

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE POLITICS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF U.S. REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT POLICY:  
A STREET-LEVEL ANALYSIS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SERVICE ADMINISTRATION  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY  
JESSICA HUTCHISON DARROW

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

MARCH 2015

UMI Number: 3687143

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI 3687143

Published by ProQuest LLC (2015). Copyright in the Dissertation held by the Author.

Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code



ProQuest LLC.  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

Copyright © Jessica H. Darrow

This dissertation is dedicated first to the staff and management at “MRA” and “RAISE” who are as devoted to social justice as any practitioners I have ever known. Thank you for trusting me to represent your challenges and your accomplishments, in all their complexity. Second, I dedicate this work to the hundreds of refugees who allowed me to witness their entry to this country.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>LIST OF ACCRONYMS</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>xiii</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL APPROACH</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>WHO ARE THE REFUGEES AND HOW ARE THEY FARING IN THE UNITED STATES?</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT POLICY: WHAT WE KNOW</b>	<b>10</b>
POLICY FORMATION AND ONGOING POLITICAL CHALLENGES	11
POLICY EVALUATION: SELECT EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES	12
POLICY EVALUATION: REFUGEE INTEGRATION	18
THE PROCESS OF RESETTLEMENT AND THE ROLE OF RESETTLEMENT ORGANIZATIONS	20
<b>A NEW DIRECTION IN REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT RESEARCH</b>	<b>23</b>
STREET-LEVEL ORGANIZATIONS	24
NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS, CONTRACTING, AND NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT	33
SLOs AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WORKFARE POLICY	36
<b>RESEARCHING THE POLITICS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>STUDY DESIGN</b>	<b>41</b>
(1) POLICY HISTORY AND INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE	41
(2) ORGANIZATIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY	43
<b>RESEARCH METHODS</b>	<b>44</b>
SITE SELECTION	44
<b>DESCRIPTION OF AGENCIES</b>	<b>47</b>
THE REFUGEE AGENCY FOR INTEGRATION, SELF-SUFFICIENCY, AND EQUALITY (RAISE)	48
THE MIDWEST REFUGEE AGENCY (MRA)	52
<b>DATA COLLECTION</b>	<b>57</b>
OBSERVATIONS	57
INTERVIEWS	58
DOCUMENT AND AGENCY POLICY REVIEW	59
FIELD NOTES AND AUDIO RECORDINGS	59
ANALYSIS	59
ESTABLISHING RIGOR	60
LIMITATIONS	61
<b>CHAPTER THREE: THE POLICY AND POLITICS OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>RECURRING THEMES OF POLITICAL CONTESTATION IN REFUGEE LEGISLATION AND THE EVOLVING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND RROs</b>	<b>62</b>

1948 – 1960: EXPANDING THE SCOPE OF SERVICES AND A FLEDGLING FEDERAL-RRO RELATIONSHIP	62
1960 – 1980: SOLIDIFYING AN INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIP AND DISPARATE RESPONSES TO SELECT GROUPS	64
1980 – EQUITABLY PROMOTING SELF-SUFFICIENCY AMONG A DESERVING POPULATION	70
<b>CURRENT REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS:</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>DELEGATING DISCRETION TO THE STREET-LEVEL</b>	<b>73</b>
DEPARTMENT OF STATE RECEPTION AND PLACEMENT PROGRAM	74
ORR’S CASH AND MEDICAL ASSISTANCE	78
REFUGEE SOCIAL SERVICES PROGRAM	81
VOLUNTARY AGENCY MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM	83
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: THE STRUCTURE OF RESETTLEMENT</b>	<b>87</b>
<hr/>	
<b>INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT INSTITUTIONS</b>	<b>87</b>
UNHCR: FINDING HOMES FOR THE WORLD’S REFUGEES	87
BPRM AND USCIS: THE GATEKEEPERS TO THE UNITED STATES	89
<b>THE UNITED STATES REFUGEE ADMISSIONS PROGRAM</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>REFUGEE ALLOCATIONS FOR RESETTLEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES</b>	<b>91</b>
THE PIPELINE PART I: THE ALLOCATIONS MEETING	94
THE PIPELINE PART II: UNCERTAINTY AT THE STREET-LEVEL	101
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: RESETTLEMENT IN PRACTICE - HOUSING REFUGEES</b>	<b>105</b>
<hr/>	
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT</b>	<b>106</b>
RAISE HOUSING PROGRAM	107
MRA HOUSING PROGRAM	109
<b>THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE RECEPTION AND PLACEMENT PROGRAM</b>	<b>110</b>
RECEPTION & PLACEMENT HOUSING MANDATES	110
DEPARTMENT OF STATE PERFORMANCE STANDARDS	112
<b>STREET LEVEL ANALYSIS</b>	<b>113</b>
ADAPTATIONS TO FLUCTUATING REFUGEE ARRIVAL NUMBERS	113
RESETTLEMENT WORKERS AS RESOURCE BROKERS	119
<b>DISCUSSION</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>CHAPTER SIX: RESETTLEMENT IN PRACTICE - GETTING REFUGEES TO WORK</b>	<b>133</b>
<hr/>	
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>FEDERAL AND STATE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM CONTRACTS AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES</b>	<b>134</b>
EARLY EMPLOYMENT SERVICES	134
VOLUNTARY AGENCY MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM	136
<b>ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT</b>	<b>139</b>
THE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM AT MRA	139
THE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM AT RAISE	141
<b>STREET-LEVEL ANALYSIS</b>	<b>142</b>
CONVEYING PERFORMANCE MEASURE PRESSURES THROUGH FORMAL AND INFORMAL MECHANISMS	142
ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES GIVEN DIFFERENT LEVELS OF CLIENT DEMAND	147
ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES GIVEN HIGH DEMAND AND LIMITED RESOURCES	160
<b>DISCUSSION</b>	<b>168</b>

<b>CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION</b>	<b>171</b>
<b>THE POLITICS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF US REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT POLICY</b>	<b>171</b>
<b>LIMITATIONS OF STREET-LEVEL THEORY AND ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS</b>	<b>175</b>
<b>IMPLICATIONS</b>	<b>182</b>
<b>LOOKING FORWARD</b>	<b>183</b>
ONGOING ANALYSIS OF HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT IMPLEMENTATION DATA	183
FUTURE ANALYSES OF UNUSED DATA	185
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>190</b>
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE – KEY INFORMANTS AT DEPARTMENT OF STATE	191
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE – KEY INFORMANTS AT THE OFFICE OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT	192
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE – CONGRESSIONAL STAFF	193
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDE – KEY INFORMANTS AT NATIONAL REFUGEE AGENCIES	194
APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW GUIDE – LOCAL AGENCIES	195
APPENDIX F: CODE BOOK	196
APPENDIX G: ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES PERFORMANCE STANDARDS	197
APPENDIX H: JOB PLACEMENT DATA	198
APPENDIX I: EMPLOYMENT COUNSELING DATA	199
APPENDIX J: JOB RELATED DATA	200
<b>WORKS CITED</b>	<b>201</b>

## LIST OF ACCRONYMS

AFDC	Aid to Families with Dependent Children
BPRM	Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration
CCSJ	Chicago Coalition for Social Justice
CRP	Cuban Refugee Program
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services
DOS	Department of State
ED	Executive Director
EES	Early Employment Services
HEW	Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
HOTR	Home On The Range
HSO	Human Service Organization
IDHS	Illinois Department of Health and Human Services
IICI	Illinois Industrial Cleaners Incorporated
IRAP	Indochinese Refugee Assistance Program
MG	Matching Grant Program
MRA	Midwest Refugee Agency
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPM	New Public Management
NPO	Non-Profit Organization
NRA	National Resettlement Agency
ORR	Office of Refugee Resettlement
R&P	Reception and Placement
RAISE	Refugee Agency for Integration Self-Sufficiency and Equality
RCA	Refugee Cash Assistance
RMA	Refugee Medical Assistance
RRO	Refugee Resettlement Organization
RSS	Refugee Social Services
SLO	Street-Level Organization
SNOW	Support Network of the Refugee Workforce
SRC	State Refugee Coordinator
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
US	United States
USCIS	United States Citizenship and Immigration Service



## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Annual Refugee and Legal Permanent Resident Arrivals (1998 - 2013)	8
Table 2: Utilization Rates of Federal Assistance Programs by Refugee Households (2000 – 2011)	14
Table 3: Interviews Conducted to Inform the History of Refugee Resettlement Policy	42
Table 4: Select Organizational Characteristics for Sample Selection	45
Table 5: RAISE Refugee Arrival Caseload, by Month and Year (2009 – 2012)	52
Table 6: MRA Refugee Arrival Caseload, by Month and Year (2009 – 2012)	56
Table 7: Comparison of Key Organizational Characteristics, RAISE and MRA	56
Table 8: Select R&P Program Mandated Services	75
Table 9: ORR Annual Appropriations, Grant Awards by Type (2007 – 2012)	85
Table 10: ORR Grants to Illinois for RCA/RMA and Social Services (2007 – 2012)	86
Table 11: National Refugee Agencies and Affiliated RROs (2010–2012)	92
Table 12: Annual Capacity Statement Figures and Actual Arrivals (Individuals)	103

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: RAISE Organizational Chart	51
Figure 2: MRA Organizational Chart	55
Figure 3: Refugee Arrivals to the United States (1998 – 2013)	91
Figure 4: The Institutional Flow of Refugee Clients	92
Figure 5: ORR Refugee Social Service Grant Contract Structure in Illinois	135
Figure 6: ORR Matching Grant Contract Structure in Illinois	138
Figure 7: A Simplified Model of Street-Level Theory	176
Figure 8: A Simplified Model of Refugee Resettlement Policy Implementation	177

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply grateful for the guidance and support that I received from Gina Samuels, who has been much more than the dissertation chair who ushered this project to the end. Gina, you have challenged me to think beyond the paradigm of my theoretical foundations, to always search for the anomaly and to reach for new depth in my work. I will strive to replicate your brand of smart and compassionate mentorship in my own career in the academy.

I would also like to thank the rest of my dissertation committee, Scott Allard and Jennifer Mosley. Scott, I am profoundly indebted to you for throwing me a lifeline when I most needed one. For this, and for the curiosity and generosity you bring to your work with your doctoral students, I thank you. I look forward to doing interesting and exciting work with you as we find ways to bring our areas of study together. Jennifer, thank you for agreeing to take this project on and for your important contributions. I would also like to thank Virginia Parks and Alida Bouris for your input as reactors to this dissertation. It is a rare opportunity to have such thoughtful and thorough engagement with one's work.

There are many other faculty members at SSA who have contributed to my work and to making my tenure as a doctoral student a wonderful experience. Harold Pollack, with your wry humor and humbly presented brilliant insights you have given me a grounding that I am not sure I earned. Karen Teigiser, with empathy, consistency, and intentionality, you taught me what it means to be a social worker. I will be a good teacher for having been your student first. Bill Borden, you have remained one of my most faithful allies. I thank you for your many kindnesses, it is you who are the treasure. Bill Sites, you supported this dissertation project from its earliest inception.

Evelyn Brodtkin is the person who first encouraged me to begin this journey as a doctor of philosophy. Evelyn you saw something in me that I did not yet know was there. You taught me how to ask important questions and leant me your own lens for finding the answers. As I develop my own approach to answering the questions that keep me up at night, I will forever be grateful to you for providing me with the foundation for my inquiry.

Thank you Susan Gzesh and the University of Chicago Pozen Family Center for Human Rights for giving me the support to go to Rwanda in the first place, and for getting behind this project in so many ways.

Some of the most important people to my work, and to my soul, are the members of my SSA cohort. Matt Spitzmueller, Eevie Smith, Christina Andrews, and Desmond Patton, you are treasured friends and I thank you for your comradeship, your humor, and your wisdom. Matt, we have quite a bond born from our shared orientation, without you this would have been a lonely road. The Complicators: some of the smartest, funniest, kindest, and most interesting folks I know: Hasan Reza and Florian Sichling thank you for pushing me and my work with much laughter and rigor; Andy Brake, at some of my lowest moments you reminded me of what matters most, and what not to take too seriously; And Ben Roth, one of the greatest gifts I have gotten from this doctoral program is your friendship. Your commitment to your family, your friends, and your work is profound, and I thank you for including me in that mix.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Deo and Phisto and all the refugees who I worked with in Rwanda. You will probably never see this manuscript, and yet it exists because of you. My wish is for each of you to find a place you can call home, to be welcomed there, and to have the life you dream is possible.

I could not have been so devoted to this project if not for my family and friends. Thank you Mom and Dad, for your love and steadfast support. Alex, James, Rae, Monica, Alli, Katie, Matt and Char, Sara, and Barb thank you for believing that what I have been doing all this time must really matter. Kevin Hand, I would never have considered this journey if not for you. And Mimi, I can't thank you enough for facilitating my first trip to the refugee camps, which changed my view of the world. Magda, you have given my kids so much love and care. Every hour I spent on this project was possible because you were there.

Most of all, I want to thank my kids and husband for their patience and love. To Stella and Cassius: from collecting pinecones at Site 16, to dance parties in our kitchen, you reflect the beauty in our world. You are my light and joy. I love you to no end. And to Mike, who never doubts me for a moment but loves me whether or not I reach my goals, I could not do any of what I do without you.

## ABSTRACT

Refugees arriving in the United States are assisted by local refugee resettlement organizations, which are contracted to implement federal resettlement policy. While scholarly research has investigated the formation of refugee resettlement policies, analyzed select outcomes of these policies, and to some extent examined the role that resettlement organizations might play in the resettlement process, little is known about what local refugee resettlement agencies actually do; refugee resettlement research lacks a street-level understanding of the work being done at the service-delivery level. This dissertation investigates how refugee resettlement policy works in street-level practice. The street-level perspective offers a systematic way to understand what happens in refugee resettlement agencies, what they do, and how resettlement policy is delivered. By extending street-level theory to a new empirical case, this dissertation shows what shapes resettlement policy on the ground and what the consequences are for policy as produced. This study also looks beyond the explanations of street-level theory, and raises questions about what other factors might help explain the practice choices that resettlement caseworkers make.

This study weaves together three analytic threads. The first, a historiographic analysis of federal refugee resettlement policy, explains that debates around responsiveness versus equity, the appropriate scope and duration of benefits, and the extent to which work should be required of resettled refugees, are revisited throughout the history of US refugee policy formation. The Refugee Act of 1980 was intended to resolve these debates, and standardize refugee policy for all eligible groups. The second, an analysis of the institutional structure of resettlement, explains that the institutional system in which refugee resettlement policy is implemented is inherently unstable. There are often dramatic fluctuations in the numbers of refugees that arrive; the federal

and state contract structures tie funding to the number of refugee arrivals; and the financial instability that results most heavily impacts local implementing organizations. The third step in this analysis provides an explanation for how workers in two local implementing resettlement organizations in Chicago negotiate service delivery within this political and institutional structure. This organizational ethnography was conducted over an 18-month period and included over 600 hours of observation and interviews with 75 study participants.

This dissertation tells a story of a refugee resettlement policy still in flux. In spite of the intentions of The Refugee Act to standardize, the workers in this study continued to reformulate policy with their everyday practice choices. This study finds that: 1) the complex refugee admissions, allocations, and funding structures drive inconsistency and unreliability down the organizational chain, so that the consequences are felt at the point of service delivery; 2) local resettlement organizations cope with the inconsistent and unreliable flow of clients and associated funds in different ways that, in turn, differentially impact the services provided to refugee clients; 3) refugee resettlement organizations and their caseworkers are influenced by the performance measures associated with their grant contracts, and 4) refugee resettlement policy implementation differs across agencies, depending on the levels of resources at the workers' disposal, worker identity and the culture of the agencies, and the extent to which workers engaged in capacity building behaviors such as establishing and maintaining good relationships with partner organizations and companies.

## INTRODUCTION

*“Refugees are joining the ranks of the poor people in the United States; their ally and their friend is the resettlement agency. Eventually everyone thrives. We do not have homeless refugees. It takes time, they have to be willing to work with the system and make it work for themselves.”*

– RAISE Refugee Resettlement Program Director

Ali waits at O’Hare’s international terminal for the flight to arrive. The plane he is waiting on carries a refugee family from Iraq, the Abdel-Hakims. Ali is the refugee resettlement caseworker who has been assigned to help the Abdel-Hakim family as they acclimate to their new life in Chicago. Ali speaks Arabic, and when the family walks out of the customs gate, he calls out to them, “Asalam wa alikum!” The family clusters around Ali, the father shakes the caseworker’s hand, and Ali touches each of the three children on their heads before bowing his own head slightly to the mother. They walk together to the baggage claim area, where Ali and Mr. Abdel-Hakim speak in hushed tones while they wait for the bags to arrive. Ali pays for a pushcart, and loads the six suitcases, talking the entire time. Together the family moves through the airport and out to the agency van.

The next morning Ali goes to the apartment building where the Abdel-Hakims are staying. Ali secured the lease for this two-bedroom unit a week earlier. He had the apartment furnished with new beds and slightly used furniture that had been donated by a local church group. On his way up the two flights to the Abdel-Hakim’s door Ali passes several other refugee clients who he has placed in this building. He greets an elderly woman from Sudan, and stops to talk briefly with a man from Eritrea. “How did the interview go?” Ali asks the man. “I go for drug test next week, I think it was good,” the man answers. They speak a moment longer, and then Ali continues up the stairs to the Abdel-Hakim’s apartment.

Ali knocks, and Mr. Abdel-Hakim opens the door. Ali goes inside, drinks some tea with the family, and then they all ride back to the refugee resettlement organization together for the Abdel-Hakim’s intake interview. This meeting takes two hours, and although it is conducted in Arabic, Mr. Abdel-Hakim has many questions about what Ali is saying. He asks Ali to explain what “welfare” means, and to assure his family that they will find work. He tells Ali that he was a civil engineer in Iraq and hopes to be recertified in the US. By the end of the meeting the family appears physically weary. They are taken back home on the public bus, escorted by an intern who does not speak Arabic. The ride is quiet. Mr. Abdel-Hakim is armed with a list of appointments that will keep his family busy for the next several days until they begin English class and their children are enrolled in the local public school. Life in American has begun.

(Excerpts from field notes)



Refugees arriving in the United States are assisted by local refugee resettlement organizations (RROs). A caseworker, or team of workers, from the RRO provides them with services, helps them find work, refers them to other relevant social service agencies, and helps them to navigate the public aid system. The way that refugee resettlement workers do their jobs can be impacted by many factors. First, their refugee clients each have a specific set of needs. They need places to live, employment, and when there are children they need to be enrolled in a school. Beyond these pragmatic concerns, refugee clients often express to their caseworkers their hopes and desires for a new life. Second, refugee resettlement caseworkers are tasked with fulfilling the service mandates of the RRO's federal and state contracts, which in turn reflect the priorities of federal resettlement policy, and much of refugee resettlement policy is written in vague language. Third, resettlement workers perform their jobs within organizational settings. Finally, as the vignette above exemplifies, the work of refugee resettlement caseworkers often happens outside the view of supervisors. Therefore workers often have to make choices about how to do their jobs without the benefit of consultation or on-the-spot direction. For all these reasons, it is not always clear what resettlement services will look like.

Due to all these factors, caseworkers might make conflicting practice choices. For example, on one hand Ali was faced with Mr. Abdel-Hakim's expressed desire to be re-certified as a civil engineer, a time-consuming and expensive endeavor. On the other hand, Ali must contend with limited resources with which to help his clients, and performance measures that stress rapid employment for refugees. Conflicting pressures such as these can impact the way that resettlement workers do their jobs.

Research from other domains of social policy explains how this puts implementing

organizations in a position to interpret, and often define, the terms of service provision. Further, the contracts associated with resettlement policy are embedded with a set of performance standards and measures. Research that looks at how contracting and performance measures impact social service delivery show that the very presence of such measures can impact the choices that workers make as they interact with their clients.

This dissertation hypothesizes that refugee resettlement organizations, like other human service organizations, each have a unique combination of resources and constraints which have an impact on how services are delivered. Street-level research has shown that workers respond to the unique set of resources, constraints, and demands under which they work by using their discretion to make practice choices that help them adapt and cope within the context of their agency. Exactly how each RRO is unique, and what impact this has on worker practice is an open question.

Research tells us relatively little about how refugee resettlement works in practice. Many resettlement studies look at refugee outcomes, but cannot provide much insight into how these outcomes occur. In short, they relegate the organizational practices that mediate between policy and outcomes to the proverbial “black box.” Like other kinds of policy evaluation studies, they assume the content of programmatic activities, although a large body of research on organizational and implementation processes makes clear that such assumptions are problematic.

This dissertation investigates how refugee resettlement policy works in street-level practice. The street-level perspective offers a systematic way to understand what happens in refugee resettlement agencies, what they do, and how resettlement policy is delivered. It asks not just what the formal policies are and how they have evolved over time, but what contributes to how the policy is implemented. By extending street-level theory to a new empirical case, this

dissertation shows what shapes resettlement policy on the ground and what the consequences are for policy as produced. This study also looks beyond the explanations of street-level theory, and raises questions about what other factors might help explain the practice choices that resettlement caseworkers make.

Together, the chapters of this dissertation draw a comprehensive picture of refugee resettlement policy in the United States. Chapter 1 provides a review of the literature relevant to this study. First, the chapter provides a snapshot of the US refugee population and benefits data from the last fifteen years, and an overview of what we know about refugee resettlement policy and implementing organizations from prior research. Second, Chapter 1 explains the conceptual approach this study adopts as it addresses the key questions of the study. These questions are: 1) what are the relevant conditions under which refugee resettlement workers use their discretion and what patterns of practice emerge? 2) In what ways do resettlement workers affect the terms under which refugees access resources and services?

Chapter 2 explains the methodological approach of this study and describes the study sites in detail. This dissertation study includes a close and highly textured analysis of two non-profit refugee resettlement organizations operating comprehensive service programs in Chicago. The original data collected for this study consists of over 600 hours of observation conducted over an eighteen-month period, in-depth interviews with more than 75 study participants including key informants, managers and practitioners, and extensive archival research.

Chapters 3 and 4 describe the two pillars of refugee resettlement, the formal legislation and the institutional structure. Chapter 3 explains that prior to the formation of the Refugee Act of 1980 (the Act) there were disparate refugee programs for different refugee groups. This chapter traces three recurring themes of political contestation through each of these disparate

programs. Specifically, this chapter finds that debates around responsiveness versus equity, the appropriate scope and duration of benefits, and the extent to which work should be required of resettled refugees are revisited throughout the history of US refugee policy formation. Further, this chapter suggests that although the establishment of the Act resolves some of these debates for the time being, it also leaves much room for local organizations to use their discretion in the policy implementation process. Finally, Chapter 3 charts the establishment and formalization of the institutional relationship between the federal, state and local governments, and RROs.

Chapter 4 explains how the US resettlement system works on an institutional level, and describes the allocation process, by which resettled refugees are distributed to the network of over 350 local resettlement organizations across the United States. This chapter suggests that the unstable and unreliable structure of the allocations process has important implications for the ways in which local RROs do their work. With little control over refugee allocations, RROs must adapt to surges and droughts in the numbers of clients and associated service funds they receive.

Chapters 5 and 6 present findings from an organizational ethnography of two local resettlement organizations, with a specific focus on the processes of housing refugees and finding them employment. Chapter 7 explains the political and sociological implications that result from the policy implementation process, and frames analyses of data collected for this study but not used in this dissertation.

This dissertation has four key findings. First, the complex refugee admissions, allocations, and funding structures drive inconsistency and unreliability down the organizational chain, so that the consequences are felt at the point of service delivery. Second, local RROs cope with the inconsistent and unreliable flow of clients and associated funds in different ways that, in turn, differentially impact the services provided to refugee clients. Third, RROs and their

caseworkers are influenced by the performance measures associated with their grant contracts. Specifically, employment caseworkers' drive to "meet the numbers" often impacted the way they performed their employment related tasks. Fourth, this study finds that refugee resettlement policy implementation differs across agencies, depending on 1) the levels of resources at the workers' disposal, 2) worker identity and the culture of the agency within which they work, and 3) the extent to which workers engaged in capacity building behaviors such as establishing and maintaining good relationships with partner organizations and companies. These findings suggest that resettled refugees are being placed into an unstable system, and that refugees are subject to varying quality of services depending on which agency they are resettled by. In other words, the standardization of policy intended by the Refugee Act is undermined by the differential ways refugee resettlement workers respond to their organizational contexts. My findings also call into question whether the outcomes of refugee resettlement policy can be assessed without understanding the quality of the services provided by RROs – an assumption implicit in much of the research on refugee resettlement.

By exploring the case of refugee resettlement, this dissertation contributes to the theoretical literature on street-level organizations generally, and to the empirical literature on social policy and refugee policy, specifically. By demonstrating where street-level organizations theory falls short in explaining the data collected for this study, this dissertation offers the potential for further analysis that employs alternative theoretical perspectives.

## CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

### **Who Are the Refugees and How Are They Faring in the United States?**

Refugees come to the United States in pursuit of safety, peace, and a new beginning. Forced to leave their homes during wartime or other violent conflicts, many of the displaced survive traumatic experiences en route to temporary refugee camps outside their home country. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) protects refugees in these camps while negotiating a permanent residential solution, such as repatriation to the home-country, settlement in the host country, or resettlement to a third country (UNHCR, 2011a). In 2012 there were over 45.2 million people forcibly displaced from their homes around the world, the highest number since 1994. Over 15 million registered refugees were among those displaced, and of these just 89,000 were admitted to third countries for permanent resettlement. UNHCR makes an annual recommendation to the world's resettlement countries about how many and which refugees should be resettled.

The US is by far the largest resettlement country (UNHCR, 2011b). (Table 1 shows the number of refugees and legal permanent residents admitted to the US between 1998 and 2013.)

Table 1: Annual Refugee and Legal Permanent Resident Arrivals (1998 - 2013)

Fiscal Year	Refugees	Legal Permanent Residents
1998	77,340	653,206
1999	86,284	644,787
2000	74,091	841,002
2001	69,813	1,058,902
2002	27,789	1,059,356
2003	29,345	703,542
2004	53,197	957,883
2005	53,957	1,122,257
2006	41,334	1,266,129
2007	48,281	1,052,415
2008	60,192	1,107,126
2009	74,654	1,130,818
2010	73,311	1,042,625
2011	56,424	1,062,040
2012	58,238	1,031,631
2013	69,926	--

(FY 2012 Refugee Admissions Report, 2012; Nwosu, Batalova, & Auclair, 2014)

This table shows that refugee admissions vary greatly year to year;<sup>1</sup> some explanations for this instability and the process for refugee admissions are provided in detail in Chapter 4.

The United States makes a legal distinction between refugees, people seeking asylum, and other immigrants. The United States defines a refugee as:

Any person who is outside any country of such person's nationality or, in the case of a person having no nationality, is outside any country in which such person last habitually resided, and who is unable or unwilling to return to, and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of, that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion (*Annual Report to Congress*, 2010).

US law distinguishes between refugees and asylees based on where each category of migrant requests protection (Charlton, Farley, & Kaye, 1988). A refugee leaves their country of nationality and seeks protection in a transit country, the refugee's arrival to the United States occurs after their request for protection has been granted. An asylee requests protection after they have arrived in the United States. Both refugees and asylees are eligible for an array of federal

<sup>1</sup> Note that the number of legal permanent residents is only shown to provide perspective on the size of the refugee program.

benefits that other immigrants cannot access. In this way, refugees and asylees can be seen as a special category of immigrant. For the purpose of this dissertation, refugees and asylees are considered one group, and are referred to as refugees.

US refugee resettlement policy applies to people from a “bewildering variety of origins” with varying levels of human capital<sup>2</sup> (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006, p. 13) and it is this diverse and ever-changing client population that refugee resettlement organizations serve. The majority of refugees who entered the US over the past ten years originate from eleven different countries, with varying amounts of English language skill (*Annual Report to Congress*, 2012). Refugees in the US show a wide distribution in levels of education (ORR, 2010; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006), have an increased risk for physical health challenges (Khaw, Burkholder, Salama, & Dondero, 2000; Weinstein, Sarnoff, Gladstone, & Lipson, 2000), and for a host of short- and long-run mental health problems (deJong, Scholte, Koeter, & Hart, 2000; Jablensky, Marsella, Ekblad, Levi, & Jansson, 1992; Kroll et al., 1989; Stevan M. Weine et al., 1995)<sup>3</sup>.

The data collected and reported by the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) are incomplete but suggest variation in the economic status of resettled refugees.<sup>4</sup> Descriptive data show that this population is, on average, poor enough to need assistance (*Annual Report to Congress*, 2006; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). The ORR 2011

---

<sup>2</sup> Human capital refers to the skills and capabilities that immigrants and refugees bring with them (J. S. Coleman, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> Although the cultural relevance of Western-style diagnoses such as PTSD has been debated among refugee researchers (Bracken, 1997), evidence suggests an association between refugee status and depressive disorders, suicidal ideation, aggression and violent behavior, drug and alcohol abuse, paranoia, and hysteria (Jablensky et al., 1992).

<sup>4</sup> In order to clarify actual income levels for refugees it would be helpful to have data on individual and household annual income. Interestingly, neither the DHHS nor the Census Bureau reports data on refugee poverty rates or annual income levels. It would also be helpful to see data on the types of jobs refugees hold (e.g.: regular or “flexible” schedule).



*Annual Report to Congress*<sup>5</sup> (*Annual Report to Congress*, 2011) indicates that refugees were making, on average, \$9.43 per hour and working 40 weeks per year. When compared to the \$609 median weekly earnings rate of full time foreign-born workers, it appears that refugees are not doing as well as their non-refugee immigrant peers ("Labor Force Characteristics of Foreign-born Workers News Release," 2012). The ORR *Annual Report* also indicates that not all refugees were working the same number of weeks per year: the longer a refugee lives in the United States, the more hours they work. For example, refugees who arrived in 2006-07 were working an average of 46 weeks per year by 2011, whereas refugees who arrived in 2011 worked an average of 16 weeks per year. Additionally, of the refugees who were working at the time of the survey (that is 41 percent of the sample population), 6 percent found employment within one month of arrival, 24 percent within ninety days of arrival, 26 percent within six months of arrival, and 22 percent after a year in the country. The unemployment rate for refugees was 18 percent in 2011, whereas the general population unemployment rate hovered at 8 percent in that same year, and the rate for all foreign born was 9.1 percent (*Annual Report to Congress*, 2011; "Labor Force Characteristics of Foreign-born Workers News Release," 2012).

### **Refugee Resettlement Policy: What We Know**

Formal refugee policy was solidified in 1980 with The Refugee Act, which established legislative guidelines for refugee policy.<sup>6</sup> The main focus of the Act is rapid employment for refugees. To support the achievement of this goal, the Act provides for refugees to receive many services including employment assistance, case management, and classes in English as a Second Language ("The Refugee Act," 1980) and makes the various US public assistance programs

---

<sup>5</sup> A survey of 1,534 refugee households provided data about employment rates, average hourly wage rates, average number of hours worked, and public assistance utilization rates.

<sup>6</sup> The policy substance and political context of the Refugee Act of 1980 are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

available to refugees with the same means-tested eligibility as the general public. In addition, resettlement policy provides for several targeted assistance programs for refugees not eligible for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Medicaid programs. With the potential for public aid uptake, the presence of a refugee community in any given state can have an impact on state budgets.

### Policy Formation and Ongoing Political Challenges

After The Refugee Act was passed, the field of refugee research has focused on the formation of the policy,<sup>7</sup> on evaluation of the policy insofar as it relates to select outcomes such as welfare utilization, employment, and integration; and to some extent, on the role of resettlement organizations in the resettlement process.

A number of rich historical works examine the strategic political use of resettlement policies, and the relationship between resettlement, domestic issues, and US foreign policy (Anker & Posner, 1981; Bon Tempo, 2008; Holman, 1996; N. L. Zucker, 1983; N. L. Zucker & Zucker, 1991). That research highlights the fragility of the US refugee resettlement system. Due to the intensely fraught political context in which some politicians pushed to expand resettlement for foreign policy and humanitarian reasons, while others sought to restrict it due to concerns about federal overspending and the potential erosion of purely “American” values, the fact and extent of refugee resettlement has always been uncertain.

Several resettlement policy studies have identified ongoing political challenges for proponents of refugee resettlement and practical challenges posed by the legislation itself for implementing RROs. With a cautionary tone, Arnold Leibowitz (1983) warns that the way the

---

<sup>7</sup> This dissertation examines post-entry resettlement policy exclusively and does not provide a review of literature that examines policies relating to the selection, screening, and entry of refugees into the United States. For select work regarding US refugee admissions policy see (Barnett, 2006; Berman, 2012; Charlton et al., 1988; Gibney, Dalton, & Vockell, 1992; Kerwin, 2012; N. F. Zucker & Zucker, 1994).

Act is written requires supporters of refugee resettlement policy to continually advocate for yearly admissions because refugee entry will always be a political debate. Leibowitz notes that the Act's granting to the President determination of annual admissions ceilings based on the advisement of Congress (this issue is explored more fully in Chapter 3) makes it inherently a political process. Leibowitz also identifies the unstable relationship between the federal and local governments and the implementing RROs as an ongoing issue.

Similarly, in his review of US resettlement policy and the difficulties that result from the policy's dependence on non-profit organizations, Norman Zucker (1983) finds that implementing RROs are challenged by the fact that legislation was written in vague language, and by the constant shifting of federal regulations. Specifically, Zucker refers to the unresolved debates about the content and duration of benefits embedded in the language of the Act. Elsewhere, Zucker (N. L. Zucker & Zucker, 1987) has identified unreliable federal funding associated with resettlement policy as an obstacle for implementing RROs.

These articles present refugee resettlement legislation as contested, unstable, and unreliable. Indeed, as with other social policies, refugee resettlement policy is written in language that is vague and which delegates interpretation to the implementing organizations. The administrative and managerial organizational challenges highlighted by these scholars are further complicated by the structure of refugee resettlement implementation, involving federal, state, and local actors.

#### Policy Evaluation: Select Employment Outcomes

Because, again, the main priority of the Refugee Act is providing for the refugees' effective transition from "dependence" to economic self-sufficiency, ORR collects data including rates of welfare use and labor market participation in an effort to measure the

economic success of refugees. There is a body of evaluation research examining each of these outcomes

### *Welfare Utilization*

Congress has repeatedly expressed concern over the escalating costs of refugee welfare use ("Possible Shifting of Refugee Resettlement to Private Organizations," 1996). There is some research, however, that indicates that federal welfare expenditures can have a positive effect on the long-term employment outcomes of refugees (Bach, 1988) and on a refugee community's ability to form community organizations (Hein, 1997). One study, looking specifically at Southeast Asian refugees' use of welfare, found that access to welfare among refugee families with at least one wage earner helped to mediate problems with the labor market, such as underemployment, and resulted in a total family income just over the poverty line (Bach, 1988). Although such findings suggest there may be associated benefits to the refugee population resulting from welfare utilization, ORR's *Annual Reports* indicate that each year there are significant numbers of refugees who do not take advantage of their public aid options. (Table 2 shows the variation in refugees' public assistance use across programs between 2000 and 2011.)

Table 2:  
Utilization Rates of Federal Assistance Programs by Refugee Households (2000 – 2011)

Year	All Cash Assistance (TANF, RCA, SSI, GA)	Food Stamps/ SNAP	Housing	Medicaid / RMA*
2011	37.8 (17.8 / 12 / 14.8 / 1.3)	61	24.2	48.4
2010	26.4 (7.1 / 8.5 / 11.6 / 2.4)	62.6	12	48.6
2009	38.3 (8.4 / 13.5 / 12.7 / 7.4)	70.2	31.6	57.7
2008	28.8 (7.5 / 8.7 / 13.7 / 2.2)	50.4	24.4	44.2
2007	31.9 (4.8 / 13.7 / 15.3 / 2)	49.3	25	51.5
2006	33.7 (5 / 13.3 / 14.8 / 4.6)	54.9	20.5	44
2005	26.8 (4.6 / 6.9 / 14.1 / 3.5)	52.7	11.4	39.3
2004	25.6 (9.5 / 3.4 / 13.5 / 2.3)	40.6	12.3	31.3
2003	28.9 (6.6 / 6.2 / 14.3 / 7.8)	46.4	14.9	36.3
2002	27.4 (5 / 2.4 / 15.7 / 7.2)	33.5	11.7	34.6
2001	35.9 (11.5 / 3.1 / 17.9 / 8.6)	35.8	10.2	33
2000	32.7 (7.3 / 4.3 / 18.2 / 7.1)	28.5	12.1	25.5

(Annual Report to Congress 2002, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011)

\* Health benefit utilization rates refer to adult individuals 16 and above, all other utilization rates refer to refugee households. Households may use more than one type of assistance.

These data show that the use of cash assistance programs such as TANF fluctuated by as much as 13 percent in these years. There was a steady upward trend among refugees in the use of Food Stamps and other forms of public assistance between 2000 and 2009. Food Stamp utilization rose by 42 percent and public health benefit utilization rose by over 32 percent during this time.

This trend in refugee benefit utilization mirrors the trend among the general public for whom participation in the Food Stamp / Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program rose from 16.8 million in 2000 to 38.9 million in 2009 (*2009 SNAP Data*, 2009). Enrollment data for adults in the Medicaid program shows growth from 10.6 in 2000 to 17.6 million in 2010 (*2013 CMS Statistics*, 2013).

While all refugees are categorically eligible to receive Food Stamps (SSA, 2008), studies have shown that “many noncitizens are not seeking assistance for which they remain eligible” (Zimmerman & Tumlin, 1999, p. 14). Table 2 shows that 50 percent of the refugees who qualified for Food Stamps in 2008 did not use them.

Studies of Food Stamp use in the general population have identified several factors that may affect take-up rates, including diversion tactics of welfare workers (Currie, Grogger, Burtless, & Schoeni, 2001). Other research attributes underutilization to factors including administrative exclusion, stigma, and lack of information (Brodkin & Majmundar, 2010; Hasenfeld, Rafferty, & Zald, 1987; Lens, 2005; Prottas, 1981; Wyers, 1976). For newly arriving refugees, welfare uptake should not be assumed. A 1982 National Opinion Research Center study (North, Lewin, & Wagner, 1982) suggested that the local resettlement agency played a role in coordinating benefit receipt for their refugee clients. In order to understand more about welfare utilization among the refugee population the refugee resettlement policy research literature needs to include an examination of the processes by which resettlement workers play the role of resource brokers for their refugee clients.

#### *Labor Market Participation*

A review of studies on the effects of resettlement policy as it relates to moving refugees into the labor market – a key outcome given the policy foci of “economic self-sufficiency” and getting refugees to work – reveals mixed findings. Some studies have found that factors external to the refugee are essential for finding employment (Haines, 1996; Lamba, 2003; Portes & Stepick, August, 1985; Stein, 1979) and earning higher wages (Allen, 2009; Mamgain & Collins, 2003). These factors include the presence of a mismatch between cultures in the community of origin and in the host community, the role of a pre-existing ethnic community for incoming refugees, and the overall state of the US economy at the time of settlement. Other studies have found, however, that levels of human capital are of critical importance for employment and higher earnings levels (Connor, 2010; Potocky-Tripodi, 2003, 2004; Vinokurov, Birman & Trickett, 2000). The individual-level variables found to be most closely associated with higher

levels of income for refugees are gender (being male was associated with higher earnings), English language acquisition, and high levels of education.

The evaluation literature that takes into consideration the role of resettlement agencies in the employment process does not provide a consistent story about these agencies. Some resettlement evaluation studies have looked at the role of resettlement agencies in the employment process, but found that it is unclear whether this assistance makes any difference (Caplan, Whitmore, & Choy, 1989; Gold, 1992; North et al., 1982), or is in the best interest of the refugee (Stein, 1979). For instance, a study (Stein, 1979) of Vietnamese refugees who arrived in the mid-70s, found that this cohort had poor workforce participation rates, and that resettlement workers pushed their Vietnamese clients to take any job, regardless of pay or skills required. Due to the difficulty in switching careers or upgrading jobs, those who did find work experienced sustained downward job mobility even after three years in the labor market.

In another relevant study, Mamgain and Collins (2003), looked at the employment experiences of refugees from various nations who settled in a small community in Maine, and found that the resettlement programs did not address some major obstacles to finding employment. For example, refugees who were successful in gaining job interviews were nonetheless often flummoxed by the questions they were asked in these interviews. Typical job interview questions such as, “how would you describe yourself?” solicited the common but unhelpful response, “I am a good son” (2003, p.131). Those successful in finding work struggled with timeliness and an inhospitable environment for the Islamic call to prayer during the workday. Those refugees who were employed often reported that they found their job not through employment programs but by activating their social contacts within their ethnic enclave.

There is some research that indicates that some resettlement agencies do play a positive role in the employment outcomes of resettled refugees, indicating that refugee resettlement agencies often hire former refugee clients, thereby providing stable, relatively good quality jobs for a segment of the population (Gold, 1992; Hein, 1988). In a comparison of employment outcomes for refugees “sponsored” by resettlement agencies versus those sponsored by their own family members, Tran (1991) found that the Indochinese refugees sampled for his study were more likely to be employed if a resettlement agency agrees to support the refugee when they first arrive (i.e., sponsor the refugee). The findings of Tran’s study are based on the assumption that “resettlement services” are a dichotomous variable: either a refugee has access to these services or they do not. The present study calls this assumption into question. The model on which Tran bases this assumption does not take into account that the substance and quality of resettlement services might vary depending on which resettlement agency the refugee is associated with.

In his discussion, Tran notes that his study does not explain why sponsorship by a resettlement agency is associated with a greater likelihood of employment, but he speculates that this could be due to the agency’s “goal to terminate its assistance to a refugee as soon as possible.” In other words, Tran suggests that the agencies are motivated to find work for the client quickly, while sponsoring family members had no such pressure. Tran does not speculate about why family members would be inclined to delay in helping their refugee family to find work. In order to unpack the reason for the causal relationship in Tran’s study, research that investigates the actual process of employment assistance within the resettlement agency is necessary.

These evaluation studies are suggestive of factors that may be associated with employment status and income levels for refugees. But studies focused on individual-level



variables miss the impact that organizations can have on creating or blocking workforce opportunities for refugees, and none of these studies shed much light on what workers actually do in the name of refugee resettlement policy within the implementing agency. This dissertation aims, in part, to address the gap left by the employment outcomes evaluation literature by leaving open the question of how resettlement caseworkers implement employment policy for their refugee clients and why they implement these policies the way they do.

### Policy Evaluation: Refugee Integration

The basic premise underlying the US resettlement program is that refugees can benefit from institutional support as they begin to integrate into their new country, an integration which is meant to include economic self-sufficiency (Bruno, 2011; Newland, 1995; Schwartz, 2010). Integration does not have a fixed definition in the literature and there has been much debate about what successful integration means, how it is achieved, and how local institutions can support it. Moreover, it is a term that has been conceptualized in different ways to describe both a process for the newly arrived, and a policy goal (Dwyer, 2010). The ambiguity around integration has implications for the work of local refugee resettlement organizations, because, as the theoretical perspective of street-level organizations outlined later in this chapter suggests, goal ambiguity can impact the way in which such organizations implement policy.

