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State Policy Outcomes on Refugee Integration and Success

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Abstract

Though U.S. refugee resettlement is primarily managed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the process of ensuring refugee success upon arrival often relies on state-level policy. In this research, I analyze the relationship between state resettlement policies, including welfare distribution, ESL education, and publicly-funded resettlement programs, and refugee social and economic outcomes, including employment, home ownership, and English proficiency. My findings indicate that there is a slight positive relationship between state resettlement service accessibility and refugee employment, home ownership, and English proficiency. However, analysis results regarding state welfare policy and ESL education produced null results. Ultimately, I recommend increased strategic data collection in refugee communities on both the state and federal level to guide evidence-based policy.

Key Words: Refugee, Migrant, Immigrant, State Government, Policy, Resettlement, Welfare, ESL Education, Foreign-born, U.S. Census.

Introduction

On March 17th, 1980, President Jimmy Carter signed the Refugee Act into law, establishing a clear U.S. refugee resettlement policy and increasing the quota for annual refugee admittance. Since the act's passage, the United States has led the international community in refugee resettlement, opening its doors to approximately 3 million individuals fleeing war, persecution, and climate crisis over the course of forty years (Pew Research Center, 2018). However, in 2017, shifting administrational priorities dramatically reduced the number of refugees resettled in the U.S., nosediving from 97,000 refugees resettled in 2016 to 28,000 resettled in 2017 ("Population Statistics" *UNHCR*, 2018). Canada now leads the United States in refugee resettlement for the first time in four decades, with the U.S. projected to further lower its resettlement quota to 18,000 in 2020 (Alvarez, 2019). Despite the United States' decrease in total number of refugees resettled, the number of displaced persons, asylees, and refugees globally continues to grow, with an estimated 25.9 million individuals eligible for resettlement in 2019 ("2018 Figures at a Glance." *UNHCR*, 2018).

Most resettlement advocates cite humanitarian arguments for resettling refugees, who are individuals that are "unable or unwilling to return to his or her home country because of a well-founded fear of persecution due to race, membership in a particular social group, political opinion, religion, or national origin" (Public Law 96-212 - The Refugee Act of 1980). Aside from the ethical imperative to resettle refugees, though, there is an economic incentive to welcome refugees to the United States. A 2017 Department of Health and Human Services study found that refugees contributed an additional $63 billion in tax revenue to the U.S. in the past decade, even when accounting for the federal and state investments in refugee resettlement programs (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017). However, the study noted that

refugees do not begin substantially contributing tax revenue until they achieve English-speaking proficiency and find steady employment.

One governmental strategy to hasten refugees' transition from sponsored asylees to wage-earning permanent residents is allowing refugees access to welfare and other forms of public assistance, including English language programs and public education (Bernstein and Dubois, 2018). Additionally, states and the federal government invest in refugee resettlement by offering grants to nonprofit organizations and volunteer agencies focused specifically on refugee integration efforts (Connor, 2017). These public investments are aimed at reducing the length of time in which refugees utilize public assistance, with the goal of expediting the refugees' contributions through tax revenue. However, as public investment in integration programs varies drastically from state to state, a question arises: How do various state resettlement policies affect refugee integration and success? This thesis project seeks to answer this question.

Literature Review

Before this question can be answered, it is critical to analyze existing academic research on refugee resettlement outcomes in the United States. Literature on this subject generally falls into three camps. The first, and largest, camp examines economic and social integration in refugee communities over time to determine whether refugees contribute to the United States as a whole. This camp is directed at justifying federal resettlement programs, especially in response to shrinking refugee resettlement quotas between 2016 and present day. The second camp focuses on refugee resettlement outcomes in specific municipalities. This literature seeks to determine whether cities' resettlement programs produce positive economic and social outcomes in local refugee communities, with the goal of guiding policymakers to implement similarly successful resettlement programs in their own communities. A third camp focuses on refugee

mental health adaptations in the United States, analyzing psychological treatment outcomes. Finally, a fourth camp of literature specifically analyzes the role of language acquisition in refugee integration in the U.S., with an eye towards improving English-as-a-second-language (ESL) programs geared towards refugees.

Economic and Social Outcomes over Time

Most literature on refugee integration and resettlement success implements long-term studies to analyze how refugees are faring in the United States (Bernstein and Dubois, 2018; Evans and Fitzgerald, 2017; Kerwin, 2018; Capps, et. al, 2015; Kallick and Mathema, 2016; Fix, et. al, 2017). These studies use U.S. Census and American Community Survey data to determine the economic, linguistic, and social integration of refugees in the United States (Bernstein and Dubois, 2018; Evans and Fitzgerald, 2017; Fix, et. al, 2017). They repeatedly find that the longer a refugee is in the United States, the more likely they are to participate in the labor force, make an income, learn English, and contribute socially and culturally to their communities (Bernstein and Dubois, 2018; Evans and Fitzgerald, 2017; Capps, et. al, 2015). Bernstein and Dubois' longitudinal study reveals refugees participate in the workforce at higher rates than natural-born U.S. citizens (p. 9), stop using public benefits over time (p. 13), and 80% become naturalized citizens who vote and participate democratically (p. 15).

Similarly, Evans and Fitzgerald's research on economic and social outcomes of different refugee age groups in the United States finds that refugees' economic stability improves over time, but overall wealth remains lower than the wealth of non-refugee U.S. citizens (p. 5). Evans and Fitzgerald also find that refugee wealth and social outcomes are stratified across age groups, with a particular focus on age at resettlement. Refugees arriving before age 14 tend to gain fluency in English, graduate high school, and pursue higher education at the same rate as non-

refugee citizens, although refugees arriving after the age of 14 perform lower than average on all three of these metrics. Refugees arriving after age 14 also have higher unemployment rates and higher welfare usage than other groups (p. 6).

