Refugee Resettlement

STUDIES IN FORCED MIGRATION
General Editors: Tom Scott-Smith and Kirsten McConnachie

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Refugee Resettlement

POWER, POLITICS, AND HUMANITARIAN GOVERNANCE

Edited by
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To those who build a longer table, not a higher fence

Contents

**Part I. Refugee Resettlement in International and
Regional Perspectives**

Part II. National Policies and Ideologies of Refugee Resettlement

Part III. Resettlement Bureaucracies and Resettled Refugees in Local Contexts

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6

The Structural and Institutional Exclusion of Refugees in Australia

Ibolya Losoncz

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Introduction

Successful resettlement of refugees depends both on individual resources and strategies of refugees and on the foundational principle of having the same rights as host communities. Stating the equality of rights is fundamental for the normative framework that determines refugee resettlement policy, and the state has an important responsibility in the clear articulation of these rights (Ager and Strang 2008; compare Jubilut and Zamur; Reklev and Jumbert, this volume). But is legislating and articulating equality of rights sufficient by itself? Or do governments also have a responsibility to use their power and their institutions to protect and advance the nondiscriminatory realization of these rights?

Focusing on the case of the economic participation of recently resettled refugees in Australia, this chapter argues that being granted the same rights underpins the successful integration of resettled refugees and that governments and their institutions have an important role in ensuring the realization of these rights. Failing to do this increases the structural imbalance of power in which refugees find themselves and negatively affects refugee integration. This chapter systemically explores the impact of social structures and institutional responses and practices on resettlement outcomes for refugees. Employment was chosen because it is an important pathway to economic and social inclusion and the settlement of refugees. It provides

an income and a sense of security and enables the development of social networks and cultural skills vital for integration. Stable employment is at the top of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR's) list of essential indicators of successful resettlement (UNHCR 2011). Employment and the economic participation of refugees also benefits the receiving country.

The chapter argues that current Australian resettlement policies are dominated by a strong emphasis on migrants' adopting their new country's normative goals and values without a corresponding emphasis on ensuring that there are effective pathways for refugees to achieve these goals (see similarly Darrow; Garnier, this volume). On the contrary, in some instances Australia's social structures and institutions constitute obstacles rather than facilitators to the economic and social inclusion of resettled refugees. For example, my findings will demonstrate how a simplistic application of mainstream recruitment mechanisms, such as the merit-based selection system, fails to recognize the relative disadvantage of refugees and thus restricts their access to jobs.

The chapter is structured as follows. The next section presents the chapter's theoretical framework. A brief account of the development of Australia's refugee resettlement programs then shows how the historical context has contributed to contradictions in current Australian resettlement policies. The rest of the chapter presents the results and analysis from two independent, yet related, datasets to reveal how Australian social structures and institutional practices thwart the social and economic inclusion of refugees admitted for settlement. I conclude by demonstrating that the structural imbalance of power in which refugees find themselves undermines their capacity and determination to economically and socially integrate and by shedding light on the chapter's contribution to the exploration of refugee resettlement as humanitarian governance.

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Role of the State and Government Institutions: Theoretical Framing

In the past ten years, research on refugee resettlement has increasingly focused on the role of host societies and host states, including settlement policies and processes, such as housing, employment, education, health care, income support, and family reunion (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury 2007; Stewart 2009; Valenta and Bunar 2010; Valtonen 2004; and Lewis and Young; Vera Espinoza, this volume). Yet our knowledge of how social structures and mechanisms do or do not support resettlement and the processes involved remains limited.

In their conceptualization of refugee integration, Ager and Strang (2008) identify two main types of processes mediating between foundational principles and integration outcomes: facilitators and social connections. Social connections, such as social bridges, social bonds, and social links are important at the local level. Facilitators, aimed at providing pathways and removing structural barriers to integration, are often under the control of the state and are important at the national policy-making level. Ager and Strang noted that despite the importance of these processes, they are undertheorized and poorly understood.

One theoretical framework to set outcomes apart from the processes leading to these outcomes is Robert Merton's adaptation theory. The two main elements of the theory are goals, that is, culturally structured normative values, and social structures, that is, pathways structuring the capacities of individuals in the social groups. In other words, the cultural structure sets goals, while social structure provides pathways for making and implementing goals (Merton 1968).