In their effort to develop a conceptual approach for understanding integration, Ager and Strang (2008) suggest that integration equates to access to economic achievement, education, housing, and health. Although the authors note that their work is conceptual in nature, they do offer a warning from their fieldwork with refugees. They write: “Community stability is potentially an important facilitator in integration. This has wide implications for refugee integration policy, not least in the area of housing, where short-term accommodation, insecure

tenancies, and certain forms of dispersal strategy all serve to promote instability in refugee resettlement” (Ager and Strang 2008, p. 184). Ager and Strang seem to be suggesting that the common housing practices they observed resettlement agencies using are at crossed purposes with the goal of achieving community stability, which the authors link to successful integration for refugee clients.

The literature on the relationship between place and integration has a long history, a review of which is beyond the scope of this chapter. What follows then is an overview of some of the important findings related to the housing patterns of newly arrived ethnic groups. Some of these studies have shown that when newly arrived ethnic minorities live in residential concentration with one another, there can be positive impact on the experience of the newly resettled (Bolt, Özüekren, & Phillips, 2009; Sherrell, 2007; Spicer, 2008), such as assistance with the cultural transition to the new country (Ives, 2007; Miyares, 2010) and with economic opportunities (Haines, 1996; Kibria, 1994; Mamgain & Collins, 2003; Murdie & Ghosh, 2009; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Portes & Stepick, August, 1985). However, other research has shown that the spatial concentration of newly arrived refugees can have a stressful impact on the community and potentially overwhelm local resources, ultimately resulting in alienation of the new minority groups by the dominant majority (GAO, 2012; Leibowitz, 1983; Massey, Durand, & Malone, 2002). The evidence of tensions around spatially concentrated refugee resettlement has been used to support policies of spatial dispersion (Brick et al., 2010; GAO, 2012). In other words, the research on the spatial proximity of newly arrived ethnic groups can be interpreted to justify opposing policy proposals.

As for how refugees are being supported when they are resettled into a community, studies that examined the refugee perspective of initial housing and resettlement have for the

most part been critical of the outcomes achieved by local resettlement agencies (Choi, Davis, Cummings, Van Regenmorter, & Barnett, 2013; Kenny & Lockwood-Kenny, 2011; Ong, 2003). However, without the perspective of the resettlement organizations, these studies leave unanswered questions about what services are provided and why they take shape as they do. There are just a few studies that take the resettlement organization as the unit of analysis, and these begin to address such questions. For example, Nawyn's (2006) study provides a broad look at resettlement organizations and asks how different agency types differ in the way they perform their resettlement tasks. By taking a broad view, Nawyn is able to identify important distinguishing features of resettlement agencies across types, such as secular and faith-based resettlement agencies, mutual assistance associations, and other refugee serving social service agencies. However, there are always trade-offs in research, and the price of her breadth is that Nawyn's study is not able to capture an in-depth analysis of service practices over time.

#### The Process of Resettlement and the Role of Resettlement Organizations

Within the refugee resettlement research there are a few studies that offer some insights into the process of resettlement without focusing on specific outcomes. Some of these studies raise broad questions about the resettlement experience writ-large (Haines, 1996; Lanphier, 1983; Wright, 1981), while others look at the resettlement experience for specific groups of refugees (Ong, 2003; Vongkhamphra, Davis, & Adem, 2010). Together, these studies are suggestive of the ways in which the resettlement process and the work of resettlement agencies take shape.

Studies that have looked at the resettlement process in the United States for different refugee groups and across time found that this process has varied dramatically depending on characteristics of the arriving group. For example, David Haines (1996) plainly states, "The

greater the cultural differences between the United States and a refugee's country of origin, the more difficult the adjustment" (p.38). In his more complex analysis, Wright (1981) notes that the background of refugees entering the United States has changed over the years, and with this change has been a parallel shift in the supports refugees need in order to achieve "self-sufficiency" in America. From the 1930s through the 1960s refugees came primarily from developed nations, and the majority of them possessed some education and skills. On the whole such refugees were able to assimilate and enter the workforce once they received training in ESL, access to health care, and some initial social and instrumental support. But, Wright notes, since the mid-1970s the refugees arriving in the United States increasingly originate from developing nations, and they arrive without marketable skills or cultural competence for their new home. In such cases, resettlement workers must introduce refugees to the norms of local communities and assist with adjusting to new home economics such as how to cook on gas stoves and feed a family using Food Stamps. Refugees who lack employment skills must be taught to navigate the unwieldy bureaucracy of the American welfare system. Wright's study highlights the ways in which the day-to-day work of refugee resettlement organizations might shift in response to the needs of their refugee client base, needs shaped by the demographic makeup of incoming refugee groups.

Taking a different analytic approach, Michael Lanphier's comparative study (1983) found that US agencies are focused specifically on the rapid economic adaptation of the newly arrived refugee. Lanphier asserts that rapid adaptation has consequences for both the refugee and the agency. For the refugee, the US model assumes that the sooner they are working the quicker they will adapt to the local community, because exposure to co-workers will secure this adjustment. For the agency, an expedited transition from "dependent" refugee to working refugee

allows room in the program for more incoming refugees. This flow-through is essential for organizational survival in a country with such high rates of resettlement and in which government grants are awarded for initial short-run resettlement services but not for long-run support services. Lanphier (1983) notes that this focus on expedient job placement results in refugees being urged to take low-skilled or manual-labor employment. Not only does this require less human capital investment on the part of the agency, but there is an incentive to encourage welfare use as a way to limit the refugees' long-term reliance on agency resources.

Notably absent from these discussions is an analysis of how the race of incoming refugee groups might impact their resettlement experience (Brewer, 2010). Just a few studies have taken up this challenge, although many of them conflate race and ethnicity (Brewer, 2010; Hein, 2005; Kraly & VanValkenburg, 2010). For example, Brewer (2010) brings together Critical Race Theory and Refugee Studies to analyze Cuban refugee resettlement over time, and finds that although the US government's marketing campaign used to promote the arrival of Cuban refugees portrayed these refugees as predominantly white, the reception of white and black Americans was antagonistic, and racially charged. In this case, Brewer finds that resettlement organizations were unsuccessful in mitigating the anti-ethnic sentiment of the local communities.

In his participant observation study of resettlement workers in San Francisco and New York, Hein (2005) examines the intersection of ethnic boundaries and the role of resettlement agencies in navigating these boundaries for their refugee clients. Hein finds that resettlement workers recruited from within racial minority refugee groups are themselves marginalized, and that the extent of this marginalization is impacted by the racially charged context in which they work. Together, these studies suggest that the race and ethnicity of the incoming refugee group plays a part in how the group experiences resettlement, and that the resettlement organization has

a role in this process. Although this dissertation analysis does not specifically focus on the role of race in the implementation of service delivery, Chapter 7 describes how the data collected for this study might be engaged to address this issue.

Several studies that focus narrowly on the resettlement process for specific refugee groups have delved more deeply into the lived experience of resettlement. For example, Aihwa Ong's (2003) ethnography of Cambodian refugees found that, whatever their qualifications, newly arrived refugees were trained to "take low-level jobs as janitors, hotel maids and domestic workers," and were instructed "in the value of 'job mobility' to help them adapt to the cycles of employment and unemployment" (p.83). Ong describes the daily encounters with street-level workers in which social workers engaged in the practice of discriminating between the "responsible" and the "irresponsible" refugees. Many of the social workers Ong interviewed revealed the derogatory assumptions they had of their Cambodian clients and the refugees themselves spoke openly of the shame this made them feel. Ong's study suggests that in these cases resettlement workers did little more than socialize incoming refugees to their place amongst the working poor of America. While Ong's study may be seen as necessarily constrained by its focus on one specific refugee group, it also demonstrates that ethnographic research provides a depth of insight about processes that other methods do not.

These studies raise important questions about how the resettlement process works in practice, questions that require a systematic examination of the street-level organizations that effectively create policy through their informal practices.

### **A New Direction in Refugee Resettlement Research**

The street-level organizations literature provides a framework for analyzing what refugee resettlement policy is and how it works in practice. This framework draws attention to both the

formal dimension of social policy, which provides the parameters for street-level work, and the informal dimension, in which street-level workers give meaning to the formal policy through their everyday patterns of practice. Informal policy is (re)created at the street-level when workers use discretion in both authorized and unauthorized ways. As the theoretical perspectives that provide a framework for this inquiry suggest, street-level organizations (SLOs) mediate policy, in part, by effecting the terms of resource provision, by creating opportunity for clients to express voice and make claims, and by effectively shaping the policy experience.

This analytic framework builds on two key perspectives: Lipsky's (1980) street-level bureaucracy model and Brodtkin's (2010) "politics of practice" model, and its analysis is informed by theoretical literature on non-profit organizations (NPO), in this case treating nonprofits as special cases of SLOs. What follows is a review of the relevant aspects of these theories and a brief discussion of some of the dimensions of organizational life that they leave unexplored. This study seeks to both extend the street-level perspective to a new empirical case, and to push beyond street-level theory in order to consider other potential explanations for the phenomena observed in this research.

### Street-Level Organizations

Lipsky (1980) argues that legislative policy cannot be understood apart from its implementation since street-level agencies and their workers mediate the relationship between individuals and the state. By studying public agencies tasked with delivering state benefits, Lipsky found that policies were shaped, in part, by the discretionary practices of street-level workers. From this he theorized that workers form patterns of practice as adaptive responses to the conditions of work characteristic of public bureaucracies. Specifically, Lipsky identified that 1) agency resources tend to be "chronically inadequate relative to the tasks workers are asked to

perform,” 2) the level of demand for service “tends to increase to meet supply,” 3) goal expectations within the agency “tend to be ambiguous, vague, or conflicting,” 4) worker performance tends to orient towards goal achievement and is “difficult if not impossible to measure,” and 5) “clients are typically non-voluntary” and therefore “do not serve as the primary bureaucratic reference groups” (1980, p.27-28).

### *The Use of Discretion in Street-Level Organizations*

To mitigate the challenges presented by these conditions, Lipsky explains that workers develop coping mechanisms: they use their discretion in systematic ways to ration services, to control clients and reduce the consequences of uncertainty, to protect worker resources, and to manage the consequences of routine practice (p.86). Lipsky (1980) finds that the effect of street-level workers’ coping mechanisms is to grant or block client access to resources and to control both clients and the work situation. It is the patterned nature of these coping behaviors that turns the use of worker discretion into systematic patterns of practice (Lipsky, 1980; McCleary, 1978).

Street-level studies provide many examples of workers’ discretionary behaviors. Rationing is a common practice found among workers at the front lines of service delivery who must balance client demand with limited resources (Brodkin, 1997; Lin, 2000; Lipsky, 1980; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003). Under these circumstances workers will routinely expend limited resources on select clients, while withholding them from others. The street-level perspective directs attention to the conscious or unconscious systematic decisions workers make about which clients will get access to the resources and which will not. Street-level studies have also found that workers routinely target resources at the clients who are most likely to succeed at the desired outcomes of the intervention, a practice called creaming (Lipsky, 1980; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003; S. R. Smith & Lipsky, 1993). Creaming is found to be an adaptive



strategy that workers use when they are being measured on the number of successes among their clients, rather than on the risks workers take to help their clients succeed. The act of creaming has the added benefits of making the workers' jobs easier and of allocating limited resources. Another way that workers have been found to deal with the challenge presented by high or unpredictable levels of client demand and limited resources is to maintain some level of resources in reserve (Lipsky, 1980; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003). This practice of "husbanding resources" may occur when performance measures track and enumerate outcomes as opposed to service quality. Workers have been found to engage in several practices that succeed in differentiating between clients in ways not defined by policy, and allocating resources according to these differentiations. One example is when workers use their bias to select certain clients for services and exclude others. This bias can take many forms. For example, worker biases have been found to originate from workers' assessments of the worthiness of the client (Lipsky, 1980). Other studies have found that the race of the client plays a role in how worker bias impacts service delivery (Keiser, Mueser, & Choi, 2004; Watkins-Hayes, 2013).

Workers use their discretion both when there are formal rules and strict guidelines and when workers are formally granted the freedom to make independent practice decisions. In the first case, rules and regulations suggest standardization across programs, but cannot restrict the ways in which workers make everyday practice decisions. Moreover, rules and regulations, especially when prolific, cannot ensure how they will be applied or interpreted. The use of worker discretion in the case of strict guidelines for practice can have various effects. Sosin (2010) explains that discretion can either succeed in promoting unequal treatment in a context of policy that seeks to standardize service delivery, or in countering overly strict or seemingly unfair mandates. For example, in their study of how performance management within a Florida

welfare transition program impacted workers decisions to sanction their clients, Soss, Fording, and Schram (2011b) find that workers were severely limited in their ability to make choices about how to help their clients. Some workers went to extra effort to communicate with their clients, to protect them from what the workers' felt were overly harsh sanctions.

In the second case, Lipsky (1980) explains that society seeks “compassion for special circumstances and flexibility in dealing with them” (p.15) and that such sanctioned discretion allows workers to respond to particular client group needs rather than applying a uniform policy to all clients (Brodkin, 2010; Lipsky, 1980). One example of this kind of discretion is found in Maynard-Moody and Musheno's (2003) study of a vocational rehabilitation counselor who works with a client with disabilities, secures computer training for her, and helps her to find a part time job as a bookkeeper. In an interview, the counselor explains that while she could have closed the case at this point she decided to extend her relationship with this client securing government funds to pay for a follow up psychological evaluation and winning the client control over a small inheritance. Due to the amount of sanctioned discretion in her work, the counselor was able to extend more of her time and government resources to this client. Maynard-Moody and Musheno find that this sanctioned discretion allowed the worker to respond to her client's individual needs, and that the worker derived job satisfaction from her ability to determine how, and how much, to help her client.

#### *The Political Impact of Discretionary Practice Choices*

While Lipsky helps explain the sources and uses of discretion in street-level bureaucracies, Brodkin (2010) takes into account the political context in which street-level organizations operate. In this way, she helps explain how the ambiguity of formal social policy effectively delegates implementation choices to SLOs. In the United States, legislative politics

often produces laws that do not fully resolve policy conflicts and result in ambiguous, or even conflicting, language (Douglas-Arnold, 1990; Kingdon, 2003; Stone, 1989). Brodtkin (2010) explains that the SLO effectively turns indeterminate policy into concrete courses of action: A process that plays out, in part, through the discretionary practices of street-level workers which ultimately determine who gets what and how.

Although street-level workers may not be always mindful of making political policy choices, the effect of their systematic use of discretion in everyday patterns of practice is political because it shapes the policy experience for their clients, a process Brodtkin (2010) calls the “politics of practice.” The practices of street-level workers have political consequences. These consequences emerge when they shape social service provision, structure opportunities for the voicing and assertion of rights, and “manage the consequences of conflicts inherent in their practices” (Brodtkin, 2010, p.62).

The practices of SLOs may be understood to have political consequences when they allocate resources and structure the terms of resource provision (Brodtkin, 2007, 2010; Lens, 2005; Lipsky, 1980; Simon, 1985; Soss, 1999; Stone, 1984). Although formal policy describes the legal terms of resource provision such as eligibility criteria, workers may “skew access and distribution in systematic ways that are inconsistent with formal law” when they use discretion while acting as resource brokers on behalf of the state or while allocating resources to clients (Brodtkin, 2010, p.66). Discretionary patterns of practice can informally, but effectively, reshape the distribution and content of the policy on the ground, ultimately determining which clients get what. As an example, Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003) interviewed a teacher who reported that she intervened on behalf of a student who had been rejected for ongoing social work services by the state, a response that was not at all typical for a worker in this circumstance. By

repeatedly filing incomplete paperwork on behalf of the student, the teacher ensured that the state continued services (2003, p.110-11). In this example, the teacher used her discretion to intervene in such a way that effectively provided her client with access to benefits he would not otherwise have had.

### *Structuring Opportunities for Voice Within SLOs*

Street-level work also has political implications when the effect is to manage the consequences of organizational practice (Brodkin, 2010), such as offering complaint (or “fair-hearing”) procedures that deflect mobilization against the SLO, limiting client interactions that could similarly lead to organized dissent, and delegitimizing client grievances. As an example, although federal policy mandates that welfare agencies offer “fair-hearings” for welfare applicants to appeal sanctions, in her study of the rates of appeals and outcomes in three states, Lens (2005) found that very few clients actually filed fair hearing appeals, and even fewer showed up to the hearings once they were scheduled. Lens concludes, “bureaucracies are not set up to encourage complaints, but rather to deflect or obscure them through a complex maze of rules and regulations that make mistakes difficult to discern” (2005, p.51). In another example, Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003) found that street-level workers delegitimized the complaints of clients by categorizing these same clients as troublesome, in some cases tagging these clients with having a psychological disorder (p.89). In each of these examples the mismatch between client interest and organizational practice was effectively managed through the avoidance and deflection of client challenges.

The practices of SLOs can affect the capacity of individuals to make claims and express interests (Brodkin, 2010). “Voice” is used here to mean the client’s ability to express her interests within a street-level organization, rather than the ability to engage in overt political

activism. Within this organization-related concept, there are many iterations voice can take. As one example, individuals might make claims about disputes through an organization's formal complaint procedure (Lens, 2005; Lens & Vorsanger, 2005). But before such a formal complaint can be made, research on disputes has shown that a transformation process occurs whereby a client first comes to understand that they have suffered an injustice, and then comes to blame the injustice on a particular party (Brodkin, 1992; Felstiner, Abel, & Sarat, 1980). Once the claimant has identified the party (or entity) responsible for the injustice, a final transformation takes place in which the individual voices their grievance and requests a remedy (Felstiner et al., 1980). The transformation process can be cut short at any stage.

Expressions of voice as a means for making demands or declaring one's interests might be complicated in the case of refugees. Here, Hirschman's (1970) work on voice and exit is useful. Simply stated, Hirschman conceives of voice as the political action of expression used with the intention of making a change to circumstances. On the other hand, Hirschman draws on the economics concept of exit, in which consumers respond to a drop in quality by taking their business to an alternative company. Beginning with the simple dichotomous model of voice or exit, Hirschman takes up more complex models, in which voice and exit are complicated by context. One example he gives is of an immigrant in America who cannot psychologically conceive of his new country as flawed, and who therefore cannot imagine making an exit.

The context for expressions of voice or action through exit is complicated in the case of refugees in refugee resettlement organizations. The refugee is not a consumer of services, as Chapter 4 will explain, refugees cannot take their "business" to an alternative RRO. Further, it is conceivable that the cultural norms in the home country of the refugee are associated with more compliant behavior in which voice is not expressed. It is also possible that experiences of

political persecution might cause some refugees to remain quiet even when opportunities for expression of voice are present. In this case both exit and voice are potentially problematic. The role of the RRO in creating opportunities for client expression seem to be all that much more crucial in light of this discussion.

The street-level perspective described here draws attention to the ways organizations and workers affect this claims-making process. Organizational theory, and specifically theories relevant to human service organizations, can go further by explaining why such behaviors might occur. Examples include: the potential insights to be gleaned from institutional theory (Garrow & Hasenfeld, 2010), such as the role of myth and ceremony (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) in shaping worker behavior within human service organizations; the role of organizational culture, in other words the shared norms, values, and assumptions among workers, in influencing the tone, content and objectives of interactions between workers and clients (Hemmelgarn, Glisson, & James, 2010; Schein, 1996); and the way that workers' professional identities shape how they interact with their clients (Watkins-Hayes, 2009). While these perspectives are used within this dissertation in order to push beyond the limits of street-level theory, Chapter 7 offers suggestions about further insights that might be gleaned from applying these theories in an analysis of the data collected but not utilized in this dissertation.

The “politics of practice” model draws attention to 1) the structure of street-level agencies, and 2) clients' interactions with workers, which can either encourage or hinder the transformation process, and can influence whether individuals express voice (Brodkin, 1992, 2010; Felstiner et al., 1980; Simon, 1985). In the first case, research on “administrative exclusion” has shown that organizational structures, such as formal procedures, can effectively block clients' opportunities to voice claims by making the procedures so unwieldy as to deter

clients (Brodkin & Majmundar, 2010; Lens, 2005). And in the second case, studies have shown that within the organizational structure workers' discretionary practices can further shape opportunities for client voice. This happens when workers structure interactions, signal the status of their clients, arrange office encounters to be more or less hospitable, and penalize clients for overstepping informal bureaucratic boundaries (Brodkin, 2010; Brodkin & Majmundar, 2010; Lens, 2008).

One result of the ways in which organizations and workers structure clients' opportunities for voice may be that clients keep quiet, and are "trained" how to act in order to move through the social service system (Brodkin, 1997; Felstiner et al., 1980; Lipsky, 1980; Soss, 1999). For example, Soss (1999) found that clients applying to claim AFDC benefits felt "'herded' as they waited for long periods in rooms that they sometimes compared to a prison setting" (p.84) and that these same clients felt that they needed to keep quiet about their complaints, to "be deferential to workers," so as not to risk losing their benefits. Brodkin (2010) also suggests, however, that certain types of organizations may provide alternative opportunities for voice: for example, through the encouragement of extra-organizational connections. She highlights this as an area for future research to probe. Empirical work has also shown that organizations can provide an informal space for clients to connect, potentially providing each other with information about shared rights, benefits, and resources (McRoberts, 2003; Small, 2006; Spitzmueller, 2014).

The data collected for this dissertation includes observations and interviews that relate to the structuring and obstruction of opportunities for refugee voice by resettlement workers. However, the analysis in this dissertation only briefly touches on these processes. Future work will address this issue and is outlined in Chapter 7.

## Non-Profit Organizations, Contracting, and New Public Management

In the 1980's at a time of public distrust of government generally (Moynihan, 2008) – and concern over inefficiencies in large government-run bureaucracies more specifically – implementation of social services was increasingly shifted from the kinds of public bureaucracies Lipsky wrote about in 1980 to contracted non-profit organizations (S. R. Smith & Lipsky, 1993). The non-profit organizations literature is of particular importance to this study of refugee resettlement policy and its implementation. First of all, of central concern to this dissertation is the ways in which the contractual relationship between the federal government and the non-profit resettlement organizations plays out in the delivery of refugee resettlement policy. Secondly, unlike other areas of social policy which have seen a progressive shift from implementation through public bureaucracies to privatized or semi-privatized spheres of service delivery (Alexander, 2000), the administration of resettlement policy has always depended, at least in part, on NPOs for service delivery (Holman, 1996).

Human service non-profit organizations (HSOs) may be regarded analytically as a special case of street-level organization. These agencies are similar to the street-level bureaucracies central to Lipsky's model in that they play a role in the delivery of policy as effective intermediaries between individuals and the state, they often have ambiguous and conflicting goals, operate with scarce resources, and the product of their work is often difficult to measure (Alexander, 2000; S. R. Smith, 2010; S. R. Smith & Lipsky, 1993). In other respects, they are not quite the same as the public agencies Lipsky wrote about in 1980. HSOs are often founded as a response to a recognized social need, they often have a target population, and they are thought to have the ability to be flexible and innovative in response to changing community needs (Alexander, 2000; Alexander, Nank, & Stivers, 1999; Lipsky & Smith, 1989). More generally,



most HSOs assume a role in providing public services and accepting contracts from federal and state governments to deliver services and benefits (Brodkin, 2010; Janice J. Dias & Maynard-Moody, 2007; M. Katz, 1996; Morgen, 2001; Salamon, 1995; S. R. Smith & Lipsky, 1993; Starr, 1988).

The human service organizations literature in part asserts that nonprofits are better suited than public agencies to deliver services (Kramer, 2003). One assumption behind this perspective is that HSOs are positioned to understand local needs and culture, and because of that they are able to innovate with new programs given particular local conditions. Another assumption that underlies this perspective is that the shift from public to privatized service delivery is associated with increased competition among providers (S. R. Smith & Lipsky, 1993). The theory asserts that as providers compete for limited government contracts, this competition will lead to increased service effectiveness, to cost efficiency, to service innovations as providers attempt to distinguish themselves, and ultimately to greater choice for “consumers” of services. This perspective asserts that the government-nonprofit relationship operates like a partnership, and the contractual relationship does not threaten the independence or mission of the nonprofit (Salamon, 1995).

Others argue, however, that the strength of nonprofits as locally based barometers of and solutions to client need is compromised by their contractual relationships with the state. This perspective assumes that the financial and contractual relationship between nonprofits and the government may undermine the independence, flexibility, and responsiveness of the nonprofit. Critics point to performance-based contracts that do not reward program innovation (Soss, Fording, & Schram, 2009), goal divergence between the agency and the performance measure requirements (Janice J. Dias & Maynard-Moody, 2007; Salamon, 1995; S. R. Smith, 2010), and

measurement devices that may have a “flattening” effect on the quality of service provided by the nonprofit, causing specialization of service to suffer (Alexander et al., 1999; Salamon, 1995; S. R. Smith & Lipsky, 1993). Performance-based contracts may even decrease agency incentive to seek out client opinion or feedback, thereby decreasing the opportunity for clients to voice their interests or concerns (Lawton, McKevitt, & Millar, 2000).

This review is not alone in identifying that the literature on nonprofits is broad and often offers conflicting perspectives. A meta-analysis of the literature leaves questions about what is definitively unique or important about these types of organizations unanswered (DiMaggio & Anheier, 1990).

Since the 1980s the government-nonprofit contractual relationship has increasingly included dependence on New Public Management (NPM) technologies that purport to promote competition between providers, and specify particular outcomes of service (Sosin, 2010). Specifically, the term New Public Management refers to a host of management technologies that have been used in the shift away from public administration and towards public management of privatized services (Gruening, 2001; Hood, 1991; Pfiffner, 2004). These technologies include the use of performance measures intended to hold service organizations accountable for outputs. This represents a shift from a management style focused on inputs, and is connected to the idea that decentralized service organizations are better suited than large centralized bureaucracies to understand what inputs are the most effective and efficient. Proponents of NPM claim that these measures hold SLOs accountable for outcomes and promote efficiency (Brodkin, 2011; Gronbjerg, 2010).

Studies that look at the ways in which contracts, governance structures, and managerial reforms have influenced the work of street-level agents (Brodkin, 2011, 2013b; Janice Johnson

Dias & Elesh, 2012; Larsen, 2013; Soss et al., 2011b; Soss, Fording, & Schram, 2013; van Berkel, 2013) find that performance measures change the incentive and demand structure under which workers make discretionary choices, and in so doing they “alter the production of policy” (Brodkin, 2013, p.26).

### SLOs and the Implementation of Workfare Policy

Within the street-level perspective and governance literatures there is a growing body of research showing that the SLOs tasked with implementing “work first” policies are essential to the process by which these policies are translated and transformed at the point of service delivery (Brodkin, 2013b; Soss et al., 2013; van Berkel, 2013; Watkins-Hayes, 2013). Workfare policies can be many things, but generally they either provide for work supports, or make income benefits conditional upon some sort of work activity, or both. Although some states experimented with work first policies prior to 1996, with welfare reform came a federal mandate that required all welfare agencies to hold public aid recipients accountable for various work activities in exchange for benefit eligibility (Brodkin, 2011). More narrowly, the workfare literature explains that, with the expansion of privatization and contracting, SLOs are in a position to determine what workfare policy looks like on the ground (Brodkin & Larsen, 2013; Soss et al., 2011b, 2013; van Berkel, 2013). In the refugee resettlement policy realm, RROs are tasked with implementing workfare policies. Like other workfare organizations, RROs are increasingly held accountable to state and federal contracting institutions by means of performance measures and standards. This literature suggests that to understand the role of resettlement agencies in implementing policies for refugees, research must include an analysis of how contracts and performance measures impact the way in which resettlement workers make

practice choices. This dissertation therefore includes a systematic review of the relevant contracts and associated performance measures.

### **Researching the Politics and Implementation of Refugee Resettlement**

This literature review has clarified that refugees arrive in the United States with varying levels of social, cultural, and economic skills and capabilities, that there are varying levels of match and mismatch between the social capital refugees bring and what is valued in the host community, and that this population is, on average, poor enough to need federal support. Refugee resettlement policy is the primary federal policy instrument used to promote the wellbeing of these new arrivals. This dissertation examines resettlement policy, adopting a perspective that places at the forefront of analysis the street-level organizations that “make” policy on the ground. While similar implementation questions have been asked in other studies of street-level workers serving marginalized groups in the US, refugee resettlement organizations have so far been left out of this research area. This problem could be especially important for refugee clients, who are not citizens of the state and therefore have a constrained set of rights and limited forms of redress when the rights they do have to benefits and services are not met or are violated.

This study offers the opportunity to explore policy in practice at the street-level by asking the following questions:

1. What are the relevant conditions of work under which refugee resettlement workers use their discretion and what patterns of practice emerge?
2. In what ways do resettlement workers affect the terms under which refugees access resources and services?
3. How are opportunities for voice created or constrained by formal and informal organizational structure and practices?

4. How do resettlement workers manage the consequences of organizational practice?

This study takes up the special case of nonprofit organizations as the primary location for implementation of resettlement policy. It also investigates the contract relationship between the refugee resettlement organization and the federal government, and asks how these contracts shape policy delivery at the street-level.

## CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA

The impetus for this dissertation began during my time working in camps for Congolees refugees in Rwanda in 2006. While in the camps, I worked closely on a project with groups of refugee youth and women. Many of the people I met told me that they dreamed of moving to America, and I was concerned that this might not be such an ideal solution to their displacement. I wondered what opportunities existed for refugees when they first arrived. I feared that their experiences, often traumatic, of flight and loss might negatively impact their processes of resettlement. Most of all, I worried that their visions of and hopes for life in America might not align with the reality of moving here and having to find work.

When I returned from Rwanda, I began to frame questions about what refugee resettlement in the United States was like. As one with experiences with the refugees in Rwanda, and having done research on the ethical and practical dilemmas of studying marginalized populations, I was less interested in focusing my analysis on refugees themselves. My concern was that newly arrived refugees might be so overwhelmed by the myriad of new responsibilities and obligations associated with the resettlement experience that it would be nearly impossible to gain their informed consent in a way that guaranteed them that participation was in fact fully voluntary, rather than some sort of quid pro quo. Further, I was aware of my own bias that told me that refugees themselves were a group of people who were motivated to succeed. I found that at this point I was less curious about how refugees contributed to the success of their own resettlement, and more curious about what opportunities they had for success. Therefore, I designed a study that would help explain the process of refugee resettlement by examining and

analyzing the work of the organizations tasked with helping this population access the opportunities available to them.

The assumption I had about the resourceful and motivated character of the refugees was not the only bias I brought to my research. I was also biased towards the workers who became the participants in my study; I assumed these workers had a motivation to help and to work hard for their refugee clients. Throughout my data collection and analysis I have been mindful of this bias, and careful to attend to evidence that belied this assumption.

As an interpretive scholar, I draw on both the models of social constructivism and positivism. In other words, I value my own subjectivity (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003) as one of many sources of data, assume that the phenomena I am interested in are contextual, and that the reality of what I am trying to understand is defined by context; therefore, my study uses qualitative methods to gain multiple data sources that can be overlapped and probed for a more fully textured description and analysis of the phenomena (Fine, Morrill, & Surianarain, 2008; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). At the same time, my study is also at times positivist (Alford, 1998; Rubin & Babbie, 2005) since I understand subjectivity to be a fraught and problematic source of knowledge which can be mitigated through triangulation. Further, I believe that there are themes that can be found in my data that allow me to group elements of the phenomena together, and that the patterned behaviors I have observed are replicable given similar conditions.

The research component of this dissertation has two parts: (1) Chapters 3 and 4 provide a history of refugee resettlement policy and an explanation of the institutional structure of refugee resettlement in the United States, and (2) the empirical findings in Chapters 5 and 6 are based on a street-level analysis of two refugee resettlement organizations in Chicago. This chapter outlines the research methods used in each of these parts.

## **Study Design**

### **(1) Policy History and Institutional Structure**

In order to provide context for this dissertation's street-level research, I investigated the political history of resettlement policy and examined the lines of political contestation around the level, scope, and content of resettlement support. I examined the refugee resettlement policy history through a process of semi-structured interviews and archival research. Key informants for this policy history were drawn from the population of federal policy makers and national-level organizational staff who shape or influence refugee policy. Interviews were conducted with key informants from UNHCR, at the Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, at the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement, with Congressional staff who participate in the refugee policy development process, and with staff members at four of the nine National Resettlement Agencies (for interview guides see Appendices A-D). Table 3 lists the interviews conducted for this history.

I did not interview every refugee policy professional at the federal and national level. For example, although there are nine National Resettlement Agencies (NRAs), I did not think I needed to interview a representative from each agency in order to gain the background information these interviews were designed to provide. The NRA representatives I did interview were drawn from a snowball sample that began with one study participant who identified multiple others who might be willing to talk to me. At the point that the data from my key informant interviews began to duplicate, I moved on to the next phase of my data collection.



Table 3:  
Interviews Conducted to Inform the History of Refugee Resettlement

Institution	Source	Number of Interviews
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	Senior Policy Official	2
Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration	Senior Policy Official 1	2
	Senior Policy Official 2	3
	Policy Staff	1
Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Refugee Resettlement	Senior Program Staff	1
	Senior Policy Staff	1
Senator Leahy's Senate Office	Congressional Staff	1
National Resettlement Agency (US Conference for Catholic Bishops)	Senior Program Staff	1
	Senior Administrative Staff	1
National Resettlement Agency (Church World Service)	Senior Policy Staff	2
National Resettlement Agency (US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants)	Senior Program Staff	1
	Senior Policy Staff	1
National Resettlement Agency (Episcopal Migration Ministries)	Senior Administrative Staff	1
	Senior Program Staff	2

I conducted historiographic archival research in order to contribute to my history of refugee policy (Ventresca & Mohr, 2002, p. 807). This research included a systematic review of relevant Congressional records and committee hearings. Extensive primary source document research relating to the development of the Cuban Refugee Program was conducted at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

The institutional structure for refugee resettlement is complex, involving multiple actors at different levels of government and non-profit organization. Although the refugee resettlement literature includes many descriptions of different portions of this structure, to date there has not been a systematic examination of this structure that includes all of its parts. Many participants in this study requested just such a description, and Chapter 4 represents an answer to this request,

both in an effort to contribute to the refugee resettlement community, and as a way of providing context for the analysis of policy implementation that follows in Chapters 5 and 6.

I researched the institutional structure of refugee resettlement through an iterative process involving multiple interviews, archival review, and observation. The interviews that informed the policy history also provided data for the explanation of institutional structure. However, in order to examine the full complexity of the resettlement system, I also needed to collect data about the state-level institutional actors. The two key institutions at this level in Illinois are the State Refugee Coordinator (SRC) and the Jewish Federation of Illinois. I conducted a series of four hour-long unstructured interviews with the Illinois SRC, and two hour-long unstructured interviews with the Director of refugee policy at the Jewish Federation of Illinois. Archival review included content analysis of relevant federal and state contracts and Memorandums of Understanding between the local agencies and the various higher-level institutional agencies. Observation included attendance at a closed-door Department of State refugee allocations meeting in Washington, D.C. and at monthly meetings with key policy and implementation personnel in Illinois.

## (2) Organizational Ethnography

This dissertation's main research component is an organizational ethnography in which I compare two resettlement agencies in Chicago in order to examine how refugee resettlement policy works in street-level practice. Organizational ethnography allows research to penetrate the depths of organizational behavior, to gather multiple perspectives, to learn about organizational process over time, and to observe these processes as they unfold (Fine et al., 2008). Although organizational ethnographies can take a variety of forms, they generally involve some combination of methods including observation, interviews, and archival research. Through an

iterative process, these combined methods can result in a “thick description”<sup>1</sup> of the organizations under study. Organizational ethnography was a useful approach for studying processes of policy delivery, as opposed to organizational outcomes or other potentially quantifiable phenomena. While this approach has been utilized in a variety of social policy areas, to date there do not appear to be any organizational ethnographies of refugee resettlement policy in the United States.

## **Research Methods**

### Site Selection

The data for this study was collected in Chicago, a city that has been a traditional gateway for immigrants of all types. Chicago was selected partly for convenience, and partly because it represents a typical urban placement for resettled refugees (Singer & Wilson, 2006). With a long history of refugee resettlement, Chicago has an established support structure for the newly resettled and unlike some other heavily resettled cities (GAO, 2012), has not experienced any concentrated or formal public resistance to resettlement, which might have negatively impacted the context in which resettlement agencies negotiated their contract obligations and mandates.

Within Chicago’s urban center there are five local refugee resettlement agencies. They are referred to using pseudonyms here and Table 4 shows the criteria used for inclusion in the study.

---

<sup>1</sup> The term “thick description” is borrowed from Clifford Geertz who used it to describe how ethnographic research combines description and interpretation in order to achieve a rich and nuanced understanding of culture (Geertz, 1973).

Table 4:  
Select Organizational Characteristics for Sample Selection

	Midwestern Resettlement Agency (MRA)	Refugee Agency for Integration, Self-sufficiency, and Equality (RAISE)	International Ministries – Refugee Resettlement Services (IM)	Islamic Refugee and Immigrant Services (IRIS)	Refugee Assistance Center (RAC)
Location	“Revere”	“Revere”	“Revere”	“Revere”	“Downtown”
R&P Contract	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Early Employment contract	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Size of R&P staff	3	3	3	1	3
Size of Employment staff	3	5	2	1	2
Affiliation with Faith Community	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Match Grant contract	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Size of client base (2011)	102	264	185	62	145

Of the five agencies, only four are in the same neighborhood (MRA, RAISE, IM, and IRIS). It was important to select two sites in one neighborhood so that differences in local housing markets did not impact the findings. All four of the agencies in the “Revere”<sup>2</sup> neighborhood hold a Reception and Placement (R&P) contract with the Department of State and an Early Employment Services contract with the Jewish Federation, therefore any of these agencies could have been selected for comparison of the implementation of these programs. However, of these four agencies, one has a sole staff member delivering R&P services and another sole staff person delivering employment services. This agency (IRIS) was not included in the study because there would have been no way to ensure the confidentiality of these staff members within the study, or

<sup>2</sup> The neighborhood in which these organizations are based has been given the pseudonym Revere.

to account for individual idiosyncrasies. Of the three remaining sites, two have faith-based affiliations and one is secular. The secular agency (MRA) was chosen for contrast, and of the two faith-based agencies the one with the largest case size (RAISE) was chosen in order to magnify the differences between the case sizes of the two final agencies. The more I learned about the various employment programs while conducting the policy history, the more I hypothesized that the presence of the Matching Grant program might make a difference to the way employment services were delivered. Therefore it was relevant that MRA implements the Matching Grant program and RAISE does not, this difference allowed me to make comparisons in the way the two agencies operated their employment programs.

Prior to starting my research I met with management at each site and discussed the project, my research methods, and the role I would play within the agency. I then posted fliers announcing my study at each site. At MRA I was invited by management to introduce myself at a staff meeting, where I took ten minutes to explain my study and to answer initial questions. I also explained the process by which I would consent study participants and protect the confidentiality of those who chose to be involved in my study. Over several weeks I met with each member of the management, staff, and intern teams. These meetings were held in private spaces and in them I explained my study in detail and verbally consented each study participant. Management at RAISE preferred to present my study to the staff at a meeting, and then to have me say just a few words by way of introduction. I then consented each study participant individually and privately. Methods scholars attentive to the potential imbalance of power between researcher and participant have written about the need to make informed consent an ongoing process (Miller & Bell, 2002). I was concerned that due to the fact that management had taken such a strong role in the introduction of my study, workers at RAISE might feel pressured

to participate. Therefore, I was intentional about stressing that participation in the study was voluntary, and reiterating this point throughout my tenure at the agency. The identity of each participant has been protected by the exclusion of any identifying information, and by the use of pseudonyms for the agencies.

Refugees were not included as subjects in the study because they are not a primary reference group for questions about organizational process and policy implementation. However, because much of my observations involved interactions between staff and their refugee clients, I asked each worker to explain my study to their clients, and to ask for their permission to have me observe their interactions. This was often done through an interpreter, or in a language shared by the worker and the client. I asked the workers to stress that the clients were not themselves a part of my study, but that they had the right to refuse my presence or to ask me to leave at any time. One just one occasion a refugee client expressed the desire not to have me observe a meeting they were having with their caseworker. On this occasion I moved to a different location of the study site and continued my observations with other participants.

### **Description of Agencies**

RAISE and MRA are both located in the Revere neighborhood which is filled with immigrant-owned businesses, restaurants, and grocery stores (Seligman, 2005). Both agencies had traditionally settled clients in the neighborhood, on the premise that this gave clients easy access to the immigrant community, to agency services, and to other social services clustered in the area. However, the local housing stock is increasingly unaffordable for an individual making minimum wage or for a family surviving on TANF payments. Between 1990 and 2000 the median rent asked by landlords in the Revere neighborhood rose by seven percent, from \$526 to \$564 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000), while the stock of vacant (and available) rental units

dropped from over 12 percent to just under five percent (The Chicago Fact Book Consortium 1990).<sup>3</sup> At the same time, a survey of Illinois TANF cases conducted in 2001-02 revealed that the median TANF benefit paid out in 2001 was \$278 (Kirby, Fraker, Pavetti, & Kovac, 2003). This imbalance of rental costs and public aid income raises questions about how refugees fared in this particular urban context, and about what resources caseworkers brought to bear as they assisted their clients with resettlement.

#### The Refugee Agency for Integration, Self-Sufficiency, and Equality (RAISE)

RAISE is a non-profit refugee resettlement organization, which has been operating in the Revere neighborhood since 1980. RAISE focuses its services on refugee and immigrant populations, with the majority of its staff and budget devoted to refugee services. With an annual budget of just under three million dollars, the agency is the largest of its kind in Chicago, and with institutional affiliations in the local faith community, RAISE is able to count on a reliable source of volunteer hours and in-kind donations such as gently used furniture and warm winter coats to be distributed to refugee clients. One fifth of RAISE's annual revenue comes from the faith community as well.

RAISE offers its clients the full spectrum of resettlement support services in-house, including initial reception and housing, employment counseling and job placement, English as a Second Language classes for four levels of learners, special programs for women, youth, and seniors, and a behavioral health program. RAISE staff also refer clients to a close network of service organizations such as the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) for public aid

---

<sup>3</sup> Although the staff at RAISE and MRA consistently referred to this challenging housing context, finding data that demonstrates the challenge was difficult. The 2000 and 1990 Census provide the most reliable data to support this claim; the 2010 Census figures do not include comparable data, and the American Community Survey for the 2007-2011 period does not include measures at the census tract level for this statistic. Therefore, I have chosen to use data from the 1990/2000 period as it is the most applicable. Accordingly, I offer statistics from the same time period for TANF benefits.

benefits and local medical clinics for initial health screening, follow up appointments, and any special needs.

