2021

Refugee and Asylee Housing Resettlement Experiences in King County, Washington

Alicia Al-Aryan

Chase Huffman

Obed Kabanda

Refugee and Asylee Housing Resettlement Experiences in King County, Washington

Alicia Al-Aryan, Chase Huffman, and Obed Kabanda

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Educational and Organizational Learning and Leadership at Seattle University

2021

Abstract

Everyone deserves fair access to housing; yet, homelessness and housing insecurity in refugee and asylee populations continues to be an issue. This dissertation studied lived experiences of refugees and asylees located in King County, Washington. Specifically, we examined experiences about refugees and asylees accessing housing programs and information in the resettlement process. This study provided information to further understand housing programs available and how they are accessed by resettled individuals in King County, Washington to mitigate homelessness in the population and to increase access to stable housing. Additionally, the study provided further understanding of barriers to accessing stable housing, while also presenting opportunity to improve quality of life for refugees and asylees. This study used an emancipatory qualitative approach with focus groups of employees from organizations providing housing services and information. Data collected were from focus groups with 10 participants who were working with housing providers in King County at the time of the study. Analysis of Research Question 1 established four major themes, including (a) affordable housing, (b) education, (c) system navigation, and (d) barriers. Research Question 2 revealed three major themes, including (a) immediate housing and overall needs, (b) long-term housing and overall needs, and (c) barriers in access and gaps in essential services. Research Question 3 revealed three major themes, including (a) additional housing services, (b) housing coordination, and (c) cross-sector collaborations. Study findings produced multiple recommendations for refugee and asylee housing services and information access. Primary recommendations for access and increased opportunity for self-sufficiency and integration are centered on extended case management, coordination of services and cross-sector collaboration, and transitional housing

provisions. Recommendations for future research include (a) documenting lived experiences of refugees and asylees, inclusive of individuals who are not proficient in English; (b) interactions and connections between service organizations providing housing information and services in King County, Washington; (c) effects of extended services and support beyond the initial 6 months; and (d) research on empowerment and refugees and asylees is needed.

Keywords: Resettlement experience, refugee and asylee housing, housing services, service provision, integration, empowerment, discrimination

Acknowledgements

Thank you to our dissertation chair, Dr. Collette Taylor, for the ongoing support and encouragement throughout the process. Your direction, consistent support, motivation, and energy enabled us to complete the project. Thank you to Dr. Trenia Walker, visiting professor to Seattle University, for your support with qualitative expertise and your guidance and overall insights.

We would also like to thank Isaac Horwith and Sunaree Marshall with King County Department of Community and Human Services for providing access and introductions to local organizations serving the refugee population. Also, many thanks to all participants who took part in the study and enabled this research to be possible.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the encouragement and support from friends, cohort 42 members, and professional colleagues who have supported us throughout this entire dissertation process.

This dissertation has been made possible by efforts of a team that included Alicia Al-Aryan, Chase Huffman, and Obed Kabanda. The team could not have completed the dissertation without the challenge and support of family members, friends, colleagues, and professors. We want to thank them all.

Alicia Al-Aryan

I would like to extend a very special thank you to my family for their support and motivation during this journey. Especially to my mother, Robin, for her unwavering support and encouragement, and to my daughter, Catherine, for being the motivation I needed. Without them, this great accomplishment would not have been achieved.

Chase Huffman

A special thank you to my husband, Eric, for spending several years encouraging and supporting me on this journey. Without him, this would not have been possible. Thank you to the friends and colleagues who have cheered me on in the process. Your support has made a world of difference.

Obed Kabanda

Special thanks to my friends and entire family for their support, especially my dear wife Louise, for taking 3 years off her career to sojourn with me on this doctorate in Seattle, Washington. And to our children Elton Kambere, Lynn Muhindo, Praise Leah Biira, and Ruth Kabugho Patience—thank you for the many hours you missed my fatherly love and support; I owe you a lot. And many thanks to my parents, Samuel and Evaloi, for laying a strong foundation for this doctoral achievement.

Dedication

The team dedicates this dissertation to all individuals identified as refugees and asylees who struggle daily with challenges navigating the complex system of accessing housing information, services, and programs in King County, Washington, and in the United States as a whole.

Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

What does it mean to be a refugee? Imagine being forced to leave your home, and everything that has ever been familiar to you, in the blink of an eye, for the safety of you and your family, and only able to take minimal items with you in the face of fear, with hope for a better future. This scenario is the reality experienced by over 80 million individuals globally (Baugh, 2020). The initial step they take is leaving their nation, and every step afterward toward resettlement is vital to their future. A common concern at the forefront of many refugees' and asylees' minds is where their new home will be now that they have left their original homes.

Individuals can hold an identity as refugees or asylees. For the purposes of this paper, individuals who identify as refugees and asylees will be referred to as refugees and asylees hereafter. Fleeing persecution, these individuals are forced to leave their homes, experience significant trauma and loss, arrive without their immediate families, are separated from social and support networks, and are uprooted from cultural familiarity (Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998; Enekwe, 2016; Preston et al., 2011). The United States has a legal obligation to protect refugees and asylum seekers and has served as a haven for these displaced individuals for years. As refugees are resettled, and individuals seeking asylum arrive in the United States, a new place to live is necessary for integration. Unfortunately, finding acceptable and affordable housing is a primary concern, and many refugees and asylees find themselves facing housing instability (Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies, 2016; Ager & Strang, 2008; Enekwe, 2016; Shaw & Poulin, 2015; Weine et al., 2011). The right to housing is a human rights issue; thus, there is a need for further research in this area to ensure housing access while reducing the risk of homelessness. To safeguard against housing insecurity, King County,

Washington has a strategic plan and programs in place to confirm its commitment to providing equitable access to affordable housing.

The strategic plan of King County's Office of Equity and Social Justice mentions everyone deserves fair access to housing (King County Hospitals for a Healthier Community, 2019). Additionally, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights explicitly includes decent housing as a basic human right, stating "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care and necessary social services" (United Nations, n.d.). Adequate, safe, stable, and affordable housing is essential for refugee and asylee physical, mental, and emotional well-being (Enekwe, 2016; King County, 2017; Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2020; United Nations General Assembly, 1951). Although King County has a strategy to address housing insecurity and homelessness, equitable access to safe, stable, secure, and affordable housing still remains an issue faced by many individuals.

In the United States, as of 2020, over half a million individuals experience homelessness and housing instability, with over 13,000 reported homeless people in King County, Washington (All Home, 2020). For refugees and asylees, this problem is compounded because nearly one in five immigrants in King County lived below the poverty line in 2019 (King County Hospitals for a Healthier Community, 2019). This rate is more than double the rate of poverty experienced by individuals born in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Additionally, a recent report indicated foreign-born residents, including refugees and asylees, accounted for almost half the population growth in King County since the 1990s (King County Hospitals for a Healthier Community, 2019). Between 2010 and 2017, the immigrant population in King County had the third largest increase of foreign-born residents across all counties in the United States with a total

immigrant population of 121,648 individuals (Balk, 2019; King County Hospitals for a Healthier Community, 2019). In 2019, this surge resulted in the immigrant population rising to over 500,000 individuals (Balk, 2019). With the explosive growth of local businesses and influx of new residents in King County, rental and home prices have continued to rise throughout the county, resulting in many residents being forced into homelessness (Flores, 2017). As a result, immigrant populations can find themselves in temporary, episodic, or permanent homelessness due to various causes (Galley, 2018).

This study provided an opportunity to better understand available housing programs and how they are accessed by resettled individuals in King County, Washington. Additionally, from the perspective of individuals employed by organizations providing housing information and services, the study provided a deeper understanding of barriers to accessing stable housing. This deeper understanding presented an opportunity to improve refugee and asylee quality of life by increasing access to stable housing and mitigating risk of homelessness.

Problem Statement

Access to housing assistance, services, information, and support for refugees and asylees is a nationally recognized challenge (Basolo & Nguyen, 2009; Enekwe, 2016; Steimel, 2017). In the refugee community, lack of coordination among agencies, systemic discrimination, unclear and unreliable information, and knowledge of how to access housing services are root causes for housing instability (Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies, 2016; Hanley et al., 2018; Simich et al., 2003; Somerville, 1998). Individuals applying for resettlement as refugees and asylum seekers hold an expectation they will have access to better opportunities in their new communities. These opportunities include stable employment, safety in a community, and enhanced educational opportunities (Baran et al., 2018; Shrestha, 2011). However, these

individuals are often met with jobs that do not align with their skills and education, experience a loss of social status, and are forced to locate and independently find housing while facing discrimination and oppression, not only in organizations providing resettlement services, but also in the community (Dion, 2001; Shrestha, 2011; Steimel, 2017; Weine et al., 2011). Misalignment of expectations leaves many individuals seeking public housing services and assistance due to housing insecurity. Increasing housing costs compound these issues. Refugee and asylee populations face inequity in job placement and compensation, leaving them unable to keep up with rising housing costs (Enekwe, 2016; Steimel, 2017).

A lack of substantial literature on refugee and asylee access to housing in the United States, specifically in King County, Washington, creates a void in fully understanding actual lived experiences of refugees and asylees. To date, little research has been completed to determine which housing program services are successfully accessed and used or where potential barriers and disconnects exist. This study sought to understand the systemic disconnect between refugees and asylees seeking housing information and services provided by resettlement organizations in King County, Washington. To accomplish that understanding, we documented lived experiences from the perspective of individuals employed by organizations providing housing information and services to refugees and asylees.