Merton argued that valued goals of society, such as economic participation and success, are desired by all, but opportunities to achieve them are not equally distributed, and pathways for some are structurally blocked or restricted. Specifically, Merton saw social structures to be the reason most migrants were unable to reach economic success and became part of the most marginalized of their new country despite working hard, often in menial jobs (Merton 1968). In his adaptation theory, he argued that behaviors adopted by individuals, in terms of adaptation of or resistance to normative goals and their formal institutions, are structurally determined. That is, social structures make the means and actions to achieve cultural goals possible for groups occupying certain statuses within a society and difficult or impossible for other groups, such as refugees.

The other important analytical concepts, to explicate social connections, are Robert Putnam's social capital theory and Mark Granovetter's work on the role of small-scale interactions. Putnam saw social capital as the relationships between people and their social networks and the associated norms of trust (Putnam 2000). In the context of refugee integration, bonding and bridging networks are vital mediators of integration outcomes (Ager and Strang 2008). Bonding social capital is characterized by strong relationships, typically with people from the same ethnic community. Bridging social capital, on the other hand, are networks of looser connections beyond family, friends, and the diaspora. These connections, although weaker than the ties with friends and family, connect people to a multitude of outside worlds, providing a bridge to new work-related networks. As proposed by Granovetter (1983), it is these distinct forms of interactions that provide the capacity to be more successful at searching for and obtaining employment.

Indeed, the positive role of bridging social capital has been confirmed by a number of empirical studies (such as, Lancee 2010; Stone et al. 2003).

Australian Refugee Resettlement Policies in Context

Australia is an augmentative country, that is, a country that actively supports population growth through immigration (Kunz 1981). Nearly 30 percent, or 7 million, of Australia's current resident population was born overseas (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016). Despite this history of immigration, Australia offers protection to far fewer refugees than many countries. Of the 2.45 million refugees globally who had their status recognized or were resettled in 2015, just 11,776, or less than 0.5 percent were assisted by Australia (UNHCR 2016). Yet, if one considers Australia's contribution as a proportion of the number of refugees resettled within the UNHCR resettlement program, Australia ranks third overall behind the United States and Canada (UNHCR 2016). This is consistent with the Australian government's long-standing position of giving priority to resettlement within the UNHCR program over on-shore applications for resettlement. For the past fifteen years, Australia has resettled between 6,000 and 12,000 refugees each year and has recently announced it will permanently increase its refugee intake to 18,750 a year by 2018–2019, in addition to its one-off special intake of 12,000 resettled refugees from the Syrian and Iraq humanitarian crisis (Kenny 2016 and see Cellini, this volume).

Until now, being a major contributor to the UNHCR's resettlement program has brought considerable reputational benefits in the international realm to Australia by promoting its global humanitarian image (Jupp 2007). Recently, the Australian government has also tried to use its strong support of UNHCR's resettlement efforts to justify its inhumane and punitive detention of asylum seekers, an act in violation of Australia's human rights treaty obligations (McBeth et al. 2011: 516).

In the domestic context, finding approval for Australia's resettlement program has been more challenging. The narrative aspects of providing permanent safety and resettlement for some of the most vulnerable refugees[1] appeals to some, but not all Australians (on vulnerability, see Thomson; Sandvik, this volume). Instead, the dominant domestic reasoning for admitting humanitarian migrants for resettlement is their potential contribution to Australia's workforce and population. In fact, historically, the Australian government's approach to humanitarian migrants is part of the broader immigration strategy of supporting population growth and subsequent economic prosperity. While in the late 1970s Australia developed a separate refugee policy, the dominant expectation that all immigrants, including refugees, should quickly benefit Australia economically has not changed (Jupp 2007).

The inappropriateness of this framework and the contradictions inherent in this policy are evident. After all, integration is a lengthy two-way process (Valtonen 2004). It involves societal and institutional adaptations to facilitate the settlement of new arrivals through reducing or eliminating barriers to social and economic participation (Ager and Strang 2008; Losoncz 2017a) and providing support services to assist the development of social connections and economic independence (Abur and Spaaij 2016; Ager and Strang 2008).