RAISE is housed in a mid-rise multi-use building on a busy intersection, within a block of major bus and train routes. RAISE itself takes up one whole floor of the building, with access from a bank of elevators or a flight of stairs. New refugee clients, refugees waiting for appointments, and visitors enter the agency through a reception office, and are stopped at the front desk and asked for identity upon entry. Clients and guests wait in this carpeted entry area until their scheduled appointment time, at which point their caseworker comes to the reception area to escort them to the offices. The waiting area has several plastic chairs lining the walls and a small bookcase which houses assorted children's toys and books. The room is not particularly comfortable, but neither is it an awkward place to wait. The feeling I got while waiting here was that this is a professional space, and the people here seem to be following a protocol. The receptionist was typically friendly and chatty, and called many of the clients by name.

Refugee clients who arrive for classes enter their classrooms directly off the main hallway outside the bank of elevators. Prior to class times the hallway is buzzing with life, people talk amongst themselves, and there are typically five or six languages spoken at once. There is usually some laughter, and there are often people sitting on the carpeted floors of the hallway in a casual way. Once classes begin the doors to the hallway close, and there is virtually no sound to be heard from outside the classrooms.

RAISE staff offices are accessed through a closed door behind the reception desk, or by a locked door off the elevator hallway. Only staff enter through the locked hallway door. During the research period there was an incident in which an angry refugee client barged into the office area, ran to his caseworker's office, and threw a plastic chair at his caseworker. After the

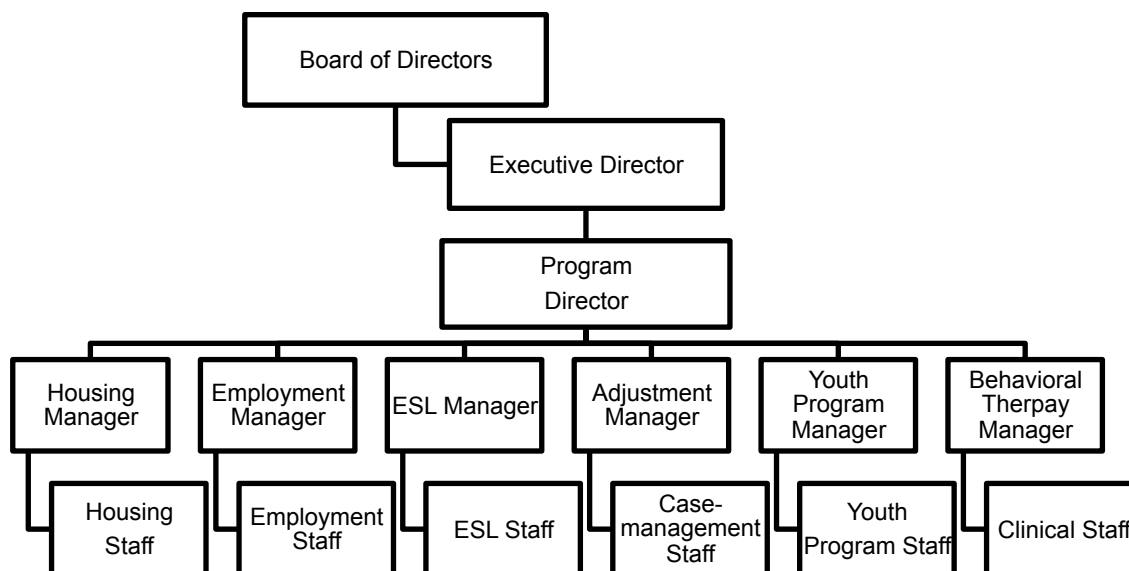


incident a security measure was added for entry to the office area. The door from the reception area to the staff offices was locked with a code-protected system that only staff could access.

The RAISE staff had a lunchroom accessed through the reception area, and with a no-food-in-the-offices policy, many staff brought lunch and convened here around noon. There was a management policy of not talking about clients in the public spaces of the agency, or in the lunchroom, and yet the lunchroom was a place where staff talked about clients informally and exchanged stories. In addition to this staff-only space, the behavioral health program secured funding to create a staff respite area in one of the unused offices. The walls of this room were painted soft colors, gentle lighting was installed, and comfortable upholstered couches and chairs were brought in. I often met with staff in this space, and it felt quite removed from the sense of urgency felt in the outer offices.

RAISE has a vertical management structure, with an active Board of Directors, an Executive Director (ED), and a Program Director. The Board is responsible for fundraising and for maintaining the strategic vision of the organization. The ED is responsible for fundraising and for advocacy around refugee policy issues. The Program Director oversees the daily operations of the organization and reports directly to the ED. Figure 1 shows RAISE's organizational chart.

Figure 1:  
RAISE Organizational Chart



RAISE has six department areas with six mid-level managers who report to the Program Director. Each department manager is responsible for the supervision of his or her own staff, and for delivering reports on staff to the Program Director. The management team at RAISE turns over infrequently. On a recent visit to the agency in 2014 I found only one new manager, the rest had been with the agency for four years or more, and one for almost fifteen years. Similarly, the staff at RAISE turn over far less frequently than of MRA. As of 2014 the housing staff had remained unchanged for almost six years, and the case management team had one new employee, one intern promoted to staff, and two case managers who had been with the agency for six years or more.

RAISE is in a rather unique situation in that it is affiliated with three National Refugee Agencies. The process for refugee client allocations through these NRAs is explained in detail in Chapter 4. In short, affiliations with NRAs are the main source of refugee clients for local resettlement agencies. With three such affiliations, RAISE received more refugee clients than any other local resettlement organization in Chicago. However, the RAISE caseloads fluctuate

dramatically over time. As Table 5 indicates, there were months during which RAISE handled up to 35 arriving cases, and months when the agency had as few as one case to prepare for. The analysis in this dissertation pays close attention to the challenge presented by this inconsistent and unreliable influx of clients.

Table 5:  
RAISE Refugee Arrival Caseload, by Month and Year

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
2009	7	1	18	7	21	23	24	21	25	7	12	35
2010	8	6	13	10	14	15	20	23	14	13	19	18
2011	19	14	2	6	6	6	6	11	21	6	4	1
2012	20	36	11	28	29	48	39	31	34	36	44	44

#### The Midwest Refugee Agency (MRA)

MRA is one of many agencies housed under one umbrella non-profit organization, the Chicago Coalition for Social Justice (CCSJ). CCSJ operates a wide variety of social service agencies, each of which address the problem of social injustice from a different angle. CCSJ programs include housing, physical and mental health services, employment supports, advocacy, and legal services. CCSJ has been in operation in Chicago since before the turn of the century, and has been serving immigrants since its inception. When formal refugee resettlement policy was instated in the late 1970s, MRA was one of the first local refugee resettlement organizations in the country to secure a federal resettlement contract. A full explanation of these policies and contracts is provided in Chapter 3.

Like RAISE, MRA offers a comprehensive array of refugee support programs in-house, as well as referrals as mandated or needed to appropriate partner organizations. MRA conducts initial welcome and housing placement for its refugee clients, offers three levels of employment

based ESL classes, conducts employment support and job placement services, and provides specialized services for youth, seniors, and extreme medical cases. When I began my research I hypothesized that access to the CCSJ umbrella would also provide MRA with resources such as supplemental services for refugee clients and additional funding as needed. The analysis in Chapters 5 and 6 indicate that this was not the case.

MRA is housed in a two story brick building on a side street of a predominantly residential part of the Revere neighborhood, within two blocks of a train stop, and one block from a bus stop. The MRA offices were moved during this research period, from the second floor to the first. When the agency was on the second floor all guests to MRA had to request entry to the building by using a video entry system. Once inside, visitors took an elevator to the second floor and were stopped at a reception desk. The elevator was lined with paper announcements, including a poster for bed-bug prevention and copy of the Universal Declaration for Human Rights. The receptionist at MRA was often surly and brief in his interactions. He required all visitors to sign in, whether students arriving for a first meeting with staff, or refugees entering for the hundredth time for English class. After signing in, refugee clients walked past a bank of cubicle offices housing another of the CCSJ agencies. The feeling I got when entering the MRA space was of a far more informal space than RAISE's, and one in which there was a lot happening at once.

MRA itself was housed in the rear portion of the second floor. The hallway leading to the agency cubicles and offices were lined with upholstered chairs and decorated with pictures of refugees and various cultural artifacts from different clients' countries of origin. It was a dark but warm and comfortable space, and often it was crowded with refugee clients talking or just sitting. The ESL classrooms opened off MRA's main hallway, and the doors to these rooms were

always open, visitors to MRA could hear the fits and spurts of attempts at pronunciation, and the sound of the ESL teachers interacting with their students.

The MRA offices were housed in cubicles just past the ESL rooms. The cubicles represented program clusters. For example, the employment staff all sat in two cubicle areas next to each other, the youth and family staff in another. The two case managers in charge of initial reception and placement had an actual office with a door that they shared, and the manager of the Reception and Placement program also had an office with a closed door. But for the most part, when clients met with caseworkers, they sat in a chair pulled up to a cubicle with no expectation or illusion of privacy whatsoever.

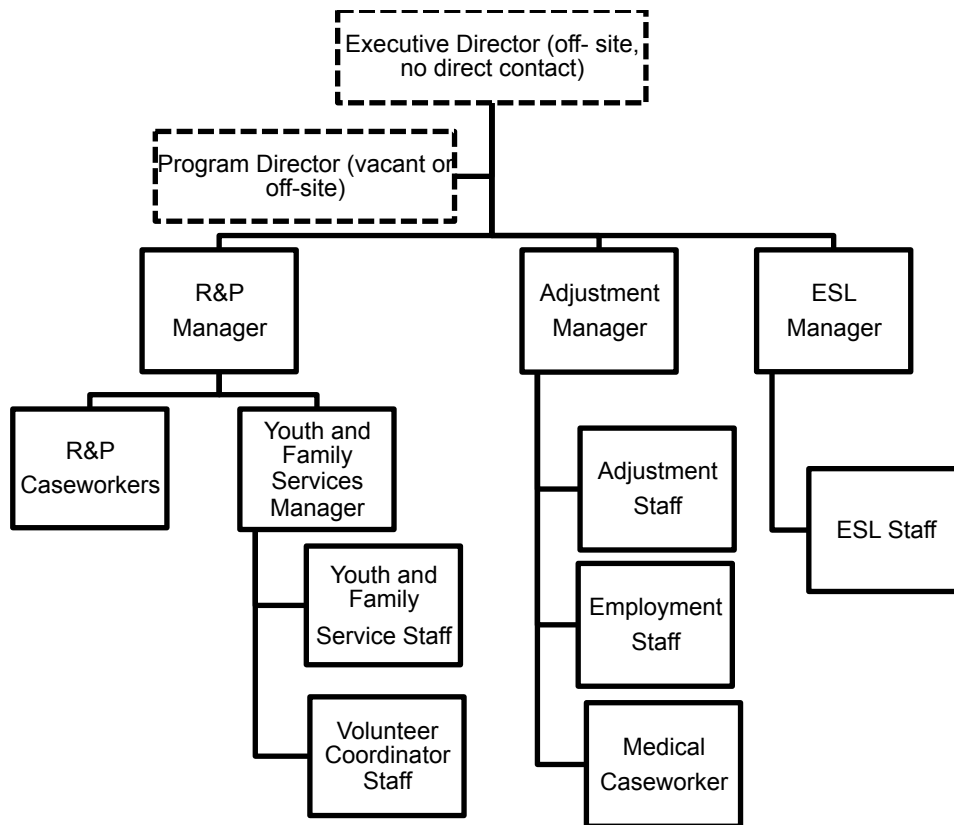
When MRA moved to the first floor of the building the physical agency changed dramatically. Visitors entered off the street directly into the MRA space, with no buzzer. There was a reception desk just inside the entry door, and the MRA staff took turns ‘manning’ the position as receptionist. The office area itself was an open-form L shape with long desks spaced out on either side of the L. With no doors or cubicle partitions, workers sat directly next to their peers at these desks. There was a persistent buzz in the space, from people talking on phones and having conversations. In the corner of the L was a small seating area with colorful rugs and plastic chairs, the upholstered ones had been replaced due to bedbugs. But refugee clients tended not to cluster here. Instead they gathered in another seating area outside the ESL classrooms and meeting rooms, housed on the flip side of the L.

MRA had a more horizontal management structure than RAISE. The Executive Director of CCSJ has offices at another of the umbrella organization’s locations, and he maintained a particularly hands-off approach to MRA. Although the ED was engaged in some federal level advocacy around refugee issues, and did some work to secure a high-profile program grant, he

did not consistently focus on fund raising for MRA. The ED delegated program management of MRA to a junior member of his management team, but for the majority of 2011 the position was either unfilled or filled by someone off-site who also managed six other agencies within CCSJ.

Three mid-level managers were responsible for both implementation and oversight of the MRA programs. These managers met regularly to discuss agency-wide issues, forming a de-facto management trinity. But for guidance about the day-to-day management issues, they had considerable autonomy and freedom from oversight. The street-level perspective suggests questions about how this unstable supervisory structure might impact service delivery for MRA’s refugee clients. Figure 2 shows MRA’s organizational chart.

Figure 2:  
MRA Organizational Chart



With only one National Refugee Agency affiliation, the resettlement program at MRA was smaller than the program at RAISE. Table 5 indicates that the MRA arrival patterns fluctuated just as much as the RAISE arrivals did, but the MRA numbers were consistently lower.

Table 6:  
MRA Refugee Arrival Caseload, by Month and Year

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
2009	6	1	7	5	10	12	10	15	21	5	7	12
2010	5	4	3	4	4	7	8	8	6	10	7	6
2011	7	5	1	3	2	4	3	5	13	1	1	1
2012	21	3	13	10	17	32	31	34	35	25	26	26

Of particular note are the three months at the end of 2011 when there was only one refugee arrival in each month. There was a question among MRA staff at the end of 2011 as to whether or not the R&P program could continue. But in early 2012 refugee allocations to MRA increased, and by the end of the year MRA received more clients than in the prior three years.

A comparison of key organizational characteristics is provided in Table 7.

Table 7: Comparison of Key Organizational Characteristics, RAISE and MRA

	RAISE	MRA
Location	Revere	Revere
2011 Expenses	\$2,655,354	\$564,776
2011 Revenues	\$2,668,727	\$511,259
Affiliation with Faith Community	Yes	No
Organizational structure	Self-contained NGO	Part of umbrella organization, CCSJ
Start Date	1980	1888
Programs	EES, R&P, Case management, Youth, Early Childhood Education, ESL, Behavioral Health	EES, MG, R&P, Case management, Youth and Family, Elderly, ESL, Early Childhood Education
Staff size (2011)	35	27
Size of client base (2011)	264	102

## **Data Collection**

I conducted field research for this study for eighteen months between 2010-2012, after first receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board. Data collection included over 600 hours of observation, 150 interviews with 75 participants, and a review of relevant documents and contracts at both MRA and RAISE. I planned a data collection schedule with three phases. First, I planned to focus all of my time and attention on collecting data at MRA. I hoped that this strategy would allow me to saturate myself in agency life without distractions, freeing me to make observations and ask questions based simply on the patterns I identified within a particular setting.

Once I had identified patterns that seemed characteristic of MRA, I planned to begin data collection at RAISE so that I might make initial comparisons in situ. I then planned to devote time exclusively to data collection at RAISE so that again I could focus my time and attention on this site without the distractions of comparison. For ten months I was at MRA, spending four days per week engaged in observation and semi- and un-structured interviews with management, staff, and interns. I then spent four months dividing my time across the two study sites, and I finished my research with four months focused mainly at RAISE. Including two sites in this study allowed for a depth of understanding about each organization, while allowing the opportunity to identify idiosyncratic organizational characteristics of either site.

### **Observations**

Observations for this study were gathered within the agencies during routine day-to-day activities such as staff meetings and trainings, client and management meetings, and during visits with federal and state monitors. Initially I worked with agency staff to identify days of the week



and times of day for observation. As trust developed, management at each agency let me plan my own observation schedule. I became intentional about engaging in observation at varying times of day and on varying days of the week so that I could be sure to include the breadth of organizational activities and worker tasks in my data collection. Observation also took place at off-site locations including the local IDHS office, at the airport, in refugee apartments, and on job interviews.

### Interviews

I conducted multiple semi-structured interviews with key policy personal, as has been explained elsewhere in this chapter. Many interview participants agreed to have these interviews audio recorded. Audio recordings were transcribed by a work-study student, and the transcription files were retained under IRB protocol.

At MRA and RAISE I conducted initial semi-structured interviews with each staff person in order to ask background and relationship building questions such as how they came to the work and what they found the most challenging in their daily work (see Appendix E). Multiple unstructured interviews with caseworkers, management, and key administrative personnel were used to address questions I had based on my observations in the field, and to further understand the practices of the street-level workers I observed. These interviews were not audio recorded, but I did take notes and captured specific quotes that addressed my questions. These interviews generated data that seemed to capture workers' perspectives, concerns, and reflections. Often there were moments in which the data generated in the interview seemed at odds with my observations from the field. When this happened I was intentional about asking the participant to help me understand this discrepancy, and in this way I was able to gain important insights from the interview.

## Document and Agency Policy Review

Content analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 1995) was conducted with agency documents in order to further explain the conditions of work for the workers and to triangulate the information gathered by observation and interview (Fine et al., 2008; Stake, 2006). Agency documents included internal reports, meeting records, quarterly and annual state and federal reports, state and federal contracts, and monitoring reports. This analysis illuminated much about the internal decision making processes, pressures, and priorities of each agency.

## Field Notes and Audio Recordings

I took copious field notes and audio recorded select meetings and interviews with the approval of all participants. These written and audio files were transcribed to computer files and were maintained under IRB approved conditions. I wrote memos to reflect on questions I had from the field and on themes that began to emerge in my initial analysis.

## Analysis

My data analysis was a multi-phased process. First, I built a codebook using theoretically derived codes and then added to the book after open-coding my data and looking for repeating ideas (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003) (see Appendix F). I built a data matrix (Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Patton, 1990) based on entries for my codes, data sources, a brief description of context, and a central quote or observation from my data. Second, I read through my data multiple times, adding excerpts to my matrix as I read. I also combed the data for anomalies, disconfirming evidence, alternative explanations, and other surprising phenomena (Marshall & Rossman, 1995), and I have included examples of these in the empirical chapters. Third, I analyzed the data in my coded matrix by searching for themes across the cells of the matrix and then using my theoretical framework to explain the themes. Finally, I pushed beyond my

theoretical framework to identify other literatures that might help to explain the themes found in my data.

### Establishing Rigor

I took several steps throughout the data collection, analysis, and writing process to ensure the rigor of my study. First, during data collection I was intentional about spending enough time in the field so that study participants became comfortable with my presence. This practice is recommended by qualitative methods scholars as a way of getting closer to how participants typically behave, and as one way of establishing a close enough relationship with participants that they might speak honestly in interviews (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). I triangulated my data sources (Fine et al., 2008), so that I had multiple perspectives of the same phenomena. I also had lengthy bi-monthly meetings with my dissertation chair to discuss my fieldwork, and later to challenge my analyses. Second, I presented my work on a regular basis to a qualitative research seminar and received feedback and critique which I incorporated into my work. Third, I met with small group of fellow doctoral students who read my work, challenged me to rethink my emerging analysis, and discussed at great length my conclusions and implicit assumptions. Fourth, as I began to write my empirical chapters I took the opportunity to conduct some member checking with staff from the two resettlement agencies included in the study. I presented some preliminary findings at a local conference on refugee resettlement attended by staff from both agencies, and I had private meetings with these participants after my presentation in order to garner feedback. I also conducted an on-site formal presentation of my findings at the invitation of one of the two agencies. In all cases, participants conveyed that they felt this work captured both the complexity and the spirit of their work, and that I had an accurate picture of the challenges they are faced with, and the various ways they have adapted to these challenges.

## Limitations

Two common challenges of ethnographic case study research relate to issues of reliability and validity (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Brodtkin, 2003; Rubin & Babbie, 2005). How can findings that incorporate the subjectivity and interpretation of the researcher be replicable, how can we guarantee that the researcher saw what she thinks she saw or heard what she think she heard? To some extent these issues are mitigated by selecting not one, but two study sites. A comparative research perspective helps to distinguish idiosyncratic from more common aspects of organizational practice (Brodtkin, 2003; Fine et al., 2008; Snow, Morrill, & Anderson, 2003). I have also gone to lengths to describe the complexity and the context of my findings. These measures are recommended to help establish the credibility of qualitative research (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Further, I have been mindful of, and transparent about, how I collected my data, how my biases might have impacted this process, how and when I engaged my subjectivity in the analysis process (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

Another common concern with qualitative research is its generalizability (Rubin & Babbie, 2005; Small, 2009a). This study seeks to engage in theoretical generalizability by extending theory (Small, 2009a; Yin, 2009). By explaining how the street-level perspective applies to the case of refugee resettlement organizations, this study extends the theory to a new empirical case. However, this dissertation moves beyond the street-level perspective by showing its limits in explaining the behaviors of the workers in this study. To the extent that I have established new or alternative constructs and explanations for the behaviors I identified, the theoretical implications of this study are transferable (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003) to other types of street-level organizations.

## CHAPTER THREE: THE POLICY AND POLITICS OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

### **Recurring Themes of Political Contestation in Refugee Legislation and The Evolving Relationship Between Government and RROs**

What follows is an overview of federal refugee resettlement policy and its evolution. This chapter makes two arguments. First, the evolution of refugee resettlement policy shows three key areas that have been particularly subject to change over time, suggesting the following lines of political contestation: the appropriate response to politically deserving populations (responsiveness versus equity), the appropriate scope and duration of benefits, and inclusion through work. Second, the trajectory of refugee policy implementation has been to develop and solidify a relationship between the federal government, state governments, and local non-profit organizations.

#### 1948 – 1960: Expanding the Scope of Services and a Fledgling Federal-RRO Relationship

##### *The Displaced Person's Act*

Prior to World War II there was no formal federal US refugee policy. America was a country made up of immigrants from other nations, and there was a long and contentious history of integration and rejection of incoming groups by established groups (N. L. Zucker & Zucker, 1987). In the aftermath of the war, debates in Congress focused on what was an appropriate response to the mass of displaced people in Europe. There was serious concern that these refugees would have “deleterious effects on America,” and potentially pose a security threat (N. L. Zucker & Zucker, 1987, p. p.27). However, the argument for a humanitarian response won out, and in 1948 the government formalized the first federal refugee legislation, the Displaced Person's Act. The Displaced Person's Act was focused exclusively on admissions criteria, and

was quite limited in that it allowed a narrow category of refugees to enter the United States according to a quota system from each European region.

### *The Refugee Relief Act*

Much like the Displaced Person's Act, the Refugee Relief Act of 1953 focused on admissions criteria and regulations with little consideration for refugee adjustment or integration into communities (Anker & Posner, 1981; Haines, 1996). The Refugee Relief Act reflected Congress's growing concern about the Cold War – it removed specific quotas for refugee admissions in favor of a set number of visas for people escaping from countries behind the Iron Curtain (N. L. Zucker & Zucker, 1987) and left resettlement assistance up to individual sponsors and charitable organizations. In 1954 the government began to pay RROs for the cost of transporting each refugee to their final destination (Haines, 1996; N. L. Zucker, 1983). Although this relationship was minimal and purely financial, it foreshadows the more elaborate relationship that was to develop between the government and RROs.

Towards the end of the 1950s refugee advocates became more successful in arguing that a more generous refugee admission and resettlement program would represent a humanitarian approach to the refugee problem, sound foreign policy, and strong domestic policy (Atwater, 1959; J. F. Kennedy, 1959; McCollum, 1959). In 1959 Congressman Francis Walter, Chairman of the House Immigration Subcommittee, introduced a joint resolution which called for the authority of the Attorney General to admit refugees to the United States without any cap on the number, and to grant these refugees the right to transfer their status to Permanent Legal Resident and eventually to naturalize their citizenship (Kelley, 1959; Walter, 1959). Then-Senator John F. Kennedy was a leader in the effort to expand the US refugee program, and as president he succeeded in formally enacting the joint resolution into law as the Migration and Refugee

Assistance Act of 1962. This shift in policy represents a change in the political dialogue about who was deserving of aid from the United States, and about the appropriate scope of the US response to refugee crises.

1960 – 1980: Solidifying an Institutional Relationship and Disparate Responses to Select Groups

### *The Cuban Refugee Program*

In 1961 President Kennedy called for emergency federal resettlement assistance in reaction to the migration of Cuban refugees fleeing their country.<sup>1</sup> The passage of the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act in 1962 formally established the Cuban Refugee Program (CRP). The relationship between the federal government and local RROs was solidified with the CRP, and more complex relationships were established between the federal, state (Florida), and local (Miami) governments: implementation of CRP was delegated to states and RROs; federal funds were appropriated by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) to repay states and local municipalities for one hundred percent of the costs of refugee cash assistance, child welfare, medical assistance, food stamps, and for increases in local public school expenditures due to the influx of refugee students; and finally, HEW granted funds to local RROs to pay for resettlement services with a primary focus on supporting employment readiness (J. Coleman, 1996; N. L. Zucker, 1983). The White House justified these expenditures on the grounds that “refugees from political oppression should not be considered as welfare and charitable burdens. They constitute a resource and an opportunity” (Dungan, 1962, p. p. 6). The language of this argument suggests that the Cuban refugees’ deservingness outweighed the federal costs of support. With the CRP, the federal government expanded its role in refugee policy, from one

---

<sup>1</sup> This analysis takes up the content of the US Cuban refugee policy and does not attempt to explain the foreign or domestic policy concerns that led to the policy itself. For this discussion see Bon Tempo, 2008 and Zucker and Zucker, 1987.

exclusively focused on admissions, to one that included an investment in the resettlement process itself (Bon Tempo, 2008; J. Coleman, 1996).

Internal White House memos document rising concern about the continued financial burden placed on local service agencies and public systems in Miami in spite of the federal support they were receiving (Chase, 1963; HEW, 1963; SSA, 1962). They show that local public schools were unable to manage the large influx of students, landlords in central Miami were complaining to their local officials about overcrowding, and there was a concern that while the majority of Cuban refugee heads of household had found work, they had done so at the expense of other local residents. In short, tensions in Florida were running high, and the White House was aware of the problem.

The Kennedy administration responded with a three-pronged solution. First, it increased the allocation of funds from President Kennedy's own Contingency Fund to private and governmental agencies in the Miami area (Mitchell, 1962). With these funds the president renewed his support of a refugee population (seen as "deserving"), and of a structure for refugee policy implementation that involved both government agencies and specialized, local NGOs. Second, the CRP incorporated a relocation program – implemented by RROs – to shift Cuban refugees from Miami to other communities throughout the United States. (This program had limited success as in the end only a quarter of Miami's refugee population were relocated.) Third, the White House hired a public relations firm and launched a massive pro-refugee campaign in an effort to assure the American public that "only legitimate refugees are allowed in and only the needy receive aid" (Juanita Green as quoted in Bon Tempo, 2008, p. p.123). The message of the campaign was that Cubans were heroes of the fight against Communism, were hard working people, and had no interest in taking advantage of government largesse (HEW,



1962). This public relations message reflected the primary concerns about refugees over time, that they should be deserving of our assistance, that they work in exchange for our support, and that our support of them will not prove to be too expensive.

The CRP did prove to be quite expensive. A report commissioned by the Social Security Administration in 1979 found that the CRP had cost “an estimated \$1.4 billion dollars, or about \$1,861 per capita” (Taft, North, & Ford, 1979, p. p.79). The political pressure to continue federal support to the local Miami community was substantial, and although the federal government made efforts to phase out the CRP, there was always backlash from the constituency in Florida. As a result, the 1979 report suggested, “It might be necessary, in order to better control costs of future refugee programs, to put a limit on the number of years an individual refugee may receive services rather than to try to phase out the program, per se, as has been the case with the Cuban program” (Taft et al., 1979, p. p.90). In spite of this recommendation, the report also noted that CRP investments had been successful in promoting self-sufficiency for Cuban refugees. The question that these conclusions raise is: how can the federal government strike a balance between the scope of support it is willing to offer refugees and how long should that support last?

Between 1975 and 1979 the federal government continued to develop and fund refugee resettlement programs ad hoc in reaction to current world crises (Desbarats, 1985; Haines, 1996; N. L. Zucker, 1983). Disparate programs were created for Indochinese (the Indochinese Refugee Assistance Program (IRAP)) and Soviet refugees (the Soviet and Other Refugees Matching Grant Program). Each of these targeted resettlement programs offered a unique package of benefits and services, reflecting the current political interests and debates about who deserved what and for how long (N. L. Zucker, 1983).

### *The Indochinese Refugee Assistance Program*

The IRAP mirrored the CRP in a few key respects. First, the debates in Congress in 1975 around the passage of IRAP's corresponding law had the same tone as the debates of the 1960s. Advocates took the position that the United States had a humanitarian responsibility to these refugees due to the United States' role in the Vietnam War, that "efforts to grant assistance to these people should not be considered a burden but a redeeming obligation" (Levinson, 2006, p. p.3).<sup>2</sup> The Indochinese, in other words, were said to be a group deserving of federal assistance. Second, the federal government offered states full reimbursement for the provision of benefits and services to Indochinese refugees in order to ensure that the refugees did not create a financial burden on local governments (Taft et al., 1979; N. L. Zucker & Zucker, 1987).

In other respects, IRAP was distinct from the CRP. First, having learned from the backlash in Miami that spatial concentration of refugees could have negative consequences on local politics, the federal government was careful to disperse the Indochinese refugees widely across the country (Desbarats, 1985). Specifically, the Department of Labor supplied national resettlement agencies with lists of communities in which resettlement was recommended, and those in which resettlement should be avoided based on unemployment rates (Taft et al., 1979).<sup>3</sup> Second, having taken the suggestion of the 1979 Taft, North and Ford report, the federal government capped the length of time that Indochinese refugees would be eligible for services, federal reimbursements to states for IRAP services and benefits were to stop after two years. Finally, the Department of State (DOS) initiated a contractual resettlement relationship with each

---

<sup>2</sup> For a thorough analysis of the causes that led the United States to admit so many refugees from Vietnam and its surrounding countries, see Bon Tempo, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> An explanation of the process by which refugees are placed in communities in the United States is provided in Chapter 4.

National Resettlement Agency. For their part, DOS paid between \$300 and \$500 per capita to the NRAs. DOS worked with each NRA to negotiate the terms of their contract, and required that in exchange the NRAs “ensure that refugees did not go on welfare” (Taft et al., 1979, p. p.119).<sup>4</sup> However, in their 1979 report, Taft, North and Ford found that “Many of the local affiliates of the voluntary resettlement agencies are indeed understaffed and overworked, and this situation does adversely affect the quality of resettlement” (p.120). The problem of how to support the NRAs and their affiliated RROs in providing services to refugees was left unanswered in the 1979 report. The remainder of this chapter demonstrates how the continuing evolution of US refugee policy *appears* to address this very challenge. The appearance is sustained by the belief that policies and contract mandates directly impact and shape the eventual service delivery.

#### *The Soviet and Other Refugee Program*

By the late 1970s the emigration of Soviet Jews from the U.S.S.R. had become a major focus of a Jewish American constituency. In response to pressure from this powerful political group, politicians reached a quick consensus around a federal program to support the Soviet refugees once they arrived in the United States (Bon Tempo, 2008). Under the Soviet and Other Refugee Program DOS offered a per capita grant of \$250 to the NRAs to support initial resettlement services. In addition to this support, HEW initiated a new program for this population that was intended to encourage more local support for the refugees and the RROs implementing services.

The HEW Matching Grant (MG) program offered participating RROs a one-to-one match for up to \$1,000 per capita to support resettlement services. The grant was intended to pay for ESL classes, cash assistance, vocational training and employment counseling (N. L. Zucker &

---

<sup>4</sup> A thorough explanation of the institutional structure of refugee resettlement and the roles of each type of agency is provided in Chapter 4.

Zucker, 1987). One condition of MG-program participation was that refugees could not be enrolled in the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program. To this end, the 1979 Taft, North and Ford report declared the program a success:

On a much narrower scale, cost-effectiveness in terms of US dollars, the results of the program compare favorably with those of other on-going Federally-funded refugee resettlement programs, in that the Federal investment is not large, and the incidence of public assistance cases appears to be comparable to a recently-arrived group of Indochinese refugees (Taft et al., 1979, p. 101).

As Congress debated the formation of a comprehensive refugee resettlement program (discussed in the following sections), and staffers sought models from past program experiences, these words of the 1979 report seem to have resonated. Of all the refugee programs operating prior to 1980, only the Match Grant program still operates today, largely unchanged but for its scope.

This overview of federal refugee policy over time shows how specific program content varied across refugee groups, yet the structure of the effective policy that developed solidified a complex set of relationships between the federal, state, and local governments, and the local RROs. In each case, implementation of refugee programs was delegated to states and local agencies, and increasingly, federal funds were appropriated to repay states and municipalities for the costs of refugee assistance. Federal funds were also given directly to local RROs to cover a portion of the costs for resettlement services (Desbarats, 1985; N. L. Zucker, 1983). However, in spite of the growing systematization of the resettlement process, any refugees entering the United States who did not qualify for one of these target-group programs found themselves dependent on the goodwill of local non-profits and philanthropic groups, with no federal funding or support for resettlement (Bon Tempo, 2008).

## 1980 – Equitably Promoting Self-Sufficiency Among a Deserving Population

In the late 1970s, debates in Congress focused on the inefficiencies caused by multiple refugee programs and on the inequities experienced by different refugee groups (Anker & Posner, 1981; Bon Tempo, 2008). At that time, the Southeast Asian refugee crisis was at its height and increasing numbers of refugees were being admitted to the United States.<sup>5</sup> In this context, restrictionists argued that any new policy might open the floodgates for untold numbers of refugees to enter the country, while expansionists, arguing that a humanitarian response to the growing global refugee crisis was necessary, could use data to show that the refugees who had come under IRAP had, for the most part, excelled in the labor market and had repaid the costs of their resettlement in the form of federal income taxes (E. M. Kennedy, 1981; "Refugee Resettlement," 1981).

Within these resettlement policy debates the areas of political agreement are striking. After almost thirty years with a formal federal refugee policy, and twenty years since implementation of the CRP began, the concept that all refugee populations are distinct from other immigrant groups and are therefore categorically “deserving” of federal assistance had become normalized ("Refugee Resettlement," 1981). Senator Edward Kennedy summarized this perspective in his description of the political debates leading up to the passing of the Act as a subsection of the Immigration and Nationality Act: “Because the admission of refugees is a federal decision and lies outside normal immigration procedures, the federal government has a clear responsibility to assist communities in resettling refugees and helping them to become self-supporting” (E. M. Kennedy, 1981, p. p.151). The need to justify support programs for specific refugee groups was over, the debate about whether the US government should be in the business

---

<sup>5</sup> In the late 1970s the tremendous flow of Cambodian and Laotian refugees into Thailand, and of the Hoa “boat people” out of Vietnam, left refugee camps overwhelmed and resulted in a massive humanitarian crisis.

of supporting this population was resolved, and the language around this resolution contains the roots of the consensus, federal refugee assistance was to be directed towards encouraging economic self-sufficiency. The disagreement now was about how best to support refugees while also achieving the goal of independence.

In its final form, the Act prioritized equity of services across refugee groups by establishing a standard procedure for refugee admissions, and authorized as standard practice the use of federal funds to support the resettlement of all refugees equally, regardless of origin, via grants to states and local voluntary organizations (Leibowitz, 1983; N. L. Zucker, 1983). Further, the Act solidified the role of the Department of State in the admissions and in the initial resettlement of refugees, and established the Office of Refugee Resettlement within the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (*Annual Report to Congress*, 2005) to administer all other refugee resettlement programs. The stated mission of ORR is to “provide for the effective resettlement of refugees and to assist them to achieve economic self-sufficiency as quickly as possible” (*Annual Report to Congress*, 2005).

The principles of the Act included freedom from “long-term dependence on public welfare,” mandating that the Director of ORR should “make available sufficient resources for employment training and placement in order to achieve economic self-sufficiency among refugees as quickly as possible” and “insure that cash assistance is made available to refugees in such a manner as not to discourage their economic self-sufficiency” (“The Refugee Act,” 1980). Although the Act does not make specific mandates about how these goals should be achieved, it does provide measures for local implementing RROs to use should the refugees they serve prove resistant to the goals of the law. To this end, the Act states, “Cash assistance provided under this

subsection to an employable refugee is conditioned, except for good cause shown... on the refugee's acceptance of appropriate offers of employment," and further, that:

In the case of a refugee who refuses an offer of employment which has been deemed to be appropriate by either the agency responsible for initial resettlement of the refugee...or refuses to go to a job interview which has been arranged through such agency or service...cash assistance to the refugee shall be terminated (after opportunity for an administrative fair hearing) for a period of three months (for the first such refusal) or for a period of six months (for any subsequent refusal). ("The Refugee Act," 1980)

With these qualifications, the Act could represent the interests of fiscally conservative legislators who were concerned that the Act might encourage welfare dependence or discourage refugees from seeking access to the labor market, while at the same time providing support for implementing organizations which ultimately would be held accountable for getting their refugee clients to work.

In the months leading up to the passage of the Act, bills were passed back and forth between Congress and the Senate, each with a different limitation on the duration of federal support (E. M. Kennedy, 1981; Leibowitz, 1983; Vialet, 1999; N. L. Zucker, 1983). The end compromise made refugees eligible for the majority of benefits – including Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) and Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA) – for the first three years of their residency with social services provided as needed on an ongoing basis ("The Refugee Act," 1980; "Refugee Education Assistance Act," 1980; N. L. Zucker, 1983). After three years, refugees were categorically qualified for public benefit programs including Medicaid and AFDC,<sup>6</sup> assuming they met the program's income and asset requirements (Halpern, 2008).

Amendments to the Act since 1980 reflect the ongoing political debates about the

---

<sup>6</sup> In each state the program benefits vary as they are pegged to the benefits given by Medicaid and AFDC benefits (after welfare reform in 1996 RCA was pegged on a state by state basis to TANF program) (Halpern, 2008; UNHCR, 2010).

appropriate scope and duration of benefits and the appropriate expectation for work with newly arrived refugees. Between 1980 and 1990 the duration of benefits was adjusted and categorical eligibility for public aid ended (N. L. Zucker, 1983). In 1991, the RCA and RMA eligibility time-frames were reduced to just eight months after arrival – where they remain (Halpern, 2008; Violet, 1999) – and social services eligibility was reduced to a five-year maximum. An amendment in 1982 removed a 60-day work registration exemption in favor of a policy that gave refugees work permits upon arrival (GAO, 1983).

The Refugee Act of 1980 is, therefore, the culmination of decades of debate about what responsibility the United States has to the world’s refugees. This debate has focused on the extent to which refugee groups deserve federal support, what the appropriate content and duration of that support should be, and to what extent refugees should be required to work in exchange for that support. The Act itself reflects these debates, but does not resolve these issues per se. Rather, as the street-level perspective described in the previous chapter explains, it provides a structure from which local implementing RROs effectively resolve these debates in real time as they deliver services to their refugee clients. Local RROs operating today have access to an array of federal programs, which were codified with the Act. The core programs operated by the MRA and RAISE organizations in Chicago are described below.

### **Current Refugee Resettlement Policies and Programs:**

#### **Delegating Discretion to the Street-Level**

Under current federal law refugees hold their assigned status for twelve months after arrival in the United States, at which time they are required to apply for a status adjustment to “Permanent Legal Resident.” After five years in the country they are permitted to apply for US citizenship (INA: ACT 209(b)).



Once admitted, refugees are eligible for federally funded programs and benefits. The Department of State maintains a short-term role in supporting the resettlement process, and the majority of federal programming is operated under the purview of the ORR.

#### Department of State Reception and Placement Program

The Department of State Reception and Placement program supports refugees and local implementing RROs for the first 90 days after arrival. The goals of the R&P program, as stated in a 2012 Cooperative Agreement between DOS and a local implementing RRO include “providing refugees with basic necessities and core services during their initial period of resettlement,” and “assisting refugees in achieving economic self-sufficiency through employment as soon as possible after their arrival in the United States in coordination with publicly supported refugee service and assistance programs.” Although there was question about how appropriate it is to have the DOS engaged in domestic policy, a senior policy official at the Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM) interviewed for this study explained his rationale for the Department’s ongoing involvement with refugees after arrival: “Once you decide you are going to pick someone up in a godforsaken place and bring them to your country, that brings with it some obligation.” This rationale mirrors the language of obligation and deservingness that has been used to justify the refugee resettlement program throughout its history.

In pursuit of the goal of economic self-sufficiency, the R&P contract mandates that local RROs provide a detailed list of goods and services to refugees. A selection of these required services are listed in Table 8, and a more detailed discussion of the housing requirements and associated performance standards are included in Chapter 5.

Table 8:  
Select R&P Program Mandated Services

Service	Duration	Description
Basic Needs Support	Not less than 30 days after arrival	Housing, furniture, food or food allowance, appropriate seasonal clothing, pocket money, assistance with applying for cash and medical services, referrals as needed, transportation to job interviews and job training, at least two home visits
Core Services	90 days	Arrange placement of refugee, case file preparation and maintenance, reception services at airport, community orientation, creation of a resettlement plan
Coordination and Consultation with Public Agencies	90 days	Consult with state and local governments and other relevant public agencies
Performance Standards	90 days	Participate in monitoring of R&P program by BPRM

While the R&P program requirements are very specific about the list of goods and services to be provided to newly arrived refugees, the program also allows local RROs a significant amount of leeway in implementing the program. A senior policy official at BPRM explained her perspective on this balance between strict rules and sanctioned discretion, reflecting the rationale behind the support for New Public Management technologies in the public administration of privatized services: “People have to read the regulations for a particular grant, read what is allowable, talk to the State Coordinator about how to do what we need them to do, but we are serious about fostering creativity by providing room for discretion, and providing regulations for service standards.”

Interviews with staff at MRA and RAISE, and observations of their work, greatly complicate the seeming simplicity of the regulation-creativity principle evoked at the DOS level. For instance, I once observed an MRA caseworker set up a two-bedroom apartment for a Burmese family of five – one of the rooms held three single beds, tightly squeezed into the small space. When I asked, “Are there guidelines around how many beds can be placed in each room?” the caseworker answered:

There are, of course there are. We can put the kids in here together because they are all young. The girls can share a room with the boys. I know it's a tight fit, but they will take the box springs out anyway and put the mattresses on the floor.

“Why do you buy the box springs then, aren't they expensive” I asked. The caseworker answered:

We have to have the box springs. The contract says we have to have box springs. And we have to put it in the case notes, “box springs,” check. If they do file review and see that we didn't supply them we would get dinged for that. But if they come and see the mattresses on the floor and the box springs in the closet they will know we did our part.

Another interview took place in the Dollar Store while a RAISE housing department staff member shopped for an arriving refugee, working to buy every item on the DOS *List of Goods*, (each item to be document in the case file). The staff member picked up two sets of Tupperware, checked a box for “small and large tupperware” on his list, and said, “they won't even use these, it is such a waste. I don't know why the State Department says we must buy these things.” It was a very common opinion of study participants that many of the DOS pre-arrival regulations were unnecessary because they did not suit the needs of their clients. These examples also represent the common practice observed for this study, of caseworkers complying with the regulations of the DOS contract even when the workers expressed the opinion that the regulations were nonsensical.