Without a complete understanding of how effective housing services are in keeping refugees and asylees housed, there is potential for housing insecurity and homelessness in this population in King County. In immigrant populations, compounding challenges of housing affordability, related systemic issues of discrimination and oppression, and rising housing costs increases the need for mitigating the already existing and perpetuated issue of homelessness (Enekwe, 2016; Steimel, 2017; Weine et al., 2011). Mitigating these challenges could potentially

improve assistance with, and access to, suitable housing. Improvement is necessary because it is difficult for refugees and asylees to progress in the immediate and long-term resettlement and integration process without secure housing. There is evidence the integration process may be jeopardized when individuals do not have a stable home (Alemi & Stempel, 2018; Beiser & Hou, 2006; Erden, 2017). Without stable housing, it is challenging to obtain secure employment necessary to achieve economic independence and empowerment; health and welfare of individuals is often compromised, personal safety and security risks increase, educational stability and access decreases, and opportunities for language acquisition are diminished (Baran et al., 2018; Shrestha, 2011).

As stability issues surrounding housing are addressed, it is possible challenges are not further compounded by perpetuating oppressive and dysfunctional systems of services for refugees and asylees. As the humanitarian crisis of individuals being displaced continued, along with increased challenges of access to affordable, stable, safe, and secure housing, it was necessary to conduct an emancipatory case study to understand individual experiences. This approach served as an opportunity for potential solutions in improving access and information for housing services.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to examine perceived lived experiences of refugees and asylees in accessing housing through organizations providing housing information and services in King County, Washington from the perspective of individuals employed by those organizations. It further identified existing initiatives that organizations affiliated with King County Department of Community and Human Services (n.d.) have available to ensure stable housing and mitigate homelessness in the refugee and asylee population. Based on research

findings, this study attempted to determine what could be implemented to increase access to stable housing for refugee and asylee populations, while also decreasing risk of homelessness.

By identifying perceived lived experiences, we generated information about available community mechanisms successfully connecting refugees and asylees to housing services. We identified potential social networks in the community connecting refugees and asylees to available housing services. The generated information and knowledge were important to King County and state housing partners and could aid future strategic planning of ways to close information access gaps about housing services and programs. This study included specific recommendations for strategic improvements.

Due to the challenging nature of accessing hidden populations, or populations who are difficult to identify, locate, access, and interview, a qualitative approach was appropriate and has been widely used in studies focusing on hidden populations (Spreen & Zwaagstra, 1994). The qualitative design for this study was an emancipatory case study, which helped to identify challenges and solutions refugees and asylees faced, as described by individuals employed by organizations working with these populations. An emancipatory approach to research is appropriate when two or more intersections of identity oppression exist in the population of interest (Kramer-Roy, 2015). This approach expanded the research foundation related to resettled persons and housing instability; thus, it contributed to a deeper understanding of programmatic areas of success and programmatic areas needing improvement, as experienced by refugees and asylees. Additionally, emancipatory research calls for (a) researchers to be accountable to the community they are researching, (b) research participants to have a voice in the research process, (c) research producing a tangible outcome to the participant community, and (d) researchers to

focus on empowering research participants (Kramer-Roy, 2015; Noel, 2016). Data collection for this study included semistructured focus group interviews.

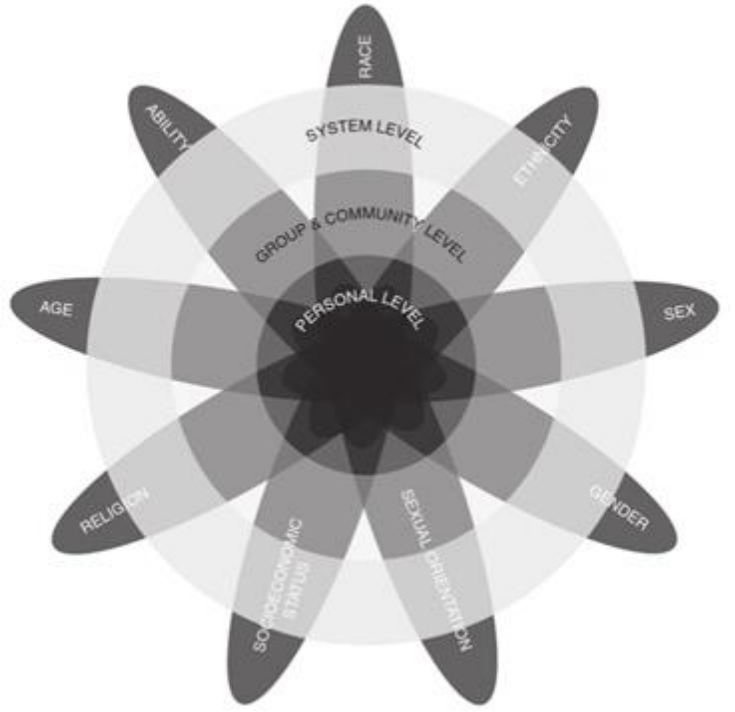
This study sought to answer the following research questions:

- Research Question 1: From the perspective of individuals employed by organizations providing housing and information services, what are perceived lived experiences of refugees and asylees in the United States in accessing information for housing services in King County, Washington?
- Research Question 2: From the perspective of individuals employed by organizations providing housing information and services, how do lived experiences of refugees and asylees impact their ability to access housing services and opportunities for integration in the United States?
- Research Question 3: What housing programs and services are most effective for reaching refugees and asylees in King County, Washington?

Theoretical Framework

Research questions for this study sought to provide a foundational understanding of refugee and asylee experiences in accessing housing information and services in King County, Washington. Identity and discrimination can play a role in accessing information and housing (Basolo & Nguyen, 2009; Dion, 2001). To understand the relationship between identity and oppression for refugees and asylees, we used Adams and Zuniga's (2018) matrix of interlocking systems and levels of oppression. This model conceptualizes how individuals experience multiple identities simultaneously at a personal, group, and systemic level (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Matrix of Interlocking Systems and Levels of Oppression



Note. Adapted from Adams and Zuniga (2018).

In addition to the model of interlocking identities, we used the lens of Young's (2014) five faces of oppression, which included (a) exploitation, (b) marginalization, (c) powerlessness, (d) cultural imperialism, and (e) violence. Using Young's five classifications for oppression, researchers in this study identified how systemic discrimination issues impact resettlement of individuals and their integration process.

By using Adams and Zuniga's (2018) matrix of interlocking systems and levels of oppression in conjunction with Young's (2014) five faces of oppression as the critical theoretical framework, lived experiences of refugees and asylees can be understood through many facets of identity (see Figure 1). This critical lens allows people to uncover assumptions and systemic patterns of discrimination based on social identities in refugee and asylee populations.

Additionally, a critical theory lens helped us explore how lived experiences, including discrimination and oppression, impacted individuals' ability to access housing services and integration opportunities. Finally, by using this framework of identity and oppression to evaluate effectiveness of programs and services, partner organizations can detect areas where services can be adjusted to be more equitable.

Significance of the Study

The Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968 banned discrimination against certain protected classes. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's implementation of the act required all local governments to affirmatively further fair housing. This study built on questions about the role of local governments and state institutions, like King County, in refugee and asylee resettlement and integration. According to the Affirmatively Further Fair Housing ruling (2015), King County's role is to "take meaningful actions to combat discrimination, overcome historic patterns of segregation, and foster inclusive communities free from barriers that restrict access to opportunity" (para. 3), including housing services. Literature on housing stability experienced by refugees and asylees is primarily studied in the context of Canadian systems, processes, and communities (Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998; Dion, 2001; Preston et al., 2011). Previous studies on housing in the United States have been approached in an overall context of integration, with limited studies specifically examining refugee and asylee experiences with housing. Studies about effects of social services available to refugees in the United States have also been limited (Enekwe, 2016).

This study explored lived experiences in accessing housing services and information of individuals identified as refugees and asylees. However, experiences were shared from the perspective of employees working in organizations providing the services. Examining these

experiences and their impact on refugee and asylee integration provided an opportunity to extend literature and include better ways to serve this population. Furthermore, this study provided an avenue to develop a greater understanding of how this population accesses available information on King County's housing services and how these experiences eventually impact their access to services and securing housing.

Some research on U.S. populations indicated many resettled individuals were unaware or unable to access information and formal housing services (Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies, 2016; Basolo & Nguyen, 2009; Hanley et al., 2018; Simich et al., 2003). Once individuals were successful in gaining access, services have been shown to help secure housing (Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies, 2016; Shaw & Poulin, 2015). Although refugees and asylees have been eligible to access housing services, length of initial resettlement services has been limited. With approved extended case management, these services can be extended to 24 months or more (Baugh, 2020; Shaw & Poulin, 2015).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

In any research study, it is important to identify assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study. First, we identified assumptions of the study. These assumptions are what we considered to be true throughout the research process. We also encountered limitations during the course of the study. These limitations are constraints we experienced beyond our control. Finally, we explain delimitations of the study. These delimitations serve as the boundaries or definitions of the research study.

Assumptions

There were four overarching assumptions for this study. First, we assumed participants would have a sincere interest in participating in the study. Second, we assumed participants

would answer interview questions honestly and candidly. Third, we assumed our inclusion criteria of the sample were appropriate (i.e., ensured participants had the same or similar experiences in providing available housing services). Lastly, we assumed participants would not feel their participation or their answers would impact their employment in partner organizations.