But the impact of this inappropriate framework and policy contradiction did not surface until recently, prompted by two main developments in Australian refugee resettlement policy in the past twenty years. First, there has been an increase in the proportion of humanitarian migrants from long-term conflict zones and from protracted situations (Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2011). Living for prolonged periods in conflict zones and refugee camps, which are characterized by insecurity, violence, and scant opportunity for education and employment, affects the physical and mental health and human capital development of refugees considerably (Loeescher and Milner 2009). As I will demonstrate in the two sections on results, a significant proportion of recent humanitarian migrants to Australia has relatively low human capital in terms of formal education and English proficiency–both important predictors of socioeconomic status.

While the characteristics and subsequent needs of humanitarian migrants have changed dramatically (Garnier 2014), investment in services and processes supporting the resettlement efforts of humanitarian migrants has not grown apace. On the contrary, this same period has also seen the second major change–a decline in the targeted support of the resettlement process of humanitarian migrants. Resettlement-specific support has been minimized, and economic and social integration has become the responsibility of the immigrant household, aided by a limited range of government-funded welfare services, coordinated by mainstream departments, and delivered by the third sector. The intersection of these two major changes, and a coinciding decline in the need for low-skilled labor in the manufacturing sector in Australia (Kelly and Lewis 2003; Waxman 2001), has resulted in diminished employment opportunities for immigrants with a low skill base; this subsequently has created an impoverished existence among refugees compared to other Australians.

The evident decline in economic participation and increase in welfare dependence (Hugo 2011) among refugees is a concern for the Australian government. But while the government acknowledges the role of settlement services and the influence of the willingness of Australian society to welcome new arrivals, the emphasis is on "the commitment of those arrivals to establishing a life in Australia" (Department of Social Services 2015: 3), rather than the effectiveness of resettlement policies and programs. Additionally, it

is assumed that existing mechanisms, developed to ensure that institutions provide equal access to all members of Australian society, will also provide equal opportunities to immigrants accepted for resettlement. But this assumption is at odds with the reality for many migrants, especially those with a refugee background who are experiencing severe social and economic problems.

Methodology

Resettlement is enmeshed in historical events, legal structures, institutional powers, and individual actions. Its study requires an interdisciplinary approach and strong methodology to analyze the complex interplay between structural and systemic conditions, actors and their agency, and cultural norms and values. To analytically explicate the causal mechanisms producing change, these elements need to be treated in dialectical unity despite their different ontological planes. To address this methodological challenge I used a critical realist approach (Danermark et al. 2002) and a sequential mixed methods research design. The initial qualitative phase, informed by grounded theory, was followed by a quantitative phase. The use of a critical realist framework provided a robust method for capturing the interplay between the analytically distinct elements of migration research and to analytically explicate the causal mechanisms producing social change or reproduction (Iosifides 2012; Losoncz 2017b). The use of inductive analytic processes of grounded theory methodology (Charmaz 2006) allowed me to uncover how participants made sense of their new country, its normative values, and its social structures. Together, grounded theory and a critical realist framework allowed me to go beyond describing meanings among participants to examining and analyzing the structures that generate them. Subsequent quantitative analysis of a larger, more representative dataset of refugees provided a robust test of the generalizability of the propositions that arose from the qualitative phase.

Qualitative Data

The collection of qualitative data was part of my doctoral thesis research, and the results reported in the qualitative section draw on findings reported in an earlier publications (i.e., Losoncz 2017a). Qualitative data were collected between 2009 and 2012 through ethnographic engagement and individual interviews in four Australian cities with thirty-two South Sudanese men and women who had migrated to Australia less than ten years ago. In addition, nine Sudanese and non-Sudanese community workers who had close professional connections with the South Sudanese community (in

the capacity of community development workers, refugee counselors, and school counselors) were interviewed for their insights into the resettlement experiences and challenges of the community. Ethics approval was sought and granted for this research by the Human Research Ethics Committee, Australian National University.