#### *DOS Per Capita Funding for Reception and Placement*

DOS supports local RROs in implementing the R&P program with a one-time per capita grant. The DOS per capita grant of \$900 remained consistent from 1980 until 2010, although the value of this grant dropped dramatically due to inflation. In 2009 DOS appointed a new Assistant Secretary of BPRM, who made site visits to several key resettlement cities immediately after

taking office. In a letter to the President of the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, Assistant Secretary Schwartz wrote:

Early in my tenure, I visited Chicago, Fort Wayne, IN and Minneapolis/St. Paul, to learn more about our efforts to meet the needs of newly arriving refugees – Bhutanese, Burmese, Burundians, Hmong, Iraqis and so many others. What I saw was both heartening and dismaying. It was so gratifying to witness the deep and abiding commitment to refugees among overworked and underpaid agency personnel in the field, the determination of new arrivals, and the welcoming spirit of local school, healthcare and government officials. On the other hand, it was very sad to meet with refugees who had severe problems that go well beyond the challenges that any new refugee might expect to confront. I heard from refugees threatened with eviction after only months in the United States. I learned that refugees often had to choose between buying food or diapers for their children. And I spoke with agency field staff overburdened by the number of refugee families they serve and the complexity of the resettlement service needs of recent arrivals.

The Reception and Placement Program administered by the Department of State includes a one-time per capita grant for the initial weeks after arrival, but the grant has declined in real terms by more than 50% since its inception some decades ago. This is a primary reason for the problems that I witnessed which have been documented and publicized in a variety of assessments over the past year or so. In short, the combined level of public and charitable resources available to the program is simply insufficient to do a quality job of initial resettlement. And in my own review of this issue, I heard repeatedly from all stakeholders -- agencies, congressional staff, and PRM Admissions office officials -- that our level of this short term support must increase substantially.

(Schwartz, 2010)

The Assistant Secretary went on to say that he was initiating an immediate change in the per capita grant, doubling the amount from \$900 to \$1,800 per refugee. The bulk of the grant, \$900, was designated for expenditures on goods and services for the refugee with whom the per capita payment was associated. \$700 of the grant was to be spent on the administration of the RRO, and the final \$200 was reserved for a discretionary fund to be spent on the most vulnerable refugees who were still within their 90-day R&P service period.

The rise in the R&P per capita grant was cited as one of the three most important recent policy changes by every subject interviewed on this topic for this dissertation. Policy officials at BPRM expressed the opinion that this was the most serious investment their office had made in resettlement since 1980. Staff at the NRAs cited the per capita adjustment as the sole factor in keeping some of their affiliates afloat during periods of slow refugee arrivals. And local RRO management spoke of how crucial the influx of funds was to the quality of their programming, and of how important the change was as show of faith from BPRM to their staff.

However, even the doubling of the R&P grant was not sufficient to remove the resource constraints which plagued implementing organizations. Due to the mandates within the program, and the context of the city within which MRA and RAISE operated, rental costs and client-related expenses such as furniture outstripped the funds supplied by DOS. When asked at the 2011 MRA annual retreat how the R&P program compared to the Employment, ESL, and Youth programs, the finance director of CCJC replied:

How blunt do you want me to be? From a business point of view you should have been shut down years ago. But you are a core program, you have been around since [before the turn of the century.] The federal government just doesn't provide enough money, that's just what it comes down to.

If the finances were the only factor under consideration, the R&P program at MRA might not have survived. But, as the finance director explained, the reception of refugees was part of the legacy and identity of this local organization. Beyond this important fact, the other programs operated by MRA were able to supplement the RRO's administrative costs.

#### ORR's Cash and Medical Assistance

DOS ends its involvement with resettled refugees after the R&P program 90-day cutoff, yet these new arrivals are still eligible for various federally funded programs and services for up

to five years. The majority of these services are funded and administered by the Office of Refugee Resettlement within DHHS.

ORR distributes funds to NRAs and local RROs via a complex mix of formula and discretionary grants (*Annual Report to Congress*, 2012). The largest of the ORR formula grants pays for the State Administered refugee resettlement program through which ORR repays states for one-hundred-percent of the costs of offering newly arrived refugees Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA), Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA), and social services. The formula for annual grants to states for the State Administered program is calculated using a retroactive look at the prior three-years of refugee arrivals to that state. Chapter 4 describes in detail the arrival of refugees into the country and the process by which these refugees are allocated to states. In brief, DOS manages the admissions process, and the allocations process is directed by DOS and the NRAs with some input from states. In other words, states do not control the final number of refugees they receive in any year. One year could bring a surge of refugees to Illinois, while the following year could bring a sharp downturn in arrivals. The connection of prior year arrivals to future funding raises questions about how this unreliable structure impacts service delivery at the local level.

Although states manage the administration of the RCA program through their local Department of Human Services offices, they contract local agencies to implement the RMA (medical clinics) and social service (refugee service agencies) benefits. The institutional structure of this system is explained in Chapter 4. Under current ORR policy, local RROs are to assist their clients in applying for public cash assistance through their local Department of Human Services office. Refugees who are found to be ineligible for TANF benefits and Medicaid are categorically eligible for RCA and RMA for up to eight months from the date of arrival in the

United States. As this chapter has demonstrated, Congress has long debated the appropriate size of cash assistance grants to refugees. RCA payments are currently pegged to TANF payments and therefore vary state by state.

The fact that refugees are eligible for TANF does not mean with certainty that they can count on accessing the program. MRA and RAISE caseworkers acted as mediators for their refugee clients with the local IDHS office. In one case, a single mother from Sudan was enrolled in TANF and received benefits for her first six months in the country, at which point the benefits were cut off without explanation and she went to MRA and asked her caseworker for help. He advised her to collect her paystubs so that he could fax them to the IDHS office and demonstrate that she was still eligible for benefits. The caseworker explained that clients have to recertify their eligibility for TANF every six months, and that the two local IDHS caseworkers often took up to a month to resolve such cases by reinstating benefits. “After all,” the MRA caseworker commented with a roll of his eyes, “you know people are always trying to game the system. I have to make the case, [Grace] is not one of those. She works hard, she has kids to feed, and she has her paperwork.” In this quote the MRA caseworker did not fault the IDHS caseworker for cutting off Grace’s benefits, he simply identified his own role as Grace’s advocate in getting the payments reinstated.

In another case, a RAISE caseworker brought his client to the IDHS office to inquire about the size of her monthly cash benefits. The IDHS agent explained that the client’s I-94<sup>7</sup> form stated she was 40 years old, and that her benefits were calculated based on her entry date and her age. “But the form was filled out incorrectly,” the caseworker explained. She is 65. She can’t get a copy of her birth certificate because she is a refugee, there is a war going on in her

---

<sup>7</sup> I-94 forms are required for all non-citizens who enter the United States in order to document the date of entry.

country. We can't get records!" "There is nothing I can do, we go by the I-94. And I have to keep my job. It is really frustrating, I feel really bad for her," the agent explained. As in the previous example, this RRO caseworker had to act as the mediator for his client. After filing for several appeals and having a dentist examine the clients teeth in order to certify her approximate age, the caseworker was able to get a new I-94 issued and public assistance cash payments reinstated for the correct amount.

These examples highlight one of the strengths of the street-level perspective. Rather than assuming that eligibility criteria for benefits equate to an understanding of who gets what and how, this perspective requires analysis of the roles that street-level workers play in making discretionary decisions about how benefits are allocated. In each of these examples there is more than one street-level worker involved in the process, and the RRO worker makes the crucial difference to the experience their refugee clients have.

#### Refugee Social Services Program

A portion of the State Administered refugee resettlement program grant supports the Refugee Social Services (RSS) program. In Illinois this program is implemented by local RROs, with funds distributed by IDHS and administered by the Jewish Federation. Chapters 4 and 6 include detailed explanations of this institutional relationship. Refugees in the United States are eligible to receive RSS services for up to five years. However, most states do not fund implementing organizations for this long. Chapter 6 provides an empirical analysis of how MRA and RAISE managed the implementation of one of their RSS programs in a fiscal context of grants limited to eighteen months.

#### *ORR Formula Funding for Refugee Social Services*

ORR uses a formula to calculate the size of each state's RSS grant, and provides an



approved package of services to be included in the RSS program, each of which is intended to improve the refugees' chances at gaining employment and achieving "economic self-sufficiency and social integration as quickly as possible" (ORR 2012, p.11). A senior policy professional at the Jewish Federation explains,

There are formula-driven social services. It's based on per capita. It's based on a three-year look back. So however many arrivals you've had in the last three years is how much they set a formula for it and that's how much the state has to then provide social services. Within those social services there are allowable ones. They need to be employment focused. Employment is essential, so employment focus.

Such is the extent to which states are subject to the unreliable and inconsistent refugee flows. When there are several years of low refugee arrival numbers, followed by a surge of arrivals, the ORR fund to support RSS will not follow until the following year. Several participants in this study reflected on the challenge that this formula funding structure created for implementing RROs. One RRO program manager explained:

This is where the right hand does not know what the left hand is doing. [BPRM] is ramping up arrivals, and we are laying off staff. As you know ORR's formula money to the states is based on arrivals of two years ago...So, based on this antiquated formula, not only we lost money this year, but we will probably lose even more next year, because the last two years the numbers of arrivals were really low. So, as I said [BPRM] is ramping up and we are laying off, while we sat fully staffed for the last year looking at each other and hoping for arrivals.

The implications of this funding structure are discussed further in Chapter 4.

ORR approved programming under the RSS grant includes ESL classes, day care, document assistance, translation and interpretation assistance, and early employment assistance. The program manager at MRA explains that essentially his caseworkers are funded through the Jewish Federation to support whatever needs their clients have: "Some of our clients have PTSD, some have specific stories of persecution and need different things. But we are not clinicians, we

are caseworkers. We are ad hoc clinicians.” Unfortunately, ORR did not fund MRA to supply mental health services, and the local mental health clinics were often overbooked and understaffed.

The main focus of the RSS grant is the Early Employment Services (EES) program, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 6. This broad category of support includes an array of employment readiness work including resume and interview assistance, skills certification, vocational training, and on-the-job training. The MRA program manager explains that EES is a “crash course that coaches our participants how to answer specific types of questions. Its quick and dirty resume building, its socializing them to what employers want.”

#### Voluntary Agency Matching Grant Program

In contrast to the crash course in employment readiness, ORR also operates the Matching Grant program that was originally initiated to support the Soviet refugees in 1979. MG operates as an alternative to the basic Early Employment Services program funded under ORR’s Refugee Social Services grant. The ORR matching grant is discretionary, and local agencies compete with each other for access to the program. Participating local agencies then use their discretion to select certain refugees to enter the MG program based on a subjective “employability” assessment.

The MG program places emphasis on rapid employment. The manifest objective of the program is to help select refugees achieve “economic self-sufficiency” in the first four- to six-months after arrival while remaining independent of public cash assistance (“Code of Federal Regulations: Refugee Resettlement Program. Title 45, Chapter IV, Part 400, Subpart b.,” 2005; Halpern, 2008). In pursuit of this goal, the MG program offers enhanced supports and services,

for a shorter period of time. The MRA R&P manager describes MG as the “bells and whistles employment program.”

Matching Grant caseworkers use their discretion to select refugees for the MG program, and these clients are then removed from the R&P and EES programs. The support needs of those enrolled are provided by their MG caseworker. Compared to the basic R&P and EES programs, refugees in the MG program are to have access to the same level of medical services, more intensive social and employment services, and more individual case management, all for 180 days after arrival (Halpern, 2008). Implementing agencies are also required to give MG participants more generous cash and housing assistance albeit for a shorter period of only 120 days after arrival (Halpern, 2008). On the other hand, these same refugees are not eligible for RCA or any other form of public cash assistance until one month after their enrollment in the MG program ends.

MRA holds a MG contract with its NRA, and served between 45 – 60 clients between 2010 and 2012. RAISE does not hold a MG contract, although the agency did operate the program for one year in 2003. The ED explained why he dropped the program after such a short time:

There were a few reasons the program was a flop. We had low arrival numbers that year, so when we enrolled clients into Match, they poached the numbers from JFed, we had nothing to report for our basic employment program. And we couldn't risk losing that basic support. Also, [RAISE] does not have great coordination between finance and programming. And the reporting to ORR was onerous. But you know, really the question is why are there two classes of refugee citizenship in this country? Why if MG is so successful isn't it available to everyone? We opted out. If all our clients can't have it, we don't want it.

With each employment program contract requiring local implementing organizations to provide outcome statistics for unduplicated services, RAISE was unable to meet the numbers for both

contracts and erred on the side of the contract under which they could serve even their least employable clients. Further, this quote highlights the RAISE perspective on policy equity. This is an important point to which I will return in Chapter 6 and 7. Questions raised for this dissertation by the structure of the MG program include how MRA caseworkers make decisions about which refugees to select for enrollment, and how the presence of the MG program at MRA impacts service delivery when compared to RAISE where there is no MG program.

Unlike DOS, ORR has not made significant changes to these programs in recent years. As was explained earlier, the funding structure for the majority of these programs is formula-based and pegged to retroactive arrival numbers. The shifts in annual appropriations reflect the fluctuations in refugee arrivals that will be discussed in the following chapter. Table 8 shows annual ORR appropriations between 2007 and 2012, and total grant awards for the Refugee Cash and Medical Assistance programs, Match Grant, and Refugee Social Services program.

Table 9:  
ORR Annual Appropriations, Grant Awards by Type (2007 – 2012)

Fiscal Year	Total ORR Appropriations	Cash & Medical Assistance	Matching Grant	Social Services
2007	492,500,000	151,700,000	60,000,000	87,800,000
2008	655,600,000	187,700,000	60,000,000	85,000,000
2009	715,400,000	194,500,000	59,900,000	85,000,000
2010	730,800,000	214,300,000	65,300,000	84,800,000
2011	707,100,000	234,600,000	78,000,000	84,700,000
2012	768,300,000	238,300,000	65,300,000	84,400,000

(ORR 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012)

Table 9 shows the ORR grants to the state of Illinois for the Refugee Cash and Medical Assistance and Social Services programs. ORR does not report grant figures for Matching Grant by state, as these awards are made to NRAs, and while the NRAs do report total MG awards, they do not provide state level data.

Table 10:  
ORR Grants to Illinois for RCA/RMA and Social Services (2007 – 2012)

Fiscal Year	Cash & Medical Assistance	Social Services	Refugee Arrivals
2007	4,026,000	1,469,000	85
2008	5,626,128	1,559,824	950
2009	5,456,734	1,853,410	1,272
2010	9,019,000	2,203,000	1,136
2011	7,300,000	2,152,182	651
2012	5,765,000	2,169,796	762

(ORR 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012)

These complicated provisions effectively delegate considerable discretion to the refugee resettlement organizations that translate the policy into action. This policy structure raises questions for this dissertation about the informal organizational practices through which refugees are categorized, obtain access to different types of benefits, or are channeled into work-based programs. A major concern of this inquiry is how the discretionary practices of resettlement workers effectively resolve political conflicts embedded in formal resettlement policy, thereby shaping informal resettlement policy at the street-level.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE STRUCTURE OF RESETTLEMENT

Refugees enter the United States through a complicated admissions process, called the United States Refugee Admissions Program, and are then entitled to an array of supportive social policies, which are implemented by local resettlement organizations. The US policies of refugee selection for entry and admission have been studied elsewhere in great detail (Bon Tempo, 2008; Charlton et al., 1988; Gibney et al., 1992; McBride, 1999; Vialet, 1999; N. L. Zucker & Zucker, 1987). This chapter describes the mechanics of refugee resettlement at both the national and local levels, delineating the pertinent actors and exploring the stakes these actors have in the resettlement process. This chapter suggests that the higher an organization is in the institutional hierarchy, the more protected they are from financial consequences related to fluctuations of the numbers of refugees entering the country. Said another way, the highest level of risk lies with the local refugee resettlement organizations. Therefore, the institutional structure of refugee resettlement has implications for the ways in which local organizations are able to do their work, and an empirical analysis of this process follows in Chapters 5 and 6.

### **International Refugee Resettlement Institutions**

#### UNHCR: Finding Homes for the World's Refugees

Over eighty percent of the refugees resettled in the United States are first granted refugee status by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This designation is dependent on, among other things, a “well-founded fear of persecution” in the refugee’s country of origin. After granting this status, UNHCR has a mandate to protect refugees until they have found a “durable solution that will allow them to rebuild their lives in dignity and in peace” (UNHCR, 2011a).

There are three durable solutions that UNHCR works to achieve for the world’s refugees.

The first, UNHCR's preferable solution, is that the home country becomes safe enough so that the refugee can return home, a solution called voluntary repatriation. The second option is that the refugee is integrated into the country of first asylum. If neither of these options is possible, resettlement into a third country is the final durable solution. It is worth noting that when none of these options come about, many refugees stay in camps intended for temporary living, in some cases "warehoused" for generations (M. Smith, 2004).

In 2011, UNHCR estimated that there were 10.5 million refugees worldwide. Of these 172,196 were designated for third country resettlement (UNHCR, 2011a), for which there were only approximately 80,000 open resettlement spots around the world. In other words, countries engaged in resettlement were only prepared to accept 46% of the refugees waiting, a durable solution of last resort, and those 80,000 resettlement spots represented solutions for less than 1% of all the world's refugees. Of the countries with which UNHCR negotiates for resettlement, the United States offers the largest number of slots. By the end of 2011 there were 72,914 refugees resettled into a total of 28 resettlement countries, and 54,077 of them went to the United States.

The fact that the United States operates the world's largest resettlement program presents a conflict for UNHCR. A senior policy official explained that in his opinion, the Department of State "process is designed on quantity, not quality." When asked how he knew that the quality of the DOS resettlement program suffered, the official responded,

I don't know. That's the problem precisely. They do not measure quality. To be fair, they may not want to have a more thorough monitoring of integration outcomes because that might reveal poor services that they do not want to have come out. There could be a backlash of public support for the program if they came out with such data.

The challenge facing UNHCR is that it depends on the United States to provide a durable solution for as many refugees as possible, and advocating for the measurement of outcomes that

could cause a political backlash that might diminish the size of the US program would be problematic.

### BPRM and USCIS: The Gatekeepers to the United States

Once a refugee indicates to UNHCR agents that she is interested in applying for resettlement to the United States, UNHCR refers this applicant to one of the US overseas Refugee Processing Centers. Refugee Processing Centers are operated by international NGOs under contract with BPRM. At the Refugee Processing Center the applicant submits to a preliminary screening process to determine if she is found to fit one of the US priority groups for resettlement. There are three priority groups for the United States Refugee Admissions Program. Priority One (P1) cases are individuals referred by UNHCR, an NGO, or an Embassy. All nationalities are eligible for the P1 category. The Priority Two (P2) category is reserved for specific groups within certain nationalities. These groups are designated by the State Department. Examples of P2 groups designated for 2011 are Iraqis associated with the US government and the Bhutanese people from Nepal. The Priority Three (P3) category is for family reunification cases for designated nationalities. If the refugee fits into one of these groups, she continues in the application process with a thorough security screening and background check by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS). Once the refugee has passed these security measures she and her immediate family are referred to a Cultural Orientation class at the Refugee Processing Center.

2011 proved to bring an exceptionally low number of resettlement cases into the United States. Barbara Strack, Chief of the Refugee Affairs Division of USCIS within the US Department of Homeland Security, explains that in November 2010, an additional security check was added to the screening process for refugees destined to the United States. This check is



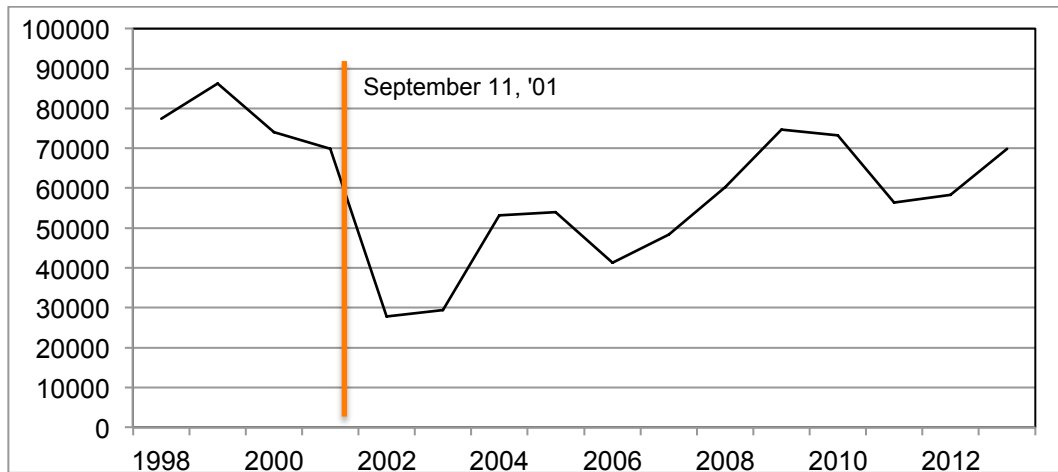
timed shortly before departure and was initially used in the processing of refugee applicants out of Iraq. USCIS reports that this screening supposedly found “bad actors” trying to get in to the country through the refugee system. Ms. Strack explains that one unfortunate and unintended consequence of the additional security step is the “extreme disruption of departures,” due in part to a screening backlog. “Anytime you disrupt a pipeline it is very difficult to get back on track” (Strack, 2011). As a result of the backlog created by security screening measures, the original projected pipeline capacity of 90,000 for 2011 was reduced to less than 60,000. USCIS is able to control the flow of refugees into the country, and one question this dissertation asks is what happens at the service delivery level when the flow of refugees is diminished to far below the anticipated level.

### **The United States Refugee Admissions Program**

The number of refugees to enter the United States is not solely determined by USCIS. Each year, the president, with the consultation of Congress, sets a ceiling on the number of possible refugee admissions to the United States. The final number of refugees that actually arrive in any given year is determined in part by the presence of refugee producing conflicts, by travel delays due to safety concerns or other processing issues on the part of the government institutions involved in admissions procedures, by foreign policy and the strategic use of resettlement, and by domestic politics which is impacted by tensions between restrictionists, who want to curtail refugee admissions, and advocates who support a robust admissions program (Barnett, 2006; Berman, 2012; Bruno, 2013; Kerwin, 2012; Lugar, 2010; Martin, 2005; Newland, 1995; USRAP, 2012). In the few years leading up to September 11, 2001 refugee admissions hovered around 70,000 or 80,000 depending on the annual cap. Following the attacks, USCIS briefly halted all refugee screening and travel to the United States, and only

slowly opened the bureaucratic processes up again. As a result refugee admission numbers dropped dramatically. Although admissions since then have followed an overall trajectory of upward growth, Figure 3 shows how drastic the year-to-year fluctuations have been.

Figure 3:  
Refugee Arrivals to the United States (1998 – 2013)

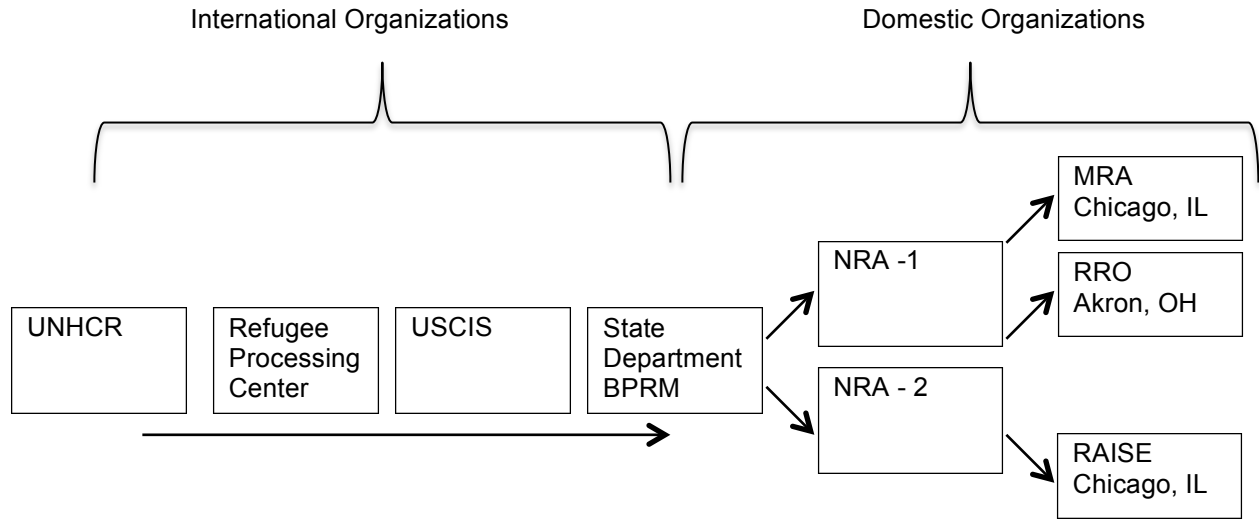


(ORR 2002, 2006, 2012; Refugee Processing Center 2012)

### **Refugee Allocations for Resettlement in the United States**

Getting refugees to their final resettlement destination in the United States involves many institutional actors, and many steps. Figure 4 provides a depiction of the flow of refugees through the pipeline of this institutional system.

Figure 4: The Institutional Flow of Refugee Clients



The United States resettlement process is administered by nine National Resettlement Agencies based in New York and the D.C. area. These NRAs are contracted with BPRM to oversee the entry and transportation of refugees and deliver services to them for 90 days under the Reception and Placement Program. The NRAs each have a network of local refugee resettlement organizations scattered throughout the country with which they subcontract for implementation of the R&P program. A list of NRAs operating in 2010-2012 is found in Table 10 along with the total number of RROs each NRA has affiliations with.

Table 11:  
National Refugee Agencies and Affiliated RROs (2010–2012)

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops	100+
Episcopal Migration Ministries	30
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants	30
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services	25
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society	24
World Relief	23
International Rescue Committee	22
Church World Service	21
Ethiopian Community Development Council	11

The allocation of refugees through this pipeline follows an intricate and multi-level process. Understanding the way this process works is crucial in developing an understanding of

the potential impact on local resettlement organizations, yet very few of the management personnel at the local RROs interviewed for this study had a clear view of refugee allocations. The following explanation will provide essential background for the empirical analysis in Chapters 5 and 6, while also offering those local RROs an explanation of the system that so impacts their work.

Annually, DOS assigns each NRA a target percentage of all refugee arrivals for that agency to resettle. For example, Church World Service might be given a target of 12 percent of all arriving refugees for the year, while the US Conference of Catholic Bishops might be assigned 20 percent, and so on, until all incoming refugees are accounted for by the target percentages of the nine NRAs. According to the NRA and BPRM staff interviewed for this study, these annual NRA target percentages are the result of a tightly protected calculus that includes the NRA's self-identified projected capacity, called the Consolidated Placement Plan,<sup>1</sup> the NRA's most recent annual resettlement numbers (which annually can fall above or below projected capacity), as well as some measure of service quality.

Each week DOS hosts an allocations meeting. The meeting itself is described in the following section. Prior to the meeting DOS assesses how close each NRA is to its target percentage of refugees, and the agency that is farthest behind is given priority in that week's meeting. Priority is recognized by the order in which the NRAs will take turns selecting from the list of approved refugees. As an example, an NRA which is designated to receive 12 percent of the total amount of refugees for 2011 will have its weekly allocation numbers slightly altered by

---

<sup>1</sup> The NRAs Consolidated Placement Plan (CPP) consists of all the individual capacity statements from each of the NRA local affiliates, an abstract describing the strengths of the entire affiliate network, and a chart displaying which regions of origin the NRA can serve refugees from. This CPP is negotiated with BPRM until a final capacity for the NRA network is agreed upon. In its assessment of the CPP, BPRM holds a panel review to consider past placement performance of the NRA and strengths and weaknesses of the CPP.

DOS to account for any surplus of refugees that NRA resettled the prior week, or to compensate the NRA if they received less than 12 percent of the prior week's refugees. In this way, the national NRAs are constantly monitored by DOS, and are kept in balance on a weekly basis. Regardless of how drastically refugee admissions vary from week to week, the NRAs can rely on this system to distribute a predictable percentage of refugee clients.

According to agency records, the NRAs are almost completely funded by government contracts (CWS, 2011; IRC, 2011; LIRS, 2011; USCCB, 2011; USCRI, 2011; WRC, 2011). NRA staff explain that the size of the contract reflects, but is not wholly determined by, the percentage share of the total allocation pool held by each NRA. In short, NRAs earn more money if they resettle more refugees, yet some portion of their contract with BPRM is guaranteed regardless of the quantity of refugees they resettle. As a result, the NRAs are somewhat buffered from financial impact in the case of a slowdown in refugee arrivals. Nevertheless, one BPRM key informant interviewed for this study expressed the opinion that NRAs prioritize the percentage of allocations they receive, "with a focus on funding and competition to get bigger, rather than on the quality of services they provide."

#### The Pipeline Part I: The Allocations Meeting

Each week DOS issues to the nine national NRAs a list of all the refugees approved for resettlement from around the world. The list includes basic information such as the number of individuals in each case, their age and gender, the country of origin, and the country of asylum from which the refugee is traveling. Any extreme medical needs are also listed. In an interview conducted as background for this study, a top-level refugee policy professional at UNHCR explained that BPRM limits the amount of information it provides to the NRAs about the arriving refugees because "PRM does not want cherry picking on the part of the agencies."

However, cherry picking is an appropriate term to categorize the behavior observed at the allocations meeting and described below.

The day after the refugee list is disseminated, representatives from each NRA gather at the closed-door allocations meeting, in which the roster of refugees is divvied up. The DOS allocation meeting was observed as a part of the data collection for this study, and participants in the meetings provided interviews that clarified questions that arose in the field.

Refugee allocation is not at all a random process; there are five organized and discrete steps, each of which depends on two basic refugee categories. Refugees are divided into groups that reflect those with “US ties,” and those without. A US tie is someone with whom the refugee has a prior affiliation or relationship. Refugees who, identified a US tie in their initial application for resettlement are pre-assigned by DOS for resettlement to the same community as their tie. A BPRM policy staff person interviewed for this study explains that this policy of US tie placement priority is meant to address the problem of early “secondary migration.” Secondary migration is when a refugee moves away from the community in which they are resettled. Refugees have reported various reasons for secondary migration, including wanting to move to the city where they have US ties (Stevan Merrill Weine et al., 2011). In an interview conducted for this study, a top level policy informant at ORR explained that there are various policy problems created by secondary migration, including that it becomes more challenging for ORR to target resources to resettling communities when the refugees move from one community to another. Interviews with allocations representatives from the NRAs revealed other issues that arrive due to secondary migration, including that the phenomenon demonstrates that refugees are not being served sufficiently in their original resettling community, that refugees are “voting with their feet by migrating away from one site and to another.”

The policy of placement priority for refugees with US ties also has implications for the allocations system. Only an NRA with an affiliated RRO in community X can be involved in the selection process for refugees with US ties in community X. Where there are multiple RROs operating in one community, and multiple refugees destined for that community based on their US ties, the respective NRA's take turns selecting from this pool of refugees.

*Step One: Stand-Alone and Dual Sites*

The first step in the allocations process takes up refugee cases that, due to their US ties, are designated for "stand-alone" and "dual" sites. Stand-alone sites are those communities in which only one NRA has one local RRO implementing resettlement services, and dual sites are those communities in which only two NRAs have a local implementing RRO. For example, in Manchester, VT there is only one RRO run by one of the national NRAs. Since this is the only NRA represented in Manchester, if there is a refugee with a US tie in Manchester, that refugee must be allocated to the NRA with the affiliated RRO in Manchester.

At this phase of allocations the NRAs with a smaller overall percentage of allocations allotted to them are greatly affected. For every refugee they are allocated for their stand-alone sites, they will have fewer refugees they can take from the later rounds of the allocations. In the case of one of the national NRAs which has the majority of its affiliated RROs in stand-alone and dual site communities, and only 12 percent of the overall share of weekly refugees allotted to them, it is quite possible that they fill their weekly quota of total refugees before they are able to resettle refugees for their affiliated RROs in larger resettling communities. Said another way, RROs affiliated with this particular NRA, but located in cities with multiple other RROs, are at a real disadvantage when it comes to refugee allocations.

### *Step Two: Almost-Impacted Sites*

The next step in the allocations meeting involves those refugees with US ties in cities that BPRM has deemed –based on the existing refugee population—as less-than-ideal for further resettlement. These cities are called “almost-impacted” sites. For example, in 2009 it was decided that San Diego had received so many refugees that local affiliated RROs were challenged to find resources for new groups. As a result, BPRM aimed to limit refugee allocations to San Diego. However, due to the priority placement policy, if an arriving refugee had a US tie in San Diego, that refugee was given a placement priority by BPRM to resettle there.

Refugees designated for almost-impacted sites are treated as special cases in allocations since such careful consideration must be given to the balance of resources and demand in these communities. When I asked NRA staff how they resolve the problem of allocations to almost impacted sites, one informant explained that if one of the NRAs with an affiliated RRO in San Diego expresses in the meeting that their local RRO does not have the resources to resettle clients that week, then an internal honor system between the nine national NRAs creates some pressure for another NRA with an affiliate in San Diego to take the case off their hands. The informant explains, “This part of the meeting can be quite tense, but there is also playing nice with each other.”

The system for considering stand-alone, dual, and almost-impacted resettlement sites warrants consideration for several reasons. First, these considerations are necessary because the system is based on situated local organizations. Place does matter in refugee allocations, but not strictly in the ways the literature on place and social service provision has theorized its



significance (Allard, 2009). In this case, place matters insofar as RROs are differently affected by refugee allocations depending on how many other RROs operate in the same community, and because RROs depend on their local community partners for input in the resettlement process. As other research has shown, if the local community is stressed by refugee resettlement, then local partners are less likely to willingly provide resettlement support (GAO, 2012). Second, the policy of placement priority for refugees with US ties demonstrates the level of institutional commitment to solving the problem of incorrectly anticipating refugee resettlement patterns. There are other possible ways to structure funding refugee resettlement services that would not prioritize refugees staying in one place. For example, refugees could be given purchasing power and local resettlement agencies could be structured on a fee-for-service model, in which refugees paid for the services they wanted. The model that currently exists does not give refugees this power however. Rather, the system is structured so that the resettlement institutions are funded to provide services, refugees are placed in proximity to these agencies, and if the refugee moves away she essentially loses her eligibility for RRO support. Thus the placement priority policy serves, in part, to ensure that refugees are less likely to migrate away from their resettlement organization.

*Steps Three Through Five: The Allocation Rounds – A Draft for Refugees*

Once the special location considerations are out of the way, the “rounds” system begins. In the rounds the weekly refugee list is divided into three allocation sub-groups: the first “pool” of allocations is reserved for medical cases with special resettlement needs for refugees who have no US ties. In this pool each refugee represents a single round of what I call the refugee draft. The NRA with the lowest percentage of arrivals left over from the previous week makes the first selection in the draft, the allocations representative runs down the list of refugees and

selects a single refugee they want to resettle. In the allocations meeting observed for this study the claiming of a refugee in this pool consisted of the allocations representative calling out, “I’ll take 3,” referring to the DOS-assigned case number of the refugee on the list. There was no discussion of the actual refugee, what their medical condition required in terms of care, or any other explanation of the selection. Next, the NRA with the second lowest percentage of resettled cases selects one refugee case they are willing to resettle. The round continues until each NRA has made one selection. The draft continues with each NRA claiming one refugee at a time until all the refugees in the no-US ties medical pool have been selected for resettlement.

The second pool of refugees to be allocated contains refugees with US ties in communities not already considered in steps one and two. In the week I observed the allocations meeting, this particular pool had 17 individual refugees in each round. What this means is that the first round of this pool is only over when each NRA<sup>2</sup> has selected 17 refugees, or as close to 17 refugees as they can get given the total number of refugees they have been allotted for the week. At this point the pool would go back around the allocations table in a second round until all the US ties cases have been distributed. These refugees are already destined for specific US cities, so the NRAs are somewhat constrained in that they can only take refugees for the cities where they have affiliate offices.

The final allocation pool contains the refugees with no US-ties. This pool follows the same system as the US-ties pool, although the round size is typically smaller and there are far fewer refugees in this pool than in the US-ties pool. An NRA representative explained that the no-US-ties is the most coveted group because these refugees can be sent anywhere in the

---

<sup>2</sup> For this and the final pool the NRAs go around the table in alphabetical order, insuring that there is no systematic skewing of selection advantage between NRAs. The pool begins each week with a new NRA, running through the alphabetical order.

country. This means that the NRA can control where these refugees go.

So I have to actually examine and analyze and say, “Oh! Our North Carolina office is really, really good. Let’s take some of the no-US-tie cases and give them to Chicago, because they’re trailing behind in their numbers.” So I try. We have to maneuver, we have to juggle, you know, these numbers and these arrivals almost on a daily basis in the last quarter to make actually, to try to make this pipeline as even as possible. Because we would not like to see an affiliate that is receiving, let’s say – they projected 370 people and we see they have about 325, and we have another affiliate that projected 110 and they’re only at 25 and it’s August! My god! They have a lot of catch up to do!

This key informant explains that she bases her decision about placing no-US-tie cases on the needs and capacities of her local affiliated RROs, and that this process is used to try and “even” out the pipeline. Because refugees with no US-ties can be sent anywhere in the country, these particular refugees represent the potential for the NRA to help manage the flow of resources to their local, affiliated RROs. If a particular RRO resettles so many refugees in one month and is then in danger of reaching their service capacity, the NRA might choose to stem the flow of clients to that RRO. On the other hand, if an RRO has gone through a period with fewer refugees to serve, the NRA might choose to allocate a greater number of no-US-ties clients to that site to bolster the RRO’s client load. In either case, whether and how many clients the RRO receives is controlled by the NRA, and not by the RRO itself.

Another NRA representative explained how he thinks about the allocation of the coveted no-US-ties cases:

My job is to make sure we have equal numbers across the network. It keeps me up at night. But I also have to respond to what is happening in the field. I mean, are they doing a good job? I’ll send ‘em what I have. Are they struggling? I might send the free ones somewhere else that week.

This representative also seems to profoundly understand the stakes the RROs have in this draft process, but evening out the pipeline is not the only consideration he has, he also refers to

rewarding affiliates who have done “good work,” in some cases holding back refugee arrivals for agencies that have been overwhelmed.

Due to the structure of the allocations system, it is not until the no-US-ties cases are considered that the NRA can control the distribution of refugees in their network. In a given week some NRAs might not participate in the no-US-tie pool because their allotted numbers were already filled. Ultimately this means that although the impact of the pipeline on the arrival patterns for local affiliates might be quite dramatic, the NRAs are only somewhat capable of protecting or advocating for their local affiliates. One of the NRA allocations representatives interviewed for this study explained her frustration with her limited ability to look out for her network of RROs:

2010 was my favorite year ever. I wasn't playing this horrible game of “Let me take this person. You take that one.” There was a larger number of free cases so I could really think about my agencies and say, like “Here is what you get because that is what you asked for.” Now I feel like it's everything I can do to get my affiliates to 70 percent of projected capacity.

The following chapter offers an empirical analysis of how MRA and RAISE adapted to a context in which refugee allocations dropped dramatically, and asks how the provision of R&P services were impacted by this factor, among others.

#### The Pipeline Part II: Uncertainty at the Street-Level

The local RRO plays a part in the allocations process by determining its own internal capacity to serve refugee clients, although this determination did not prove to resolve the practical dilemmas that fluctuations in refugee arrivals caused during this study. Each year the local, affiliated RROs send their NRA a projected number of refugees they plan to serve for the upcoming fiscal year. The R&P manager at MRA explains that the agency bases this capacity

statement on the number of refugees served in the prior year, balanced with the other service grants the agency holds and its internally assessed capacity to serve refugees after the R&P grant funds from BPRM are exhausted. MRA sends its capacity statement to the NRA for review. The R&P manager explains that the NRA often requires MRA to raise its capacity numbers, and has “not once requested that the capacity statement be lowered, not once.”

The problem with basing agency budgets on the capacity numbers is that these numbers are neither a guarantee of refugee clients, nor of the timing when clients will arrive. One local RRO director interviewed for this study explains that the office keeps “three sets of budgets,” one for BPRM with the projected arrivals represented, one for the Board of Directors that shows a more “realistic” arrival figure with the corresponding per capita funds included, and a final set for internal use that shows how few refugee arrivals the agency can receive while still keeping its doors open. This explanation reveals that the risks of low refugee arrivals are profoundly understood at the local management level.

### *Feast and Famine*

As the previous section explained, the capacity statement is only a smart part of the calculus that determines if a local RRO actually receives refugee clients. In practice, the capacity number seems to be more of a figurative ceiling for allocations. The actual number of refugees that each agency received often fluctuated dramatically from month to month and from year to year. Table 12 shows the annual numbers of clients each agency in this study projected and the number they received.

Table 12: Annual Capacity Statement Figures and Actual Arrivals (Individuals)

Year	Capacity Statement	MRA	RAISE
		Arrivals	Capacity* Statement Arrivals
2008	459	346	400 586
2009	460	201	435 509
2010	460	173	454 475
2011	460	102	525 264

\* This number reflects three capacity statements for RAISE, one for each NRA with whom the agency is affiliated for allocations.

Observation at both MRA and RAISE management meetings revealed a focus on anticipating clients numbers and problem-solving when these numbers were either high or low. At one such RAISE meeting the Program Director told her staff, “we have six families on Wednesday, five more on Thursday. It’s going to be crazy so everyone be prepared to do whatever you have to.” With eleven families arriving at the airport within twenty-four hours of each other, the agency staff had to manage the logistics of transportation of people and luggage, apartment set-up, grocery shopping, and intake meetings. In this case, the logistics worked out without a hitch; no luggage was lost, and no clients missed any intake meetings. However, the toll for this surge in the R&P program seemed to be paid by the staff. The housing department worked several twelve-hour days, the case managers put all their current clients on hold while they worked overtime to process the new clients. And the way in which services were provided to clients changed in this busy context. A case manager explained, “When they come like this I don’t even worry about really trying to connect with them the way I normally do. I mean, there will be time for that, and they are tired anyway. But it’s all I can do to remember which family I am talking to!” Chapter 5 provides a more complete analysis of how the R&P housing department adapted to the changing conditions of feast and famine in client arrivals.

Observation of the R&P program at MRA in 2011 provided an example of the impact of

a severe dip in refugee arrivals. In 2010 the agency received 173 clients, but in 2011 just 102 refugee clients arrived (46 family cases). By the end of 2011 MRA was carrying a deficit of \$53,517 in the R&P program. The R&P manager let one case manager go in November and reduced the second case manager's hours by half. In addition, upper management requested that one of the program managers accept a 25 percent pay reduction in order to try and make up some lost revenue and stem the growing deficit in the R&P budget. This context led to low staff morale, as evidenced by this quote from an interview with one of the R&P staff: "It's pretty depressing to work in refugee resettlement and then have no refugees." The impact of this context on service delivery is analyzed in the following chapter.

