# PHRG
## PEACE HUMAN RIGHTS GOVERNANCE

# Reaching Actualisation After Resettlement: A Qualitative Analysis of Afghan Refugees in the U.S.

*Elizabeth Salley*

**Research Articles***

**UP**
PADOVA

# Reaching Actualisation After Resettlement: A Qualitative Analysis of Afghan Refugees in the U.S.

*Elizabeth Salley\**

Abstract: In 2021, following the U.S. withdrawal and Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, approximately 120,000 Afghans were evacuated by the United States. Many cities in the Midwest U.S. resettled these evacuees, including St. Louis, Missouri, which welcomed over 1,200 Afghan evacuees from 2021–2023. This study uses a qualitative approach to explore the empirical social, emotional, and economic resettlement experiences of Afghan refugees in the Midwest, with the goal of determining integration outcomes salient to refugees. The researcher conducted a qualitative study with seventeen (17) Afghan refugees in the Midwest through semi-structured interviews and grounded theory method analysis. The result was a posited integration model grounded in the empirical data. The model offers insights on Afghan refugee resettlement experiences based on gender, culture, ethnicity, migration context, and self-defined integration goals. From this data, the researcher offers recommendations for future scholars, local service providers, and national policy makers.

*Keywords: refugee; Afghanistan; migration; United States; grounded theory; qualitative methods*

\*    Saint Louis University, email: elizabeth.salley@slu.edu

## Introduction

In August 2021, the United States' withdrawal from Afghanistan ended a twenty-year occupation in the country. The Taliban's subsequent takeover of Afghanistan's government placed many Afghans' lives at risk. Particularly in danger of Taliban persecution were those who had worked for the Afghan or U.S. government, military, and members of minority ethnic groups. This upheaval led to the hasty and chaotic evacuation of over 120,000 Afghans to the United States via Operation Allies Refuge (OAR), and approximately 90,000 resettled in the U.S. via Operation Allies Welcome (OAW) (Robles 2023; Adams 2023). Additionally, more found their way to bordering countries and ultimately to the U.S. Many cities in the Midwest resettled these evacuees, including St. Louis, Missouri, which welcomed over 1,000 Afghan evacuees from 2021–2023 (Henderson 2023). This evacuation posed unprecedented circumstances for resettlement communities.

Thus, this study implements a qualitative analysis to investigate the integration challenges and embodied experiences of Afghan refugees in the Midwest United States. The study sought to address the questions: 1) 'What are Afghan refugees' challenges and opportunities in resettlement?' 2) 'How do Afghan refugees define their "success" in their new host society?' 3) 'How are gender, nationality, and immigration status defined and experienced for Afghans?' The research questions were operationalized as a semi-structured interview and underwent grounded theory method analysis. Due to this approach, specific hypotheses were not formulated. Instead, a distinct integration model was developed from the empirical data. This model is context-specific and offers an opportunity for testing and replication with other refugee populations or geographic locations.

Overall, this study offers an examination of an evacuation and refugee population scarcely present in the current literature. The subsequent article will offer a literature review, discussion of qualitative methodology and results, and a summative examination of the study's limitations, recommendations, and conclusion.

## Literature Review

### Resettlement, A Dawn of New Challenges

Upon arrival in the U.S., refugees face substantial challenges. The federal government requires refugees to become 'economically self-sufficient' as quickly as possible (Chen and Hulsbrink 2019). However, language

acquisition, physical and mental health disorders, combat or torture injuries, and discrimination often constrain employment opportunities (Zubaroglu-Ioannides 2019; Gottvall et al. 2019; Lori and Boyle 2015). Furthermore, resettlement agencies experienced devastating budget cuts during the Trump administration and therefore deficiencies in staffing and infrastructure. During the 2021 Afghan resettlement, U.S. agencies struggled to rebuild their capacity as they were confronted with sudden waves of numerous refugee arrivals, national housing shortages, soaring rent prices, and an ongoing global pandemic (Washington Post Editorial Board 2022).

Finally–and perhaps most notably–most Afghan arrivals were granted a temporary and tenuous humanitarian parole status. With this status, they are permitted to live and work in the U.S. for one to two years but lack a path to legal permanent residency. Only a small percentage of evacuees held Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs), a status with an immediate path to legal permanent residency (Bernstein et al. 2023; Adams 2023).[1] Refugees are required to apply for permanent residence status one year after admission to the U.S. (Greenberg et al. 2021). Those evacuees with humanitarian parole or undocumented statuses predominantly applied for a status adjustment by asylum in the face of potential deportation; however, outstanding federal asylum backlogs have inhibited an adjustment of status update or timely approval (Adams 2023). The Afghan Adjustment Act–which would provide a path to legal permanent residency for eligible humanitarian parolees–has failed to pass in numerous Congressional sessions (Adams 2023).

Thus, evacuees were granted a variety of federal statuses with diverging benefits; however, all receive federal refugee benefits. Subsequently, for this study, the term 'refugee' is used, except in instances necessary to specify arrival circumstance or immigration status.

## Afghan Refugees, An Exceptional Integration Challenge

Afghanistan's diverse linguistic, geographic, and ethnic landscapes further complicates resettlement. A total of 247 ethnic groups are listed in the Afghan census (CIA 2022; O'Bryan 2014). Pashtuns (Sunni) constitute the largest ethnic group and often the greatest socioeconomic advantages. The Hazara (Shia), historically and presently, are the most ethnically persecuted demographic in the country. Tribal affiliations and geographic

---

[1] Beginning in 2006, Congress created the SIV program as a path of permanent U.S. residence for Afghan professionals and their immediate family members worked directly with the U.S. Armed Forces or under COM authority as a translator or interpreter for a period of at least 12 months and obtained a favorable written recommendation from a General or Flag Officer in the chain of command of the U.S. A limited number were awarded each year (Batalova 2021; Greenberg et al. 2023).

concentrations also contribute to social stratification in Afghanistan, and sometimes, divisions persist in the resettled host countries (O'Bryan 2014). Additionally, Afghanistan is linguistically diverse, with the predominant languages including Dari (77%) and the official language, Pashto (48%) (CIA 2022). Language differences especially frustrate the exchange of co-ethnic social capital in resettlement communities.

## Defining Refugee Resettlement Integration Outcomes

Refugee integration is defined on multiple levels by national, local entities, and in academia, impacting policy, programs, and research objectives. As previously noted, on a federal level, the U.S. requires refugees to become 'economically self-sufficient' and employed as quickly as possible, as defined by their ability to support their family without government cash assistance (Chen and Hulsbrink 2019; Halpern 2008). The Department of State provides resettlement agencies a one-time payment of up to $2,025 per person to assist with the refugees' first three months after arrival. $1,125 must be applied to direct support for clients, including costs for food, rent, and furniture (Chen and Hulsbrink 2019; Shear and Tankersley 2021). The remaining amount is applied to resettlement expenses, such as caseworker salary and English classes (Chen and Hulsbrink 2019). Refugees are also eligible for up to twelve months of Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA, extended from eight months in 2023), and some may be eligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) (U.S. Department of State 2021). Still, within twelve months, refugees are expected to obtain sustaining employment and rapidly acculturate to the host society. This approach overlooks multiple aspects of integration, including social and cultural, and important indicators such as social belongingness, education access, and civic participation. Such indicators are key dimensions of models such as the social determinants of health, promoted and pursued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2024).

