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Abstract

Community resilience has been used as a conceptual framework to promote urban refugee protection, integration, and well-being. In the context of this focus on "refugee communities," it is critical to gain a deeper understanding of the ways urban refugee "communities" function. This study explored urban Congolese refugees' use of social capital to promote resilience during a period of political violence in Nairobi, Kenya. Findings illustrate how refugees used social capital across different contexts to access and distribute resilience-promoting resources. Women primarily relied on informal bonding forms of capital while men exhibited greater degrees of access to formal bridging and linking networks. I argue for a conceptual shift from "community resilience" to "resilience within networked communities" in order to develop a more nuanced understanding pertaining to how urban-displaced refugees interact with various social networks to survive and thrive.

Keywords: Urban refugees, community resilience, social capital, gender, Africa, Kenya, Democratic Republic of the Congo

The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has identified bolstering "community resilience" as an important strategy to improve refugees' individual and collective wellbeing (UNHCR, n.d., 2018b; see also International Alert, 2015). As the number of refugees globally increases, programs and policies directly aimed at enhancing resilience among individuals and groups affected by forced migration have flourished. For example, the World Bank (2016) compiled a resource on older adults and community resilience, and the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) and the National Child Traumatic Stress Network have focused on fostering women's, children's, and families' resilience (NCTSN, 2007; WRC, 2016). Recently, the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) called for proposals to identify "best practices for building resilience" (PRM, 2015).

The growing focus on promoting resilience among displaced persons and communities is reflective of a paradigm shift moving from deficits-centric approaches to strengths-based programing and research. There has been momentum in the past decade to focus on refugees' resilience (see Carlson, Cacciatore, & Klimek, 2012; Lenette, Brough, & Cox, 2013) with examinations of community resilience in refugee groups residing in camps and settlements (Darychuk & Jackson, 2015; Omata, 2012) and resettled in high-income countries (Mason & Pulvirenti, 2013; Rinker & Khadka, 2018). Less attention has been paid to urban refugees' resilience in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) of first asylum despite the fact more than 84% of refugees live in such settings (UNHCR, 2016).

This article provides ethnographically embedded insight into the intricacies of adult urban Congolese refugees' social networks, contributing to understandings of how refugees themselves utilize relationships to access resilience-promoting resources. The presented research focuses on urban Congolese refugees in Nairobi during Operation Usalama [Security] Watch, a period in 2014 characterized by police raids, harassment, and arbitrary arrests and by forcible relocation and deportation of refugees living outside of designated camps in Kenya (Human Rights Watch, 2014). For the purposes of this article, community resilience encompasses both individuals' perceptions of community capacity to address political violence (Kimhi & Shamai, 2004) and their ability to individually and collectively access socioculturally meaningful resources (Bourdieu, 1986; Ungar, 2011).

This research is presented through four overarching sections. First, I provide the study context and a brief review of the literature. Second, I discuss recruitment and sampling, methods, and data analysis. Third, I present findings in the form of vignettes and small-group discussion and

interview results to illustrate Congolese refugees' social networks in everyday and extraordinary contexts. Finally, I consider the importance of social capital to promote refugees' well-being and present a review of implications of the findings for practice and future research.

Context of research

Kenya plays a significant role in receiving refugees from neighboring countries, having hosted 471,330 registered refugees and asylum seekers as of July 2018 (UNHCR, 2018a). Prior to 1991, refugees in Kenya were legally permitted to integrate into the country (Campbell, 2006; Verdirame & Harrell-Bond, 2005). For the past three decades, Kenya followed a de facto encampment model, requiring displaced persons to reside in refugee camps; however, implementing the encampment policy had not been rigorous in practice (Lambo, 2012) and many refugees sought livelihood opportunities in urban areas. While the exact number of refugees living in Nairobi is unknown, UNHCR (2018a) conservatively estimates that 71,899 refugees reside in the capital city; however, this number takes in only registered refugees and asylum seekers.

In March 2014, the government of Kenya issued a directive stating that any refugee living outside of one of the designated encampment areas must relocate to a refugee camp immediately (HRW, 2014). This refugee directive was enforced through a series of police raids during which refugees were harassed, arrested, detained, forcibly relocated to refugee camps, or deported (Yarnell, 2014). During this period of state-enforced violence against refugee communities, many urban refugees in Nairobi went into hiding, actively avoiding encounters with members of the host community (HRW, 2014).