The South Sudanese population was chosen for two reasons: first, the relatively larger number of South Sudanese refugees, approximately 20,000 (Lucas et al. 2011), accepted for resettlement in Australia between 2003 and 2007; and, second, the concerns voiced by both the government and the South Sudanese community regarding their settlement outcomes (Dhanji 2009; Hebbani et al. 2010; Milner and Khawaja 2010; Murray 2010), indicating the community to be an "extreme" example of the failures of the resettlement processes. Selection of extreme cases are useful, as they often reflect the purest form of insight into the phenomenon being studied (Bazeley 2013).

Initial snowball and convenience sampling of participants progressed to purposive sampling as the research advanced. Participants were from a mix of South Sudanese ethnic groups, the majority being Dinka and Nuer. Their age ranged between eighteen and fifty years, and about one-third of them were women. A third of the participants stated that they had a tertiary education and another third a secondary education. Remaining participants had either a primary level of education or no formal education. About half of the participants were married but did not always cohabit with their partner. About one-third of the participants were employed, and nearly all participants were pursuing some form of education or training.

Formal interviews were between thirty- and ninety-minutes long. All participants were interviewed in English, which most could speak well.[2] Data were analyzed and increasingly abstracted using constant comparative methods of grounded theory. While interviews were the primary source of data, my engagement with the community, such as attending community celebrations and church services, helped to contextualize findings emerging from interviews. This use of multiple data sources brought layered, yet convergent meanings to the research (Bazeley 2013).

Quantitative Data

Quantitative data were drawn from Wave 1 of the Longitudinal Study of Humanitarian Migrants or Building a New Life in Australia (BNLA) survey performed in 2014. BNLA is a longitudinal survey of humanitarian migrants that was commissioned by the Department of Social Services and collected across Australia. The sample was drawn from a database of resettled refugees who had been granted visas through Australia's humanitarian program and had arrived in Australia three to six months prior to the interview.[3]

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This chapter uses data from all 1,798 adult respondents between the ages of twenty-one and fifty-five.

Since results from the qualitative and quantitative analysis are reported in separate sections—as they are related to two different, although closely related samples—inferences and interpretations are integrated in the discussion section.

Results from Qualitative Research with the South Sudanese Australian Community

Participants were aware of the important role of employment for successful resettlement, and they reported a strong desire to work and to become economically self-sufficient. But, despite desiring and expecting economic participation, the unemployment rate of 30 percent among the Sudanese-born population is almost six times that of the overall Australian population (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012). Further, those employed are often underemployed and/or clustered in low occupational status immigrant employment niches (Correa-Velez and Onsand 2009).

Participants saw employment as the main pathway to their goal to move from their refugee status and to become an included and contributing member of their new society. At a public event in Canberra celebrating the first anniversary of South Sudanese independence, the local community leader put the following public request to the minister for multicultural affairs:

> Many of our people from South Sudan are now educated at universities as economists, legal and health professional or are qualified workers in the fields of childcare, community work, or aged care, but they are not given the opportunity to work. We want the opportunity to contribute to this society. We do not want to stay refugees relying on service providers forever. (first anniversary celebration of South Sudan's independence, 21 July 2012, Canberra)

Employment was also seen as an important opening to become active members and to learn in their new social environment about its practices, norms, and values. It was also seen as an opportunity for both immigrants and members of the host society to learn about each other's culture and build social connections. As expressed by one of the participants:

> Employment is the best and the quickest way to integrate. . . . For example, if I work with you, then you can learn my culture and the others working in other companies—from there our image in the society gets communicated and we kind of, you know, will believe that we are part of this society. (young male South Sudanese participant)

Indeed, stable and meaningful employment is critical for successful settlement; it provides an income and a sense of security and enables the development of social networks and cultural skills, which are vital for integration. It also contributes to psychological and social well-being by enhancing self-esteem and self-sufficiency (Correa-Velez et al. 2015). Conversely, long-term unemployment among refugees is likely to negatively influence settlement, health, and well-being (Abdelkerim and Grace 2012; Fozdar and Torezani 2008).

The main reasons identified by participants for not being able to attain employment included lack of skills and English proficiency, lack of networks and knowledge of the local employment context, discrimination from employers, and a merit-based selection system that fails to recognize the relative disadvantage of refugees. These issues fall into the three conceptual categories of human capital, social capital, and systemic barriers.