The limitations of the U.S. welfare system cause third-sector organizations such as non-profits, faith-based organizations, and grassroots initiatives to create a 'safety net' for refugees and serve integrative functions not provided by the state (Calò et al. 2022; OECD 2023; Judelsohn 2023; Trudeau 2006). Thus, on a local level, each organization often develops their own indicators of their services' success in refugee integration; however, if the organisation is funded by the national government or another donor entity, evaluation indicators may be contingent on the grant funding (Wolch 1990; Trudeau 2008). Dan Trudeau (2008) provided a foundational analysis of the shadow state and refugee integration. In this case study of immigrant-

serving voluntary organizations in Minneapolis, Trudeau focuses on the Lao Family Community (LFC), a non-profit refugee resettlement organisation. The case study demonstrates how the state constricts and can influence the integration experience of refugees through monitored staff training and professional consultants, while the non-profit pushed back against some of these directors, advocating for a more refugee-centered, culturally competent approach to both service provision and evaluation metrics (Trudeau 2008).

In scholarly literature, perhaps the most cited reference on refugee integration is Ager and Strang's conceptual framework of integration (2008), which was extended by the UK Home Office (Ndofor-Tah et al. 2019) to include the following domains: five Markers and Means (Work, Housing, Education, Health and Social Care, and Leisure); three Social Connection domains (Social Bonds, Social Bridges, and Social Links); five Facilitators (Language and Communication, Culture, Digital Skills, Safety, and Stability); and a Foundation (Rights and Responsibilities). As a framework, this proposal only provides dimensions, necessitating organisations or states to define their own operationalized metrics for each variable.

Recent scholarship advocates for a strengths-based approach to assess refugee integration. For instance, Tara J. Yosso's community cultural wealth model draws on Critical Race Theory to challenge conceptions of People of Color as culturally impoverished (2005). While not explicitly an integration theory or framework for refugees, it offers salient concepts of consideration for marginalized communities such as refugees integrating into U.S. host societies. Yosso argues that discussions of race and capital are historically based on a limited black/white paradigm, and she critiques Bourdieu's cultural capital model that posits the white middle-class as the norm and aspiration of cultural capital wealth. Instead, Yosso proposes six different types of capital Communities of Color have: aspirational, familial, social, navigational, resistant, and linguistic capital. Yosso argues that these forms of capital can facilitate the social mobility of People of Color (2005). Furthermore, allowing refugees to self-determine integration outcomes supports a strengths-based approach to refugee resettlement (Lee et al. n.d.). The U.S.'s focus on economic self-sufficiency overlooks refugees' frequent desire to "give back" and otherwise contribute to the civic life of their communities (Lee et al. n.d.). However, studies that center refugees' self-defined integration success outcomes are scarce or, in national policy spaces, non-existent.

## Methodology

Thus, this study implemented semi-structured interviews with Afghan refugees resettled in the Midwest United States. A qualitative approach was selected due to the limited existing research on the topic and subsequent need to capture in-depth insights into individual experiences, beliefs, and behaviors. The semi-structured interview format provided a consistent set of questions posed to all interview participants while also permitting exploration of new themes and information through probing questions. This approach ensured data comparability across participants while remaining flexible in capturing variation and emerging themes (Okegbile 2014). Finally, the Midwest United States was selected as a regional focus due to the researcher's personal relationships with refugees and resettlement organisations in the area, while also addressing literature gaps on the growing population of refugees in the Midwest. IRB approval was received on June 15, 2022, and pseudonyms were assigned for all participants.

## Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a crucial aspect of this study, acknowledging the impact of the researcher's background, values, unconscious biases, and beliefs on data collection, and potential power dynamics between the researcher and participants. To address reflexivity, the researcher created a social identity map and journaled reflections on her social identities, their impact on the research process, and associated emotions (Jacobson and Mustafa 2019). Key social identity aspects of the researcher included those as a cis-gendered, US-born, agnostic, middle-class white woman raised in the Midwest United States. Each of these implies power dynamics with refugee participants, especially those of intersecting identities, including Muslim, non-white, non-native speakers, refugee status, and varying education levels.

## Sampling and Recruitment

This study employed convenience and purposive sampling for a resulting total of seventeen (17) participants. Eligibility included refugees of any arrival year; a range of evacuee statuses (humanitarian parolees, SIVs, refugees, asylees, undocumented); and any resettlement city in the U.S. Participants were recruited via local grassroots organisations and personal social networks in St. Louis, Missouri; Lawrence, Kansas; and Springfield, Missouri. A $20 incentive was provided to participants.[2]

_____

[2]   The incentives were generously funded by the Knoelder Fund, College of Arts & Sciences,

**Semi-Structured Interviews**

The interviews were based on a semi-structured interview schedule and questionnaire developed to address the research questions. Interviews were in-person or virtual, with durations ranging from 35 minutes to one hour. Dari speakers were provided a live interpreter, who was a female Afghan humanitarian parolee.[3] With participant permission, interviews were audio recorded and transcribed using Otter.ai software, while typed notes were taken for participants who declined audio recording. Recordings were deleted immediately after transcription.

## Data Analysis: Grounded Theory Method

This study employed a grounded theory approach for data analysis, allowing the discovery of new insights and understanding within the social world. This approach emphasises remaining close to participants' thoughts and narratives, creating theory founded in empirical data through an inductive process. It is well-suited for accounting for multiple contexts, including geographic, social, cultural, and political factors (Corbin and Strauss 2008; Creswell 2013). Key components of grounded theory analysis include theoretical sensitivity, theoretical sampling, reiterative and comparative coding, memos, and reflexive journaling. The constructivist epistemological approach was also adopted, acknowledging the dynamic, subjective relationship between the researcher and participants. Data collection and analysis are seen as co-constructed through the researcher's perspectives, values, beliefs, background, and experiences (Charmaz 2014; Pidgeon and Henwood 1997). Additionally, the researcher promoted theoretical sensitivity through an extensive literature review and conversations with refugees and social service providers before developing the interview structure. The findings of this study are not generalisable but provide a theoretical explanatory framework developed through the researcher's and participants' subjectivities.

Transcripts underwent line-by-line open-, axial-, and selective-coding according to the grounded theory method. The researcher iteratively coded interviews, analyzed them in batches, adjusted the semi-structured interview with new probing questions, and revisited transcripts multiple times to refine and expand codes. Theoretical and/or descriptive codes were assigned

---

Saint Louis University.

[3]   The Dari interpreter was generously funded by the Saint Louis University Women's Commission. Attempts to hire a Pashto interpreter were unsuccessful due to a scarcity of available speakers in the community.

to statements in-vivo, and memos were also documented in order to link codes to potential theories in Atlas.ti. Theoretical saturation of interviews was obtained after approximately 10-12 participants, indicating the upper limit of the sample size with little new information emerging.

# Results

The results are the emergent themes from interviews with seventeen (17) Afghan refugees in the U.S. Midwest, exploring their migration experiences, identity, and aspirations. Through the grounded theory approach, a theoretical integration model was inductively constructed by the researcher.