Perspectives on community resilience and social capital

Community resilience is an important lens through which to examine well-being, broadly defined, in disadvantageous settings. While there remains definitional ambiguity, community resilience is characterized by the capacity to secure and negotiate coping resources (Kimhi & Shamai, 2004; Ungar, 2011), the ability to adapt or change (Berkes & Ross, 2013; Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche, & Pfefferbaum, 2008), the ability to overcome great stress or difficulties (Kirmayer, Sehdev, Whitley, Dandeneau, & Isaac, 2013), and the general maintenance or enhancement

of well-being during acute or chronic hardship (Davis, Cook, & Cohen, 2005). Communities that exhibit higher levels of resilience are better able to withstand shocks (Norris et al., 2008), to garner resources that promote well-being (Kimhi & Shamai, 2004), to care for vulnerable members of their communities (Morton & Lurie, 2013), and to anticipate and prepare for future disruptions and challenges (LaLone, 2012). Research related to refugees' resilience has conceptualized resilience as protective factors (Carlson, Cacciatore, & Klimek, 2012); as a product of everyday and mundane processes (Lenette, Brough, & Cox, 2013); as socially and culturally (re)produced (Darychuk & Jackson, 2015); and as shaped by social-ecological factors (Darychuk & Jackson, 2015; Tippens, 2017; Yotebieng, Syverten, & Awah, 2018).

Kimhi and Shamai (2004, p. 441) identified three directions community resilience takes in the literature: *resistance*, which describes how communities absorb a threat; *recovery*, focusing on how quickly communities recover from a disturbance; and *creativity*, which centers around "the ability of a social system to maintain a constant process of creating and recreating, so that the community not only responds to adversity, but in doing so, reaches a higher level of functioning." Bonanno and colleagues (2015) note that the intensity and duration of a stressor in tandem with the level of exposure to this stressor shape resilience processes.

A challenge pertaining to research in community resilience is the conceptual opacity of "community" itself. A community may be delineated vis-_a-vis a common identity or shared culture (Kirmayer et al., 2013; Ungar, 2011), psychological ties to place and people (Kirmayer et al., 2013), or through geographic areas (Bonanno et al., 2015; Kirmayer et al., 2013; Norris et al., 2008). Scholars of refugee studies have documented refugees' place-based and spatially defined communities, communities comprising individuals with similar characteristics, "communities of strangers" (Madhavan & Landau, 2011), and religious communities (see Lyytinen & Kullenberg, 2013 for review). Lyytinen (2015) discovered that depending on their reason for leaving the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Congolese refugees in Kampala variably perceived the presence of new refugees from the DRC to be a comfort or threat. Additionally, Congolese refugees identified membership in a range of what Lyytinen (2017) referred to as "communities of trust," including those based on country of origin, ethnic identity, religious affiliation, needs (e.g., supportive groups), and community organizations.

In addition to the challenges of affixing the overarching label of "community" on populations affected by forced migration, it has been suggested that much literature on refugee resilience also provides an overly

optimistic view of community resilience. For example, Omata (2012) described how community expectations of resource sharing in Buduburam settlement in Ghana placed stress on refugees who themselves had scarce resources. This work challenged assumptions that community-based support networks should be seen solely as positive signs of community resilience.

Kirmayer and colleagues (2013) state that "resilience is a 'clustered' phenomenon that is not randomly distributed among individuals in a society or community, but occurs in groups of people located in a web of meaningful relationships" (p. 72). Social capital, which broadly refers to the degree to which individuals can access embedded assets within a community (Cox & Perry, 2011), is the most utilized variable to predict community resilience (Bonanno et al., 2015). Social capital can provide insight into community resilience through an examination of the webbed relationships of which Kirmayer and colleagues speak. Bourdieu's (1986, p. 51) conception of social capital remains the foundation for many contemporary scholars of the concept. For Bourdieu,

> Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital.

Several scholars point to three primary forms of social capital: bonding, bridging, and linking social capital (Woolcock, 2002; Kawachi, 2006; Poortinga, 2012). Bonding capital describes relationships among network members who share social identities and other similar attributes (Kawachi, 2006). In the case of refugees, these similar attributes may include nationality or ethnicity, post-migration settlement location, or resources. Bridging and linking capital refer to "connections between individuals who are dissimilar with respect to social identity (bridging capital) or who interact across explicit power and authority gradients in society (linking capital)," (Kawachi, 2006, p. 991).