Kerwin's study corroborates Bernstein and Dubois' and Evans and Fitzgerald's conclusion that refugees find economic stability and social integration over time in the United States, and also offers statistics measuring refugee integration as a whole. Using American Community Survey data, Kerwin finds refugees' median household income is $43,000, 63% of refugees have U.S.-born children, 40% of refugees are married to U.S. citizens, and 67% have gained naturalized citizenship (p. 206). These statistics further illustrate the degree of refugees' economic and social stability in the United States, with an emphasis on time as a driving factor behind refugee success.

One shortcoming of long-term research studying the U.S. refugee population as a whole is that although these studies acknowledge a variety of state and local resettlement policies across the U.S., neither study focuses on how these various policies affect integration. Rather, this holistic research uses Census and American Community Survey data to form a general, nationwide look at refugee outcomes over time, with no attention to specific policies that positively or negatively influence refugee integration. For example, Evans and Fitzgerald mention refugees of various age groups utilize public assistance and welfare, but they do not analyze how different states' welfare systems affect integration outcomes.

Municipal Public Assistance and Refugee Success

Long-term, nationwide studies of refugee success across the United States contrast with more concentrated research studying refugee integration on the municipal level. Existing literature examining municipal refugee resettlement analyzes how social services, public

assistance, and nonprofit community organization affect refugee economic and social integration in specific localities (Fabos, et al., 2015; Farrell, et. al, 2008; Franz, 2003). Farrell, Barden, and Mueller's research focuses on refugee success in three municipalities offering Refugee Social Services, including child care, Medicaid, disability assistance, and educational activities. They find that refugees in Houston and Miami, which require employment as a qualification for receiving these benefits, tend to have higher employment rates overall, but lower income over time. Contrastingly, refugees in Sacramento who receive benefits with no employment requirement are subject to lower initial employment rates, but over time, higher overall per capita income (Farrell, et. al). Farrell's team focuses solely on economic outcomes, such as employment rates and income, rather than taking a holistic view and measuring social outcomes as another aspect of resettlement success.

Fabos' and Franz' research focuses on refugee populations in specific U.S. cities to gather a more detailed understanding of how refugees form relationships, pursue education, and find employment in their communities. Fabos focuses specifically on refugee populations in Worcester, MA, which resettles 26% of Massachusetts' total refugee population (p. 3). Fabos' team primarily studies the demographic breakdowns of Worcester's refugee population, examining country of origin, gender, age, languages spoken, and educational attainment. Overall, they find that refugees in Worcester mirror national trends in integration: over time, they generate higher incomes and find greater economic stability (p. 26), with younger populations showing higher levels of English fluency (p. 19).

Franz' research examines the Bosnian refugee population in New York City, with an emphasis on understanding social integration between men and women in the metropolitan area. Overall, she finds that Bosnian refugees rarely established relationships with U.S. residents.

Rather, they developed relationships in well-established Bosnian refugee communities in the metropolitan area, forming predominantly-Bosnian neighborhoods (p. 35).

Although all three studies on refugee integration and success on a municipal level offer a more detailed understanding of resettlement in specific cities, they lack widespread applicability to the refugee resettlement debate in the United States. Farrell, Barden, and Mueller's research studied municipalities with similar population sizes, wealth, and political culture. Sacramento and Miami both have populations of approximately half-a-million residents, and both are predominantly liberal cities with large pre-existing immigrant populations. Houston is slightly larger than Sacramento and Miami, with a population of just over 2 million, but it shares Sacramento and Miami's liberal political cultures and immigrant populations. By analyzing such similar cities, the Farrell's team controlled for extraneous factors influencing policy outcomes, but simultaneously limited the scope of their analysis. Including cities that vary more in size, political culture, and geographical location would increase the overall applicability of their findings. Similarly, Fabos and Franz's focus on Worcester and New York City, respectively, limits an opportunity for comparison across different municipalities.

Refugee Mental Health

Another camp of existing research on refugee resettlement in the United States analyzes refugee mental health outcomes after resettlement (Tempany, 2009; Wong, et al., 2006; Ringold, et al., 2005; Lustig, et al., 2004; Gong-Guy, et al., 1991). This research analyzes the high rates of suicide, depression, PTSD, and anxiety among the refugee population, due to the stressors

refugees experience before and after flight, exacerbated by feelings of mistrust, isolation, and inferiority upon arrival in the U.S. (Tempany, 2009; Ringold, et. al., 2005; Lustig, et al., 2004).

Gong-Guy's examination of barriers to successful psychological intervention finds that domestic psychologists and psychiatrists tend to misdiagnose refugees' mental illnesses, largely due to language barriers and poor interpretation (p. 642). Additionally, Gong-Guy finds that culturally-inappropriate treatment methods tend to intensify refugees' stress and anxiety levels. For example, psychologists who do not understand cultural gender norms may unintentionally offend a patient, in turn compounding the already-difficult process of acculturation upon resettlement (Gong-Guy et al., 1991). Tempany corroborates Gong-Guy's findings in her 2009 study on Sudanese refugees' mental health upon resettlement, in which she recommends that psychologists develop an understanding of Sudanese cultural beliefs and social structures before attempting to provide treatment (p. 305). Ultimately, Tempany finds inconclusive evidence that Western mental health treatment effectively treats Sudanese refugees' PTSD, depression, and anxiety (p. 311).

Wong's 2006 study on Cambodian refugee mental health suggests that structural barriers, not cultural barriers, create a greater obstacle to effective mental health intervention in refugee communities. Although Wong acknowledges potential problems created by linguistic and cultural misunderstandings in treatment, she hypothesizes that high costs of care are the greatest barrier preventing refugees from obtaining mental health treatment, as 80% of Cambodian refugees in her study report quitting treatment due to financial issues (Wong, 2006).