Limitations

This study featured a few limitations. First, the primary study population was initially limited to individuals who identified as a refugee or asylee and received services through King County Department of Community and Human Services. However, this population may only have generalizability across the organizational ecosystem. Due to the sensitivity of immigration issues surrounding asylees and refugees, coupled with unavailability of refugees and asylees willing to participate, we depended on data generated from focus group interviews with housing provider employees. Although this population was a limitation to the study because we did not collect data of experiences directly from refugees and asylees, some of the housing provider employees themselves identified as former refugees and asylees. Research questions were answered from the lens of those employee's experiences working with organizations providing services and information to refugees and asylees.

The second limitation was the limited sample size of individuals who worked to provide housing information and services for this study. The small sample size placed a limitation on generalizability of findings, which may not be applicable beyond the context of this research. The third limitation involved financial and time constraints. These constraints limited participant recruitment because materials were not able to be translated into multiple languages and no incentive was provided to encourage participation. Finally, results may not be applicable or

generalizable to other immigration statuses as defined by the Immigration and Nationality Act (1952).

Delimitations

We identified three delimitations for this study. First, this study occurred in King County, Washington. Second, the definition of the study population included individuals employed by organizations providing housing information and services to refugees and asylees per the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Citizenship and Immigration Services in the Immigration and Nationality Act - Title 8 USC 1101 (1952). Last, the study population was limited to individuals employed with organizations providing housing and information services to refugees or asylees who have received services through either the King County Department of Community and Human Services or a partnering organization.

Definition of Terms

To provide additional understanding and standardization, the following terms were used throughout this study:

- **Affordable housing.** Housing is deemed affordable to those with a median household income at or below the threshold as rated by the national government or a local government by a recognized housing affordability index (Bhatta, 2010).
- **Asylum seeker/asylee.** An asylum seeker or asylee is an individual who is seeking international protection (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, n.d.).
- **Displacement.** Displacement is the movement of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence because of, or to avoid the effects of, armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of

human rights, or natural or human-made disasters (International Organization for Migration, 2020).

- **Empowerment in housing.** In the housing context, empowerment is any process by which individuals gain control over their housing situation (Somerville, 1998; Steimel, 2017).
- **Extended case management.** Extended case management is a program with an aim to support refugees in successfully transitioning to life in the United States and developing necessary self-sufficiency skills while emphasizing well-being and independent access to community resources (Shaw & Poulin, 2015).
- **Immigrant.** From the perspective of the country of arrival, an immigrant is a person who moves into a country other than that of their nationality or usual residence, and the country of destination effectively becomes their new country of usual residence (International Organization for Migration, 2020).
- **Integration.** Integration is a dynamic, multidirectional process in which newcomers and receiving communities intentionally work together based on a shared commitment to acceptance and justice, and to create a secure, welcoming, vibrant, and cohesive society (Shaw & Poulin, 2015).
- **International protection.** International protection is protection accorded by the international community to individuals or groups who are outside their own country and are unable to return home because their return would infringe upon the principle of nonrefoulement, and their country is unable or unwilling to protect them (International Organization for Migration, 2020).

- **Low-income household.** A low-income household is any single person, family, or unrelated persons living together whose adjusted income is at or below 80% of the median family income adjusted for family size for the county where the project is located (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, n.d.).
- **Nondiscrimination.** Nondiscrimination is a principle obliging states not to discriminate against any persons based on their race, color, sex, national origin, language, religion, disability, political or other opinion, or other status, with a purpose of ensuring enjoyment of all rights and freedoms for all people (International Organization for Migration, 2020).
- **Refugee.** A refugee is an individual who is unwilling or unable to return home due to having a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2020).
- **Resettlement.** Resettlement is the transfer of refugees from an asylum country to another state who has agreed to admit them and ultimately grant them permanent residence (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, n.d.).

Summary

There is a global humanitarian crisis involving displaced persons due to reasons beyond the individual's control. As a result, they are forced to leave their homes in search of safety. The United States is the second leading country for welcoming displaced persons and has numerous organizations providing services to aid in the resettlement and integration process. The continued number of refugees and asylum seekers in the United States, combined with the ongoing issue of affordable housing, fuels housing insecurity for individuals resettling in the United States. Based

on existing literature, we identified a problem that refugees and asylees lack information and access to organizations providing housing services.

We examined the disconnect or lack of information and access to housing services provided through resettlement organizations and individuals, specifically in King County, Washington. By examining employee perspectives on experiences of refugees and asylees in accessing housing information and housing services throughout King County, Washington, we identified existing challenges and potential solutions for improving programmatic access and information. Our chosen methodological approach was an emancipatory case study because it is the most appropriate approach for populations with two or more intersecting identities and it is focused on empowering the community of focus through researcher accountability. The theoretical framework used for this study was Adams and Zuniga's (2018) matrix of interlocking systems and levels of oppression with a lens for discrimination based on Young's (2014) five faces of oppression. Finally, this study was significant because it contributed to limited literature in the United States on experiences of refugees and asylees in accessing housing information and services.

Organization of the Study

This chapter introduced inequities faced by refugees and asylees in accessing information and housing service programs. It also connected housing instability challenges with consequences and long-term impacts for individuals in the resettlement process. Chapter 2 provides an in-depth review of literature surrounding refugees and asylees in concepts of resettlement and integration experiences, housing programs and partnerships, and issues with programmatic structures. A critical theory lens was used as the framework for studying issues of

access in housing stability. Highlighted throughout the literature review is the theme of integration.

Chapter 3 outlines the research design and methodology used in this emancipatory case study, including research questions, research approach, study context, study participants, sampling, selection, and recruitment. The chapter describes specific details for data collection, data analysis, and procedures. It additionally discusses measures of quality, including ethical issues, research positionality, credibility dependability, transferability of the study, and control for biases.

Chapter 4 presents study findings and describes major themes that emerged from a thorough analysis of data collected from focus group interviews with individuals employed with resettlement and housing providers in King County. Chapter 5 focuses on discussion of findings and interpretations, recommendations, and areas for future research, including implications for housing programs and services targeting refugees and asylees.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter reviews literature relevant to the research questions of lived experiences of refugees and asylees, and how those experiences impacted their ability to access housing information and services, and opportunities for integration. In the literature reviewed, we explored resettlement and integration experiences, housing programs and partnerships, and issues with programmatic structures. We used a critical theory lens as the framework for studying issues of access in housing stability. The chapter continues with exploration of individuals' experiences with resettlement and integration, government and nongovernmental organization (NGO) programs, and obtaining housing. The literature review highlights integration, which aims to provide refugees and asylees with stable and affordable housing, leading to self-sufficiency and empowerment.

Overview of Refugee and Asylee Experiences

Refugees are identified as individuals who have been forced to flee their homes due to war; ethnic, tribal, or religious violence; or persecution. They may also have a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, n.d.). Displacement of refugees and asylees is a humanitarian crisis that has affected millions of people globally (Baugh, 2020; International Rescue Committee, 2020; Steimel, 2017). After displacement, individuals await a resettlement location. Once assigned, individuals are then provided a haven for refuge, beginning initial steps toward immediate and long-term goals for integration. In initial stages of resettlement, stable and secure housing is a major component of the integration process. However, while navigating systems and organizations providing housing services, refugees and

asylees often experience discrimination and additional challenges in the process of securing housing (Dion, 2001; Steimel, 2017).

Dion (2001) argued refugees and asylees experience discrimination in accessing housing based on their nation of origin and across multiple identity categories. In measuring responses from individuals originating from Jamaica, Somalia, and Poland, Dion cited individuals from Jamaica and Somalia reported experiencing more discrimination than those from Poland. Between individuals from Jamaica and Somalia, family size and citizenship status were identity aspects where perceived discrimination was experienced differently. However, gender was a consistent identity where females reported experiencing more housing services discrimination (Dion, 2001). Dion also noted discrimination took the form steering refugees and asylees toward housing in often low-income neighborhoods, decreasing potential for self-sufficiency.

In addition to housing discrimination, Steimel (2017) argued the goal of self-sufficiency in providing services to individuals consumed the practice to the point of disempowering individuals receiving services from organizations. Due to governmental mandates, refugees and asylees have been unable to reject any job offer and have been discouraged from pursuing education or higher-level careers aligned with their previous experience and training, which has placed limits on achieving self-sufficiency (Steimel, 2017). By restricting housing choices and job opportunities, refugees and asylees have also been restricted in many other life choices and deprived of opportunity for full integration (Dion, 2001; Steimel, 2017; Sue, 2018; Young, 2014). Awareness of these challenges is necessary for resettlement and integration program implementation to be equitable. Although literature is limited in geographic scope around this topic, there is evidence these challenges exist across the United States (Enekwe, 2016; Shaw &

Poulin, 2015). This evidence is important because the number of individuals admitted into the United States is expected to increase.

The number of admitted individuals resettled throughout the United States has fluctuated depending upon presidential administration and global humanitarian concerns (Baugh, 2020; Radford, 2017). Factors influencing distribution of refugees throughout the United States have included local community resource availability, possibility of reuniting families, and nonprofit organizations availability to assist in the integration process (Radford, 2017). For the United States fiscal year 2021, the anticipated number of applications filed by individuals seeking refugee status and asylum was estimated to be over 300,000 (U.S. Department of State, 2020). Of these 300,000 individuals, a total of 15,000 were set to be granted refugee status through the U.S. Refugee Admissions program, with remaining individuals applying for asylum (U.S. Department of State, 2020). However, with a change in presidential administration, the Biden and Harris 2021 administration promised to increase the ceiling on refugee admissions to 62,500. This number was expected to increase to 125,000 in fiscal year 2022 (Refugee Processing Center, 2021). The number of individuals admitted to the United States under refugee status and country of origin are important to be aware of when considering resettlement program policy, capacity, planning, and implementation. At the time of this study, approximately 5,000 refugees had been resettled in the United States for fiscal year 2021 (Refugee Processing Center, 2021).

