Mediated Transnational Communication: Digital Technology Use and

Transnational Communication Practices of Resettled Refugees

by

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ABSTRACT

In 2016, the United Nations reported a historical high of 65.6 million globally displaced people. Within the current protectionist and isolationist climate, the U.S is accepting a fewer number of refugees for resettlement than ever before and less governmental funding is being allocated to resettlement organizations, which provide support services for refugee resettlement and integration.

Increased migration and the advancement of communication technologies with affordable access to these technologies have produced extensive communication networks and complex relational ties across the globe. While this is certainly true of all migrants, building and maintaining relational ties has added complexity for refugees whose journey to resettlement, economic insecurity, political disenfranchisement, and vulnerability impact the motivating factors for digital engagement.

This dissertation seeks to understand to what extent Diminescu's (2008) concept of the *connected migrant* addresses the lived experience of resettled refugees in Phoenix, Arizona. The *connected migrant* through information communication technology (ICT) use maintains transnational and local networks that produce mobility and belonging. *Connected migrants* are able to produce and maintain socio-technical sociality abroad and in the country of settlement to create and access social capital and resources. Using a grounded theory approach and qualitative methods, this research project explores concepts of mobility, connectivity, and belonging in relation to resettled refugees. The research indicates that age, imagined affordances, digital literacy, language, and time moderate connectivity, belonging, and mobility for resettled refugees. Finally, I offer the

concept of transnational contextual relationality to understand refugee communication

strategies with the transnational and local network.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to Chesley Calloway for his continued support as I pursue my goals. From taking the GRE, applying to master's programs, going through my master's program while working full time, applying to PhD programs, entering graduate school full time, the comprehensive exam, the prospectus, data collection, and writing the dissertation, you have been a listening ear, a patient partner, and a source of love, forgiveness, and grace. Offering laughter and kindness during stressful, self-absorbed, and overly cerebral graduate school moments, you have been a grounding source. We joke that you have a junior master's in communication studies because you have spent nearly 10 years listening to me talk about communication and media theories and analysis. But this speaks to how you are a true partner who listens and is an active discussant in matters that make up my personal and professional spheres. For all that you do, including learning how to grocery shop and cook, to doing the laundry, and making sure there's always wine in the fridge, I'm deeply grateful for you and our relationship. I hope I can be as self-less to you as you have been to me.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 2015, an unprecedented flow of refugees entered Europe while increasing news stories of capsizing refugee-filled boats in the Mediterranean captivated global audiences with accompanying images of bodies washed up on beach shores ("Refugee Crisis Timeline: How the crisis has grown," 2015). These gruesome news stories and mediated images awoke the world to what is now called the refugee crisis ("Refugee Crisis in Europe," n.d). With a focus on Syrian refugees fleeing the Islamic State and the Bashir al-Assad regime, the refugee crisis forced Western nations to reconsider the global obligations of nation-states toward persecuted people. In 2016, the United Nations reported a historical high of 65.6 million globally displaced people. The displacement was driven by the Syrian conflict, along with conflict in Iraq and Yemen as well as in Sub-Saharan Africa including Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, and Sudan ("Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016," 2017). It is clear by these numbers that refugees are a growing concern, not just for humanitarians, but also neighboring and asylum receiving countries.

The United States of America has a long history of accepting refugees and since the Refugee Act of 1980 raised the cap to begin accepting 50,000 refugees for resettlement annually. Overall, the U.S. has a lower population of refugees within its borders compared to the European Union and Africa due to proximity to areas of conflict. While President Obama had raised the cap from 85,000 to 110,000 in 2016, President Trump decreased the cap to 50,000 in 2017 after taking office ("U.S. hits refugee limit for 2017," 2017). The cap set by President Trump in 2018 was 45,000 and in 2019 is

30,000, the lowest in 40 years ("Fact Sheet: U.S. Refugee Resettlement," 2019). Most refugees in the U.S. are resettled in California, Texas, and New York where a combined 20,738 refugees were resettled in 2016. In comparison Michigan, Ohio, Arizona, North Carolina, Washington, Pennsylvania, and Illinois respectively take at least 3,000 refugees annually ("Key facts about refugees in the U.S.," 2017). In September 2017, the Arizona Department of Economic Security reported 2,892 refugees resettled in Maricopa and Pima county, while in 2018 a total of 998 refugees were resettled in Arizona ("Arizona Refugee Resettlement Program – Quarterly Meetings and Contract Information" n.d.; "Fact Sheet: U.S. Refugee Resettlement," 2019). As government funding for refugee support services continues to be cut, the need for services remains the same. Many non-profits have emerged to provide support for refugees and rely heavily on volunteer workers.

While volunteer teaching at a citizenship class hosted by a refugee resettlement organization in Phoenix, Arizona in 2017 I met a young Burmese couple who had recently married after meeting in a Facebook group for Burmese diasporans. Both man and woman were refugees who had met online after being resettled in different countries. The man was resettled in the U.S. while the female was resettled in Sweden. After meeting and falling in love through a Burmese diasporic social media platform they decided to marry and relocate to be together in Arizona. As the man told me his story I found myself mesmerized by the global and technological forces at play that would take two young Burmese from Burma to Europe and North America respectively, where they would meet in an online forum and build a relationship through digital technology before coming together in Arizona. This is only one of many stories of information

communication technology's (ICT) role in bridging and bonding displaced and dispersed people in the context and contingencies of globalization.

Increased migration and the advancement of communication technologies with affordable access to these technologies have produced extensive communication networks and complex relational ties across the globe. While this is certainly true of all migrants, building and maintaining relational ties has added complexity for refugees whose journey to resettlement, economic insecurity, political disenfranchisement, and vulnerability impact the motivating factors for digital engagement. This project is interested in the information communication technology use and transnational communication practices of resettled refugees.

This dissertation seeks to understand to what extent Diminescu's (2008) concept of the *connected migrant* can be applied to resettled refugees in Phoenix, Arizona. According to Diminiscu, the *connected migrant* through ICT use maintains transnational networks that produce mobility and belonging. Rather than ICTs creating a deterritorialized identity producing a double absence, neither here nor there, the *connected migrant* is both here and there. They are able to produce and maintain socio-technical sociality abroad and in the country of settlement, or what are called bridging and bonding ties, to create and access social capital and belonging (Diminescu, 2008). Using a grounded theory approach and qualitative methods (interviews and participant observations), this research project is interested in exploring concepts of mobility, connectivity, and belonging.

The concept of the *connected migrant* is a particularly useful concept for studying refugee connectivity as the modern refugee is technologically connected with access to

smartphones prior to resettlement. The migrant is defined in relation to the sedentary: those who move versus those who don't. Refugee are certainly migrants as they typically move through one or more nation-states prior to resettlement, however, the refugee is a forced migrant fleeing their homeland due to conflict or persecution. The concept of the migrant is one who has no roots, whereas refugees are uprooted and scattered. Diminescu's *connected migrant* might include tourists who decides to live abroad, multinational corporation employees, and naturalized citizens who travel. Different mobilities produce stability for the *connected migrant*. Therefore, the *connected migrant* exists and produces a culture of mobility which is facilitated through a culture of connectivity, or sociality through digital connection. A culture of mobility consists of the networks, activities, and transnational flows between the homeland and the host country. One of the questions this research project explores is to what extent are resettled refugees able to produce and engage this culture of mobility.

Belonging is another feature of the *connected migrant*. The *connected migrant* has "multi-belonging (to territories and to networks), hypermobility, flexibility in the labor market, the capacity to turn a relational dexterity into a productive and economically effective skill" (p. 569). One's ability to build and maintain bonds that facilitate mobility and identity construction within multiple communities to build and leverage social capital is a key advantage of the *connected migrant* figure. Another question this research project explores is to what extent are resettled refugees able to produce belonging in their transnational network and in the resettlement country. Therefore, this dissertation is interested in the "here and there" of connectivity and belonging or the mediated transnational communication practices of resettled refugees; this dissertation asks to what

extent do resettled refugees align with the concept of the *connected migrant* and what factors may contribute to facilitating or constraining mobility, connectivity, and belonging.

Producing Refugees

To better understand the mediated transnational communication practices of refugees it is important to examine the political and historical factors that produce refugees, understand the process of resettlement to the U.S., and identify potential challenges refugees face here in the U.S.

According to the United Nations, refugees are defined as those who must be granted asylum due to a "well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it" ("1951 Refugee Convention," 1951). This definition has been amended and adapted over time. While some refugees may be repatriated (returned to their home country) many cannot and it is assumed they will stay in their country of resettlement. Due to the longevity of residence in the resettlement country, many nation-states may be cautious to label certain displaced individuals as refugee or asylee (Zetter, 1999). Adelman (1999) argues that refugees are a product of modernity. Modernity, the move toward rationality and reason, is not without its contradictions. Nationalism, which depends on irrationality, promotes individualism and self interest in the modern era but also requires collectivities to band together by

sentiment. The state inculcates loyalty by conferring rights and privileges to its citizens. Therefore, a failed state is one that persecutes instead of protects its citizens. According to Adelman (1999), globalization is the way in which principles of modernity, such as ethics and economic principles, become universal norms. Thus, refugees are a product of a failed state that rejects modernity and therefore rejects rationality. To understand modern-day global refugee discourse, a historical tracing of key events and policies can provide context for current global conditions. Gatrell (2008) identifies four global historical events that produce refugees. Here I provide a brief history of these events that shaped the modern refugee conditions.

World War I. World War I which centered around conflict in Europe between the Allies and the Central Powers resulted in the end of the German, Russian, Ottoman, and Austro-Hungarian Empires. The Central Powers' colonies were dispersed among the Allied victors. This caused forced migration throughout Eastern Europe and genocide of many people. The forced migration produced negative impressions of refugees as either deserters of the war or people who required elaborate and compelling narratives of suffering and despair in order to garner compassion for the refugee condition (Gatrell, 2008).

World War II. After WWII, much of Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe were carved up by colonizers to be independent nation-states with little concern for ethnic or religious ties or claims to land. This produced many enduring conflicts including the ongoing Palestine-Israel conflict, India-Pakistan conflict, and the splintering of ethnic Kurds into four countries where they are a minority population, among other global

conflicts. The mapping of the continents of Africa, Asia, and South America produced many refugees and internally displaced people (Gatrell, 2008).

Cold War. As the United States of America and the Soviet Union emerged as super powers post-WWII, for a period of roughly 40 years an ongoing ideological battle between Capitalism and Communism, wherein proxy wars, placement of authoritarian leaders in key interest areas, and a nuclear arms race – as well as a race to the moon- was fought. These actions destabilized the autonomy of multiple areas including Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East, and parts of Latin America, which would later produce refugees globally (Gatrell. 2008).

Post-Cold War. As neo-liberal policies and globalization ideology proliferated throughout the 1980's, movement of capital and people began to stress the economic systems of poor and vulnerable countries. Many countries that had natural resources depleted during colonial rule and had uneven economic development after independence became fiscally weak and oftentimes heavily indebted. The World Bank and IMF's structural adjustment programs negatively impacted many social programs for vulnerable populations in developing countries. The lack of resources, historical debt, and poverty within these countries, oftentimes cause intra-state conflict wherein the minority populations are politically alienated and are forced to migrate either internally or to another country (Harvey, 2005; Gatrell 2008).

Forced migration and displacement happens in the context of globalization. Globalization focuses on "the removal of barriers to free trade agreement and the closer integration of national economies" (Stiglitz, 2002, p.ix). Globalization occurs through supranational institutions such as the World Bank and IMF, which are regulated by the

United Nations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and multinational corporations (MNCs).

Globalization is intimately tied to neoliberalism which puts faith in the invisible hand of the free market and is heavily influenced by the Bretton Woods Agreement (Harvey, 2005). The 1944 Bretton Woods agreement established a monetary management system for commercial and financial relations among the United States, Canada, Western Europe, Australia, and Japan, thereby interlinking major nation-states' economies. While the Bretton Woods agreement ended in the 1970's there have been lasting effects to trade practices. Globalization is perpetuated through trade agreements, which mediate trade tax, tariffs, and investments between nation-states, which produce economic flows wherein international and multinational corporations may manufacture and sell goods in multiple nation-states.

Globalization has caused the increased flow of people across the world as economic migrants in both blue- and white-collar professions relocate to where jobs are available. Globalization has also caused an increase in the production of refugees. As economies are globally linked, fragile nation-states do not have the ability to absorb the impact of global recessions (Marfleet, 2006). These vulnerable nation-states are more susceptible to economic collapse, political destabilization, famine, and war. Additionally, multinational organizations produce waste that contributes to climate change or the destruction of individual's homes and natural environment. Therefore, globalization contributes to the production of economic refugees, climate refugees, political refugees, and refugees fleeing from war and famine.

Resettlement

Charmarkeh (2013) found in a multi-sited ethnography of Somali refugees that many African refugees' trajectories to resettlement were zigzagged rather than linear. They often pass through "transit" countries where they meet other migrants fleeing war and famine in cybercafés. Within these cybercafés communication technologies may be used strategically to gain information about money transfers for being smuggled into the next country, find out the next step in the journey, and find out information about friends and family who remained in the home country. These journeys often bring refugees to refugee camps where they may languish in the camps for years or if they are particularly vulnerable may be considered for screening for resettlement.

Resettlement to the U.S. takes up to two years. The UNHCR refers refugees for resettlement. The agency collects detailed biographical and biometric data including iris scans, fingerprints, and facial scans. The US government then conducts five background checks, three in-person interviews, utilizes six separate security databases and involves eight U.S. government agencies. Refugees do not apply for resettlement themselves and do not pick their country of resettlement ("Refugee Resettlement Facts," 2018). All refugees who are resettled must fit into one of the vulnerability categories: women and girls at risk, children at risk, urgent medical need, religious minorities, LGBT refugees, and survivors of violence and torture ("U.S. Refugee Admissions Program FAQ," 2018). Once a refugee passes screening and interviews and is accepted for resettlement, they are matched with a resettlement organization. Then refugees must sign a promissory note with the U.S. government which pays for the travel costs of resettlement and establishes credit for the refugee. Once refugees receive medical clearance and sit through a cultural

orientation, they are able to fly to the U.S. where they are greeted by the representative from the resettlement organization. Refugees receive a social security number and are able to find employment immediately upon arrival and may apply for a green card after one year in the U.S.

Resettlement organizations provide services such as assistance with finding affordable housing, employment, medical care, counseling, English learning training, and cultural adjustment for up to 90 days after arrival. Domestic resettlement is limited to the first 90 days; therefore, case workers may not be available or obligated to assist refugees after the initial 90 days. This presents unique challenges for refugees especially those with limited English proficiency and those living with disability.

For example, one woman I met from Syria was living in a two-bedroom apartment in Glendale, Arizona with her six children and her husband who could not work. She spoke limited English and relied on the $500/month disability check they received from the government and food stamps. Her husband was awaiting multiple surgeries to his back, knees, and shoulders before he could work. Her husband could drive, but she could not. Additionally, she could not leave her house because her six children ranged from 3 months old to 9 years old. She was still raising multiple very young children. When the family arrived in the U.S. they were given $900 by the resettlement organization for their first 90 days to help them pay for housing and food while they got settled in and acclimated to the U.S. According to Catholic Charities Refugee and Immigration Services, this is a one-time only provision of initial resettlement money which they can spend on whatever they want. For resettled refugees

issues of transportation, language proficiency, (dis)ability, and financial stress contribute to poorer mental and physical health outcomes.

According to Walker et al. (2015), refugees have poorer health and lower personal well-being than other migrant groups. Refugee women are culturally displaced and socially isolated with limited English language proficiency. Peer support is identified as an important factor for psychological adjustment and acculturation of refugees. Social isolation and social exclusion are associated with poorer health, while social support and social inclusion are considered among the most important social determinants of health. The ability for people to have access to resources and services such as language support, safe living accommodations, jobs, education, and healthcare is critical for successful resettlement and integration and to fight social isolation and alienation (Felton, 2015). Technology can facilitate social inclusion as well as access to resoures. Mobile phone technology access and use has significant implications for producing wellbeing and empowerment for resettled refugees. Literature on mobile phones have described three broad categories for usage: 1. To nurture relationships 2. Purposive: To coordinate activities, problem solve, and seek information. 3. To have power over, and empowerment of, people through technology-assisted communication (Walker et al., 2015). Empowerment is of particular interest to this project. Broadly defining empowerment as self-determination for goal attainment; as identified in prior literature, goal attainment can occur via skills, knowledge, and access to information and resources (Van Dijk and Hacker, 2003; Livingstone, 2004; Mehra, Merkel, and Bishop, 2004). I argue that refugees can be empowered through digital technology, that technology creates

social connectedness and provides access to resources for language support, housing accommodations, jobs, education, and healthcare.

Additionally, a refugee "case" consists of the applicant, his or her spouse, and unmarried children under the age of 21 or the nuclear family. Once a refugee arrives in America they may petition for other dependent family members to be reunited under the reunification act ("UNHCR Guidelines on Reunification of Refugee Families," 1983). However, non-dependent family members such as adult siblings and extended family members are not included under the family reunification act. Therefore, in some cases refugee families may be split apart and resettled in different countries. This is the context for which transnational family and kinship communication practices occur for refugees. Additionally, as refugees belong to a larger cultural, ethnic, or religious diaspora, they engage in diasporic transnational communication practices. Diaspora and transnationalism will serve as the theoretical framework for this research project.

I come to this research through my own experiences growing up in a transnational family. While my mother, two older sisters, and I were based in Troy, Michigan, my father, a computer scientist consultant, traveled and lived in other states and countries as a result of his consultancy work. For much of my upbringing my father did not live in the same house as me and the rest of my family. Instead, he provided financial support and parented from afar. One of the most challenging periods was when my father worked for Aramco in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia for two years as my middle sister and I approached our teen years. The time difference, distance, and only having a landline phone to communicate mediated our relationship and his ability to parent. Financial hardship served as the impetus for my father taking a contract so far from the family and cultural

clashes between American values versus "traditional" Indian values contributed to the growing conflict between my parents and us. As a child of immigrants, living primarily with one parent while another lived abroad working, living in an affluent area but being financially insecure, and navigating the cultural dynamics of American teenage life with Indian cultural pressures, I feel my life story resonates with concepts engaged by diasporic transmigration scholarship. However, I understand that I am extremely privileged with two highly educated parents with mobility and access to resources, and yet we still struggled. My interest in the refugee experience of resettlement is informed by the question: How do refugees, who come to this country with only a bag of their belongings and limited access to resources, find financial and social stability while acclimating to a new culture? I am deeply interested in the ways that refugees maintain their transnational ties while adjusting to American cultural norms and the way digital technology mediates this process.

In this dissertation, I aim to research digital technology use and mediated transnational communication practices. The following chapters will provide the theoretical and methodological frameworks for the analysis and discussion of ICT use by resettled refugees. It is the scope of this project to expand on Diminescu's (2008) *connected migrant* to produce a theoretical understanding of the connected refugee. Chapter two engages transnationalism and diaspora studies as the theoretical framework to understand refugee displacement, resettlement, and issues of belonging in a transnational and local context. Next, I engage the role of information communication technology in migration and digital divide literature to show how technology can both facilitate and constrain connectivity in the local and transnational context. Chapter three

explains the methodological framework by which I approach this research project.

Utilizing a grounded theory approach, this research project seeks to better understand the

ways in which technology connects and empowers refugees during the resettlement and

adjustment process both locally and transnationally. Chapter four provides an analysis of

transnational communication practices of resettled refugees. Chapter five provides an

analysis of refugees' use of ICTs after resettlement to build and maintain local

connectivity. Finally, chapter six provides a discussion of the findings and implications

for refugees' digital technology practices at the intersection of mobility, connectivity, and

belonging in the transnational and local context.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the following pages, I review the extant literature on diaspora, transnationalism, and information communication technology (ICT). I aim to articulate the refugee as a diasporan in a transnational network, with competing global tensions in identity development post-displacement, and unpack the role of community for refugees in relational settlement. Then I will discuss ICTs and the role they play in relational settlement. At the end of this chapter I will provide research questions that will scaffold the broader research question of how mediated transnational communication practices of resettled refugees shape the resettlement process in the United States of America.

Diaspora and Transnationalism

Diaspora and transnationalism as theoretical lenses can illuminate the complexity of global migration flows, identity and identification development, and how refugees are uniquely positioned within transnational communities. I believe diaspora is a particularly salient theory as refugees are the classical diaspora, the forcibly dispersed, scattered people who maintain transnational ties (Safran, 1991). Diaspora studies illuminates the liminal, multi-locative affiliations and influences that produce a local-global identity and transnational communities. Transnational Studies emerged as a field to better understand the phenomenon of transmigrants' lived experiences and the links, networks, and affiliations they maintained (Basch et al.,1994; Bauböck & Faist, 2010; Braziel & Mannur, 2003; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004). According to Bauböck and Faist (2010), while diaspora always refers to a group of people, transnationalism refers to "processes that transcend international borders and therefore appear to describe more abstract

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phenomena in a social science language" (p.13). Whereas diaspora studies may be interested in the cultural distinctiveness of a diaspora, transnational literature is interested in migrant incorporation and transnational practices. As diasporic identities are not integrated and incorporated into the host society, this is a major point of departure between diaspora and transnational studies. To better understand how diaspora studies and transnational studies applied to resettled refugees can elucidate conceptual tensions experienced by resettled refugees, I will first define diaspora and the refugee as diasporan within a transnational network, then look at issues of identity development, and finally discuss the role of diasporic transnational communities for refugees.

Defining diaspora and transnationalism. The term diaspora derives from the Greek word "diaspeirein" which is the verb *speiro* (to sow) and preposition *dia* (over). For the Greeks "diaspeirein" was the natural process where the seeds of a fruit abruptly scatter from the parent body, disperse, and reproduce (Cohen, 1997; Tölölyan, 1996). Diaspora is broadly defined as a scattered, dispersed population. While originally the term diaspora referred to the Jewish diaspora, through the late 1980's and mid-1990's diaspora scholars expanded the definition of diaspora as any group dispersed from one place of origin (real or mythicized) to two or more nation-states. (Clifford, 1994; Cohen, 1997; Safran, 1991; Tololyan, 1996). The broader definition of diaspora as dispersed population includes expatriates, IT migrants, labor migrants, refugees, etc. In this way, researchers can conceptualize similar and divergent behaviors, attitudes, and practices in diasporas that exist regardless of forced expulsion or willing dispersion. For resettled refugees, the process of displacement and resettlement produces dispersion across two or more nation-states creating a diaspora.

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Transnationalism is conceptualized along two major definitions: 1. The flow of goods, ideas, and people across borders in a way that undermines the sovereignty of nation-states (Braziel & Mannur, 2003). 2. The forged and sustained multi-stranded relations that link the origin and settlement countries (Basch et al., 1994). Within these definitions are several concepts that are central to transnational studies. First within transnational studies, scholars reject the idea of the nation-state as a container to study society and community. Instead Basch and colleagues (1994) promote the concept of a transnational social field. The social field is the space within which actors and their positionality are constituted. This is done through capital and habitus (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986). Habitus is the conscious and unconscious internalized behaviors and norms that we engage in within a particular social field. Capital is the ability, skills, and access to resources that allows an individual to assert influence and power. Therefore, within a transnational social field, non-state actors engage in everyday activities that produce social, cultural, and economic capital. Transnational studies are the study of the everyday practices of migrants to understand their kinship networks, remittances (social and financial), and identity formation across borders (Vertovec, 2009). To better understand how resettled refugees—whose primary aim is to build a sustainable new life for themselves and to assist their family emotionally and financially in the country of origin and in the transit countries—engage in everyday transnational social practices aimed at supporting their kinship network and adjusting to their settlement country, transnationalism can offer an analytical focus to the study of refugees.

The refugee as diasporan. While refugees are a dispersed population, understanding how the refugee is produced as diasporan can illuminate the larger global

social forces that effect the experience of refugee displacement and resettlement. Cohen (1997) identifies five typologies of diaspora: trade, victim, labor, imperial, or cultural (de-territorialized). These diaspora typologies may overlap and are not meant to be perfect matches for a particular ethnic group, rather they help shape our understanding of migratory phenomena and social, economic, and political behaviors. Victim diasporas are mainly refugee or forced migrant groups which include Jews, African Slaves, Palestinians, and Armenians to name a few. Labour diasporas refer to the proletariat working classes who migrate either as guest workers or during colonization as indentured servants to labour in near slave-like conditions. Imperial diasporas are defined as migration based on imperial regimes that caused Spanish, Dutch, German, French, and British colonists to fan out across most parts of the world. Trade diasporas consist of ethnic entrepreneurs that serve as middlemen between production and distribution across multiple cities and may include Chinese, Indian, Lebanese, among other trade groups. Cohen notes that the difference between trade and imperial diasporas is that the latter is state-sponsored. Finally, cultural diasporas consist of groups whose identities are "cemented as much by literature, political ideas, religious convictions, music and life-styles as by permanent migration" (p.xii). These groups have deterritorialized identities in that their homeland cannot be located and the identities that emerge are formed in ambiguity of ethnicity and nation. Examples of cultural diasporas include Caribbean and Parsi groups.

Through these typologies of diasporas can be understood as being influenced by colonization and post-colonization/globalization policies and practices which serve as motivating forces for migration. While refugees are considered a victim diaspora, a

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group's diaspora may consist of waves of migrations. In other words, the first wave of migration may have been comprised of a trade diaspora that later, due to conflict in the homeland, consists of more forced migrants. For instance, many Syrians spread out across South America, North America, and Europe for educational and economic opportunities long before the 2011 conflict in Syria began. These established communities in the diaspora become important actors in helping resettled refugees and for advocating for political change in the homeland.