Language Acquisition and Resettlement

Another camp of existing research on refugee resettlement specifically studies the relationship between language acquisition and refugee integration, with a focus on the

effectiveness of various English language programs (Whitney, 2012; Gahungu and Luseno, 2011; Chiswick and Miller, 2007; Ives, 2007). Whitney's study of federal and state policies mandating and funding refugee English language education programs assesses the motivations behind teaching refugees English. She finds that federal policies and policies in Texas center around economic productivity and employment as the primary motivations for teaching refugees English: few policies recommend English acquisition to promote social integration (p. 88-90). She also finds that Texas' policies mandating English education require only 80 hours of English instruction, with refugees actually participating in only 20-40 of these hours (p. 91). This reality contrasts with linguists' supposition that a minimum of 110 hours of foreign language instruction increases proficiency only one level, and more instruction is required to gain proficiency (p. 72).

Gahungu and Luseno's study of language acquisition in 14 Burundi refugees in Chicago, and Chiswick and Miller's survey of immigrant English acquisition in the 2000 Census reveal that learning English as a second language is more complex than simply teaching English classes. Gahungu and Luseno find that in addition to teaching English, public schools must be conscientious of the inconsistent educational access refugees experience prior to coming to the United States. Teaching English to an 18-year-old refugee who has completed ten years of formal education is simpler than teaching English to an 18-year-old refugee who has only completed school through the second grade level. Public ESL programs must find ways to accommodate these refugees by teaching them the building blocks of education, such as how to properly hold a writing utensil, without humiliating them by placing them in a grade level inappropriate for their age. Additionally, Gahungu and Luseno recommend offering refugees a form of public cultural orientation in addition to English classes, to explain social norms and critical skills necessary for life in the United States (p. 17).

Chiswick and Miller's study further demonstrates the complex nature of providing practical ESL education to individuals resettled in the United States. Although they focus on the U.S. immigrant population at large, they find that non-native English speakers lose their ability to learn English as they grow older, as crucial brain plasticity is reduced as individuals age (p. 2). These findings emphasize the necessity of enrolling immigrants and refugees in English language programs immediately upon arrival in the United States to maximize their chances of gaining proficiency. Further, Chiswick and Miller's research suggests that exposure to English prior to arrival in the United States correlates with higher levels of English proficiency upon resettlement. This exposure has positive impacts on acquisition upon resettlement whether its delivered as formal English education in one's country of origin or casual exposure to U.S. television and media (p. 6).

Questions Arising from Literature Review

Reviewing the relevant literature on refugee resettlement in the United States raises important questions for this analysis. Particularly, Farrell, Barden, and Mueller's study on municipal requirements for welfare access raises questions regarding how public assistance programs affect refugee success in different states. Do welfare programs requiring proof of employment help refugees achieve economic stability faster, or do they inhibit refugees from acquiring the skills necessary to obtain a higher-paying position? Likewise, Gahungu and Luseno's research on public English language programs demonstrates a need for greater flexibility in ESL programs, with a focus on meeting refugee students where they are in their educational journey, as well as providing sociocultural orientation to recent arrivals. However, the efficacy of designating an orientation period for recent refugees is shadowed by Chiswick and Miller's conclusion that the window for English acquisition decreases with age, and ESL

education must begin as soon as possible to grant aging refugees a chance to reach proficiency. These findings exhibit the need for more research on public assistance and ESL programs' effectiveness in producing positive economic and social outcomes in refugee communities.

Theory

Based on the various results recorded in the literature review, I have established three hypotheses as to which state policies will result in higher outcomes of refugee integration in success. First, I predict that states with welfare programs that do not require proof of employment will experience higher levels of refugee success in the long term. Next, I predict that states with more accessible ESL programs for both child and adult learners will experience higher levels of refugee success. Finally, I predict that states which spend a higher percent of their budget on refugee integration programming will have a higher level of refugee success.

My prediction that "friendlier" refugee welfare systems will result in higher levels of refugee success is multi-part. The first aspect of welfare-friendliness is whether it requires the refugee to actively be working to receive welfare. Many critics contend that requiring proof of employment will motivate civilians to actively search for work and learn to provide for themselves. Additionally, they believe proof of employment is essential to ensure civilians are not taking advantage of welfare handouts, which would de-incentivize employment. Although this linkage between employment and welfare makes sense in theory, I predict that in practice, it will lessen refugees' abilities to gain skills necessary for better jobs in the long term. When a refugee first arrives in the United States, they typically lack English-speaking skills or transferrable certification to attain a better-paying job.

While immediately requiring refugees to find employment upon arrival may grant refugees greater financial stability in the short-term, it will not benefit them in the long term. If

refugees are working upon arrival, they likely are not taking classes to improve their English or earn a certification such as a GED or Associate's Degree (Farrell, et. al, 2008). This means they are likely to get stuck in a low-paying position that requires no English or documented skills. Alternatively, taking away the requirement that refugees work to receive welfare opens the possibility of enhanced education and English-learning, which will in turn translate to higher-paying jobs in the long run. It follows that state welfare programs that do not require proof of employment will aid refugees more in the long-term.

Another aspect of welfare program friendliness that is unrelated to career achievement and economic stability is the psychological outcomes affected by various programs. Welfare benefits that require refugees to find employment as soon as they arrive in the United States will likely push refugees into lower-wage jobs in manual labor. For refugees arriving in the U.S. who are experiencing dramatic cultural adjustments and likely dealing with mental health struggles, getting stuck in a low-wage job has the potential to increase feelings of resentment and depression in the United States (Gong-Guy et al., 1991). If recently-resettled refugees feel they have no access to social mobility nor better job opportunities, they will be less likely to get involved in their communities or work to integrate, as they feel that their efforts are futile (Wong, et al., 2006). While it is more difficult to prove this psychological connection, it is important to consider the impact hope for social mobility and higher standards of living has on refugees' motivation to integrate.