The United Nations Refugee Agency (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, n.d.) reported there were 79.5 million individuals displaced globally at the end of 2019, which was 1% of the world's population. This number of displaced individuals included 26.3 million refugees and 4.2 million asylum seekers. On a national level, since 1970, over 3.7 million refugees and asylees have been resettled in the United States (Baugh, 2020; International

Rescue Committee, 2020; Steimel, 2017). According to the 2019 annual flow report by the Department of Homeland Security (Mossaad, 2019), 29,916 individuals were admitted into the United States under refugee status in 2019. Individuals entering the United States as refugees came primarily from five countries of nationality: 43% from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 16% from Burma, 15% from Ukraine, 5.9% from Eritrea, and 4% from Afghanistan (Baugh, 2020). Individuals granted asylum in the United States come primarily from three countries of nationality, including China, Venezuela, and El Salvador (Baugh, 2020). Although individuals arrive in the United States from many different countries, they have commonalities in their experiences integrating into their new communities.

Experiences of Refugees and Asylees for Resettlement, Integration, and Empowerment

To understand how identity and oppression influence experiences of refugees and asylees, we examined literature on resettlement, integration, and empowerment through self-sufficiency to provide context for the resettlement process. Once refugee status has been determined and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (n.d.) completes screenings, refugees are informed of their initial resettlement location and the refugee resettlement agency is assigned to aid in the resettlement process. To cover the cost of travel to the United States, refugees are provided with a loan from the State Department's reception and placement program. Refugees approved to resettle in the United States are dispersed across the country. The decision of where individuals will be relocated depends on availability of community resources and availability of local partner nonprofit organizations (Radford, 2017). The location individuals are assigned to make their new home may impact their success in integration. The settlement location we examined in this study was King County, Washington.

Resettlement and integration are not immediate upon arrival to the United States; rather, the process occurs along a continuum. This resettlement–settlement continuum includes acclimation, adaptation, and integration (Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998). In the acclimation and adaptation stages of the continuum, refugees adjust to a new life in the United States. This phase includes obtaining housing, learning English, obtaining employment, and becoming familiar with the community. As refugees become acclimated and adapt to their new country of resettlement, the integration process is underway (Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998).

Integration is a gradual, multidirectional, multidimensional, interactive, and complex process (Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998; Czischke Ljubetic & Huisman, 2018; Shaw & Poulin, 2015). Integration and self-sufficiency are the foci of resettlement programs in the United States; ideally, refugees achieve these components soon after arrival (Shaw & Poulin, 2015). To examine integration and self-sufficiency of refugees and asylees in the United States after arrival, it is necessary to describe all measured areas in determining successful integration and self-sufficiency. Factors beyond economic independence must be considered when evaluating integration and self-sufficiency, including language, education, health and well-being, civic values, participation and engagement, housing, social connection, and belonging and safety in the community (Office of Refugee Resettlement, n.d.; Shaw & Poulin, 2015).

Identity and discrimination occur in the resettlement process and further complicate integration and self-sufficiency. Individuals with a strong identity tied to their ethnicity and nation of origin often experienced greater distress and discrimination with organizations providing resettlement services (Alemi & Stempel, 2018; Beiser & Hou, 2006; Noh et al., 1999). Noh et al. stated discrimination experienced by organizations providing resettlement services

was strongly correlated to symptoms of depression. Other researchers indicated discrimination amplifies trauma and distress refugees or asylees may already have been experiencing (Alemi & Stempel, 2018; Beiser & Hou, 2006). Beiser and Hou argued experiences of discrimination for refugees and asylees was often expressed as betrayal because the individuals were leaving a situation of persecution based on their identity. Alemi and Stempel further argued social support that comes from being connected to other individuals of the same ethnicity and national origin did not mitigate any effects of discrimination. For individuals who identified strongly with culture of their home country, oppression experienced through organizations providing resettlement services negatively impacted their ability to recover from trauma and impeded integration into their new community (Alemi & Stempel, 2018; Beiser & Hou, 2006; Noh et al., 1999).

Integration involves refugees and asylees becoming active participants in the host city of their new country of resettlement, with all community members working together in the process (Ager & Strang, 2008; Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998). Not only do refugees and asylee need to be actively engaged in participation in the new community, existing members of the community also need to be prepared to facilitate this participation (Czischke Ljubetic & Huisman, 2018). Primarily, integration is participation in the United States in economic, social, cultural, and spiritual affairs, while also maintaining aspects of refugee native culture (Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998; Enekwe, 2016; Shaw & Poulin, 2015). This integration includes becoming active through employment, education, engaging in the community, and accessing services. These participation areas have been viewed as spheres associated with short-term goals in resettlement and long-term goals of integration (Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998). These spheres are interconnected and can be interdependent. Strong indicators show refugees who

successfully integrated in the economic sphere experienced greater success in integration in other spheres. On the interconnected nature of these spheres, literature examining refugee integration highlighted the importance of social bonds in the new community (Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998; Erden, 2017). As refugees have a greater sense of belonging in their new communities and develop a new social network, the support they found reinforces the integration effort, leading to empowerment (see Table 1; Erden, 2017).

Table 1. Potential Indicators of Resettlement and Integration in Refugees

Sphere	Short-Term Goal (Resettlement)	Long-Term Goal (Integration)
Economic	• Entering job market • Financial independence	• Career advancement • Income parity • Entry into field of prior employment
Social	• Established social network • Diversity in social network	• Accessing institutions • Engaging in efforts to change institutions
Cultural	• Adaptation of various aspects of lifestyle (e.g., diet, family relationships)	• Engaging in efforts to redefine cultural identity • Adapting or reassessing values
Political	• Citizenship • Voting	• Participation in political parties • Participation in sociopolitical movements

Note. Adapted from the Canadian Council for Refugees (1998).

Empowering refugees is a complicated matter. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (n.d.) described refugee empowerment as gaining control over their own environment. Further, empowerment requires secure control over resources (Turkington, 1997). Although there has been increasing focus on empowerment of refugees, there still remains a significant gap in literature on how resettlement organizations attempt to empower refugees in the United States. This lack of information on program execution by resettlement organizations

and refugee and asylee experiences poses a barrier to fully understanding empowerment through housing stability. Additionally, this disconnect has created a discrepancy between stated goals and practical application.

Research has indicated a disconnect between long-term goals and execution due to a greater focus on empowering refugees rather than providing necessary assistance to achieve empowerment, specifically through housing (Steimel, 2017). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (n.d.) has supported and promoted the empowerment of refugees, and the approach suggests refugees are "agents rather than subjects" (Steimel, 2017, p. 90). This idea is further supported by the argument that "Refugee empowerment is critical in refugee integration [and] newly arriving populations have inherent capabilities when given opportunities" (Steimel, 2017, p. 90) such as obtaining gainful employment, a commonly used measure of empowerment and self-sufficiency. However, true integration and empowerment go beyond refugee employment and financial security, and further examination is needed.

The refugee and asylee journey can be fueled by safety concerns, involve fleeing dangerous homelands, and be filled with traumatic experiences; thus, refugees and asylees begin their integration process at a disadvantage compared to other resettled populations. Having fled their country of origin and often suffering from traumatic experiences, it is necessary to examine what factors either enable or prohibit refugee empowerment and integration in the resettlement process. As a result, it is also necessary to examine available public services, how refugees are accessing services, and how these efforts influence refugee integration.

Theoretical Framework

To understand experiences of refugees and asylees in accessing information and services for housing through employee perspectives, it is important to review literature indicating identity

is based on social categorization and is connected to experiences of oppression and discrimination (Adams & Zuniga, 2018; Alemi & Stempel, 2018; Collins, 2000; Sue, 2018). Moreover, full citizenship can be denied or limited to social identity groups who are not fully independent from needing government assistance services (Sue, 2018; Young, 2014).

Considering citizenship status is a component of an individual's larger identity, some individuals may experience discrimination and oppression based on race, gender, religion, national origin, and more, in addition to their identification as a refugee or asylee (Adams & Zuniga, 2018; Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989). The theoretical framework in this study was Adams and Zuniga's (2018) matrix of interlocking systems and levels of oppression and Young's (2014) five faces of oppression to identify how discrimination and oppression manifest systemically. Additionally, we explored influences of refugee identity and oppression in accessing resettlement services in the United States.

Identity and Oppression

Examining the relationship between identity and oppression in the experience of refugees and asylees required first understanding the role identity plays in the resettlement process. First, we defined identity in the context of the study. Then, we explored the relationship between identity and oppression. Finally, we analyzed the influence of oppression in the experiences of refugees and asylees.