## A. Participant Demographics

Participants were primarily female (n=11) versus male (n=6). Additionally, the participants were predominantly humanitarian parolees (n=12), followed by SIVs (n=4) and refugee (n=1). Ages ranged from 25-35 years (n=6) and 36-48 years (n=11). Finally, the majority of participants were resettled in St. Louis, Missouri (n=14), followed by Kansas City, Missouri (n=1); Lawrence, Kansas (n=1); and Springfield, Missouri (n=1).

## B. Integration Model for Afghan Refugees: Achieving Actualisation

This model offers a theoretical explanation for Afghan refugees' core pursuit of actualisation, defined as holistic spiritual, emotional, and social fulfillment. Furthermore, actualisation denotes the realisation of one's agency, potential, and well-being. The model comprises tiers, domains, facilitators/inhibitors, and contextual factors, defined as:

- **Tiers:** These signify key areas for integration, vital for Afghan refugees to attain their self-defined goals. Tiers encompass Factors Entering Integration, Foundation, Sociocultural and Interactive, and Actualisation.
- **Domains:** Each tier contains core domains with specific codes emerging from data. Domains encompass Capital and Contextual Factors, Basic Needs, Statefulness, Language, Acculturation, Social Capital, Women's Integration, Host Society, and Actualisation.
- **Focused Codes:** These detailed codes delve into each domain, elaborating significant experiences or concepts. See Table 2 for focused codes.
- **Facilitators and Inhibitors:** Internal factors such as identity, values, and emotional states shape Afghan refugees' dreams, goals, and integration paths.

- **Environmental Contextual Factors:** These dynamic factors encompass macro-level (migration governance) and micro-level (organisational ecosystem) influences on integration, forming a backdrop to the model.
- **Relationship Between Tiers and Domains:** The integration process is multidimensional and dynamic, with certain domains influencing others. Progression is not linear, as domains interplay and priorities shift.

Please see Figure 3 for a visualisation of the integration model. Furthermore, each axial code was informed by focus codes, as seen below in Table 2. A selection of focused codes from the integration model are explored in the following sections.

Figure 3: Integration Model for Afghan Refugees Resettled in the Midwest United States
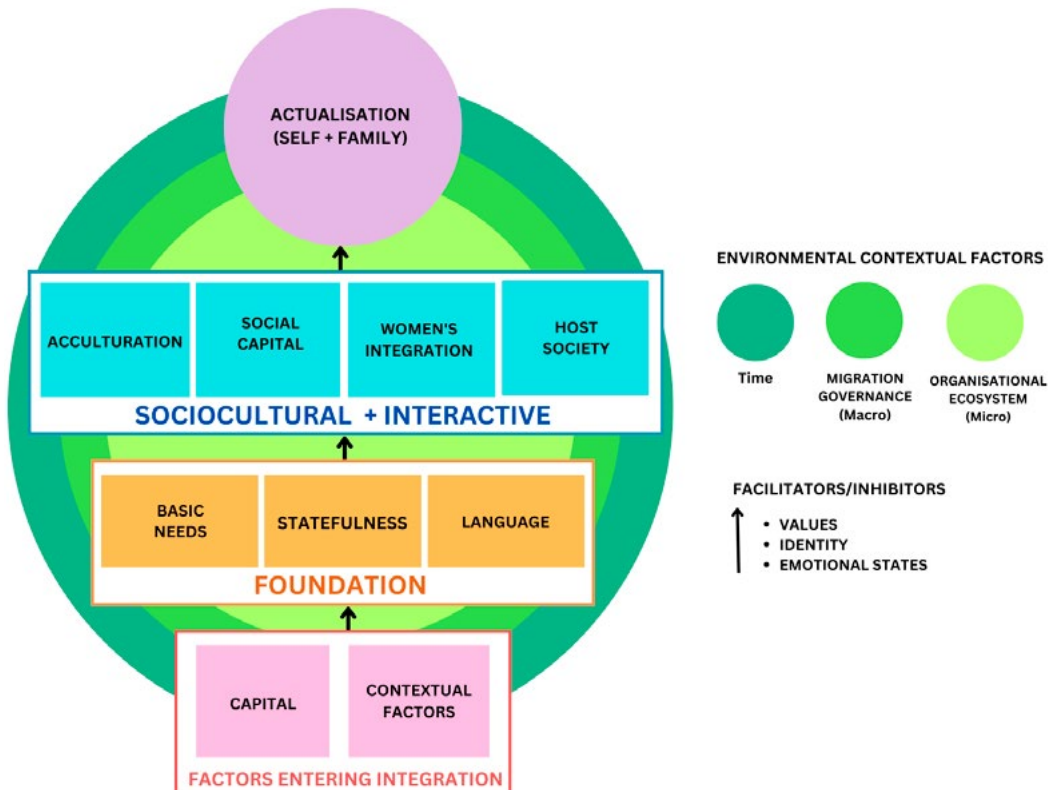
Table 2: Integration Model Focused Codes

| Tier | Domain | Focused Codes |
|---|---|---|
| **Actualisation (Self and Family)** | Family's Higher Education, Home Ownership, Vocation, Community Contribution, Family Reunification, Reestablishment of Rituals, Agency to Realise Dreams, and Belonging | |
| **Sociocultural and Interactive** | Acculturation | Technology, Religious Customs, Food & Drink, Communal Proximity & Ritual, Legal Systems |
| | Social Capital | Social Bonds, Bridges, and Links |
| | Women's Integration | Childcare, Transportation, and Language Competency |
| | Host Society | Attitudes, Hospitality, and Outreach |
| **Foundation** | Basic Needs | Housing, Food Security, Healthcare, Transportation, Education, Safety, Employment, Communication Technologies (CTs) |
| | Statefulness | Residency Status; Knowledge of Rights |
| | Language | English Competency–Self and/or Family Member |
| **Factors Entering Integration** | Capital | Linguistic, Human, Cultural, and Social Capital, Physical and Mental Health |
| | Contextual Factors | Pre-Immigration, Immigration, and Post-Immigration Contexts |

# Exploring the Integration Model

## A. Factors Entering Migration: Contextual Factors

In the domain of "Factors Entering Migration," contextual factors play a significant role in shaping the integration journey of Afghan refugees. This study examined micro- and macro-level influences across the timeline of resettlement, impacting access to education, social networks, and overall integration.

### 1A. Pre-Migration

Structural obstacles, stemming from war-induced migration, disrupted education for many participants. The experiences of Nooria (age 42, St. Louis, humanitarian parolee, 2021 arrival) illustrate this challenge when her family's move to Iran during the first Taliban takeover led to years of restricted access to education:

> I moved to one of the cities in Iran, I could go to school there to seventh grade. I was at a school until seventh grade, but my family moved to Tehran, the capital of Iran. But we hadn't the legal documents to stay in Tehran, and I couldn't go to school for six or seven years.

She ultimately resumed learning at an Afghan school in Tehran years later. Others found improved educational prospects upon migrating to Pakistan, enhancing their human capital through linguistic skills and education. Naima (age 44, St. Louis, 2002 refugee arrival) moved with a cousin to Pakistan as an adolescent, due to security concerns during the Soviet occupation. She lived there for ten years, attended school, and learned English. Naima describes:

> When I was in Pakistan, I finished my high school, then I started medical school, and for one year I was in medical school. But then the school was shut down by the Taliban in Pakistan. So, when they shut down the school, I had to go back to school where I used to study, like my high school. They were hiring teachers. So, I went back there, and I did a test and everything. I passed the test, and I became a teacher over there.