My next prediction that states with more ESL programs for both child and adult learners will experience higher levels of refugee success is relatively straight forward. If states and cities have more ESL programs, both K-12 and adult learners will be more likely to enroll in these programs, in turn increasing their English proficiency and aiding in career placement and social

integration. In terms of the total number of ESL programs in a community, volume and geographic distribution are incredibly important considerations (Gahungu and Luseno, 2011). Upon arrival in the United States, most refugees are unable to receive a state driver's license for several years, until their English proficiency has improved to the point of passing a driver's test. Additionally, many recently-resettled refugees do not have the money to purchase a car, even if they are fluent enough in English to pass a driver's test and have the money to pay the fees for a driver's license. In communities with poor public transportation systems, many refugee K-12 students are forced to enroll in their neighborhood school, or attend whatever public institution is accessible by school bus. If refugees cannot find housing or residency in a neighborhood with a school specializing in ESL education, they have no choice but to send their students to a school that lacks expertise in helping them learn English. With this in mind, I predict that higher numbers of ESL K-12 schools per capita will result in better outcomes of refugee success.

In terms of adult learners, ESL education delivery is slightly more difficult to measure than looking at public K-12 school districts. Adult learners often receive ESL education through one of three avenues: community colleges, nonprofits focusing on ESL education, or English classes for parents taught through their childrens' public schools. For adult learners, accessibility is measured in volume and geographic location of ESL institutions and the cost of attending these ESL classes. While K-12 public institutions typically provide students with ESL education for free, adult educational institutions likely charge adult learners a fee for attending these classes. With this in mind, cost of attendance will be another valuable consideration in weighing how accessible ESL programs are in each state (Chiswick and Miller, 2007). It follows that the more affordable ESL classes are in a community, the more likely refugees will be to learn English, and in turn, find career and social success.

Finally, my third hypothesis contends that states with more refugee-oriented resettlement services will have higher levels of refugee success. Refugee-oriented resettlement services exist in a variety of forms, including state-administered services, Wilson-Fish programs, and public-private partnerships. These various resettlement services tend to provide free English classes, short-term housing and food assistance, financial support, and pro bono legal counsel. These resources combine to support refugees in both economic and social outcomes by helping them achieve financial stability, find jobs, and integrate into society through English learning and educational attainment. It follows that states with greater numbers of these services per capita will also experience more positive outcomes in the refugee community, as they can service more refugees at a time, and at a deeper level.

Research Design

How do state resettlement policies affect refugee integration and success? To answer this question, I will run correlation analyses searching for correlations between welfare policy, ESL education, budgetary allocations, and nonprofit refugee services and measures of refugee success in all U.S. states. For reference, the three hypotheses tested in this research is as follows:

> **H1**: States with welfare programs deemed "friendlier" to refugees will experience higher levels of refugee employment and home ownership.

> **H2**: States with better-funded English as a second language programs for both K-12 students and adult learners will experience higher levels of refugee English proficiency.

> **H3**: States with a higher number of refugee-oriented resettlement services, including public-private partnerships, Wilson Fish organizations, and state-administered programs

per capita will experience higher levels of refugee English proficiency, home ownership, and employment.

Defining State Policies

First, I will research how public assistance and welfare programs affect refugee integration. Looking at each state's requirements to receive Medicaid and SNAP benefits, I will use an ordinal scale to assess how "friendly" each state's welfare program is to refugees. The ordinal scale will consist of low (1), medium (2), and high (3) rank of refugee friendliness based on how easily their policies allow refugees in their state to receive public assistance. States receiving a "low" (1) rating of welfare friendliness require proof of employment to receive either Medicaid or SNAP across the entire state. States receiving a "medium" (2) ranking of welfare friendliness require proof of employment to receive either Medicaid or SNAP in a portion of the state, but not the entire state. Finally, states receiving a "high" (3) rating of welfare friendliness do not require proof of employment for either Medicaid or SNAP benefits across the state. With this ordinal scale, I will determine whether friendlier, more flexible welfare policies correlate with higher levels of employment and home ownership in the refugee community.

Next, I will study how states' ESL programs affect refugee success. Using quantitative data from all 50 U.S. states, I will assess ESL program accessibility for both school-age refugees and adult refugees, and determine how access to these programs correlates with refugee success. First, I will use state data to assess total state allocations to public K-12 ESL. This will determine ESL accessibility for school-age refugees. Next, I will use the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement's databases on ESL non-profit organizations in each state to assess the total number of nonprofits and community service organizations focused on ESL per capita in each state. From here, I will use data from the U.S. Census, American Community Survey, and the Office of

Refugee Resettlement to see whether higher accessibility of these ESL programs correlates with higher English proficiency and employment attainment among the refugee community in each state.

Finally, I will assess if there is a correlation between total state investment in refugee resettlement services and programs and refugee integration and success in each state. I will analyze each state's budget, and determine what percent of their total expenditures are oriented towards services and programs focused on refugee resettlement and integration. I will compare these expenditures with each state's measures of refugee success and assess whether higher expenditures correlate with higher measures of refugee success.

Defining Refugee Success

"Refugee success" will be a multi-part definition focused on economic and social outcomes in each states' refugee community. I will determine measures of economic achievement using data from the 2010 United States Census and recent American Community Surveys. I will consider the percent of refugees in each state studied who are employed, own homes, and make an income above the poverty line. From there, I will run correlation analyses comparing states' ESL, welfare, and resettlement services with refugee economic achievement data, and see if there is a statistically significant correlation between certain policies and certain outcomes. In addition to considering refugees' economic achievement, I will analyze relationships between ESL programs, integration services, refugee English language acquisition. Using American Community Survey measures of English-speaking ability, I will compare ESL expenditures to the percent of the refugee population identified as speaking English "very well," which is the Census Bureau's official measure of English proficiency.