Human Capital

Skills and English proficiency is a significant predictor of employment in Australia, and poor English speakers are disproportionately represented among the unemployed (Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research 1996). All participants identified the importance of good communication and English skills for participating in the labor market. At the same time they were concerned that the current provision of the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) is inadequate for learning a new language, and its delivery does not take into account their limited formal education experience. As explained by one of the South Sudanese community workers:

> They've been to English classes, the CIT classes, for 510 hours without learning A, B, and C. They managed to teach them nothing. And I don't blame them. Many of us are coming from a village where only 1 percent of the women went to school. Just learning to hold a pen took time. (female South Sudanese community worker)

The participant's claim that the current provisions of English classes is inadequate is supported by educational research showing that the process of acquiring a new language requires seven to eleven years (Thomas and Collier 2002) and possibly longer for adult migrants.

Social Capital

Another challenge for obtaining employment identified by participants is the lack of social connections facilitating job search. As expressed by one participant:

"Getting opportunity is based on who you know, not what you know. And that's the problem for our community; we don't have that connection where you can easily access employment opportunities" (young male South Sudanese participant).

Social connections are one of the important domains of Ager and Strang's (2008) conceptual model. Bridging types of social capital (Putnam 2000) are particularly vital mediators of gaining employment.

While participants reported high levels of bonding social capital in their community, they also observed that the value of these connections for finding employment is limited, as very few people in their community have connections with Australian employers in their newly emerging community. Bridging social capital, on the other hand, was reported to be weak. Participants also noted that, despite the importance of these connections for finding a job, employment services did not help them to cultivate these connections.

Systemic Barriers

But the main issue for participants was what they called "hidden racism" in the forms of discrimination and systemic barriers in the Australian employment recruitment practices. A particular concern among participants was the large proportion of graduates in their community with a qualification from Australian universities who cannot find employment.

Many of us are doing factory work, even though we've got skills. We are trying hard to get into the education system so that we can get a better job. But most of us, even though we completed our degree in Australia, we are not getting employment. So we go to the factory. (male South Sudanese participant)

While the employment of first-generation adult refugee migrants in the lower echelons of the labor market is a relatively established trend in Australia, there is a new dimension to the problem: a large proportion of young African Australians with high-level qualifications from Australian universities who cannot find jobs. The "countless African Australian refugees with high-level qualifications who've found it virtually impossible to work in their field of expertise in Australia" even raised the concern of the then finance minister, who concluded that "professional employment opportunities are still heavily influenced by the informal connections of familiarity that attach to people who are well integrated into our society. Outsiders are subtly excluded by a complex web of invisible barriers" (Tanner 2008).

The next section explores whether the claims presented in this section can find support in quantitative analysis of a much larger and more representative sample of the most recent humanitarian migrants in Australia.

Results from Quantitative Analysis of the BNLA

Sample characteristics have confirmed the relatively low level of human capital in terms of formal education and spoken English, but they also indicated considerable personal resources. A considerable proportion, 15 percent, has never been to school and 70 percent reported not being able to speak English at all, or not well. A large proportion of survey respondents were born in long-term high-conflict zones, such as Iraq (40 percent) and Afghanistan (25 percent). Although 33 percent of respondents reported experiencing posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), 89 percent of participants had positive self-efficacy[4] and 93 percent reported positive attitudes toward self. Social capital among survey respondents was relatively low, with only 33 percent responding positively about their community support networks. In terms of deprivation, 23 percent of respondents reported experiencing more than one type of hardship due to a shortage of money, compared to only 8 percent in the broader Australian community.[5]

Despite a strong desire among participants to work and be economically independent, only 6 percent were in paid work after six months in Australia, which increased to 18 percent in the subsequent ten months.[6] Lack of published data restricted direct comparison with immigrants from other migration categories for the same period. But a report on settlement outcomes released in 2011 found that after four years living in Australia only 31 percent of humanitarian migrants were employed compared to 50 percent of family migrants and 84 percent of skilled migrants (Australian Survey Research Group Pty Ltd 2011).