Brubaker (2005) suggests that rather than the diaspora being a singular concept of a dispersed group, a diaspora is "an idiom, stance, or claim, not a bounded entity" (p.1). Diaspora, for Brubaker, as a noun is a *collectivity*, *condition* (diasporicity or diasporism), *process* (diasporization, de-diasporization, and re-diasporization), and *field of inquiry* (diasporology or diasporistics). As an adjective it designates a *stance* (the diasporist) or position in a field of debate or an *attribute* (diasporic and diasporan) or modality (diasporic citizenship, diasporic consciousness, diasporic identity, diasporic imagination, diasporic nationalism, diasporic network, diasporic culture, diasporic religion, diasporic self) (p. 4). Brubaker identifies the following taxonomies of the diaspora: dispersion, homeland orientation, and boundary maintenance. Dispersion may be any dispersion both within and across nation-state borders. The homeland is that which is identified and conceptualized by the diaspora. The homeland orientation proffered by Brubaker is less a specific place and more focused on the ability to recreate a culture in diverse locations. Finally, boundary-maintenance is the diasporan's ability to maintain a distinctive identity from the host country. Brubaker posits a tension between boundary-maintenance and boundary-erosion that accounts for individuals who do not identify as diasporic as well as

generational differences that produce assimilated identities. These three criteria allow researchers to study diaspora as an idiom, stance or claim, rather than a bounded entity with certain entailments.

For refugees, the trauma of displacement and loss of home sometimes serves as a driving force for total integration in the host country and desire to forget the homeland or focus on producing a new national belonging in the host country. While this desire for integration and moving forward from loss may motivate refugees to be less engaged with activities and news related to the homeland, racialization, discrimination, and being treated as the foreign other may impede assimilation and integration. Therefore, I argue that one's ability to pass in the dominant host community, the location of resettlement, and the effects of trauma due to displacement will influence identification with the diaspora. That being said, under Brubaker's definition, refugees may still be understood as diasporic through the *process* of diasporization or the forced dispersion from homeland across multiple nation-states. Therefore, regardless of diasporic identification, refugees may be understood as having *attributes* of a diasporan, as someone having network ties across multiple nation-states.

Transnational networks. Transnational studies typically focus on flows between country of origin and country of emigration. This narrow focus on the sending and receiving country allows for researchers to analyze the effects of flows between goods, ideas, and people in ways that are measurable and that allow scholars to theorize the phenomenon. However, globalization studies and the field of sociology delimit transnationalism from two nation-states to the flows across multiple nation-states and the ways technologies produce transnational networks (Appadurai, 1996; Baubock & Faist,

2010). I align my definition of transnationalism with that of globalization studies with a focus on flows that transcend the limitations of the sending and receiving countries. In this way, circuits of global flows can be studied to illuminate the economic and ideological practices that make up and produce migration flows and translocality. Translocality refers to the deterritorialization of cultures such that they are reproduced and transformed in new localities through migrant practices. These localities produce a network of spaces that connect migrants and flows across borders. This alignment with a delimited understanding of transnationalism will allow for an analysis of how diasporic communities maintain global transnational networks and also how spaces or localities become hubs in a larger network of global flows, especially for refugees.

Levitt and Jaworsky (2007) identify transnationalism as occurring primarily in the following domains: social, cultural, economic, religious, and political. The social domain consists of strong and weak ties that bond and bridge transnational migrants and non-migrants. These ties may be utilized for collective mobility, may be exploited for cheap labor, and may be used to bridge disparate families for the practice of endogamy. The cultural domain consists of the ways in which individuals develop cultural identities and practices versus integrating, assimilating, or acculturation. This identity development exists in a dialectical tension between structure (culture industry) and agency (consumer). Identity may exist on a continuum of hybridity where one end consists of destabilized hybridity and on the other end assimilationist hybridity (discussed more in-depth below). The economic domain consists of both financial remittances individuals send back home as well as the multinational organizational practices that serve as the catalyst for migration. For instance, many multinational corporations choose to take advantage of

neoliberal policies which allow for factories to be built in economically underdeveloped countries. This may produce migration to the location of the newly built factory for employment purposes. Religious transnationalism refers to the ways in which migrants practice and reproduce religious activity from the country of origin in the settlement country and how those practices may be more or less orthodox or conservative than the practices in the country of origin. The political domain refers to political engagement one has with the origin country and destination country. The political domain is phenomena such as long-distance nationalism, expatriate voting, and political mobilization around issues in both settlement and origin countries. Transnational practices occur through these domains and constitute the transnational communities and networks for transnational flows. Of particular interest to this study are the social and cultural domains that impact resettled refugees' transnational practices and identity development post-resettlement. To better understand the role of network ties in the displacement, resettlement, and adjustment process it is important to understand network affordances. As refugees move from country to country, leaving their homeland, going to a refugee camp in a border country (or being smuggled into another country), and then being resettled, network ties become important to gaining information about the next step in the journey (Charmarkeh, 2013). Additionally, once refugees are chosen and processed for resettlement, network ties may be instrumental in providing information and support about the resettlement country which may help with adjustment. Therefore, access to network ties prior to displacement and during resettlement can be essential to transnational movement for refugees out of conflict zones and to places of safety.

According to social network theory, a network is made up of strong ties and weak ties (Granovetter, 1973). Strong ties refer to the frequency of engagement between two entities where as weak ties refers to entities that are only connected through other entities. Whereas you may have strong ties with your family and friends because you frequently see and talk to them, and indeed they may have strong ties amongst each other due to interaction with one another through you, your friends and family may have weak ties to your coworkers with whom they never interact. While friends and family may not speak to or interact with your coworkers because both parties know you, they are linked-weakly- in a network. Networks are also made up of hubs. Hubs represent entities that multiple ties are linked to in a dense way such that the hub is a primary means through which information passes. Putnam (2000) takes Granovetter's concepts of strong and weak ties further by adding the social element. He identifies communication within these networks as either bonding or bridging individuals. Bonding occurs between family and friends whereas bridging occurs between the weak ties in the network. The communication function within these networks serves to bond or bridge individuals.

Network theory plays a role in the development and maintenance of social relations for new migrants. When new migrants first resettle in a destination country, it is often through weak ties that they have access to resources that help them integrate into the new society. Weak ties play an important role in the immigration and integration process. More often than not, it is those weak ties that provide new migrants with help with job attainment, procuring living accommodations, and providing social support. Digital media plays a central role in the bridging and bonding of new migrants (Brinkerhoff, 2003). It is through access to various digital platforms that migrants are

connected to those far away weak ties, by which bridging occurs. Additionally, new migrants still keep in touch with family and friends back home allowing for continued bonding.

In the globalized world of increased migration and interconnectivity, a common feature of the modern global era is the transnational family. The transnational family is a concept where a family member lives in different country than other family members but still performs their role within the family. For example, an adult child living abroad may continue taking care of their parent's finances and medical health from long distance. Digital technology allows for different types of families to be maintained. Refugee families are necessarily transnational families where families may be split apart due to resettlement in different countries and/or family members who remain in the homeland or in refugee camps. Therefore, bonding ties with family are maintained actively through transnational communication practices using digital technology. However, through during the process of displacement and resettlement resettled refugees also engage bridging ties.

The refugee as diasporan, of a dispersed group and having experienced diasporization, is part of and maintains a transnational network. Through weak and strong network ties, there is potentiality through connectivity for different forms of mobility and belonging. Transnational network ties can bridge diasporans such that refugees can build social capital that aims at providing access to financial and social resources during the displacement to resettlement process. Transnational networks may consist of other previously resettled refugees who have gained knowledge of the host country as well as the larger diasporic community. The potentiality of these networks ties to access different

forms of capital and social support is central to the *connected migrant* and the potential

impact to the social, emotional, and financial health of refugees.

Identity and identification. Diaspora studies primarily focus on individual

identity formation, community identity formation, and political mobilization across

nation-states. As noted above, a refugee's sense of identification with a diasporic

community may be influenced by factors other than being from a dispersed group. An

important consideration is how the cause for migration may impact one's identification

with the diaspora.

Clifford (1994) argues that it is through discursive practices that diaspora and

diasporic identity are constructed within migrant communities. Rather than a set of

migratory circumstances and social relations dictating one's diasporic identification, it is

one's own diasporic consciousness that dictates one's membership and belonging in a

diaspora. Thus, not all ethnic minorities belong to a diaspora simply because their ethnic

group has been exiled, dispersed across multiple nations-states, and share a collective

memory of the homeland. Diasporic consciousness awakens from within through

engaging in transnational communication with those in the diaspora and in the homeland.

This is a significant departure from taxonomic definitions of diaspora in that it

acknowledges the individual's agency and self-determination in identity construction. For

instance, not all women would like to remain in a diaspora if that diasporan community

engages in oppressive gender practices. Not all refugees identify with a broader diaspora

but rather may only focus on maintaining family ties. Whether this develops over time

into diasporic consciousness depends on the individual and motivating experiences that

produce a diasporic consciousness. Here minority identity development theory may help

us to understand how often minority identities go unexamined until a triggering event, usually some form of discrimination, occurs that motivates individuals to reject the dominant group and to seek out other similar ethnic minorities (Ponterotto & Pedersen, 1993).

For refugees who have predominantly lived in ethnically and racially homogenous spaces, it may not be until resettlement that they experience a triggering event such as racial discrimination. Triggering events have the potential to produce diasporic consciousness and a diasporic identity. Indeed, the diasporic identity is a disaggregated identity that rejects essentialism, universalisms, and nationalism for anti-essentialist and transnational orientations. The diasporic disaggregated identity is a mixed identity made up of people and a particular land. This identity allows diasporic people to hold contradictory positions of being both from a place and not from a place.

Clifford (1994) suggests that to have a diasporic consciousness and diasporic identity, one is necessarily "dwelling-in-displacement" (p. 310). Building off Hall's (1990) concept of hybridity, displacement is often brought on by racialized discrimination and oppression in the host-land, which prevents assimilation. A hybrid identity, or hybridity, is a disaggregated identity wherein one feels as if they are neither from here nor there. This feeling of being from neither here nor there may be brought on by racism or other forms of marginalization in the host country, as well as not feeling from the home country; either because the home country does not exist, is occupied, or because the home country identifies certain behaviors as authentic and those living in the diaspora -- with creolized behaviors and patterns of speaking as -- inauthentic. This produces Gilroy's (1993) deterritorialized identity whereby, using W.E.B. Dubois

concept of double consciousness, one is neither comfortable with the host nor home country due to creolization, a sort of bricolage identity. Thus, a central component of diaspora and diasporic identity is produced by structural inequalities of race and class.

Diminescu's (2008) *connected migrant*, however, occupies the here and there. There is no need to cut ties once uprooted. Thus, the question becomes: is the connected refugee a diasporic identity of double absence or one of double presence? While the *connected migrant* requires transnational diasporic ties for social continuity to provide different forms of mobility, technological connectivity supposedly produces transnational and local belonging that may not produce a disaggregated identity but rather a cosmopolitan identity. A cosmopolitan identity is pluralistic, global, and has "overlapping interests and heterogenous or hybrid publics in order to challenge conventional notions of belonging, identity, and citizenship" (Vertovec & Cohen, 2002, p. 1). Refugees may have multiple affiliations and identifications with the home, transit country, and settlement country. They may feel a sense of belonging here and there.

Whereas diasporic identification is based on marginality in the host country that produces a feeling of belonging neither here nor there, transnational migrants have simultaneous identification with the host and home countries. I believe Levitt and Glick Schiller's (2004) transnational concept of simultaneity enables us to understand refugees' double presence. Rather than positioning migrants as dispossessed of location, Levitt and Glick Schiller argue that migrants are "embedded in multi-layered, multi-sited transnational social fields, encompassing those who move away and those who stay behind" (p.1003). Simultaneity allows migrants to live their daily lives, routines, and engage with institutions that are located in the destination country and transnationally.

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Building on the concept of simultaneity, Tsuda's (2016) conceptualization of diasporicity allows us to bridge the dichotomies of the double absence or double presence by positioning migrants in the "relative embeddedness of dispersed ethnic groups in transnational connections to their ancestral homeland and to their co-ethnics scattered in various countries around the world" (p.253). Diasporicity, metaphorically understood as a wheel, positions diasporans as simultaneously being encapsulated by centrifugal (pushed away from the center - diaspora) and centripetal (pulled toward the center - homeland) forces. In this way, Tsuda theorizes the complex, dialectic experiences of those who occupy liminal identities. Some individuals may be more diasporic (both connected to the homeland and others in the diaspora) than others and thus would have a thicker connection of spoke and/or rim. However, diasporic consciousness plays a significant role in Tsuda's conceptualization of diasporicity of the collectivity and diasporan. The more one is oriented toward the diaspora both in consciousness and action, the more diasporic the individual. Tsuda's concept of diasporicity may help elucidate the uneven production of diasporic consciousness and identity formation across individuals and groups of resettled refugees. Rather than a double absence, diasporicity provides a nuanced way of understanding different compositions of a double presence, or diasporic identification as a relative condition.

Major differences between transnationalism and diaspora communities include the idea of the homeland and the communities' orientation toward it. While the homeland (real or mythicized) is a motivating factor for diasporas, the nation-state may be less important for transnationalism as individuals may focus more on kinship networks and financial remittances. Also, a feature of transnationalism is social remittances, or the

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ways in which through mediated transnational socializing, migrants impact non-migrants at home producing a type of cosmopolitanism. Through exposure to new ways of being, transnationalism can impact social practices, political beliefs, and cultural practices in the homeland. Similarly, through acculturation, migrants impact the settlement country's cultural practices. Rather than requiring a disaggregated identity or "dwelling-in-displacement" in the host country, migrants may be able to create new syncretic ways of being in the host country.

Refugees, as a dispersed population, are the classic definition of diaspora. In the context of globalization, refugees are also uniquely positioned as a transnational community within a larger diaspora. A diaspora may include economic migrants and sojourners along with resettled refugees, however refugees may not have the same mobility options and economic opportunities as other migrants. Therefore, refugees have unique needs and may experience more severe forms of marginalization. Citing Malkki's (1995) ethnography of the Hutu refugees in Tanzania, Haridranath (2007) traces how the experience of expulsion and the experience of resettlement shape refugee's identity formation to each other, the diaspora, and relationship to the homeland. In Malkki's study Hutu refugees in the Mishamo Refugee Settlement in Tanzania constructed identities informed by a Burundi nationhood where notions of home were understood more as a moral decision rather than a geographical territory; while Hutu refugees resettled in the city of Kigoma, Tanzania had more cosmopolitan, hybrid identities that understood home as a territorial entity. This study highlights how constructions of identity are based on experiences of displacement and resettlement.

Diasporic transnational communities. As mentioned above, diaspora studies is interested in identity, and this identity formation occurs in the context of community. Diasporic communities function to produce cultural norms, may engage in discussions of religious practices, and ofttimes focus on political events in the home country through active discussions on public mediated platforms. Because of the dispersion of people over multiple nation-states, media technology has been a central feature of diaspora since the 1980's (Wakeman, 1988). Media technology serves to connect the diaspora through discussion board forums, e-newsletters, and mailing lists. Through these technologies, diasporans are able to discuss and debate key features of their community identity and hybridized identity. Diasporans are also able to access media (videos, music, newspaper, etc.) that come from the home country which aids in the production of a diasporic identity (Georgiou, 2005).

Diasporic communities produce bonding and bridging networks online (Brinkerhoff, 2003). Bonding, the strong kinship relations that diasporans are able to maintain through information communication technologies, tend to be similar ties; whereas bridging networks, weak ties that diasporans maintain in their network to create a larger sense of community, tend to be dissimilar ties. That is to say bonding ties are likely to consist of individuals who share similar values, experiences, and practices because of relationship proximity. Whereas bridging ties are likely to consist of individuals who are dissimilar to the migrant and therefore provide social capital and access to more diverse resources. Diasporic mediated communication practices allow migrants to transform relationships from bridging-to-bonding ties.

These community communication practices may also be used for political mobilization. Often a feature of diaspora is a focus toward the homeland with an intention toward supporting or bettering political and social conditions. Therefore, diaspora communities may come together to rally around a political cause. Through online forums, individual's political identity and voice may be heard and respected even when they might otherwise be marginalized in their day to day life (Bernal, 1999). Social media can also activate latent ties (Haythornewaite, 2002). When a major event occurs in the homeland, an individual may be inspired to participate in the network in order to rally resources to help the homeland. Thus, a latent tie (i.e., an individual who is not engaged in the network) may be activated and become a weak or eventually strong tie.

Transnational communities similar to diaspora communities engage in online mediated practices to maintain strong and weak network ties. Transnational communities are made up of kinship ties that produce flows of ideas, goods, people, and finances. However, transnational communities tend to serve a goal-oriented function such as accessing resources, providing social support, job attainment, living accommodations, and social inclusion. As mentioned above, transnational communities may include ethnic communities, but also can include community networks based on economic migration, multinational organizations, networks for drug and/or human trafficking, and religious communities.

Transnational communities are produced through social networks and media technology. Hollander (2000) identifies digital communities as producing shared culture codes, cultural identities, and function to socialize individuals into the community. Therefore, transnational communities created through digital platforms also function in

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similar ways as face-to-face communities. Transnational migration practices heavily rely on bridging and bonding ties as they reduce the risk of migration by having access to network ties.

Traditionally, diaspora studies has focused on the individual and the community, the media they produce and consume, the discursive practices that generate cultural codes and produce community norms, and the ideological flows that produce political organization. While all diasporas are transnational communities, not all transnational communities are diasporas. For instance, international bureaucrats, musicians, sportspersons, drug peddlers, gunrunners, seafarers, and sometimes prostitutes may belong to a larger transnational network and share occupational and class characteristics that are not reduced to nationality or homeland (Vertovec & Cohen, 1999).

While much of diaspora studies focuses on the relations between homeland and diaspora and the ways individuals build communal identity through mediated platforms, the relations of individuals between emigration countries has been undertheorized. By focusing on the communal discursive practices of diasporic communities, diaspora studies has taken a broad approach to cultural formations. This study will narrow the focus by looking at the interpersonal relational ties between those living in the diaspora. Particularly of interest is the communication flows between refugees in the diaspora that provide social, emotional, and mental support informed by the trauma of displacement and the resettlement process. Who can understand the experience of displacement better than other refugees from the same homeland dealing with acclimating to language, culture, and religious differences in resettlement countries? To better understand

transnational connectivity and the communication practices of resettled refugees, the research questions I put forth are the following:

RQ1:   In what ways do refugees communicate with family and friends abroad?

RQ2:   What do transnational communication practices with family and friends do for refugees?

The Role of Information Communication Technology

As discussed above, information communication technologies (ICTs) are the medium by which transnational diasporic ties are built and maintained. Specifically, ICTs are the mechanism by which the *connected migrant* produces transnational social continuity for relational settlement. As it is the scope of this research project to understand the extent to which the *connected migrant* represents the experiences of the connected refugee, it is necessary to understand the mechanism by which connectivity is produced. To better understand the role of ICTs in the experience of refugee displacement and resettlement, this section offers a review of relevant studies and theories that elucidate the potential and limitations of technology in forced migration.

Refugees' use of mobile technologies and social networking sites directly impacts their social capital which produces social inclusion both online and face-to-face, thereby establishing their place and sense of belonging in both the society of resettlement as well as the homeland. In multiple studies done in Australia, it was found that refugees can face "complex information and communication challenges" that can lead to social and economic problems due to language barriers, cultural differences, and insufficient interaction of refugee migrants with their new environment (Leung, 2010; Lloyd et al.,

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2013; Correa-Velez et al., 2013). This may produce social exclusion and stall the acculturation process. Social exclusion is defined as a "relational process of declining participation, solidarity, and access" (Silver & Miller, 2003). As refugees often cannot return home, it becomes necessary for them to acculturate in to the country of resettlement. If social exclusion is an information problem (i.e., how to speak the local language, how to be culturally competent in the resettlement society, and how to access resources) that produces social isolation and economic disadvantage, digital technologies have the potential to give refugees access to resources to learn language, access resources, and learn cultural norms. Such affordances might ensure social inclusion and economic parity for refugees. Social inclusion is defined as the "extent that individuals…are able to fully participate in society and control their own destinies" (Warschauer, 2003). Social inclusion involves proactively creating opportunities (Phipps, 2000).

Research has found that ICT use facilitates activities that can promote social inclusion (Selwyn & Facer, 2007). In a focus group study, Alam and Imran (2015) looked at the link among digital technology, social capital and social inclusion. The authors found that if digital divide, consisting of access, skills, motivation, and diversity of usage of digital technology (which will be discussed more in-depth below) was overcome, one could produce social capital which would produce social inclusion. Social capital is one form of capital that impacts one's social position. The three major forms of Bourdieu's (1986) capital are social, economic, and cultural. Cultural capital is the accumulated cultural knowledge (education, intellect, and access to symbolic goods) that gives one social status and power. Economic capital is one's command of economic resources

(money, assets, and property). Social capital is one's access to resources via one's social network. Social capital within a network may include information that allows social mobility and integration. In Alam and Imran's (2015) study, digital inclusion – the access to and use of digital technology – conferred access to information (social capital) for opportunities (education, employment, entrepreneurship, and entertainment), e-services (government, banking, billing, shopping, and health), and connectivity (knowledge, information, interaction with wider community, and socializing) which produced social inclusion. Thus, digital technology can produce belonging for refugees in the country of resettlement by producing social inclusion through social capital.

Digital technology can also be used to produce capital for refugees with their diasporic community. Because internet users can produce and disseminate their own content and worldviews, cyberspace can become a "discursive space where marginalized groups such as immigrants may have a so-called voice in public" (Chan, 2005). Victoria Bernal's (2006) study of the Eritrean diaspora found that Eritrean refugees, due to isolation and discrimination in their country of settlement, remained actively engaged in political participation for the 'homeland' in the online space Dehai. Even though Eritrean refugees did not plan to return home, they maintained a strong identification with Eritrea and Eritrean nationalism. Through discussion and debates within the website's forum, Eritrean's produce political identities within the diaspora. The equal access to engage in debates allowed some users to emerge as key talking heads on political issues. This ability to elevate one's social position within the online sphere was significant, especially for those users who were otherwise marginalized in their real, non-virtual life. In this way, digital engagement produced new subjectivities and capital in the Eritrean online

sphere. Eritrean refugees moved beyond their marginalized position to gain influence and status in the diaspora.

Use of digital technologies can produce social capital through access to key resources, information, and connectivity which can produce social inclusion in the country of settlement. Engaging in digital online spheres may also produce cultural capital as individuals emerge as key interlocutors in digital diasporas. This has implications for one's sense of identity and social-wellbeing. As digital technologies play an important role in the lives and wellbeing of refugees from journey of displacement to resettlement, it is important to understand factors that mediate that use of digital technologies. Particularly important to how technology use is theorized are the concepts of technological affordances, network effects, and digital divide. The following paragraphs define these concepts and explain how they impact transnational communication practices and refugee resettlement.

Technological affordances. Technological affordances of digital media platforms impact one's ability to build social connection. Technological affordances are the constraints and possibilities of material artefacts (Hutchby, 2001). Different digital interfaces afford different experiences and interactions in the digital environment. For instance, a kindle will allow different affordances than an iPad in the experience of reading an e-book. Through the use of certain types of media and technological devices, individuals are able to experience and access different kinds of resources and achieve different goals. For instance, if I were to use Facebook to keep in touch with my family and friends, the infrastructure of Facebook allows me to post information for anyone I am "friends" with to see. Therefore, I can keep friends and family updated on my personal

on-goings without having to call or email each individual. Through this platform, I am able to maintain a certain type of closeness through mass online disclosure. This may differ from my experience of sharing information on a closed group on Whatsapp. Likewise, if I am choosing to join and engage in an open forum based around specific interests, I am able to enact one of my membership identities in a way that may not be appropriate for a mixed audience. For instance, if part of my identity is that I see myself as a politically active citizen, I may join a forum which allows me to perform that identity and engage in discussions online with other similar individuals. In this way, different digital platforms may function for different reasons.

However, it should be noted that as digital platforms change, affordances change (Ellison & boyd, 2013). For instance, Facebook only had a "like" option for many years, constraining the reaction and communication individuals could have to each other's posts. Now Facebook allows for multiple reactions to posts which can still produce a somewhat constrained communication. Communication and connectivity are shaped by technological affordances. As Van Dijck (2013) notes, connectivity is a resource and individuals are habituated into sociality and connective platforms. The types of platforms used by migrants and refugees can significantly shape their experiences and access to social support, or even one's ability to perform identity and membership.

Network effects. Another influence on migrant communication practices is network effects. Network effects identify how some technologies emerge as popular technologies or platforms. The more users who use a technology, the more the value of the technology increases (Blank & Reisdorf, 2012). For instance, if the majority of migrants use Whatsapp to maintain their kinship ties, the more value Whatsapp has for a

particular community. Similarly, if most diasporic community members utilize a community forum to discuss politics, religions, and cultural norms, the more the community forum has value over other platforms. This has implications for producing connectivity, belonging, and mobility for refugees. Without knowledge of the current, most relevant platforms used by the diasporic transnational network, migrants might become socially isolated and unable to access social capital both transnationally and locally. This is particularly concerning for older refugees or for refugees whose technology use is not as sophisticated.

Digital divide. As has been established above, use of digital technology has major implications for transnational migrants, diaspora, and refugees. Therefore, it is essential that we look at barriers to the access and use of digital technologies. The digital divide was originally conceived as a lack of access to infrastructure and devices, however in this era of low cost and easy-to-access technology, scholars have developed a more complex understanding of the various facets and dimensions to barriers to digital inclusion.