Data

      The data used in the correlational analysis models is derived from various sources. Data on state Medicaid and SNAP requirements is provided by Pew Research Center's Stateline dataset. Information on state ESL expenditures is gathered from the Education Commission of the State's 2014 assessment comparing state appropriation equations used to determine additional funding per ESL student in each district. Information on the total number of federally-approved refugee services per state is derived from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement database, which tracks state-administered services, Wilson-Fish programs, and public-private partnerships. The U.S. Refugee Processing Center provides information on the total number of refugees resettled in each state, and Refugee Council USA provides data on each state's total budget expenditures on refugee resettlement programs. All dependent variable data regarding refugee home ownership, employment, educational attainment, and English proficiency is derived from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2017 American Community Survey with 5-year projections.

      Correlation coefficients for all correlation analyses are listed in the following chart. All scatter plots are listed in Appendix A.

Test	Correlation Coefficient
State Resettlement Expenditures vs. English Proficiency	0.1446
State Resettlement Expenditures vs. Employment	0.1183
Refugee Service Access vs. English Proficiency	0.2362
Refugee Service Access vs. Home Ownership	0.2128

Refugee Service Access vs. Employment	0.0872
State Allocations for ESL vs. English Proficiency	0.2258
Welfare Requirements vs. Unemployment Rates	0.2341
Welfare Requirements vs. Home Ownership	0.0632
Welfare Requirements vs. Educational Attainment	0.2241

<u>Analysis</u>

None of the analyses tested in this research demonstrated strong, statistically significant correlations. The correlational outcomes range from a high of 0.2362 in the comparison between refugee service access and English proficiency, to a low of 0.0632 in the comparison of welfare requirements and home ownership.

The results of the correlational analyses concerning state welfare requirements and refugee resettlement success neither confirm nor deny my first hypothesis (H1). I predicted that states with friendlier, more flexible welfare programs with lenient employment requirements will produce better results in refugee unemployment rates, home ownership, and educational attainment. However, the correlation analyses show a slight negative relationship between friendlier welfare requirements and employment rates. The correlation between welfare requirements and home ownership is too weak to draw any conclusions. The correlation between welfare requirements and home ownership suggests a slight positive relationship between friendlier welfare requirements and higher home ownership rates. These mixed outcomes

demonstrate that the relationship between state welfare requirements and resettlement outcomes is complex and varies across different measures of achievement.

Though the results show only a slight degree of correlation, three tests relating state expenditures to English proficiency supported my hypothesis (H2) that states with better-funded ESL programs for both K-12 students and adult learners will experience higher levels of refugee English proficiency. The first test analyzing the correlation between refugee service access and English proficiency yielded the strongest correlation coefficient of all tests in this analysis. This result aligns with fairly simple logic: refugees with greater access to nonprofit organizations providing free English and jobs skills classes tend to demonstrate higher levels of English proficiency. Similarly, the test comparing state allocations for ESL education to proficiency outcomes suggests a slight correlation between greater spending per student and higher levels of English proficiency.

Though both of these tests support my second hypothesis, a third test related to English proficiency contradicts my hypothesis. My test comparing total state expenditures to English proficiency suggests a slight negative relationship, in that increased state investments in resettlement programs correlate with lower English proficiency. However, this outcome may suggest an alternative frame of reference for state expenditures and English proficiency. It is possible that states where refugees experience relatively low levels of English proficiency are actually forced to spend more in other areas of resettlement. For example, if refugees do not gain English proficiency in a certain state, they are less employable, and therefore, lean more heavily on welfare and other refugee-serving agencies. In the case of this correlational analysis, it seems my presupposed independent variable of total state expenditures may have actually suggested a dependent variable that is reactionary to refugee English proficiency.

All tests regarding refugee-oriented services show slight support for my hypothesis that increased access to refugee resettlement services results in positive social and economic outcomes (H3). Though the correlations were only slight, and the correlation in the test comparing refugee service access to employment rates is so low as to be null, there is a small relationship between service access and higher rates of English proficiency and home ownership.

Overall, the data only consistently support H3's prediction that states with more refugee services have higher refugee social and economic success rates, and even the correlational support for this hypothesis is weak. The data regarding H1 and H2 demonstrate mixed results, rendering these hypotheses null.

Limitations and Extraneous Variables

The primary limitation affecting the accuracy of this research is the availability of state and federal data focused specifically on the refugee community in relation to English acquisition. When recording characteristics of the foreign-born population in the U.S., most states and the federal government tend to combine refugees, asylees, and immigrants into one group, rather than separating out the population and focusing on the refugee community specifically. This is important in multiple regards.

First, the American Community Survey only provides information on English proficiency in the foreign-born population at-large, rather than focusing specifically on the refugee community. This jeopardizes the accuracy of conclusions based on this dataset, as the U.S. refugee population overwhelmingly comes from non-English-speaking countries (Krogstad, 2019), while the U.S. immigrant population has a higher number of English-speakers. By using the foreign-born population's overall English proficiency to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of ESL programs in refugee communities, we likely overestimate overall English

proficiency in the U.S. refugee community. However, no reliable sources provide English proficiency data drawn specifically from the refugee community, so analyzing the foreign-born population included in the American Community Survey is the closest analysis method available.

Further, the U.S. Census and American Community Survey must allow for more diverse data collection on English proficiency by creating more levels of proficiency than the status quo of "speaks English very well" or "speaks English less than very well." Though these overly-general categories likely accelerate the Census Bureau's ability to collect nationwide data, they also erase any nuance from the data and do a disservice to linguistic data by suggesting individuals either do or do not speak English well.