While Naima hoped to continue medical school once in the United States, she worked several years of food service and domestic cleaning jobs until ultimately securing employment as a translator for the federal government.

### 2A. Immigration Context

Immigration circumstances and arrival year significantly impacted refugees' integration. Previous SIV arrivals experienced concrete timelines and preparation for departure, while those evacuated in 2021–mostly as humanitarian parolees–faced chaotic and dangerous situations, such as Kabul airport bombings, intimidation, and violence; frantic evacuation crowds; family separation; and hunting by the Taliban as they awaited evacuation. They also left or destroyed essential documents and possessions due to lack of evacuation preparation or fear of Taliban persecution.

Asmina (age 28, St. Louis, humanitarian parolee, 2021 arrival) repeatedly returned to recounting the narrative of her family's evacuation, evidently traumatised by the event. Her family attempted evacuation twice; they survived gunfire, and her husband, beatings by the Taliban. She described:

> And I came to my home, and my relatives called me and said that today, tonight, you can go to the airport, that the Americans, they helped people to evacuate and we went there. It was 2 a.m., and we were there until the morning. That morning the Taliban, they shot at the Americans, and there was fighting between Americans and the Taliban. Lots of people died by gunfire that day in the airport, and I escaped…And my son was very shocked because of the situation and because of the gunfire we have seen.

Asmina's statement echoed many of the evacuees', including many who were pregnant and caretaking small children during the evacuation.

### 3A. Refugee Camps

Refugee camps presented varied experiences and thus impact on resettlement. Some participants suffered due to overcrowding and hygiene issues. Others found opportunities in the camps, building skills through educational workshops and forming valuable friendships that continued in their resettlement communities. These contextual factors established the foundation for Afghan refugees' integration experiences, impacting education, social capital, and well-being.

### 4A. Post-Immigration Context

Upon arrival in the United States, Afghan refugees faced a reevaluation of their expectations, reshaping their objectives for health, education, employment, and housing. While some held misconceptions of an easier life with a robust social safety net, others anticipated immediate continuation of higher education or professional careers, leading to delays in securing employment. Media-driven ideals of a perfect U.S. life were contrasted by the reality of safety concerns, particularly in low-income housing areas.

Aman (age 32), an SIV resettled in St. Louis in 2013, articulated the struggle of adapting expectations. He recounted his initial belief in a carefree and safe environment, which evolved as he encountered crime and insecurity:

> I knew the language, but I wasn't fully adapting the culture of how the people are different, different people that you see here, and, uh, a little bit of that, and then I thought as you say, everything is like "green garden," you know, and you'll have fun and there's no problem, nothing. As I was living on the southside in St. Louis [when I was first resettled], and I heard about, like, gunshots, people getting killed, and the people getting into fights, things like that, and I was like, no, everywhere–there's crime everywhere. There's like, you have to watch your back and about your safety, things like that.

As hopes for an idealised life collided with reality, refugees navigated unforeseen challenges. Naima's desire for medical school was deferred as she adjusted to work, illustrating the tension between initial expectations and practical realities:

> So, every job [the resettlement agency] found, it was a housekeeping job, and I did not like that. But finally, I had not any other option. I had to accept it, and I started working as a housekeeper. And at that time, I was working as a housekeeper in a hospital. It was so stressful for me at the beginning. Not at the beginning–like, I worked almost a year. But it was really stressful, because I was planning to become a doctor [back in Pakistan]. So, I became a housekeeper in the hospital. It was really, really stressful for me. But I had to do it, and I did it.

Ultimately, adaptation strategies were employed to confront these disparities, including hope, perceptions of identity, and acceptance (see Facilitators/Inhibitors).

## 5A. Systems of Inequality Across the Temporal Spectrum (Ethnicity and Gender)

Power is divided along lines of ethnicity, tribal affiliation, and gender in Afghanistan. Many participants spoke of how this stratification impacted their lives before and after immigration. Hazaras, a Shia minority that also comprises tribes such as Sadat, more frequently spoke of the discrimination and fear for their life as a persecuted minority. They experienced targeted bombings of Hazara schools and exclusion from higher-income employment. Nooria shared, '[ISIS] wanted to attack Shia and Hazara in Afghanistan, and as an ordinary Shia, I will be in danger.' Ultimately, these experiences in Afghanistan impacted participants' traumatic experiences and also available human capital that could be transferred post-resettlement, such as English competency and professional experience.

Participants also emphasised the contrast in civil rights for women between Afghanistan and the U.S. Women varied in the degree to which they faced restrictions, persecution, and gender-based violence in Afghanistan. Asmina, for example, was forced into marriage and ended her education at 21-years-old; her in-laws subsequently isolated and abused her. Despite challenges of childcare and poverty in the United States, Asmina expressed relief of leaving a painful life in Afghanistan and hopes to learn English and go to community college in the U.S. Still, her forced marriage and education termination translated to struggles in the U.S. in finding employment and understanding how to navigate complex healthcare and transportation systems necessary for building language competency.

## B. Foundation: Basic Needs, Statefulness, and Language

### 1B. Basic Needs

Basic needs such as housing, food security, healthcare, education, safety, employment, transportation, and communication technologies were vital to well-being. Most refugees also described the struggle of becoming financially independent quickly after the end of their federal cash assistance, or 'welcome money.' Additionally, many Afghans disqualified for food stamps and other federal welfare benefits upon employment, despite living in poverty. For instance, Asmina lives with her husband and two young children. As previously noted, she does not speak English and is a full-time mother. She said, 'We have an economic problem. My husband has a job, but he receives a $2,000 payment monthly, and we do not have food stamps and my husband's income or salary – that's not enough.'

### 2B. Statefulness

Statefulness implies an individual's access to complete state protections and resources, including social welfare programs, public services like education, employment authorisation, legal protections, and political participation (Kingston 2011). In this domain, two codes were identified: residency status and knowledge of rights.

Residency status refers to any federal status that allows immigrants to have documented identification and associated rights–of course, there are a spectrum of rights and limitations in the U.S., depending on the status. The confusion of the humanitarian parole status with recent evacuees, and variation in their entry routes and process, left some parolees in legal limbo without documentation.

For instance, Nooria entered through the U.S.-Mexico border after her family missed the initial evacuation and were later assisted by her previous employer, an international organisation, in leaving the country. Her humanitarian parole status was unclear to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and local social service providers, thus delaying resettlement support upon arrival, including the provision of a social security number. Nooria shared:

> We hadn't any bank account, because without social security, you cannot open bank accounts. We hadn't the vehicle, because without social security, without ID card, you cannot buy a car. And it was a very tough situation for us.

Furthermore, participants not only expressed the desire for the rights afforded by residency (or even better, full citizenship) but knowledge of and

the confidence to advocate for their rights. This was the case with Nooria and her family's social security numbers, as well as other participants regarding housing placement, welfare benefits, and labor exploitation.

### 3B. Language

Language proficiency emerged as a cornerstone of integration for Afghan refugees in the United States. Beyond facilitating communication, participants underline its critical role in securing better employment, navigating public welfare resources, fostering social connections, and realising personal aspirations. Safa (age 25, St. Louis, humanitarian parolee, 2021 arrival) stressed the obstacle of language barriers in seeking suitable employment that aligns with her education. For those with English-speaking family members, the presence of English speakers in the household eased integration stressors.