This chapter has analyzed the institutional structure of refugee resettlement, and the system of allocations through which refugees are distributed to local RROs across the country. This system of allocations has important implications for local RROs. Due to the requirement that refugees with US-ties resettle near their contacts, and the large number of local, affiliated RROs in their networks, the NRAs have limited ability to control the distribution of refugee clients among these RROs. Local RROs are left adapting to a structure that mandates the provision of services without permitting the RRO to control the number of refugee clients, or the timing of their arrival. In order to understand how this unreliable and unstable admissions and allocation system impacts service delivery at the local level, the following chapters provide an empirical analysis of the implementation of the DOS Reception and Placement program and the ORR Early Employment and Matching Grant programs at two local RROs.

## CHAPTER FIVE: RESETTLEMENT IN PRACTICE - HOUSING REFUGEES

*“How much longer can we put people in apartments that cost a thousand dollars when they make \$8.50 an hour?”*

– Refugee Resettlement Program Manager

### **Introduction**

This chapter systematically examines policy implementation by two RROs in Chicago. It seeks to contribute to an understanding of how the federal government is faring in its goal of supporting refugees in their transition to life in the United States. Its particular focus is the housing mandate of the Department of State Reception and Placement program, and it shows how this program is implemented by local refugee resettlement organizations in Chicago, and what organizational factors impact service delivery. Although RROs typically implement multiple programs and are supported through many different funding streams, this chapter focuses on the R&P program because it can be argued that this program provides the initial building blocks for a refugee’s successful transition (Schwartz, 2010).

Among the goods and services that implementing RROs are mandated to provide is initial housing since it can stabilize the individual or family, so that they from there gain access to the labor market and otherwise thrive in their new country (BPRM, 2009). DOS provides local RROs with per capita payments intended to defray resettlement costs incurred during the 90-day period. Each new refugee client served by the RRO is associated with this one-time grant to the agency, so RROs rely on the arrival of refugee clients for the receipt of R&P funds. Unfortunately, the flow of refugees to the United States has fluctuated over time, and further, the assignment of refugee clients to the local RROs is neither consistent nor reliable. In spite of the commonly held view that the R&P program provides crucial transition assistance for refugees,



this dissertation joins other research in identifying structural instabilities in the program (Brick et al., 2010).

This chapter analyzes the housing policies and practices at the Refugee Agency for Integration, Self Sufficiency, and Equality, and at the Midwest Refugee Agency. There are two key findings in this chapter. First, when the instability of the federal client allocation and funding system is not mitigated at the local level with supplemental resources, there are negative consequences for the employment stability of agency staff. Second, in the context of contract terms and performance mandates and fluctuating and unreliable client arrivals, local RROs differ in their ability to secure sanitary housing based on the internal resources of the agency and the extent to which workers were able to prioritize capacity building through relationships with local community partners. These findings suggest that the instability of the R&P system, which has only marginal impact on the NRAs, is only truly felt at the local level. Agency staff levels are one resource that management can control when budgets shrink, and therefore staff positions are not secure. Further, these findings suggest that refugees are subject to varying quality of services depending on which RRO they are resettled by.

### **Organizational Context**

The previous chapters have provided the essential background for a street-level analysis of R&P policy implementation at RAISE and MRA. Chapter 2 explained how the two RROs are structured and what organizational resources they each bring to bear on the problem of delivering services to their refugee clients. Chapter 3 analyzed the formal statutes and associated policies that provide the framework in which these agencies operate. And Chapter 4 drew the institutional map in which these RROs are located and explained that both refugee client allocations and the federal per capita grant support for these clients are resources that the RROs do not control.

This chapter begins with the particular context in which RAISE and MRA operate. The analysis begins with an overview of the housing programs in each agency and a narrow focus on the housing mandates included in the R&P program. The chapter then raises analytic questions about the housing policy that takes shape in each agency. This question is addressed using data collected from direct observation of daily housing-related practices at each agency, attendance at staff meetings, interviews with front-line and management staff, and a systematic review of housing-related documents and contracts.

### RAISE Housing Program

The Reception and Placement program at RAISE is divided across multiple departments within the agency. Among these is the housing department, which handles all of the pre-arrival tasks related to the R&P housing mandates, including selecting client housing, setting up the apartments and placing clients into housing units, as well as some post-arrival housing tasks such as managing and maintaining relationships with local landlords.

The manager of RAISE's housing department was one of six mid-level managers and reported directly to the agency's program director. The department's direct access to mid- and senior-level management is hypothesized to be an added resource for the program. The housing staff included one full-time worker, who had worked at RAISE since shortly after being resettled by the agency four years prior, and a housing intern. The presence of specialized housing staff represents a resource that was unique to RAISE. The staff in the housing department identified their specialization in housing as the core of their jobs. One member of the housing department described her job this way: "It's all up to me, and it's all on me. We have twenty clients coming, they need apartments, or we have four clients coming, they need apartments. And I have a lot of leeway to come up with stuff, which I really like. I think that that is part of why I have been here

for four years.” Another member of the department explained his process as I shadowed him during an apartment set-up:

Well, I come once to clean, I mean really clean. They always say, “broom clean” but it’s never really clean. I come back to drop off furniture. Then once with groceries, you know, fill the fridge. Then I come to meet the deliveries. We get the bed frames dropped off. I have to come back after the [church group] for my final check. They don’t do it like I like it.

These workers indicate that their identities are formed around their housing-related tasks. They both express pride in the work they do, in one case securing housing and in the other case setting up.

The RAISE housing department was funded, for the most part, with the DOS R&P grant. The salaries of the staff in the housing department came from the administrative portion of these funds, while program-related R&P funds were spent exclusively on client-related costs such as furnishings and rent. In the housing program, RAISE supplemented the DOS R&P grant with substantial funds from private donors and fund-raising events. The majority of supplemental funds were used to pay for client rental costs. The housing manager explains:

We raise private funds because we know the government money isn’t enough. And that’s just thinking about month one. This doesn’t even count the rent for the next month, so... we don’t want anyone to end up homeless or to have any big problems. So we keep paying.

RAISE has a policy of paying the first month of each client’s rent in full, as mandated by the R&P contract. In addition, RAISE’s housing policy required refugee clients to pay \$150 of the cash from their public assistance benefits towards their rent in months two and three, while RAISE subsidized the balance of the rent costs. After the third month, RAISE assessed each client’s level of compliance with the employment department in order to determine if rental subsidies would continue. RAISE’s program manager said that the agency paid for more than

\$200,000 in rental subsidies in 2011, over and above the costs covered by the DOS R&P grant. The extent to which RAISE was able to subsidize so much client rental costs set it apart from MRA, an important point to which I will return.

#### MRA Housing Program

Unlike RAISE, MRA did not have a housing department per se. Rather, refugee housing was handled within the agency's R&P program. In 2011, the MRA R&P program had a manager, two caseworkers, and a revolving set of interns.

MRA's two R&P caseworkers were responsible for the same major housing-related tasks as the RAISE housing staff: the selection of housing, apartment set-up, and the placement of clients into housing. However, as caseworkers, the MRA R&P staff had many other responsibilities beyond housing refugee clients. One caseworker noted, "Other agencies have people who deal with all the housing stuff, I mean if we didn't have to do that we could spend our time actually doing our jobs, spending time with participants and stuff." This observation demonstrates that this worker derives satisfaction from his interactions with his clients, so much so that he defines his job in terms of his ability to make time for this activity. And yet, he was responsible for securing housing for his clients as well. The staffing structure at MRA put the R&P workers in the position of having to balance multiple roles, and the caseworker's quote implies that one role was more heavily valued than the other. These circumstances raise questions about the ways in which MRA caseworkers adapted as they performed housing related tasks while trying to balance the host of other responsibilities they had.

MRA had a policy of paying for the first month of rent in full, as per the DOS mandate. Unlike RAISE however, MRA required its clients to pay all their public assistance cash toward their rental costs in the second and third months, while MRA subsidized the balance of rent in

these months. After the third month it was expected that the clients would be employed and earning enough to pay the entire rent.

## **The Department of State Reception and Placement Program**

### Reception & Placement Housing Mandates

As Chapter 3 explained, the Reception and Placement contract requires local RROs to provide some core housing-related services for the arriving refugee or refugee family. The language of the contract is very specific about some of its mandates, and yet also includes vague demands that leave interpretation up to the implementing organization. Furthermore, the contract allows for the RRO to use some discretion in the way it fulfills its mandates. The street-level perspective draws attention to all these aspects of the contract and calls into question the way workers adapt to contract demands. Mandated services include: finding and securing “safe” housing for the client, setting up the apartment prior to arrival, escorting the client to the apartment, and paying for a minimum of one month of rent for the apartment. In exchange for providing these services and assets on behalf of the DOS, the local agency receives \$1,850 in per capita payments to be divided between administrative and client-support costs.

Many of the DOS housing requirements are to be prepared prior to the refugee’s arrival in the United States. As with other aspects of the contract, an agency must deal with requirements for pre-arrival housing preparation that are both very specific and incredibly vague. As an illustrative example, one local agency follows a *Core Services Checklist*<sup>1</sup> that requires secure “decent, safe, and sanitary housing” that is also “affordable based on projected family

---

<sup>1</sup> DOS issues an annual *Cooperative Agreement* to the nine NRAs, which then issue mandates to their subcontracted local affiliated RROs. The *Core Services Checklist* referred to here is disseminated by one NRA and is understood to represent the requirements of the DOS.

income and accommodates known disabilities to the extent possible.”<sup>2</sup> This requirement makes it clear that the agency must provide a place for the arriving refugee. The rest of the mandate leaves much to be determined by the agency and caseworker. Questions that follow such directives are: on what basis should a caseworker project family income? How should a worker resolve the problem they face when trying to find an apartment with rent costs within the budget of a family living on Public Aid (or at best making a low-level living wage) that is also “sanitary?” What are the conditions that make up “safe” housing? Who decides whether or not a refugee is in fact safe once placed in the apartment?

If caseworkers turn to the DOS *Cooperative Agreement* for clarification of the DOS definition of safety they would read (in 2012) that housing should meet the “federal housing quality standards or local or state standards if local or state standards are higher than federal standards.” This requires the caseworkers to be familiar with federal, state, and local housing standards, as well as to take responsibility for differentiating the level of hierarchy between these three.<sup>3</sup>

If the idea of safe and secure housing lacks a detailed definition, DOS is very clear about how to account for the items on the required list of goods to be placed in the refugee’s apartment prior to arrival. One of the national NRAs issues to its affiliate agencies an official *List of Goods*

---

<sup>2</sup> In the case of refugees who have relationships with people in the US (commonly referred to as having “US ties”) who are willing to house them, the local agency must assess the available housing and ensure that it is up to the standard they believe the DOS would accept; If the DOS sends a contract compliance monitor to look at the housing of refugee clients, they are just as likely to go visit a refugee who is living with US ties as one who is not. For refugees who arrive without US ties willing to house them, the local agency is responsible for locating and securing this housing.

<sup>3</sup> The DOS *Cooperative Agreement* does go on to clarify some additional, and much more clearly defined criteria for safe refugee housing. For example, the agreement states that there should be “no visible bare wiring, no peeling or flaking interior paint for dwellings built before 1978, no visible mold,” and that housing should include “fire extinguishers in accessible locations where required.” While this list of criteria may be interpreted by the caseworker as a DOS definition of safety, it in no way guarantees that a refugee will actually feel safe in an apartment. In several instances during this study refugees chose to move out of the apartments provided to them, citing safety concerns. These concerns never included the presence of flaking paint or absence of a fire extinguisher, but rather were consistently focused on the presence of neighbors deemed to be threatening.

*to be Provided*, which comes with the following instructions:

Please ensure that you use this form as a way of documenting that the case received each item *as required*. Every item listed must be provided and recorded on this list. If a refugee refuses an item please indicate on this form and document the reason in the case notes. Please also feel free to use this form to record other items distributed to refugees during the R&P period. Whenever possible, households should be set-up prior to arrival with all required goods. *This form must be signed by the PA as an acknowledgement of goods received by the 90<sup>th</sup> day.*

The document then goes on to list a very specific set of items to be provided. As an example, the agency must provide a “mattress - twin/double,” with the stipulation that, “only married couples and small children of the same sex may be expected to share beds.” The list also requires the agency to provide a “box spring, bed frame, kitchen chairs (one per person).” Various other household items listed also come with specific instructions: “One place setting of dishes (plate, bowl and cup) per person,” “one toothbrush per person,” and “hangers (20 per person).” On the other hand, some required items come with vague explanations such as, “baby items as needed,” and, “culturally appropriate, ready-to-eat food.” For a refugee family consisting of two parents and two teenaged children getting resettled into a two-bedroom apartment, agencies would be required to provide 178 different items, not including food.

#### Department of State Performance Standards

The 2012 DOS *Cooperative Agreement* lists a formal set of performance standards against which the agencies are to be measured. These include vaguely worded criteria including that the refugee be “placed in a safe dwelling,” “placed in an affordable dwelling,” and “has basic necessities.” The contract states that the DOS will evaluate performance “on an ongoing basis,” and that if the contracted agency fails to comply with the agreement, DOS could halt funds to support ongoing resettlement.

In practice, during onsite monitoring of RAISE and MRA, federal monitoring agents selected four refugee cases at each agency and visited these clients in their apartments. The agents completed written reports that included observations from these home visits as well as findings from interviews with the refugee clients. Housing related topics discussed at debriefing meetings between federal agents and resettlement agency management and staff, which were observed for this study, included: missing items from the required list of goods, maintenance issues, the presence of pests and bedbug infestations, rental costs, and the “sense of safety” reported by the client. The federal agents’ focus on these select issues, and inclusion of findings pertaining to these issues in the written report, provided an incentive for the workers at RAISE and MRA to focus their attention on these issues as well. The questions raised here are how the workers at each agency responded to this incentive, and with what consequences for the housing experience of refugee clients. These questions, as well as the findings from the monitoring, are taken up in the following analysis.

### **Street Level Analysis**

#### **Adaptations to Fluctuating Refugee Arrival Numbers**

Both RAISE and MRA dealt with fluctuations in the number of refugee arrivals each month and this section analyzes the different strategies used by each agency to adapt to these fluctuations. The analytic question is: how did different agency conditions lead to different strategies for coping with inconsistent and unreliable client allocations and with what consequences for staffing, funding, and ultimately, for street-level performance as it related to refugee housing?

At RAISE, refugee arrivals in 2010 followed a pattern that management called predictable, with some dips in numbers at the start of the year, and higher numbers in mid-



summer. During this time the housing staff was paid from the administrative portion of the DOS R&P grant.

When refugee arrivals slowed in 2011, and the per capita grants dwindled, RAISE management paid the housing staff salaries out of the general operating funds that were raised by the ED and Board of Directors. During these same months, the housing staff spent their time building the department's internal capacity, and the housing manager required her staff to expand their daily routines to include some of the tasks of the other departments. For example, in October of 2011 there were only one or two refugee families arriving each week. The housing staff-person in charge of apartment set-up spent one morning driving around Chicago looking for discount furniture stores where he intended to create a new relationship for an alternative source of bedframes and mattresses. At each location he interviewed the salespeople, asking them about delivery costs and timetables. When asked about how he was spending his time, the RAISE staff-person explained, "It won't always be like it is now, I have to prepare, to be ready for that rush and to know I can get things in order for the family of six if they come." This worker seemed to be looking forward, to be mindful of the need to build his capacity now for dealing with a surge in refugee arrivals later. At the same time, the housing manager required the housing staff-person to spend the afternoons helping out in the youth program by picking up and dropping off youth participants in the agency van.

Refugee arrival numbers increased again at RAISE in early 2012 and the youth program driving responsibility was passed off to another staff person while the housing staff returned to a singular focus on housing tasks. During a typical week of busy arrivals the housing program secured and set up five or six apartments. On one particular day, the staff fielded furniture deliveries at two apartments, purchased and delivered a week's worth of groceries to one of the

units, and deep-cleaned a third unit. The deep cleaning included mopping, bleaching, changing light bulbs, and switching a sink faucet. The attention to detail and meticulous apartment preparation was something the housing staff-person spoke of with pride. Even during this busy time, he did not let details go unattended. The housing manager described how she perceived the work ethic of her staff-person, and their relationship as a housing team: “I’m pretty uptight about this stuff. But so is [Michael].<sup>4</sup> When he is on his game he will catch the one thing that slips through my fingers, in a good way. When he is off his game...well he isn’t ever off!”

MRA also experienced a dip in refugee arrivals in 2011. The more predictable pattern of 2010 fell away, and in March of 2011 only one refugee family arrived at MRA. With a smaller caseload to begin with, MRA had a smaller financial margin than RAISE did when arrivals dropped. This, combined with the absence of a general operating budget to work with, put the MRA mid-level managers in a difficult situation.

In May of 2011 the R&P manager called a meeting with his staff to discuss “the arrival situation.” He warned the staff that if arrivals did not pick up he would have to ask them to “adjust your hours” to reflect the lighter caseload. Whereas in January of 2011 the R&P team was handling 23 cases, one caseworker explained that in May his total caseload was four clients, the other caseworker had five clients, “And our job is at stake. [Mateo]<sup>5</sup> already warned us.”

When refugee arrivals failed to pick up by Fall 2011, the MRA R&P manager received a call from the head office of CCSJ, MRA’s umbrella organization, telling him to cut back his budget, but with no suggestion about how to do this. The R&P manager met with his staff again to discuss staff levels and arrivals:

---

<sup>4</sup> The name used here is an assigned pseudonym used to protect the identity of the study participants.

<sup>5</sup> The name used here is an assigned pseudonym used to protect the identity of the study participants.

Basically what I'm going to have to do now is to monitor the number of arrivals that we have and then look at the allocations that we have for staffing and how much costs we're incurring as opposed—put up against how much revenue we're receiving from the federal government. It's just easier for me to have one person take the hit if that person can be the individual who's working somewhere else, or there's another option or opportunity outside of this place.

The R&P manager's explanation reveals the close relationship between federal funding and agency staffing levels at MRA. With greater numbers of federal per capita payments arriving from DOS, MRA was able to support two R&P caseworkers. As the per capita payments fell off there was a correlation with the agency R&P staff budget. MRA had no supplemental funding for its R&P program, when arrivals were low the program ran a deficit as the earlier quote from the finance manager indicates. The only way to impact the budget deficit was to make cuts in staff costs. In October of 2011 the R&P manager reduced the hours of one caseworker, and when arrivals dropped even more precipitously at the end of 2011, that caseworker was let go.

At least four problems were created when management reduced staff in order to solve MRA's R&P budget crisis. First, clients were impacted when their caseworker was let go. One staff member explained the effect on clients: "It's hard for the [clients] to understand. They come in and ask where their caseworker is. Even with a few days' notice, it's not enough. They are confused."

Second, the sole R&P caseworker left was overwhelmed: the cases that were engaged with R&P services needed to be taken to IDHS, social security appointments, and for medical screenings; new apartments had to be secured and prepared for the few arrivals that were making it through the pipeline; and those arrivals had to be picked up at the airport. Seldom in the MRA office, the caseworker repeatedly missed the weekly staff meeting at which client needs and

problems were discussed by the entire R&P team. At one of these meetings an ESL teacher raised the issue of a new client who he was worried about:

ESL Teacher 1: [Mu Tong] is behaving strangely in class, has anyone noticed anything?

ESL Teacher 2: I've been over [to her apartment] and that place is pretty disgusting.

Employment Manager: There are eight people living over there.

ESL Teacher 1: Where is R&P on this? Does anyone know?

Employment Manager: I'll follow up, I think R&P is underwater.

A week later, the facilitator of the meeting asked for follow up about Mu Tong. The employment manager had not had time to meet with the client, and the R&P caseworker was again not able to attend the meeting. Without a member of the R&P team at this weekly meeting the remaining staff were limited in their ability to assess or address client needs. While the R&P caseworker struggled to balance the competing demands on his time he also missed several scheduled home visits. When the worker was able to visit the client apartments, he found that two of them had intense bedbug infestations. The clients were either unaware that they could have reported the infestation, or neglected to do so. In either case, the worker missed the opportunity to discover the bedbugs for himself, and the clients suffered the consequences.

Third, staff morale around the MRA offices was desperately low. A caseworker in the Youth and Family program reflected on the recent staff reduction in this way: "This is a human rights organization and we expect our employees to treat participants a certain way, but in order to treat people well you need to be treated well." A member of the Employment program speculated about why the R&P program reduced staff to one rather than keeping both staff members and reducing their billable hours: "They could have kept them both on. I mean they are

going to need ‘em both when things pick up. But [senior management] told me that this was not about people, it’s about job descriptions.” In January of 2012 MRA conducted an internal anonymous survey of its staff, and 50 percent or more of the respondents reported feeling “Very dissatisfied,” or “Dissatisfied” with the “Program’s internal climate and organizational culture,” with the “Level of transparency between staff and management on information-sharing and the program’s activities (i.e. staff job descriptions/expectations, allocation of resources, budget constraints, etc.)” and with the extent to which “Management does an excellent job of keeping employees informed about matters affecting us.” The MRA staff was unhappy, and this unhappiness appeared to be rooted in the staff reduction and in the sense that management was not doing enough to communicate or to mitigate the challenges the agency faced on behalf of their staff.

Fourth, reducing the size of the R&P staff left the department unprepared for a surge in refugee arrivals. In January of 2012, the allocation pipeline opened up again and MRA was notified of an increase in their client arrivals for the month. The R&P caseworker told me, “Things are better here, we are full for January, chock-o-block full! I have a case size five to find an apartment for, next week we get three [refugee arrivals] on one day! We are back in business.” With so many arrivals on the books, the R&P finances improved, and the R&P manager re-hired the former R&P caseworker who had not found alternative work.

With different levels of resources at their disposal, management at RAISE and MRA handled the dip in refugee arrivals differently. Access to general operating funds at RAISE gave the housing department more options for coping with this decrease. By tapping into this funding source management at RAISE was able to maintain their housing staff levels, although the nature of work for the housing staff changed based on the arrival pattern of refugee clients. With no

access to supplemental funds for the R&P program at MRA, management had fewer options when the per capita payments for refugee arrivals dropped. Ultimately at MRA, the instability of the refugee allocations system filtered down to the street-level and created employment insecurity for the R&P staff, confusion among R&P clients and information slippage within the department, and low staff morale at the agency.

### Resettlement Workers as Resource Brokers

In the context of a shared neighborhood, and the same federal contract guidelines, RAISE and MRA both connected clients to housing through their relationships with landlords, acting as “resource brokers” (Marwell, 2007; McRoberts, 2003; Roth, 2013; Small, 2006, 2009b). What this literature does not always explain, although Small makes some hypotheses, is why two organizations of the same type, such as MRA and RAISE, might differ in the way they perform the role of resource broker. As an empirical case of this phenomenon, this section analyzes the differential ways in which these two similarly positioned organizations dealt with the task of determining where and how to house refugee clients who did not have US ties, and with what consequences.

#### *Selection of Housing and Relationships with Landlords*

The RAISE housing staff had informal decision rules they used when selecting client housing. One member of the housing staff explained:

We want our clients to be able to come in for services, so they need to be able to get here using [public transportation]. Also the rent has to be affordable for them. You know, they won't be making much, and they might need to pay rent on [Public] Aid, they have to be able to stay in the apartment. Then we look at the apartment itself, you know, is it near a public school where other refugee kids go, is it in a community where other people speak the language, you know, are there any bedbugs.

These criteria reflect some of the requirements listed in the DOS contract, such as the unit's

affordability and absence of pests. This worker also listed criteria not included in the contract, such as ease of access to the agency, a public school, and the language community of the client. These criteria relate to improving the client's experience, and had the potential to make the caseworkers' jobs easier. In addition, these criteria reflect common issues of concern raised in monitoring meetings between clients and federal monitoring agents.

In keeping with the criteria discussed by this worker, observation for this study confirmed that the apartments RAISE rented on behalf of its clients were more often than not on a direct bus or train route to the agency, were in neighborhoods where other refugees lived, and were free of bedbugs. Beyond this, the apartments were observed to be, for the most part, clean and well maintained. Federal monitors also reported that during their home visits of RAISE clients they found, "families were in housing that was surprisingly large and kitchens had been redone and so on," and that "there were no structural issues that we noted that would need follow-up on and people did not report any infestation, which we appreciate."

One adaptive practice the RAISE housing staff employed, in an effort to secure the type of housing described above, was to increase agency capacity by fostering relationships with local landlords. A member of the housing staff explained that this was a key part of her job, "I literally spend half my day on the phone with these guys." Observation for this study saw the housing staff routinely placing and fielding phone calls to and from landlords of buildings where RAISE had clients placed, and going out to lunch with landlords every few weeks. The conversations with landlords were often about small maintenance issues, or about moving a new client into an open unit. The housing manager explained that her relationships with her landlord contacts were "excellent."

For their part, the landlords benefited from this relationship; the RAISE housing staff

alerted the landlords to maintenance issues before they got out of hand, and often acted as intermediaries and translators between the landlord and the tenants in potentially challenging circumstances. As an example, on one occasion the housing manager was called by one of the caseworkers because a client had reported a bedbug infestation. The housing manager picked up her phone right away, “I hate to make these calls,” she said. To the landlord who answered the phone she said:

Hello [David]. We have a situation at 3440...Yep...Bedbugs...We can handle it with our service. And we are ordering new mattresses and will take care of laundry, the pillows, and furniture....Yes. But do you want to handle the treatment and bill us or have us handle...Okay, done....I'll let you know when it's done.

The housing manager arranged a bedbug treatment within twenty-four hours, and then sent the landlord a copy of the paid invoice, “Just so he knows that it's legit. They know this is a problem. But if you handle it, if you take care of it, they really appreciate it. We just have to make sure they are educated. A lot of them think our clients brought bedbugs with them, but no!” This example highlights two important facets of the relationship between RAISE and the landlords. The housing manager made the landlords' jobs easier by taking care of the bedbugs herself, and in so doing she also sent a message to the landlords that the lines of communication were open and that she could be trusted to let him know if issues arose. The manager also identified the important role of pre-empting any biases or stereotypes about her clients by the landlords. The landlords demonstrated the value of their relationship with RAISE by routinely providing access to good quality apartments.

RAISE staff also diverted potential issues before the landlords needed to get involved. For example, during a home visit with a newly arrived couple from Burma, another client from the same building asked the RAISE caseworkers to come to his neighboring apartment. When we



walked into his unit, the client showed us six 50-pound bags of rice. “There are rats. They are eating holes,” he explained. The caseworker answered, “You have too much rice. You cannot keep it like this. Okay, I will tell someone and I will come this afternoon. Can you be here at four?” The client agreed and in the afternoon the caseworker returned with a tight-seal garbage can. She threw away the bag with the rodent hole and showed the client how to empty the other bags and seal the can. On her way back to the office she called the housing manager and explained the situation. The caseworker assured the manager, “It’s handled. For now. But we need to stay on top of this.” It is not clear how much the RAISE landlords were aware that issues that were being handled before they necessitated landlord engagement, but nonetheless this type of caseworker practice helped to ensure that there were fewer incidents that got out of control.

When the housing department was informed that refugees were due to arrive, the housing team typically drew from its pool of landlord relationships to select an apartment. RAISE most often resettled either individual refugee clients, or refugee families of between two and six people. For all of these case sizes, the housing staff made use of its contacts in buildings with one and two bedroom units. However, on one occasion, when a family of seven was allocated to RAISE, the housing manager explained that this was a “nightmare” because, “none of my contacts have [three bedrooms] available and they are usually in three-flats, so I’ll have to literally drive around and look for what is available.” As this quote explains, augmenting RAISE’s existing housing resources by fostering landlord relationships was not sufficient to address all of the agency’s housing needs all the time. As the manager made clear, there was a significant benefit to her saving time by accessing apartments from her existing resource pool whenever possible, rather than spending time driving around the neighborhood to find new units. However, when the need arose, the housing manager did alter her routine and spent time

combing the neighborhood for suitable housing.

The value RAISE placed on good landlord relationships extended beyond the extent to which they afforded access to good quality apartments or saved the housing manager on time. Good landlord relationships had the potential to save the agency money. There were many occasions when refugees decided to leave Chicago during their resettlement service period in order to move to another city in search of work or other ethnic communities. When a refugee made such a “secondary migration” they were supposed to alert their caseworkers. The caseworker informed the housing manager, who in turn informed the landlord. In one example of this, a client left for Minneapolis after only three months in the country. She left behind all of the donated items in her apartment. When the housing manager explained the situation to the program manager, she presented the problem as a big picture issue: “It’s not just the rent on this one that we have to worry about, this is about landlords relationships. If they leave an open apartment...it can’t be like that or they won’t work with us anymore.” Rather than viewing this as an abandoned lease, potentially causing a rift with the landlord, the housing staff was able to accommodate the landlord by filling the unit with a new tenant. The staff was observed cleaning the unit, supplementing the goods in the apartment with a few purchased items, and moving in a new family who arrived just a few days after the first tenant left. By not purchasing an entire apartment worth of new furniture and DOS mandated goods, the RAISE housing staff saved money. By filling the vacated unit with the incoming family, the housing staff saved the time of finding a new apartment and maintained a good relationship with the landlord.

In months when RAISE had heavier allocations of clients, this sort of shuffling of clients in and out of apartments was not uncommon. At a staff meeting, the housing manager explained the protocol for out-migration to the RAISE staff:

We have had a lot of outmigrations... which is mostly due to not finding employment and in some cases family in other states. We have a system now with the casework team where we will be notified in housing when people out-migrate. You know, [Omar] is moving to Texas to be with his brother. And [April] refuses to sign her lease because she says she is going to Molene tomorrow for a meat-packing thing she heard about. But we will just keep the apartment open, and then [Neema], you can move your clients in later this week.

The new secondary migration protocol included the housing department replacing one tenant with another, informing the landlord of the change in tenants, and having new leases drawn up.

The housing manager explained that in months when there were slow allocations RAISE covered the rent on empty units in order to keep them available for when clients began to arrive again, and to maintain relationships with landlords. During one busy month, the program manager explained to her staff that RAISE was going to plan ahead for secondary migrations,

Program Manager: “Do people know about our temporary apartment? We are going to try and set up a two bedroom apartment so when they come they go into a temporary set up... if they start calling Minnesota on the way from the airport...” (laughs).

Housing Manager: “This is crazy... so its not only Minnesota, its just in all directions, we’ve got Denver, Texas.”

Program Manager: “That’s why people in Chicago don’t want to resettle Somali cases because they always out-migrate to Minneapolis.”

Thanks to the wealth of general operating funds in the RAISE accounts, the agency was able to come up with solutions to the secondary migration problem that helped to maintain relationships with landlords, and therefore to maintain the agency’s capacity for housing.

In their role as resource brokers, the RAISE housing staff selected housing for their clients in a context shaped in part by the requirements of the DOS contract, by limited access to affordable housing in the Revere neighborhood, and by access to agency resources such as staff and funds. Rather than adapt by looking for more affordable housing outside the Revere

neighborhood, which would potentially have made it harder for clients to get to the agency and for the agency to serve the clients, the housing staff adapted by increasing agency capacity through strong landlord relationships. These relationships represented a net benefit to the agency, even when it cost the agency in terms of covering rent payments on empty rental units.

In stark contrast to the RAISE approach, MRA caseworkers did not make relationships with landlords a top priority as they balanced all the responsibilities their job required. In fact, caseworkers routinely avoided angry phone calls from landlords who threatened to evict refugee clients with bedbug issues, to evict refugee clients they did not want as tenants (due to other tenants complaining of strong smells or communal style meetings in the common areas), or from landlords who swore they would never work with MRA again. On one occasion, after a refugee family moved out and abandoned their lease, a caseworker said that the landlord was “fuming. He’s threatened to sue [MRA].” MRA had other clients living in the same building, but with limited resources with which they could protect these clients from the potential ramifications of having an angry landlord, the caseworkers did not make efforts to pacify the landlord. On another occasion, when the MRA staff was planning a broad bedbug-eradication campaign, the team discussed how they might bring landlords on board with the campaign:

Adjustment Caseworker: “And it will be helpful also if you are able to get one of the landlords with who we have a good relationship. You know, I want you to do this in my apartment. I mean if you have one with whom you have a really good relationship, well this is what we are doing with our...”

R&P Caseworker 1: “Do we have any that are not mad at us right now?”

R&P Caseworker 2: “I don’t think...”

R&P Caseworker 1: “That aren’t going to come in and like yell at people.”

R&P Caseworker 2: “It’s a really big mess. The latest one we had that we thought was good. That we thought was good, but now...”

Adjustment Caseworker: “That is not just about bed bugs, he is also mad because

we are not...”

R&P Caseworker 1: “...paying.”

R&P Caseworker 2: “They are all issues combined.”

The caseworkers could not identify a single landlord who might be willing to work with them on a campaign that ultimately would have helped the landlords as well, because there was no trust in these relationships.

One result of poor landlord relationships was that the MRA’s R&P department had few reliable housing resources to turn to when they had busy arrival periods. One caseworker noted, “right now we have one landlord, and if we get a rush we will be in trouble.” Trouble in this case would mean spending time securing new housing resources for clients by reaching out to new landlords, at exactly a time when caseworkers could benefit from the efficiency of less logistic work and more time to focus on an increased client load.

As an example of the consequences of having limited resources for housing selection, one caseworker struggled to find acceptable housing for some arriving clients. During a slow arrival month, this caseworker took time to visit potential apartments for clients arriving two weeks later, reaching out to new landlords in the process, because, he explained, “no one wants to work with [MRA] anymore.” The units he found were each with a different new landlord. One unit rented for \$700 per month, plus electricity costs. The caseworker explained that this apartment had “[bedbug] bloodstains on the walls, and leaks.” The other unit was \$750 per month plus gas and electric fees, and was described as being “very clean and nice.” The caseworker thought it was “worth the extra expense to have a clean apartment” and to save maintenance trouble for the tenants down the line. However, when the clients arrived, the caseworker placed them in the cheaper apartment. When asked about this choice, the caseworker explained, “When they first

come, every dollar makes a difference. I did not want them to have trouble.” The MRA staff did not talk about bedbugs as a deciding factor when selecting apartments. A caseworker explained, “typically we hear about infestations after move in.” And yet, in this example, the caseworker selected an apartment with bedbug bloodstains on the walls, because this apartment was slightly more affordable than the other unit. In a practice routinely observed at MRA, when it came down to selecting housing on behalf of his client, this caseworker prioritized affordability over quality. This was a choice set the caseworker was left with, due at least in part to the lack of resources at the worker’s disposal.

Repeated observation, informal interviews with staff, and the reported observations of the DOS monitors all indicated that the discretionary practice of placing clients in cheap and unsanitary apartments was standard routine at MRA. Observation took place on home visits in units that had issues such as: stains on the walls, flying bug infestations in the kitchen, potent smells and discoloration in the wall-to-wall carpeting, and roaches in the bathroom. One intern, new to the R&P team, summed up her impressions after touring four MRA apartments, “I didn’t know they were living in such slums.”

In fact, bed bugs were an almost ubiquitous issue in these apartments. A more experienced MRA intern made a habit of leaving her shoes and handbag in the hallways before entering client apartments which, she explained, protected her from picking up bedbugs. She warned me on the way into a client apartment, “Never sit down. If they offer, just stand anyway. Or pick a wood chair. You don’t want to leave with bedbugs!” The DOS monitors also commented on the rodent and bedbug problem. Of the four units they visited in 2011, two had infestations. The monitor noted in her post-monitoring debrief with staff that one family, “had bites all over their ankles,” and that another unit had, “mice, bedbugs, and roaches, it was a

perfect storm!” The staff at MRA all knew that the bedbugs were a problem, the question was what to do about it. At a staff wide meeting during a particularly slow month, one of the managers asked the R&P staff, “Since arrivals have slowed down and you have had a chance to do new landlord outreach, is there a chance to not place new arrivals in the bed bug infested apartments?” One R&P caseworker answered, “It’s not like we are trying to find bedbugs, but the cheap places are infested!” When faced with the very real challenge of finding units their clients could afford, MRA workers routinely sacrificed apartment quality.

The exceptions to this norm of placing clients in cheap and unsanitary or infested units demonstrated that MRA workers did have other options. One such exception occurred during a busy arrival month when an MRA caseworker reached out to a new landlord to secure a two-bedroom apartment for a refugee family of six. The unit rented for \$1,050 a month, heat included. It was on a “really nice block” in a “condo building.” The unit was very sunny with windows on two sides, a washer and drier in the unit, a dishwasher, and a working fireplace. The caseworker joked that he “spent all weekend wondering how I can move into a place as nice.” When asked about the relatively high cost of the unit, the caseworker explained that the family had “at least two ‘employables.’ Plus one, maybe two, on SSI. They can make this work. And look at the place, I mean I want to live here!” During the intake interview with this family the worker went into great detail as he explained their monthly income from the various sources of public aid, he calculated that they would take in approximately \$1,350 each month in cash assistance, for the first eight months they were in the country. At that point the family’s cash benefits would drop to \$1,100, but, the worker explained, hopefully by then the work-eligible family members would be employed. The worker decided on the clients’ behalf that the quality of the unit was worth the expense and potential risk that the family might be stretched to pay the

rent. While this case may suggest there was a range of options available to the MRA caseworkers, it was the makeup of this particular case that gave the worker the opportunity to make an exception to the routine MRA housing practice; very few client families had the unique mix of a relatively high SSI cash payment as well as a TANF payment and a potential income earner in the same house. In this case the worker had more potential income than usual to work with as he made decisions for his clients, and this tipped the balance in favor of a decision to place the client in better (and more expensive) housing.

These examples help shed light on some of the factors at work in the housing selection process at MRA. The adaptive practice the caseworkers routinely used when balancing their limited resources with the demands for affordable and safe housing was to apply a decision rule based on low cost. On rare occasion the quality of the housing was made a higher priority than the cost.

### **Discussion**

The empirical evidence provided in this chapter demonstrates how a complex refugee admissions and allocation structure drives inconsistency and unreliability down the organizational chain, so that the consequences are felt at the point of service delivery. The impact of this instability was different at RAISE and MRA. Due to the agency practice of using general operating funds to supplement staff salaries when R&P payments were low, there were no layoffs at RAISE within the housing department. At MRA on the other hand, management adapted to major deficits in client allocations by reducing staff hours, and ultimately by laying off staff. This finding implicates the refugee allocations system for putting local RROs in the position of having to manage organizational instability. A system that balances refugee allocations among National Resettlement Agencies on a weekly basis, and prioritizes refugee



resettlement in the same location as US ties, pushes the impact of instability and unreliability down to the service organizations. Ultimately, this has an effect on service delivery, as one local RRO spends precious general operating funds on staff salaries rather than supplementing the fund for client support, and another turns to reductions in staff size with the potential for information slippage, client confusion, and low staff morale.

This chapter also finds that workers at RAISE and MRA resolved the problem of how to implement the housing requirements of the R&P contract in different ways, under different organizational structures, bringing different resources to bear, and leading to divergent housing policies for their respective refugee clients. In their role as resource brokers, the staff at RAISE and MRA differed in their routine practice. This appears to be due, in part, to the levels of resources at the workers disposal and to a difference in worker identities and departmental cultures.

The street-level perspective draws analytic attention to the balance of resources, demands, and incentives that impact the way workers use their discretion to make routine practice choices. The workers at RAISE had more resources at their disposal, and were able to use their discretion to allocate time and money to the development of landlord relationships. Fostering these relationships proved to be a good investment. During months busy with arrivals, workers, in most cases, were able to draw on their resource pool to quickly place clients into apartments. Also, their landlord contacts, more often than not, provided RAISE with access to good quality apartments. However, RAISE's strategy did have its limitations. When particularly large families arrived, RAISE staff had to invest extra time in finding appropriate housing.

The street-level perspective does not attend to worker motivations, or the culture of the workplace. However, these factors help to explain the behavior of the workers at RAISE. The

RAISE housing staff identified themselves as specialists in the housing field, which seems to have led to taking a certain amount of pride in doing housing well. This relates to the culture of the housing department at RAISE. The housing staff had a way of doing things, and they were clear about what they understood this pattern to be. Here the street-level perspective is useful again, it explains that when workers' patterns of practice make the workers' jobs easier, they are more likely to be repeated. The cyclical pattern at RAISE worked like this: workers had the time and resources to devote to doing housing well, they identified themselves as people who do housing well, and they continued to increase agency capacity through their practice patterns, which helped to assure that resources were made available to them by local landlords.

As opposed to the workers at RAISE, the workers at MRA did not have the same access to financial resources, nor did they have a specialized focus on housing tasks. The R&P caseworkers at MRA had multiple competing demands on their time. The way that workers at MRA performed housing-related tasks on behalf of their clients was impacted by the different identities the staff expressed, and by the different cultures of their workplaces. MRA's R&P caseworkers saw themselves as caseworkers first, and identified their housing tasks as a distraction from this core work. This identity orientation impacted their housing work. Rather than investing their limited time and funds into developing landlord relationships on which they could depend, the MRA staff selected housing on an ad-hoc basis. The result of this arrangement was that, more often than not, workers had a poor choice of apartments from which to select for client housing. This could be because landlords reserved their best quality housing for the resource brokers with whom they had stronger working relationships. However, MRA workers did, on occasion, make exceptions and spend extra time finding higher quality apartments for clients. Unfortunately, this practice was an exception as opposed to the common practice at

MRA. What this meant was that MRA workers were inconsistent in their role as resource brokers; refugee clients got access to different quality housing, at different costs, depending on how the caseworker chose to allocate their own time in securing the unit.

The differences in routine housing practices at RAISE and MRA equate to different housing policies for different refugees. Refugees placed with RAISE were more likely to live in higher quality apartments with more attentive and receptive landlords, whereas refugees placed with MRA were more likely to live in housing with bedbugs and under landlords resentful of their presence. This variation in housing policy is antithetical to the goals of the DOS R&P policy-makers, and demonstrates that formal policy alone does not determine how implementation takes shape. Rather, the R&P contract and performance standards shape a context in which workers make certain kinds of choices about how to allocate their limited time and funds, and in so doing, reconstruct housing policy with their everyday routine practice.

## CHAPTER SIX: RESETTLEMENT IN PRACTICE - GETTING REFUGEES TO WORK

*“Reality is no one likes the first job they get, they have to know they cannot come running back to us after a month just because they don’t like the job.”*

– Employment caseworker

### **Introduction**

Chapter 3 of this dissertation explained that the Refugee Act of 1980 allows for policies and programs to support refugees on their path to integration, giving primacy to the push for employment. Chapter 4 demonstrated that the structure of this policy provision is complicated, involving federal, state and local governments, as well as national and local non-profit organizations. Implementation of resettlement policies is delegated to over 350 local refugee resettlement organizations operating in 48 states. Within this system newly arrived refugees receive work permits, are assigned to an RRO, and are entitled to an array of employment services as they navigate their entry into the US labor market. Between 2010 and 2012 these local RROs served over 187,000 refugees from more than 50 countries (Refugee Processing Center, 2012). Although the Act was intended to standardize services provided across such a diverse set of agencies, metropolitan areas, and refugee groups, street-level theory suggests that the actual variation comes in the form of policy implementation by agency workers. Policy makers’ attempts to attenuate this variation imposed performance standards to measure the outcomes of refugee employment policy — a managerial practice that has become quite common in the realm of privatized and contracted social service provision. This chapter focuses on the implementation of employment policies by MRA and RAISE, and seeks to explain how performance standards impact what these policies look like in practice, and why.