An additional variable affecting the analysis of this data is the difficulty of isolating specific variables in the correlation analysis. This extraneous variable is especially prominent in determining state funding for English Language programs, which are generally calculated as an additional percent of per-student funding calculated into school district appropriation formulas. States calculate an additional weight in appropriation formulas for a variety of factors aside from just the number of ESL students per district. One of the most prominent additional weight per formula factors is additional weight in formula for low-income students. This means that in states where a large cross-section of ESL students are also low income, these ESL students are proportionally receiving more funding per ESL student than states where ESL students are financially well-off. It is impossible to account for this intersectionality in analyses testing correlations between ESL funding and educational outcomes.
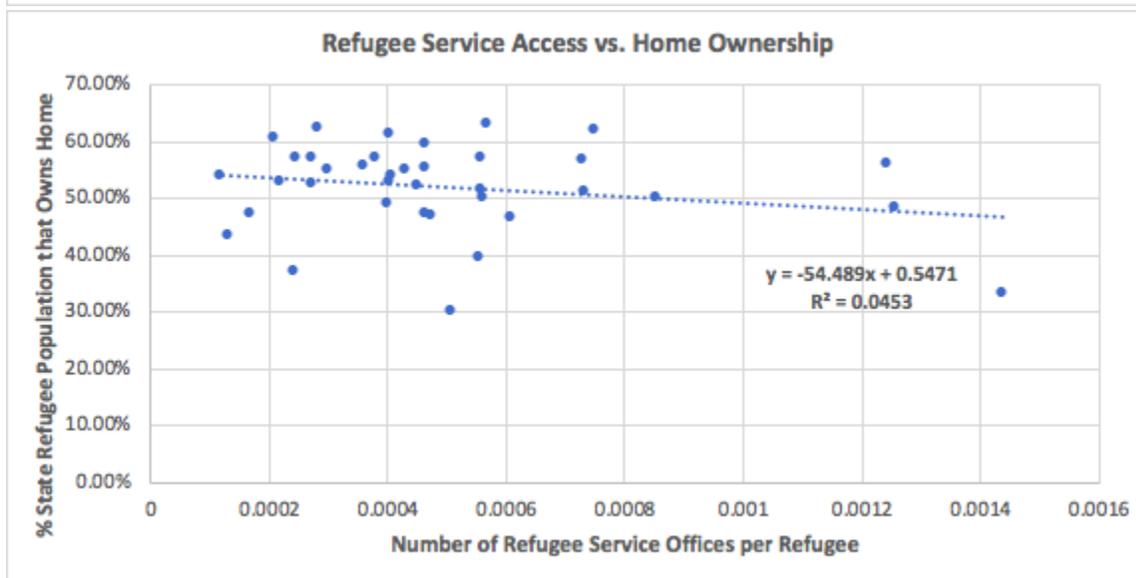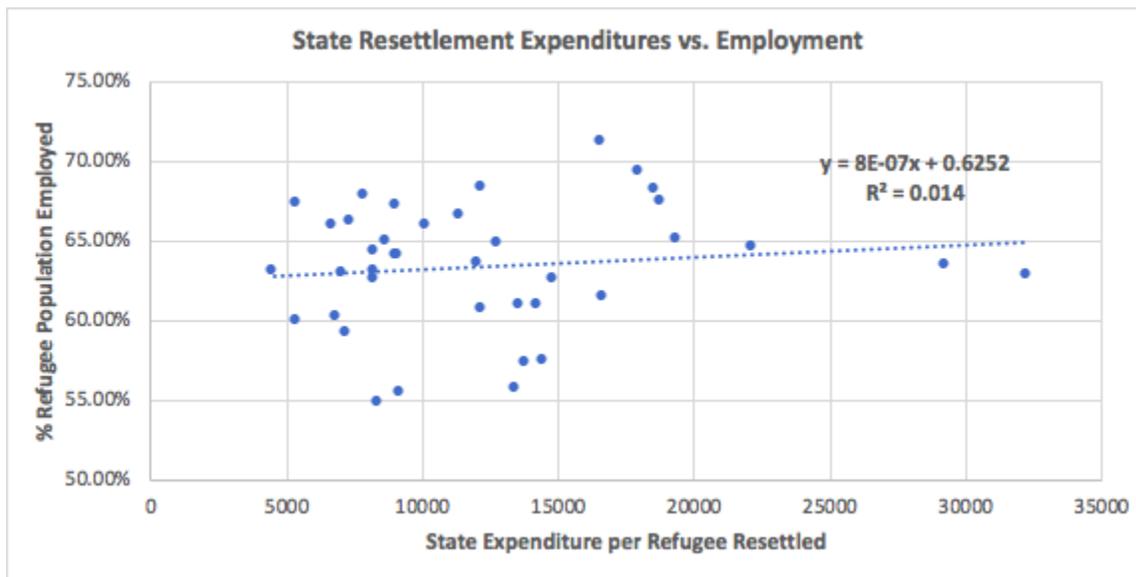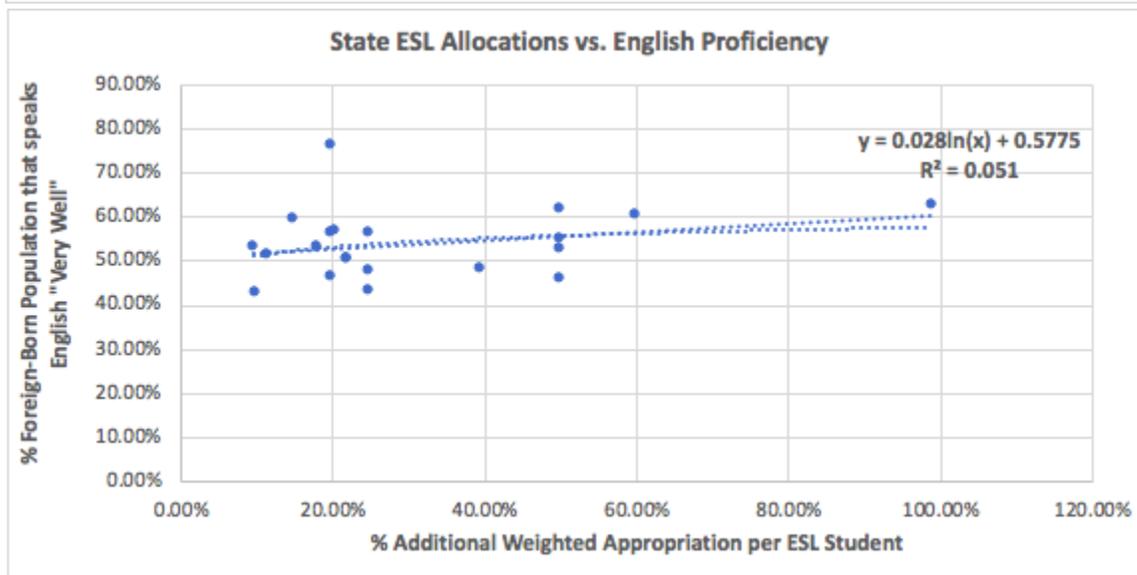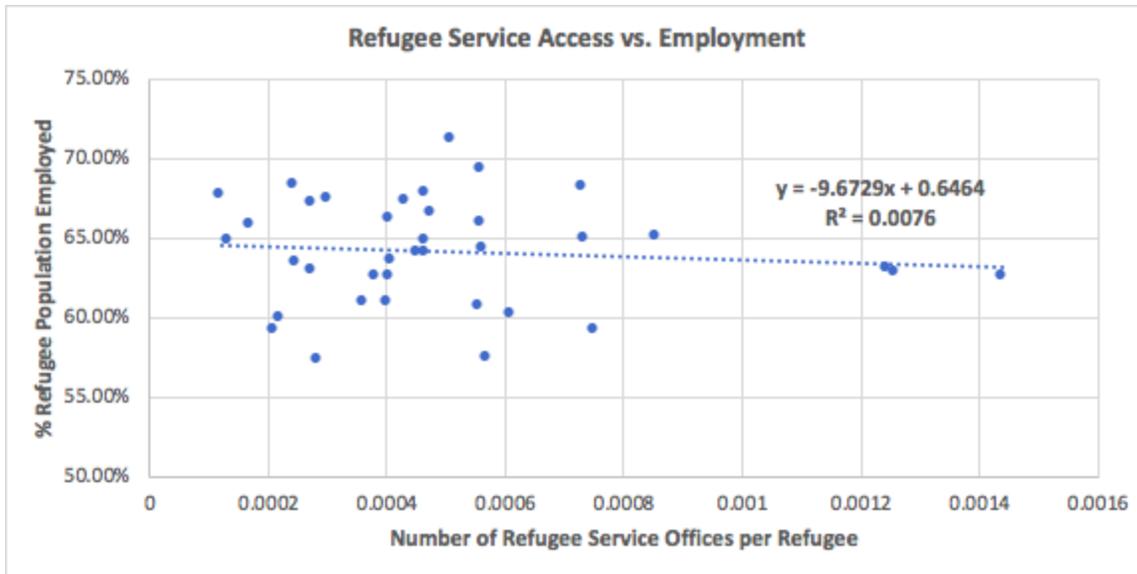
Conclusion