Logistic regression of the BNLA data to predict employment found gender, age, time spent in Australia, and English proficiency to be significant predictors. Males were much more likely to be employed than females. Odds of employment increased slightly with age but decreased as people got older. Being employed also improved with time spent in Australia and with increased English proficiency. But education level and employment prior to coming to Australia were not significant predictors of being currently employed. A considerable proportion, 38 percent, held postschool qualifications and 58 percent had work experience prior to coming to Australia. Yet, these personal resources did not improve the likelihood of employment, indicating that current hiring practices undervalue the capabilities of humanitarian migrants. Similarly, while participants reported high self-sufficiency and self-reliance, these personal resources did not translate into improved employment prospects. Interestingly, PTSD did not show a negative impact on gaining employment either.

When looking for work, the majority of refugees turned to family and friends (64 percent), followed by Centrelink and employment agencies (55 percent), employers (48 percent), own community (46 percent), and news-

paper and internet (37 percent). Only 19 percent reported looking for work through connections within other communities, confirming limited bridging-type social connections among the most recently arrived refugee communities in Australia.

In terms of the helpfulness of available services, the agency that they found the least helpful was the very agency tasked with helping job seekers find a job–employment agencies. Nearly 40 percent found them to be not at all helpful, and an additional 25 percent a little helpful. This confirms claims made by South Sudanese participants of the qualitative study: employment agencies are unresponsive to the needs of refugees.

The main reasons for finding it hard to get a job converge with reasons identified by the South Sudanese sample. Lack of Australian work experience followed by English proficiency were the leading reasons, with each selected by more than half of the respondents. Lack of skills and qualifications and not being able to get a job in the same occupation previous to coming to Australia were identified by about a third of the respondents. Discrimination, however, was only identified by 6 percent. This discrepancy could relate to the relatively short period survey participants had spent in Australia, compared to South Sudanese participants. As participants were still in the process of enhancing their English and accrediting their qualifications from overseas and acquiring Australian qualifications, the potential for discriminatory practices to arise has been limited.

Discussion

Such a low rate of employment among a population with high aspirational and personal resources, as well as capacities in the form of postschool qualifications and overseas work experience, raises the question of socially structured inequalities in Australian settlement policies and discrimination from employers. Indeed, a number of important large sample size quantitative Australian studies have found higher unemployment rates among refugees compared to other migrants even after controlling for differences in education and English proficiency. While their employment outcomes improved with duration of residence, it continued to lag behind other migrants (Cobb-Clark 2006; Thapa and Gorgens 2006; Vandenheuvel and Wooden 1999). Additionally, employment outcomes did not improve with time at the same rate for all refugees. Some groups, such as those from Africa, continue to experience higher levels of unemployment even after a considerable length of residence (Hugo 2011).

Despite this robust empirical evidence, both employers and the Australian government refuse to acknowledge the connections between policies and practices and the disproportional difficulties faced by refugee migrant groups in Australia in gaining employment. Instead they attribute it to lack

of skills and personal characteristics. Employers claim that often refugees do not have the "cultural knowledge" or that they would not "fit in" with other staff. This was often stated as a "soft skill" related to "Australian-ness" (Tilbury and Colic-Peisker 2007). In other words, the subjective concept of "cultural difference" has become an admissible reason, at least in practice, for denying economic participation and inclusion.

As for the government position, the emphasis remains on the characteristics and so-called deficits of refugees. For example in 2016, when reporting on the low employment rate of 18 percent among humanitarian migrants after fifteen months in Australia, the Department of Social Services identified low levels of literacy, little formal schooling, and high rates of mental health problems as a main reason for such low levels of employment (Taylor 2016). This chapter argues that from a policy perspective, individual characteristic should not be seen as deterministic factors, but rather as capacities that can be turned into participation if appropriate pathways are provided. My finding that postschool qualifications and work experience prior to coming to Australia did not improve the odds of participants' employment indicates that the current pathways are inadequate.