Social networks are crucial for refugees' protection in urban spaces, and refugees arriving to cities with friends or relatives have been shown to have a boost (Landau & Duponchel, 2011, p. 9). Despite the importance of social membership for refugees, Madhavan and Landau (2011) found that migrants' social networks in post-migration urban settings are spread thin (p. 480) and that many have little trust in public institutions to provide assistance or direct benefit. Gender has also emerged as

an important dynamic regarding membership in social networks in post-migration contexts. Research with refugee groups has demonstrated that female refugees exhibit strong bonding capital but generally have lower access to bridging and linking forms of capital (Boateng, 2010; McMichael & Manderson, 2004). Darychuk and Jackson (2015) found that Palestinian women living in West Bank refugee camps relied on bonding social capital as sociocultural and religious expectations limited their access to wider communities. McMichael and Manderson (2004) described how female Somali refugees resettled in Australia created "niches and sheltered spheres of activity and experiences, practical and symbolic—that allow[ed] the community to exist in partial isolation from the host community" (p. 88). Elliot and Yusuf (2014) found that the establishment of Somali businesses in a resettlement setting were beneficial to female and male bonding but also noted the role of these establishments in creating opportunities to bridge to members of local communities in resettlement contexts.

Methods

This ethnographic study is part of a multimethods dissertation project that took place over a total of 12 months during 2012 and 2014 and focused on Congolese refugees' psychosocial health and well-being in urban Kenya. Early into my 2014 fieldwork, the government of Kenya (GOK) initiated Operation Usalama Watch to respond to threats of terrorism in the country (Amnesty International, 2014a). Although political violence was not the initial focus of this research, urban refugees were increasingly condemned by the GOK for growing insecurity in Kenya. To respond to the social context of this project, I adjusted some of my research questions to examine social capital and resilience in the context of structural and political violence. The presented data address these latter research questions. I engaged in participant observation as circumstantial ethnography (Lock & Nichter, 2002), allowing for deeper understanding of the ways individuals, families, and communities navigated extraordinary situations of violence and adversity. Specifically, this study offers insight into the social lives of Congolese refugees residing in a specific neighborhood in which participants spoke of having strong social ties, frequently held formal and informal community gatherings, and resided in the delineated research area longer term compared to other neighborhoods sampled.

Two Congolese research assistants who resided in the targeted geographic community were hired to recruit participants, provide interpretation, and serve as cultural liaisons. Participants were sampled using convenience and snowball techniques. To be included in this study, participants had to be at least 18 years of age, self-identify as a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (regardless of UNHCR refugee-status determination), and be fluent in either Kiswahili or English. As most of the refugees in this study originated from the eastern provinces of the DRC, where Kiswahili is widely spoken, there were no individuals excluded due to language.

Research participants from this neighborhood were largely from North Kivu and South Kivu in the eastern DRC and represent 14 ethnic groups. The median age of those who participated in small group discussions ($n¼412$) and in-depth interviews ($n¼421$) was 31 (range: 18–63). Sixty-two percent of participants worked in the informal economy, holding jobs as shopkeepers, tailors/seamstresses, barbers/stylists, and in *vibarua* (various small jobs in the informal market). To protect the confidentiality of research participants, names of participants, organizations, and specific geographic locations in Nairobi have been changed or de-identified.

I, along with research assistants, explained the purpose and scope of the study, how findings would be used, and the voluntary nature of participation in Kiswahili. Time was allocated for questions. Participants who agreed to continue with the interview provided a signature or thumb print. After completing interviews, participants were given food in the equivalent of US$5 to thank them for their time. The small gift was decided by research assistants at the onset of the project.

Ethical approval was obtained through the University of Arizona Human Subjects Projection Program and through the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) in Kenya. Although I introduced myself as an independent researcher, it is possible that some participants perceived me to be affiliated with a nongovernmental organization (NGO) in Nairobi and may have felt pressure to participate or believed that participation would result in direct benefits. Generally, however, not being affiliated with an NGO allowed me access into the everyday spaces of Congolese women and men, particularly during a period of diminishing trust in formal institutions.

As this study draws on a small qualitative sample, it is meant to be exploratory and cannot be generalized to other urban refugee groups. Additionally, given my status as a woman researcher conducting fieldwork alone, I had greater ethnographic access to women's spaces than to the

spaces in which men bond with one another. The main exception to this was when I spent time accompanying refugee community leaders, the majority of whom were men and accustomed to bridging with individuals outside of their ethnic groups.

Methods

I conducted participant observation in Nairobi over 12 months. Although I was accompanied by Congolese research assistants during interviews, I often visited with families and community leaders alone to develop relationships and foster trust. I actively attended and participated in social activities in various Congolese neighborhoods, including religious celebrations, community gatherings, and refugee community leader meetings. Ethnographic inquiry facilitated access to everyday conversations and to informal and formal community meetings, providing context for the experiences participants discussed in interviews. To avoid drawing attention to specific geographically-bound groups of refugees during fieldwork, I rotated research activities among three different neighborhoods in Nairobi. This work centers on one of these neighborhoods.