Van Dijk and Hacker (2003) identify digital divide as having four main components of access: mental, digital, skills, and usage. Mental access refers to the lack of interest, motivation, computer anxiety, and unattractiveness of new technology. Material access refers to the lack of possession of computers and network connection. Skills access refers to the "lack of digital skills caused by insufficient user-friendliness and inadequate education or social support" (p. 316). Digital skills consist of instrumental (operate hardware and software), informational (skills of searching information using hardware and software), and strategic (using information for one's own purpose) skills. Usage access refers to the lack of diversity of usage of various devices, softwares,

applications, etc. According to Van Dijk (1999) problems with digital technology gradually shift from the first two to the latter two kinds.

Over time, the usage gap will become a substantial focus on the digital divide as some people become advanced digital technology users and others will only use the basic functions. This has implications for one's ability to accomplish larger life and work goals. Gender, education, age, and income were found to be moderating factors in the digital divide. Van Dijk and Hacker (2003) identified three kinds of resources one may lack that contribute to the digital divide: material, social, and cognitive resources. Material resources refer to material access to digital technology. Social resources refer to one's social network and social support to manage technology use. Cognitive resources refer to literacy, numeracy, and informacy. Literacy are the skills to read and search for information in texts. Numeracy are the skills to handle numbers, figures, and tables, and to compute. Informacy are the skills to operate digital technology and search for information in digital resources. Thus, it is the resources and accompanying skills or the lack thereof that produce the digital divide.

Van Dijk (2006) identifies four types of inequality produced through digital divide: immaterial (life chances), material (access to capital and resources), social (positions of power and participation), and educational (capabilities and skills). He also re-imagines the digital divide as cyclical. Where one may have finally reached the final stage of the digital divide where they have high usage of a technological device, and then there is new technological innovation. Therefore, the user must begin at the bottom once again where they must find the motivation, access, digital skills and finally usage skills.

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In his criticism of digital divide research, Selwyn (2004) furthers explicates the complexity of the digital divide. He identifies access as not just one's ability to use a digital device on a network, but also the context within which this usage occurs. For instance, an individual using a digital device within their own home will engage in different types of digital behavior than those who are using digital devices in a public space, like a cybercafé. Therefore, there are levels of connectivity. Building off Berman and Phillips's (2001) study that identifies meaningful engagement with ICTs as producing 'social quality' in terms of socio-economic security, social inclusion, social cohesion, and empowerment, Selwyn identifies social inclusion in terms of participation in society. He suggests meaningful engagement with ICTs that allow participation in society to occur along the following dimensions: production activity, political activity, social activity, consumption activity, and savings activity. Therefore, he identifies ICTs as those devices and platforms that allow individuals to fulfil active roles in society. Using this concept of ICTs and social quality as a consequence of engagement with ICTs, Selwyn puts forth the idea that Technical Capital mediates other forms of capital (social, cultural, and economic) in a network society and information age. Technical capital is the access and use of technology to impact one's ability to produce social, cultural and economic capital.

As identified above, digital inclusion has very important implications for refugees. Specifically, Andrade and Doolin (2016) have identified five valuable capabilities ICTs contribute to refugees' social inclusion. Overcoming the digital divide can be used:

to participate in an information society, to communicate effectively, to

understand a new society, to be socially connected, and to express a cultural

identity. In realizing these capabilities through ICT use, refugees exercise their

agency and enhance their well-being in ways that assist them function effectively

in a new society and regain control over their disrupted lives (p. 405).

As age, gender, income, and education are identified as moderating factors in overcoming

the digital divide, newly resettled refugees may be at risk as they are often low-income

and older migrants who may feel social isolation more intensely without access to their

social network. To better understand the role of ICTs' affordances, network effects, and

digital divide on the resettlement process for refugees, I put forth the following question:

RQ3: How, if at all, do ICT affordances constrain or facilitate intercultural

adjustment for refugees in the U.S.?

As Diminescu (2008) argues, the new migrant is a connected migrant. Gone are

the days when immigration meant cutting one's roots, now migrants circulate and keep in

touch. This connected mobility has implications for network maintenance but also access

to resources and capital. As Diminescu (2008) writes:

Migrants without papers but who have friends successfully integrated in the

international market. This social form of integration from the bottom up, which

has been a source 'settlement into mobility' for thousands of migrants with no

solid financial or institutional capital, pose a question not only for the nature of

any migration policy but also for our sociological vision of migrations (p. 571).

Diminescu's *connected migrant* offers utility for understanding 'relational settlement' or the ways migrants adopt modern communication technology for departure, return, and 'intermittent integration' where total integration in the host society is no longer the goal but rather participation in a variety of social milieus that produce mobility and belonging. The *connected migrant* must balance integration into the host society with maintaining the cultural practices of their enclave. This research project is interested in understanding what is 'relational settlement' for refugees. I assume that the connected refugee, with their initial limited access to resources, will rely on their network and the resources and capital gained through digital technology use and mediated transnational communication practices.

Through a tracing of diaspora, transnationalism, and the role of information technology use in migration, this chapter has provided a review and synthesis of extant literature that informs this study. The scope of this dissertation project is to answer the following questions using grounded theory, interviews, and participant observation:

RQ1: In what ways do refugees communicate with family and friends abroad?

RQ2: What do transnational communication practices with family and friends do for refugees?

RQ3: How, if at all, do ICT affordances constrain or facilitate intercultural adjustment for refugees in the U.S.?

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to explore the extent to which communication technology use and mediated transnational communication practices that construct the *connected migrant* produce the connected refugee through a case study of refugees resettled in Phoenix, Arizona. In this chapter, first, I will provide the rationale for a grounded theory approach to the study of transnational mediated communication practice of resettled refugees. The following sections identify the study participants, the data collection method, challenges, and data analysis techniques.

Qualitative Research

I chose a qualitative research approach because it would best enable me to understand the rich and nuanced lifeworlds of resettled refugees. According to Christian and Carey (1989) it is the aim of the qualitative researcher to interpret the interpretations of a subject's experiences to understand the individual's lifeworlds. Qualitative research aims to find themes and patterns within the arbitrary dimensions of language by focusing on multiplicity, polysemy, and specificity that undergird the human experience and ways of being. Qualitative research allows for the study of local specificity and how context shapes the experiences of an individual's socially constructed reality. As refugees have experienced forced expulsion, displacement, resettlement, and the formation of diasporic transnational ties, a qualitative approach allows the subject to explain salient experiences and interpretations of these geo-political, familial, and individual transitions and transformations.

Grounded Theory

A grounded theory approach was most appropriate for this study because it allows for the development of middle range theoretical frameworks from the data (Charmaz, 2000). This case study of resettled refugees' technology use is informed by context-bound local experiences that interplay with global influences. Thus, a matrix of factors impact the transnational communication practices and intercultural adjustment experiences of resettle refugees. Developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to discover substantive theory that would fit the data and would work in the real world, grounded theory as a method aims to integrate the strengths inherent in quantitative methods with qualitative approaches (Walker & Myrick, 2006). Grounded theory moves from theory to theory. First by using sensitizing concepts to sample data theoretically, grounded theory then engages in a constant comparative method to ensure that all the data fit within the concepts and categories. Grounded theory develops theories that explains the data. The constant comparative method provides a systematic analysis of data. Charmaz offers a constructivist grounded theory that places emphasis on "views, values, beliefs, feelings, assumptions, and ideologies of individuals" who experience diverse local worlds and multiple realities (Creswell, 2005, p. 402). Grounded theory's relevance derives from its offering analytic explanations of actual problems and basic processes (Charmaz, 2000). To understand and therefore theorize about how refugees experience resettlement within the technocene era to produce the *connected migrant*, a grounded theory approach is necessary.

Participants

This study utilized critical case and theory-based sampling strategies. Critical case sampling allows logical generalization and maximum application of information to other cases; and theory-based sampling uses theoretical constructs to guide sampling to elaborate on and examine theory (Creswell, 2007). Utilizing theoretical constructs of diaspora and transnationalism and using the case of refugees resettled in Phoenix, Arizona to generalize about the transnational communication practices of refugees resettled in America, the study sampled refugees resettled in the metro-Phoenix area, Arizona. The study participants had to have been admitted into the country as a refugee, were 18 years of age or older, used information communication technology such as a computer or smart phone, and maintained transnational communication with family and friends abroad. Twenty-nine participants were recruited. The number of participants by country of origin are the following: 1 Afghanistan, 1 Burundi, 1 Congo, 1 Cuban, 1 Honduras, 8 Iraq, 1 Somalia, and 15 Syria.

Recruitment. Participants were recruited through three primary means. First, the executive director of the non-profit PC's for Refugees gave me access to Syrian refugee contacts. These contacts were refugees who had either received a computer/laptop from the non-profit or had sent their children to free computer classes offered by the non-profit. Second, participants were recruited from the Maricopa Community College system (Glendale Community College, Phoenix Community College, and Mesa Community College) as many refugees take English language classes through the community colleges. Within the community college system, I posted flyers and sent out emails to listservs that serve English as a Second Language (ESL) students that I was given access

to from the registrar. Additionally, I recruited participants by presenting my research study in ESL classes at Phoenix College and Glendale Community College. Third, the interpreter employed during this study, also a refugee, reached into her network to recruit refugees from individuals in her apartment complex. The interpreter reached out to potential Syrian participants through Whatsapp or through chance encounters in her apartment complex. The interpreter was given the recruitment flyer and we discussed how she should answer any questions asked by potential participants. Appendix A provides the recruitment flyer that was disseminate into recruitment sites.

Funding. There are two primary funding sources for this dissertation from Arizona State University Hugh Downs School of Human Communication: the Graduate Student Summer Research Grant and the Transformation Project Initiative. The funding received from these two sources were used to purchase Amazon gift cards, hire and pay the interpreter, and pay for transcription services. Refugees were offered a $25 Amazon gift certificate for participating in the interview. The interpreter was paid $15/hour. Transcriptions services ranged from $0.72-$0.90 per minute. Any amount that was not covered by the Graduate Student Grant or the Transformation Project was supplemented by my own income.

Interview Site. Interviews were held in the participant's home or on one of the following campuses: Arizona State University-Tempe, Mesa Community College, Phoenix College, Glendale Community College, and Grand Canyon University. I was able to secure a private room through student affairs at Mesa Community College, a private room through the Center for Learning at Glendale Community College, a private room in the library at Arizona State University, and a private room at the student union at

Grand Canyon University. There were four interviews that were conducted outdoors on picnic benches at Glendale Community College and Phoenix College in order to accommodate the participants' availability after the administrative offices were closed. However, efforts were made to maintain the privacy of the interviewee. Interviews done at participants' homes were often done with spouses, children, and other family members present.

During these at-home interviews, the presence of other family members meant that at times multiple members would share their experiences. Fourteen of the interviews were conducted in participants' homes, however only eight of those interviews were group interviews. Refugee researchers in New Zealand have reported similar data collection experiences as the interview location impacts the interview process (Andrade & Doolin, 2016). While the presence of multiple individuals/family members in group interviews may influence participants' responses to interview questions, data may also be richer as those in the group discuss their different answers to the questions. For instance, in cases where men claimed to be too busy to maintain transnational communication with family and friends, their wife would often interject that it was in fact their role to maintain family communication. In a one-on-one interview, that data would be lost and what would be reported is a lack of contact. Additionally. at-home interviews provide the researcher with an insider view of the participant's home-life. While this also means that participants may become more easily distracted than they would in a lab setting, this setting provided a more casual atmosphere to the interview which allowed participants to open up and share stories. Finally, it may be considered culturally inappropriate to meet with a married individual alone. Therefore, in some cases interviewing in the family

setting was more culturally appropriate and allowed the participant to feel at ease participating. All interviews were face-to-face, received signed consent, and audio recorded.

Data Collection

The primary mode of data collection was one-on-one or group (family) interviews. However, it should be noted that knowledge of the refugee experience was informed by volunteering at the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Welcome to America Project (WTAP), and serving as mentor for a refugee family. From August to December 2017, I worked with other volunteers to teach the IRC citizenship classes. Refugees who have been in the U.S. for 5 years are eligible to apply for citizenship and therefore many take classes to learn about governance, history, and practice English. Classes were held on Saturdays from 9am-12pm in Glendale, Arizona. During classes, I would often have informal conversations with attendees about resettlement, technology use, and intercultural adjustment. Once the IRC lost funding for the classes, I transitioned into volunteering for WTAP, a non-profit that provides refugees with furniture, décor, and functional items like cooking ware and bathroom toiletries. WTAP gathers large amounts of volunteers (often 20-35 people) who drive to 4-5 refugee's homes on Saturday or Sunday to deliver the aforementioned items. Volunteers would arrive and begin placing furniture in the home, cleaning and arranging kitchens and bedrooms, and putting up décor. After the volunteers placed the items in the home, refugees would often share their story of the conditions that produced displacement, the experience of displacement, and resettlement experience. Finally, from July to November 2018, I had the honor of serving as a mentor for a refugee family. Mentors help refugee families

experience and navigate American culture norms and institutional systems they may not be familiar with such as the Department of Motor Vehicles to get a license. During this time period, I spent many Saturdays at the family's home or driving them to run errands while exchanging stories of our lives and experiences. These experiences were especially informative due to their informal nature where I was able to occupy a less "institutional" role than interviewer and instead was able to engage in more conversational exchanges.

Interview. Twenty-nine semi-structured interviews were conducted from August 2018 to January 2019. Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 120 minutes, with an average time of 45 minutes. Interviews are particularly useful to gain an understanding of how people conceptualize their lifeworld and construe their actions. To understand a subject's lifeworld, or the lived world of the subject, I asked questions that allowed the subject to reflect on their experiences to generate meaning of social situations. As refugees are a sensitive population, one-on-one interviews have the potential to allow an opening up of individual stories and accounts that may be difficult to discuss in a focus group setting. According to Lindlof and Taylor (2011), interviews enable people to give accounts, including their justifications and excuses, of social conduct which shows the cultural logic of a group. Therefore, interviewing is an appropriate form of inquiry when trying to understand the experiences, worldviews, and to gather information that cannot be observed by other means. Through the interview process, I elicited stories, accounts, and explanations to understand experiences, worldviews, intentions, processes, and outcomes. Appendix B provides the interview guide for the semi-structured interview with participants.

Interpreter & Limited English Proficiency. As all participants interviewed were immigrants, an Arabic interpreter was necessary for 12 of the 29 interviews; 4 of the participants had arrived to the U.S. as children and predominantly grew up in the U.S., requiring no language support; the remaining 13 participants were ESL learners. The interpreter was trained to articulate only what the participant said and to try to minimize adding extra information unless it was necessary to give context. After each of the first 4 interviews, the interpreter and I met to reflect on the interview process so that I could provide feedback for the development of her interpretation skills. The presence of an interpreter provided for richer data as respondents were able to answer questions in their mother tongue with ease and command of language and nuance of expression. However, there were moments when respondents seemed to be speaking for a long time and the interpreter reported a very short response. Thus, interviews with the interpreter are both rich but also are one step removed from the respondent's answers.

In order to accommodate limited English proficiency speaker/ESL learners, participants were given time and space to answer at their own pace. Questions were broken down and re-framed for simplicity and respondents' answers were re-stated and verified for clarity of meaning and interpretation (Kvale, 1996).

Additionally, while trauma was not a focus of the study, many of the refugees had experienced trauma. During the interview process, if participants expressed discomfort discussing a memory or topic, participants were reassured that they did not need to continue, and I would engage in check-ins to ensure they were comfortable continuing with the interview. Moments when participants experienced an intense emotional reaction, time and space was given to process that emotion and, if deemed appropriate,

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follow up questions were asked to explore why a question like "What do you talk about with your friends back in Lebanon?" might elicit such a reaction.

Table 1. Participants & Interview Description

Gender (Includes solo and group interview participant)	Female	23
	Male	15
Age	18-29	8
	30-39	10
	40+	11
Interview Type	One-on-one	21
	Family/Group	8

Self-Reflection

Self-reflection is the process by which researchers note and reflect on their biases, assumptions, and how their understanding of the phenomenon under study is shaped over a prolonged engagement. After the first several interviews, I journaled about the experience and my thoughts in order to reflect on my emerging assumptions and interpretation. A significant factor in the interviewing experience was my own perceived foreignness. As an Indian-American woman, my participants verbalized many times that they felt they could relate to me as I was not read as American. Indian culture and norms were brought up frequently by participants as a way to bridge the distance between us. This perceived similarity of being non-White, non-American allowed some participants to open up about cultural differences between the homeland and host country that they might not otherwise for fear of being perceived as complaining about America. Additionally, having an interpreter who was Arab, came to the U.S. as a refugee, and wore a hijab created a familiarity and closeness with the Syrian participants that I would

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not be able to achieve on my own as a non-Muslim, non-Arab woman. However, ultimately, I am a child of immigrants and therefore identify with and embody certain American ideologies that inherently create a distance between me and my participants. Alternatively, that distance allows me to see some of the cultural logics that operate at the latent level that might otherwise be difficult to discern from an insider perspective.

Gender was another factor that influenced the interviews. I found that women were very open, expressive, and willing to meet with me without an escort present. However, there was a slightly different effect when speaking with men alone. The men were mostly young, in their 20's, which may have also influenced the interview. Older men, in their 30's and 40's, would only agree to meet in their homes with their families present.

Challenges

There were three challenges I experienced while interviewing participants: impression management, family (group) interviews, and disclosure risk. Impression management is concerned with the perception others have about a person, object, or event (Goffman, 1967). Many of the Syrian refugees, who were the most recent immigrants having arrived 2016 onward, were very concerned with representing Syrians as developed, specifically not backward, people. Some questions that did not have value judgements embedded within them elicited responses aimed at managing perceptions of Syrians as similar to Americans. Take the following exchange, for example:

> *Interviewer: Let's say you arrived in America today, what do you wish you knew*
>
> *technology-wise that would help you navigate adjusting to American life?*

Participant: Nothing. Where I came from it's not too bad. We have good

technology there, so when we came here it's not big difference. We already know

everything from Jordan and Syria, it's not very bad. And when we came here it's

a little bit different like online stuff you depend on online and internet in your life

but we already know how to use them so that was not that big of a challenge for

us.

For me, this question stemmed from my own experiences traveling abroad in Europe and

Asia. It was often through interactions with locals or savvy travelers that I would learn of

applications that would help navigate transportation, gain access to resources, or learning

of local events. However, with some participants, this question was experienced as a

positioning of Syria as the backward "other." Another theme that emerged during

interviews was some Syrian participants insisted that there were no cultural differences

between America and Syria. For example:

Participant: No that. Everything is fine with me. I didn't feel there is a difference

between my culture and the American culture. Maybe some people from my

country feel there is some differences between two countries but for me I don't

know why I didn't find anything differences between the two countries. I don't

know.

I believe these denials come from a desire to represent Syrian refugees as a "good fit" for

America. Often participants who denied any existing cultural difference were women

who wore hijab. Most of these responses came from one-on-one interviews I held with

Syrian women. Arguably, this may have also been an attempt at closing any perceived

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cultural distance between the participant and myself. Syrian men tended to engage the question differently.

Participant: It is too much different.

Interviewer: could you give me like 2 to 3 examples

Participant: So its basically culture, religion, freedom. Here is more freedom.
Family interviews were another challenge that required navigating. As many of the participants worked multiple jobs, went to school, and had young children, the only time they could interview was in the evening at their home. Therefore, all interviews in participants' homes included at least their spouse and, in some instances, children and other family members. These interviews required moving from one-on-one interviews to group interviews where my interpreter would report on interactions between family member and responses by multiple members. These interviews allowed for rich data as the family environment reduced the formality of the interview process. However, this required we move from hearing one participant's voice to sometimes hearing multiple responses or switching between participants.

Finally, disclosure risk was a minimal but significance presence in a few of the interviews. As refugees experience an intense vetting process before being accepted for resettlement in the U.S., many become sensitive to how disclosure could affect their experience with settlement and citizenship. When participants expressed concern over disclosing information, I told them that it is okay for them to not answer questions while assuring them that all data would be anonymized and any identifiers would be kept confidential.

Data Analysis

     Coding. After all interviews were fully transcribed, transcripts were uploaded into Atlas ti for first cycle coding. Keeping with grounded theory, data was first open coded line by line for the first 10 interviews. After the initial 10 interviews generated the majority of the codes, I moved into simultaneous open and focused coding, which allowed for initial categories to emerge. During this process, I employed analytic memo writing to track the emergence of themes and contradiction within codes. Analytic memos allow researchers to stay involved in the analysis moving from codes to abstractions while building theoretical categories (Charmaz, 2006, p. 72). Through the constant comparative method, codes were placed into the following categories: technology affordances and uses, transnational communication, barriers to communication, community, experience of displacement, initial resettlement experience, acculturation and adaptation, demographic information, journey to America, network of connections, and contact frequency.

     Thematic Analysis. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (themes) within qualitative data. According to Clarke and Braun (2017), "The aim of TA is not simply to summarize the data content, but to identify, and interpret, key, but not necessarily all, features of the data, guided by the research question" (p. 297). Codes are the building blocks for generating themes. Themes that emerge may be at the manifest or latent level. Manifest-level themes may serve as the foundation work to develop high-level theoretical constructs. Latent-level themes may be used to gain a deeper understanding of the nature or experience of everyday life, or phenomenology (Saldana, 2016). Theming the data may take on the form of adding

verbs to codes, such as adding "is" or "means" after the code. "Themeing may allow you to draw out a code's truncated essence by elaborating on its meanings" (p. 231).

Theoretical Constructs. Theoretical constructs, according to Saldana (2016), are a way of clustering sets of related themes and labeling each cluster with a thematic category. As grounded theory is interested in developing substantive theory, the goal of this study is to inductively develop theoretical constructs through a core or central category, which explains what the research is about. To create theoretical constructs, as a culminating step theoretical coding will be utilized to develop an umbrella concept that covers and accounts for all the codes and categories. Theoretical codes are not the "theory itself, but an abstraction that models the integration" (Glaser, 2005, p. 17). "It is a keyword or key phrase that triggers a discussion of the theory itself" (Saldana, 2016, p. 250).

Theoretical constructs can be used to construct an operational model diagram to explain the interrelated nature of the code and themes. Operational maps are useful for disentangling complex and voluminous data into coherent and intelligible forms. Operational maps may be a useful tool to visualize and analyze theoretical constructs. The aim of this research project is to unpack and expand on the concept of the *connected migrant* to understand the connected refugee.

CHAPTER 4

SEPARATED CONNECTION: TRANSNATIONAL BELONGING

This chapter presents themes in participants' responses related to transnational communication. First, I give the context of transnational communication for resettled refugees by tracing the migratory paths from displacement to resettlement for the participants and the global networks they maintain. Then, I look at the ways in which refugees articulate the value and function of transnational communication with their kindship networks. The aim of this chapter is to explore transnational belonging or the "there" of being "here and there" in migrant belonging literature.

RQ1: In what ways do refugees communicate with family and friends abroad?

Becoming a resettled refugee necessarily produces a transnational network. From fleeing one's home to entering a refugee camp or living in a bordering transit country to ultimately being resettled, refugees cross multiple borders. Third country resettlement is considered a durable solution for displacement. As this dissertation focuses on resettled refugees in Phoenix, Arizona and their diasporic transnational network ties, the following section answers the descriptive research question of refugee transnational communication practices by tracing migratory paths, transnational networks, and communication with family and friends abroad. Refugees transnational networks are produced, maintained, and influenced by the following ways: (1) migratory paths from displacement to resettlement, (2) communication frequency, and (3) multi-platform web application use for connectivity. The data show that migratory paths are key in producing transnational networks. Exit strategies to bordering countries create two of the hubs in the network (homeland and transit country), while self, family, and friend resettlement further

expands the network. Network strength is maintained by daily and/or weekly communication via multi-modal, multi-platform communication strategies. ICT use by refugees produces transnational connectivity which has the potential to produce mobility and multi-belonging or, what Diminescu (2008) calls, a "culture of bonds" (p. 567). The following sections expands on these findings.

Producing Transnational Networks

> Participant: I left Iraq in 2006, then I went to Syria. I stayed there in Syria six years. I'm waiting for the visa to come to America. After years, Syria, they have some bad things there, so I just traveled to Jordan to meet them, I don't what they call it too, they're a group of Americans meet me to give me the visa.
>
> *Interviewer: UN?*
>
> Participant: Yes, the UN. I already have my file in the UN. I need the last step to come to America. Somebody meets me, this is the last step, then after that they give me the visa. I went to Jordan. I lived in Jordan for six months. After that, I come to America. The total, I think, seven years, just waiting for my visa to come here. It was a long time, but I did it.
>
> <div align="center">-Female, 30s</div>

As exemplified above, during the displacement process it is common for refugees to migrate to bordering countries to escape the conflict in their home country. It is often from these transit countries that refugees meet with U.N. workers to then be resettled elsewhere. These migratory paths to resettlement produce transitional social networks as refugees meet both other displaced migrants and local citizens in the transit country creating bonds that help with acquiring resources and building a sense of community. As

is evident in the excerpt above, refugees may spend years in a transit country or refugee camp before ultimately being resettled. Additionally, refugees may cross multiple borders before resettlement. An exception to this is when individuals assist the U.S. government and need to be resettled because they are deemed traitors. A handful of Iraqis that worked with the U.S. government after the fall of Saddam Hussein were resettled directly to the U.S. without crossing into a transit country. The migratory paths represented in the image below show the multiple exit strategies out of conflict zones to resettlement. As nearly half of the participants (15 of 29) were Syrian refugees, the image below has a strong representation of exit strategies out of Syria to the nearby countries of Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon. Producing a dense network of connectivity between the U.S., Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, and Syria. The next largest representation of participants were Iraqi refugees (8 of 29), many of whom fled to Turkey, Syria, or were directly settled in the U.S. Other participants represented were displaced from Afghanistan, Burundi, Somalia, Congo, Honduras, and Cuba.