For example, English proficiency is the strongest skill-based predictor for employment and is fundamentally linked to good settlement outcomes. But refugees come to Australia with vastly different English skills, and most of them have low levels of English. While English proficiency is viewed by the Australian government as one of the most important indicators of integration and resettlement (Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2006), the current provision of English classes, AMEP, does not deliver the desired outcome. Wave 2 results from the BNLA indicates that only 18 percent of the participants who reported not speaking English at all or not well in Wave 1 reported improved English proficiency a year later.[7]

AMEP provides up to 510 hours of English language tuition to humanitarian entrants and other migrants. In the 2016–2017 budget, the government announced that the AMEP program will be redesigned to improve client participation, including establishing two new service streams—social English and pre-employment English (Refugee Council of Australia 2016). The AMEP redesign is an encouraging development that may create better opportunities for refugees to become proficient in English and subsequently allow increased employment opportunities and effective settlement. Yet there are other important improvements needed. Recent community feedback identified flexible funding options to cater to the diverse needs of learners accessing the program and a more practical, practice-oriented structure and content as especially relevant. There are particular considerations for refugee women who have little or no experience in formal classroom settings while some women from Muslim communities are challenged by lack of access to private transportation, fear of using public transportation, not being allowed to travel unaccompanied, discomfort with mixed-

sex classes, and lack of information (Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia 2016).

Another area where recognized pathways to employment remain unsupported is fostering work experience opportunities and connections to potential employers–both acute needs among refugee migrant job seekers. Lack of Australian work experience prevents migrant jobseekers from competing with other applicants in the labor market. Their lack of connections beyond family and friends limits their capacity to be more successful at searching for and obtaining employment. As established by research, it is the ties beyond family and friends that provide a bridge to new work-related networks (Granovetter 1983). Yet employment agencies–private enterprises founded by the government–fail to assist in the development of connections to potential employers or opportunities for work experience. Both qualitative and quantitative results of this research found employment agencies to be unresponsive to the needs of refugees. Rather, they see their role as "expert mediators" between the unemployed and potential employers and providers of training to job seekers (Tilbury and Colic-Peisker 2007).

There are a number of potential reasons employment agencies are unresponsive to the needs of refugees, including institutional inertia, lack of appropriate skills, and contractual disincentives. Contractual arrangements and remuneration of employment services depend on the number of clients serviced and/or placed in employment. Refugees represent a relatively small proportion of the total client pool of mainstream agencies, yet they have very specific needs that require employment agencies to go outside of their routine activities. Under the current arrangement, responding to the specific needs of clients from a refugee background does not make a good business case.

Of course, labor market discrimination cannot be seen in isolation from government policy and lack of government action to fix the evident systemic flaw in Australian recruitment processes. As one non-Sudanese community worker commented:

> We should be a bit more thoughtful of what we are going to do with the people when they come to the country. Like 13,000 people a year is a lot of people when they don't know what they are doing and the support from the government is rather pathetic. They just give out the settlement grants to different organizations, but a lot of the people don't get any benefits. There are no structural responses from government. It is a kind of a minimalist approach. We take these people to keep the UN happy and then we give the funding to these organizations to look after them and hopefully it will work. (non-Sudanese community worker)

So what is the reason behind the Australian government's reluctance to fix the dissonance between pathways and programs as delivered and their policy objectives?

The standard method of recruitment in Australia applied to all job applicants, including those from a refugee background, is merit-based selection. The mechanism is believed to deliver equal access and opportunity to *all* members of Australian society. It follows an assessment based on the candidate's work-related and personal qualities, including demonstrated experience, preferably in Australia, of the skills required. This benchmark is hard to attain for most refugees, who, because of their refugee experience, are not entering the labor market on equal terms with people who grew up in Australia. In other words, the application of mainstream recruitment mechanisms, without provisions for disadvantaged groups, restricts access to refugees and other disadvantaged groups and thus systemically discriminates against them.

In summary, Australia's current resettlement practices are delivering poorly in both performative and practical dimensions. In the global context, the shortcomings of the Australian government's human rights obligations have been noted by the United Nations. Resettlement countries commit themselves to providing appropriate services, infrastructure, and support necessary for the integration of refugees, including the creation of equal access and opportunities to ensure participation and actively promote an inclusive and welcoming society (UNHCR 2011 and see van Selm, this volume). In its response to Australia's fifteenth to seventeenth periodic reports to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UNCERD), the committee drew particular attention to the multiple forms of discrimination experienced by some groups, including African Australians. The committee recommended that Australia strengthen the racial and cultural dimensions of its Social Inclusion Agenda (UNCERD 2010: 3).