I used in-depth, semi-structured interviews to elicit responses pertaining to refugees' experiences in Nairobi, common stressors and coping strategies, ranges and types of perceived supports, and how individuals overcame difficult situations to explore socioculturally meaningful social capital and community resilience. Additionally, the presented subsection of the research includes two sex-disaggregated small-group discussions consisting of five men and seven women, respectively. Small-group discussions explored access to bonding, bridging, and linking capital using the central question: "What resources are available to you during challenging or stressful situations?" Participants in both groups provided examples of forms of capital as connected to community resilience (or not) in the context of harassment and raids.

Data analysis

I used thematic analysis when reviewing field notes, interviews, and small group discussion data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Interviews were transcribed verbatim, translated from Kiswahili to English, and finally back-translated into Kiswahili by research assistants. I typed field notes into a narrative form, usually on the same day I met with families or

attended gatherings. Following the six phases of thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), I (a) familiarized myself with the data from this subsample (audio recordings, field notes, interview and group discussion transcripts), making annotations in the margins; (b) generated initial codes; (c) searched for themes; (d) reviewed themes in relation to the larger data set; (e) defined and named themes; and (f) synthesized findings to produce a report. In addition to open, thematic coding, I identified three predetermined themes: resilience, community resilience, and social capital. Initial coding, including the thematic analysis steps, was an iterative process conducted with Congolese research assistants every two weeks. After the fieldwork phase, I used MAXQDA, version 11, (VERBI GmbH, 2015) to manage data, analyze for potential additional concepts, and ensure thematic consistency.

Findings

In this section I present vignettes, field notes, and interview and small-group data to illustrate the ways adult urban-displaced Congolese refugees navigate personal and community networks to access and provide resilience-promoting resources. In the first two subsections, I show case-bound examples of bonding and bridging/linking capital, respectively. Then in the third subsection, I present additional findings from the broader subset of data used for this study to highlight social capital as a promising lens through which to examine community resilience.

Urban refugees' bonding social capital

It was a crisp May afternoon in a remote enclave barely within Nairobi's sprawling boundaries, but where concrete foundations grow each day due to a high demand for affordable housing in Kenya's capital city. The Congolese women who filled Eva's living room commented on the weather, on how much they missed the warmth that was gradually dissipating into Nairobi's cool season. The women, a total of eight in their 40s and 50s, reclined into the black vinyl sofa that wrapped around the entirety of Eva's living room. They gathered here every week over tea and snacks. Eva arrived in Nairobi in the late 1990s and, as one of the longest-standing Congolese residents in this neighborhood, she viewed her work as creating a sense of community among the other refugees who had fled ongoing violence in the DRC, or "the Congo"—the shorthand

preferred by participants. One of Eva's primary duties was to host formal meetings for community leaders, primarily young men; however, in the presence of other women, she was unguarded, laughing more loudly, smiling more broadly.

The women ate *sombe* (a dish with boiled cassava leaves), prepared by Eva, as they discussed topics ranging from the weather to church gossip to community politics. Although young men more frequently represented the Congolese as formal liaisons between the community and the host country, Eva and several other women in the room were respected elders and were in part responsible for identifying and advising community leaders. As the conversation dwindled, some of the women began to shift their focus to the small television set in the corner of the room. They shushed the others and listened intently as a reporter emerged on screen to discuss the latest situation for urban refugees in Kenya: *More than 170 Congolese refugees were arrested in a church on the outskirts of Nairobi and taken to Dadaab refugee camp* [along the Kenya- Somali border]. *Reports of use of force … tear gas* (Amnesty International 2014a, 2014b), the reporter continued in Kiswahili about the devastation of the raids on urban refugee households. *A six-month old baby starved to death inside the once safe confines of her crib after her mother was arrested in a police raid* (HRW, 2014).

In many ways, this news was unsurprising. Six weeks prior to the women's gathering, the Government of Kenya had issued a directive stating that all refugees residing in urban areas must relocate to one of the country's peripheral refugee camps (HRW, 2014), far from established networks in the capital city. Although Kenya has implicitly followed encampment procedures in recent decades, definitional ambiguity around the policies meant they were followed without rigor, allowing for implicit acceptance and growth of an urban refugee population in the country, largely concentrated in the capital city of Nairobi (Lambo, 2012). Operation Usalama Watch, the Kenyan government's response to intensifying threats of terrorism within the country, tore refugee and migrant families apart through police brutality, arrests, and deportations (Amnesty International, 2014a). The country's largest stadium, an arena in which Kenyans have proudly cheered for the national Harambee Stars and their favorite local football club teams, was transformed into a detention center for international migrants, even those with United Nations–sanctioned refugee status (Kushkush, 2014; Amnesty International, 2014a).