## C. Sociocultural and Interactive: Acculturation and Social Capital

The second tier of the integration model includes domains centered on adaptations to culture, changes in social fields, and exchanges of resources (symbolic or material) in relationships. These domains are identified as acculturation, social capital, women's integration, and the role of the host society.

### 1C. Acculturation

Acculturation of the immigrant group impacts the psychological shifts and well-being of this group, capacity to assign new meaning in their post-immigration life, and their ability to maintain and access more resources in the host society.

### i. Legal Systems

Participants also described the trials of adapting to infrastructure and bureaucratic systems in the U.S. Such systems include traffic laws and infrastructure, and cultural and legal differences in childcare, taxes, and licensing. In Afghanistan, many systems were more informal. Ali, age 46, was resettled in Kansas City, Missouri, as an SIV in 2014. He provided the example of receiving a drivers' license in Afghanistan versus the U.S.:

> I renewed my driver license three or four times [in Afghanistan]. Trust me, I didn't go to the DMV. If I needed my drivers license, I would find somebody because I was busy. I found somebody and gave him my two photos. [I would say,] hey, can you get me my driver license plus

> my ID or a copy of my ID? He would say, okay, give me like $10 or $20, I will get it.

A lack of knowledge of these rules places Afghans at risk of entering the criminal justice system and associated financial and social consequences.

### ii. Religious Customs

While only a small number of participants described essential challenges in adapting religious practices in their new environment, the limited number of codes may be due to the researcher's identity as a non-Muslim and omission of explicitly religious questions. However, religious customs are included in the integration model due to the 'weight' of significance of the described experiences of religious practice. These experiences included feelings of 'otherness' when wearing certain religious dress, the absence of specific religious sites customary to their devotional practice, and confusion on religious rights in the workplace.

For Ali, religious practice at first determined his employment choices, since he was unaware of his rights:

> The first job that I got here, I started working in a gas station. Muslims really love to work in a gas station, because a lot of those gas stations, the owners are Muslim, from Pakistan, from India, from anywhere. The good thing about it in the very beginning, you're very sensitive about your prayer time, and you don't know that you [have religious rights].

Related to religious practice, food was described as a crucial challenge in adapting to resettlement cities in the United States.

### iii. Food

Afghans desired to maintain their traditional food. Afghans immediately sought places to buy halal meat, although often expensive in their resettlement city, and other food and drink items like Afghan bread and tea. Ali was resettled by a local Jewish organisation in 2014. He said:

> The meat–we [Muslims] don't serve pork. Besides that, it's lamb or beef. It should be what's called halal, that should be slaughtered in Islamic way. So, for one and a half months, we didn't eat meat at all when I was in the U.S. in the very beginning, because I didn't know any Afghan. I didn't know any Muslim to give me direction.

Like Ali, other Afghans emphasised the importance of finding grocery stores with cultural items early in the resettlement process and the expense of these specialty items in the U.S. Besides grocery items, participants cited

specific textiles (such as Afghan rugs) and serving dishes as resettlement needs and spent their limited welcome money on these items.

### iv. Communal Proximity and Ritual

Within the domain of acculturation, community proximity and ritual emerged from the data. That is, Afghans frequently cited the separation from family and rituals associated with these social networks as an integration challenge; these structures previously provided order, meaning, and connection. Rituals included long weekend trips with extended family, weekly celebrations, green tea with family in the evening, religious site visits, and large weddings and engagement parties. Rashida, age 36, a humanitarian parolee resettled in St. Louis, Missouri, in 2021, described this separation and fracture of ritual as one of the most significant challenges of resettlement. She stated, 'We had a good relationship with our neighbors [in Afghanistan], and we met each other, we were very close to each other. We had lots of parties and… it was a very good time, but here [in St. Louis] we are…we are not very close here.' Relatedly, Narges expressed some of the challenges of spatial separateness and social distance in her resettlement city of Lawrence, Kansas, stating, 'And then, so mostly in my culture, we have different ways of celebrating or embracing happiness, like we sit together and eat food daily, we live in extended family, so we are surrounded by a lot of people.'

## 2C. Social Capital (Bonds, Bridges, and Links)

Afghans referred to the value of social capital in accessing resources, connection, and building human capital, such as language skills. Social capital is distinguished as social bonds, bridges, and links. Through social bonds, Afghans often found employment, car loans, information on volunteer organisations, asylum advice, and other resources through the Afghan community. Additionally, shared community with Muslims (from Somalia or Pakistan, for example) likewise expanded available networks for employment and information on resources, like halal meat and mosque locations. Many Afghans also described the perceived advantages of creating American friendships, or social bridges. Often, friendships with Americans were developed either at work or through volunteer organisations. Afghans found value in these friendships for feeling welcomed, practicing English, learning more about American culture, and navigating complicated U.S. systems, such as healthcare and housing. Finally, Afghans described value in social links, such as resettlement agencies and local volunteer organisations. Although participants also expressed frustration with these resources in their expectations for more legal, cultural, or financial support, ultimately,

these institutions were valued when they needed assistance with items such as housing, furniture, and food stamps. However, the limited federal resettlement support strained the capacity of resettlement agencies, and confusion amidst the recent evacuation inhibited some of the value of social links for Afghan parolees. The organisations deemed the most helpful were those who provided transportation and active listening and problem-solving.

## D. Facilitators/Inhibitors: Identity and Emotional States

Facilitators/Inhibitors are internalised factors impacting Afghans' integration process. These factors encompass identity, values, and emotional states, influencing their adaptation, goals, and experiences.

### 1D. Identity

The Cambridge University Press definition of identity is used to ground the examination of this concept. According to this source, 'Identities are sets of meanings that define who we are in terms of the roles we have, the groups or social categories to which we belong, or the unique characteristics that make us different from others' (Burke 2020). Three identity categories of nationality, gender, and immigration status allow further insights to how Afghans perceive and ascribe meaning to these roles or categories, and thus, how they make decisions throughout resettlement.

### i. Afghan Identity

The multiplicity of Afghan identity cannot, of course, be fully generalised by the results of the participants in this study but offers context-specific insights into how identity is experienced by Afghan refugees. Codes that emerged from this category included viewing Afghans as "one human," ethnicity, communal value, and emotions of pain, struggle and pride.

Participants expressed that ethnic stratification was difficult to avoid in Afghanistan. Especially those who were Hazara or other Shia minority commonly shared preoccupations, worry, and pain for Hazaras still experiencing violent persecution by extremist groups in Afghanistan. Rashida, age 36, a Hazara Afghan humanitarian parolee that arrived in St. Louis in 2021, elaborated:

> Last month, we had a suicide attack on a college, it was an academic center that we lost. It happened…in a Hazara location. It is very painful for us. We are very sorry about that, because the parents raise their children to have a better future. They sent them to the school to learn, but they lost their children, and they received the bodies of their children, and it is very bad and very painful.