This study of employment policy implementation by RROs extends street-level theory to a new empirical case, and makes two key contributions to the literature. It provides an analysis of the formal and informal mechanisms by which performance standard pressures were conveyed at the street-level, and of how the unique organizational context of the RRO helped to shape how refugee employment policy was implemented at the street-level. This chapter finds that employment caseworkers engaged in several adaptive strategies predicted by street-level theory, such as rationing limited resources by sorting clients into service groups and offering choice opportunities to the clients most likely to succeed. This analysis also identifies an adaptive strategy not predicted by street-level theory, a practice I call expanding the resource pool.

### **Federal and State Employment Program Contracts and Performance Measures**

As previous chapters have explained, the Act provides the legislative guidelines for policy provision at the street-level. The Act stresses rapid work entry for newly arrived refugees, and has the manifest goal of helping refugees achieve economic self-sufficiency, which is defined as not relying on public cash assistance programs ("The Refugee Act," 1980). In keeping with these priorities, the majority of federal funding for refugee resettlement is directed towards employment supports (Potocky-Tripodi, 2003), and the contracts are monitored based on select employment outcomes (GAO, 2011). Together, the incentives and potential sanctions embedded in these contracts create organizational motivation to focus on employment. ORR offers two employment support program contracts, the basic and ubiquitous Early Employment Services, and the selective enrollment Voluntary Agency Matching Grant.

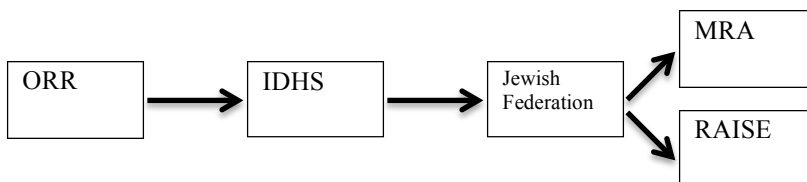
#### Early Employment Services

The Early Employment Services program is part of ORR's multi-faceted Refugee Social Services grant. EES provides funding for local agencies to support staff members who act as

employment specialists who focus solely on the task of preparing their clients for work and finding employment for these clients. According to the Employment Participant Contract used at one local agency, mandated activities of the EES program are: employment specialist meetings with individual clients, helping clients through practice job application completion and resume composition, job-related field trips, identification of appropriate employers using labor market information, job referral to appropriate employment opportunities, and direct outreach and follow-up with employers by the job developer. The provisions included in this local agency's contract explicate the mandates of the federal EES contract. The question the street-level perspective raises is how employment caseworkers negotiate a work environment shaped, in part, by these contract provisions.

In Illinois, IDHS holds the contract with ORR for the RSS program. The financial amount of this contract is determined annually by formula, and is tied directly to the number of refugees that were resettled in the state in the prior three years. IDHS, in turn, contracts the Jewish Federation of Illinois to administer the RSS contract. The Jewish Federation then subcontracts with the local implementing RROs (see Figure 5).

Figure 5:  
ORR Refugee Social Service Grant Contract Structure in Illinois



The Jewish Federation collects the statewide RSS funds and permits local agencies to bid for subcontracts by submitting proposed budgets and plans for service. Due to its primary role as the contract administrator, the Jewish Federation essentially mediates the relationship between the

local agencies, the state, and the federal government: managing the approval and dispersal of grant funds to the agencies, collecting data about service provision and financial expenditures from the agencies, and monitoring the agencies for performance evaluation.

Performance standards are important as analytic indicators insofar as they become part of the organizational terrain that employment caseworkers must navigate as they make everyday practice decisions. The street-level perspective and governance literature (Larsen, 2013; S. R. Smith & Lipsky, 1993; Soss et al., 2013; VanSlyke, 2007) raise questions for this study about how the performance measures – employed by the Jewish Federation to monitor and evaluate the work of the RROs – influenced the decision set from which employment caseworkers made practice choices in their everyday work. There were six performance standards associated with the EES contract. These standards measure and set requirements for how many clients get employed and how quickly, the percentage of full-time jobs acquired, and the percentage of jobs that offered benefits (see Appendix G). But the mere presence of performance standards does not guarantee that a contracted agency will work towards meeting these standards. There must be some mechanism through which the local agencies experience an incentive to meet the standards, or are presented with a potential cost of not meeting them. These mechanisms are described in the findings of this chapter.

#### Voluntary Agency Matching Grant Program

As Chapter 3 explained, ORR's alternative to the basic EES employment program is the Voluntary Agency Matching Grant. It has selective enrollment and emphasizes expedited employment. Refugees selected for the MG program are pulled out of the standard case management pool, and out of the basic EES program. Enrolled refugees are to have access to

more intensive employment services for 180 days after arrival, and cash and housing assistance for 120 days.

The financial and service supports offered to clients through the MG program are paid for with a 2:1 match grant: a \$2,200 per capita payment from ORR is matched by \$1,100 worth of goods and services by the RRO. In exchange for these goods and services, ORR's MG contract is explicit about the responsibilities of enrolled clients. The contract is clear that a client must attend any interviews organized by the MG caseworker, and that they agree to accept the first "appropriate" job offered to them. The contract also includes the conditions under which workers are authorized to sanction clients:

Limited sanctions may be imposed in order to attempt to gain compliance, through the reduction or temporary withholding of maintenance assistance or other services. If the client continues to fail to comply, the agency, after due process, may fully sanction the client from the Matching Grant Program.

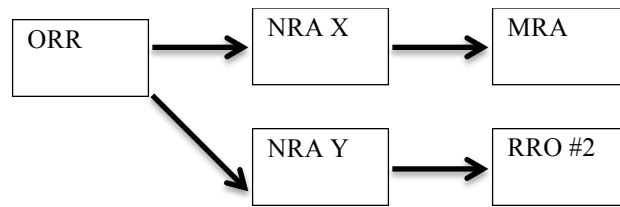
How would MG caseworkers interpret and implement these contract terms? And how was sanctioning deployed in both authorized and unauthorized ways?

Not all RROs have access to the MG program, and not all clients within the implementing agencies are enrolled in MG. RROs apply to their respective NRAs to be an MG program site, and if approved they are assigned a number of MG slots for the year. Participating RROs then use their discretion to select certain refugees to enter the MG program based on a subjective assessment. Evidence from this process is provided in the findings below.

The MG structure bypasses the state institutions completely, and instead the NRAs have a direct relationship with the federal agency (see Figure 6). The NRAs then subcontract with their network of RROs in communities throughout the country.



Figure 6: ORR Matching Grant Contract Structure in Illinois



In the case of MG, the NRA acts as the intermediary between the local agency and the federal government. The NRA is responsible for collecting data from the local agencies and then submitting compiled reports to ORR. In addition, the NRAs do the majority of the MG program monitoring on behalf of ORR.

There are seven performance measures applied to the MG program: the number of clients enrolled in the program; how many were “self-sufficient” at 120 days; how many of those continued to be self-sufficient at 180 days; how many clients in total were self-sufficient at 180 days; how many entered employment; the average hourly wage; and whether or not health benefits were offered as part of employment. In an interview, the MG coordinator at one NRA explained the ORR measures used to monitor the performance of local RROs:

Well, we’re compelled to collect and compile and report that data to the feds on a regular basis. It’s something that we have to do. It’s in our cooperative agreement in our contract with HSS and ORR...But while we report this stuff to ORR, ORR has not for many years had, kind of, an effective...had an intensive monitoring regime of any type for what the various agencies are doing.

In the absence of an “intensive” monitoring regime, what characterized the relationship between ORR, the NRA and the local RRO, and with what impact on MG service delivery? The NRA did serve as a proxy monitor for ORR; the national agencies collected outcome reports from the local RROs at 120 and 180 days, and engaged in off-site case file review on an ad-hoc basis, and in

formal on-site monitoring every three years. The more informal mechanisms of encouraging contract compliance are discussed in a later section of this chapter.

### **Organizational Context**

#### **The Employment Program at MRA**

MRA was subcontracted by its NRA for implementation of the Matching Grant program, and by IDHS/Jewish Federation for the EES program. With multiple supporting grants, agency budgets showed that employment was the highest funded department at MRA. It had a manager and a team of workers who were solely responsible for employment related tasks. The employment team fluctuated in size over time. At one point there was one employment staff person for the EES program and one for the MG program. At another point there were two EES staff although still only one for the MG program. There were always three to four interns designated to the employment program.

MRA's employment manager was responsible for program oversight, budgeting, and for ensuring that the appropriate employment outcome reports were submitted to the respective contract agencies. She also reported her team's employment outcomes on a weekly basis to the local Support Network of the Refugee Workforce, described below. The employment manager was the point person for all the employment-related feedback and critique during federal monitoring visits. In addition, this manager oversaw the casework team and the medical caseworker, giving her multiple programs, contracts, and grants to manage.

MRA's EES caseworkers were responsible for: locating potential employers for refugee clients and establishing relationships with human resources personnel: interviewing new refugee clients and establishing an employment plan with them; preparing clients for interviews and writing their resumes; taking clients on job interviews; following up with employers after clients

were hired; and managing any client-related employment issues that might arise. From January to September of 2012 MRA's EES employment caseworkers provided services to between 28 and 69 clients each month (see Appendix I).

The MRA MG staff was similarly responsible for all aspects of the employment support process, but with some additional duties as well. Upon entering the program, MG clients were assigned to an MG caseworker. In addition to her employment related duties, this worker was responsible for locating housing for MG clients if they needed it, mediating with the Public Aid office for Food Stamps and Medicaid access, and reporting all employment outcomes directly to the monitoring agent. In 2012 the MG program served between 40 and 74 clients monthly.

The MRA employment team participated in a collaborative network with the employment staff from five other local refugee resettlement organizations, called the Support Network of the Refugee Workforce (SNOW). One of the founding members of SNOW explained in an interview that the local agencies had a history of sending their refugee clients to the same employment interviews and competing with each other for job placements. In 2008 the employment specialists at the local agencies decided to share some job-related resources in an effort to reduce the extent of direct competition between them. The concept behind the network was to expand the pool of potential employers, and add to each agency's placement options. However, it remains an open question how involvement in the SNOW network impacted the context of resources, incentives, and demands in which employment caseworkers at MRA performed, and how this in turn might have influenced the routine practice decisions these workers made. Although this question is not taken up within the current analysis, Chapter 7 briefly outlines how this issue might be addressed using data from observations of SNOW meetings.

## The Employment Program at RAISE

Because RAISE did not hold a MG contract, the employment program at RAISE operated with fewer financial resources than did the MRA program. RAISE was subcontracted by IDHS/Jewish Federation to implement the EES program, but the agency did not hold any other federal employment program grants. RAISE's employment manager was responsible for the oversight and reporting of the EES program. Although she did not submit her team's monthly outcomes to the Jewish Federation directly, she did share the outcomes with the entire RAISE staff at bi-weekly meetings, and with the SNOW network on a weekly basis. As was the case at MRA, the employment manager at RAISE was the point person for all employment-related feedback and critique during monitoring visits.

The employment department served between 105 and 145 clients each month (see Appendix I). In service to these clients, the employment team at RAISE had specific tasks for each employee. Job Developers were responsible for securing new employer relationships and for taking clients out on interviews with these employers. Job developers were assigned respective industries – one hospitality and restaurant industries, another fitness and manufacturing industries, another food production and health worker industries, and so on. Job Counselors were responsible for coaching the clients through interview preparation and for creating resumes, as well as for meeting with clients on a consistent basis in order to support the job search process. The employment workers at RAISE seemed to value this specialization of tasks. One employment caseworker explained what she enjoyed about her job: “I love what I do here because the job description is simple, so I get to be incredibly creative and individualize services. As a social worker it's great.”

The employment team at RAISE also participated in the SNOW network, meeting once a week in the offices at one of the participating agencies.

### **Street-Level Analysis**

#### Conveying Performance Measure Pressures Through Formal and Informal Mechanisms

Street-level theory predicts that workers will use their discretion to make practice choices that adapt to their work conditions, and the workfare literature has shown how performance measures become part of the work context. Research that seeks to explain the contracting relationship between governments and SLOs has identified formal and informal variations of monitoring as the ways government institutions promote contract compliance (Benish, 2010; Soss et al., 2011b; VanSlyke, 2007). In order to explain how pressures from performance standards are conveyed to the street-level, the following analysis shows the formal and informal mechanisms through which the priorities of the EES and MG contracts were conveyed to employment caseworkers at RAISE and MRA.

#### *EES Performance Measure Compliance Incentives*

Research for this study identified four formal and three informal-mechanisms through which the Jewish Federation applied pressure to local agencies in order to encourage them to meet performance measures. I conceptualize formal compliance mechanisms as those that the Jewish Federation has identified and communicated about to the grantees ahead of their application. I conceptualize informal measures as those that, from the grantee's perspective, occur spontaneously, and that the EES contract does not enumerate.

The formal mechanisms for promoting performance measure compliance included data collection, on-site monitoring, corrective action, and sanctioning, each of which represented a potential cost to the agency. Each of these mechanisms are briefly described here in order to

explicate the pressures and incentives for the local agencies represented by the contractual relationship with the Jewish Federation.

The Jewish Federation required its subcontracted RROs to submit fiscal reports twice a year, and outcome data on a quarterly basis. The employment teams at MRA and RAISE were each responsible for collecting and submitting this EES outcome data. It was a time consuming process that indicated to the workers what types of outcomes the agency was being held accountable for. On a quarterly basis the Jewish Federation mailed out a *Review of Program Performance* to each of the local agencies. Included in this report were the six EES performance standards and each of the RROs achievements in relation to these standards. This dissemination of agency employment outcome data had the potential to either shame or reward local agencies, representing a cost or benefit in reputation.

In addition, the Jewish Federation sent a staff member to the local agency to monitor their case files every six months. In an interview, the monitor talked about her process: “I want to see that the dollars we are funding the agency for are helping the clients reach their goals.” When asked what she looked for specifically, she explained that she read case notes in order to find out “how they are helping.” When asked to explain what case notes reveal about the service delivery process, she elaborated: “If you don’t document that something is happening it’s not really happening, we can’t know about it. Also, this is a part of your contract, to keep case notes about what they are doing.” Note that the specific pressure that this focus on case notes put on workers was not to participate in any certain kind of service provision, but rather to establish a usable form of documentation. In the follow up report after one MRA case file review for the EES program, the Jewish Federation report stated:

In six of the eight files reviewed, the case notes were appropriately detailed, explaining the services provided to the client using clear, consistent descriptions. When case notes are well-detailed, the file is easier to evaluate, making the review go smoothly. Case notes are the backbone of file documentation and [MRA] staff members maintain very good notes.

In this case the message conveyed by this formal compliance mechanism was that MRA was doing a good job, and should keep doing things the way they have been. The potential cost of not keeping the kind of case notes that satisfied the monitor was that the agency could be placed under “Corrective Action.”

Corrective Action was the third formal process the Jewish Federation used to encourage local agencies to comply with the terms of the service contract. When the monitor discovered what she identified as a systematic issue in the case files of an agency, she explained that she would write a report notifying the agency that it was being placed under Corrective Action. The agency was then required to provide a written commitment to addressing the issues identified in the report, and a follow up on-site monitoring was conducted two to three months later. Being placed under Corrective Action had potential costs for an agency, it took worker time to document the remedy plan and to collect the evidence that the plan was in effect. And the ultimate risk was that the agency would be sanctioned.

The final formal mechanism for encouraging contract compliance was sanctioning. In an interview, a Jewish Federation senior staff person explained that sanctioning meant withholding the funds for a contract. In one case, the senior staff person described a local agency that was placed in Corrective Action three times. When remedies were not made, the Jewish Federation terminated the EES contract with this agency: “We pulled one contract but [they] are still a provider. So they stopped doing one set of services and are doing other services and they’re a fine provider.” In this case the local agency did not have its EES contract renewed, but did

continue its contracts for other Refugee Social Services. The fact that this agency was allowed to keep serving clients maintained their presence in the community and thus made them a continual reminder to the other local agencies about the price for non-compliance.

The Jewish Federation also had informal ways of encouraging contract compliance. These included informal information sharing at interagency meetings and intensified interpersonal contact. On a monthly basis, representatives of thirteen local refugee-serving agencies gathered at the Jewish Federation offices in a Council meeting attended by the Refugee State Coordinator and the Jewish Federation staff. The seven Illinois RROs were each represented at the Council meeting, MRA by one of its mid-level managers, and RAISE by its Program Director. At these meetings the Jewish Federation staff were observed routinely discussing examples of outstanding performance outcomes, thereby informally rewarding local agencies for exceeding their projections for service.

The senior staff of the Jewish Federation engaged in an intensified level of contact when she felt that an agency was falling out of compliance. Observation for this study identified no less than thirteen calls between the Jewish Federation and one RRO in one day, accompanied by several lengthy emails each asking for more detailed information from the RRO. When combined with all the different mechanisms for encouraging contract compliance, the cost to the RRO in terms of time and energy spent on communication with the Jewish Federation was great enough to encourage compliance.

In the case of the RROs operating in the Revere neighborhood, employment caseworkers had to balance this demand for rapid client employment with a limited resource of available jobs. Not all local employers hired refugee clients, who most often had limited English language capacity and work experience that was not applicable to the types of jobs available (GAO, 2012).



Additionally, as Chapter 4 explained, the numbers of refugee clients placed with local RROs was controlled in part by the NRA and in part by the DOS, not by the RRO itself. Client numbers fluctuated, often dramatically, month to month, and these patterns were unpredictable to the RRO. In this context of ever-present performance measures tracking job placements, scarce employment opportunities, and fluctuating client demand, workers had an incentive to make sure that the job opportunities they had access to were not wasted.

#### *MG Performance Measure Compliance Incentives*

As with EES performance, the Matching Grant program required some incentive mechanism for workers to meet or exceed performance goals. Observation for this study revealed a series of mechanisms, both formal and informal, which included reporting and monitoring. MRA's MG caseworker compiled monthly reports that enumerated her success along a series of measures. In addition to this formal mechanism for creating a performance incentive, there was also an informal pressure created around these documents. On what appeared to be a random basis, representatives from the NRA called MRA to follow up on some part of the monthly outcome report. When the MG caseworker was asked for an example, she explained:

Last year I sent the August reports in and [the NRA] called right away with a question about how many were enrolled because, it was complicated, we reported 5 but they only thought it should be 3, but two were kids and were entered in somewhere else. Anyway, they noticed the number and followed up right away. The pay attention.

This follow-up conveyed to the employment caseworker that her work was being monitored, and she was being held accountable for the performance outcomes of her clients. Another mechanism by which the incentive to meet MG performance measures was created was the bi-annual monitoring from the NRA. This monitoring included an on-site meeting with the employment staff, interviews with refugee clients in their homes, and a formal debriefing meeting at MRA.

Evidence of the formal and informal means for creating worker incentives around this monitoring is included later in this chapter.

Employment caseworkers at MRA and RAISE performed the everyday tasks of their jobs in an organizational context shaped in part by these pressures to meet performance standards. This context was further shaped by the fluctuating numbers of refugee clients allocated to the agencies by the NRAs, and the demand for service that these clients represented. The rest of this chapter is devoted to an analysis of how workers responded to these pressures, incentives, and demands and what shape refugee employment policy took as a result.

#### Adaptive Strategies Given Different Levels of Client Demand

The workers at MRA and RAISE formed adaptive practice strategies that were, in part, responses to the pressures of performance measures and to the numbers of clients workers had to serve at a given time. When they became routine, these strategies reformulated refugee employment policy at the two agencies. In keeping with the predictions of street-level theory, workers developed adaptive patterns of practice as they used their discretion to respond to the demands and incentives at their agencies, and these strategies often impacted clients differentially.

In 2011 the state changed the guidelines for the EES contract. This change imposed a new service cap; local agencies could only report their outcomes for clients served within 18 months of their arrival in the United States, whereas previously these agencies were able to report services for up to 24 months. This contract change created an incentive for subcontracted agencies to limit services to that same time period. Employment caseworkers now had less time in which to get their clients jobs, yet the performance standards upon which the agency was measured had not changed. In this context, clients served beyond the 18-month mark would draw

on agency resources, but could not be enumerated in grant reports. Also, EES contract renewals depended on the agencies meeting their own service projections and did not account for shifts in arrival patterns. What this meant was that if refugee arrivals were low and the agency had projected they would serve more clients than actually arrived, the agency technically missed their projection. Under these conditions the agencies had a contractual incentive to focus their employment resources on every client they could enumerate in their grant reports and to get every one of these clients to work within 18 months. However, the street-level perspective demands that analysis move beyond the written contract and take into account the actual practices of agency management and direct-service staff.

*Sorting and Cherry-picking Clients at MRA*

In the absence of any senior level management direction, MRA program managers were left to figure out how to respond to the reduction in the contract service period. The management team discussed the implications of not making internal changes and continuing to serve clients as before:

Adjustment Manager: “My concern is that the service dollars will not follow what we are doing. That’s just how service provision works. The reality of how we wanted the program to work is not going to be allowable.”

Employment Manager: “The thing is they’re still going to be showing up.”

Adjustment Manager: “How do you articulate, we are not serving you anymore because of new contract language?”

The way this problem was framed by the adjustment manager was that the agency could not risk engaging in service provision that was not directly supported by grant money, that what decides program direction is funding guidelines and performance metrics rather than service-provider initiative. The employment manager raises the concern that clients will still demand services.

And the adjustment manager quickly pivots to talk about how to implement the change. The managers continued to discuss the implementation challenges and did not debate further whether or not to make the changes.

The result of the management discussion was a decision to formally sort clients into two groups, one eligible for services based on tenure with MRA, and one not. Sorting is defined here as the process by which workers created groups based on certain characteristics, in this case tenure with MRA, and then placed clients into these groups according to the extent to which they possessed the characteristic. The management team planned to craft a letter to all MRA clients explaining the new parameters for service, and to articulate the limitations of ongoing service for the group no longer eligible. They called the group who were eligible for service “employable,” and those no longer eligible “non-employable.” During their planning meeting, the team focused on the challenge of implementing the service change, and on defining the client categories. One manager explained:

We have come to an agreement, as to what this letter is going to look like...what’s going to happen is like, there’s a general paragraph that explains kind of new service provision, and then it breaks down into two different paragraphs that you are either, or. Like you’re either a ‘participant in an employable household’ or ‘you are not’ and given the fact that you are an employable or not, you will or will not receive employment-related type adjustment services. There’s going to be, you know, some conversations that we’re going to have to have with participants to clarify [*laughs*] this letter, because it’s definitely hard to articulate this in a way that is simplistic. And I think that, to a certain extent, we’re going to have to work to think about, you know, where is it advantageous to provide these services to individuals who you know, need these services? And so it might not be a kind of blanket type of, ‘you can’t come here anymore.’

There are two important elements to this explanation. First, the term “employable” is used here not to describe the extent to which a client is likely to be an attractive job applicant, but rather to mean that a particular client has been sorted into a group that is eligible for employment support

services, a category defined purely by the service contract. Employable clients were the ones who could be counted in the agencies performance reports. The term “employable” was manipulated in multiple ways at MRA, as will be discussed later in this chapter. The second important element of this explanation is while sorting clients into two groups solved the problem of how to justify targeting MRA’s resources to clients they could report in their performance outcomes, it did not solve the dilemma of need. As this manager acknowledges, clients who were sorted into the non-employable group might still need employment assistance.

The employment staff at MRA responded to the dilemma of client need among the non-employable by using their discretion to select particular clients who were beyond the service time limit and who the worker wanted to work with, a practice I call “cherry picking.” Cherry picking is a form of worker bias. Worker bias is conceptualized in the street-level literature to explain why workers target certain clients for receipt of limited resources or services, resulting in the skewing of provision of services that policy intended to be distributed equally. Cherry picking was engaged in at MRA as a way of extending supplemental resources to particular clients. Rather than engaging in husbanding resources, workers who cherry picked clients extended services to clients who were technically ineligible, thereby using agency resources to provide services that would not be enumerated in grant reports. Further, cherry picking involved selecting an individual client, in spite of how unlikely the client was to succeed, based on the sympathies of the worker. These clients were chosen not because they would do well, but in fact because they had not.

The street-level perspective raises questions about why and how workers made such discretionary choices. There seemed to be a tacit agreement among the employment staff and management that workers could use their discretion to cherry pick cases for this kind of

supplemental support when there was time to do so. In answer to the question why they would offer services to ineligible clients at all, one employment caseworker responded, “They need help. If I have time, I’m going to help!” Statistics reported in the July–September 2011 Jewish Federation quarterly *Review of Program Performance* show that MRA served 17 clients who they could not report due to ineligibility. Regardless of the EES contract limitations and the management response of sorting clients into groups, 22 percent of the clients workers provided employment services to were ineligible and therefore not counted in the quarterly agency grant assessment. The MRA staff was able to provide these services to select ineligible clients during this time because the number of newly resettled refugee clients was relatively low and the workers had some surplus time to offer clients who had been previously resettled. However, when arrivals picked up, the extent of the cherry picking diminished. In 2012 MRA received 20 more clients in the third quarter than they had in the same quarter in 2011, and the July–September 2012 Jewish Federation quarterly *Review of Program Performance* reported that the agency only extended services to 3 ineligible clients.

In answer to the question of how workers selected these clients, workers consistently cherry picked clients they sympathized with, and cited service limitations to clients they did not. One employment staff person explained how she decided to help a client who was technically ineligible for service and would therefore not be counted in the Jewish Federation report: “If someone shows up at our office out of the blue four or five years later, I won’t do anything for them. But this woman is here all the time, she’ll probably be here today. She is funny, she is able to draw on something inside herself.” This worker liked her client’s sense of humor, and her tenacity, and the worker rewarded the client for these characteristics by extending employment services even though the client was technically ineligible.

This worker and others at MRA often described their sympathies when explaining how they chose to serve particular clients who had timed out for EES. In one case the entire employment staff extended services to a client from Iraq who had timed out of services. This client was the father of two, married, and regularly came to visit the agency with his family. He had suffered several heart attacks during his first two years in the country and, although he was not approved for disability insurance, he could not work. When he returned to the MRA office for employment support after 24 months, the staff worked as a team to find him a job that offered relatively low physical stress. The extent of this client's struggles, and his enduring charm, made him a sympathetic figure to the MRA staff, and they responded to their sympathies by allocating employment resources.

At the same time, clients who did not elicit worker sympathy were cut off from services when their formal eligibility ended at 18 months. For example, a group of four Iraqi refugees came to the United States at the same time as the man who suffered heart attacks, but proved to be resistant to the types of job interviews the employment staff were able to secure for them. When the 18-month service period ended for these clients the employment staff terminated their services and expressed relief not to have to work with these clients any longer. Observation confirmed that employment workers repeatedly cited service limits to ineligible clients whom they found more challenging and less sympathetic.

Workers at MRA seem to engage in cherry picking, in part, as a way of improving their own work experience, and in part as a way of salvaging their images of themselves as members of a helping profession. The data from previous chapters show that the majority of MRA's staff were unsatisfied with their relationships with supervisors, and reported feeling demoralized by the layoffs among their peers. Further, as the rest of this chapter shows, employment

caseworkers contended with the difficult reality of having to find jobs for their clients who were often unprepared for the job market, and with local employers who offered low-wage jobs. Many refugee clients complained to their employment caseworkers that they did not like the jobs they secured, as the opening quote to this chapter alludes to: “Reality is no one likes the first job they get, they have to know they cannot come running back to us after a month just because they don’t like the job.” Under these conditions MRA workers found a way to gain satisfaction from their work, by “going the extra mile” for the clients with whom they enjoyed interacting. The employment manager explained the challenge of working at MRA, and why she liked her job:

We as an agency think because you can pay your bills and have an income, even though this job is not at all what they want to do...we are often stuck in this definition of self-sufficiency because that is what we can do and that is our job and yet it has nothing to do with our participants and their hopes and dreams and who they want to be. But what matters at the end of the day, is that I am good at my job. And I think I am really good at it.

“What does being good at your job mean, how do you describe doing your job well?” I asked her. She elaborated: “I know my clients. I can tell you anything you want to know about them. And they come back to work with me, even after they are done, they come back. I’m proud of that.” This quote highlights one of the challenges that employment caseworkers faced – dealing with a mismatch between the realities of the job market and their clients’ dreams. In order to tolerate this mismatch the employment manager formed an identity around the aspects of her job that were in her control. She identified herself as someone who did her job well, she took pride in that identity, and providing services to certain clients after they were ineligible was part of that experience for her. Her actions with clients confirmed this self-report.

Collectively this evidence demonstrates that neither the contract limitations, nor the management directive at MRA were wholly deterministic of service limitations for specific



clients. The contract change and MRA's protocol change provided parameters for workers to ration services. With this parameter in place, what determined whether clients would receive services after their 18-month eligibility expired was, at least in part, the number of refugee clients the agency had in a given period. What determined which clients would receive employment support after their eligibility period was the values and preferences (Mattison, 2000) of the street-level staff. This is not necessarily a problem for the agency. In fact, it could be argued that this is the system working, that workers are able to do exactly what the MRA management hoped they could, which is to respond to client need regardless of the contract terms. What is problematic however is that workers in this agency repeatedly used their discretion to cherry pick clients they were sympathetic with. It is not hard to imagine that the hardest to serve clients, those difficult to place in jobs or resistant to the sorts of jobs made available to them, could also be clients who needed just as much support as their peers who elicited more sympathy.

#### *Sorting Clients at RAISE*

Guided by the same set of contract changes that led the MRA team to reduce its service period on paper to match that of the new EES contract guidelines, the RAISE employment team responded by rationing their resources to serve only those clients within the new contract guidelines, with just one major exception.

Observation for this study began at RAISE after the EES contract change was initiated, and therefore there are no data points during the transition. When asked to recall the change, the program manager explained that the case management staff was responsible for alerting their clients to the change, and that new clients were informed of the service term limit via a written and verbal explanation of benefits and services. Observation for this study provided three data

points at which clients were informed of employment service term limits at RAISE and were provided with an explanation of the scope of employment services they were entitled to: this information was shared at an orientation meeting attended by newly arrived clients, at individual intake meetings between the client and employment workers, and in the initial meetings between clients and caseworkers.

In practice, the employment team was only observed allocating services beyond the 18-month cap on one occasion. This exceptional case involved a group of 25 Palestinian refugees who had been resettled in 2010 by multiple resettlement agencies to the [Cedar Hills] suburb, over an hour from the Revere neighborhood where the agencies were located. This case was unique in that, prior to their arrival, a mosque in Cedar Hills had advocated for the resettlement agencies to resettle the clients there. The managers of the local resettlement agencies agreed. In separate interviews, both the MRA and RAISE program managers explained that this solution made sense due to the absence of a Palestinian community in the Chicago urban area, and because the mosque was offering to take some responsibility for the ongoing care of these clients. However, this resettlement solution also presented a challenge for the agencies. Because of the distance, the clients ended up not coming in for services, nor did the caseworkers routinely make the trip out to Cedar Hills.

In 2011, a representative of the mosque in Cedar Hills contacted the employment managers at the local resettlement agencies to advocate on behalf of several Palestinian refugees who were unemployed and had become homeless. The RAISE employment manager brought her staff to a meeting at the mosque, also attended by employment caseworkers from two other local agencies and the mosque's refugee advocate. Before leaving for the meeting the RAISE employment manager asked her staff to check the files for each client to find out if they were still

within the 18-month service period and to clarify the circumstances of their employment case management. At the meeting the manager attempted to limit the scope of her team's obligation to these clients:

Advocate: "At Ramadan 80 percent of them did not have jobs."

RAISE Employment Manager: "We have gotten most of them jobs, but some of them work two days and then walk off the job."

Advocate: "They feel abandoned, they feel no one is listening to them. So how can we help them?"

RAISE Employment Manager: "It would be helpful to see who we are talking about. If they didn't get resettled with us we cannot help them. If they have been here for two years they need to find other services."

The employment manager made an effort to justify a limitation of services in three ways. First, she explained that her team had done their job by finding work for "most of" the clients, and that the clients were to blame for quitting these jobs, thereby abdicating RAISE of further responsibility. When this reasoning was met with a further plea for help from the advocate, the manager took a different tack by suggesting that perhaps these clients were not RAISE's responsibility, and that even if they were RAISE clients, perhaps they were outside their 18-month service period. At each turn, the manager attempted to limit her agency's role in providing employment services to these clients, thereby rationing her agency resources.

The resolution to this demand provides the only observed example of RAISE allocating services to ineligible clients. In response to the above interaction between the RAISE manager and refugee advocate, the MRA employment manager interjected: "It feels feudal to me to say, 'oh they got one job and so they are done.' Maybe that's how you do it but..." At this point the tension in the room was palpable, the RAISE staff looked at each other with exasperated expressions and the MRA manager leaned forward and watched them for a response. When the

silence continued the MRA manager declared angrily, “We have enough staff, we can provide services to them!” The mosque representative spoke quietly and suggested a middle-ground solution in which each of the agencies would provide services to clients who were technically ineligible due to the service cap, but on a conditional basis. It was agreed that the advocate would work to figure out “who is in the mindset of serious and who is not serious. Those who come to [English] class, those who go to interviews and get and keep jobs, we will know who is serious.” By taking the focus off the role of the agencies and turning the attention to client input and effort, the advocate was able to provide common ground for the agency staff. The employment managers from the three different agencies agreed to each offer ongoing services only to those clients who the advocate deemed was making a serious effort.

When asked about her opinion of this resolution, the RAISE employment manager explained, “I feel like the goal is self-sufficiency. Not we pay your rent and you just hang out. These people do not have the ethic for work! But we have to work with [MRA] and [Refugee Services International] all the time, if it’s going to be like that we couldn’t move forward.” In contrast to MRA, the one-time decision at RAISE to extend employment services beyond the eligibility period was not based on worker preferences for particular clients, or on workers’ needs to salvage an image of their jobs. In fact, the sole exception of providing services to ineligible clients was made for a group of clients about whom the employment manager expressed a great deal of judgment. In this case, making an exception for these clients was based on the need to maintain a working relationship with the other resettlement agencies that participated in SNOW, thereby preserving the resources secured through that shared employment network. The cost in terms of RAISE’s employment staff time in this Cedar Hills context was actually an investment in what had been a long-term relationship that had the potential to provide

ongoing returns.

The employment workers at RAISE seemed to be quick to cite service limitations, in part, because they did not need to extend supplemental services, or cherry pick particular clients, to maintain their identities as good workers. In fact, providing boundaries for service provision seemed to be part of how the RAISE workers defined good quality work. At the annual staff retreat, an employment caseworker defined his job in this way: “We are not the solution to all their problems, we are going to teach them, but we cannot do it all for them.” And the employment manager described what she saw as one of the core strengths of RAISE’s work: “I like that we see clients during appointment time so that you are giving clients quality service. And also teaching clients. Most places in the United States you can’t just waltz in and expect to be seen so it is good to help them understand this.” A week after the staff retreat the program manager disseminated a wrap-up document that summarized the highlights of the meeting. This document listed the following “challenge for helping client become self-sufficient,” which was identified by staff at the meeting:

- Lack of boundaries with staff who provide services beyond what is appropriate (i.e. giving money, making accommodations for some families over others, etc.)

The document also listed a set of recommendations for dealing with this challenge, which were also defined by staff at the meeting:

- Set boundary guidelines for clients at orientation and re-enforce them often (e.g. come to appointments on time, have a plan for paying rent and transportation, practice your English, pay attention to your location and how to the ride CTA, etc.)
- Hold clients AND staff accountable for appropriate boundaries
- Encourage staff to set a good example for clients and other staff members
- Support language development and education about the “system”
- Just say NO when boundaries are being crossed. It is a learning opportunity for both the client and the staff member.

The prevailing culture at RAISE was focused on providing services to clients in a way that

mirrored the conditions of larger society. Implicit in this approach, and explicit in the worker's comments and the staff retreat summary, was the notion that RAISE staff were engaged in teaching clients what to expect outside the agency. Doing good work at RAISE therefore was associated with providing and maintaining boundaries for service delivery, and not with making exceptions.

### *Comparison of Adaptive Strategies*

In the context of the EES contract change, both MRA and RAISE management chose to make changes to their own internal service policies. However, in these cases neither the contract change, nor the adjusted agency policy ultimately determined whether or not refugee clients received employment support after 18 months. These examples highlight that even in the context of performance measures and contracts that influence agency choices about the structure of policy provision, workers can exercise their discretion in ways that further alter the shape that policy takes. Specifically, both MRA and RAISE employment caseworkers used their discretion to decide whether to allocate services to clients who were outside the contract service period, thereby determining what the policy experience would be for clients who had been in Revere for more than 18 months.

Both agencies provided services to ineligible clients, but their decisions around which clients to distribute resources to were made differently. MRA employment workers made ad hoc discretionary decisions to cherry pick ineligible clients they sympathized with, while at RAISE employment resources were only extended to ineligible clients when other resources were at stake. The key differences that distinguished the choice-set of employment workers at MRA from that of workers at RAISE are the size and culture of the agencies, and the source of positive identity for the workers.

With almost twice as many clients to serve, the RAISE caseworkers could less afford to use their discretion to offer services to clients who had timed out. Evidence of how size matters in this case is drawn from the distinct patterns of practice across the two agencies, and supported by a shift in practice at MRA when client numbers were higher. The result of this difference in practice is that clients who happened to be with MRA at a time when the agency caseload was low ended up with a different kind of employment policy than those placed at RAISE, and even from those placed at MRA when client levels were high.

Differences in organizational culture and staff identity also played a role in whether or not workers extended services to clients outside the service period. In a context of low client arrivals, the employment workers at MRA contended with staff reductions and low staff morale. The culture at MRA was one in which employment workers were alienated from senior management. Under these conditions workers found a resourceful way to improve their own employment experiences by cherry picking clients to extend supplemental services to, thereby salvaging their identities as workers engaged in social justice work. The workers at RAISE operated in a culture of strong agency identity around teaching their clients. Doing the job well included understanding, and operating within, boundaries, and therefore did not include extending services beyond the contract limitations.

#### Adaptive Strategies Given High Demand and Limited Resources

In response to performance measures that prioritized rapid work entry, employment caseworkers at MRA and RAISE routinely selected the clients who seemed the most likely to succeed, and placed these clients in limited program and employment opportunities. Other street-level research has shown that workers engage in this practice, called creaming, in order to achieve and report the highest number of positive outcomes for their performance reports, to

make their own jobs easier, and as a way of allocating limited resources (Lipsky, 1980; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003; S. R. Smith & Lipsky, 1993). However, in the case of the RROs studied in this ethnography, creaming did not always look like it does in other street-level studies.

### *Creaming the Most Compliant Clients at MRA*

A study of MRA's implementation of the Matching Grant program provides an example of how workers adapted to performance measure pressures by creaming clients who were the most likely to succeed. What is particularly interesting about this practice at MRA is that workers based their decisions about selection on the client's apparent level of compliance.

In practice the Matching Grant caseworker was the gatekeeper for the MG program and therefore for the supplemental resources and benefits available to MG enrolled clients. The MG caseworker screened potential clients in order to fill the available MG slots. Screening interviews took place at the caseworker's desk, which was in the middle of the employment department's shared cubicle space. With no privacy it was often difficult for the caseworker to stay focused on her interview for the entire process, often a co-worker would interrupt to ask a question, or another client would stop by the desk to ask for help. The caseworker consistently dismissed these interruptions and returned to her client, but the setting did not give the impression that the client had the caseworker's full attention. During this interview the MG caseworker completed her assessment, and by the end of the meeting she made the discretionary decision to offer them a place in the MG program, or not.

Street-level theory might lead to expectations that the MG caseworker would use her discretion to select clients with significant prior work history, or with a strong mastery of English, as both of these factors might impact the client's success on the job market. But



creaming at MRA did not happen as might have been predicted. For example, clients with more substantial work history and higher levels of education were often screened out of the selective MG program, while clients with very limited English and a farming background were often selected first. The MG gatekeeper explained her criteria for selecting program participants: “People have to be employable. Employable means flexible and willing to take any job.” Other staff at MRA expressed similar ideas about what “employable” meant, and about which clients were appropriate for referral to the MG program. One caseworker explained: “The term ‘highly employable’ is ambiguous because someone who is highly educated but not willing to take any job would not be considered ‘highly employable. That person should not be in Match Grant.” Rather, the term “employable” was used by the MG caseworker to describe the extent to which the client would be compliant. The MG caseworker was creaming clients who appeared to her to be most likely to follow her direction and take any job offered to them.

In order to assess whether a client was in fact willing to take any job available, the MG worker described to clients the kinds of jobs they might get offered: jobs that came with long transportation times; jobs that required workers to stand on their feet the whole time; jobs that included hard physical labor or the cleaning of toilets and bed pans; even jobs that required working on their feet in the deep chill of meat lockers. This worker pushed clients to be specific about what they were willing to do. In one interview she asked a client who had no previous labor market experience, “Will you lift 20 pounds? 30 pounds? Will you clean or wash dishes? Will you work at night? And what about if the job requires you to switch your school schedule?” The client nodded between her questions, agreeing he would be willing to do all she asked, and also that he would travel over an hour to and from work and would accept a minimum wage of \$8.25 per hour. This client was offered one of three MG seats available that month, although

there were ten other refugee clients interviewed for the opportunity, some of whom had substantial work experience in their home countries.

When asked to reflect about this process of selecting clients who she felt were the most potentially compliant for the limited MG seats, the caseworker focused on the fact that if she were to be liberal in screening clients, then her “self-sufficiency rates” might be lower. ORR defines self-sufficiency as “earning a total family income at a level that enables a family unit to support itself without receipt of a cash assistance grant,” and requires MG program sites to enumerate the number of clients who have reached this milestone. A 2010 monitoring report from MRA’s NRA reported that the local agency’s self-sufficiency outcomes at 120 and 180 days “exceeded the national average,” and the 2010 rates were an improvement over MRA’s own 2009 rates. The MRA MG caseworker was singled out in a federal ORR 2010 report as having done an excellent job. This formal feedback provided an incentive for the MG caseworker to maintain her high job placement rates.