What most unsettled the women in the room was that police had begun targeting Congolese neighborhoods and refugees in the immigration raids, erasing any waning sense of security to which the women clung.

Until this point, the primary victims of Operation Usalama Watch were those of Somali descent, the collateral damage of a campaign built on racial profiling to identify and prosecute members of al Shabaab, the Somali-based terrorist organization that claimed responsibility for recent attacks in Kenya (Amnesty International, 2014b), including the high-profile Westgate Mall attack (Abdi, 2013). While the immigration raids initially targeted the Somali community in the Eastleigh section of Nairobi, Operation Usalama Watch eventually spilled beyond these geographic boundaries into spaces where participants had once felt a sense of security. As a young Congolese man shared with me: accents, clothing, food choice, or even walking with a particular gait all signal a status of non-belonging, of the other (Tippens, field notes, June 14, 2014).

Eva sensed the women's growing unease, and as an informal leader among the women, attempted to boost their morale. She picked up the remote control that was sitting next to her lap, silencing the reporter. She raised her left eyebrow while easing back into the sofa. The expression was difficult to read until, smirking, she motioned to her friends: "Everyone, *eh*, I do not see why we cannot just move to Kakuma [refugee camp] now. Housing would not cost us anything—not even one *shilling*! Why are we paying so much to live in upmarket Nairobi rentals when we could be living for free?!" The women laughed in response, seeming momentarily to forget the deep worries they expressed during interviews: police extortion and harassment; children being mocked by classmates and teachers for being refugees; and having enough money to pay for housing, school fees, food, and medical expenses.

Throughout multiple informal visits with the women during Operation Usalama Watch, none had ever expressed outrage at the profiling and abuses against Somali refugees in Kenya. In fact, during one visit with the women, I was told that if I were to take a trip to the international airport in the middle of the night, I would see planes "filled with Somalis" who were being resettled in North America and Europe (Tippens, field notes, April 19, 2014). These conversations highlighted the perceived unfair treatment of Congolese and the favoring of other nationalities by the humanitarian community. The othering of Somali refugees challenges the narrative of a cohesive "urban refugee community" while establishing a "community" imagined around Congolese nationality and around shared suffering and persecution. Female and male participants in interviews, informal conversations, and small-group discussions frequently invoked this notion of "the other"—describing the "host community," refugees from other nations, and Congolese from different ethnic groups as a way of drawing boundaries of exclusion to protect their

various communities of belonging from perceived interlopers, individuals who might place a strain on the resources and social capital that had been carefully cultivated (see also Omata, 2012).

Urban refugees' bridging and linking social capital

The meeting space in which the refugee community leaders gathered stood in stark contrast to the intimate furnishings of Eva's living room. The room occupied the second story of a business office complex in Nairobi's central business district and was sparsely decorated with rows of folding chairs, which were mostly filled by young men in their 20s and early 30s. Of the 28 refugee community leaders present at this meeting, only one was female.

This summit of refugee leaders was requested by the leaders themselves and hosted by the legal arm of a community-based NGO, the Refugee Legal Aid Project (RLAP). Three Kenyan attorneys represented RLAP at this gathering, sitting at a long table facing the audience. While the attorneys reviewed their notes prior to the start of the meeting, some of the leaders chatted among themselves as others read through the agenda, descriptively titled: "forum for refugee community leaders on their role and way forward following massive arrests, detention and deportation of persons of concern in Nairobi." An attorney, the only female among the RLAP representatives, glanced at her watch and signaled to a male colleague, who called the meeting to order. The meeting began with a prayer in Kiswahili led by one of the male attorneys; refugee leaders bowed their heads as the facilitator expressed gratitude for the day and for the opportunity to gather.

After the prayer a male representative for RLAP began speaking broadly about the recent immigration raids and arrests of refugees in Nairobi but was quickly interrupted by an Eritrean man who was nervous that they were wasting time better devoted to urgent matters: "There is a bad situation going on with Operation Usalama Watch. We think you [RLAP] have something to tell us. That is why we are here" (Tippens, field notes, May 6, 2014). Other community leaders nodded in agreement, some sitting near me whispered to one another that RLAP had not done enough to help refugees in Nairobi in recent weeks. "Let's be honest," a Rwandan man spoke out, "people are frustrated with you [RLAP]!" A representative from South Sudan added: "I did not see action from you or other NGOs when pregnant women were arrested or when our people were being deported—"

"You are all bitter," the female attorney interrupted the South Sudanese leader, "but we [as an NGO] cannot stop the Kenyan government from arresting refugees."