Identity. In understanding identity and oppression, it is crucial to provide an operational definition of identity. Kirk and Okazawa-Rey (2018) defined identity as "a complex interplay among a range of factors: individual decisions and choices, particular life events, community recognition and expectations, societal categorizations, classification and socialization, and key national or international incidents" (p. 10). Considering the many definitions of identity, we

selected this operational definition due to its expansion beyond behavioral and personal characteristics. Defining identity is a small but critical element in examining identities of individuals who have been categorized as refugees or asylees by U.S. policy and practice. The social categories individuals either identify with, or are classified into, may form the basis of social group memberships (Adams & Zuniga, 2018; Young, 2014). Adams and Zuniga argued these categories were often constructed in binary terms; however, the reality is many individuals exist in an identity continuum. Additionally, because identity is based on many factors with many potential social categorizations, individuals experience multiple social identities simultaneously, which is known as intersectionality (Adams & Zuniga, 2018; Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989).

Crenshaw (1989) first introduced intersectionality in discussing Black women's marginalization from feminist theory and antiracist politics. However, Collins (2000) claimed intersectionality marks a confluence of identities and oppression, and the concept of a matrix of domination defines how these intersections are organized and interact at a societal level. Adams and Zuniga (2018) critiqued and further developed Crenshaw's intersectionality and Collins's matrix of domination by arguing the simultaneous experience of multiple social identities that bestow relative advantage or disadvantage is inextricable and expressed at three distinct levels: personal, community, and systemic. Adams and Zuniga created a model for the matrix of interlocking systems and levels of oppression (see Figure 1). The interlocking systems model served as the framework for understanding complexity of identity with asylees and refugees in accessing housing services in King County, Washington. Additionally, the matrix presented a starting point to understand how different identities may experience systemic disadvantage in the form of oppression (Adams & Zuniga, 2018; Collins, 2000).

Oppression. With a framework for understanding identity and the relative advantage or disadvantage an individual experiences based on their identity, it is also essential to provide context for how this disadvantage presents as oppression. Both Collins's (2000) and Adams and Zuniga's (2018) concept of identity reiterate identity is based on social categorization; thus, an individual can simultaneously experience many identities. Social categorization frequently occurs on a binary, which creates a social category of advantage and of disadvantage (Adams & Zuniga, 2018; Collins, 2000; Young, 2014). This disadvantage is frequently identified as oppression (Adams & Zuniga, 2018; Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989).

In a general sense, oppression can mean overt domination and tyranny of one individual or group over another, resulting in deprivation or imposition (Adams & Zuniga, 2018; Sue, 2018; Young, 2014). However, Young (2014) clarified, stating "Oppression designates the disadvantage and injustice some people suffer not because a tyrannical power intends to keep them down, but because of the everyday practices of a well-intentioned liberal society" (p. 271). It is important to note oppression is identified in society's structure and not necessarily with individual leaders themselves (Adams & Zuniga, 2018; Young, 2014). Young (2014) further argued a critical difference between discrimination and oppression is discrimination can be attributable to explicit and overt action, and oppression "often exists in the absence of overt discrimination" (p. 272). In this sense, oppression can occur with or without malicious intent and is created from individuals' direct action and society's systems and structures. This operational understanding of oppression can serve as the foundation for examining how oppression appears in everyday interactions.

In the context of identity and social categorization, it is essential to note differentiation does not necessarily equate to oppression (Adams & Zuniga, 2018; Young, 2014). To identify

occurrences of oppression, Young provided five classifications for oppression: (a) exploitation, (b) marginalization, (c) powerlessness, (d) cultural imperialism, and (e) violence. Marginalization is specifically identified in literature as a form of oppression, usually expressed as deprivation or restriction of life choices, where full rights of citizenship are denied (Sue, 2018; Young, 2014). Sue further clarified denial of jobs, health care, and appropriate living conditions are common issues marginalized groups face. The framework for identity and classification of oppression both provide a foundation to understand how these factors have influenced experiences of refugees and asylees.

Influence of Identity and Oppression

Frameworks for identity and oppression create a lens to analyze the influence oppression and discrimination have on refugees and asylees in accessing housing information and services. Research indicated refugees and asylees have experienced oppression based on multiple identities and incongruent empowerment practices (Dion, 2001; Steimel, 2017). Additionally, effects of oppression and discrimination are increased for individuals who have a strong tie to their home country's cultural identity (Alemi & Stempel, 2018; Beiser & Hou, 2006; Noh et al., 1999). Analyzing how oppression and discrimination present in practice is essential to understanding the overall experience of refugees and asylees, and systemic barriers they may face.

Influences of identity-based oppression and discrimination have many potential impacts on refugees and asylees (Beiser & Hou, 2006; Dion, 2001; Steimel, 2017). Systemically, refugees and asylees have experienced restrictions in their ability to choose meaningful employment and have been directed to housing in neighborhoods with decreased access and opportunities (Dion, 2001; Steimel, 2017; Sue, 2018). Additionally, for individuals with a strong

identity based on their ethnicity and national origin, discrimination has posed a greater detriment to their health and integration (Alemi & Stempel, 2018; Beiser & Hou, 2006). Furthermore, the focus of self-sufficiency through economic means diminishes identity and capacity of refugees and asylees, which disempowers them from real integration (Dion, 2001; Steimel, 2017). For individuals arriving in a new country, identity and social categorization can automatically restrict opportunity and integration services, resulting in marginalization and deprivation.

This study's theoretical framework was grounded in the critical theory of identity-based oppression for refugees and asylees. With an operational definition of identity, we explored the role social categorization played in bestowing relative advantage and disadvantage through Crenshaw's (1989) concept of intersectionality, Collins's (2000) matrix of domination, and Adams and Zuniga's (2018) matrix of interlocking systems and levels of oppression. Then, we explored influences of identity and oppression on refugees and asylees. We identified discrimination in organizations providing resettlement services and their impact on integration. With this critical theoretical lens, we sought to understand experiences of refugees and asylees in accessing housing services while also critiquing how systems and practices perpetuate oppression.

Government and NGO Partnerships in Providing Housing Programs to Refugees/Asylees

The Office of Refugee Resettlement (2021), under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is primarily responsible for services provided to resettle refugees after their arrival. At the time of this study, there were nine voluntary agencies with a nationwide network of over 300 offices in 180 locations providing resettlement services and determining where to place refugees (Radford, 2017). Once refugees arrive at their respective resettlement locations in the United States, they are met by a representative from the assigned resettlement agency. At this

point, refugees and asylees likely have limited financial resources and need some form of assistance, specifically housing (Murdie, 2008). Therefore, the purpose of resettlement agencies is to assist individual refugees and asylees in the process of starting their new lives in the United States. Funded through the Department of State and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2009) with a one-time allowance per refugee, resettlement agencies are equipped financially to aid in the process of refugee resettlement for the first 30–90 days after their arrival. In addition to covering resettlement agency staff and integration services costs, these funds are used to arrange housing and provide home furnishings, climate-appropriate clothing, and food (Office of Refugee Resettlement, n.d.).

Resettlement agencies' role has included assisting in the integration process by guiding refugees through the process of accessing community resources such as schools, medical care, language services, core social services, and obtaining a Social Security Card (National Immigration Forum, n.d.; Office of Refugee Resettlement, n.d.). After the initial 3 months of financing by the State Department of Reception and Placement expires, state and other NGOs continue to provide services for refugees. This is the stage of the resettlement process where available state and local public services come into focus. The Office of Refugee Resettlement and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services have laid strategies to working in partnership with private housing partners, including nonprofits and corporations in the sector working together in housing resettlement support for refugees and asylees (Baugh, 2020; Office of Refugee Resettlement, n.d.; Shaw & Poulin, 2015).

In the next section, we discuss literature on existing federal, state, and other decentralized housing programs to provide an understanding of how refugees and asylees have accessed

services. We also analyzed existing literature on public–private partnerships in providing housing services to refugees and asylees.

Brief Overview of Federal, State, and County Housing Programs

Brown and Scribner (2018) pointed to the historical overview of the United States' role in proactively resettling displaced persons after World War II, and in response to other refugee crises that emerged in Cuba, Southeast Asia, and Eastern Europe in later decades. Similarly, before enacting the Refugee Act of 1980, admission of refugees in the United States had been on an ad hoc basis. After enactment of the refugee act, a clear definition of the right to asylum and refugee status provided a basic standard admission criterion and specifications for assistance programs targeting these groups of new immigrants (Baugh, 2020; Kerwin, 2010). Following World War II, and the initial establishment of policy surrounding refugee resettlement in the United States, there has been a series of evolutionary changes resulting in a clear process to guide refugee and asylee access to housing through public housing authority policies and programs believed to have benefited over 3 million refugees (Anker & Posner, 1981; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, n.d.; U.S. Department of State, 2020). One notable change in practice has been extending the length of time for case management.

Extended case management has been recognized as an effective approach to ensuring blended access to resettlement services and programs for refugees in the United States (Shaw & Poulin, 2015). However, this emerging approach has not yet been implemented universally by most resettlement organizations. Nevertheless, increasing evidence has generated acceptance of the approach as an effective strategy to self-sufficiency and positive adjustment by refugees, including promoting their well-being and independence (Baugh, 2020; Mossaad, 2019; Shaw & Poulin, 2015). Unique to the approach is the best practice of matching individuals and

households with caseworkers who have a similar cultural and linguistic background, providing an opportunity for engagement and dialogue about the refugee or asylee's needs (Shaw & Poulin, 2015).