Figure 1: Displacement to Resettlement Migratory Paths
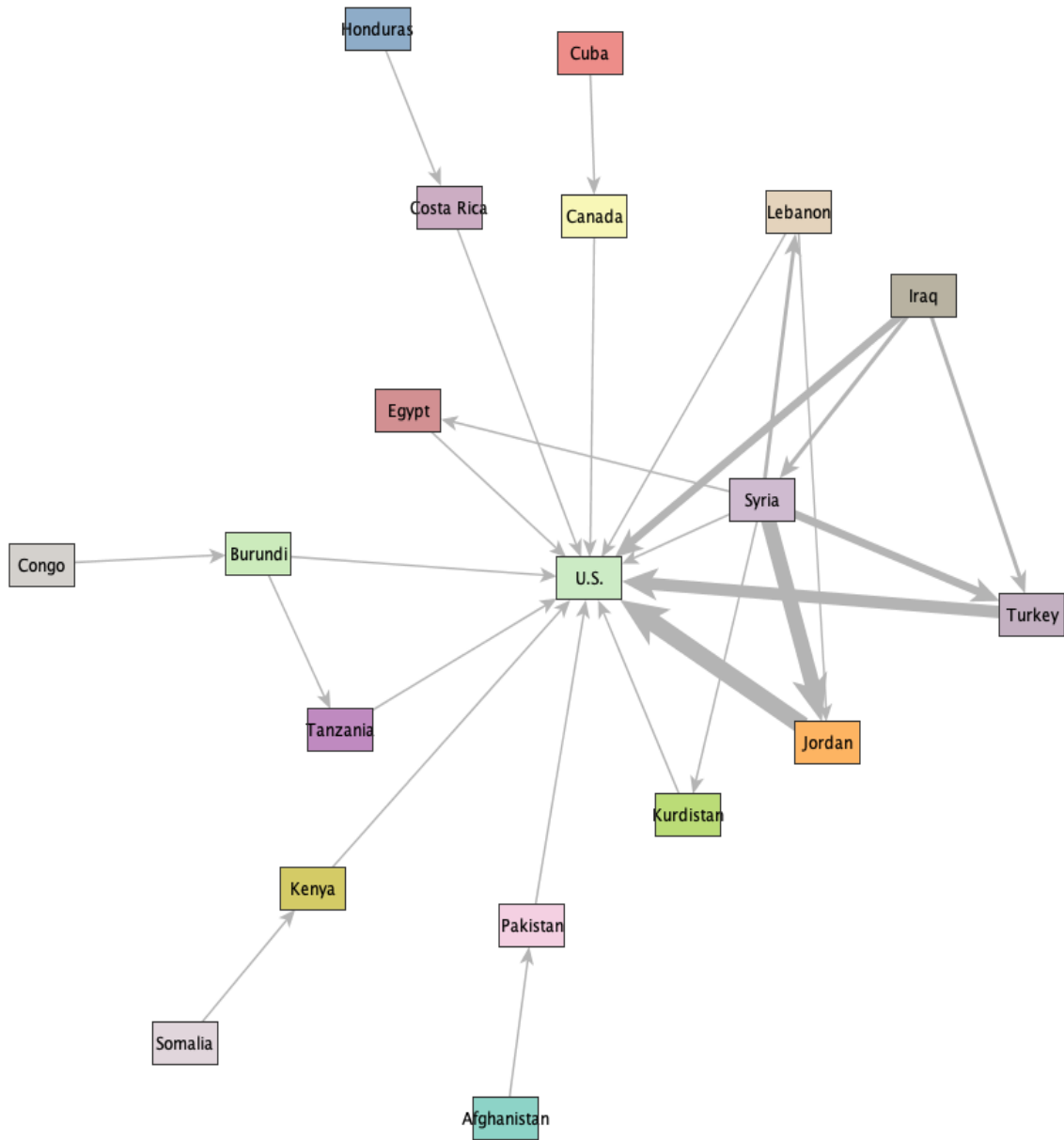
Most participants (23 of 29) passed through only one transit country before being resettled. Two participants had to pass through two transit countries before resettlement. Four participants were settled directly to the U.S. Another feature that should be noted is the flows of migrants from one conflict zone to another conflict zone. As demonstrated in the excerpt above, refugees who flee to a neighboring country may only find temporary reprieve if that country is also a conflict zone. For Iraqis who fled to Syria, the Syrian war soon became a secondary displacement. Similarly, conflict in the Congo has driven Congolese to Burundi refugee camps where they wait to be resettled, however conflict in Burundi have driven Burundians to refugee camps in Tanzania. While refugees must leave their homeland for fear of immediate danger, they may also be running toward a conflict zone.

These migratory paths from the homeland outward to bordering countries and the social ties that are created during the displacement to resettlement process produce the global networks that become resettled refugees' diasporic transnational communities. These social ties become part of a 'social continuum' that have the potential to facilitate transitions and minimize discontinuities and to produce social capital for refugees both in the U.S. and abroad. Image 2 depicts the locations of transnational communication networks resettled refugees maintain.

Figure 2: Image of Global Communication Network
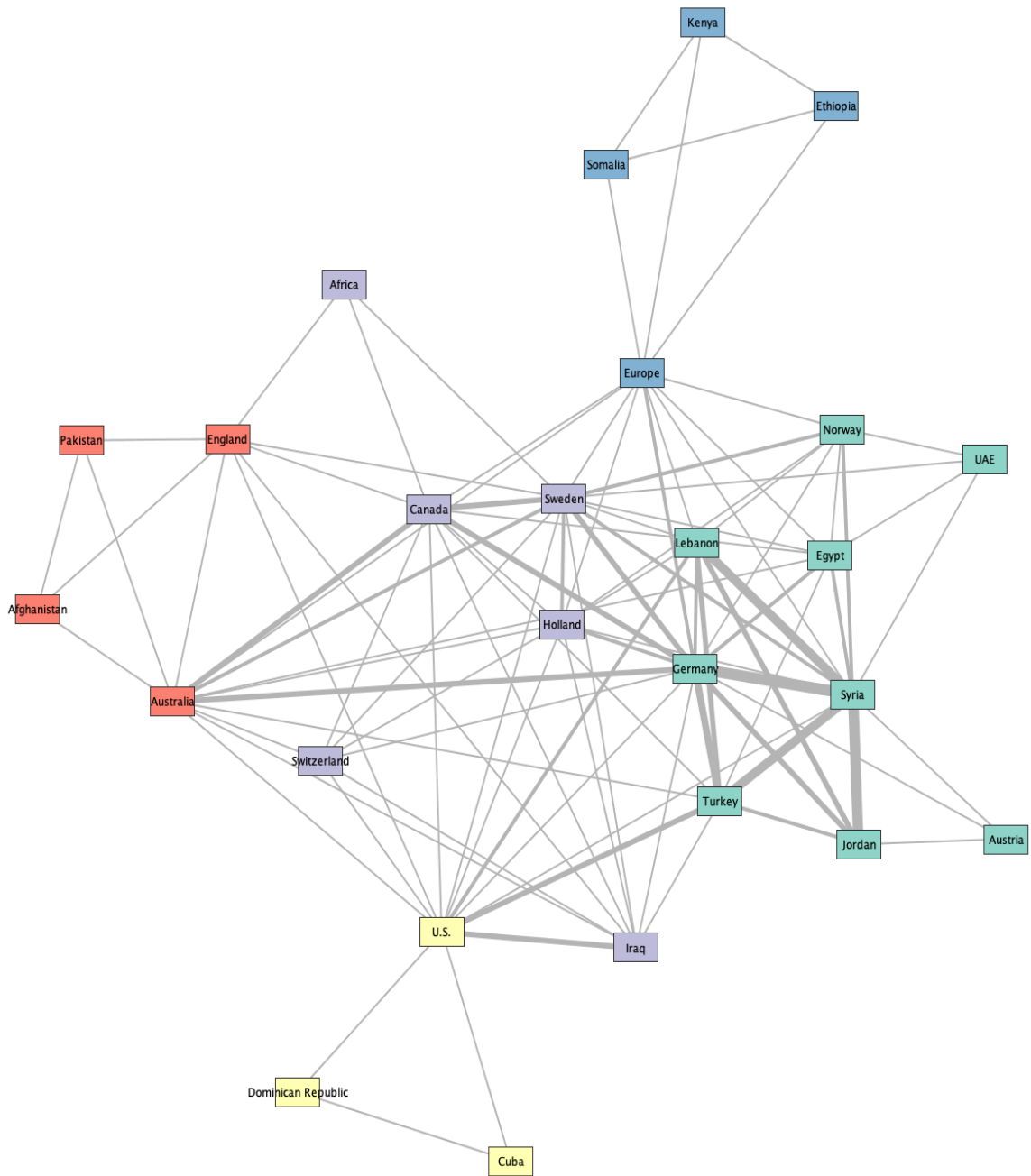
In response to the question "where are the family and friends you keep in touch with," participants identified all major countries (and sometimes continents) where those in their kinship network had either been displaced to or resettled who they regularly

maintained contact. Responses ranged from one country to eight countries. On average participants' kinship networks consisted of maintaining communication with family or friends in three countries ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 1.77$). In Image 2 above, network clusters are indicated by the color of the node, while the width of the link indicates the co-occurrence of countries that were identified by participants. Therefore, several participants identified their kinship network including contacts in Syria, Germany, Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon. Transnational networks for resettled refugees consist of the homeland, countries bordering the homeland, and resettlement countries. These networks produce the diasporic communities that later may become an important source of political and nation-building discourses that often serve to connect and organize diasporas. These "culture of bonds" produced and maintained by ICTs have the potential to produce future mobility and what Diminescu (2008) terms relational settlement. Rather than integration or assimilation in the resettlement country, refugees can maintain their sense of identification and affiliation to multiple nation-states.

      Strategies of Connectivity. To maintain and strengthen these bonds, refugees use multiple platforms to produce connectivity in their transnational network. Studies suggest that connectivity is strengthened by the use of multiple social media platforms as the affordances of each platform may provide unique content or ways of engaging to produce connection (Haythornthwaite, 2011; Van Dijk, 2013; Bucher & Helmond, 2017). For instance, Facebook may allow users to post photos, general life updates, and share articles or content to large groups of people whereas Whatsapp may allow users to create smaller or more private groups where users may send geo-location specific content. While Facebook has reaction buttons (like, love, haha, wow, sad, and angry), Whatsapp

allows users to copy content and respond to sections of a conversation that create non-linear discussions and engagement with content. Rather than technology simply connecting individuals, users engage in an ecosystem of connective media which creates a dynamic infrastructure of connectivity that influences larger cultural and communicative practices (Van Dijck, 2013). As demonstrated in Graph 1, multimodal communication practices (textual, aural, and visual) become part of a strategy to produce connectivity.

Table 2: Social Media Platforms
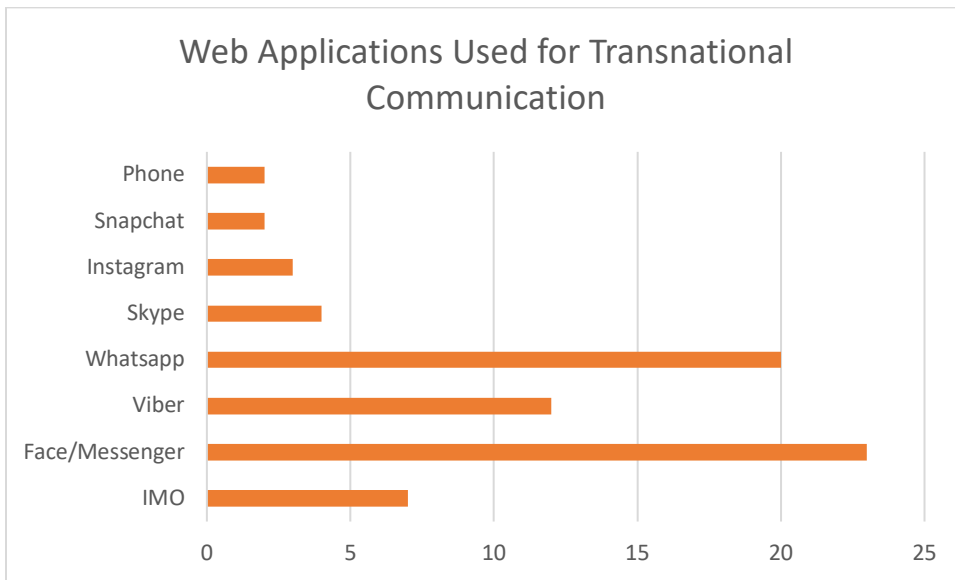
In responses to the question "what applications do you use to keep in touch with them (family and friends) and why?" participants identified using two to three different applications ($M = 2.70$, $SD = .91$). Whatsapp, Viber, and Facebook Messenger were identified as the most common applications used by participants. Participants identified network effects, affordances, and safety as primary rationales for using particular applications in maintaining transnational connections. For instance, in a one-on-one

interview, a male participant in his 20's identified technological affordances and network effects as the primary rationale for using particular applications:

Participant**:** Oh, the phones. I use Facebook, Messenger, to talk to them because you don't have to pay or something. Before I used to call my sister, she's in Turkey. Before we have to put something to call them.

Interviewer: The calling card?

Participant**:** Yes, but now it's just using Messenger or Facebook.

Interviewer: Are there any other apps that you use?

Participant**:** Yes, like WhatsApp or Viber.

Interviewer: Do you have a reason that these are the main apps that you use? You said free?

Participant**:** Yes, free and it's like you can open the video camera, video call. Also, it's fast and everybody use it.

Interviewer: Everyone uses it?

Participant: Some people they only use Snapchat and there are others like video camera, WhatsApp doesn't have a video camera and Viber does but it depends on people that most they follow. The most people are using Facebook or Messenger.

Here we can see the participant values the camera function, free international calling, and the degree to which others in their network use the application. The quality "fast" and the type of interaction "video camera" qualify the value of the application not just for the participant but others in his/her network. Other participants mentioned some applications are better because they "don't need strong internet connection," are "free," "international," and "easy" to learn. Indeed, another male participant in his 30's said he

used Whatsapp, Messenger, and IMO because they were "famous" applications indicating they were commonly used by his transnational network. However, as young man in his 20's bemoaned:

> All the world is on that now, you know: Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook. But you have the same friends on Snapchat, on Instagram and Facebook. So when you want to post something you post it 3 times and we see the stuff 3 times, its boring.

Individuals may experience these network effects differently. They may not perceive the technological affordances, or may not be leveraging the affordances to provide new and interesting content.

Similarly, for a female in her 40's, safety was one of the most important features of using particular applications. In the excerpt below, safety and network effects are emphasized as primary rationale for using Viber:

> Participant: When I came to United States in 2011, there is no Viber, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, only in your Messenger. I was every Saturday, Sunday open camera talk to them by Messenger or Skype. In 2011 in September, it was the first communication the first technology, it was Viber. I get a smartphone, my family, they send me from Iraq and I start to call them by this option. This is called Viber. American they don't know about that; only refugees they know, Latin America they don't know; even Europe, only Middle East. This is called Viber. Viber you can call by internet and I call every day my family. This is my mom everyday call me in the morning, did you see my mom?

I don't have Face (FaceTime) because I want to be safe. My husband get killed and I have problem. I want to be in safe and UN told me, "Take care of yourself." I want to be only Viber, WhatsApp.

Interviewer: It's safer?

Participant: Yes. Facebook, anybody can know you where you are. People, they can contact or they know information about you.

Interviewer: Viber is safer, that's actually really good to know.

Participant: Viber very safe. Not anybody can know if he doesn't have your number, he can't know where you are, but Tango, Instagram or Twitter they can search and find you.

Interviewer: Yes, it has a geo-location, Twitter. Yes, you're right. So you're not on those because it's dangerous.

Viber is identified as being specific to the Middle Eastern communication network which gives the platform more significance for Arab users. The participant also touts Viber's privacy feature, which requires users to have each other's phone number before communicating on the platform, as providing a sense of safety. Additionally, the features of geolocation and geo-tagging on various social media platforms becomes a safety concern. It is specifically Viber's lack of geolocation capacity that is seen as a positive feature of the app. These safety features are especially important for refugees who continue to be in danger as they are still being pursued by extremist or fascists groups in the homeland, even though they have been resettled in America. However, even Viber for all its safety features is suspect. The same female participant who touted the safety features of Viber also expressed concern about her phone being tapped:

Participant: Sometimes we are very careful because Viber, they control from the big company of Viber. Israel created this technology. Sometimes we are very, very careful, we use in-code. You know what's that? We use like 'Shᵊfra' they call in English is like code. We use code. Like in Aramaic, I say word like-- How I will tell you? Because it's secret. Like if I say in Arabic, "Aysha lwnk" that's mean 'how are you?' That's means 'don't talk' Okay?

The majority of participants, with the exception of the three participants from African nations, expressed awareness and concern over phone tapping. As corporations own social media applications and aggregate data for both human research and surveillance, in the context of forced migration and conflict, even popular applications are treated with suspicion. However, which applications are considered safe are based on word-of-mouth rumors. As a male participant in his 50's said:

I will not use IMO, just whatsapp, messenger, Instagram. Viber, a little. Before when I was in Turkey I was focusing on Viber because Viber we heard that the government cannot listen what you're speaking. Now no one in Syria, I have a friend still in Syria, if I need to speak with him I speak with him on Viber. Viber and Skype. Because the government cannot know or hear what you're speaking.

Talking in code or even simply acknowledging that companies or government are listening to phone conversations is treated as a given fact that must be navigated. However, which applications are used for surveillance is unclear and it seems participants operate under the belief that they are managing the surveillance. I will further discuss the impact of the suspicion of surveillance on transnational communication later in this chapter.

Finally, while some applications share similar features, the functionality of certain features may be stronger in one app than another. This serves as rationale for the use of multiple platforms when maintaining transnational communication as demonstrated in the interview with a female in her 30's:

Interviewer: So how do you keep in touch with them? Calling? Messenger?

Participant: Facebook messenger, IMO…

Interviewer: Whatsapp or anything?

Participant: So Whatsapp only writing messages

Interviewer: Can I ask why? Is the video quality better in one or the other?

Participant: Yeah, they are way stronger for individual calling and voice calling.

They are better than Whatsapp

By using multiple platforms, resettled refugees are able to maintain more complex forms of connectivity to produce a sense of being together. Indeed, as represented in the graph below, the majority of participants reported speaking with family and/or friends on either a daily basis or at least once a week.

Table 3: Frequency of Transnational Communication

Frequency of Contact

	Daily	Frequent (every week to every other week)	Infrequent
Number of Participants	13	13	4
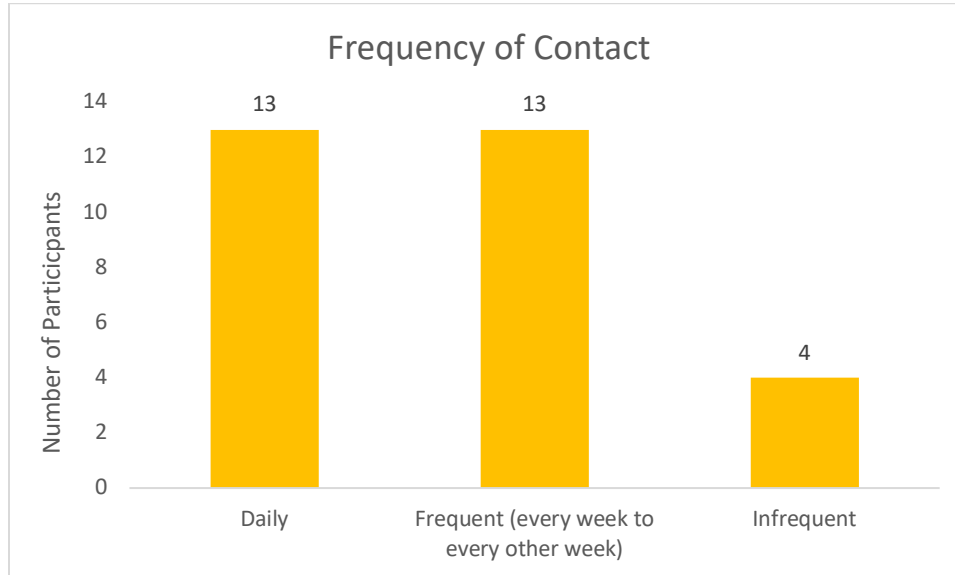
The sense of being together while being physically apart, or co-presence, is facilitated through these multi-platformed, daily communication practices. Co-presence is produced through ICTs as users engage in face-to-face activity while being apart. However, as noted in the graph above, not everyone can engage in these daily or even frequent communication practices. Those who did not engage on a regular basis were either younger, in their early 20's, having arrived to the U.S. as a child with a weaker sense of network ties, or were older and had multiple jobs making communication difficult. However, even for those who were too busy to maintain regular contact, oftentimes their spouse or other family member would serve as a primary communication link to the transnational network. Therefore, being completely cut off from the network was not found in any of the interviews. Rather, being a latent tie, such as youth who would later engage the network, or weak tie, not engaging the network but having a spouse or parent who has strong ties in the network, were common features of the infrequent contact participants.

In summary, resettled refugees communicate in a transnational network consisting of the homeland, transit countries, and the resettlement countries of individuals in their network. On average, refugees' networks consist of three countries, but can be as few as one and as many as eight countries. Refugees maintain contact using multiple platforms with Facebook Messenger, Whatsapp, and Viber as the most commonly used applications. Technological affordances, network effects, and safety were identified as key factors in deciding which platforms to use to maintain transnational contact. Finally, refugees maintained frequent to daily contact with family and friends abroad. Those who were infrequent communicators in the network still had family members (mothers, siblings, or spouses) who were strong links in the network. Through ICT use, refugees maintain connectivity to their network for current or future needs. These network ties produce a transnational network within a diasporic network that provide refugees with potential social capital and resources. The following research question seeks to understand the content of these communication practices.

RQ2:   What do transnational communication practices with family and friends do for refugees?

Understanding the transnational networks, connectivity platforms, and frequency of refugee transnational communication provides us with the "how" of refugee transnational communication practices. This research question seeks to understand the "what" of refugee transnational communication practices, or to understand what refugees talk about with those in their network and the impact of those communication practices. The data show that refugee transnational communication practices predominantly

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function to maintain the health of the network. Refugees are able to maintain the health of their network in three main ways: (1) by engaging in frequent communication that serves to bypass physical distance and cultural difference, (2) by giving and receiving emotional support, and (3) by managing content flow to and from the network for self and other's emotional well-being. As resettled refugees have endured physical and mental trauma, and those in their network have likely also been traumatized by displacement, these communication practices have both short-term and long-term implications for the cultural, social, emotional, and financial health of the network. Additionally, these diasporic transnational ties are especially important for producing transnational mutli-belonging. The following section expands on these finding.

Communication in Transnational Networks: Building and Maintaining the Health of the Network

A central focus of this dissertation is to understand the shape and impact of transnational communication on resettled refugees in relation to the concept of the *connected migrant*. To better understand mobility, connectivity, and belonging in the transnational context, participants were asked to share what conversations they had with family and the impact of those conversations. In my interviews with the participants, three salient themes emerged: (1) bypassing distance and difference, (2) maintaining and building the health of the network, and (3) managing transnational tension.

Bypassing distance and difference. ICTs allow refugees to collapse the physical distance virtually. Daily or frequent communication serves to keep long distant family members up-to-date on daily events and family and local community well-being. Communicating the banality of the everyday becomes an important feature in producing

connection. Knowing what one another ate for dinner or what chores one needs to do produces a feeling of togetherness. Additionally, experiencing the banal with one another through the video chat feature of these various social media applications helps participants minimize the knowledge gap of cultural differences experienced by refugees in America. New experiences and exposure to new cultural logics have the potential to change individuals significantly. The cumulative effect of being exposed to and learning new ways of being have the potential to alienate individuals from their transnational network. However, through video chatting and sending photos in real time, migrants broadly and refugees specifically can lessen these cultural gaps. Through ICT use, refugees are able to share new experiences with those in their transnational network. Along with being together in time, they can also experience new and unique phenomena together. Bypassing distance and difference requires (1) communicating the "right now," (2) communication that produces co-presence, and (3) continuity of contact.

  The right now. Many participants communicated the importance of knowing about everyday life and the "right now." During a one-on-one interview, a female participant in her 50's emphasized that communicating about the everyday or "daily life talk" produced a feeling of togetherness:

> Interpreter: So it's basically like daily life things, like what you cooked today, what are you doing right now, where, her mom asks her, is your husband and your kids. And her mother also tells her that if there is a problem with one of her siblings she tell her like that and that happened with your sister or brother. So basically like daily life talk.

So she's saying that when I keep in contact and we keep in touch on a daily basis it makes me feel like we are still living together. Like before night I close the phone and in the morning I open the phone and call them. It's like constantly, we're like living together. We know everything from time to time. So it really has helped me talking always to them.

An important feature of knowing about the "right now" is that it is not about narrativizing the recent past or reflecting on events of the day. This experience is about being in time, even if not in space, together; to know "everything from time to time." Especially for women whose primary domain is the household, these communicative practices provide a continuity of experience in relating to and connecting with family members. The phone serves as a portal of connection that one simply needs to open and close throughout the day to create togetherness.

Similarly, a 20-year-old female participant, reflecting on her transnational communication practices with her family, stated, "It's really mostly like, "How are you doing?" They mostly tell me how they're feeling and they're always asking me, "Are you done with school? How's school?" It's mostly getting to know how are you doing and feel like right now." Sharing with one another their emotional status "right now" can be seen as a strategy of creating a shared virtual emotional space for being together at the same time.