Tensions were high in this forum, differing from the light, informal gathering of the Congolese women in Eva's living room and from many in-group community meetings that took place among members of specific ethnic groups or nationalities. My host at this event, Joseph, was one of the leaders carefully selected by Eva and other elders in his community. Like each of the other 27 refugee leaders sitting in this room, Joseph was chosen to represent his geographically-defined community based on his social and cultural capital, including his education, language skills (English, French, Swahili, and three ethnic group languages from DRC), and social mobility. Although several Congolese participants in different neighborhoods shared with me that they lacked trust in their representatives, Joseph was well respected in his geographic community. Many Congolese refugees living in this neighborhood reminded me that I was lucky to work with Joseph and that they considered him a strong leader and friend. Joseph was serious but displayed easy humor and a broad smile when he was among friends in his age group. Tall and slender, he often dressed in pressed black trousers and a buttoned shirt. The thoughtful eyes that absorbed and processed information at rapid speed were usually veiled behind the thick black frames of his reading glasses. During the heated conversation between RLAP and the refugee leaders, Joseph sat quietly, his eyes attentive to the speakers but also glancing in the direction of those not talking to assess nonverbal cues, revealing two additional reasons Joseph was chosen among his peers by the Congolese elders: diplomacy and intuition.

The tone of the meeting eventually became more collegial, with both the refugee leaders and the hosts beginning to resolve differences and engage in strategic planning to improve refugee protection in the context of ongoing political violence in Nairobi. RLAP representatives and community leaders each contended with the difficult task of negotiating the fissure between the host country and refugees; as such, the greatest allocated time on the agenda was dedicated to hearing the different perspectives and experiences of the two overarching groups. The RLAP attorneys frequently spoke of their powerlessness within Kenya, one emphatically told the refugee leaders:

> International tools [conventions] have been interpreted differently by the government of Kenya. We are here at the invitation of the government. The United Nations [Refugee Agency] is here at the invitation of

the government. Even all of you, you are here at the invitation of the Government of Kenya (Tippens, field notes, May 6, 2014).

RLAP representatives negotiated their collective role as information brokers by advising refugee leaders to tell their communities to cooperate with the police if approached ("Do not run and do not become confrontational"), to speak primarily in English and Kiswahili if able, to develop relationships with district chiefs, and to "dress like Kenyans." Laughter from both RLAP representatives and refugee leaders echoed throughout the room when a young South Sudanese man jumped from his seat to emphasize the latter point:

> Yes, yes! I love you all, but look at you! Just look at you! [Pointing to different leaders who wore clothing representative of various ethnicities and nationalities spanning the African continent.] This is logic. Blend. And tell your friends to blend. Say it with me, everyone: *Blend in*! (Tippens, field notes, May 6, 2014).

The laughter faded after several minutes, giving way to serious discussions of communities' experiences of violence and suffering as a result of the government's refugee- camp directive. A Congolese male representing a different geographic area pleaded: "How can a mother be happy without her child? We need you [RLAP] to advocate for us on mother-child separation. The government of Kenya would send children—*children*— to refugee camps." Men also spoke repeatedly of "mothers who fight," primarily stories of women resisting arrest, highlighting community-based advocacy within the context of the family unit. Although she remained silent for the duration of the forum, the sole female community leader approached the RLAP staff and other refugee leaders after the meeting, communicating her fears as a new mother with a young infant. In this conversation, the female community leader enacted a culturally accepted social role as a caregiver to leverage bridging/linking social capital to advocate for urban-displaced refugees more broadly.

Unlike the deep bonding among the women in Eva's home, this meeting was more formal in nature. Although RLAP representatives exerted their power as Kenyan nationals in defining community as "all urban refugees in Nairobi," regardless of national or ethnic identity, individuals representing various nationalities and ethnic groups deliberately leveraged this label to garner resilience-promoting resources (e.g., protection networks, information) for themselves and the various communities to which they belonged.

Social capital and community resilience

Congolese participants received emotional, informational, and instrumental support through social-relationship–centered networks. For example, Solange (female, 31 years old) described how both she and her mother relied on bonding social capital within the "Congolese community" to secure employment and subsequent financial security:

> When I came here, it was not good. It was not a good life. I think it was bad because we used to live in [a de-identified informal settlement or "slum"]. It was a very small place. Very, very small. I think the room used to be a toilet and they changed it to be a room. Life was not good. We could not sleep, we did not have food. It was very bad. Until one day my mother got a job through a Congolese friend [at a regional NGO as a seamstress]. She got that job because she knows how to stitch. After she started working, she asked if they could take me to have a job there. They accepted, and I started working. That's how I was trained to dye fabrics. Eventually, my [Congolese] friend Jean introduced me to his boss, the [British] director of a different NGO. Jean's boss wanted to start a fabric project. That is how I came to my current job.