Numerous authors have asserted navigating program and service access has remained a challenge as refugees and asylees have arrived in the United States, including navigating individualized service provision by different resettlement actors (Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies, 2016; Basolo & Nguyen, 2009; Hanley et al., 2018; Shaw & Poulin, 2015; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). Shaw and Poulin (2015) also suggested successful transition for refugees and asylees must include full access to a package of well-being services including employment, health, finances, education, housing, and adjustment. Consequently, the United States has established national housing programs and partnerships to support those in need, including immigrant populations, with access to affordable housing services in a decentralized system (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, n.d.). These programs include public housing programs, which have long been defined to include apartments owned by local public housing authorities for tenants to rent out for a maximum of 30% of their annual adjusted household income (National Immigration Law Center, 2018; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, n.d.). Specifically, a series of national federal and nonfederal programs have focused on enhancing access to affordable housing for refugee and asylee individuals and families (Shaw, 2014; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, n.d.). These programs include a Section 8 housing choice program comprising of project-based housing assistance, project-based voucher, project-based Section 8 housing, tenant-based housing assistance, and tenant-based Section 8 housing. Additional components of the program include a low-income housing tax credit, which includes

privately owned apartments whose owners receive tax benefits in return for renting some or all the units at more affordable rates to eligible tenants (Office of Refugee Resettlement, n.d.; Seattle Housing Authority, 2019; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, n.d.).

In the state of Washington, federal and nonfederal housing programs are provided to refugees and asylees, including subsidized and low rent housing apartments, public housing, housing choice voucher Section 8 program, and other affordable housing programs (Fair Housing Partners of Washington State, 2016; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, n.d.). The state has also run housing and essential needs referral programs, providing access to rental assistance and essential needs items for low-income individuals who are unable to work for at least 90 days (Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, n.d.). Under Washington State's legislative house bill 1406, local governments can set aside a portion of state sales tax and apply it toward affordable housing and rental assistance programs. Income in Washington State is projected to increase to $160 million by 2040 (King County Affordable Housing Committee, 2019). Although these programs are run at the state level, refugees and asylees arriving in King County from various parts of the world experience realities of high housing costs and essential well-being needs. These realities often push them to extremes of homelessness in the county (King County Hospitals for a Healthier Community, 2019). Therefore, nonprofits have increased their efforts to support refugee and asylee resettlement efforts in Washington State.

In King County, the main voluntary resettlement agencies active in refugee and asylee resettlement programs include the Jewish Family Service of Greater Seattle, World Relief Seattle, Diocese of Olympia, International Rescue Committee–Seattle, and Lutheran Community Services Northwest (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2015). Lutheran Community Services

Northwest (n.d.), for example, has promoted refugee integration, mobility, and empowerment, which is a program supporting case management services and free immigration legal assistance, including affordable housing, medical assistance, English as a Second Language (ESL) support, and transportation access. It is unclear from the literature analysis how these partners have worked together and how their collaboration has worked for or against access to affordable housing programs and services for refugees and asylees. The next sections discuss literature on available housing partnerships between public and private housing providers at the state and county level, and how these partnerships have enhanced access to affordable housing for refugees and asylees.

Existing Public–Private Partnerships Providing Housing Services

Public–private partnerships in housing assistance programs for refugees and other immigrant programs have been key to ensuring effective access to resettlement services (Shaw & Poulin, 2015; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, n.d.). Shaw and Poulin suggested extended case management involving matching the language and nationality of caseworkers with newly arriving refugees and asylees as an effective way to ensure an engaging experience for delivering a full package of refugee integration needs in a blended way. In contrast to other immigrants arriving in the United States, refugees are eligible to receive and rely on public services upon arrival, and program capacity is essential to resettlement and integration of incoming refugees (Enekwe, 2016; Murdie, 2008). Washington State has used the state administrative model for delivering resources to refugees, with services allocated directly by the state in collaboration with other housing organizations that play a supportive role to the state (Enekwe, 2016; Office of Refugee Resettlement, n.d.).

King County has been an active participant in implementing an immigrant and refugee partnership program, including immigrant and refugee rights as critical pillars of the King County Equity and Social Justice (n.d.) strategic plan. The program has positioned King County as a welcoming and inclusive community for all new arriving residents, including refugees and asylees, to access county programs and services. To affirm this commitment, 80 elected King County officials gave a pledge to promote and build safe, welcoming, and inclusive communities (King County, 2017). The pledge, built on nondiscriminatory principles, provided an open window to refugee and asylee access to housing services irrespective of their immigration status, race, religion, national origin, age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, housing status, veteran status, political ideology, ancestry, or any other social identity (King County Hospitals for a Healthier Community, 2019).

King County Housing Authority (n.d.-a) has been a direct provider for rental housing and rental assistance to more than 19,000 households across 33 cities. King County Housing Authority manages over 4,000 federally funded housing units and an additional 6,000 units of low- and moderate-income housing. Funding has been derived from tax credits or tax-exempt bonds, all targeting families and individuals, including those who identify as refugees and asylees. However, even with all these units, the county has not fully served refugees and asylees, and reports have indicated they have continued to face housing access and homelessness challenges (King County Hospitals for a Healthier Community, 2019). Consequently, King County Housing Authority (n.d.-a) has been part of other housing programs, including managing the moving to work program and a Section 8 voucher program which provides access to affordable housing on the private market for more than 10,000 households. With the move to work framework, King County Housing Authority (n.d.-a) has benefited from the flexibility to

shape federally funded programs in ways that respond to local conditions and needs, including offering better support for economic self-sufficiency for beneficiaries, including refugees and asylees.

King County's partnership with nonprofits and private housing agencies has provided housing and other supportive services to a total of 55,000 people earning less than the county median income (King County Department of Community and Human Services, n.d.; King County Housing Authority, n.d.-c). This number includes refugees and asylees, because many of these individuals fall below the median income (Baugh, 2020; Shaw, 2014; Shaw & Poulin, 2015). Relatedly, literature has indicated the housing choice voucher and subsidized housing programs have remained the main programs, assisting more of the region's lowest-income residents, with 81% of families earning less than 30% of the area median income of $32,100 per year for a family of four, as of 2019 (King County Equity and Social Justice, n.d.; King County Hospitals for a Healthier Community, 2019; King County Housing Authority, n.d.-c).

Nevertheless, available literature leaves gaps in clarity on how effective these public partnerships are structured, and how partnerships and collaborations translate into benefits for refugees and asylees in accessing affordable housing services in King County. The next section presents literature on key facts about housing access by refugees and asylees and how partnerships could be acting as enablers or barriers to accessing housing services.

Key Facts on Refugee and Asylee Access to Housing in King County

King County has made different housing programs available to individuals and households seeking access to affordable housing. These programs have included direct public housing assistance and partnerships with private housing service providers, including nonprofits, churches, and private housing companies (King County Hospitals for a Healthier Community,

2019). Specifically, the King County Department of Community and Human Services (n.d.) homeless housing program has been identified as an active program supporting housing stability and individual safety for eligible residents. The homeless housing program focused on administering a housing stability strategy, which included (a) emergency and short-term housing; (b) homeless prevention support to prevent households from losing their housing; (c) permanent housing, including permanent supportive housing; and (d) a special projects component, including support with subsidized bus tickets to homeless and/or low-income individuals, including those identified as refugees (King County Department of Community and Human Services, n.d.).

Through Section 8 voucher programs, King County Housing Authority (n.d.-b) has supported 11,400 households with low-income rent as part of enhancing affordable housing. The Section 8 voucher program in King County has accounted for 50.4% of housing services accessed as of January 2019, compared to subsidized housing (20.9%) and other rental housing, including nonprofit partnerships (28.7%; King County Hospitals for a Healthier Community, 2019; King County Housing Authority, n.d.-c). It is unclear how much of these numbers account for refugees and asylees. Other housing programs like subsidized housing programs, moderate-income housing programs, a manufactured homes program, and other affordable rental housing programs have existed in the county to increase affordability of housing among low-income households and individuals vulnerable to homelessness in King County, with refugees and asylees included (King County Housing Authority, n.d.-a, n.d.-b).

Considering federal and nonfederal programs, qualifying individuals and households are required to pay below market, flat rent amounts (King County Hospitals for a Healthier Community, 2019). Specifically, available programs attempt to keep rent and utility costs below

30% of adjusted monthly income. It is important to note household income for housing supported by King County Department of Community and Human Services (n.d.) has been monitored to ensure it does not exceed a threshold, although households may pay more than 30% of income on housing. Available literature revealed low employability levels as common to most individuals identifying as refugees and asylees, which is due to a misalignment in skills and education required for most job opportunities; thus, they also experience low-income levels (Baugh, 2020; Shaw & Poulin, 2015; Steimel, 2017).

However, given limited literature on refugee and asylee experiences in King County on how they are accessing housing information and services, it remains unclear how this population has been navigating through barriers to access affordable housing services (King County Hospitals for a Healthier Community, 2019). This study contributed to closing the literature gap with facts specific to lived experiences of refugees and asylees in accessing information about housing services. Consequently, the next section discusses existing literature on available systemic linkages for accessing affordable housing programs and services and highlights existing gaps impacting housing access for refugees and asylees.

Systemic Linkages to Housing Programs and Structures in Reaching Refugees and Asylees

Corbett and Noyes (2008) noted the challenge of continued delivery of human services programs in silos by different actors running closely related programs and delivering distinct benefits to narrowly defined target populations. These challenges have resulted in complex, confusing, redundant, and incoherent guidance to individuals and families seeking these services (Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies, 2016; Hanley et al., 2018; Simich et al., 2003). Corbett and Noyes suggested a systems integration approach fostering a blended systemic collaboration among partners working together. This approach includes a best practice

of identifying areas of homogeneity, including institutional and programmatic similarity, to make delivery of services even easier to targeted populations. According to Corbett and Noyes, this practice is best done if partners consider implementing joint programmatic reviews while building synergistic approaches to collaboration, communication, convergence, and coordination as they deliver human-centered services. In contrast with refugee resettlement programs, including housing support services, there is continued advocacy for evolving service delivery by adopting a systemic approach to serving refugees and asylees (Office of Refugee Resettlement, n.d.).