Other participants emphasized the banality of the conversations focusing on day-to-day happenings such as cooking, school, and work. These communication practices serve to create a sense of being together in real time and experiencing one another's banal thoughts and feelings as you would if physically present with your family or friends.

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Co-Presence. Participants emphasized the value of being and doing together in real time with family to show what their life is like in America. Showing what life is like in America, through audio-video technology, helps to reduce the experiential differences between refugees and their network. In a one-on-one interview, a female participant in her 40's shared about her experiences of day-to-day interaction with her family abroad:

Participant: Yes, everything they know about me. I take picture, sometimes I'm asleep, I leave this because this has Viber too, you can download. I leave this open. My mom when she called me, I can open camera and tell her, "Mom, I am cooking, I'm cleaning," I put (face) mask and she see me. My nephew and niece in Baghdad, they want to see me, I want to see them when they are sleep. This is Viber I told you, miss, in advance, it's gift from God, you can touch with people all the day, they know what are you doing, where are you going.

Sometimes I'm in Macy's or a restaurant, I open, I show them "Look. America. Look, I am at restaurant. Look. I am eating this. Did you see this food?" "Mom, I went to outlet, they have big Christmas tree," I opened to my mom camera. I said, "Mom, look." I show her, and she said, "Oh." and she called my brother. It's like the same time. Events, we share, the events, like they are here in the United States.

Sometimes my family too. My mom's sick, my mom washing the clothes, she put the phone and she talk, and I see when my family they have a new house, they show me, they share with me, yes miss. Life is changed and technology is very important.

Refugees are able to share new experiences with their family abroad. Doing together and sharing daily experiences become part of the regular practice of building togetherness that bypasses growing differences. For example, the U.S. way of celebrating Christmas and other national holidays can be shared with and consumed by those in the network. These new practices and cultural norms become communal knowledge. The resettled refugee becomes an important node for knowledge consumption, distillation, and dissemination to the network. In another interview, emphasis is put on sharing the daily, banal experiences to maintain the family bond. The banal interactions and shared experience are part of maintaining the bonding ties that produce social continuity in the relationship, as exemplified below. In a family interview, the wife in her 40's expressed the importance of engaging in the same activity at the same time:

> Interpreter: Majorly making sure that everything is doing good and everyone is in good health and she said we talk facetime so maybe they're cooking and I'm cooking too. So, they see me at the same time.

In the excerpts above, daily communication is enhanced by the video capability of ICTs. Rather than just telling, participants can show or, more importantly, *do* together. Sharing events and experiences in real time creates a sense of being together. More importantly, cultural differences become shared experiences. In this way, the new context of life in the U.S. does not change refugees' ways of being and knowing such that they become isolated from their family or their network. Instead these experiences are shared, and the network's knowledge is shaped and changed concurrently. Missing in space together does not mean missing in time together. This continuity of knowing each other and changing together maintains and strengthens transnational bonds.

However, while sharing information can expand the network's knowledge, sometimes cultural differences and lived experiences may be difficult to articulate to the those in the network. As a couple shared, there are some knowledge gaps that might be hard to bridge for family abroad. As we sat in the couple's living room, sipping Turkish coffee, the couple in their 30's shared a funny anecdote:

> Interpreter: So it's just talking to them and knowing that everything is ok and going fine that is the best, that is enough to know about.
>
> *Interviewer: Do they understand your life here?*
>
> Interpreter: So he says when we talk with them, sometimes I talk to them about things where they're like "OMG are you serious, they are like such things happen there?" So like he suffering from back pain and his mom tells him like don't carry the gas…. Like you know how everything is electric here back home the stove is gas.
>
> *Interviewer: like a propane tank?*
>
> Interpreter: Yes, exactly. So she says don't carry that let someone else carry it for you. And he's like, What are you talking about mom like there is no such thing here everything is on electricity. And they're like "oh really?"

Here we can see something that is taken for granted in the U.S., having all appliances run on electricity with reliable service, is a novel concept for those living in places where propane gas tanks are still necessary for cooking on the stove. While these knowledge gaps of lived experiences may seem minor, they also have potential to shape how we imagine and relate to the lives of those in other nation-states. If we cannot conceive of

others' lived experience, it may be difficult to serve as a resource for advice or emotional support.

Continuity of Contact. Another feature of transnational communicative practices relies on the use of multiple platforms to engage in constant, daily contact. While audio and/or video communication may not always be available due to work or time constraints, quick notes to one another over social media can maintain or even strengthen the connection in the network. During an interview with a male participant in his 50's, when asked about how frequently he communicates with friends and family abroad, he identified that frequent, if not in-depth communication, is an important feature of maintaining the transnational connection:

> Participant: With my friends sometimes say send me something in Facebook. I
> tell them, "Okay" or "Ha, ha, ha" or something else, but it's everyday. When I talk
> with him, that'd be one time a week. One time a week.

Continuous engagement creates an uninterrupted flow of communication that bridges physical distance through virtual contact. These social media sharing practices provide common content to bond over and keep friends abreast of the type of content people in their network are consuming. Sending each other memes or humorous content becomes an easy and fun way to stay connected. These practices provide a continuity of interaction from pre-resettlement through post-resettlement. These seemingly regular practices of friends finding ways to laugh together bypass the difference and distance created through displacement and resettlement.

Everyday communication allows participants to feel as if they are kept up-to-date with their family and daily ongoings such that it is like they never left. In a one-on-one

interview with a woman in her 30's, the everyday is emphasized as providing a continuous flow of information that allows her to feel close to her family:

> Participant: Yes, everyday I call them. I was talking to them when you came
>
> *Interviewer: oh really? And what kind of things do you talk about?*
>
> Participant: Just the life, how they're doing, how I'm doing, simple stuff. They let me know everyday what's happening there because it's a long time since I've seen them. So almost 5 years. So we're talking everyday. In our culture. Everyday. If someone dies, if someone gets married, you know someone gets accident. Some stuff like this.

By sharing the day-to-day happenings of not just the family, but also neighbors and friends, those in the network allow resettled refugees to feel as if they are not far from their community and missing important life events. The information flow from the network to the refugee bridges knowledge and culture gaps that might be experienced after resettlement. This has significance for one's identification with the network as well as for feeling connected and knowing how to behave or what to talk about when reunified during a visit. As expressed by a young woman in her 20's, keeping up to date with what's going on back in the homeland is very important. When discussing visiting the homeland and getting friends' references, she stated, "Yes, I try to go as often as I can because I miss people so much. I've been getting up to date what people are doing new, because when I left, I was on duration, I couldn't get most far as from most facility. Now, when I came back, I know what they're talking about." It's important to know what everyone in your network is talking about to feel part of the network as well as to

maintain the strength of bonds. Therefore, bypassing and bridging distance is a two-way flow of communication between those resettled refugees and their network.

Giving and getting emotional support. Transnational communication practices in the refugee context has added weight as resettled refugees are often resettled in different countries than their family members and some family members are still in conflict zones, refugee camps, or living in precarity in transit countries. Transnational communication practices provide resettled refugees and those in their network access to material and immaterial resources such as emotional support, financial support, and to plan for future opportunities when the conflict has ended. When asked about what transnational communication provides resettled refugees, the complexity of managing multiple and competing needs emerged as a salient theme. Resettled refugees are concerned with providing support for those in the diaspora as well as receiving support from the network. However, participants were extremely cognizant of the struggles their family and friends abroad were experiencing and therefore limiting disclosure or strategically sharing and concealing information became part of the larger aim of managing the health of the network.

Giving Emotional Support. Participants, having recently gone through conflict and precarity themselves, were very invested in providing emotional and, when possible, financial support for family members and friends who were still either in conflict zones or in transit countries. In the excerpt below, the male participant in his 40's identifies how he is able to understand and connect with those still living in conflict zones in ways that others who have not experienced war and displacement cannot:

Participant: So the main thing for them is that we are sharing their feeling, their

suffering. It's the most important for them. They need someone to feel with them.

Especially those who are in the same circumstances. We live the same

circumstance there. Now they're suffering. So when they talk about everything

we understand because we lived there the same.

Interviewer: So you're offering support to them. And you're making them feel…

Participant: Stronger.

One's ability to express solidarity and share in other's "suffering" is understood to

provide those in the network with emotional fortitude to continue enduring during these

difficult times. Having experienced these same issues, refugees are uniquely positioned to

be the support system to other refugees in their network. For family and friends who are

still in conflict zones, such as in Syria or Iraq, talking about the fear of nearby bombs

going off or the prohibitively high rising cost of food allows those in the network to not

only know what the state of affairs is but also creates space for venting and releasing

emotions. Similarly, in many transit countries refugees are not allowed to work. As

Turkey and Jordan accept Syrians under a tourist visa rather than as refugees, Syrians do

not have the correct paperwork and status to legally work in those countries. This results

in difficulty with paying rent, buying food, and paying for children's schooling. In a one-

on-one interview with a female participant in her 20's concern over the wellbeing of her

brother who was still in a transit country was a central focus of their communication:

Interviewer: I see you have a brother in Lebanon. What kind of things you talk

about when you talk to each other?

Participant: When I talk to my brother?

Interviewer: Yes.

Participant: Sometimes I ask them about if he can find a job in Lebanon, if he can't continue his education, something like that. I ask them if he found the house to live in because the life in Lebanon is really difficult.

Interviewer: Is it?

Participant: Yes because they don't like the refugee.

Interviewer: Really?

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: It tends to be a little difficult, it's hard to get a job maybe, or what are some difficulties?

Participant: Yes. He cannot find a job, find a home, to continue his education, it's really hard for him, because I told you, he's Syrian.

As many participants had experienced this precarity, they understand the stresses and concerns that plague family and friends in these transit countries. Therefore, giving those in the network a space to share their fears and worries serves to provide empathic support for those who do not have financial security.

Getting Emotional Support. Resettled refugees in the U.S. are often considered those who demonstrated an extreme need. Often these are people who have medical needs, very young children with special needs, or might have more difficulty than others surviving in the refugee camps. While only a few participants were willing to discuss the exact conditions that led to being chosen for resettlement, many participants expressed finding emotional, and in some cases, financial support from their family and friends

abroad. In a family interview with a couple in their 40's, venting was identified as an important feature of the value of communicating with friends and family:

> Interpreter: yeah they tell them any problems that are with them
>
> *Interviewer: How does that help you with dealing with the problem? Does it help you with dealing with the problem?*
>
> Interpreter: There's no help that we get but you're saying something to someone that's just like venting to someone to get it off your chest
>
> *Interviewer: Does it help… so the venting... It helps emotionally to vent?*
>
> Interpreter: Exactly, it helps emotionally. So he's saying that in Syria they had a lot of problems and when you talk to someone or vent to someone it makes them feel a little bit better

Venting and sharing day-to-day problems with one's transnational network provides an emotional release that helps with managing stress. While no solutions are offered through these communication practices, sharing both the good and the bad can help refugees feel connected to family and friends abroad and provide a sense of being supported. As demonstrated below, in a one-on-one interview with a woman in her 50's suffering from PTSD talking and sharing with family can make one feel better:

> Participant: Physically, I feel relief, emotionally, I feel that I am not alone. I can talk my first language and I feel relief because I'm talking without think twice whether I need to say and think twice the work connections. It's so sad when I need to hang up. It's so sad but it's helping me a lot emotionally, physically. I feel relief.

The experience of resettlement can produce feelings of isolation and loneliness. Talking

with friends and family abroad provides a respite from the day-to-day challenges of

living in another country and speaking in another language. Similarly, with a woman in

her 30's who was experiencing depression from the passing of her mother relied on

communication with family and friends abroad to provide emotional support:

> Interviewer: so what is the value of staying with people who are abroad in
>
> _____? Why would it be helpful or beneficial to stay in touch?
>
> Participant: they help me because I'm far staying from there.
>
> Interviewer: So how does it help you?
>
> Participant: emotionally
>
> Interviewer: emotionally? Is there like an example of a time…
>
> Participant: yeah sometimes when I talk to them they take emotionally from me, I
>
> think and they talk to me nice. And sometimes I don't thinking good and I have
>
> stress. They give me some advice or some good words. So it helps.

In the excerpt above receiving advice and kind words from people within the network

help with coping with loss and dealing with negative thoughts that arise from depression.

Those in the network may be uniquely positioned to offer this type of support due to the

longevity of the relationship as well as being familiar with the person who has passed.

The interconnectedness of the network can serve an important function in the giving and

receiving of emotional support. Communicating with family and friends allows

participants to feel supported, have a space to think and speak in their mother tongue, and

vent about day-to-day problems for emotional release.

Limiting disclosure. Participants were very cognizant of the continued problems experienced by family and friends abroad. What content was shared was dependent of the location of those in the network. A major concern voiced by participants was not wanting to burden those who were already facing difficulty in either the homeland or in a transit country by telling them about the issues experienced in America. In a family interview with a couple in their 40's, the content of communication was influenced by the location and safety of those in the network:

> Participant: so the people -family and friends- outside of Syria we talk to them about the negative and the positive. But the people in Syria, they already have enough, they're already facing enough. So we just don't tell them the bad or negative things that are happening to us. So what we go through here is nothing to what they go through there.

Participants engage in communication strategies in order to maintain the health of the network. Participants weigh the impact of what information is shared and with whom. Maintaining a balance of giving support and getting support while still sharing enough information that those in the network still feel connected becomes part of a strategy and tension refugees experience in maintaining transnational ties. Indeed, these transnational ties, often serve to re-frame problems experienced by those resettled in western countries. As demonstrated in the excerpt below, when comparing one's problems to those living in precarity in the Middle East or in Africa, a female participant in her 20's explains, one's minor irritations seem minimal:

> Participant: No, I would never (share negative personal news) because I'm always thinking like this. If I'm going to give them what's wrong with me and then they

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tell me what's wrong with me, mine is petty to them. That's why I tend not to

bring it up because I'm like, "You're probably having life harder than I am." I

remember once I was complaining to my cousin and I was like, "Oh my gosh, I

can't believe people who drive," and she was like, "I never drove before so you

couldn't complain with me." I was like, "Why am I complaining about this, I

should be grateful." That's why I try not to complain because they have a life

harder.

Many participants identify transnational communication as serving as reminders to be

"grateful" for their own safety, access to food, and work. In comparison to those who are

in camps, in the homeland, or in transit countries where they may not work, life in

resettlement, even with the feelings of isolation and experiences of prejudice, is the better

situation. In this way, transnational communication not only allows those in the network

to give and get support, but also serves to provide resettled refugees a source of self-

reflection.

      Managing Transnational Tensions. While generally understood as a resource

for resettled refugees, transnational communication is not without its problems. As

refugees are part of the very network they engage, ensuring their communication

practices maintain and build their own social, emotional, cultural, and financial health

produces tensions in their transnational communication practices with the network.

During the interviews with participants, many contradictory tensions emerged as refugees

grappled with the benefits and challenges of transnational communication. In thinking of

oneself in relation to the network, three tensions that emerged from the interviews were

relief-apprehension, preservation-risk, and accessibility-inaccessibility. These tensions

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deal with the emotional effects and/or infrastructural difficulties in transnational communication experienced by resettled refugees. Refugees need to manage these tensions to maintain their own health in the consumption and dissemination of information with the network.

    Relief-Apprehension. As many participants had family and/or friends in conflict areas, communication becomes both a source of relief and a source of stress for refugees. Hearing from those living in conflict zones meant that they were alive and safe, however hearing about their struggles also produced apprehension and concern for the family and friend's ability to survive. The excerpt below demonstrates these tensions:

    Participant: When we talk to them, and they say that their doing bad or they're not safe it makes it worse for us after the phone call. They start thinking omg how are they living and all of that. And it makes it worse for us when they tell us that.

    Interviewer: So it is difficult to have those conversations

    Participant: yeah, when they tell them it is not safe here. That is something they always worry about

    Interviewer: So then what is the biggest benefit to staying in touch with people abroad?

    Participant: It is really important and beneficial to keep in touch and to know how they're doing and keep on taking their news and make sure they're doing ok, knowing that there is nothing harmful happening

    Interviewer: so it gives you peace of mind to know that everyone is still alive and ok

Ultimately, communication becomes a source of fear for the other and relief when they are safe. As there is very little resettled refugees can do for those in conflict zones there is a helplessness experienced where contact becomes the veil between knowing whether family is alive or dead. This not knowing if family is alive or dead, structures how participants begin their day:

> Participant: Now you can't live one hour without phone. Really when I wake up, immediately a cup of coffee and the phone. That's before I sit down in the day. Just iPhone. I see, my mom does anybody speak with me? Let's see my family because I'm so afraid. You know when you have a family out from here and you cannot…everyday I wake up and I think are they alive or something.

Awaking each morning with apprehension of lack of contact, of news of death structures the emotional state for resettled refugees. While living and experiencing day-to-day challenges and triumphs, participants are in a constant state of waiting to hear of death. Their families and friends live in an imagined potential death, or in suspended animation, only to be re-animated each morning once contact has been made. Connectivity to the network serves as an important link to provide the mortality status of friends and family abroad. Participants' mental and emotional well-being are deeply affected by these transnational communication practices.

Preservation-Risk. Transnational communication is an important factor in preserving culture and identity for resettled refugees. Indeed, transnational communication allows refugees to maintain diasporic ties which allow for future projects such as nation building. However, contact may also be difficult for traumatized individuals whose only way forward is to focus on the future. Therefore, transnational

communication can be, for some, extremely risky. In an interview with a woman in her 20's, communication with friends abroad became a source of sadness as memories of her happy past were painful:

> Participant: Yes. When I talk to my friend, all the time, make me reminder to remember my school, my culture, my street, my home, when we play with each other when we are in our childhood.
>
> *Interviewer: Okay. Does that feel good? Is it a little difficult?*
>
> Participant: I feel sad right now.
>
> *Interviewer: You feel sad?*
>
> Participant: Yes, because we lost our culture. Some people want to talk about the past, but I don't like to talk about the past. I would like to talk about the future. I would like to rebuild my country and all the world.

In the excerpt above, transnational communication becomes a potentially fraught and emotional engagement where certain topics are off-limits or even necessary to avoid. When asked about frequency of communication, the young woman said she only spoke to those in her transnational network five times a year. The attempt to minimize contact is a necessary strategy for self-preservation due to trauma from displacement. A handful of other participants identified trauma as a reason for minimizing contact with their network. One female participant whose son was traumatized from war, minimized contact with family abroad after noticing her son became emotional and erratic after speaking with them. His trauma, which the family believed God would fix and were therefore not seeking out medical treatment, was managed through limiting exposure to certain stimuli.

However, as noted above, ideas of nation-building and future potentialities are also motivators for staying in contact with one's transnational network. Indeed, for some youth, communication within the transnational network served as a function to preserve culture for oneself and for future progeny. In a one-on-one interview with a female participant in her 20's, maintaining contact with those in the network was essential for preserving culture and a sense of family ties:

> Participant: For me, I feel it's more important for my kids in the future because they are my family. My mom's side of the family is in Africa too, my dad's side is. My general family is in Africa. When I grow up, I don't want to forget about them because they're still my family. I just want my kids to know that, "There is your uncle, your auntie. They're not just here. There's somebody there for you." That's why I want to keep the culture. That's mostly what I feel like I don't want to lose as I get older.

This active network building and maintenance happens in the context of risk of culture and network loss. For some participants, preservation of culture becomes a project that needs to be engaged actively. Ideally, this active engagement will produce conditions that allow future progeny to reach out into the network and have resources and people available to them. Thus, in this tension participants experience both issues of preservation and risk to self and to future goals.

Accessibility-Inaccessibility. In the digital divide literature, it has long been understood that access to technology is no longer a primary concern for connectivity and network research. However, what became clear during these interviews was that access is not always about access to technology as much as access to internet connection and

privacy. In response to the question "are there challenges to staying connected?" a female

participant in her 30's identified internet connection as a primary challenge:

> Interpreter: So like for her here there is of course no problem. But for them
>
> sometimes in the camps they don't have connection. You know, you have to walk
>
> a few miles to get a bad connection.

While in the excerpt above the participant experiences connectivity issues due to lack of

infrastructure in the camp, participants identified infrastructure issues as a common

problem especially in areas of conflict. Many participants who had family in war torn

areas or strongly government-controlled areas related similar challenges to internet

connectivity for family and friends abroad. In a family interview, a male participant in his

40's explained the compound issues that affect communication with family still in the

homeland:

> Participant: So now Syria especially… now it's very easy to keep in touch with
>
> the other places. But Syria when they get chance to internet they contact us and
>
> we hear communication. But there is not always access to internet there. Even
>
> though now under the control is more now more than before. So if you talk about
>
> the government they come and catch you directly now
>
> *Interviewer: So you can't talk about the government at all.*
>
> Participant: No nothing. Just hello! How are you doing? We are fine. We are very
>
> fine. Especially under the area under the government control so they cannot speak
>
> anything. There was two areas in Syria. Areas under government control, they're
>
> killing the people and doing very bad things. Some areas under ISIS, they're
>
> doing the same. So the government and ISIS is double faces for one coin. They

did the same for the people. All of the Syrian people were killed in this war. Yes
this is the truth.

*Interviewer: yeah. So in Syria sometimes there are no internet issues but they're
being monitored either by ISIS or the government.*

Participant: by the government yeah.

For those living in a conflict zone, connectivity was affected by multiple factors.
Inconsistent internet connection provided one obstacle to accessing the network, however
government monitoring was another factor that impacted the quality of communication
and what content could be discussed. In this way, government control impacts the ability
of those in the diaspora to discuss political and national issues with those in the
homeland. As mentioned earlier, a few participants reported speaking in code to bypass
this issue. Another common barrier to communication was censorship:

Participant: Sometimes when the country is in a curfew. They cut the electricity,
the water, the internet, the phones are in probation. My family has a local phone
not cellular. They have a local phone. I can call there.

The government censorship through surveillance or by disconnecting the internet
connection to the outside world was a common feature of refugee transnational
communication. The two main causes for connectivity issues, infrastructure problems that
are experienced at the refugee camps and in conflict zones, and government censorship,
were salient across the majority of interviews. Surveillance and safety for those abroad
and those resettled become facets of navigating communication and connection in the
transnational network. Additionally, having the material tools for connection
(smartphone) does not ensure the connectivity capacity (internet connection).

These affective, strategic, and infrastructural communication components require resettled refugees to navigate transnational communication tensions within their transnational networks. While cutting ties is not of interest, participants nonetheless experience unique challenges and benefits to maintaining transnational ties.

In summary, participants engage in various strategies to maintain the health of the network. The banal everyday mediated conversations bypass distance and difference by creating co-presence between refugees and their network. This maintains the strength of the bonds within the network as well as diversifies the cultural health of the network. By giving and getting emotional support and managing disclosure of negative information, refugees are able to tend to the emotional health of the network. Finally, managing contradictory tensions within transnational communication serves to maintain the individual's health within the network. Thus willingness to engage in connecting with the network may be influenced by competing tensions of utility and self-preservation.

CHAPTER 5

NEW SOCIAL RELATIONS: MIGRANT BELONGING AND INTERCULTURAL

ADJUSTMENT

This chapter is interested in the social ties resettled refugees are able to create and access in the resettlement country and the ways in which ICTs produce and maintain these new social relations to gain social capital and facilitate intercultural adjustment. As discussed in the literature, a component of the *connected migrant* is social continuity such that transitions to the emigration country are facilitated by weak or bridging ties in the network in the resettlement country. Throughout these interviews, a picture of barriers to connectivity and belonging emerged. While some participants demonstrated a high-level of knowledge and skill in ICT use to access community, resources, and for problem-solving, other participants articulated that ICTs lacked any value for problem-solving or community building. Intercultural adjustment and belonging are mediated by imagined technological affordances or the perception of the value and capability ICTs offer an individual. First, I look at how participants utilize technology to produce new social ties and for intercultural adjustment. Then, I look at barriers to leveraging technology for producing belonging and intercultural adjustment and the benefits and limitations to resettlement enclaves. This chapter is interested in the "here" of the "here and there" in migrant belonging literature.

    RQ3:   How, if at all, do ICT affordances constrain or facilitate intercultural

            adjustment for refugees in the U.S.?

This research question requires a discussion of tensions embedded in ICT use, or to what extent technology can and cannot help refugees. As visualized in Figure 3, the

data show that refugees' ability to leverage ICTs for local belonging, mobility, and connectivity was moderated by four factors: age, perceived value, language, and time. While all refugees had access to technology, diversified use of technology was more often demonstrated by participants in their 20's and in some cases 30's, or individuals that might be considered digital natives. For older participants (30 years of age and older, 21 participants), diversified use of ICTs was influenced by the perceived value that social media platforms could offer. An individual's ability to imagine the benefits and utility provided by ICTs influenced connectivity behavior. Language was another factor that moderated ICT use. For all participants, language acquisition was identified as the most important skill for intercultural adjustment. While technology can help with language acquisition, English dominance of technology and social media provided a paradoxical obstacle for older participants. If you do not already speak and read in English, how can you learn to use social media and language learning applications that are in English? Also, language acquisition leads to better jobs, which lead to better living accommodations, diversified community, and therefore access to various social capital and resources. Finally, time was a moderator for leveraging ICTs for intercultural adjustment. While technology saves time, it also requires time to use technology for community building, learning language, learning new social media platforms and applications. Therefore, age, perceived value, language, and time are factors that influence ICT use in general and specifically for intercultural adjustment. These factors are contingent upon individual skills, knowledge, and motivation. These factors also influence participant's ability to use connectivity for local mobility and belonging. To understand how age, perceived value, language, and time moderate connectivity,

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belonging, and mobility it is necessary to understand (1) how social continuity is produced, (2) how connectivity is produced, (3) barriers to connectivity, and (4) the role of the enclave. The following section expands on these findings.