Emotions of pain and pride also emerged as identity definitions of 'Afghan.' Rashida, for instance, elaborated, 'To be Afghan to me is the pain, the misery, the war, suicide attacks, and all that bad happened in Afghanistan.' However, those who spoke with pride of an Afghan identity described their connection to the beauty and diversity of the country, Muslim identity, Afghan communal values, and resilience in the face of adversity. For Asmina, despite a lifetime of struggles, her embodiment of the latter was clear in her words and actions. She said, 'The Afghan people have passion, patience, and they can handle any difficulties and challenges in their life, anywhere, in any place of the world. They handle every challenge.'

### ii. Gender Identity

While men were interviewed for this study, this discussion primarily focuses on women due to 1) the greater sample size of females in the study, and thus, descriptive data on women's definition of gender identity, and 2) limited descriptive responses from men regarding the embodiment of a male Afghan identity. The latter may have been a result of the researcher's identity as a woman, and therefore, her social identities and subjectivities limiting the amount of rich data she could gather about this phenomena.

In contrast to male participants, female participants described themselves in relation to a collective of Afghan women, including those still in Afghanistan, and throughout the temporal spectrum (past, present, and future). This collective aligned with pain and struggle; multiplicity and capabilities; and strength. Asmina again expressed the collective pain and resistance of Afghan women poignantly:

> It is all the difficulties and challenges I face in my personal life that it connects to Afghan women's lives. If any other person in another country, if they face these kinds of challenges and difficulties, then maybe they tell their husband that we can get divorced or you go your own way. But we are strong, because we have all these difficulties and challenges, and it's kind of our tradition to have this [internal] resolve.

Similar to the description of Hazara ethnicity, women also inhabited a sort of 'double reality' of feeling connection, pain, and responsibility for women still in Afghanistan. Participants described how the changing power structures of policy, culture, and family between the two countries allowed women to express more of their agency in the U.S. This was, in fact, a motivating factor for many families to evacuate Afghanistan, anticipating extreme Taliban measures to restrict and oppress women. It also apparently served as a motivating force for women who did make it to the U.S. to pursue English, education, and employment.

Indeed, while women structurally have more opportunities in the U.S.–such as the legality to attend school–women who did not know English, have familial support in their resettlement city, and were constrained by childcare and transportation faced much more frustrating paths to achieving their goals of community college attendance. The initial step of learning English was not only time-intensive but required resources, such as internet and tablet access, a car, and childcare.

## 2D. Emotional States

The emotional states of Afghan refugees throughout the immigration and resettlement process serves as a facilitator or inhibitor in their adaptations. The term 'emotional states' is used broadly here to refer to the emotions Afghans noted as responses to their immigration challenges; sometimes, these were described as intentionally chosen, such as acceptance of their situation or hopefulness for the future.

### i. Hope

Hope–or aspirational capital, if viewed from a critical race theory framework (Yosso 2005)–was explicitly or implicitly expressed as a coping mechanism for Afghan refugees. Daoud (age 44, St. Louis, SIV, 2021 arrival) struggled with grief and trauma from leaving Afghanistan and loved ones, the current social and political situation in Afghanistan, and resettlement challenges. Yet, he emphasised the importance of hope:

> And I want to tell you that in darkness, people are seeking light. And they want to seek light, that we are seeking happiness for our life and for our future. And because we came from a very bad situation, and because everything was–we lost everything, and now we hope that we can gain a good life for ourselves.

In this interview, Daoud oscillated between emotions of grief, gratitude, despair, and hope, indicating that these emotions are never isolated and some serve as guiding forces to a greater intensity or more often than others.

### ii. Grief, Survivor's Guilt, and Acceptance

Daoud's statement also relates to commonly cited emotions of grief–a loss of loved ones and homeland, dreams, aspirations, skills, status, and overall, a life built–and lost. Nooria, for instance, had experienced many external obstacles in her lifetime as a refugee in Iran, extended disruption to education, and discrimination as an ethnic minority and woman. She built a successful career for herself as a government official, journalist, learning

English, and obtaining a graduate degree. The evacuation and her new life as a humanitarian parolee brought new struggles. She expressed:

> I was good in my own language. I was a good writer. I could communicate very well, and I could do everything with my own language, but sometimes, like, I think that all my experience and all my skills that I had gotten – that's useless here, and sometimes I think that all work I have done in my life to learn and to educate, now it's nothing–sometimes I feel like that.

Those who struggled with grief or trauma would sometimes frame their challenges as predestined or out of their control, or merely, a trial to accept. Acceptance was also framed as gratitude for their current safety.

## E. Actualisation: Family Reunification

According to the American Psychological Association, actualisation is defined as "mobilizing one's potentialities and realizing them in concrete form" (2018). Beyond basic subsistence, humans reach for what is beyond survival and is the fulfillment of their personal and communal dreams, potential, and empowerment. This domain tier, the final domain and core theme, defines how Afghan participants define their success in their new host society. These are their dreams, goals, and ultimately their personal markers of integration beyond basic survival. No Afghan participants described their success only in individual terms–they viewed their individual actualisation in context of their family and resettlement community.

### 1E. Family Reunification

All Afghan participants in the study still had family in Afghanistan, feared for their family's safety, and were actively seeking ways to bring their family to the United States (with the exception of one participant who experienced abuse by her in-laws). The concern for their family was both an inhibiting integration factor and a primary vision for their happiness and success in the U.S.

For example, Ali shared his concern for his family in Afghanistan, 'Because, the worst thing that I was thinking a lot about – one of my brothers was in the army, and he was a lieutenant colonel. Right now he's hiding. Hiding somewhere.'

Hakim, 27, a humanitarian parolee resettled in Springfield, Missouri, in 2021, also struggled with concern for his family in Afghanistan. He was separated from them in the chaotic evacuation, literally at the gates of the Kabul airport. He said that his greatest challenge in the U.S. was, 'Living without family. Living alone, that is the hardest.' In interviews, Afghans

made direct calls for Congress and policymakers to ease family reunification pathways in the U.S. Participants expressed desires for the connection, structure, and meaning family reunification would bring to their lives.

### 2E. Community Contribution

Afghans not only defined their goals in terms of their immediate family but also their vision to ultimately contribute to others, whether that was supporting family or giving back to their resettlement community. For instance, as Mahdi, a humanitarian parolee that arrived in St. Louis in 2021, shared:

> So, we are trying to have a very good future in the United States, but my children especially, we will invest all time for my children to be positive to help the community where we are living there. Any community that we live, we belong to that community. The community that we were born–so we had a family, we left everything there, we wish to be good, to be safe, but we belong to America right now. We will be here, and we will help the community that we are living under.

The desire for contribution and community was also mirrored in a desire for belonging.

### 3E. Belonging

Belonging for Afghans was described in many forms, including citizenship, connection and community, adapting to the culture, and finding a home that suited their family size and safety. While these factors are noted in other domains of the integration model, "belonging" was included in "actualisation" for the implicit feelings Afghans described achieving in the future. Narges contrasted her feeling of belonging in Afghanistan versus the United States. In spite of the kindness displayed by her classmates and host community, she still felt like an outsider and desired to feel the belonging of Afghanistan. She said:

> I was not–like here, I have all the rights, but still, I'm an immigrant. In some places, I still find it hard that people accept me. Over there, no matter what, I was accepted, and my efforts were appreciated. Here, I must work a lot in order to find the space or convince people that I'm worthy of being accepted.