The above example illustrates how bonding capital can be used to access bridging/ linking networks for expanded opportunities. Some participants had access to transnational bonding capital (e.g., families resettled to third countries) that they were able to leverage to improve their positions. A woman in her mid-40s, Annette, identified familial remittance networks as an important source of instrumental support: "Many are doing well because they have relatives abroad who are supporting them. In Nairobi, you need money to survive."

Most female respondents emphasized bonding support, especially from other women; however, there were notable exceptions to this. Winnie, a 46-year-old woman whose husband remained in the DRC, provided an example of using bridging social capital when discussing a hardship that she overcame:

> When I first came to Nairobi, I used to make traditional juice and sell it from door-to-door. I also cooked fish and *sombe* [Congolese dish with cassava leaves]. I was selling that juice I made every day [to the Congolese] just to have something to eat ... I did not have money for feminine napkins. I made them out of clothes I had or found discarded—I would cut [the fabric] up. I went to [a second-hand market in Nairobi], and I took all my courage and I asked for a bra and panties. I told [the Kenyan shopkeeper] to also give me some clothes and I would sell them for her.

> She was skeptical, but I convinced her. I know this Nairobi on foot! I went around neighborhoods and neighborhoods, and I sold those clothes she gave me. I came back with money for her. So this was a job I kept doing.

Although Winnie was successful in her attempts to bridge outside of her community, a 46-year-old single mother described the difficulty of being a refugee woman without resources, particularly when attempting to utilize precarious social capital networks for survival:

> You have to have money to buy things, so it can be a big problem for women, a challenge. Somebody can deceive you. A man can say, "I can help you." But if you go with him, maybe you get a disease and then he will mistreat you because you have no people. I have support here (from "neighborhood community"), so I am still surviving. As a woman.

During in-depth interviews, men were more likely to describe utilizing a range of bonding, bridging, and linking social capital. A 27-year-old participant, Artur, who witnessed his father's death in the DRC and escaped to Kenya with his younger sister, spoke about the emotional support he received through close friendships in Nairobi:

> My life in Nairobi since I came in 2009, I passed through so many things … so many challenges I faced. And I reached a point to understand life is not only with parents but also with the people you meet; you can create a family. Your friends can be family in life's course. Most of the people who helped me are the people I found and we became friends, and now they are like my family. I have them from all over. I have Somali friends. I have Congolese. I have Kenyans.

Joseph, the refugee community leader, discussed his role serving as a liaison between the district police station and Congolese refugees during Operation Usalama Watch. In this role he provided his geographic community access to linking capital and embedded resources (e.g., protection). During a small-group discussion, four out of five male respondents stated that they would contact the local police if there were a raid in the neighborhood. When I expressed surprise (it was more common to hear stories of fearing the police during this fieldwork period), participants explained to me that while they themselves were not entirely comfortable with the police, they felt they could leverage Joseph's relationship with the police chief to secure protection resources.

The police chief explained that his rapport with the refugees living in his district began with Joseph, the community leader: "Joseph did not

have his own television many years ago, so he liked to come to the police compound to watch football." He continued:

> I have a cordial relationship with refugees in this area. We have a committee of representatives from different countries. People can come to the office directly or, if they are afraid to come themselves, they can voice their concerns through their representative. My dream is to have an officer to serve foreigners in this area, a liaison. Until now, though, any issues involving refugees have always been brought to my attention, and we try to help ... Our relationship with the refugees has been good, but now we have this directive. It is an order from the government, so I cannot comment [but] it is still important for police to work well with members of the community ... Sometimes refugees think that the police have a lot of money. We [the police] will give refugees 100 or 200 shillings when we see refugees who are not doing well, just so they can get some food.

The above passage illustrates how bonding capital can be transformed into bridging/ linking capital to improve individual well-being and status and to benefit the broader geographic community.

Discussion

The goal of this analysis was to contribute to enhanced understandings of community resilience as it relates to urban refugees' social capital. This builds on the previous work of scholars of migration studies (e.g., Landau & Duponchel, 2011; Lyytinen, 2015, 2017; Madhavan & Landau, 2011; Omata, 2012) to highlight connections between social capital theory and community resilience frameworks. More specifically, the results of this study show the potential for "resilience within networked communities" to be a more meaningful framework than "community resilience" with urban-displaced refugees. I will attempt to elaborate on this below.