Figure 3. Factors for Producing Local Mobility and Belonging

```
┌─────────────┐      ┌─────────────┐      ┌─────────────┐      ┌─────────────┐
│     Age     │      │             │      │  Language   │      │             │
│             │      │  ICT Use    │      │ Acquisition │      │             │
│  Perceived  │      │  (Degree    │      │    Job      │      │  Mobility   │
│    Value    │  →   │    of       │  →   │ Advancement │  →   │     &       │
│             │      │Connectivity)│      │  Community  │      │ Belonging   │
│  Language   │      │             │      │             │      │             │
│    Time     │      │             │      │  Cultural   │      │             │
│             │      │             │      │ Adaptation  │      │             │
└─────────────┘      └─────────────┘      └─────────────┘      └─────────────┘
```
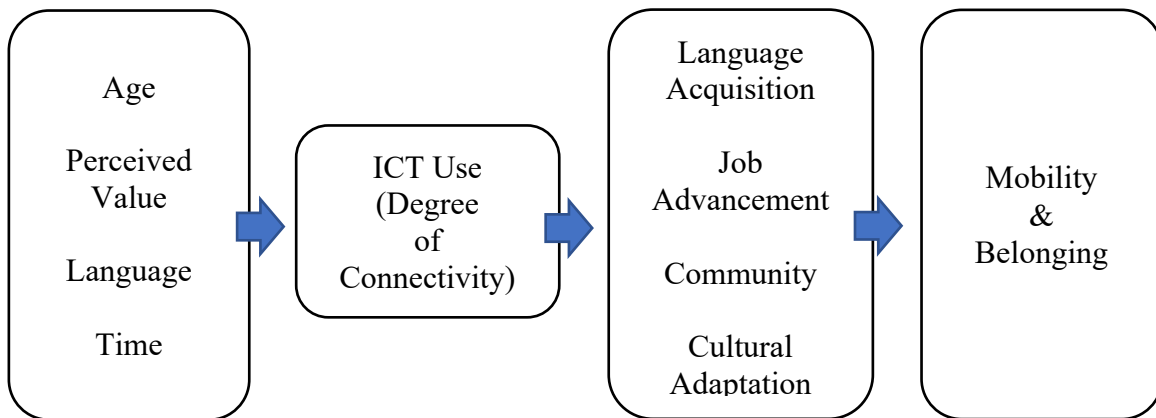
Social Continuity and Connectivity

> Interpreter: Yeah they do. They keep in touch from Facebook. So the thing is like they do have community here, but the way was community was created was that through Facebook groups. Like in Jordan he had Facebook. So he had the groups. Through those groups he met these men that have become his best friends and actually one lives in Glendale and another in Greenway and they work at the same company and they talk everyday. So they live here, and they facetime or do a group call everyday.
>
> *Interviewer: But you met when you were in Jordan?*
>
> Interpreter: yeah, they met in the Facebook group in Jordan and through the group they were talking and were like I got chosen to be a refugee in this country and

96

the others were like, "oh me too" and that's how they met and bonded. Then they

came here and met a different guy who had been here a year and a half before

them and he invited them over to his house. To like a lunch. And they were all

together. And they became close friends and work in the same company. They go

together and come back together from work. And through them the wives and the

children got connected.

The excerpt above from a family interview with a couple in their 30's exemplifies

Diminescu's (2008) *connected migrant* where participants are able to access weak social

ties through an online Facebook group, which helps facilitate the transition from one

country to another and eventually transforms the men's bonds from weak to strong ties.

Indeed, during the interview one of the participant's friends facetime called to chat,

which humorously demonstrated his point of how close they were. Admittedly, this type

of connectivity amongst strangers was not as common of a feature found in my

interviews. I believe it is because this man's personality was very social and outgoing.

His friendly, outgoing nature, coupled with his knowledge and motivation to use social

media to build connections, allowed him to facilitate a smoother transition for him and

his family.

In fact, it was the connectivity maintained between family members which helped

facilitate the resettlement and transition experience for resettled refugees. Four

participants who had family members already in the U.S. experienced a much smoother

transition and access to digital and material resources. For instance, these participants

said that family members told them about useful web applications or websites for

acquiring furniture or buying kitchen items. Participants who had family already in the

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U.S. had access to cultural, infrastructural, and behavioral knowledge that other resettled refugees may not. In an interview with a male participant in his 50's, having family in the U.S. became an indispensable resource:

> Participant: Call people. Call my uncle. If I have found something I don't understand, I call my uncle because my uncle, he lived in the United States for 43 years.
>
> *Interviewer: Okay. He's still here?*
>
> Participant: Yes. Now he's in Colorado. I always ask him, "I need to buy something, what do you advice me on it?" He says, "No, don't take this, take this."

As demonstrated in the excerpt, having access to family or individuals in a network that have long lived in the resettlement country can provide participants with information and resources that ease the transition to the U.S. Family can be there to give you advice. These strong bonds give access to weak, bridging ties. These family members can provide resettled refugees with bridging ties to others in their network which has the potential to facilitate access to jobs, community, and a knowledge base from which to draw.

For a female participant in her 20's, her older cousin and his friends became a significant resource for getting a job and getting settled in the U.S.:

> Participant: Well, I got my first job, thanks to a friend (who) work on metroPCS and I worked there for a while, but the housing and other services we got it from Craigslist and we bought our furniture from Craigslist. It was important. The cars were also from Craigslist. Yes, we got everything from Craigslist.

For this young woman, having friends and family already in the U.S. provided her with access to a job and to finding affordable, used goods that helped her set up her life when she first arrived. However, it should be noted that most participants (25 participants) did not have family in the U.S. before arriving. Their experience of initial resettlement was dependent upon the resettlement organization and religious institutions that provide material resources and cultural brokering for the first 90 days.

Producing Connectivity

While not all refugees have a pre-existing network to tap into that will ease their transition during resettlement, there are some who are able to leverage ICTs to produce connectivity and belonging after resettlement. Age and education seemed to be major indicators in one's ability to produce and maintain local connectivity and leverage ICTs for intercultural adjustment. All participants aged 18 to 29 (8 of the 29 participants) were active users in online groups and producers and consumers of social media content such as Instagram and Facebook. ICT use by participants aged 31 to 53 (21 of the 29 participants) was influenced by interest and self-motivation and, in one case, a degree in computer science. While in eight interviews individuals aged 30 or older showed interest in learning and using new web applications to problem-solve, others were more interested in face-to-face/person-to-person relationships and did not see how ICTs could be leveraged to produce new social relations or problem-solve. In four interviews with participants in their 40's and 50's ICTs were not seen as solving any of the issues that they faced, including those issues related to building community, finding resources, and adapting to U.S. culture. Thus, age is a significant factor in ICT use. It should be noted that participants in the 18 to 29 age range could be considered digital natives who were

born into a world of internet technology. These digital natives have used smart phone

technology from high school onward. Additionally, it should be noted that many

participants aged 18 to 26 came to the U.S. at a young age and went through the U.S.

school system necessitating early adoption of English and being immersed in American

culture norms.

Connectivity and youth. Youth demonstrated the ability to build connectivity for

accessing local communities, communities in the U.S., and for assisting their parents in

creating connectivity. Youth's neuroplasticity allows for easier acquisition and adoption

of new technologies, language, and cultural behaviors. Participants in the 18 to 29 age

range reported using ICTs to join online groups both in their mother tongue and in

English to learn about local events, local businesses, and to connect to others for

problem-solving, to crowd-source reviews and recommendations for products and

services, and to meet other resettled refugees. As exemplified in the excerpt below,

messaging platforms can serve as a space to crowd-source problem-solving:

> Participant: To know if there is a problem that is going on with you and there is a
>
> group on Viber or Facebook, they could just write their problem and there are
>
> other people who face the same situation and they could help you explain to you
>
> how to get over that problem.
>
> *Interviewer: is this how people do things? They just go and will find an Arab of*
>
> *Phoenix group and they will ask questions?*
>
> Participant: yeah, always. Any problem that you have you can just post it and
>
> there might be other people who have faced a similar situations and they can just
>
> help you.

Through messaging platforms and social media groups, participants are able to access a larger network of locally-based individuals to help with navigating various issues and institutions. These groups exist in various languages, but to know how to access them or to value what the group can offer seems to be influenced by age. Not all participants found value in online groups as will be discussed further in the section on barriers to connectivity.

Youth and young adult participants also demonstrated a desire to maintain ethnic and cultural connections in the U.S. Some participants were actively engaged in organizing and maintaining locally and nationally-based diasporic connections. The excerpt below exemplifies a youth-led movement to maintain diasporic connection both locally and nationally in the U.S.-based resettled refugee population:

Participant: I am in a group called Burundi's _____ and what it is basically is a group of young adults in USA. It's mostly teens and high school students and college students, Burundians high school students and college students and what we're trying to do is promote our culture in our community because we noticed the rate of people like teens and young adults are losing the values that we had in Africa. They're losing the culture, nobody celebrates Independence Day no more. Nobody bothers or cares about it. We're really trying to bring up the topic, talk about it like, "Hey you guys remember in Africa," trying to bring it up.

That's basically what we're trying to do. It's a new group so we haven't really been around for that while but that's how we stay connected. When we have events going on, we will make a good Google docs and we share it all together and then we work on the event or something, or we talk on WhatsApp mostly. We

have a group chat so it's mostly like that. It's happening in other cities. A lot of the

Burundian youth are starting to make this group and trying to really preserve the

culture it's basically what it is about. This is all through Facebook primarily. It's

Facebook, it's very high.

These diaspora-building activities serve to reify one's cultural identity as well as create

long-term connections for potential future nation-building and endogamy. These

connections can help navigate the tensions of cultural hybridity, experiences of being a

refugee youth, and provide a sense of belonging for young resettled refugees. The

primary tools used for these activities are social media, messaging platforms, and

shareable, collaborative documents. These social ties are created and strengthened

through multi-modal communication strategies. Thus, younger participants are able to

create new social relations and stay connected through ICTs to create a sense of

belonging and help with intercultural adjustment.

Another common feature discussed by some of the participants with young

children was that their children served as cultural brokers, language brokers, and

technology bridges for their parents. Four of the participants whose children grew up in

the U.S. frequently depended on their children to held them navigate technology use and

cultural adaptation. In the excerpt below, a male participant in his 40's discusses how his

children play a role in connecting him and his wife locally:

Participant: Thank god from the beginning until now nothing negative has

happened to us but like the only hard and difficult thing that we're still going

through is the language barrier and we tell them about it all the time. But like until

our kids went to school and learned the English language themselves, they started

connecting us to the people outside and translating back and forth and all of that.

Youth have the ability to produce connectivity for their parents which help them to

expand their local network and access a diversity of knowledge and resources. Similarly,

youth can serve to bridge the technology gap for their parents. In an interview with a

woman in her 50's, her son is integral in developing her digital literacy skills:

> Participant: I don't know. I really want to improve my knowledge and cellphone
>
> and how to access all these programs, the media. Sometime, I guess, something I
>
> don't know how to log in or access. It's always calling my son, "Hey, I got this
>
> one, how to do it?" Sometime it's a challenge for me, learning something new, but
>
> I like this technology really. I always say to people, "I like the new technology.
>
> It's so fast, so easy to use, and--" It's like within a second you can link with the
>
> last place in the world. It's-- oh, my gosh.

Here the participant is interested in technology's capacity for connection but is not as

proficient in using the various web applications and programs. Her son serves as a source

of knowledge to help her access the various tools available through ICTs. In an interview

with a woman in her 20's she recognizes how her youth is almost synonymous with tech

expertise within her family:

> Participant: Yes, for sure. We use Google maps every single time because we
>
> need to take the bus for the first week because no one had a car. Because I was the
>
> youngest in my family group, I was in charge of dealing with technology all the
>
> time. I was the one who say, "Well, the bus is coming at this time and then we'd

have to take this other one and then this other one." It's funny, like everyone rely

on me and in my sense of direction that I don't have any, but they relied on me.

Even though the participant does not see herself as having a particularly strong skill in

leading the family or using the Google maps application, she quickly learns to occupy

this role and becomes an important link between her family and the new country where

they resettled. Four participants in their early 20's identified their role in assisting their

parents both with technology and with navigating American culture norms. Young adults

play an important role in ICT use and assisting intercultural adjustment for the entire

family. Their access to diverse cultural spaces due to school and work gives them

knowledge and resources that their parents may not know how to access. Additionally,

because of neuroplasticity they are able to pick up the local language quicker which can

help the family with language acquisition, navigating institutions, and accessing digital

resources specific to the resettlement city. Older refugees who do not have children and

do not have digital literacy skills may find themselves isolated or taking longer to adjust,

unless someone within their network is able to provide them with the information and

resources to help with intercultural adjustment.

Barriers to Connectivity

As mentioned above, not all participants found value in ICTs for their ability to

create and maintain local connectivity and assist with intercultural adjustment. While

many identified ICTs as necessary in America and used web applications such as Google,

Google Translator, YouTube, and Google maps/GPS for day-to-day activities, they did

not see the smartphone as a tool that created community or bridged intercultural divides.

Two main themes that emerged for those who did not see ICTs as a tool to produce and

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maintain community, problem-solve, or for intercultural adjustment were the perceived value of ICTs and the trustworthiness of those people met through the internet. Language was also a barrier in ICT use for connectivity and accessing resources. As many applications are in English, those without a strong command of the language, or who spoke a non-dominant dialect, the lack of language proficiency presented a barrier to leveraging ICT affordances. Barriers to connectivity were influenced by (1) how users perceived the value of ICTs, (2) untrustworthiness of the unknown, (3) time, and (4) language.

Utilitarian users and perceived ICT value. Many users aged 40 years and above, used smartphones to help with day-to-day functions. For instance, seven of the fifteen male participants across all age groups were Uber or Lyft drivers in addition to their more traditional form of employment. Therefore, these participants relied on the applications such as Uber and Lyft for income. However, outside of the utilitarian function of Google Maps for navigation and the ridesharing applications for payment, not all participants found ICTs to be useful. Five of the participants aged 40 years or older, and one participant in his 30's, articulated that ICTs are valuable for google translator and GPS features, but they did not find ICTs useful for problem-solving. In response to the question "How do ICTs address some of the resettlement challenges you've mentioned?" participants in this group believe that person-to-person help is more important than resources ICTs can offer. A male in his 40's stated:

> Participant: No. The cellphone doesn't have anything to do with the things that we
> face and the things that happen here. It depended on us on how we treated the

people and how they treated us when we first came. So the phone didn't do

anything.

Interviewer: How did you learn about American culture? Just over time? Did

google help?

Participant: From daily living and all the time we've been here. And actually we

have American friends. Like we visit them and they visit us.

In the excerpt above, ICTs are not seen as able to build connections that might help

facilitate in-person relationships. Rather the in-person is valued and technology is

positioned as "didn't do anything" in adjusting to life in America. While many

participants articulated that intercultural adjustment was a matter of time, whether ICTs

were seen as a tool that assisted the adjustment process was a matter of the perceived

value of ICTs. Participants who already knew about, or were interested in learning about,

the different types of applications and platforms were better able to leverage technology

than those who viewed technology as only good for their utilitarian function. That is

those who viewed the utility of technology for only specific functions such as short-term

assistance to address needs, to pay bills or for work use, were less likely to use

technology to expand their connections or to problem solve. For instance, two female

participants talked about using their smartphones for google translator to manage

immediate interactions at a grocery store or with the front desk receptionist at a doctor's

office but had more difficulty with more in-depth conversations or in knowing how to

create a community or meet people. The six participants who were utilitarian users

communicated that they did not know how to create community or connect with

Americans. In a one-on-one interview with a male participant in his 50's, building

community and meeting people was difficult to navigate:

> Participant: That I feel difficult for me exactly. When I need to find something
>
> around me, I use the Google map. This background, I just found some place, but I
>
> found it difficult to connect with people. I don't know how to connect with
>
> people. Actually, I tell her I'm single and I am 51, next year I begin 52, that's me.
>
> I am an old man. Actually, I need stability. I need to get married. I'm looking for
>
> good woman. How can I connect with people if I don't know? I found it difficult
>
> for me.

As can be seen in the excerpt above, the participant can use Google map to get around but

does not know how to meet people. In this interview, the participant was genuinely

curious as to how to use technology to create connection but simultaneously raised

concerns about how it was easy for people to lie online and therefore did not want to use

technology to create connections. These competing tensions of the desire to meet people

but not trusting the platforms that might create new connections produces a dilemma for

resettled refugees. The next section explores this distrust of technology and people online

further.

Untrustworthiness of the unknown. When it came to connectivity and

connection many participants recognized that the internet was a space ideal for deception

and abuse. However, many participants that belong to the digital native category (aged 18

to 29) had been socialized into internet usage practices from a fairly young age and did

not identify deception as a major concern. Older participants (aged 30 and older),

expressed concerns around trustworthiness and connection. Specifically, participants

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from Iraq and Syria expressed that they did not trust other Arabs who had moved to America. Many emphasized that when Arabs move to America, they take on the "bad qualities" in America and not the "good qualities." In the excerpt below, the 40 year old male's distrust of other Arabs and distrust of online platforms becomes a barrier to leveraging a sense that ICTs to answer problems:

> Interpreter: So he's saying that even if the groups on Facebook were English or Arabic, if they're in English I don't understand and if it was in Arabic, the Arabs that talk about all these things most of them are liars, they don't say the truth they just lie to people to get money out of them and stuff like that off of these Facebook groups. And he gave an example…
>
> So, Facebook groups, he gave the example of _____, he's from Iraq. He's saying that he lies about people about a lot of things to get money out them and he doesn't say the truth. Like he's saying now that if you guys want to help people, especially people who don't speak English is like to make a little school and have classes to teach the old people.
>
> *Interviewer: Does he know about the Rio Salado English classes? It's a community college that does English classes and a lot of refugees take these classes.*
>
> Interpreter: He says he doesn't know about it.

Here we see that the fundamental distrust of the connectivity function of social media mixed with word-of-mouth rumors about other Arabs diminishes the value of what social media platforms and online communities can offer. Additionally, the participant communicates a desire for a space to learn and practice English. This desire is echoed by

many resettled refugees. However, this lack of online engagement has the potential to isolate resettled refugees from knowledge and resources. As a counter example of the problem-solving and language acquisition features of connectivity, a female participant in her 20's found the Rio Salado College English classes through Facebook:

> *Interviewer: You said you found Rio Salado on Facebook. That's really interesting. You found out about a whole college system on Facebook. I don't know if that's common or if that's something that you were able to do because you're--*
>
> Participant: No, that's not common. I don't know how I found it here in Facebook. I open my Facebook, "There is an advertisement. What is that? Rio Salado. I will go." Also, if you know ____, he drove with me to the Rio Salado and helped me to fill application over there.

These excerpts juxtaposed highlight the level of trust and openness with which different participants approach ICT use. Also, in the excerpt above, while the participant does not believe it is common to click on online ads to find out local information, I would argue that local social media ads have the potential to introduce new migrants to specific locally-based events, places, and content that may produce local connectivity. Also, important to note, the participant may have found out about English classes through a Facebook ad, but she is then able to reach into her network to confirm the legitimacy of this school and have someone to drive her there to sign up for classes.

Dimensions of time and connectivity. ICTs produced a unique paradox for many participants. While many laud the time saving function of ICTs, participants expressed that the rhythm of life in the U.S. does not provide any time for socializing. Many

exclaimed that "you have to work in the U.S." as if this was not the case in other places and that one's "mind is always full" in the U.S. Capitalist values produce a unique tempo in the West that provide a barrier to creating and maintaining connection and belonging in the U.S. In the excerpt below, the female participant in her 30's provides examples of the time saving function of ICTs:

> Participant: Yes. The smartphone, it's helped a lot. When I come to America, I don't know how transfer money like from my debit card to pay my bills, from my debit card because my husband has auto pay in his card, so sometimes I have to give him some money or he's need to give me some money to pay my car payment or my house payment. The first time, every week I just go to the bank, "Please, I want to put this money. I want to put this money. I want to make a payment." Blah-blah-blah. Now no, I learned, so I can do everything easy from my phone. I can transfer money, pay payment to all that stuff. If I have a question, I don't have to.
>
> Before, I can't speak in the phone, just I want to go see them face-to-face to speak to them. I want to make sure everything is good, but now no, I can call them and ask them like, "What the problem?" Like that stuff. So I save more time. I don't have to spend gas and time to go there.

The smartphone can be used to address many day-to-day necessities such as paying bills, online banking, and saving money on gas for driving to run errands. The smartphone saves time and money and in a capitalist society time is money. However, saved time does not mean leisure time, it is simply redirected time. When responding to the question, "do you have a community here?" a female in her 20's responded:

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Participant: Do you believe I don't go outside with anyone, because all my time, to study and for my family. Because I would like to finish my duties. Then I would like to continue with all people, Arab-American or non-Arab-American, there is no problem.

Interviewer: Right now you're just too busy, not socializing that much?

Participant: Yes.

In the excerpt above, the participant speaks of her duties which include school, work, and attending to family needs, however there is little time for anything else especially not socializing. Resettled refugees must begin paying back the resettlement loan to the U.S. within six months of their initial resettlement. On top of a driving need to earn an income to repay the loan and pay for housing and food for basic survival, many young refugees also experienced a retardation in their schooling during the displacement experience. Thus, they are working and attending school and, in some cases, also tending to young children. For instance, a male participant in his 30's, who has a job, attends evening school, and has two young children (under the age of 10) stated:

So life here is difficult. I have friends. I have a community here especially with the Syrian people here. We kind of know each other all of us. So have friends, many friend, but I don't meet them in usual a lot because they have jobs and I have a job so we may not find the perfect time to meet them so I may see them once a month or once every two months some of them. So we don't keep in strong strong touch but we still...

As you can see there is no "perfect time" for creating and maintaining community. Time for connection with one's community is positioned as competing with time for making

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money. As participants are often embedded in refugee communities, this issue effects the participant and everyone in their community. This particular participant in his 30's had been an accountant in his homeland. However, none of his education transferred to the American education system and therefore he was attending school to become an accountant once again. There are strong motivating forces for refugees to make up for lost time. Therefore, building connections and belonging becomes a future project, when one has time.

Language and connectivity. Another paradoxical barrier to ICT use and connectivity was language. For participants who struggled to learn English, as English is the lingua franca of technology, technological platforms were seen as inaccessible. For one participant who had joined his father's import/export business and therefore did not attend school past 6th grade, adjusting to the U.S., learning English, and using technology was difficult. However, for his wife, who attended college and could read in English and Arabic, ICTs were extremely useful for learning about local resources:

> Interpreter: So she's saying that yes I am part of a couple groups on Facebook that like tell you there is a place here that has good food, there's a place here that are making discounts today, there's a place here that is making such and such. But her husband is saying that he doesn't speak English so well so he doesn't like being part of these groups and he's saying the person that lives here and doesn't speak English it's hard for him to live

In the excerpt above there is a compounding effect of not knowing English in that both virtual spaces and physical spaces become difficult to access making it more difficult to learn English through interactions. However, since the participant's wife was able to

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access these virtual groups for resources, the participant still had access to these resources by proximity. Another issue regarding the lingua franca of technology is the diversity of applications in non-English language. A female participant in her 20's relates her family member's struggle with using smartphone technology in the U.S.:

> Participant: Yes. I feel like it might be a little harder for them because I'm thinking of my sister-in-law when she first came here. She got a smartphone, but it was in Dari. Everything she would have on there would be in Dari. It wasn't much use because it wasn't really helping her as much. I don't know. I feel like it would help most. I feel like it would be a little challenging if they did have it all English because they wouldn't know where to go to like how to use it.
>
> For example, if this wasn't, I don't know, some other language that I didn't know, I would have a hard time as well like, "Where is that button?" I feel like the little buttons that have a phone like if you click on that, you know this is going to call someone. You click that. I feel like--
>
> *Interviewer: There's some icons that are universal where like, "Okay. That's a phone. I can use that"*
>
> Participant: Yes. I feel like it's a lot more efficient to have it in your own language, but it doesn't help as much, I guess. At the same time, it would be challenging if it's just in English. It might help out as well just because if you're trying to adjust to the American life or the Western culture, you're getting more familiar with things like technology.

In the excerpt above, the dominance of English applications for non-English speakers is identified as impeding the cultural adjustment and adaptation process. Another issue is

the lack of diverse applications in one's mother tongue. If technology can serve as a tool through which cultural adjustment and adaptation can occur, the language barrier is further exacerbated, prolonging one's ability to adjustment. Alternatively, English dominance technology can be seen as a type of forced language immersion. While nearly all participants, except the five who came to the U.S. as young children, took English as a Second Language classes at the community college, once the course was over, maintaining the language was difficult, especially if there was no one with whom to practice speaking English. This issue will be discussed further in the next section.

Helpful Enclave- Involuntary Encapsulation

A compelling theme that emerged during interviews is the tension between the benefits and drawbacks to being placed and connected with other refugees from the same language community. When refugees are first resettled by resettlement organizations, they are often put in apartment complexes and in jobs where there are other refugees. This strategic placement by resettlement organizations end up creating ethnic and language-based enclaves. Sometimes these enclaves are a by-product of deals made with apartment complexes to house refugees affordably, and other times these enclaves are due to limited English proficiency and jobs that do not require English, or what one participant called "refugee jobs":

Participant: he's a driver

Interviewer: He's a driver, ok. I've met a lot of people who are drivers for the airport. Does the IRC help them get this job?

Participant: yes. Because they don't need English there. Most of the people are like from Iraq, Somali from Africa, Mexican. So they, so it's basically mixed so they don't (speak) English there.