This correlational analysis seeks to determine relationships between state refugee resettlement policies and positive social and economic outcomes in U.S. refugee communities.
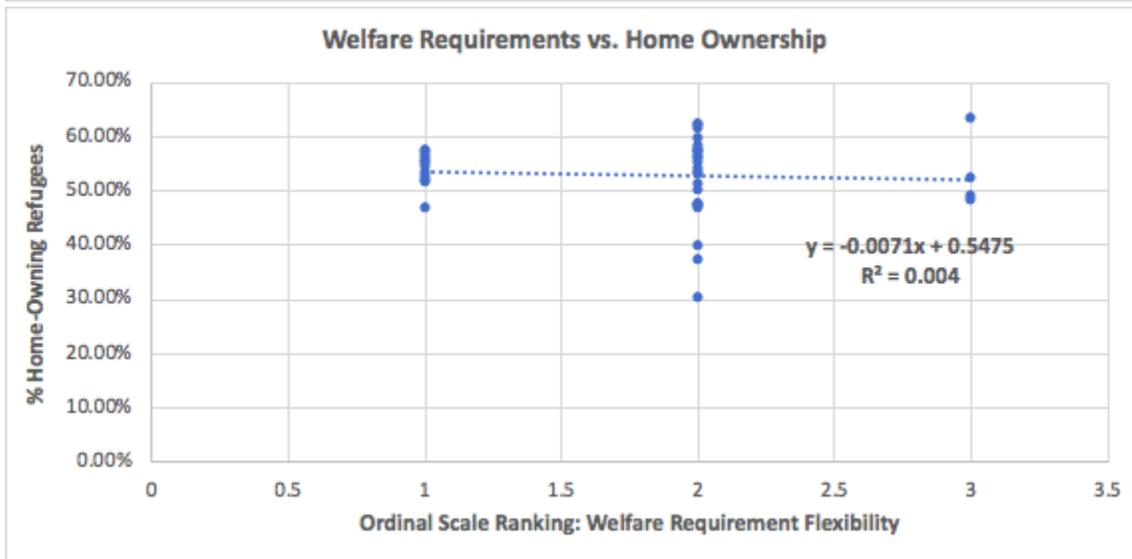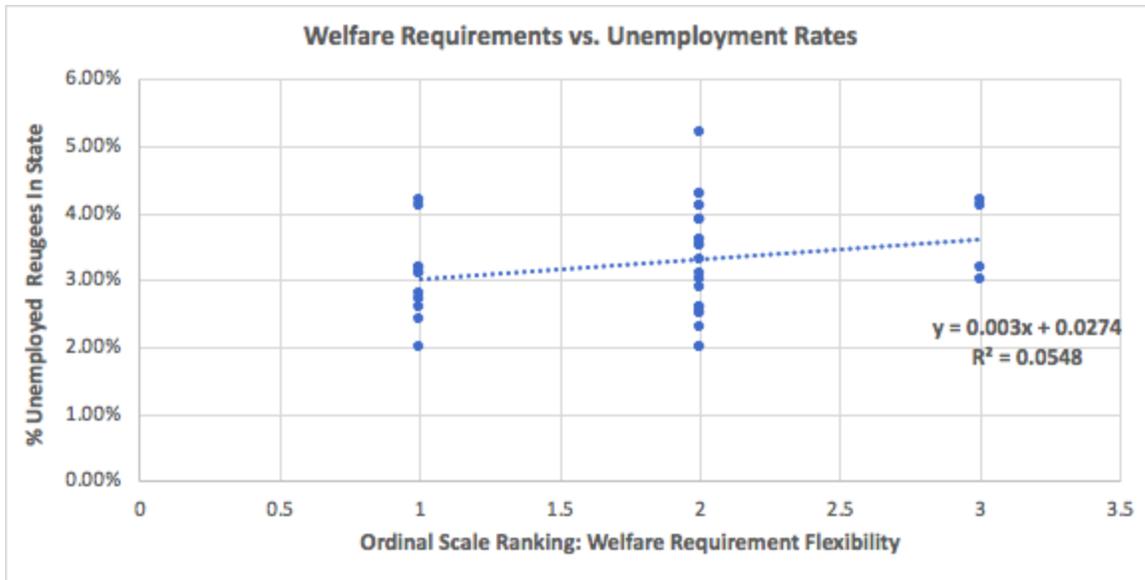
Unlike existing research, it focuses specifically on state-level policy in light of shifting federal priorities related to refugee resettlement and success. Further, it tests both economic (employment and home ownership) outcomes and social (English proficiency, educational attainment) outcomes in refugee communities. Overall, the research found a slight correlation between increased access to refugee resettlement services and positive social and economic outcomes. Aside from this conclusion, the correlational relationships between the other factors tested are too insignificant to make any definite conclusions about the hypotheses.
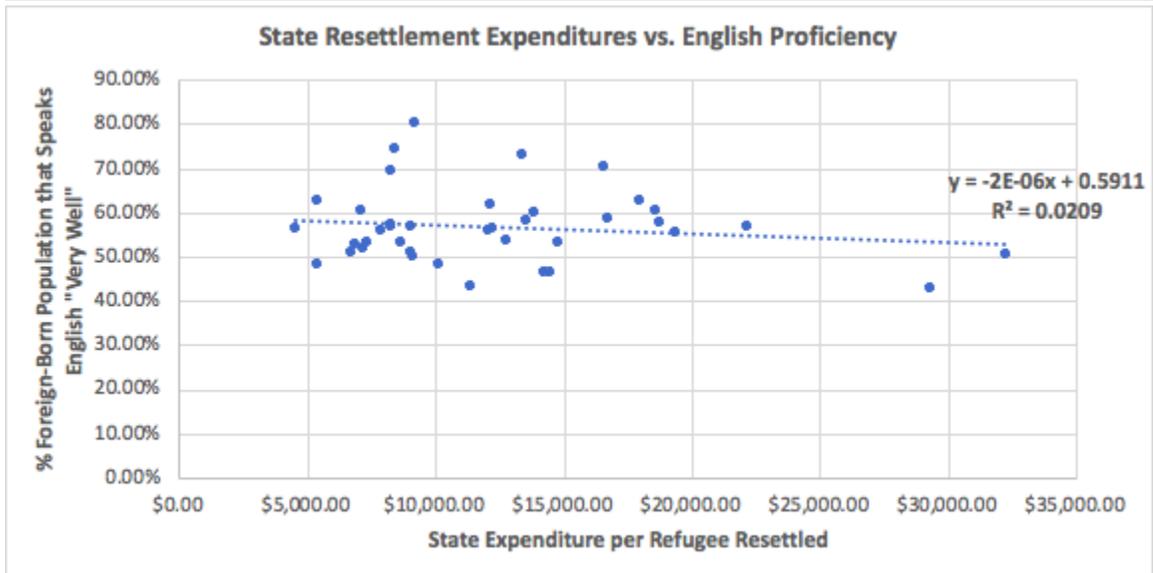
The primary policy recommendation to emerge from this research is the necessity of implementing stricter federal and state standards on data collection, both in relation to state refugee resettlement programming and policies, as well as on refugee outcomes in the United States. The U.S. Census and the American Community Survey sections on migrant status should be broken into more specific categories than "foreign-born" or "native-born" resident, and allowing respondents to identify as refugee, asylee, or immigrant. These provisions will allow policymakers and researchers to conduct in-depth quantitative studies on refugee resettlement practices and in turn, develop evidence-based policy at all levels of government.

Appendix A

State Resettlement Expenditures vs. Employment

$y = 8E\text{-}07x + 0.6252$
$R^2 = 0.014$

Refugee Service Access vs. Home Ownership

$y = -54.489x + 0.5471$
$R^2 = 0.0453$

Refugee Service Access vs. Employment

$y = -9.6729x + 0.6464$
$R^2 = 0.0076$

State ESL Allocations vs. English Proficiency

$y = 0.028\ln(x) + 0.5775$
$R^2 = 0.051$

Welfare Requirements vs. Unemployment Rates

% Unemployed Reugees In State

Ordinal Scale Ranking: Welfare Requirement Flexibility

$y = 0.003x + 0.0274$
$R^2 = 0.0548$

Welfare Requirements vs. Home Ownership

% Home-Owning Refugees

Ordinal Scale Ranking: Welfare Requirement Flexibility

$y = -0.0071x + 0.5475$
$R^2 = 0.004$

Welfare Requirements vs. Educational Attainment

y = -0.0516x + 0.8189
R² = 0.0502

State Resettlement Expenditures vs. English Proficiency

y = -2E-06x + 0.5911
R² = 0.0209

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