This ORR performance standard created an incentive for the MG worker to get her clients to work quickly, and this end was achieved most easily for her when she worked with clients who were not picky about what job they would take. In fact, in our interview this worker indicated that her goal of reaching the highest possible self-sufficiency rates for her program would have been more difficult if the clients in the program were harder to employ. But outcomes were not her only concern. When asked to elaborate on her priorities, the caseworker also focused on the challenge to her own work, rather than on the end result for her clients. She explained, “Dealing with the headache of enrolling someone who is picky about work and then having to constantly deal with them is hell.” Due to the program guidelines of MG this employee was in a position to screen potential clients for the limited number of seats available. Her

practice of creaming the easiest to serve clients made her job easier because these clients were ostensibly easier to place in jobs rather quickly due to their willingness to take any job, and they were less challenging for her to interact with on a day-to-day basis. This example highlights how the incentives created by outcome-based performance measures can combine with limited program resources and high levels of client demand to create a context in which workers will use their discretion to determine what policy looks like. In this case, the organizational context created an incentive for the MG caseworker to select the clients who were the easiest to serve because they were the most compliant, and therefore were the most likely to succeed.

#### *Sorting and Creaming Clients at RAISE*

The performance standards associated with the EES contract also stressed rapid employment for as many clients as possible. The RAISE employment staff responded to the imbalance of performance measure pressure, client demand, and available job opportunities differently for different employment options. In the case of one employer, Home on the Range (HOTR), which routinely hired large groups of refugee employees, paid a relatively high wage of \$9.00 per hour, and offered full time work and benefits, the RAISE employment staff made a practice of sorting clients by their risk of impending homelessness, and selecting from those most at risk to send for job interviews. The employment manager reflected on this practice in an interview: “I wish we could move some of them over, a few have asked for [HOTR], but it sucks because you just make a list and then decide who is the most desperate.” Observation for this study revealed that HOTR hired almost every applicant sent to them by RAISE. So, while the employment manager would have liked to use HOTR as an opportunity to move some clients up in the labor market, from lesser paying jobs to the more stable HOTR job, with so many clients in need of work, so few openings at HOTR, and the relative guarantee that her clients would get

employed quickly, she reserved this opportunity as a safety net for her clients most at risk. The practice of sorting clients into groups and allocating limited resources based on these groupings has been identified in other street-level research (Brodkin, 1997; Lipsky, 1980; Soss, Fording, & Schram, 2011a). However, this practice has typically been described as a process of creating stereotypes about clients based on client characteristics. This example from RAISE demonstrates a distinct form of sorting, in which client need is the orienting frame for the grouping.

There were other types of positions for which the RAISE employment staff adapted to the pressures from EES performance standards by creaming the clients most likely to get hired. As an example of how this practice played out at RAISE, the employment team was observed selecting clients for an interview at a Persian restaurant. The staff discussed a list of clients who were actively looking for work, and one of the job developers mentioned a client from Eritrea who had been very motivated to interview and who had experience in kitchens. The program manager, who knew the restaurant owner, warned the staff, “We won’t get him hired there. They are not inclusive. You need to send a Middle Eastern or Eastern European. It just won’t work.” This process was routine. The employment staff creamed the clients they felt were most likely to succeed at certain job opportunities, and in so doing the staff also withheld these same opportunities from clients whom the staff assumed held less of a chance of getting hired.

Both of these practices, sorting and creaming clients, were reasonable practice adaptations given the limited numbers of job openings and the types of opportunities the employment caseworkers had access to for their clients. Had there been more openings at HOTR, employment caseworkers might have chosen to provide opportunities for their clients in lower paying industries to move up in the labor force. Had there been more restaurants open to hiring refugee workers, the employment staff might have found other options for the African refugee

with kitchen experience. This particular client was not able to find employment at all, and he chose to take his family and move to another part of the state where it was reported there were more opportunities for work.

*Broadening the Resource Pool at RAISE*

Employment caseworkers in the Revere neighborhood all contended with the problem of limited job opportunities for their refugee clients. But with so many clients to serve, the RAISE workers had a greater imbalance of demand and supply than their peers at other RROs, while still being held accountable to the same performance standards for rapid labor market placement. One way that RAISE handled this imbalance was to shift in and out of relationships with employers, based on the level of client demand at a given time.

One example of this practice involves a company at which refugee clients had many bad experiences – [Illinois Industrial Cleaners Inc. (IICI)] – but which, as one employment caseworker noted, was often willing “to hire people that no one else will hire.” IICI did not require staff to speak English, but observation for this study revealed that IICI’s human resources department showed a preference for women of petite build – women who were often bypassed for manual labor jobs such as in the meatpacking and manufacturing industries. At a time when RAISE’s refugee arrivals were low, with only 36 arrivals in one month, RAISE had fewer clients to place and less need for IICI. As the employment manager explained:

We have not used them in a long time. It’s a crappy job and people get fired all the time. One guy, he asked to be placed there because he had friends there. I was like, ‘are you sure?’ So he went, he got hired, and he liked it! One night gets locked in...when he was cleaning and he gets freaked out and pulled and pushed and kicked and broke the door, and he was fired. I mean they will fire anyone. And, it takes six weeks to actually get to work between paperwork, interviews, badging and security.

Despite this attitude toward IICI, some 12 months after this interview, when refugee arrivals were

at an all-time high, with more than 60 arrivals in a month, RAISE held a hiring fair for the same company. In that context, the employment manager's explanation was this:

[IICI] is hiring. We will still send people. We have a couple of people who asked on their own to go because they heard about it through friends. [IICI] does not demand a very high level of English or ability, so it is good for people with limited option. The Somali women are really hard to place – single mothers, low English, and a lot of employers are uncomfortable with their dress and hijab, unfortunately. Plus, when we can get a big group together, [IICI] will come to [RAISE] and do interviews here, so it makes it really easy for us and the clients.

The employment manager's new attitude about, and altered practice with, IICI came from the ever-present performance standards that required RAISE to get their clients to work quickly, combined with a shift in organizational context in which RAISE had twice as many clients to place in employment.

#### *Comparison of Adaptive Strategies*

Although the evidence provided here is drawn from different employment contracts at each agency, the data demonstrates that the employment caseworkers at MRA and RAISE used many of the same adaptive techniques, namely distributing limited employment resources by sorting and creaming clients. The fact that workers at both agencies deployed these techniques, in spite of the fact that MRA had more program resources than RAISE and that RAISE served more clients than MRA, suggests that the prevailing contextual factors influencing worker practices were the limited supply of job opportunities for clients and a set of performance measure pressures that stressed rapid work entry for as many clients as possible (see Appendices H and J for an overview of job placement outcomes at both agencies).

However, there are some subtle yet important distinctions about how these distribution processes played out at each RRO. MRA employment caseworkers were relatively punitive in their treatment of clients, whereas RAISE caseworkers routinely selected clients for limited job

opportunities based on client need and the likelihood that the client would get hired. MRA's practices were due, in part, to the added pressure the MRA workers were under by having to comply with two sets of performance standards and half as many clients to select from as they tried to select the most work-ready for limited employment opportunities.

RAISE's strategy of broadening the resource pool by shifting in and out of relationships with employers merits further investigation. This adaptation suggests the RRO has the ability to alter the resource and demand equation, and therefore to change the context in which workers use their discretion to distribute resources to clients.

### **Discussion**

This chapter has extended street-level theory, and makes a contribution to the workfare literature, by presenting the findings of an empirical study of employment policy provision by refugee resettlement organizations. Specifically, this analysis has explicated the mechanisms by which performance measure pressures were conveyed to RRO employment staff. These pressures encouraged workers to get clients employed as quickly as possible, and were conveyed through formal mechanisms such as monitoring visits, reports, and feedback from the granting institutions, and through informal mechanisms such as conversations and meetings with management and staff in which employment outcomes were discussed.

Secondly, the street-level analysis in this chapter has found that workers in these agencies acted in ways similar to workers in other workfare SLOs. Specifically, employment caseworkers adapted to performance measures that incentivized getting as many clients to work as quickly as possible by engaging in routine practices such as sorting clients into groups and distributing limited resources and opportunities based on these groupings, creaming the clients most likely to succeed, and rewarding clients for compliant behavior. Not surprisingly, these findings suggest

that RROs are like other workfare agencies in that contracts and associated performance measures are influencing how service provision takes shape within them.

However, there are some aspects of RROs that make them unique from other types of workfare agencies, and which played a part in shaping the adaptive strategies of workers at MRA and RAISE. MRA and RAISE were subject to the NRA client allocation process, and had no ability to control the flow of clients on a week-to-week basis. Yet this chapter has shown that the number of clients they had to serve at a given time impacted the practice choices that workers made, and ultimately impacted the policy experience of the refugee clients. For example, workers at MRA engaged in the practice of cherry picking in order to extend supplemental resources to clients beyond their service limits. This practice was evident during a lull in client arrivals, and was not evident when client arrivals were more plentiful.

My analysis of employment worker behaviors explains that at MRA workers engaged in cherry picking on an ad hoc basis as a way of improving their own job experience by maintaining the image of themselves as a part of a helping profession. RAISE workers did not respond to the shift in refugee arrival patterns the same way that MRA workers did, and this could be because RAISE employment workers defined their jobs, in part, in terms of teaching their clients about appropriate boundaries and service limitations.

Another important contribution of this chapter is the analysis of how RAISE workers shifted in and out of relationships with employers in order to broaden their resource pool when client arrivals were highest, and contract the pool when arrivals were lower. This strategy was in part an adaptation to an environment in which the job opportunities themselves were less than ideal, the manager described not wanting to have to send clients to sub-optimal jobs, and one in which pressure to get as many clients to work as quickly as possible had to be managed in the



context of limited job resources and high client demand for work. This finding demonstrates a potential point of intervention for refugee resettlement policy. With more consistent and predictable refugee allocations, RROs might use their foresight to experiment with this kind of broadening resource pool behavior, and potentially to find better job opportunities for their refugee clients before a large influx of clients arrived.

These findings have important implications for refugee clients, who are not like the clients of other workfare agencies. The majority of refugees face increased barriers to work, such as limited English language capacity and work experience not aligned with the demands of the US labor market, and have a history of trauma to contend with (GAO, 2011). It is precisely because of the unique challenges that refugees in the United States face that a specific kind of social service organization was designed to meet the needs of this population. If the structure of contracts and performance measures is influencing RROs to operate in ways similar to other types of workfare organizations, then either the rationale for the existence of these population-specific organizations must be revisited, or the contract and performance measures must themselves be re-examined.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION

*“I think the perception should be ‘we are doing a great job’ – but we could be doing so much better. It is due to undue stress due to lack of federal resources.”*

– RAISE program manager

### **The Politics and Implementation of US Refugee Resettlement Policy**

This study weaves together three analytic threads in order to explain the politics and implementation of US refugee resettlement policy. The first step in the analysis explains that the political history of resettlement policy has reflected ongoing tensions around the question of whether or not refugees are worthy of resettlement assistance, and, if so: whether assistance should be responsive or equitable; what the appropriate scope and duration of resettlement assistance should be; and to what extent work should factor into the resettlement process. Many of these tensions were formally resolved in the Refugee Act of 1980. And yet, street-level theory shows that legislation tells only a part of the policy story. Within the parameters of refugee law, implementing organizations continue to impact the shape that policy takes as street-level workers deliver services to their clients.

The second step in this analysis explains that the institutional system in which refugee resettlement policy is implemented is inherently unstable. There are often dramatic fluctuations in the numbers of refugees that arrive; the federal and state contract structures tie funding to the number of refugee arrivals; and the financial instability that results most heavily impacts local implementing organizations.

The third step in this analysis provides an explanation for how workers in two local implementing RROs in Chicago negotiate service delivery within this political and institutional structure. Conducting an organizational ethnography allowed me to dive deeply into the housing

and employment policy implementation processes over time and to gain rich insights about what was driving worker behavior at RAISE and MRA.

This study's analysis of housing policy implementation finds that agencies reacted to shifts in client and funding levels differently, and that worker practices differed across the two agencies. Specifically, in the context of low refugee arrivals MRA workers experienced employment instability, which resulted in low staff morale. During periods of both high and low arrivals, housing caseworkers were overtaxed with multiple responsibilities, and they seemed to identify as caseworkers first, making housing tasks a secondary priority. The quality of the housing secured by MRA staff was inconsistent and often compromised by rodent and insect infestations. On the other hand, fluctuations in refugee arrivals did not affect the job security of the RAISE housing staff, even though the diversity of tasks they were required to complete did expand. These workers self-identified as housing specialists and the quality of the housing stock they secured was decent and consistent. The different practices of workers at the two agencies is explained, in part, by the extent to which housing staff were able to build agency capacity by prioritizing relationships with landlords, the culture of the housing department, and the professional identity of the staff.

The analysis in Chapter 6 finds that employment worker practices also differed across the two agencies. Workers at MRA responded to contract service limitations by sorting clients into groups and providing services to all the clients in the eligible, or "employable," group. When client arrivals were low, workers at MRA used their personal bias and engaged in cherry-picking – selecting clients with whom they sympathized and providing them with supplemental employment services – while citing service limitation to clients with whom they did not sympathize. Workers at RAISE responded to the same contract service limitation by citing

eligibility limitations to all clients, with one exception. The RAISE employment manager extended employment services on one occasion when she felt her relationship with other peer agencies was at risk. These differences in worker practices across the two employment departments are explained by a difference in organizational culture, worker identity, and caseload size.

The findings from Chapters 5 and 6 suggest the importance of extra-organizational relationship building in the implementation of refugee resettlement policy. Workers at RAISE engaged in capacity-building behavior with landlords and local employers. Through the relationships that housing staff made with landlords the housing department gained access to quality apartments at relatively affordable rates. Due to their ability to expand agency capacity with local employers, the RAISE employment workers were able to place their clients into jobs quickly, even when client arrivals were high. In short, drawing on these extra-organizational relationships allowed RAISE to be nimble: to adjust to different levels of demand. On the other hand, MRA did not benefit from strong landlord relationships. Rather than engaging in capacity-building behavior, MRA workers seemed to be in a constant mode of survival. Not only did this culture of work seem to impact workers' perspectives of themselves and of their jobs, it also presented an implementation problem in that R&P workers could not find enough quality apartments at affordable rates for their clients.

This dissertation tells a story of a refugee resettlement policy still in flux. In spite of the intentions of The Refugee Act to standardize policy for all refugees, the workers at RAISE and MRA continue to resolve the debates about: 1) whether resettlement policy should be responsive or equitable; 2) what the appropriate scope and duration of resettlement assistance should be; and

3) to what extent work should factor into the resettlement process – and they do so with very different results.

1) At RAISE, for the most part, clients were treated equitably. As one example, the agency dropped the MG program, in part because it separated clients into two tiers of service. As another example the RAISE employment policy was limited, with just one exception, to 18-months. At MRA, different refugee clients got different employment programs; workers used their discretion to select some clients for the MG program, some clients received the basic EES program for 18-months, and some clients were cherry picked to receive ongoing EES services.

2) The issue of the proper scope and duration of benefits for clients was routinely reformulated by workers at RAISE and MRA. The way the EES 18-month employment service cap was managed by each agency provides examples of this reformulation. And, while the data included in these chapters does not provide evidence of the way in which workers at RAISE and MRA determined which clients would receive ongoing housing subsidies, that discretionary process is another example of how this debate is resolved at the point of service delivery.

3) Work requirements were, in most cases, the same for all clients at RAISE. EES was the only program option, and again, all clients received these program supports for the contracted 18-months, with the one exception of the Palestinian refugees in Cedar Hills. At MRA, work requirements were different for different clients. First, there were two work programs, and workers used their discretion to determine which clients were given access to the “bells and whistles” MG program versus the standard EES program. Second, employment workers cherry picked certain clients to receive supplemental employment services.

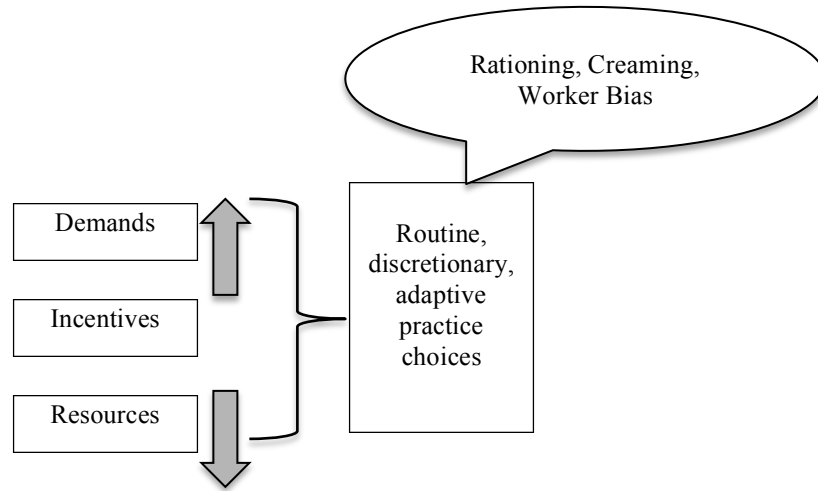
The implications of this policy reformulation by workers are serious for refugee clients. This dissertation shows that, although in some cases workers responded to individual client

needs with particular services, in many cases workers used their discretion to make practice choices as a response to the context of their work. When asked by a visiting delegation to summarize the strengths and challenges of local resettlement agencies, the RAISE Program Manager said, “I think the perception should be ‘we are doing a great job’ – but we could be doing so much better. It is due to undue stress due to lack of federal resources.” While this statement does explain one of the challenges local resettlement organizations face in Chicago, the implication of the ongoing process of policy reformulation suggests that her answer is only part of the story. In fact, this dissertation shows that refugee resettlement policy is different for different refugees, and that what policy looks like depends on a combination of factors, including which agency the refugee is allocated to, how many other refugees (and associated funds) arrive at the same time, how sympathetic agency workers are, and the extent to which workers at the agency have successfully prioritized establishing extra-organizational relationships.

### **Limitations of Street-Level Theory and Alternative Explanations**

The street-level framework helped to form my initial research questions about what I wanted to understand about RROs, and it provided me with an analytic lens through which to start explaining the data I collected in the field. However, like all theories, street-level theory has its limitations. A simplified model of street-level theory is depicted in Figure 7:

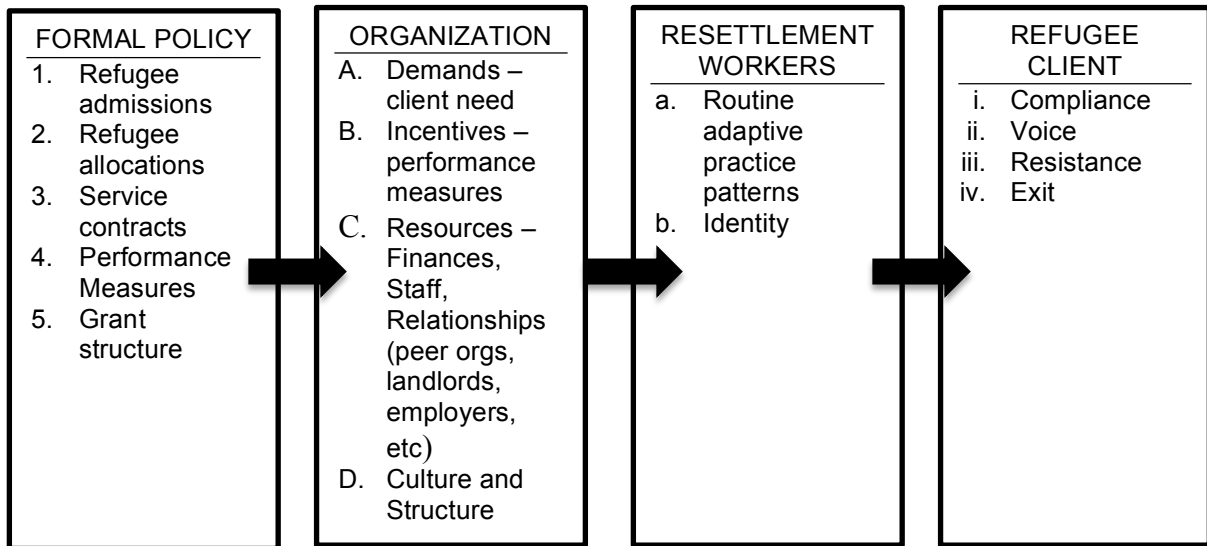
Figure 7:  
A Simplified Model of Street-Level Theory



This model assumes that workers make choices about how to deliver services in a context of high client demand, ever-present incentives from performance measures, and insufficient resources. The model predicts that in response to these conditions, workers will engage in adaptive behaviors that help to ration resources, structure the terms of exchange, and make their jobs easier. Specifically, the model predicts that workers will use their discretion to cream the easiest-to-serve clients, and select certain clients for ideal service delivery based on worker bias.

The data from this study show that the reality of refugee resettlement service delivery does not quite map onto the model predicted by street-level theory. Rather than conditions of high client demand and limited resources, workers within RROs were faced with unpredictable and unreliable levels of client demand and resources. Further, street-level theory does not take into account proximal and alternative factors that can help explain the practice choices that the participants in this study made. A model of refugee resettlement policy implementation that extends street-level theory and leaves room for some alternative explanations is proposed below.

Figure 8:  
A Model of Refugee Resettlement Policy Implementation



This model reflects two major findings from this study. First, the model for understanding the practice choices of street-level workers can be expanded to include proximal factors, in this case the policy context. This model also moves beyond street-level theory to begin to frame considerations of the impact of worker practice choices on the behavior of their refugee clients, specifically looking at how worker patterns of practice might relate to client compliance, resistance and expression of voice. Second, refugee resettlement policy research to date tends to treat service delivery as a fixed effect and has not explicated the relationship between contextual factors and service delivery. This model is a first cut at describing these relationships.

#### *Policy Context*

This model of refugee resettlement policy implementation depicts the policy context in which local implementing refugee resettlement organizations (RROs) are embedded and which impacts the working conditions under which resettlement services are delivered at the street-level. Specifically, (1) refugee admissions policies, managed and implemented by the



Department of State and the United States Customs and Immigration Service, create fluctuations in the numbers of refugees that arrive to the US on a weekly basis. These fluctuations in arrivals have implications for local RROs that are exacerbated by (2) allocations policies that prioritize: the placement of refugees with US ties in proximity to the US tie, minimizing the impact of new refugee arrivals on communities that have previously resettled large numbers of refugees, and maintaining a specific percentage share of annual refugee arrivals for the National Refugee Agencies. Under these policy conditions RROs are subject to inconsistent waves of refugee arrivals, and, in any given week two RROs in the same community might receive vastly different numbers of refugee clients.

The policy context also includes the (3) service contracts between federal, national, state, and local level institutions. The model predicts that the structure of these contracts and their embedded mandates will impact the incentive and demand structure of local implementing organizations. Specifically, the (4) performance measures in place to hold implementing RROs accountable for specific outcomes and outputs create an incentive structure for workers within RROs that alters the way in which these workers make practice choices. The model also predicts that the various (5) grant structures will have an impact on the local organizational context as funds are more or less available for staff and program support and as the use of these funds is more or less restricted.

#### *Local Implementing Refugee Resettlement Organizations*

The organizational context in this model is made up of 4 factors, each of which are impacted by the policy context: the (A) client demand for service, (B) organizational incentives, (C) organizational resources, and the (D) organizational culture and structure.

(A) The level of client demand is, for the most part, a direct result of the refugee allocation system that puts the Department of State and the National Resettlement Agencies in the position to determine how many refugee clients are assigned to each local RRO – a process over which the local RRO has very little control. (B) Organizational incentives are created by service contracts and associated performance measures. Performance measure incentives are conveyed to workers in multiple ways including the requirement that workers enumerate specific outcomes of service, the dissemination of formal outcome reports among local RROs, person-to-person contact and monitoring visits by granting institution representatives. (C) Organizational resources include funding, staff, and relationships with partner service providers, local employers and landlords, and peer RROs. Many of these resources are impacted by grants and contracts. For example, much of the local agency funding comes from federal and state grants, and some contracts require that local RROs have a certain number of staff per client. On the other hand, when grants are terminated or when per capita grants dwindle, agencies are left with limited resources. Other agency resources, such as agency relationships, are only indirectly impacted by grants and contracts, but are more obviously impacted by other agency factors such as agency culture and structure. (D) Organizational culture, by which I mean the shared values, norms, and traditional practices of the organization, is impacted by many factors. The organizations' histories influence their current culture, as does the fact that they are RROs and that these types of organizations do things "a certain way." Finally, organizational structure, by which I mean the management, supervisory, and power structures within the organization, are impacted in part by organizational history and by organizational culture. This model theorizes that both the culture and the structure of local RROs will be impacted by the resettlement policy context. Implementing organizations operate within the parameters of their contract mandates, and future

empirical research needs to examine how these shared mandates effect the culture and structure of different RROs.

### *Refugee Resettlement Workers*

The model predicts that refugee resettlement workers will adapt to this organizational context by using (a) routine practice behaviors. Specifically, when there are limited resources but high levels of client demand for service, workers will use their discretion to ration resources, sort clients into groups for service receipt, and cherry-pick from among the clients with whom they are most sympathetic for receipt of supplemental services. The incentives in place from performance measures will encourage workers to cream clients most likely to succeed.

The way in which workers respond to client demand for service is also impacted by organizational culture and structure. Workers are more likely to engage in routine practice behaviors that represent the culture of their particular RRO, while the organizational structure will support certain kinds of worker practices while limiting the potential for others. For example, a structure with clear management and supervisory roles and a clear definition of staff expectations and responsibilities might be associated with certain types of worker practices, while a structure lacking supervision and clear roles and responsibilities might be associated with different worker practices. Future research in this area will help to clarify this theoretical relationship.

The model also identifies the role of (b) worker identity in the service delivery process. The ways in which workers come to see themselves and their role in this helping profession will have an impact on the way in which they interact with their refugee clients and the routine patterns of practice that they engage in.

### *Refugee Clients*

Finally, the model theorizes that the behaviors of refugee clients will be impacted by the practice behaviors of their resettlement workers and the organizational context in which services are delivered. Specifically, refugee clients will be trained by their caseworkers to be (i) compliant with worker demands in order to avoid sanctions and / or to receive limited resources. Clients might be given opportunities to express (ii) voice within their service organizations, and these opportunities are impacted by the structure and culture of the organization itself, as well as by practice patterns of their caseworkers. In some cases, refugee clients will (iii) resist the demands of their caseworkers, either through explicit expression such as refusing to accept a particular job opportunity, or by implicit expression, by (iv) not returning to the RRO for services.

It is important to note that the relatively limited number of factors contained in both the worker and client boxes in Figure 8 are reflective of my study design and theoretical perspectives. This study was not intended to analyze the refugee clients' experiences of service delivery, and the data I collected does not allow me to flesh out this context as well as it did the others in the model. Furthermore, street-level theory is limited in the extent to which it considers alternative factors motivating worker behavior, over and above the context of demands, resources, and incentives in which workers make practice choices. Future work is needed to more deeply examine the worker and refugee client context.

## **Implications**

The conclusion that refugee resettlement assistance is not a fixed effect, but rather that this process might look different in different organizational contexts within the shared broader policy context, has implications for policy, practice, and research.

First, this study has found that the current refugee admissions and allocations policies, managed by DOS and the NRAs, have a serious impact on the context in which local RROs implement services for their refugee clients. Unless these policies are changed in such a way that local RROs can either predict in advance how many clients they will have in a given quarter, or can rely on sufficient administrative support funds regardless of how many clients arrive, many RROs will continue to adapt by creating employment instability for their workers. This study explains how this instability in turn impacts resettlement services for refugee clients. The empirical evidence provided in this dissertation also suggests that policy makers at the federal, national, and state level must do more than require a list of inputs for workers to adhere to and look beyond the outcomes reported in performance reports. For policy makers to understand what refugee policy actually looks like at the point of service delivery, and to ensure that services are being implemented in a way that is equitable across refugee groups, they must seek an understanding of the processes by which resettlement outcomes are achieved.

Second, this study has found that resettlement workers and management have a vital role to play in the (re)formulation of refugee resettlement policy. Certainly, this data shows that much of the context in which these workers provide service is out of the control of the local RRO. But, the findings of this dissertation also indicate that some organizational factors, such as the culture and structure of the RRO, can mitigate certain service delivery challenges. These factors might be, at least in part, amenable to input, intervention, and innovation on the part of local RRO staff.

Further, the routine practice patterns of resettlement workers can have real impact on the way in which their refugee clients navigate the service experience. Although the data included in the analysis of these chapters only explain part of this relationship, they do imply that resettlement service delivery can be conceptualized as an interactive process in which the behavior of refugee clients both influences, and is influenced by, the practices of resettlement workers. Practice interventions that seek to improve the quality of service delivery for refugee clients must incorporate this interactive conception if they are to be successful.

Finally, refugee resettlement research needs to incorporate a more complex understanding of resettlement service delivery. The limited literature in this area includes program evaluation studies that associate client outcomes with either human capital factors or economic and social structural factors, but leaves policy implementation in the “black box” – treating it as a constant rather than a variable. A more nuanced examination of resettlement outcomes would include resettlement service delivery variation, and would examine differential outcomes in relation to this variation. What is more, this study has explained many different relationships between formal policy, organizational context, worker behavior and refugee client behavior, but has only scratched the surface of others of these relationships. Future work needs to probe more deeply into the processes outlined in Figure 8 and flesh out more fully the complex process of refugee resettlement policy implementation.

### **Looking Forward**

#### Ongoing Analysis of Housing and Employment Implementation Data

The organizational practices that I describe in this study offer an important contribution to the field of refugee research: to date there has been a limited understanding of what R&P and employment policy provision looks like. What is more, my analysis moves beyond the

descriptive and provides explanations for why these practices occur. However, there could be alternative explanations for these phenomena. For example, studies that draw on representative bureaucracy theory and a theory of social comparison have explained the impact of client-worker racial/ethnic matching, albeit with inconsistent findings (Cabral & Smith, 2011; Flaskerud, 1990; McBeath, Chuang, Bunger, & Blakeslee, 2014; Watkins-Hayes, 2013; Ziguras, Kimidis, Lewis, & Stuart, 2003). Regardless of whether they find the effect of client-worker race/ethnicity matching to be positive or negative for service delivery, these studies are suggestive with regard to my data. Many of the caseworkers who participated in my study were former refugees themselves, some dark-skinned and some lighter-skinned, and some White. The match, or mismatch, of client and worker along racial, ethnic, or language lines could help to explain some of the practices I recorded in my data. For instance, workers who are paired with clients with whom they share a language and/or ethnic background might find it easier to communicate and establish trust with their clients, which could mitigate some of the challenges of navigating relationships with clients unfamiliar with American culture (Harrison, 2006; McBeath et al., 2014). Alternatively, workers who are former refugees themselves might find themselves facing dual roles, that of caseworker and that of ethnic community member – a position from which making choices for clients can be particularly challenging and might well impact the practice patterns of the worker (Reamer, 2003). Resettlement workers might find that working with clients from their own country of origin presents other challenges as well. For example, a worker from MRA explained that he prefers not to work with clients from his country in Africa because “they think like back home, you’re one of them, so how can you help them? If I tell them something, they won’t believe me; even if someone white tells them the same thing, they listen to them and not me.” It is possible that in the context of performance measures, which stress the

priority of getting clients to comply with certain demands quickly, the feeling that his clients will not listen to him could drive this worker to resort to sanctions or other means to gain compliance. This issue merits future analysis.

#### Future Analyses of Unused Data

For the purposes of the analysis in this dissertation I intentionally focused on two core programs, and within them, two core services of refugee resettlement. However, I collected a wealth of data during my time at RAISE and MRA, much of which has not been put to use in this study. What follows are four concepts for future analyses, including the data I plan to draw on, the theoretical perspectives I will employ, and the potential impact of the work.

##### *1) Making an American Citizen: Structuring Voice in Refugee Resettlement*

As the opening quote from this dissertation so aptly stated, “Refugees are joining the ranks of the poor people in the United States; their ally and their friend is the resettlement agency. Eventually everyone thrives. We do not have homeless refugees. It takes time, they have to be willing to work with the system and make it work for themselves.” The RRO project is, in essence, teaching refugees what it means to be a good client. The data from Chapters 5 and 6 include examples of how refugees were treated when they were non-compliant. I have additional data that documents interactions between staff and refugees in which clients are encouraged to do as they are asked, and warned of the consequences if they do not. However, I also have evidence from both agencies of opportunities for clients to convene and exchange information with each other, and to express voice. As one example, I observed a meeting in which RAISE clients were invited by management to express their dissatisfaction with the RAISE housing subsidy. The clients requested a change to the policy, and the policy was changed in response to these client demands.



This analysis will use the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 1 for understanding how and why opportunities for voice were created or constrained within SLOs, and will push beyond this framework to ask questions about what the political implications are of teaching refugees to be good clients, and by extension, good citizens (Brodkin, 2013a; Felstiner et al., 1980; Gerstle & Mollenkopf, 2001; Hirsch Ballin, 2014; Hirschman, 1970; Lens, 2009; Wan, 2014; Young, 2000).

## *2) Framing Refugees as Deserving of Support*

One of the themes that I discovered through the open coding of my data reflected the common language about the “deservingness” of refugees for support. For example, in a monthly meeting of MRA managers in which ongoing rent subsidies were discussed, one manager asked, “Are there people on here who you think are deserving who we can expend this money on?” Meanwhile the housing manager at RAISE formulated the problem of how to distribute ongoing rental subsidies in this way: “Three months of rent assistance is never enough, so all refugees are ‘worthy’ of more help, but with limited resources we have to decide who to give them to.”

This practice of framing clients as deserving of support is not unique to MRA and RAISE. Chapter 3 presented an analysis of the evolution of US refugee resettlement policy and traced recurring lines of political contestation around the extent to which refugees are deserving of support. What is more, my historical analysis of this debate mirrors a similar debate about the poor in the United States.

For this analysis I will draw on the literature about social welfare development in the United States, and the framing of the “undeserving poor,” in order to draw parallels to the framing of refugees as a “deserving” population (Gordon, 1994; Handler & Hasenfeld, 1991; M. B. Katz, 1989, 2001; Weaver, 2000). I will argue that, by adopting the politicized language of

deservingness, refugee resettlement workers are reifying the inequalities and prejudices that, in fact, usually succeed in marginalizing their clients.

### *3) The Role of Interagency Collaboration and Competition in Refugee Resettlement*

MRA and RAISE did not operate their resettlement programs in silos. On the contrary, these agencies were in regular contact with each other. For example, all RROs in the state of Illinois were included in a consortium that met once a month, hosted by IDHS and the Jewish Federation. I attended nine of these meetings, at which information about refugee allocations for each agency was disseminated, common challenges were discussed, and best practices were shared. In addition, employment caseworkers from all Chicago-area RROs were involved with the SNOW network, which I described briefly in Chapter 2. These caseworkers met once a week to share employment program resources and discuss strategies for service delivery. Finally, agency staff often met staff from other agencies in the day-to-day course of providing services: they saw each other at the local IDHS office, at job interviews, and in local apartment buildings where their clients were residents.

These interactions were not all collaborative. Workers at RAISE and MRA often made comments about being “the best” agency in the city, and the employment caseworkers at each agency consistently talked about what to share with other agencies and what to withhold. The questions I will ask in this analysis are: What impact did the interactions with other local agencies have on the practices at MRA and RAISE? And what role did competition or collaboration play in this process?

This analysis will draw on organizational theories of collaboration and competition (Aldrich, 1979; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Ingram, 2002; Selden, Sowa, & Sandfort, 2006; S. R. Smith & Lipsky, 1993; Tjosvold & Tsao, 1989; VanSlyke, 2003). VanSlyke (2003) argues that

part of the theoretical justification for privatization and contracting of social services relies on the assumption that there is competition among providers, which leads to program innovation; VanSlyke challenges this assumption. Other studies have shown that local social service agencies tend to become more like each other over time (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) and that agency collaboration can have a positive effect on service delivery (Selden et al., 2006). These perspectives of networked social service organizations will be deployed to understand what was happening among MRA, RAISE, and other local providers. This analysis could be helpful in our understanding of what interagency collaboration means, and what role competition might play in this relationship.

#### *4) Are Case Notes Really Representative of Case Work?*

My data are rife with references to the importance of case notes, not as a tool in case management but as one of the mechanisms of non-profit governance. The DOS, ORR, and Jewish Federation policy professionals talked about the need for case notes to be detailed and “meaningful,” so that monitors conducting case file reviews might successfully assess the work of local RROs. One monitor explained, “If you don’t document that something is happening, it’s not really happening, we can’t know about it. Also, this is a part of your contract, to keep case notes about what they are doing.”

Management at RAISE and MRA also talked about the importance of case notes. A refrain at both organizations was “If it’s not in the case notes it didn’t happen.” In order to be in compliance with contract requirements and to exceed performance measures, managers pushed their staff to spend more time writing case notes. However, staff at RAISE and MRA did not use case notes in their case management process; they did not turn to case notes as a reliable paper trail of casework. Rather, they relied on in-person contact to share information about clients

internally. At both agencies, staff spent considerable time bolstering their case notes at the end of the month, just prior to case file reviews.

Drawing on the NPM literature and research on case notes in clinical practice (Floersch, 2000; Räsänen, 2011; Swartz, 2006) this analysis will use evidence from my organizational ethnography to argue that case notes are not representative of actual casework, but rather are a living archive of the pressures created by New Public Management technologies. This work will contribute to our understanding of the limits and opportunities to be found in the case note record in refugee resettlement practice and monitoring, which may have implications for the ways other social service managers and practitioners think about the role of case notes in their agencies.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE – KEY INFORMANTS AT DEPARTMENT OF STATE

1. Background
  - a. Can you tell me about the work you have done here over the years and then specifically about what your current responsibilities are?
2. Admissions and resettlement
  - a. I would like to take the opportunity to hear from you about how you think these two sets of policies intersect and affect each other.
    - i. Prompt: I have heard that the local agencies are concerned that the admissions numbers may drop, in which case agencies may need to let some resettlement staff go. At the same time, some agency staff have expressed concern to me that the admissions numbers might remain high, while the federal funds appropriated and allocated for resettlement could drop and that this might cause the quality of resettlement work to suffer. How do you think about this tension between admissions and resettlement?
  - b. How are allocation decisions made to the various NRAS? Who is involved with that process that I can talk to?
3. Specific State Department policy changes
  - a. What do you think have been the three most important policy changes within the R&P program?
  - b. I know that the most recent increase in per capita funds from \$800 to \$1600 was a big change, can you tell me a bit about how this change came about? How were you involved?
    - i. Who (or what?) else was key to this policy change that I might talk to?
    - ii. How was this dollar amount decided upon?
  - c. Can you tell me about the current climate of fiscal belt-tightening and how you think it is going to affect the R&P program?
4. Divide between ORR and State
  - a. I find the history of the placement and maintenance of the R&P program here at State and the placement of other resettlement programs at ORR to be fascinating. Can you tell me what are the benefits and challenges presented by having different resettlement programs run out of different government offices? What are the administrative challenges for your department?
  - b. Do you coordinate with your counterpart at ORR? What does this coordination look like?
5. Resettlement agency accountability and reporting mechanisms
  - a. How does State decide about NRA contracts? Who can I talk to about this process?

## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE – KEY INFORMANTS AT THE OFFICE OF REFUGEE

### RESETTLEMENT

1. Background
  - a. Can you tell me about your position and a little bit about how you came to this work?
2. Specific ORR policy changes
  - a. What recent policy changes to the Matching Grant program have you overseen?
    - i. What was your part in this policy change?
    - ii. Who else was involved that you think I should talk to?
    - iii. Who are the Congressional committee people involved in this?
  - b. How did you decide what the best package of services and incentives would be for this adjustment to the MG program?
  - c. What effect has this program change had?
    - i. How were you made aware of this effect?
  - d. Has the MG program been adjusted at all during the recession?
3. Relationship between ORR and State
  - a. Can you share your opinion about how the State's R&P and the MG program complement each other?
  - b. How does the relationship between the agencies function?
  - c. Do you collaborate with State on contract decisions for NRAS?
4. Relationship with NRAS
  - a. How does your relationship with the Matching Grant officers at the NRAs function?
  - b. Can you tell me about the introduction of the SMART objectives in the ORR funding mandates and how these work?
5. Resettlement agency accountability and reporting mechanisms
  - a. How do you keep track of the work the affiliates are doing?
  - b. Do you do field trip to local voluntary agencies?
    - i. Can you talk about one of these?
    - ii. How did you select which affiliates to visit on your last field trip?

## APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE – CONGRESSIONAL STAFF

1. Background
  - a. Can you tell me about your job and a little bit about how you came to this work?
  - b. Where does your Congressional / Senate office stand on the expansion / retraction / maintenance of the refugee resettlement program in the United States?
  - c. There has been a lot of discussion about the death of Senator Kennedy and what impact his loss might have on refugee resettlement in the United States, what do you think the impact might be?
2. The role of Congressional / Senate staff in policy formation
  - a. Does your office have a strategic plan around advocating for new / amended policies around refugee resettlement?
  - b. How was this plan developed?
  - c. What are the steps you will take to pursue this policy development?
3. Policy Changes
  - a. What recent or pending policy changes do you think I should know about in resettlement assistance?
  - b. Did your Senate office place a part in this policy change? How did this work?



APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDE – KEY INFORMANTS AT NATIONAL REFUGEE  
AGENCIES

1. Background
  - a. Can you tell me about your job here and a little bit about how you came to this work?
2. Resettlement Administration
  - a. Can you explain how the relationship functions between your office, the federal agencies, and the local agencies that serve the refugees?
  - b. What are the benefits of this structure and what are the drawbacks?
  - c. How do you determine which affiliates to work with or renew contracts with?
  - d. How do you determine which affiliates to send refugees to?
  - e. Who else can I talk to about this?
3. Policy Changes
  - a. What recent or pending policy changes do you think I should know about in resettlement assistance?
  - b. Did your NRA place a part in this policy change? How did this work?
4. Divide between ORR and State
  - a. How do the R&P program at State and the other resettlement programs at ORR overlap?
  - b. How do you navigate the separation of programs, funding, and reporting mechanisms?
  - c. How do you report up to ORR and to State? How is your contract with State managed / renewed?
5. Resettlement agency accountability and reporting mechanisms
  - a. How do you keep track of the work your local agency affiliates are doing?
  - b. Do you do field trip to local voluntary agencies? Can you talk about one of these?
  - c. How did you select which affiliates to visit on your last field trip?
  - d. What struck you as surprising about what you saw at the local affiliates you visited last?

## APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW GUIDE – LOCAL AGENCIES

### Interview Guidelines for Semi-structured Interviews with Agency Staff

1. Description of job / responsibilities
2. Description of their feelings towards their work
3. Explanation of professional challenges and how they manifest in day-to-day work
4. Description of professional relationship with management
5. Description of how they get supervision and how they are held accountable for their work
6. Description of interactions with other institutions such as the welfare office or medical service organizations

APPENDIX F: CODE BOOK

<b>Code</b>	<b>Sub-code</b>
Client deservingness/ Un-deservingness	
Handling Clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stereotypes</li> <li>Categorizing clients</li> <li>Managing client expectations</li> <li>"Teaching" clients how to behave</li> <li>Responding to individual client needs</li> <li>Sanctioning</li> <li>Creaming</li> <li>Cherry-picking</li> <li>Withholding</li> </ul>
Managing Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time</li> <li>Money</li> <li>Housing</li> <li>Jobs</li> <li>Refugee arrivals</li> <li>Staff</li> <li>Miscellaneous</li> </ul>
Worker Responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extra effort</li> <li>Limit / Withdraw</li> <li>Categorizing clients</li> <li>Saving my job / Making my job easier</li> <li>Case-noting</li> </ul>
Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Making room for client expression</li> <li>Limiting client expression / shutting clients down</li> </ul>
Mediating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DHS / SSA</li> <li>Landlords</li> <li>Employers</li> </ul>
Organizational Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring</li> <li>Sanctions</li> <li>Contracts</li> <li>Interagency competition</li> <li>Interagency collaboration</li> </ul>
Organizational Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervision</li> <li>Worker relationship to their own work</li> <li>Tone of the workplace</li> </ul>
Pipeline Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flow</li> <li>Outmigration</li> </ul>

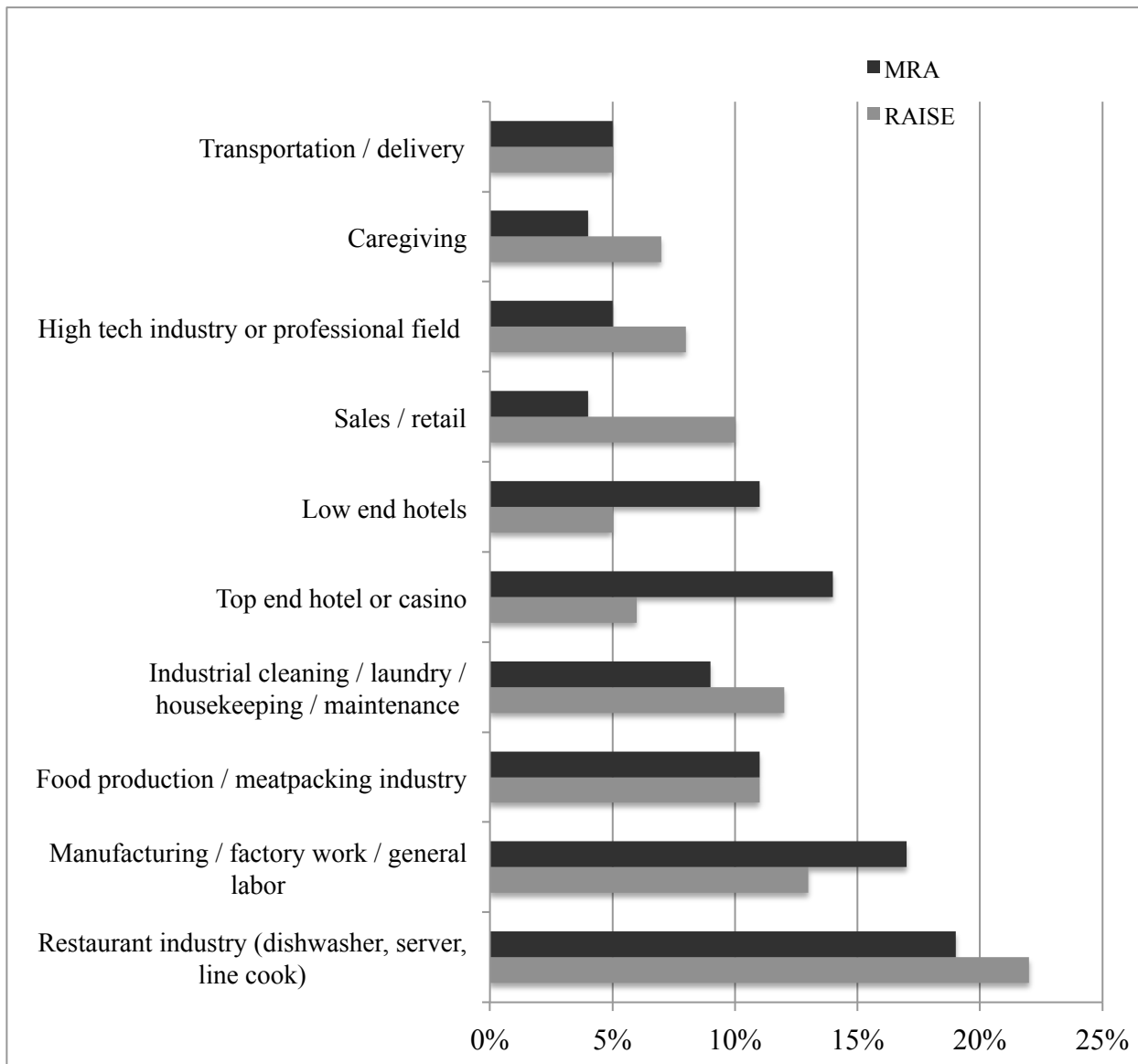
APPENDIX G: ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES PERFORMANCE  
STANDARDS

Performance Standards Used With IDHS / Jewish Federation Early Employment Services Grant:

- A. The number of unduplicated clients receiving EES on a quarterly basis will at least meet the agency's projections. Please note that on a quarterly basis a 15% leeway is allowed.
- B. On a quarterly basis, the number of unduplicated entered employments for TANF/RCA recipients will at least equal the agency's projection. Annually, the agency will place 55% of the unduplicated TANF/RCA clients served in Employment.
- C. On a quarterly basis, the number of unduplicated entered employments for non-PA recipients will at least equal the agency's projection. Annually, the agency will place 65% of the unduplicated non-PA clients served in Employment.
- D. On a quarterly and annual basis, the number of TANF/RCA unduplicated entered employments with health benefits will be equal to 70% of the total unduplicated entered employments for those populations.
- E. On a quarterly basis, the number of 90-day job retentions will at least equal the agency's projection. Annually, 75% of the unduplicated clients entering employment will still be employed 90 days after placement.
- F. On a quarterly and annual basis, 85% of all unduplicated placements will be employed full-time.

## APPENDIX H: JOB PLACEMENT DATA

Annual job placement data by industry and placement agency (2010-2011):



APPENDIX I: EMPLOYMENT COUNSELING DATA

Ratio of clients seen for employment counseling to the number of clients hired in that same month:

Agency	Month	Number of clients who received employment counseling (EES program)	Number of clients hired (EES program)	Ratio of clients seen for employment counseling to clients hired
MRA	1/12	69	10	14%
	2/12	62	7	11%
	3/12	46	16	35%
	4/12	28	24	86%
	5/12	40	25	63%
	6/12	29	13	45%
	7/12	40	14	35%
	8/12	40	17	43%
	9/12	40	10	25%
		394	136	35%

Agency	Month	Number of clients who received employment counseling	Number of clients hired	Ratio of clients seen for employment counseling to clients hired
RAISE	1/12	127	16	13%
	2/12	116	18	16%
	3/12	128	21	16%
	4/12	141	20	14%
	5/12	123	20	16%
	6/12	115	14	12%
	7/12	146	21	14%
	8/12	135	20	15%
	9/12	126	20	16%
		1524	225	15%

APPENDIX J: JOB RELATED DATA

Job related data from RAISE and MRA employment programs:

Agency	Month	Percentage of full time jobs	Average salary	Salary range	Percentage of jobs with benefits	Percentage of jobs at temp agency
<b>RAISE</b>	10/11	69%	\$9.23	8.25 - 10	54%	0%
	11/11	65%	\$9.03	8.25 - 12.25	57%	0%
	12/11	63%	\$8.91	8.25 - 13.95	37%	0%
	1/12	63%	\$9.18	7 - 11	38%	6%
	2/12	50%	\$9.68	8.25 - 15.60	28%	0%
	3/12	71%	\$9.51	7 - 50K	48%	0%
	4/12	65%	\$8.83	5 - 13.50	40%	5%
	5/12	75%	\$10.46	7 - 45K	50%	0%
	6/12	57%	\$10.02	8.25 - 13.95	36%	0%
	7/12	86%	\$9.17	8.25 - 10	62%	0%
	8/12	85%	\$9.20	5.25-13	70%	15%
	9/12	80%	\$10.13	8.25 - 18.25	60%	15%
		<b>70%</b>	<b>\$9.45</b>		<b>49%</b>	<b>4%</b>
Agency	Month	Percentage of full time jobs	Average salary	Salary range	Percentage of jobs with benefits	Percentage of jobs at temp agency
<b>MRA</b>	10/11	85%	\$9.55	8.25 - 15.50	54%	0%
	11/11	79%	\$9.52	8.25 - 12.25	57%	21%
	12/11	33%	\$10.10	8.25 - 12	50%	0%
	1/12	90%	\$9.28	8.25 - 10	50%	10%
	2/12	100%	\$9.68	8 - 10.54	71%	14%
	3/12	69%	\$9.33	8.25 - 11	69%	0%
	4/12	92%	\$12.31	7.75 - 15.91	75%	21%
	5/12	84%	\$9.82	4 - 15.91	44%	24%
	6/12	85%	\$10.24	8.25 - 21	62%	23%
	7/12	100%	\$9.27	9.25 - 10	86%	0%
	8/12	59%	\$10.38	8.25 - 12.68	29%	12%
	9/12	90%	\$8.80	8.25 - 9.25	20%	0%
		<b>82%</b>	<b>\$9.86</b>		<b>56%</b>	<b>12%</b>

## WORKS CITED

- Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). Understanding integration: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 21(2), 166-191.
- Aldrich, H. E. (1979). *Organizations and Environments*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Alexander, J. (2000). Adaptive strategies of nonprofit human service organizations in an era of devolution and new public management. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, 10(3), 287-303.
- Alexander, J., Nank, R., & Stivers, C. (1999). Implications of welfare reform: Do nonprofit survival strategies threaten civil society? *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 28(4), 452-475.
- Alford, R. (1998). *The Craft of Inquiry: Theories, Methods, Evidence*. NY: Oxford University Press.
- Allard, S. (2009). *Out of Reach: Place, Poverty, and the New American Welfare State*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Allen, R. (2009). Benefit or burden? Social capital, gender, and the economic adaptation of refugees. *International Migration Review*, 43(2), 332-365.
- Anker, D. E., & Posner, M. H. (1981). The forty year crisis: A legislative history of the Refugee Act of 1980. *The San Diego Law Review*, 19(1), 9-90.
- Atwater, E. (1959). *Statement of Elton Atwater*. Washington, D.C.: House Committee on Foreign Affairs.
- Auerbach, C. F., & Silverstein, L. B. (2003). *Qualitative Data: An Introduction to Coding and Analysis*. NY: New York University Press.
- Bach, R. L. (1988). State intervention in Southeast Asian refugee resettlement in the United States. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 1(1), 38 - 54.



- Barnett, D. (2006). *Backgrounder: A new era of refugee resettlement*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Immigration Studies.
- Benish, A. (2010). Re-bureaucratizing welfare administration. *Social Service Review*, 84(1), 77-102.
- Berman, C. E. (2012). Bordering on conventional: The politics of Iraqi resettlement to the US and Europe, 2003-2011. *Refuge*, 28(1), 123-135.
- Bolt, G., Özüekren, A. S., & Phillips, D. (2009). Linking integration and residential segregation. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 36(2), 169-186.
- Bon Tempo, C. J. (2008). *Americans at the Gate: The United States and Refugees during the Cold War*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- BPRM. (2009). Reception and placement basic terms of the cooperative agreement between the government of the United States of America and the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants. Washington, DC: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration.
- Bracken, P., Giller, J., & Summerfield, D. (1997). Rethinking mental health work with survivors of wartime violence and refugees. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 10(4), 431 - 442.
- Brewer, C. (2010). *Questioning the Cuban Exile Model: Race, Gender, and Resettlement, 1959-1979*. El Paso, TX: LFB Scholarly Publications.
- Brick, K., Cushing-Savvi, A., Elshafie, S., Krill, A., McGlynn Scanlon, M., & Stone, M. (2010). *Refugee resettlement in the United States: An examination of challenges and proposed solutions*. NY: Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs.
- Brodkin, E. Z. (1992). The organization of disputes: The bureaucratic construction of welfare rights and wrongs. *Studies in Law, Politics, and Society*, 12, 53 - 76.
- Brodkin, E. Z. (1997). Inside the welfare contract: Discretion and accountability in the state welfare administration. *Social Service Review*, 71(1), 1-33.

- Brodkin, E. Z. (2003). Street-level research: Policy at the front lines. In M. C. Lennon & T. Corbett (Eds.), *Policy into action: Implementation research and welfare reform*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press.
- Brodkin, E. Z. (2007). Bureaucracy redux: Management reformism and the welfare state. *Journal of Public Administration, Research, and Theory*, 17(1), 1 - 17.
- Brodkin, E. Z. (2010). Human service organizations and the politics of practice. In Y. Hasenfeld (Ed.), *Human Services as Complex Organizations* (Second ed.). Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Brodkin, E. Z. (2011). Policy work: Street-level organizations under new managerialism. *Journal of Public Administration, Research, and Theory*, 21(supplement 2), i253-i277.
- Brodkin, E. Z. (2013a). Commodification, inclusion, or what? Workfare in everyday organizational life. In E. Z. Brodkin & G. Marston (Eds.), *Work and the Welfare State: Street-Level Organizations and Workfare Politics*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Brodkin, E. Z. (2013b). Street level organizations and the welfare state. In E. Z. Brodkin & G. Marston (Eds.), *Work and the Welfare State: Street-Level Organizations and Workfare Politics*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Brodkin, E. Z., & Larsen, F. (2013). The policies of workfare: At the boundaries between work and the welfare state. In E. Z. Brodkin & G. Marston (Eds.), *Work and the Welfare State: Street-Level Organizations and Workfare Politics*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Brodkin, E. Z., & Majmundar, M. (2010). Administrative exclusion: Organizations and the hidden costs of welfare claiming. *Journal of Public Administration, Research, and Theory*, 20, 827-848.
- Bruno, A. (2011). *U.S. Refugee Resettlement Assistance*. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service.
- Bruno, A. (2013). Refugee Admissions and Resettlement Policy. In R. J. Irvin & L. Gambrell (Eds.), *Refugee Resettlement in the United States*. NY: Nova Science Publishers.

- Cabral, R. R., & Smith, T. B. (2011). Racial/ethnic matching of clients and therapists in mental health services: A meta-analytic review of preferences, perceptions, and outcomes. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 58*(4), 537-554.
- Caplan, N. S., Whitmore, J. K., & Choy, M. H. (1989). *The Boat People and Achievement in America: A Study of Family Life, Hard Work, and Cultural Values*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Charlton, R., Farley, L. T., & Kaye, R. (1988). Identifying the mainsprings of US refugee and asylum policy: A contextual interpretation. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 1*(3/4), 237-259.
- Chase, G. (1963). *Cuban Refugee Flow - Miami Problem*. Washington D.C.: The White House.
- Choi, S., Davis, C., Cummings, S., Van Regenmorter, C., & Barnett, M. (2013). Understanding service needs and service utilization among older Kurdish refugees and immigrants in the USA. *International Social Work, 0*(0), 1-16.
- Code of Federal Regulations: Refugee Resettlement Program. Title 45, Chapter IV, Part 400, Subpart b., U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2005).
- Coleman, J. (1996). Cubans. In D. W. Haines (Ed.), *Refugees in America in the 1990's: A Reference Handbook*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *The American Journal of Sociology, 94*(Supplement: Organizations and Institutions), S95-S120.
- Connor, P. (2010). Explaining the refugee gap: Economic outcomes of refugees versus other immigrants. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 23*(3), 377-397.
- Currie, J., Grogger, J., Burtless, G., & Schoeni, R. F. (2001). Explaining recent declines in Food Stamp program participation [with comments]. *Brookings-Wharton Papers on Urban Affairs, 203-244*.
- CWS. (2011). Financial Statements, June 30, 2011 and 2010. NY: Church World Service.

- deJong, J. P., Scholte, W. F., Koeter, M. W. J., & Hart, A. A. (2000). The prevalence of mental health problems in Rwandan and Burundese refugee camps. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 102, 171-177.
- Desbarats, J. (1985). Indochinese resettlement in the United States. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 75(4), 522-538.
- Dias, J. J., & Elesh, D. (2012). Structuring performance: Performance contracts, organizational logics, and leadership in welfare-to-work programs. *Social Service Review*, 86(1), 143 - 168.
- Dias, J. J., & Maynard-Moody, S. (2007). For-profit welfare: Contracts, conflicts, and the performance paradox. *Journal of Public Administration, Research, and Theory*, 17, 189-211.
- DiMaggio, P. J., & Anheier, H. K. (1990). The sociology of nonprofit organizations and sectors. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 16, 137-159.
- DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48(April), 147-160.
- Douglas-Arnold, R. (1990). *The Logic of Congressional Action*. New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press.
- Dungan, R. A. (1962). *Cuba: Its refugees and its limitation*. Washington D.C.: The White House.
- Dwyer, T. (2010). *Refugee Integration in the United States: Challenges & Opportunities*. Washington, D.C.: Church World Service Immigration and Refugee Program.
- Felstiner, W. L. F., Abel, R. L., & Sarat, A. (1980). The emergence and transformation of disputes: Naming, blaming, claiming... *Law & Society Review*, 15(3-4).
- Fine, G. A., Morrill, C., & Surianarain, S. (2008). Ethnography in Organizational Settings. In D. Buchanan & A. Bryman (Eds.), *Handbook of Organizational Research Methods*. London: Sage Publications.

- Flaskerud, J. H. (1990). Matching client and therapist ethnicity, language, and gender: A review of the research. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing, 11*, 321-336.
- Floersch, J. (2000). Reading the Case Record: The Oral and Written Narratives of Social Workers. *Social Service Review, 74*(2), 169-192.
- Food Research Action Center. *2009 SNAP Data*. (2009). Retrieved from: <http://frac.org>
- GAO. (1983). Greater Emphasis On Early Employment And Better Monitoring Needed In Indochinese Refugee Resettlement Program (G. A. Office, Trans.). Washington, D.C.: Government Accountability Office.
- GAO. (2011). Refugee Assistance: Little Is Known about the Effectiveness of Different Approaches for Improving Refugees' Employment Outcomes. Washington, D.C.: Government Accountability Office.
- GAO. (2012). Refugee Resettlement: Greater Consultation with Community Stakeholders Could Strengthen Program (G. A. Office, Trans.). Washington DC: Government Accountability Office.
- Garrow, E., & Hasenfeld, Y. (2010). Theoretical approaches to human service organizations. In Y. Hasenfeld (Ed.), *Human Services as Complex Organizations* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gerstle, G., & Mollenkopf, J. (Eds.). (2001). *E Pluribus Unum?: Contemporary and Historical Perspectives on Immigrant Political Incorporation*. NY: Russel Sage.
- Gibney, M., Dalton, V., & Vockell, M. (1992). USA refugee policy: A human rights analysis update. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 5*(1), 33-46.
- Glesne, C., & Peshkin, A. (1992). *Becoming Qualitative Researchers*. NY: Longman.
- Gold, S. J. (1992). *Refugee Communities: A Comparative Field Study*. London: Sage Publications.

- Gordon, L. (1994). *Pittied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare 1890-1935*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gronbjerg, K. (2010). The U.S. nonprofit human service sector: A creeping revolution. In Y. Hasenfeld (Ed.), *Human Services as Complex Organizations* (Second ed.). Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Gruening, G. (2001). Origin and theoretical basis of New Public Management. *International Public Management Journal*, 4, 1-25.
- Haines, D. W. (1996). Patterns in refugee resettlement and adaptation. In D. W. Haines (Ed.), *Refugees in America in the 1990s: A reference handbook*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Halpern, P. (2008). *Refugee economic self-sufficiency: An exploratory study of approaches used in office of refugee resettlement programs*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Handler, J. F., & Hasenfeld, Y. (1991). *The Moral Construction of Poverty: Welfare Reform in America*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- Harrison, G. (2006). Broadening the conceptual lens on language in social work: Difference, diversity, and English as a global language. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 36(3), 401-418.
- Hasenfeld, Y., Rafferty, J. A., & Zald, M. N. (1987). The welfare state, citizenship, and bureaucratic encounters. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 13.
- Hearing before the Subcommittee on Immigration and Refugee Policy of the Committee on the Judiciary. *Refugee Resettlement*, United States Senate, 97th Congress, first session Sess. (1981).
- Hein, J. (1988). State incorporation of migrants and the reproduction of a middleman minority among Indochinese refugees. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 29(3), 463-478.
- Hein, J. (1997). Ethnic organization and the welfare state: The impact of social welfare programs on the formation of Indochinese refugee associations. *Sociological Forum*, 12(2), 279 - 295.

- Hein, J. (2005). Ethnic boundaries and intermediaries in the resettlement of Indochinese refugees. In D. M. Rutledge (Ed.), *Marginality, Power, and Social Structure: Issues in Race, Class, and Gender Analysis*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Hemmelgarn, A. L., Glisson, C., & James, L. R. (2010). Organizational culture and climate: Implications for services and interventions research. In Y. Hasenfeld (Ed.), *Human Services as Complex Organizations* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- HEW. (1962). *Your Opportunity to Help Worthy Cubans Help Themselves*. Miami, FL: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.
- HEW. (1963). *Position paper in regard to the handling of Cuban refugees if flights were to be resumed*. Washington D.C.: Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.
- Hirsch Ballin, E. M. H. (2014). *Citizens' Rights and the Right to be a Citizen*. Leiden: Brill Nijhoff.
- Hirschman, A. O. (1970). *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Holman, P. A. (1996). Refugee resettlement in the United States. In D. Haines (Ed.), *Refugees in America in the 1990s*. Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press.
- Hood, C. (1991). A public management for all seasons. *Public Administration*, 69(1), 3-19.
- Ingram, P. (2002). Interorganizational Learning. In J. A. C. Baum (Ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Organizations*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- IRC. (2011). Financial Statements: September 30, 2011. NY: International Rescue Committee, Inc.
- Ives, N. (2007). More than a "good back": Looking for integration in refugee resettlement. *Refuge*, 24(2), 54-63.
- Jablensky, A., Marsella, A., Ekblad, S., Levi, L., & Jansson, B. (1992). *Conference and symposium reports*. Paper presented at the The International Conference on the Mental

Health and Wellbeing of the World's Refugees and Displaced Persons, Stockholm, Sweden.

Katz, M. (1996). *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America*. New York: Basic Books.

Katz, M. B. (1989). *The Underserving Poor: From the War on Poverty to the War on Welfare*. NY: Pantheon Books.

Katz, M. B. (2001). *The Price of Citizenship: Redefining the American Welfare State*. New York: Henry Holt.

Keiser, L. R., Mueser, P. R., & Choi, S.-W. (2004). Race, bureaucratic discretion, and the implementation of welfare reform. *American Journal of Political Science*, 48(2), 314-327.

Kelley, J. W. (1959). *Refugee Bill*. Washington, D.C.: The Library of Congress.

Kennedy, E. M. (1981). Refugee Act of 1980. *International Migration Review*, 15(1/2, Refugees Today (Spring - Summer 1981)), 141-156.

Kennedy, J. F. (1959). *A Nation of Immigrants*. NY: The One Nation Library.

Kenny, P., & Lockwood-Kenny, K. (2011). A mixed blessing: Karen resettlement to the United States. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 24(2), 217-238.

Kerwin, D. (2012). The faltering US refugee protection system: Legal and policy responses to refugees, asylum-seekers, and others in need of protection. *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 31(1), 1-33.

Khaw, A. J., Burkholder, B., Salama, P., & Dondero, T. (2000). HIV risk and prevention in emergency-affected populations: A review. *Disasters*, 24(3), 181-197.

Kibria, N. (1994). Household structure and family ideologies: The dynamics of immigrant economic adaptation among Vietnamese refugees. *Social Problems*, 41(1).

Kingdon, J. (2003). *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. New York: Longman Classics.



- Kirby, G., Fraker, T., Pavetti, L., & Kovac, M. (2003). *Families on TANF in Illinois: Employment Assets and Liabilities*. Washington, D.C.: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.
- Kraly, E. P., & VanValkenburg, K. (2010). Refugee resettlement in Utica, New York: Opportunities and issues for community development. In J. W. Frazier & F. M. Margai (Eds.), *Multicultural Geographies: The Changing Racial/Ethnic Patterns in the United States*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Kramer, R. M. (2003). Voluntary agencies and the contract culture: "Dream or nightmare?". *The Social Service Review*, 63(1), 33-60.
- Kroll, J., Habenicht, M., Mackenzie, T., Yang, M., Chan, S., Vang, T., . . . Cabugao, R. (1989). Depression and posttraumatic stress disorder in Southeast Asian refugees. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 146, 1592 - 1597.
- Labor Force Characteristics of Foreign-born Workers News Release. (2012). *Economic News Release, 2014*(October 31). Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov>
- Lamba, N. K. (2003). The employment experiences of Canadian refugees: Measuring the impact of human and social capital on quality of employment. *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 41(1), 45 - 64.
- Lanphier, M. (1983). Refugee resettlement: Models in action. *International Migration Review*, 17(1), 4 - 33.
- Larsen, F. (2013). Active labor market reform in Denmark. In E. Z. Brodtkin & G. Marston (Eds.), *Work and the Welfare State: Street-Level Organizations and Workfare Politics*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Lawton, A., McKeivitt, D., & Millar, M. (2000). Coping with ambiguity: Reconciling external legitimacy and organizational implementation in performance measurement. *Public Money & Management*(July-September), 13-19.
- Leibowitz, A. H. (1983). The Refugee Act of 1980: Problems and Congressional Concerns. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 467, 163-171.

- Lens, V. (2005). Bureaucratic disentanglement: Are fair hearings the cure? *Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law and Policy*, 12, 13-54.
- Lens, V. (2008). Welfare and work sanctions: Examining discretion on the front lines. *Social Service Review*, 82(2), 197-222.
- Lens, V. (2009). Seeking justice: Citizens' use of fair hearings to correct errors in public welfare bureaucracies. *Journal of Public Administration, Research, and Theory*, 19, 817-837.
- Lens, V., & Vorsanger, S. E. (2005). Complaining after claiming: Fair hearings after welfare reform. *Social Service Review*, 79(3), 430-453.
- Levinson, P. J. (2006). *Shaping U.S. Refugee Policy: The Unique Role of the House Judiciary Committee*. Paper presented at the Conference Papers - International Studies Association, Ipswich, MA.
- Lin, A. C. (2000). *Reform in the making: The implementation of social policy in prison*. NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Lipsky, M. (1980). *Street-Level Bureaucracy: The Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services*. New York: Russel Sage Foundation.
- Lipsky, M., & Smith, S. R. (1989). Nonprofit organizations, government, and the welfare state. *Political Science Quarterly*, 104(4), 625-648.
- LIRS. (2011). *Financial Statements and Report of Independent Certified Public Accountants*. Baltimore, MD: Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service.
- Lugar, R. (2010). *Abandoned Upon Arrival: Implications for Refugees and Local Communities Burdened by a U.S. Resettlement System That is Not Working*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Mamgain, V., & Collins, K. (2003). Off the boat, now off to work: Refugees in the labor market in Portland, Maine. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 16(2), 113 - 146.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. (1995). *Designing Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Martin, D. A. (2005). *The United States Refugee Admissions Program: Reforms for a New Era of Refugee Resettlement*. Washington D.C.: Migration Policy Institute.
- Marwell, N. (2007). *Bargaining for Brooklyn*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Massey, D. S., Durand, J., & Malone, N. J. (2002). *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration*. NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Mattison, M. (2000). Ethical decision making: The person in the process. *Social Work, 45*(3), 201-212.
- Maynard-Moody, S., & Musheno, M. (2003). *Cops, Teachers, Counselors: Stories From the Front Lines of Public Service*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- McBeath, B., Chuang, E., Bunger, A., & Blakeslee, J. (2014). Under what conditions does caseworker-caregiver racial/ethnic similarity matter for housing service provision? An application of representative bureaucracy theory. *Social Service Review, 88*(1), 134-165.
- McBride, M. J. (1999). *The evolution of US immigration and refugee policy: Public opinion, domestic politics and UNHCR*. Whittier, CA: Centre for Documentation and Research.
- McCleary, R. (1978). On becoming a client. *Journal of Social Issues, 34*(4), 57-71.
- McCollum, R. S. (1959). *Migrants, Refugees, and Escapees*. Washington D.C.: Senate Foreign Relations Committee
- McRoberts, O. (2003). *Streets of Glory: Church and Community in a Black Urban Neighborhood*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Meyer, J. M., & Rowan, B. (1977). Institutional organizations: Formal structure as myth and ceremony. *American Journal of Sociology, 83*(2), 340-363.
- Miller, T., & Bell, L. (2002). Consenting to what? Issues of access, gate-keeping and 'informed' consent. In M. Mauthner, M. Birch, J. Jessop & T. Miller (Eds.), *Ethics in Qualitative Reserch*. London: Sage Publications.

- Mitchell, W. L. (1962). *The Cuban Refugee Program*. Washington D.C.: Social Service Administration.
- Miyares, I. (2010). Changing perceptions of space and place as measures of Hmong acculturation. *The Professional Geographer*, 49(2), 214-224.
- Morgen, S. (2001). The agency of welfare workers: Negotiating devolution, privatization, and the meaning of self-sufficiency. *American Anthropologist*, 103(3), 747-761.
- Moynihan, D. P. (2008). *The Dynamics of Performance Management : Constructing Information and Reform*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Murdie, R., & Ghosh, S. (2009). Does spatial concentration always mean a lack of integration? Exploring ethnic concentration and integration in Toronto. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 36(2), 293-311.
- Nawyn, S. J. (2006). Faith, ethnicity, and culture in refugee resettlement. *The American Behavioral Scientist*, 49(11), 1509-1527.
- Newland, K. (1995). *U.S. Refugee Policy: Dilemmas and Directions*. Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- North, D. S., Lewin, L. S., & Wagner, J. R. (1982). *Kaleidoscope: The resettlement of refugees in the United States by the voluntary agencies*. Washington, D.C.: Bureau for Refugee Programs, U.S. Department of State.
- Nwosu, C., Batalova, J., & Auclair, G. (2014). *Annual Number of U.S. Legal Permanent Residents, Fiscal Years 1820-2012*. Retrieved from: <http://www.migrationpolicy.org>
- Ong, A. (2003). *Buddha Is Hiding: Refugees, Citizenship, the New America*: University of California Press.
- ORR. *Annual Report to Congress*. (2002). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov>.
- ORR. *Annual Report to Congress*. (2005). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov>.

- ORR. *Annual Report to Congress*. (2006). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov>.
- ORR. *Annual Report to Congress*. (2007). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/data/arc.htm>.
- ORR. *Annual Report to Congress*. (2008). Washington DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- ORR. *Annual Report to Congress*. (2009). Washington DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- ORR. *Annual Report to Congress*. (2010). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- ORR. *Annual Report to Congress*. (2011). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- ORR. *Annual Report to Congress*. (2012). Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- ORR. (2010). *Office of Refugee Resettlement Data*. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/data>
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Pfiffner, J. P. (2004). Traditional public administration versus the New Public Management: Accountability versus efficiency. In A. Benz, H. Siedentopf & K. P. Sommermann (Eds.), *Institutionenbildung in Regierung und Verwaltung: Festschrift für Klaus König*. Berlin, Germany: Duncker & Humboldt.
- Portes, A., & Rumbaut, R. G. (2006). *Immigrant America: A Portrait* (Third ed.). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

- Portes, A., & Stepick, A. (August, 1985). Unwelcome immigrants: The labor market experiences of 1980 (Mariel) Cuban and Hatian refugees in South Florida. *American Sociological Review*, 50(4), 493-514.
- Potocky-Tripodi, M. (2003). Refugee economic adaption: Theory, evidence, and implications for policy and practice. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 30(1), 63 - 91.
- Potocky-Tripodi, M. (2004). The role of social capital in immigrant and refugee economic adaptation. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 31(1), 59-91.
- Prottas, J. M. (1981). The cost of free services: Organizational impediments to access to public services. *Public Administration Review*, 41(5), 526-534.
- Räsänen, J.-M. (2011). Producing norm talk of fact-based case recording in interviews with emergency social workers. *Qualitative Social Work*, 11(1), 6-22.
- Reamer, F. G. (2003). Boundary issues in social work: Managing dual relationships. *Social Work*, 48(1), 121-133.
- Refugee Act of 1980, United States Congress, Pub. L. No. PL 96-212, 102.17 Stat. (1980 March 17, 1980).
- Refugee Education Assistance Act, US Code: Title 8,1522, Pub. L. No. P.L. 96-422 (1980 October 10, 1980).
- Refugee Processing Center. *FY 2012 Refugee Admissions Report*. (2012). Retrieved from: <http://www.wrapsnet.org>
- Roth, B. (2013). *Mexican Immigrant Youth and Social Mobility Pathways in the Suburbs*. (PhD Dissertation), University of Chicago, Chicago.
- Rubin, A., & Babbie, E. R. (2005). *Research Methods for Social Work* (Fifth ed.). United States: Thomson Brooks / Cole.
- Salamon, L. M. (1995). *Partners In Public Service: Government-Nonprofit Relations in the Modern Welfare State*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

- Schein, E. H. (1996). Culture: The missing concept in organizational studies. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 41(June), 229-240.
- Schwartz, E. (2010). *Letter to President and CEO of U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants*. Washington, D.C.: United States Department of State.
- Selden, S. C., Sowa, J. E., & Sandfort, J. (2006). The impact of nonprofit collaboration in early child care and education on management and program outcomes. *Public Administration Review*, 66(3), 412-425.
- Seligman, A. (2005). Uptown. *Encyclopedia of Chicago* Retrieved September 2, 2013, from <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1293.html>
- Sherrell, K. (2007). On the outside looking in: the precarious housing situations of successful refugee claimants in the GVRD. *Refuge*, 24(2).
- Simon, W. H. (1985). The invention and reinvention of welfare rights. *Maryland Law Review*, 44(1), 1-36.
- Singer, A., & Wilson, J. H. (2006). *From 'there' to 'here': Refugee resettlement in metropolitan America*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution.
- Small, M. L. (2006). Neighborhood institutions as resource brokers: childcare centers, interorganizational ties, and resource access among the poor. *Social Problems*, 53(2), 274-292.
- Small, M. L. (2009a). 'How many cases do I need?': On science and the logic of case selection in field-based research. *Ethnography*, 10(5), 5-38.
- Small, M. L. (2009b). *Unanticipated Gains: Origins of Network Inequality in Everyday Life*. NY: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, M. (2004). Warehousing refugees: A denial of rights, a waste of humanity. *World Refugee Survey*, 38-56.
- Smith, S. R. (2010). The political economy of contracting and competition. In Y. Hasenfeld (Ed.), *Human Services as Complex Organizations* (Second ed.). LA: Sage Publications.

- Smith, S. R., & Lipsky, M. (1993). *Nonprofits For Hire: The Welfare State in the Age of Contracting*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Snow, D., Morrill, C., & Anderson, L. (2003). Elaborating analytic ethnography: Linking fieldwork and theory. *Ethnography*, 4(2), 181-200.
- Sosin, M. R. (2010). Discretion in human service organizations. In Y. Hasenfeld (Ed.), *Human Services as Complex Organizations* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Soss, J. (1999). Welfare application encounters: Subordination, satisfaction, and the puzzle of client evaluations. *Administration & Society*, 31(1), 50-94.
- Soss, J., Fording, R., & Schram, S. F. (2009). *The organization of discipline: From performance management to perversity and punishment*. Paper presented at the Welfare states in transition: Social policy transformation in organizational practice, Chicago, IL.
- Soss, J., Fording, R., & Schram, S. F. (2011a). *Disciplining the Poor: Neoliberal Paternalism and the Persistent Power of Race*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Soss, J., Fording, R., & Schram, S. F. (2011b). The organization of discipline: From performance management to perversity and punishment. *Journal of Public Administration, Research, and Theory*, 21(supplement 2), i203 - i232.
- Soss, J., Fording, R., & Schram, S. F. (2013). Performance management as a disciplinary regime: Street-level organizations in a Neoliberal era of poverty governance. In E. Z. Brodtkin & G. Marston (Eds.), *Work and the Welfare State: Street-Level Organizations and Workfare Politics*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Spicer, N. (2008). Places of exclusion and inclusion: Asylum-seeker and refugee experiences of neighborhoods in the UK. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 34(3), 491-510.
- Spitzmueller, M. (2014). *The making of community mental health policy in everyday street-level practice: An organizational ethnography*. (PhD Dissertation), University of Chicago, Chicago.
- Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims of the Committee on the Judiciary House of Representatives. *Possible Shifting of Refugee Resettlement to Private Organizations*, United States Congress, One Hundred Fourth Sess. (1996).



- SSA. (1962). *Considerations involved in establishing a second Cuban refugee center in New Orleans, Louisiana* Washington D.C.: Social Service Administration.
- SSA. (2008). Food Stamps and other nutritional programs Retrieved April 6, 2010, from <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10100.html>
- Stake, R. E. (2006). *Multiple Case Study Analysis*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Starr, P. (1988). The meaning of privatization. *Yale Law and Policy Review*, 6, 6-41.
- Stein, B. N. (1979). Occupational adjustment of refugees: The Vietnamese in the United States. *International Migration Review*, 13(1), 25 - 45.
- Stone, D. (1984). *The Disabled State*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Stone, D. (1989). Causal stories and the formation of policy agendas. *Political Science Quarterly*.
- Strack, B. (2011, 7/13/11). [The US Resettlement Program Selection Process].
- Swartz, S. (2006). The third voice: Writing case-notes. *Feminism & Psychology*, 16(4), 427-444.
- Taft, J. V., North, D. S., & Ford, D. A. (1979). *Refugee Resettlement in the U.S.: Time for a New Focus*. Washington D.C.: New TranCentury Foundation.
- The Chicago FactBook Consortium. *Local Community Fact Book: Chicago Metropolitan Area 1990*. (1990). Chicago: University of Illinois.
- Tjosvold, D., & Tsao, Y. (1989). Productive organizational collaboration: The role of values and cooperation. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 10(2), 189-195.
- Tran, T. V. (1991). Sponsorship and employment status among Indochinese refugees in the United States. *International Migration Review*, 25(3), 536-550.

- U.S. Bureau of the Census. *General and Special Demographic Characteristics: 2000 for Chicago and the 77 Community Areas*. (2000). U.S. Bureau of the Census Retrieved from <http://www.public-record.com>.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *2013 CMS Statistics*. (2013).
- UNHCR. (2010). U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program Retrieved January 8, 2010, from <http://www.rcusa.org>
- UNHCR. (2011a). Durable Solutions: The Ultimate Goal. Retrieved December 21, 2011, from <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646cf8.html>
- UNHCR. (2011b). *UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2012*. Paper presented at the 17th Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement, Geneva.
- USCCB. (2011). 2011 Annual Report. Washington D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.
- USCRI. (2011). 2011 Annual Report. Arlington, VA: U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants.
- USRAP. (2012). *Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2012: Report to the Congress*. Washington, DC: United States Senate.
- van Berkel, R. (2013). Triple activation: Introducing welfare-to-work into Dutch social assistance. In E. Z. Brodtkin & G. Marston (Eds.), *Work and the Welfare State: Street-Level Organizations and Workfare Politics*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- VanSlyke, D. M. (2003). The mythology of privatization in contracting for social services. *Public Administration Review*, 63(3), 296-315.
- VanSlyke, D. M. (2007). Agents or stewards: Using theory to understand the government-nonprofit social service contracting relationship. *Journal of Public Administration, Research, and Theory*, 17, 157-187.

- Ventresca, M. J., & Mohr, J. W. (2002). Archival research methods. In J. A. C. Baum (Ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Organizations*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Vialet, J. (1999). *Refugee Admissions and Resettlement Policy*. Washington, DC: National Library for the Environment.
- Vinokurov, A., Birman, D., & Trickett, E. (2000). Psychological and acculturation correlates of work status among Soviet Jewish refugees in the United States. *International Migration Review*, 34 (2), 538-559.
- Vongkhamphra, E. G., Davis, C., & Adem, N. (2010). The resettling process: A case study of Bantu refugee's journey to the USA. *International Social Work*, 54(2), 246-257.
- Walter, F. (1959). *H.J. Res. 397 Joint Resolution*. United States: 80th Congress.
- Wan, A. J. (2014). *Producing Good Citizens: Literacy Training in Anxious Times*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Watkins-Hayes, C. (2009). *The New Welfare Bureaucrats: Entanglements of Race, Class, and Policy Reform*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Watkins-Hayes, C. (2013). Race, respect, and red tape: Inside the black box of racially representative bureaucracies. In E. Z. Brodtkin & G. Marston (Eds.), *Work and the Welfare State: Street-Level Organizations and Workfare Politics*. Washinton, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Weaver, R. K. (2000). *Ending Welfare as We Know It*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Weine, S. M., Becker, D. F., McGlashan, T. H., Laub, D., Lazrove, L., Vojvoda, D., & Hyman, L. (1995). Psychiatric consequences of 'ethnic cleansing': Clinical assessments and trauma testimonies of newly resettled Bosnian refugees. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 152, 536 - 542.
- Weine, S. M., Hoffman, Y., Ware, N., Tugenberg, T., Hakizimana, L., Dahnweigh, G., . . . Wagner, M. (2011). Secondary migration and relocation among African refugee families in the United States. *Family Process*, 50(1), 27-46.

- Weinstein, H. M., Sarnoff, R. H., Gladstone, E., & Lipson, J. G. (2000). Physical and psychological health issues of resettled refugees in the United States. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 13(3), 303 - 327.
- WRC. (2011). Financial Statements and Report of Independent Certified Public Accountants. Baltimore, MD: World Relief Corporation of National Association of Evangelicals.
- Wright, R. G. (1981). Voluntary agencies and the resettlement of refugees. *International Migration Review*, 15(1/2 Refugees Today), 157 - 174.
- Wyers, N. L. (1976). Shame and public dependency: A literature review. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 4, 955-966.
- Yin, R. (2009). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods (Fourth Edition)* (Vol. 5). Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Young, I. M. (2000). *Inclusion and Democracy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ziguras, S., Kimidis, S., Lewis, J., & Stuart, G. (2003). Ethnic matching of clients and clinicians and use of mental health services by ethnic minority clients. *Psychiatric Services*, 54(4), 535-541.
- Zimmerman, W., & Tumlin, K. C. (1999). *Patchwork policies: State assistance for immigrants under welfare reform*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- Zucker, N. F., & Zucker, N. L. (1994). *United States Admissions Policies Toward Cuban and Haitian Migrants*. Paper presented at the 4th International Research and Advisory Panel Conference, University of Oxford, UK.
- Zucker, N. L. (1983). Refugee Resettlement in the United States: Policy and Problems. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 467, 172-186.
- Zucker, N. L., & Zucker, N. F. (1987). *The Guarded Gate: The Reality of American Refugee Policy*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Zucker, N. L., & Zucker, N. F. (1991). The 1980 Refugee Act: A 1990 Perspective. In H. Adelman (Ed.), *Refugee Policy: Canada and The United States*. Toronto, Canada: York Lanes Press Ltd.