As demonstrated in the excerpt above, in an effort to help refugees find gainful employment while managing issues around language barriers, resettlement organization will place refugees in jobs where language is not a necessary skill. Airport drivers rely on GPS and pre-determined destinations that are sent through web applications requiring little to no communication or interaction with the customer. This allows refugees to bypass barriers to employment that would make resettlement quite difficult. Indeed, some participants emphasized the benefit and utility of having access to people from the same-language community. A female participant in her 20's emphasized the benefit of having access to individuals from the same language-community:

Participant: What would I recommend is also as a social worker, if you're getting, whoever you're getting, try to find a community for them because I know a lot of the refugees, as you know, you're more comfortable when somebody speaks the same language as you. Try to find a community that's a part of their culture because I know a lot of different refugees that come when they-- Like my dad, he was always like he connects to every refugee that comes here. I would say just try to find somebody in the community. Connect them with their people is what I'm trying to say. Who have been here who just know-- Because I know my dad, whenever somebody calls him, a lot of refugees call him up and they're like, "I need help with this," he's there. A lot of social workers do connect him with families.

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In the excerpt above, the participant's experience as a refugee and with her family's experience helping other refugees emphasizes the importance of being connected with people who speak the same language. Initially, being placed in enclaves serves to allay some of the stresses of being placed in a new environment where the culture and the language are different. Many participants found help with accessing local resources and getting set up during the initial resettlement experience from face-to-face relationships formed with individuals in their same language community from either their job or apartment complex. In an interview with a couple in their 30's, initial resettlement was facilitated by other refugees who arrived earlier:

> Participant (husband): I have friend from Iraq, he speak Arabic. He show me, he sell me. He has store for cell phone. He advise me for phone. See many people speak Arabic and English from Iraq or from before 10 year, 12 years, 15 years, and have a store. Somebody sell phone, somebody smoke shop, somebody has restaurant. And from Syria, same (person's name) and other people maybe you don't know. I buy my car from people from Syria
>
> *Interviewer: And how did you find the apartment*
>
> Participant (husband): same thing, my friend from Syria from before me. And my friend, some people from Iraq
>
> Participant (wife): here is too much Arabic
>
> Participant (husband): yes too much Arabic, here all apartment – Arabic
>
> *Interviewer: But that must be nice for the kids to have some friends to play with*
>
> Participant (husband): No I don't need to know Arabic.

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These face-to-face relationships give participants the knowledge necessary for adjusting to life in America. From getting an apartment, a phone, a car, and in some cases a job, these connections are essential to resettlement. Once the initial, basic needs are met, participants are able to leverage technology to further assist with intercultural adjustment. However, many participants aged 30 and older communicated frustration at being surrounded by people from their same language community. Motivation to integrate into American culture was difficult due to the inability to practice speaking English. A woman in her 50's with a degree in computer science shared her frustration over the lack of access and connection to native English-speaking people:

> Participant: The first thing when I came to America I use my smartphone for learning English, by watching lesson through YouTube, through website, this is the first thing. Secondly, I used my smartphone for any problem, technology problem, home problem, medical, I use smartphone. It's helpful but there's some problem for me, just for me, I use my phone to learn anything but there's a challenge, it's about my situation always at my home, don't get out and see people and different situation as my situation, I don't apply what I see in my real life, this I mean.

The participant expresses frustration because she cannot find people who are different from her (non-Arabs) to interact with and practice speaking English. While younger refugees may find it easier to learn and practice speaking English and meeting people outside of their language family due to school or other youth-based activities and spaces, older refugees have less access to diversified spaces. After initially being necessary and helpful to resettlement, these enclaves can create involuntary encapsulation. Participants

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might find it difficult to adjust and acculturate because they do not know how to access and expand their network to include non-refugees. This has implications for access to diverse knowledge and resources and one's ability to get a higher paying job for social mobility. Language acquisition was identified as one of the most important features of adjusting to life in America. Involuntary encapsulation makes mastering another language difficult.

Prejudice. Another element that predominately Muslim, hijab-wearing women spoke of was the experience of prejudice in the U.S.:

> Participant: No, no, this problem have some reason because the American people didn't like to talk with women like me because they think bad about Islamic is not terrorism or this is the first one but I have neighbor, American neighbor, we have relation with it and contact but as needed of us.

In the excerpt above, the participant, an Iraqi woman in her 50's who wears the hijab, articulates the difficulty in meeting and building relationships with people in America due to prejudice. Communication with her neighbor is only perfunctory. Four hijab-wearing refugees reported experiencing discrimination and prejudice. Enclaves may serve as safe spaces for Muslim women who are marked as different by their religious garb. Enclaves can provide protection from the judgmental western gaze. In this current protectionist, Islamophobic, anti-immigration climate in the U.S., resettled refugees might be targets of racist acts. Therefore, enclaves may provide a community and a sense of safety. However, as demonstrated in the quote above, these experiences of prejudice make it difficult for women to expand their network and form new connections producing another type of involuntary encapsulation.

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Resettled refugees' ability to produce, access, and leverage local connectivity has very real implications for the experience of resettlement and intercultural adjustment. Refugees who were able to utilize technology to engage their ethnic enclave for initial social support and connectivity, expressed frustration with not being able to access diverse local population thereby diversifying their network and access to material, immaterial, and social resources and opportunities. In overcoming the digital divide to achieve digital inclusion, refugees had the material resources (access to ICT and internet connectivity), however social and cognitive resources for technology use to produce connectivity and belonging were moderated by age, language, perceived value of the technology, and time.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

The scope of this research project is to understand to what extent Diminescu's

(2008) concept of the *connected migrant* addresses the lived experience of resettled

refugees. Drawing upon key results from my exploratory research, this chapter will

evaluate the applicability of mobility, connectivity, and belonging in the resettled refugee

experience. First, I unpack the concept of the *connected migrant* to understand what

components make up mobility, connectivity, and belonging and how they are produced.

Next, I compare the experiences of the refugee in relation to the *connected migrant* to

understand the benefits and limitations of this concept in understanding the connected

refugee. This chapter presents the tensions experienced by refugees in producing

connectivity, mobility, and belonging. Following that, this chapter will present

implication and evidence-based policy recommendations to address information and

resource disparity at the international, national and local levels. Then, I offer

transnational contextual relationality as a concept to understand how context of migration

influences network connections and relationships. Finally, I discuss the limitation of this

research and future directions.

Connectivity, Mobility, and Belonging

The *connected migrant* is one that experiences mobility and belonging through

connectivity. Mobilities, broadly understood as flows and practices that give access to

diverse socio-spatial locations, both virtual and physical, are produced through bonds

(Diminescu, 2008; Urry, 2000). Indeed, Diminescu (2008) claims that bonds are "*the*

creator factor for mobility" (p. 579, emphasis in the original). Connectivity, the

ecosystem of sociality maintained through technological platforms, produce and maintain these bonds (Diminescu, 2008; Van Dijck, 2013). Connectivity can produce virtual and imagined mobilities which can lead to migration and transnationalism that produce object and corporeal mobility (Urry, 2000). According to Urry (2000) corporeal mobilities are the movement of bodies in space; object mobility is the movement of cultural products that retain their cultural meaning in a different socio-spatial context; imagined mobilities are media products that produce new ways of knowing and being that influence social relations; and virtual mobilities are the de-materialization of the means to communicate or movement in cyberspace that produce virtual communities without leaving one's physical space. For the purposes of this dissertation virtual and corporeal mobilities are of interest to understand the *connected migrant*. These mobilities and the connectivity that influences these network flows can also impact migrant belonging.

The *connected migrant* has "multi-belonging (to territories and networks), hypermobility, flexibility in the labor market, the capacity to turn relational dexterity into a productive and economically effective skill" (Diminescu, 2008, p. 569). As refugees are forced migrants whose corporeal mobility is in the context of war, trauma, loss of material and symbolic objects and nation-state belonging, it is necessary to understand the potential and limitations of the *connected migrant* in relation to the connected refugee. Table 4 identifies the similarities and differences between the *connected migrant* and the connected refugee.

Table 4. Characteristics of Connected Migrant versus Connected Refugee

	Diminescu's (2008) Connected Migrant	Connected Refugee
Connectivity	Connectivity produces bonds which create relational dexterity for economic benefit	Connectivity influenced by imagined affordances, temporality, and tech lingua franca
Mobility	Virtual mobility Local corporeal mobility Transnational corporeal mobility Hypermobility	Virtual mobility Local corporeal mobility Transnational corporeal mobility dependent on connectivity and economic stability. Potential future hypermobility.
Belonging	Multi-belonging to territories and network	Transnational belonging influenced by diasporicity and displaced nationhood; Local belonging influenced by enclave, prejudice, and access to diverse communities

The Connected Refugee

The connected refugee is any refugee with access to Information Communication Technology and thus has some degree of connectivity and mobility. The connected refugee has the potential to be the *connected migrant*. This study finds that the conditions of migration and potential barriers to leveraging technology moderate refugees' ability to produce the benefits of the *connected migrant* – hypermobility, relational dexterity for

economic benefit, and multi-belonging. It should be noted that while not all refugees experience barriers, the initial context of migration (displacement to resettlement) and being placed in enclaves does limit forms of mobility and belonging. I argue that over time refugees can adapt to the host culture, gain economic security, and citizenship which effect connectivity, mobility, and belonging. However, for refugees who are able to leverage technology thereby creating social continuity, they may attain increased connectivity, mobility, and belonging sooner allowing for a smoother transition from displacement to resettlement. The following sections expand on the potential barriers that resettled refugees may experience to produce (dis)connectivity, (im)mobility, and (un)belonging.

(Dis)connectivity

Refugee connectivity is influenced by imagined affordances, temporality, and the dominance of technology's lingua franca. While nearly all refugees own a smartphone, refugee connectivity is complicated by the perceived value of digital platforms and distrust of mediated connections. Or rather the psychological dimensions of the affordances of technology impact the local and transnational uses of ICTs. Nagy and Neff's (2015) concept of imagined affordances combines the material with the perceptual dimensions of human-computer-interaction to help us understand these connectivity barriers in the global and local context. Imagined affordances extends Hutchby's (2001) concept of technological affordances, wherein the technological environment affords or constrains human action and interaction. Imagined affordances emerge in between the "users' perceptions, attitudes, and expectation," the material and functional aspects of technologies, and the designer's expectations and intentions (Nagy & Neff, 2015, p. 5;

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Bucher and Helmond, 2017). Thus, technology use is influenced not only by the environment of the interface, but also the designer's intentions, and the potential or limitations of the user's imagined uses. In the case of forced migration, older refugees may be limited in the imagined benefits technological platforms may confer for the self.

However, the other side of this is the imagined dangers of technology. While distrust of technology was not moderated by age, digital natives may be socialized at a younger age to identify and avoid online scams. It should be noted that a defrauding industry has emerged in the U.S. in response to the vulnerability of recent migrants who do not know how to navigate institutional systems. Four participants told me anecdotally that they knew someone or had themselves been defrauded of money in some way by another Arab who they met through their network. If interactions with weak links in the network have resulted in negative consequences, then engaging on platforms where there are no network ties have that much more potential for causing some harm. Therefore, connectivity and dis-connectivity are informed by the imagined benefits and limitations technology affords the user, the refugee.

Temporality is another significant factor in producing (dis)connectivity. With migration, migrants are not only in different spaces but also different times. ICTs are often touted for their ability to collapse space-time to produce a virtual co-presence. However, I argue that time may be a significant barrier in connectivity. Many participants identified time difference as one of the biggest barriers to communication with their friends and family. Even though all participants have access to communication technology, connecting with loved ones abroad required labor for finding the "perfect

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time." When participants are waking up or getting off of work, their family and friends abroad may be going to sleep or just waking up to begin their day.

Additionally, the tempo of life in the U.S. is significantly different than in other countries. The U.S. is structured by capitalist time. Capitalist time organizes time based on productivity and capital accumulation structured by clock-time (Harvey, 1990; Urry, 2000). This occurs in contrast to organizing human activities around social relations based on social time, or natural time such as farming or other nature-based activities (Urry, 2000). Thus, resettled refugees, whose lives are structured by capitalist time, experience asynchronicity with family and friends abroad who are either in transit countries struggling to survive without legal work opportunities, in the refugee camps where time seems to slow to a near stop as people wait for repatriation or resettlement, or in other western countries where the time difference cannot be easily overcome. Capitalist time impacts resettled refugees' connectivity with family and friends abroad as well as with their local community. As noted in chapter 5, many refugees were simply too busy working, going to school, and tending to family needs to connect with family and friends abroad as well as to build and sustain relationships with people in the resettlement country. Building and maintaining community might become a future project when one has time. Therefore, connectivity is impacted by time difference and capitalist time and thus requires the labor of temporality to maintain the culture of bonds both transnationally and locally.

Language is another dimension of (dis)connectivity for refugees. While arguably the online sphere has expanded and evolved from English only to now offering multilingual translation options for diverse users; from its inception in the 1970's

computing literature and publications have been in English and continue to dominate the technology sphere with Russian as a close second (Grier, 2017). While the lingua franca of technology can change given a political shift in geopolitical dominance, currently English continues to be the common language for computer science. What this means is that most new and innovative applications, platforms, and technologies will first be in English and therefore developed for English speaking and reading users. Of course, future versions of these technologies may target diverse multilingual users. For refugees who do not speak or read in English, there is initially isolation and an inability to use these technologies.

Additionally, new users may need to be socialized into established practices and norms of certain platforms; however, as platform usages are not static, new practices and uses may develop around new users. As users influence tech practices and norms, new users can produce new ways of producing and consuming media. Issues of technology's lingua franca arise from the potential dis-connectivity and therefore digital exclusion of refugees which has potential to produce social exclusion (Alam & Imran, 2015).

While resettled refugees can and do learn English with time, age may be another factor in addressing the language gap. It may take older refugees more time to learn to read, write, and speak in another language both due to habituated ways of being as well as due to being immersed in ethnic and language-family enclaves. Therefore, while refugees may not be totally disconnected due to language barriers as now there are multilingual keyboards that allow users to communicate in their mother tongue as well as the video chat feature on smartphones, language barriers may still serve to limit the diversity of connectivity with people and platforms.

The implications of these tensions between connection and disconnection for resettled refugees lies in the economic impact. In Diminescu's (2008) concept of the *connected migrant*, connectivity can generate income-earning opportunities for migrants. Thus, dis-connectivity has the potential to limit access to economic opportunities which effects social mobility. Therefore, connectivity is important because refugees' capacity for connection may also produce those economic opportunities that help produce economic stability and perhaps even upward social mobility.

(Im)mobility

Mobility, generally understood against that which is sedentary, has come to encompass many dimensions of modern life including the physical, social, cyber, and symbolic. As Barglowski (2015) argues, mobility is associated with betterment for different areas of life and therefore "non-mobility has become symbolically devalued" (p. 3). Individuals with access to mobility, in a post-modern society, have mobility capital which produces symbolic value for the individual. "Mobility, like all forms of capital, is related to social inequality in social spaces" (Barglowski, 2015, p. 4). Thus, mobility and immobility produce and reproduce asymmetrical social positions.

Diminescu's (2008) *connected migrants* have hypermobility which, through connectivity, they are able to leverage for economic opportunities. Resettled refugees, however, due to the context of their migration, do not always have the same access to different forms of mobility as other migrants, or at least not initially. Corporeal and social mobility may be affected by the type of official documents migrants can access. Many participants I spoke to came to the U.S. with very few belongings and most reported that their paperwork (birth certificate, high school diploma, college diploma, medical records,

etc.) had been lost due to the destruction of war. Once they arrive in the U.S., refugees are supposed to receive a green card immediately so that they may work to pay back the resettlement loan; however, two participants reported delays in receiving appropriate paperwork after the 2016 election. Access to official documents can impact refugees' ability to retain their job and, more importantly, apply to higher paying jobs.

Additionally, corporeal mobility is affected by immigration status. After five years of living in the U.S., refugees may apply for citizenship. If and when they are approved for citizenship, only then may refugees apply for a U.S. passport. While refugees may apply for a refugee travel document, if they return to the country of persecution, their status as a refugee may be terminated (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, n.d.). Therefore, transnational corporeal mobility may be limited for the first five years.

Local corporeal mobility may also be limited initially. Many of the participants I interviewed lived in section 8 housing and were working multiple jobs to make ends meet. As refugees enter the country with a $10,000 loan with payments that begin immediately, they begin life in America in debt. The initial economic instability, paired with the language barrier and the restrictive nature of the enclave, may contribute to limitations to transnational and local corporeal mobility. While refugees have local corporeal mobility in general and through rideshare applications, older participants reported a knowledge gap of how to access diverse local populations. The social capital gained through a diverse network also opens up mobility into diverse physical spaces. Therefore, a limited network produces limited corporeal mobility. However, based on the findings of this research study, refugees can access the economic benefits produced by

transnational and local corporeal mobility if they are able to acquire local language, culturally adapt, and diversify their local networks, which may come with time.

Virtual mobility, or occupying diverse cyber-spaces, is more easily accessible for resettled refugees who own smartphones. I would argue all refugees experience some form of virtual mobility, however the degree of diversity and the complexity of use are dependent upon one's digital literacy and imagined technological affordances. Knowing how to use technology and perceiving the various social media platforms as having value and use for personal benefit impact resettled refugees' use of technology. Virtual mobility is important for refugees as the online sphere is a space where they may elevate their social position through discussion and debate with those in the diaspora (Bernal, 2006). This is especially important for those who may be marginalized or experiencing prejudice or discrimination in the country of resettlement. As discussed above, diversified networks allow for greater accumulation of social capital. Accessing diversified cyber-spaces, or virtual mobility, may allow refugees to access greater social capital which can impact their economic stability and social mobility. On the other hand, a lack of access to diverse cyber-spaces may adversely affect one's ability to elevate their social position and to access social capital.

Mobility and immobility have major implications for resettled refugees' ability to achieve economic and social parity with local populations. While Diminescu's (2008) *connected migrant* has hypermobility, I argue the connected refugee, initially, does not have diversified corporeal mobility. However, corporeal mobility can develop in time. Virtual mobility is moderated by age, digital literacy, and imagined affordances. To ensure refugees can access mobility capital and eventually come to have hypermobility,

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diversification of one's physical and cyber networks is necessary. This diversification has real implication for addressing social inequality and reaching parity.

(Un)belonging

The *connected migrant* operates in a culture of bonds facilitated by ICT connectivity to produce multi-belonging and hypermobility. Literature on migrant belonging and identity construction aims to capture the tensions of territorial, social, and cultural multiplicity inherent to the migrant experience. Refugees are unique from other types of migrants in that they have experienced a loss of homeland. However, this loss of homeland does not immediately preclude identity and affiliation with territorial nationhood. Or rather, refugees may still be oriented toward an imagined homeland based on their memories and nostalgia of the nation-state pre-conflict. As noted in Chapter 4, maintaining communication with friends and family abroad may serve as a painful reminder of loss for those refugees who are traumatized by displacement and resettlement. Therefore, some individuals may find it more helpful and healthy to cut ties or minimize communication that serve as reminders of the homeland. Refugee identity construction with the homeland is complicated by affective dimensions of displacement and resettlement. However, I argue that the modern refugee, with a globally dispersed transnational network and connective technology, takes on a global orientation which produces a cosmopolitan identity such that he/she belongs to the homeland, transit country, and resettlement countries (Vertovec & Cohen, 2002).

As trauma may serve as a barrier to maintaining belonging to the homeland, prejudice serves as one of the barriers to producing local belonging in the resettlement country. After 9/11, anti-Muslim rhetoric and Islamophobia became globally normative.

Indeed, there has been a rising number of hate crimes in the U.S. against American Muslims, including bullying in primary school, desecration of mosques, and incidences of extreme violence ("Coping with the Persistent Trauma of Anti-Muslim Rhetoric and Violence," 2019). At least four participants mentioned experiencing prejudice due to wearing the hijab. While many migrants and diasporans may experience marginalization and discrimination, this has particular significance for refugees as they do not have the same type of mobility to leave the resettlement country that other migrants might. However, I should note, Latino refugees placed in Arizona, which has a large Latino population, did not experience interpersonal discrimination and found a large community of non-refugees fairly quickly. Therefore, where refugees are resettled, the demographic makeup of the local population, and the cultural orientation of the city toward foreigners has implications for refugee belonging. As the U.S. is quite large with diverse values, orientations toward migrants, and varying levels of tolerance depending on the region, refugee belonging or marginalization may be dependent upon the region of resettlement. Indeed, as noted in Chapter 5, initially refugees are placed in enclaves that facilitate the transition to the resettlement country. While these enclaves can serve as communities, they can also produce involuntary encapsulation wherein refugees cannot access diverse populations that facilitate access to diverse resources in the resettlement country. Therefore, local belonging can be facilitated or limited by access to diverse spaces through diverse use of technology.

As Diminescu's (2008) *connected migrant* experiences a double presence of being both here and there, the question becomes to what extent can the resettled refugee experience this double presence. I believe, for refugees, this double presence is

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complicated by loss and discrimination. However, I do not believe that refugees experience a double absence either. Rather Tsuda's (2016) concept of diasporicity can help us understand the varying degrees of identification with the homeland, diaspora, and the country of resettlement that refugees experience that informs their identify construction. One cannot simply erase the identification with one's home country, nor can one permanently feel like an alien in their country of residence. Rather refugees experience the push and pull tension of belonging to the homeland, resettlement country, and the diaspora. These tensions are produced, resisted, and maintained through technology's connectivity to the global and local network. Thus, belonging and un-belonging in the transnational and local network are in constant negotiation with the emotional and material needs of those in the network, the material and emotional needs of the resettled refugee, and the geopolitical climate abroad and in the resettlement country.

Implications & Policy Recommendations

Refugee mobility, belonging, and connectivity have implications for socio-economic integration and social mobility. Without an understanding of the potential uses and gratifications provided by technology, as well as the skills to use technology, refugees may not be able to leverage the full connective possibilities of technological platforms which may affect corporeal, virtual, and social mobility as well as local and global belonging. Diminescu's (2008) *connected migrant* is a utopic ideal of transnational belonging in a post-modern world of flows, bricolage experience, and access to diverse forms of capital for material and immaterial benefit through technologies' generative

capacity. For resettled refugees, mobility, belonging, and connectivity are moderated by age, imagined affordances, digital literacy, time, and language.

In addition to the socio-economic implications, one's ability to harness the connective possibility of technology for mobility and belonging has the potential to produce empowerment for refugees. I define empowerment in Chapter 1 as self-determination for goal attainment. I believe goal attainment occurs via skills, knowledge, and access to information and resources (Van Dijk & Hacker, 2003; Livingstone, 2004; Mehra, Merkel, & Bishop, 2004). Therefore, refugees can be empowered through the social connectivity produced by digital technology to provide access to resources for language support, housing accommodations, jobs, education, and healthcare.

In order to address these issues of socio-economic integration and empowerment related to leveraging connectivity, I propose a multipronged approach. As indicated in the literature, social continuity and connectivity are salient to migrant transition and integration, thus I believe addressing gaps in social continuity and connectivity must occur at the international, national, and local level. First, I discuss a proposal for pre-resettlement computer classes. Then, I discuss computer and technology classes that should be offered post-resettlement through resettlement organizations. Next, I discuss the role of the enclave in facilitating transitions, cultural adaptation, and digital literacy. Following that, I offer options to facilitate connection between the local host population and resettled refugees. Then, I discuss the need to transpose education systems from country of origin into the American education system. Finally, I discuss the need to reassess the refugee placement in the U.S.

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Technology classes by UN or international NGOs. I believe it is necessary to hold technology classes in refugee camps as well as areas known to have a high population of refugees such as cities in Turkey and Jordan. The goal of these classes is two-fold: social networking and digital literacy. While all participants used social media sites, in most cases elder refugees (30 and above) did not use the site to expand their network and connect with strangers. Especially for individuals who see the internet as an untrustworthy space, connectivity is a risky activity. As discussed above, this limited connectivity has implications for limited mobility and economic integration. Therefore, digital literacy classes are necessary to teach refugees (of all ages) how to avoid scams and what is legitimate versus suspicious online behavior. I believe digital literacy classes, which teach individuals both consumption and production of digital media content, can address the constraints produced by imagined affordances. Once refugees of all ages feel comfortable navigating the online sphere, this should destigmatize the untrustworthiness of social network platforms allowing for more connectivity.

For refugees who are illiterate, attaining digital literacy and social networking may be difficult. However, modern communication is moving more and more toward video communication. This includes Snapchat, posting videos on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and on messaging platforms like Whatsapp and Facebook Messenger. Therefore, there should be a strong component of creating and consuming messages in video format so as not to exclude refugees with limited literacy.

While not all refugees in refugee camps have a smartphone, most refugees reported knowing someone who did have a smartphone. Smartphones might be used by multiple users in refugee camps. Therefore, even individuals who do not own a

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smartphone can often borrow one for a short time period. Therefore, these classes would

not require the UN or NGOs to provide desk tops, but rather would teach digital

technology and online social networking through smartphones refugees already own or

have access to.

Technology classes by resettlement organizations. Once refugees have

resettled in the U.S., resettlement organizations should provide ongoing

computer/technology classes for refugees. These classes would specifically focus on

learning how to create a resume, look for jobs, and use websites specific to the local

context. For instance, I regularly use AZ Central to find local events. Or web applications

and sites like Groupon, Craigslist, or Nextdoor can be helpful for finding affordable

products, services, and events.

Computer/technology classes can also be useful for finding language learning

sites or applications like DuoLingo, Babbel, or YouTube for language acquisition.

Language acquisition is particularly important to transition and integration. As

resettlement organizations are funded by the federal government, I believe they should

also invest money to create web applications that focus on English language learning.