In the domestic context, many refugees experience severe social and economic problems. My analysis of the BNLA found that over 23 percent of participants experienced more than one type of hardship due to shortage of money, compared to only 8 percent in the broader Australian community.[8] Such economic marginalization of refugees prevents them from fully participating in or belonging to the broader community. In other words, while the Australian government gives legal permission to refugees to resettle in Australia, they are not afforded the same living standards and opportunities enjoyed by the broader Australian society.

Conclusion

This chapter critically examined Australia's refugee resettlement program and the reasons for adverse economic and social outcomes among refugees. I have argued that the main reason lies in labor market discrimination and

lack of government action and policy to provide refugees accessible pathways for inclusion. Yet, Australia is not unique in failing to have effective policies and programs to assist the integration of refugees. Countries, such as Sweden, Norway, and Belgium, also have very high-level unemployment and subsequent marginalization of refugees (Eurostat 2014). Despite being given equal foundational principles and rights, a large number of them remain "outside the system."

Can we generalize from the findings of this Australian case study to explain general trends in economic outcomes for resettled refugees in so-called Western countries? I propose that we can. The findings of my study that by simply giving equal rights and equal access to social institution and structures will not lead to good integration outcomes is not limited to Australia. It applies to any situation in which the state fails to take additional steps to ensure that equal rights principles give people substantive rather than formal, equal opportunities. Following the approach to power presented in the volume's introduction, one could say that the inability of governments to ensure enforcement of the principle of equal rights for resettled refugees considerably reduces the negotiating power of many refugees, as it deprives them of options to improve their socioeconomic situation.

The failure to ensure equal rights is a more subtle way to exclude forced migrants from Australian society than the country's established policy of isolation of asylum seekers in faraway detention centers (Garnier 2014), yet it is equally concerning. Further, this points at the hypocrisy of the Australian government's insistence on the greater "humanitarian worth" of resettled refugees as opposed to asylum seekers and, in this context, at the limits of care at the core of Australia's official humanitarian migration program, whereas selection and admission control mechanisms are manifold. This chapter's analysis thus contributes to this volume's critical exploration of refugee resettlement as humanitarian governance.

Despite increasing evidence of the systemic exclusion of refugees it is generally not acknowledged, and the narrative is dominated by claims that particular migrant groups are prone to adopt nonfunctional behaviors. However, as argued by Merton (1968), it is not members of particular groups that have dysfunctional behavior; rather it is elements of institutions that are generally functional for some but dysfunctional for others. In other words, social structures affect not only outcomes for people but also the strategies and behaviors they adopt. The structural imbalance of power in which resettled refugees find themselves undermines their capacity and determination to economically and socially integrate. Difference-blind recruitment practices imposed by the government tends to block the pathways to economic participation of refugee migrants, while discrimination in the labor market seems to coerce refugees to be unemployed or underemployed. Lack of government action to address these structural problems, and scapegoating

particular groups instead, can lead to the systemic marginalization of refugees and the stigmatization of particular communities.

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Notes

1. For example, women admitted under the woman-at-risk visa subcategory.
2. Participants had considerably higher levels of English proficiency than the wider South Sudanese Australian community. Follow-up discussion with participants indicated that the issues and experiences discussed are shared across the community, especially among those with greater cultural gaps and lower English proficiency.
3. Onshore visa holders had to have received their permanent protection visas in the same period.
4. Self-assessed ability to accomplish goals, think of good solutions, and handle whatever comes one's way.
5. Information on hardship for the broader Australian community is based on the author's analysis of data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey, Wave 13, 2013.
6. Results from Wave 2 data. The limited number of survey items collected in Wave 2 does not allow the use of this more recent data to identify significant predictors of employment.
7. Author's analysis of BNLA Waves 1 and 2.
8. Author's analysis of data collected from the HILDA survey, Wave 13, 2013.

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