Participants pursued their desire of belonging through seeking out Afghan community, connection with coworkers, citizenship (especially those humanitarian parolees applying for asylum and SIVs), English and driving classes, and dreams of home ownership.

## Limitations

There are several limitations to this study, including generalisability, sampling, and omission of race and religious questions. First, as previously mentioned, this is a qualitative study in which the results cannot be generalised to the experiences of all Afghan refugees. Second, this study demonstrated many limitations in sampling. More women (n=11) than men (n=6) participated in the study, limiting the perspectives, narratives, and thus social data of men's contextual and resettlement experiences. This may impact the data in several ways; for instance, men may more readily secure employment but experience greater social pressures in financially supporting their family; additionally, one participant shared that her husband had been disabled from Taliban torture, which could potentially be a risk factor for more men in Afghanistan. Therefore, it is valuable to include more male interviewees in future studies. Additionally, interviewees were primarily Dari speakers and Shia minorities. This latter was due to the interpreter speaking Dari rather than Pashto, and the former may be due to attendees of the women's group (the main recruitment pool) composed primarily of Shia minorities. Furthermore, the age structure of this sample is predominantly 35-48 years (n=12), with the lower range of the age group including 25-34 years (n=5). Future studies could expand the age structure to include those more in the lower age range and also 50+ years.

Finally, this study includes limitations in further exploring relevant integration topic areas of religion and race. Due to the researcher's social identity as non-Muslim, she did not have extensive knowledge or personal experience at the time of the study to ask informed, appropriate questions related to religiosity, identity, and how religion may or may not be a central acculturation challenge or strategy. While participants spoke of their Muslim identity and aspects of religious practice, the researcher often did not probe further extensively, and her non-Muslim identity may have also limited participants' responses related to religion. Additionally, two participants' comments implied negative stereotypes of Black Americans and immigrants. In these cases, the researcher did not probe further on race perceptions. It is essential to understand Afghans' perceptions of race in the U.S. to examine how they integrate with all resettlement society members, their preferred assimilation reference groups (Portes and Zhou 1993), and for local social service providers to examine education for refugees to prevent the perpetuation of anti-Blackness in the U.S.

# Recommendations

## Future Research

To address the limitations of time, a longitudinal study is recommended to track refugees' evolving integration experiences, needs, and perceptions. Furthermore, this study could enhance credibility by applying measures such as triangulation with refugee focus groups and surveys and a content analysis of U.S. media and policies; additionally, surveys or interviews should be implemented with local social service providers or the general public of resettlement cities to examine the impact of the attitudes, perceptions, and associated behaviors of the receiving communities. Furthermore, distinct topic questions regarding religiosity and race are recommended, as well as expanding the research team to include those of varying social identities. Finally, as noted in the limitations section, sampling could also be expanded to include more Afghan men and a wider range of ethnicities, arrival years and statuses, and age range.

## Social Service Providers and Policy Makers in the U.S.

The researcher proposes the following recommendations to support Afghan refugees in their integration in the United States. These proposals address the financial, physical, and emotional well-being of Afghan refugees, as well as the success indicators that emerged from this study. The recommendations are in no particular order of chronology or significance.

### A. Local Good Practice

- **Cultural Orientation:** Ensure that Afghan refugees have translated materials on how to obtain a social security number and associated rights; recognizing labor exploitation; rights on prayer time at place of employment; knowing the difference between affirmative and defense asylum (and associated legal assistance); and where to find halal meat and nearby metro stops. Additionally, affirm that resettlement staff are also knowledgeable on these processes and resources.
- **Organisational Capacity and Services:** Increase community capacity (volunteers, grants, etc.) for organisations with transportation and/or in-home English classes, driving classes, digital literacy, and childcare–especially critical for women's equitable integration–and also those that build social capital (such as soccer and women's groups). For those with no immediate family in their resettlement city, prioritise connecting them to these services immediately, as their limited social capital inhibits finding or taking advantage of communal resources.

- **Apartment Setups:** If providing apartment appliances, swap coffee pots for kettles, and solicit donations for traditional serving dishes and rugs. Otherwise, refugees often use their welcome money to buy these directly, which is typically a great expense.

Furthermore, partnerships with local universities for volunteers, resources like creating maps with ArcGIS, and program evaluation could assist in increasing capacity for these services.

### B. National Good Practice

- **Expand direct cash assistance beyond three months**, especially for high-risk individuals with large families, single parents, and/or with no immediate family in the resettlement city as a social safety net.
- **Create more paths for legal permanent residency** by passing the Afghan Adjustment Act or similar legislation and expanding SIV cases. The financial, psychological, and temporal costs of asylum-seeking and precarity of the temporary parole status hinder the economic and social integration of Afghan refugees. Furthermore, ease pathways for family reunification. Additionally, lower fees for seeking asylum.
- **Provide grants to local organisations** that are providing context-specific, specialised support for refugees in their communities, especially for costs not covered by federal safety nets, such as legal assistance and dental surgery.
- **Invest in regional transportation infrastructure** to ensure functioning, safe, affordable, accessible, and consistent public transportation for new arrivals Action steps include supporting the Missouri Highway and Transportation Commission's request for $11.7 million for transit investments in the state of Missouri, to be divided between the state's 32 transit providers and implementing action steps posited in the regional MetroLink's security audit (Citizens for Modern Transit 2024).

## Conclusion

A qualitative study was implemented to examine the resettlement experiences and integration markers of the recent Afghan refugee resettlement in the Midwest United States. Semi-structured interviews were implemented with qualifying participants, followed by a grounded theory method analysis. The semi-structured interview included questions about pre-immigration, immigration journey, and post-resettlement context; post-immigration challenges and opportunities; hopes and expectations; and identity.

Seventeen Afghan refugees participated in this study through virtual or in-person interviews. Participants were primarily recent humanitarian parolees

(n=12), resettled in St. Louis, Missouri (n=14), and women (n=11). The researcher also implemented reflexivity practices throughout the process– pre-, during-, and after-data collection, as well as analysis. Transcripts or typed notes (for those who did not give permission to record) underwent open-, axial-, and selective-coding, in alignment with grounded theory method analysis.

Ultimately, an integration model was inductively created as a theoretical explanation of the empirical data. The model centers on the core category of "Actualisation," which includes subcategories of Afghans' concepts of success and fulfillment for themselves as an individual and family. The tiers consist of Factors Entering Integration, Sociocultural and Interactive, and Actualisation. Each tier is composed of associated domains, including Capital and Contextual Factors (Factors Entering Integration); Basic Needs, Statefulness, and Language (Foundation); Acculturation, Social Capital, Women's Integration, and Host Society (Sociocultural and Interactive); and Actualisation (both a tier and domain). This framework is set within environmental contextual factors of time, migration governance (macro-level), and organisational ecosystem (micro-level)–structures in which integration is eternally occurring and Afghans are navigating within. Throughout the integration process, internalised, subjective realities are denoted as facilitators or inhibitors–identity, values, and emotional states. This model is not intended to generalise all Afghan refugees' experiences but present a theoretical framework grounded in the empirical data.

Ultimately, this study sought to identify vulnerabilities of this population using mixed methods and go beyond identifying basic subsistence needs to the emotional and spiritual fulfillment empirically described by Afghan refugees. The study further presented local and national policy recommendations based on the posited integration model. As Phillimore and Goodson expound in their refugee integration research, 'For those seeking refuge, it could be argued that the importance of finding a home is particularly symbolic as it marks the end of a journey and the point at which refugees can start to consider their wider needs' (2008, 316).