These applications should focus on using the mother tongue of refugee groups as well as

icons for refugees who are illiterate. Illiteracy in one's mother tongue may not present an

issue for learning a different language ("Refugees Learn to Write in Greek but Remain

Illiterate in Their Mother Tongue," 2018). Therefore, while initial measure may need to

be taken, such as web applications using icons, with time refugees can learn to read and

write in the local, host language.

While resettlement organizations are having much of their funding restricted due to the current administration's isolationist and protectionist stance against globalization, resettlement organizations utilize many volunteers to run their classes. Therefore, these organizations would primarily need to provide space for refugees to meet to hold the classes and can have volunteers run the classes. In particular, volunteering could be a good service-learning project for college students who tend to hold irregular schedules compared to working adults. Therefore, resettlement organizations should seek to build relationships with local colleges.

I believe that technology classes broadly can help refugees for navigating the displacement to resettlement process, to access internet-based jobs, to connect with diverse groups globally that might provide access to diverse forms of knowledge, and to understand how to navigate institutions and socio-cultural ways of being in the country of resettlement. These classes hold particular significance for older refugees and for those who have predominately relied on face-to-face connection. These classes can disrupt suspicions of the cyber-sphere as an untrustworthy space where scams take place as well as help refugees understand the potential problem-solving uses and connectivity building capacity of technology.

Role of the enclave. Identifying and cultivating relationships with community leaders within refugee enclaves should be an important goal for resettlement organizations. Specifically, community leaders can direct new refugees to classes and programs that are available from the city as well as the resettlement organization. Community leaders can also pair younger community members (aged 18 to 29) with older members to help navigate institutions, online sites, introduce new and diverse social

spaces, and assist with cultural adaptation. As noted earlier, youth have an easier time with language acquisition, technology use, and accessing a diverse range of knowledge and resources due to access to diverse spaces. A program which pairs younger members from the same family language with older member can provide an important link to the local population.

Local Connectivity. Resettled refugees may not know how to access local populations. This has serious implications for social mobility, economic integration, and belonging. Involuntary encapsulation also impacts the host population in that they are unable to benefit from the multicultural diversity that produces dynamic ways of knowing and being. Through involuntary encapsulation the local population may be unable to access diverse talent and brain gain. Additionally, without interaction the host population may hold prejudiced views based on misinformation about different racial or religious groups. Thus, local connectivity benefits both the refugee population and the host population. I propose three approaches to resolving the issue of involuntary encapsulation: public campaigns, locally-based Discord servers, and workplace mentoring programs.

First, there needs to be locally sponsored events that focus on multiculturalism that bring together local populations with refugees. These events need to be publicized in local media, on social media, and in areas of cities where there may not be refugees. These events can serve as a space to interact, try local and global food, witness various cultural performances, and promote tolerance and empathy. In Phoenix there are often local street fairs and events meant to promote community and local business. I think these events can be scaled up to include more diverse populations and communities. Since

many refugees live in Glendale and may not have transportation, it would require the city to offer buses to these types of events. With sponsorship by local companies, transportation would not cost the city a significant amount of money and companies would be able to advertise on buses city-wide.

Next, each city that refugees are resettled in should begin utilizing Discord servers to create connectivity with local community members. Discord is a free digital platform that enables users to create chat channels based on interests. Resettlement organizations or other non-profits could use Discord to connect local populations with refugee populations around hobbies or various fields of interest. Since Discord is an online platform, those without transportation could still access these communities through their smartphones. Additionally, resettled refugees can communicate with locals on these chat channels using Google translator. Therefore, local Discord servers are financially and linguistically accessible.

Lastly, using New York City's Big Brother Big Sister mentoring program as a model, I think it would benefit both local companies and refugees to create an incentivized mentorship program. In this day in age, consumers are interesting in ethnical consumption of products. Therefore, to boost their image, many companies participate in corporate social responsibility wherein companies engage in pro-social behaviors to give the image that they care and are enacting positive change in the world ("What is Corporate Social Responsibility," 2019). In New York City, Big Brother Big Sister has created partnerships with multiple corporations wherein employees are paired with a child to serve as a mentor twice a month from 4-6pm, during company time ("Workplace Mentoring Partners," n.d.). In my personal communication with a former program

manager, I was told that employees were incentivized in various ways, including mentorship being considered in promotions.

I believe we can create a similar program for refugees. Currently, the people who have the most time to volunteer with refugees are students and retired people. Unfortunately, these two groups do not have access to various types of capital. I believe by creating a workplace mentorship program between corporations and resettlement organizations, refugees will be able to access working adults who can help them build key skills for acquiring jobs as well as give them access to diverse knowledge and spaces. Corporations benefit through the brand management enhanced by corporate social responsibility. This would serve as a win-win.

Education - brain waste to brain gain. Currently, there is no system in place to properly transfer education and skills from country of origin to the resettlement country. A familiar trope of the American immigrant story is the cab driver that was a doctor in his country ("Skilled immigrants often struggle to put degrees, credentials to use in U.S.," 2017). Not only does this impact the earning potential of the immigrant, this also impacts the settlement country in that they are losing out on skilled workers and knowledge that could benefit the country. Refugees who have lost everything and start out their life in the U.S. in debt are particularly affected by this gap in the system. I argue there needs to be a governmental effort to identify transferrable skills and education credits of resettled refugees. The current system produces brain waste, or loss of beneficial skills and knowledge. By creating a system, either through testing or internships, key skills can be recaptured and put to use such that the economy of the country of resettlement benefits. A system that assess refugee education and skills would produce brain gain for the U.S.

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Re-assessment of placement program. Finally, I believe given the current geopolitical climate of protectionism and anti-immigration occurring across the globe, resettlement organizations need to carefully consider within which cities they place refugees. While we need to be careful of overpopulating sanctuary cities and distributing the responsibility of placement across many resettlement organizations so as not to stress the resources of a few, I think it is also necessary to look at the political climate of a city before placing refugees. Issues of racism, xenophobia, and islamophobia can exist in any place but might be more likely to manifest in politically conservative cities. Therefore, placement organizations should take into consideration the race and religion of the refugee, pre-existing communities, and the political climate of a city prior to placement. To this end, there is a new software, named Annie, which uses machine-learning to assess "physical ailments, age, levels of education, and language spoken" to assist with refugee placement to a place they are most likely to succeed ("How technology could revolutionize refugee resettlement," 2019). This has implications for refugee mental health and belonging, and community cohesion.

Transnational Contextual Relationality

This research has delineated the barriers that refugees may face in achieving connectivity, mobility, and belonging and potential policy recommendations to address those barriers. I now offer the concept of transnational contextual relationality to understand how the context of migration and settlement may influence communication and relationships in the network. While this concept can apply to all transnational communication between migrants and their network, there is particular applicability of this concept to understanding resettled refugees' communication with their network.

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Resettled refugees are unique from other migrants in that migration occurs in the context of forced displacement and resettlement to countries without any choice. That is not to say that refugees are without self-determination or agency, but that in the context of war and trauma, choices are limited and based on survival and safety.

Transnational contextual relationality occurs between actors in the network comprised of the settlement country, homeland, and diaspora. For refugees, transnational contextual relationality occurs between the resettlement country and homeland, resettlement country and transit country/refugee camp, and resettlement country and other's resettlement country.

Transnational contextual relationality is influenced by global geo-spatial politics and situated embodiment. Global geo-spatial politics are influenced by global dynamics and flows between nation-states that reproduce and resist cultural hegemony and dichotomies of East-West or Global South and Global North comprised of strong and weak economies and global political influence. For instance, labor migrants may emigrate from a nation-state with a weak economy to a nation-state with a strong economy. While these workers may strengthen the economy of the settlement country they may simultaneously strengthen the economy of the homeland through remittances, thereby increasing the national gross domestic product of the homeland. However, depending on which country the migrants came from and which country they settled in, there may be more or less opportunity to integrate into the host country and exchanges of cultural goods, remittances, or political influence. These flows between nation-states and their impact can best be understood by the concept of simultaneity (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004).

Tsuda's (2012) taxonomies of simultaneity offer an understanding of transborder engagement between migrants in the settlement country and homeland. Tsuda identifies four types of transborder flows: zero-sum, co-exist, positive reinforcement, and negative reinforcement. Zero-sum transnational relationships are when immigrants are more involved in one society over the other. Co-exist transnational relationships are when immigrants simultaneously engage with the home and host country, but the engagement does not influence one country over the over. Positive reinforcing transnational relationships are when immigrants are increasingly incorporated into the receiving country such that they are able to access resources that enable greater engagement with the homeland. Finally, negative reinforcement is when disengagement with one country causes disengagement with other. However, refugees belong to a diaspora and belong to transnational families. Therefore, simultaneity needs to move beyond binational engagement to consider multinational engagement. I argue that refugee transborder engagement differs based on the context of who they are communicating with and from where. Communication will differ based on where refugees are resettled in relation to those in their network. Refugee communication strategies are influenced by the state of the political party and security of the nation-state in the host country and homeland, where other's in their network have been resettled, and the level of precarity in the transit countries or refugee camp.

Situated embodiment is another influence on transnational contextual relationality. Embodiment is knowing through the body. Extending Butler (1993) and Weiss's (1999) concept of embodiment, the materialization of discourses and politics on the body, to understand how the context of the situation produces knowing in the body of

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the refugee, I argue that refugees' embodied experiences are situated in the transnational and local context. For example, some refugees may be traumatized from the displacement and loss of war, while other refugees may not be traumatized from displacement or may have been born into refugee camps where there was no personal experience of forced migration. The body's experience in the transit country or the camp may produce different ways of knowing and being in the refugee's body.

Resettlement then produces new discourses on the body. Racialization and prejudice in the host country can produce new experiences on the body of the refugee which produce new ways of knowing and being. In contrast, those who may not experience any prejudice and easily integrate into the host society may produce a different way of knowing and being. Moving from the specificities of the transnational to local experience produces a psycho-social embodied context with which refugees approach relational communication with the network.

Taken together, global geo-spatial politics and situated embodiment comprise the locative communicative behavior of migrants, or what I term transnational contextual relationality. This locative communicative behavior occurs within the network as well as locally with the host population and/or enclave. With this concept I hope to elucidate relational communication behaviors of the participants in my study. The following applies the geo-spatial and embodiment lens to communication practices of study participants to understand their network management strategies.

On different soil. Participants articulated different communication strategies with those in the homeland versus those in transit countries or resettlement countries. In order to understand these different strategies, we need to consider the geo-spatial politics of

where refugees have come from and where they have been resettled. As the U.S. and western nations are hierarchically ordered due to the history of colonization, industrialization, and the modern global economy, resettlement in the U.S. has certain attendant privileges. Whether these privileges are real or perceived does not matter as refugees resettled in the U.S. are considered be living a luxurious life. Many participants discussed family and friends in the homeland and transit country assuming they were so rich that they had "bags of money". This perception was so ingrained, based on media, that many participants felt that they couldn't explain the truth of their lived reality and therefore did not even try. Regardless of this perception of wealth, resettled refugees did have better economic opportunities and safety compared to those in the transit countries and in the homeland. Therefore, participants had to limit what they could vent or complain about to family and friends who were experiencing economic and safety insecurity. For instance, a participant who had to undergo multiple surgeries in the U.S. did not tell his family in Syria because he didn't want to worry them especially as they were dealing with food insecurity and bombings. This differs from the openness with which participants spoke to family and friends resettled in Europe or Australia. Participants reported sharing more and having a mutual understanding of the everyday experience with those in their network who lived in western nations.

However, privilege is also contextual for resettled refugees. Many refugees who had family and friends in Europe lamented about the healthcare system in America. In comparison to universal healthcare in other countries and other social goods like a basic income, some participants reported that their lives were more difficult than those in their network who were resettled in Europe.

Additionally, Arab participants were sure to emphasize that they were coming from a nation-state that was modern and not impoverished. Syrian participants often juxtaposed Syria with African nations claiming that even with government surveillance and censorship, they were more modernized and therefore could more easily understand and integrate into western nations. Refugees reify the global social order of nation-states through discourses of modernity and tradition.

Connecting with the host population is also influenced by where the refugee is coming from and where they are resettled. For instance, one participant who left Iraq for Syria found a seamless transition and connection with the host society in Syria compared the U.S. While this may not seem like a surprising find it does illustrate how the degree of cultural, religious, and phenotypical difference can impact adaptation to the host society. As mentioned previously, hijabi Arab women experienced prejudice in the U.S. related to their outward display of Islam. While the U.S. is considered multi-cultural, the anti-Islamic sentiment that has grown since 2001 has constructed a false ideological dichotomy of the West versus the rest, especially against Arab and Islamic culture. Concepts such as sharia law are mis-interpreted and rhetorically constructed as a threat to U.S. democratic freedom. These geo-spatial politics play out on the body of the refugee.

Refugees from African nations resettled in the U.S. enter into the historical context of American slavery and African-American identity politics. Additionally, post-colonial economic destabilization, civil wars, religious conflict, and ethnic group divisions have contributed to ongoing conflict across multiple nation-states in Africa. Continued media coverage of wars, famine, and corruption in African nation-states paired with news of financial, voluntary, and military aid sent from the West have produced a

simplified image of African nations. Long-term conflict and global political positioning inform the relationality between refugees from African nations and the West.

As displacement has been a long-term condition for some African refugees, resettlement becomes the fulfillment of long-term desires. This is in contrast to Syrian refugees whose displacement to resettlement has occurred in a relatively acute time frame. Therefore, the resettlement of African refugees in western nations influences communication with the network differently than Arab refugees. African refugees are speaking from a different geo-spatial political position than Arab refugees. Resettlement of African refugees may include sharing more nuances of life in America as a way to extend knowledge in the network. However, as noted above, the degree of precarity, poverty, and instability of those in transit countries or the homeland will influence to what extent resettled refugee share difficulties or problems they face. Similarly, communication with those in Europe or Australia is less about sharing the experiences of America as it diverges from images in the media and more about sharing the daily life experiences. The relational gap between resettled refugees with those in their network is influenced by politics, economy, geography, and demography of placement of those in the network. The political context of the sending, receiving, and transit countries produce the geo-spatial political location from which the refugees speaks and what they can or cannot speak of.

In the refugee body. Situated embodiment within the refugee body seeks to understand how refugee experiences in the homeland, transit country, and resettlement country inform the psycho-social location from which refugees communicate with those in the transnational and local network. Two primary components that inform the psycho-

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social location of refugees are trauma and discrimination. Traumatic events and discrimination do not impact the mind and body uniformly. Two people may experience the same stressful event and for one the body produces symptoms of PTSD and for the other it does not. That being said, displacement from one's homeland is a stressful, traumatic event that still informs the body of the refugee. Therefore, displacement creates a new way of knowing and being in the refugee body. However, the level of response to the stressful event may produce different psycho-social profiles and locations that inform communication strategies.

Additionally, the journey and time in the transit country or refugee camp can produce a secondary or new type of trauma on the body of the refugee. Many Syrian participants related stories of discrimination and passing in the transit country. As Syrian refugees are not considered refugees in countries like Jordan and Turkey, they are unable to work, but also experience discrimination and segregation. One participant told me of how refugee children in Jordan had to go to night school so as to keep them separated from native Jordanian children. As if refugee children were somehow subhuman and contaminants to the local population. These experiences in the transit country can produce additional trauma and emotional stress. As one participant put it, the initial shock of living in the transit country was so significant that they did not experience any shock when they were resettled in the U.S. However, another participant who was able to pass as Turkish due to prior business dealings with the country, reported having an easier time in Turkey than in the U.S. initially. However, it should be noted that passing for Arab refugees in transit countries is contingent upon one's ability to apply the correct accent to Arabic, a language already known to the participants.

Transit countries may not always produce new trauma if refugees do not experience segregation and discrimination. For instance, an Iraqi participant related how displacement from Iraq to Syria was a positive experience where they were welcomed with open arms and felt comfortable with the similarity of the culture, religion, and phenotypic features. Acceptance by the transit country produced emotional and economic stability for some refugees.

Others who may not be traumatized in the transit country include those born into refugee camps. Two of the participants I spoke to had been born in refugee camps, which is being born into liminality, or between spaces. They did not experience loss of home but instead were always already displaced. Therefore, not all refugee bodies are informed by the experience of trauma or discrimination in the transit country.

Finally, there is the experience in the resettlement country. Once refugees are resettled into a new nation-state the degree to which they are welcomed and can be incorporated into the resettlement country produce a new way of being and knowing on the refugee body. Refugee relational behavior in the resettlement country is informed by the level of acceptance or discrimination they experience. However, refugee engagement in the resettlement country is also informed by their previous trauma. Perkins et al. (2011) found that migrants' psychological state was informed by their experience of migration and that "many serious challenges of acculturation, integration, discrimination, and acceptance remain for the migrant and receiving communities" (p. 241). On the one hand, refugee trauma impacts communication and relationality with the host society; on the other hand, the socio-political issues within the host country impact reception of refugees. As discussed above, within the specific context of the U.S., anti-Islamic

rhetoric and a history of slavery and oppression may influence the interactions between host and refugee populations. As one participant put it,

> "What I can remember is it was very hard transitioning. Because, first of all, I didn't speak the language. Second of all, I was very new. I didn't know how to act or what to do basically, especially in school. Especially the fact that, at that time, it was just after 9/11. I feel like being as Muslim is very hard. As a woman, I feel like a lot of people were prejudiced and they have their discrimination."

The impact of experiencing discrimination and prejudice when one has already experienced displacement can produce additional psycho-social stressors on refugees. These compounding experiences of loss, discrimination, and trauma experienced in the body of the refugee influence their communication with the transnational network and the local population.

Transnational contextual relationality and simultaneity. As noted above, the context of geo-spatial politics and situated embodiment inform the location from which refugees communicate with the local and transnational network. Simultaneity has primarily focused on binational engagement and flows, however, should expand to include multinational engagement and flows. Transnational contextual relationality for refugees includes diasporic flows and can provide an understanding of the different communication strategies refugees use with their network. While I do believe the experiences in the local context influences engagement in the transnational context, the local context for refugees in the U.S. is made up of the host population and the enclave. Therefore, I think the needs of the network along with the context dictates the communication flow. For instance, whereas resettled refugees may engage in a

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unidirectional flow of providing emotional and/or financial support for family and friends in the homeland or transit county, they may simultaneously receive and give emotional and/or financial support from family and friends in resettlement countries.

I argue that refugees are simultaneously engaging in different communication strategies and flows with different constituents in the network and in the local population, which requires that we reconsider the taxonomies of zero-sum relations and negative reinforcing relations within simultaneity. As refugees are more often than not permanently settled in the resettlement country, their engagement with the local population is necessary. Whether the host population is the enclave or larger society may depend on the degree of discrimination, racialization, or political climate in the settlement country. The connected migrant/connected refugee concept disrupts the binaries to produce multiplicity. Connected refugees can have simultaneous engagement with different communities in different countries that allay the negative effects of trauma, discrimination, and loss and build a sense of mutli-belonging.

Technology should not be seen as a panacea for trauma and loss. As noted in chapter 4, there is some risk associated with communicating with the transnational network. Specifically, traumatized individuals or those still at risk for harm might choose to distance themselves or minimized communication with the network. Indeed, some refugees may choose to identify with the host population and minimize communication with the diaspora and homeland if those connections cause pain. However, it was not the scope of this research project to interview refugees who had cut ties with their transnational communities. As this research was interested in people who maintained transnational ties, I argue that refugees are simultaneously engaged with those in the

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homeland, transit countries, and resettlement countries in ways that allow for the sending

and receiving of various types of resources including emotional support, but also require

communication strategies that take into consideration the context of those in the network.

Limitations & Future Directions

The goal of this study was to understand refugee technology use for transnational

communication and intercultural adjustment in the context of resettlement in Phoenix,

Arizona. As such, this study would have benefitted greatly from interviewing more

participants per ethnic/racial group as well as age groups. I believe interviewing more

participants in their 40's and 50's would have given a more nuanced understanding of the

impact of age on technology use. While there is a fairly large representation of Arab

participants, this study would have also benefitted from more interviews with Latino and

African refugees. There were no Asian refugees interviewed in the study, therefore the

experience of Asian refugees is not represented in this study. Better racial and ethnic

representation would have given a more nuanced view of how cultural values impact

transnational communication and intercultural adjustment.

Additionally, as it was the scope of this study to understand the experiences of

resettlement and integration, a significant limitation is that I did not actively pursue

questions of how race and or religion impacted resettlement. These issues would

sometimes emerge naturally when the participant brought them up, but I believe it would

strengthen our understanding of belonging and integration of resettled refugees by

engaging participants on their thoughts and experiences on race and religion in the U.S.

Future studies might seek to understand how mobility and belonging are

experienced by refugees who have been resettled for 10 years or longer. The majority of

refugees I interviewed had only been in the U.S. for less than 5 years. As time is a moderator of connectivity, mobility, and belonging, a study looking at refugees who have been in the country longer can elucidate to what degree time can impact socioeconomic integration, empowerment, and multi-belonging. Additionally, as connectivity is the foundation of producing the *connected migrant*, a future study should seek to understand the impact of computer classes on refugee connectivity, mobility, and belonging. I believe a study that utilizes a pre-test and post-test experimental design would significantly contribute to this literature.

Conclusion

Through a grounded theory approach, this qualitative study sought to understand to what extent the concept of the *connected migrant* could apply to the experience of resettled refugees. This research study gives a nuanced understanding of the connected refugee in the specific context of resettlement in the U.S. This research indicates that age, imagined affordances, digital literacy, language, and time moderate connectivity, belonging, and mobility for resettled refugees. Understanding this, the need for greater support for technology classes pre- and post-resettlement should be apparent. This would address issues of age, imagined affordances, and digital literacy. Diversifying the language of applications to address the language needs of refugees who are accepted into the U.S. should also be taken into consideration. Additionally, producing local connectivity through mentorship programs can produce economic stability for refugees and brain gain for the resettlement city. To best serve refugee and host populations we must identify transferrable skills and assess placement of refugees. Additionally, the concept of transnational contextual relationality can help us understand the locative

communication strategies that refugee use to communicate with the transnational and local network. This research contributes to digital diaspora, transnationalism, migration, technology affordances, and digital divide literature. Continued research on resettled refugees and *connected migrants* can help us better understand the role of the network in facilitating transitions and integration that benefit both the settlement country and the migrant.

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APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Mediated Transnational Communication: Digital Technology Use and Transnational
Communication Practices of Resettled Refugees

My name is Nandita Sabnis, and I am a graduate student at Arizona State University. I am part of a research team studying how resettled refugees use digital technology in the resettlement process as well as keep in touch with friends and family abroad.

To be included in this study, you must meet the following criteria:
1. You must be 18 years or older
2. You must own and use a smart phone or computer
3. You must be admitted into the U.S. as a refugee
4. Have family and/or friends living abroad

If you have any questions about meeting the qualifications for this study, please email me at Nandita.Sabnis@asu.edu

If you meet the criteria above, you may qualify to take part in the study. The study consists of a 90 minute interview where you will be asked questions about your experiences with digital technology use, the resettlement experience, and communication practices with friends and family. After the interview, you may be contacted for a follow up interview that may last up to 30-minute. All responses will be made anonymous and no identifying information will be made available.

Your participation is completely voluntary. At any time, you may choose to end the interview. Once the interview is completed, you will receive a $25 Amazon gift card.

Thank you for considering being part of this study.

If you are interested in participating, please contact me at Nandita.Sabnis@asu.edu

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Maricopa Community Colleges. If you have concerns about this study, or you feel that your rights have been violated in any way, please contact:
Maricopa Community Colleges IRB Office, 2411 W 14th St, Tempe, AZ 85281, United States of America, irb_office@domail.maricopa.edu
(480) 731-8701

Nandita Sabnis
Doctoral Candidate
Arizona State University

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Hello, _____. I would like to thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview today. This interview is for a research study that investigates how digital technology can help with the resettlement process through everyday use as well as keeping in touch with friends and family abroad. I'm going to be asking you about your communication practices as well as your experience with resettlement in the U.S.

It is important for you to know that the findings from this interview will be used for academic research and publication only, and will not be used for any other use. I would like you to feel free to share your opinions, observations, and experiences. I will be audio-taping this interview in case I miss anything during the interview. Before we begin do you have any questions about the consent form or anything else?

Demographic Information:
1. Country of Origin
2. Occupation now
3. Occupation in country of origin
4. Level of Education
5. Gender
6. Age

Mediated Transnational Communication Practices:
1. How long have you been in America?
2. What was your journey here? Where had you been living prior to being resettled in Phoenix? Briefly, tell me about your life before coming to Phoenix.
3. Where are your family and/or friends resettled?
4. How often do you keep in touch with them?
5. What web application do you use most to keep in touch with them? Why?
6. Give me an example of some of the things you talk about with your family? Friends?
7. Can you think of a time when talking to your friends or family abroad helped with something you were experiencing in America?
8. What is the most important part of staying connected to people living abroad?
9. What is the biggest challenge to staying connected to people living abroad?
10. How has communicating with friends and family changed since coming to America?

Technology Use & Resettlement:
11. When did you first learn to use a smart phone?
12. What is the biggest challenge to using this device? Language barrier? Cost? Usage?
13. In what ways has the smart phone helped during the initial resettlement process? Job? Housing? Other resources?
14. What is the primary use for your smart phone?
15. What is the most difficult aspect of resettlement?
16. How, if at all, does having a smart phone address this difficulty?
17. How have you used your smart phone to adjust to life in America?

18. Do you use your smartphone to pay bills?
19. Do you have a community here? How do you keep in touch with them?
20. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your technology use, maintaining communication with friends, family, the larger community, or about the resettlement process?