In Washington State, there have been efforts to harness a systemic approach to accessing affordable housing, including requiring fair housing state partners to comply with fair housing laws. According to Fair Housing Partners of Washington State (2016), such laws include refraining from selective applicant screening, including creditworthiness, criminal history, employment history, and background checks because screening processes have often caused risk to new refugee and asylee applicants in accessing affordable housing services. It remains unknown how arriving refugees and asylees have been guided and supported with this information.

King County Housing Authority (n.d.-c) has operated with a systemic approach, including engaging and working with different housing partners in connecting individuals and households to affordable housing programs. The approach includes nonprofit and private housing partnerships considered primary vehicles for housing services to effectively support qualifying individuals and households to access diverse housing services (King County Housing Authority, n.d.-b). Nonprofit partners offer supportive services for low-income households and homeless individuals. For example, Refugee Women's Alliance (n.d.), under a partnership with King

County Housing Authority, provides housing assistance and intensive case management to assist with housing and prevent homelessness in King County. The nonprofit approach to assisting refugees has included identifying and securing stable and suitable housing, including moving into the new home and obtaining household items such as furniture and other necessities, by linking to other service providers (Refugee Women's Alliance, n.d.). This approach implies an extended provision of services built on linkages with other providers in the system.

Similarly, King County Housing, Homelessness, and Community Development Division implemented a structured system including direct housing service access to eligible individuals and direct funding awards supporting community partner organizations and cities (King County Department of Community and Human Services, n.d.). King County Housing Authority has provided housing contracts to community partners to provide public housing services ranging from subsidized Section 8 house vouchers or affordable housing, depending on areas being served. King County's other systemic approach for cultivating connections is an initiative targeting the Skyway–West Hill and North Highline neighborhoods, both of which had been experiencing high displacements affecting mostly immigrants (King County Department of Community and Human Services, n.d.). The initiative has supported preservation and creation of affordable housing and has worked with communities affected by displacement to identify harmonized strategies for addressing rising housing costs and land values. Similarly, King County Regional Homelessness Authority, established in December 2019, has supported coordination efforts to reduce homelessness (King County Hospitals for a Healthier Community, 2021).

With existing systemic approaches in place, there is still a gap in the literature about how all these efforts are translating into positive lived experiences for refugees and asylees in helping

them navigate systemic processes and structures to access affordable housing in King County. This gap formed the basis for this study. The next section presents available literature about a disconnect in housing programs and delivery structures, and their resulting impacts on refugee and asylee access to services.

Identified Areas of Disconnect in Housing Programs and Delivery Structures

Shaw and Poulin (2015) highlighted inadequate resettlement services as a barrier to achieving the goal of self-sufficiency for most refugees and asylees. Additionally, well-being and service needs of refugees and asylees in the United States were not adequately being met. Similarly, Corbett and Noyes (2008) have attributed such inadequacy to challenges characterized by complexity, confusion, and incoherent guiding information to those seeking human services due to partners operating in silos. The states have been required to work innovatively to ensure federal and nonfederal programs and services have access to all those who are eligible (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, n.d.). In Washington State, housing assistance programs have included partnerships at the state, county, and local levels. These programs involve nonprofits, private housing businesses, and religious organizations remaining actively involved with refugee and asylee resettlement (Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, n.d.). It is not well known how public and private partners are working in their structural arrangements to increase access and reduce barriers to affordable housing for refugees and asylees.

There has been tremendous leadership commitment to improving access to affordable housing and other services in King County; however, there remains a disconnect in affordable housing access for refugees and asylees (King County Hospitals for a Healthier Community, 2019). Even with structures like the King County Immigrant and Refugee Commission, which

was established as a permanent agency to oversee integration of immigrant and refugee communities, refugees and asylees have still struggled to access affordable housing, implying a disconnect still exists (King County Immigrant and Refugee Commission, n.d.). The commission has been far from achieving its vision of ensuring the county becomes a place where everyone has equitable access to opportunities through an effectively coordinated approach to enhancing access to fair and equitable housing services. There is an opportunity for the study to establish any insights from King County and housing partners around how the commission is performing and the translation into access to affordable housing for refugees and asylees. A disconnect has existed in affordable housing access for southwest King County residents (King County Hospitals for a Healthier Community, 2019). Historically, this area has suffered the brunt of rising housing market rates continuing to affect low-income households, most of whom are refugees and asylees (King County Hospitals for a Healthier Community, 2019). Most residents have been displaced due to rising housing costs in this part of the county, and many of these residents are people of color and immigrants, including refugees and asylees, who have had to relocate to other affordable areas (King County, 2019). Southwest King County has continued to experience (a) limited affordable and low-income housing services, (b) a need for rent control, (c) an increased need for rental assistance, and (d) a need for improved Section 8 assistance (King County Hospitals for a Healthier Community, 2019). Given their support for appropriate language and cultural resources, community-based partners have been recognized as entities effective at serving immigrant and refugee communities (Shaw & Poulin, 2015).

There is a disconnect in access to available housing resources, which points to issues of what could be best pathways for reducing affordable housing access challenges for refugees and asylees in King County. This disconnect in access suggests the need to explore individual lived

experiences for refugees and asylees, and how they are navigating existing structures to access housing resources.

Experiences of Refugees and Asylees in Obtaining Housing

It is essential to know lived experiences of refugees and asylees in obtaining housing to identify known barriers and issues with housing services. Although previously reviewed literature indicated identity and discrimination have played a part in securing housing (Beiser & Hou, 2006; Dion, 2001; Steimel, 2017), this section focuses specifically on experiences of locating and obtaining housing. Literature on experiences in obtaining housing and surrounding issues can be categorized into two themes: (a) economic and financial stability, and (b) social support. Both financial stability and social support are critical to an individual's integration into the United States (Preston et al., 2011; Shaw & Poulin, 2015; Simich et al., 2003).

In terms of economic and financial stability, integration and resettlement programs tend to focus on employment as the immediate and primary goal for individuals receiving resettlement services (Enekwe, 2016; Shaw & Poulin, 2015; Steimel, 2017). This focus on immediate job placement often leaves individuals forced to accept the first position available, rather than a job matching their education or skill level (Enekwe, 2016; Steimel, 2017). Focus on job placement often leaves individuals making at or near minimum wage, which puts them in financially unstable circumstances (Enekwe, 2016; Shaw & Poulin, 2015; Weine et al., 2011). Shaw and Poulin shared over half of participants in their study indicated their financial situation was either bad or very bad for the first 6 months in their new community. Enekwe also noted refugees and asylees required more than two household members to work full time to afford housing based on average wages.

In addition to low wages, refugees and asylees, and practitioners providing resettlement services, have identified housing affordability as a significant barrier (Enekwe, 2016; Preston et al., 2011; Shaw & Poulin, 2015; Weine et al., 2011). Individuals have often been forced to resort to secondary migration or relocation to obtain affordable housing (Brick et al., 2010; Shaw & Poulin, 2015; Weine et al., 2011). Some practices and policies have not allowed organizations providing resettlement services to counsel or encourage secondary migration and prevent federal financial support from continuing through relocation events (Brick et al., 2010; Weine et al., 2011). Enekwe affirmed public housing access can take years, leaving many individuals to find housing independently. Despite these challenges, Shaw and Poulin identified extending services and case management from 8 months after arrival to 24 months after initial arrival to the host community frequently resulted in better financial and housing stability, regardless of relocation. Documented experiences of refugees and asylees in obtaining housing suggested they were often receiving low wages, living in unaffordable housing, and frequently forgoing assistance to relocate for job opportunities and housing affordability (Enekwe, 2016; Preston et al., 2011; Weine et al., 2011).

Social support is another critical factor in successful integration and is often lacking for individuals seeking resettlement assistance and services (Basolo & Nguyen, 2009; Hanley et al., 2018; Simich et al., 2003). Simich et al. argued information does not flow in a timely or reliable manner from organizations providing resettlement services to individuals receiving services and frequently occurs in the middle of services. Existing literature has suggested refugees and asylees mostly find support from family, friends, and other social ties when locating housing (Basolo & Nguyen, 2009; Hanley et al., 2018; Simich et al., 2003). Simich et al. claimed need for social support is the second most common motivation for secondary migration and relocation. By

having to locate housing through social supports, refugees and asylees have often found housing in higher rates with individuals who have immigrated, which frequently were in low-income neighborhoods with decreased access to services and assistance (Basolo & Nguyen, 2009; Hanley et al., 2018; Steimel, 2017). Basolo and Nguyen cited refugees and asylees often reside in worse neighborhoods than nonimmigrants and have been frequently directed to those neighborhoods based on racial or ethnic identity. However, Shaw and Poulin (2015) claimed finding a community with shared experiences significantly improved an individual's adjustment to resettlement. Erden (2017) further noted social support and a community with shared experiences allowed refugees and asylees to become self-sufficient and feel empowered. The many barriers an individual may face with organizations providing resettlement services highlights the importance of social support. Systemically, individuals have often been forced to locate housing or independently fund their relocation. However, there is a small benefit to relying on social support networks because these individuals can find meaningful social connections.