## References

Adams, R. S. (September 13, 2023) 'Afghan Evacuation and Resettlement: Two Years Later There's Still Work to Do,' Retrieved from: http://www. justsecurity.org/88182/afghan-      evacuation-and-resettlement-two-years-later-theres-still-work-to-do (accessed: 11/11/2023).

Ager, A. and Strang, A. (2008) 'Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework', *Journal of Refugee* Studies, 21(2):166–91.

American Psychological Association (2018) 'APA Dictionary of Psychology', retrieved from: https://dictionary.apa.org/actualization (accessed: 03/06/2024).

Batalova, J. (September 9, 2021) 'Afghan Immigrants in the United States,' Retrieved from: https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/afghan-immigrants-united-states (accessed: 11/11/2023).

Bernstein, H., Guelespe, D., and Bose, S. (August 15, 2023) 'How Temporary Immigration Status Has Affected Afghan Evacuees in the US,' Retrieved from: https://www.urban.org/ urban-wire/how-temporary-immigration-status-has-affected-afghan-evacuees-us (accessed: 11/11/2023).

Burke, P. (2020) *The Cambridge Handbook of Social Theory*, Cambridge University Press.

Calò, F., Montgomery, T., and Baglioni, S. (2022) 'Marginal players? The third sector and employability services for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the UK' *Voluntas*, 33(5), 872-885.

Charmaz, K. (2014) *Constructing grounded theory, 2nd Ed.*, London: Sage Publication.

Chen, X. and Eloiss, B. H. (2019) 'Barriers to Achieving "Economic Self-Sufficiency": The Structural Vulnerability Experienced by Refugee Families in Denver, Colorado', *Human Organization*, 78(3), 218-229.

CIA (2022) 'Afghanistan', Retrieved from: https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/ countries/afghanistan/#people-and-society (accessed: 26/02/2022).

Citizens for Modern Transit (2024) 'Citizens for Modern Transit Legislative Priorities 2024', retrieved from: https://cmt-stl.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/2024-Policy-Agenda-CMT-WEB.pdf (accessed: 03/06/2024).

Corbin, J. and Strauss, A. (2008) *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory, 3rd ed.,* Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2013) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, Sage Publications.

Fullerton, M. (2014) 'The Intersection of Statelessness and Refugee Protection in US Asylum Policy', *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 2(3),144-164.

Gottvall, M., Vaez, M. and Saboonchi, F (2019) 'Social support attenuates the link between torture exposure and post-traumatic stress disorder among male and female Syrian refugees in Sweden', *BMC International Health and Human Rights*, 19(28), 1-11.

Greenberg, M., Reynolds, C., and Workie, E. (September 16, 2021) 'Different Statuses, Different Benefits: Determining Federal Assistance for Afghan Evacuees', Retrieved from: https://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/afghan-evacuees-different-statuses-different-benefits (accessed: 26/02/2022).

Halpern, P. (2008) 'Refugee Economic Self-Sufficiency: An Exploratory Study of Approaches Used in Office of Refugee Resettlement Programs', retrieved from: https://aspe.hhs.gov/reports/refugee-economic-self-sufficiency-exploratory-study-approaches-used-office-refugee-resettlement-0 (accessed: 03/06/2024).

Henderson, A. (August 23, 2023) 'The International Institute is touring the country to lure Afghans to St. Louis', Retrieved from: https://www.stlpr.org/economy-business/2023-08-23/the-international-institute-is-touring-the-country-to-lure-afghans-to-st-louis (accessed: 11/11/2023).

Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP). (2023) "How is poverty measured? – INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH ON POVERTY – UW–Madison', Retrieved from: https://www.irp.wisc.edu/resources/ how-is-poverty-measured (accessed: 11/11/2023).

Kingston, L.N. (2011). 'Legal Invisibility: Statelessness and Issue (Non) Emergence,' Order No. AAI3429058 dissertation.

Jacobson, D. and Mustafa, N. (2019) 'Social Identity Map: A Reflexivity Tool for Practicing Explicit Positionality in Critical Qualitative Research', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 18:160940691987007.

Judelsohn, A. (2023) 'Planning resettlement: Assessing governance gaps in the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program' (Order No. 30748387).

Lee, J., Weng, S., and Ivory, S. (n.d.) 'Changing how we measure success in resettlement', retrieved from: https://www.fmreview.org/lee-weng-ivory (accessed: 03/06/2024).

Lori, J. R. and Boyle, J. S. (2015) 'Forced migration: Health and human rights issues among refugee populations', *Nursing Outlook*, 63(1), 68-76.

Ndofor-Tah, C., Strang, A., Phillimore, J., Morrice, L., Michael, L., Wood, P, and Simmons, J. (2019), 'Home Office indicators of integration framework 2019', *Home Office Research Report 109*, London: Home Office.

O'Bryan, C.W. (2014) 'Gender, Mobility and Self: Afghan Women in Vancouver, British Columbia', Order No. 3644451 dissertation, University of Oregon, Ann Arbor.

OECD (2023) 'The social and solidarity economy as a partner along the refugee journey', *OECD Local Economic and Employment Development [LEED] Papers*, No. 2023/15.

Okegbile, E. O. (2014) 'South sudanese refugee women's healthcare access and use', Order No. 3668854.

Phillimore, J. and Goodson, L. (2008) 'Making a place in the global city – the relevance of indicators of integration', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 21, 305−25.

Pidgeon, N. and Henwood, K. (1997) 'Using grounded theory in psychological research', In *Hayes N. (Ed.), Doing qualitative analysis in psychology* (245−273), Hove, UK: Psychology Press.

Robles, J. (March 28, 2023). 'Afghans resettled in US fear being sent back as pathway to legal status stalls in Congress', retrieved from: https:// theguardian.com/world/2023/mar/28/ afghans-resettled-in-us-future-uncertain (accessed: 11/11/2023).

The Washington Post Editorial Board (February 7, 2022) 'Good News about Afghan Refugees', retrieved from: https://www.washingtonpost. com/opinions/2022/ 02/05/afghanistan-refugees-need-congress-help-permanent-residency (accessed: 26/03/2023).

Trudeau, D. C. (2006) 'American citizenship and state devolution: Nonprofit organizations and the dominance of liberal citizenship in the context of the shadow state.'

Trudeau, D. (2008) 'Towards a relational view of the shadow state', *Political Geography, 27*, 669-690.

U.S. Census Bureau (2020) '2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates', retrieved from: data.census.gov (accessed: 02/08/2023).

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2024) 'Social Determinants of Health', retrieved from: https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health (accessed: 03/06/2024).

U.S. Department of State (2023) 'Reception and Placement', retrieved from: https://www.state.gov/refugee-admissions/reception-and-placement/ (accessed: 11/11/2023).

Wolch, J. (1990) *The shadow state: Government and voluntary sector in transition*, New York: The Foundation Center.

Yosso, T.J. (2005) 'Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth', *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69-91.

Zubaroglu-Ioannides, P. (2019) 'U.S. resettlement policies and their impact on refugee wellbeing: Service providers' response in new york city' (Order No. 13886077).