Consistent with Lyytinen's (2017) findings that Congolese refugees in Kampala felt a sense of belonging in multiple "communities of trust," respondents in this Nairobi-based study participated in various social groups to negotiate, access, and distribute resilience-promoting resources within and among their networks. Given heightened political violence at the time of this study, participants demonstrated an increased reliance on bonding capital (see also Lyytinen, 2017); however, in times of obligation and need, refugees placed themselves at risk to access bridging/linking networks to secure resources. It is in this context that I believe it is important for researchers and practitioners to pay attention to *processes* in

addition to *places*. Just as there have been calls to look at resilience as a process, the utilization of social capital to build resilience in precarious environments is dynamic and ever shifting. How individuals and groups situate themselves within and among different resourced communities is dependent upon a myriad of personal, community, and ecological factors.

Gendered access to and utilization of social capital was a prominent finding of this study. Congolese women primarily—although not exclusively—reported and demonstrated bonding social capital, which is consistent with findings related to the identification of close-knit female friendships and networks among Liberian refugees in Ghana (Boateng, 2009, 2010) and Somali refugees in Australia (McMichael & Manderson, 2004). Women in this study engaged in emotional labor associated with supporting other Congolese refugees. Bonding capital typically manifested as private-sphere activities that centered around the home and included preparing traditional food for community gatherings, using humor to put others at ease, and hosting both formal and informal community meetings in the intimate and familiar environment of the home (for comparison, Congolese groups in other Nairobi neighborhoods hosted formal community meetings in rented or donated spaces). Women contributed to community resilience by reproducing social traditions (see also Darychuk & Jackson, 2015), revealing the contributions of cooking Congolese dishes as an act of creating resilience-promoting spaces. Oka (2014) highlighted the consumption of favored foods among refugees in a Kenyan camp as contributing to a sense of normalcy and dignity; similarly, a participant in Lyytinen's (2015) research stated: "When I eat cassava leaves I feel like I am in the DRC" (p. 599).

It should be noted that it was not only women who enacted gendered roles. Congolese men, especially those in their 20s and early 30s, reported higher levels of bridging and linking social capital than their female counterparts. Examples of this are found in the overwhelmingly male representation of communities at formal meetings. In speaking of the need to protect women at the RLAP meeting, refugee leaders performed masculinity in a male-dominated space, echoing Owen's (2015) assertion that "male companionship is important for the 'protection' of women" and that "male bodies provide protection from other male bodies" (pp. 167–168; "other male bodies" in this research signify those representing the state as well as those outside of the "communities of trust" constructed by Congolese women and men). It is also important not to overlook the risk at which men are placed by virtue of their engagement in public-sphere activities. Owen (2015) discussed the need for Congolese participants in urban South Africa to expand "person-to-person network[s]

across social markers of difference such as race, class, religious affiliation, ethnicity, gender and nationality" (p. 108). Each attempt to expand one's social capital placed individuals at risk:

> Bracing themselves against the possibility of xenophobic attitudes from South Africans across the color line, Congolese risk their dignity to secure assistance. The inability to do so has dire consequences for survival and ultimately limits social mobility and economic success. (Owen, 2015, p. 108)

Bridging social capital is difficult to access and maintain in politically violent times. Madhavan & Landau (2011) discuss the concept of "thin trust" as "less intense but sufficient for facilitating cooperation" (p. 476). The refugee community leaders, who were primarily men, seemed to understand how to work within these precarious bridging and linking networks to advocate for themselves and their communities. Although Congolese men have strong bonding networks (see Owen, 2015), it is interesting to note that several male participants in this study used terminology associated with bonding capital (e.g., "family" and "friends") to refer to out-group, bridging relationships. This transformation of bridging networks into bonding support—and the furthering of bonding relationships into formalized informational and instrumental support structures— is an important area for further study.

Finally, as evidenced by increased trust in the police among participants in this neighborhood compared to other spaces, refugees' perceptions of resources within their immediate social networks were related to an improved sense of personal security and well-being. The buffering effect of *perceived* resources is consistent with Kimhi and Shamai's (2004) research showing that community resilience has a positive effect on individual life satisfaction in situations of political violence.

Conclusion

I argue that "resilience within networked communities" (building on Jabareen & Carmon's (2010) and Lyytinen's (2017) previous work on "communities of trust") is a crucial step toward developing a nuanced understanding of how urban-displaced refugees interact with social networks to promote individual and collective well-being and security in precarious times. The Congolese participants in this study created permeable microsystems, each holding specific resources and meanings. Interventions that seek to bolster community resilience among refugees may risk obscuring

individual-level variables that influence the creation and maintenance of various discrete and overlapping communities of trust. Practitioners seeking to enhance refugees' resilience may wish to do so by working with representatives from these various microsystems (e.g., refugee community leaders, religious institutions, community elders, NGOs,). With this in mind, community resilience or group functioning in times of distress should not be considered a substitute for requisite structural and policy changes needed to improve the lives of urban refugees.

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