Empowerment Related to Housing

The scope of available literature on the relationship between housing and empowerment is limited. When considering refugee and asylee experiences of empowerment related to housing, the literature base is even further limited. Overall, empowerment has had a strong connection to the process of individuals increasing control over their lives (Somerville, 1998). When considering empowerment in relation to refugee and asylee access to housing, empowerment could be described as the process of disadvantaged or excluded individuals acquiring something of the character of the citizens (Harrison, 1995, as cited in Somerville, 1998). This process could align access to housing and ability of refugees and asylees to secure suitable, appropriate, and

affordable housing, leading to empowerment. This empowerment comes from refugees' and asylees' increased control of their housing situation (Somerville, 1998). The foundation of the ability to secure housing relates to access to information necessary to do so; thus, there is an increased importance on accessible community services to assist in this process.

Summary

Literature reviewed in this section addressed policies and processes for resettlement and experiences of refugees and asylees throughout the process. Individuals experienced challenges applying for and receiving refugee or asylee status precluding arrival to the United States. The theoretical framework provided a lens to understand the importance of identity, discrimination, and oppression refugee and asylee populations have faced. Research on experiences of individuals going through resettlement and integration in the United States has presented processes, challenges, and opportunities available upon arrival in the United States (Enekwe, 2016). We also examined the structure of government and NGO partnerships to identify existing partnerships for housing services in King County, Washington. In examining these partnerships, we analyzed areas of disconnect between refugees and asylees and resettlement organizations. Existing literature has documented refugee and asylee populations' experiences in obtaining housing (Dion, 2001; Enekwe, 2016). The relationship with empowerment identified systemic and social challenges creating barriers to stable housing. Examining literature highlighted areas of opportunity for this study to expand the current knowledge base while also having local applications.

The following chapter presents the research design and methodology used in this study. The research questions, approach, context of the study, study participants, sampling, selection,

and recruitment are outlined. The chapter continues with a description of the data collection, analysis, and procedures, followed by an explanation of measures of quality.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter presents the research design and methodology used in this emancipatory case study by the three members of the research team. First, the chapter outlines research questions, research approach, context of the study, and study participant sampling, selection, and recruitment. It then includes specific details for data collection, data analysis, and procedures. Finally, the chapter describes measures of quality, including ethical issues, researcher positionality, credibility, dependability, transferability of the study, and control for biases.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine refugee and asylee lived experiences in accessing housing from perspectives of individuals employed by organizations providing housing service programs in King County, Washington. We further examined services available in King County for housing access and stability. By examining perceptions of lived experiences related to accessing housing, we identified areas successful in providing stable housing opportunities and areas in need of improvement. This study sought to answer the following research questions:

- Research Question 1: From the perspective of individuals employed by organizations providing housing and information services, what are perceived lived experiences of refugees and asylees in the United States in accessing information for housing services in King County, Washington?
- Research Question 2: From the perspective of individuals employed by organizations providing information and services, how do lived experiences of refugees and asylees impact their ability to access housing services and opportunities for integration in the United States?

- Research Question 3: What housing programs and services are most effective for reaching refugees and asylees in King County, Washington?

Research Methods

Due to the difficult nature of accessing hidden populations, or individuals who are difficult to identify, locate, access, and interview, a qualitative approach was appropriate and is widely used in studies focusing on hidden populations (Spreen & Zwaagstra, 1994). The qualitative design for this study was an emancipatory case study. An emancipatory approach to research is appropriate when two or more intersections of identity oppression exist in the studied population (Kramer-Roy, 2015). Emancipatory research also calls for researchers to be accountable to the community being researched by ensuring (a) research participants have a voice in the research process, (b) research produces a tangible outcome to the participant community, and (c) researchers focus on empowering research participants (Kramer-Roy, 2015; Noel, 2016).

Context of the Study

The focus group setting was virtual through Zoom, a video conferencing platform, due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Researchers and participants accessed the Zoom application from their homes or other locations where access to a device capable of running the application and internet was available. Individuals were recruited from nonprofit organizations providing services in King County, Washington, in partnership with King County Department of Community and Human Services. These organizations have provided a variety of services for refugee and asylee resettlement, including housing services.

King County was selected as the geographic area of focus due to the number of individuals resettled in the vicinity and increasing immigrant population, along with issues

surrounding housing availability and stability, especially among refugees and asylees. In King County, Washington, at the time of this study, 50% of individuals experiencing homelessness were in communities of color (All Home, 2020; King County Hospitals for a Healthier Community, 2021). Furthermore, 19.5% of immigrants in King County lived in poverty, which is more than double the poverty rate of individuals born in the United States (King County Hospitals for a Healthier Community, 2019; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). These refugee and asylee families in King County are at a disproportionately higher risk of homelessness due to their poverty level and housing insecurity. King County Department of Community and Human Services established partnerships with various community organizations in responding to housing needs of people living in King County. Therefore, we decided to study the work of King County Department of Community and Human Services based on a desire to explore how strategic investments into housing support services trickled down to refugees and asylees. The study setting was ideal due to King County Department of Community and Human Services' proximity to locations serving the research population and the willingness of organizations providing services to work with us in conducting the study.

Because the purpose of this study was to examine refugee and asylee experiences accessing housing information and programs, and to identify barriers, King County Department of Community and Human Services was interested in the results. Furthermore, participant recommendations about accessing housing services and information strategies could have been pivotal in helping King County advocate for more effective and accessible housing programs.

Population

The primary general population for this study was individuals who worked for organizations that provided housing information and services to refugee and asylee populations

in King County, Washington. In Washington State fiscal year 2020–2021, with decreases in resettlement due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, there were 284 refugees resettled in the state (Refugee Processing Center, 2021). In 2019, there were approximately 1,950 refugees and 484 individuals granted asylum in Washington (Baugh, 2020; Krogstad, 2019). The target population for this study was individuals employed by organizations that provided information and housing services in King County, Washington. The study sample included 10 individuals who worked for organizations providing housing information and services in partnership with King County Department of Community and Human Services. By recruiting 10 individuals, we met the minimum number necessary for case study research and hoped to achieve data saturation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Mills & Gay, 2019).

It is important to recognize homeless populations and individuals seeking social services are among the most difficult populations of which to apply random sampling procedures (Heckathorn, 1997; Qureshi, 2018). Additionally, individuals in refugee and asylee populations are also difficult to identify, locate, access, and interview, which can lead to difficulty in data collection. Due to these barriers, these individuals fall under the definitions of a hidden population and dispersed population (Heckathorn, 1997; Qureshi, 2018; Spreen, 1992; Spreen & Zwaagstra, 1994; Welch, 1975). Based on existing literature and challenges of data collection, we documented refugee and asylee lived experiences through perspectives of individuals who worked with this population through the resettlement process.

Participant Selection

Because this study sought to examine a population difficult to identify, recruit, and communicate with, specific participant requirements and sampling procedures were necessary. We used purposive–convenience sampling with a targeted sample size of 10 or more individuals

employed by organizations providing housing resettlement services. To qualify as a participant in this study, individuals (a) worked full time in an organization providing housing resettlement services to refugees and asylees in King County, Washington; (b) were employed with the organization for a minimum of 2 consecutive years; (c) were employed in a program staff role; and (d) were 18 years of age or older at the time of the study (see Appendix A).

Participant Recruitment

A staff member with the community partner acted as a gatekeeper by providing contact information and making an initial introduction between the organizations and the research team. Organizations included the Refugee Women's Alliance, World Relief Seattle, African Community Housing and Development, International Rescue Committee—Seattle, Afghan American Community of Washington, El Centro De La Raza, and Refugees Northwest. Although the community partner served as primary gatekeeper, we identified additional organizations for the study because direct access to clients was limited.

Because King County did not have direct access to clients accessing available programs, it was necessary to identify additional organizations providing housing services and programs in the community. These identified organizations then provided access to their employees (Creswell, 2009). To identify potential participants, we performed an online search to locate organizations in King County providing resettlement services for refugees and asylees. We developed a list of keywords and entered them into an online search engine to locate organizations. Keywords included refugees, asylees, housing, program, Seattle, and King County. From there, a list of 113 local organizations was populated. We reviewed the mission statement and services provided for each organization. From this list, seven organizations were listed as primary agencies operating in King County, Washington: Jewish Family Service of

Greater Seattle, World Relief Seattle, Diocese of Olympia, International Rescue Committee, Refugee Women's Alliance, Lutheran Community Services Northwest, and Eastside Refugee and Immigrant Coalition.

Four organizations were contractually affiliated with King County Department of Community and Human Services, so the staff member from King County Department of Community and Human Services served as a gatekeeper to the organizations and facilitated an e-introduction. Once we established introductions, we sent emails to appropriate contacts in the organizations (see Appendix B). This email contained a proposal letter requesting the contacts participate by serving as a liaison to their employee base. The letter was adapted from Preston et al. (2011), who identified the purpose of the study, how the organization would serve as a liaison, length of time needed to serve as a liaison, how data were collected, what the liaison may gain from participation, and potential impacts and outcomes of the research.

We attempted to recruit refugee and asylee populations through clients of organizations that agreed to participate as a liaison. We sought refugee and asylee participants who had accessed organization services in the past 3–36 months from the onset of data collection. However, we were unable to recruit refugees and asylees to participate in the study; instead, we approached the entire study from the perspectives of individuals employed with housing organizations. The many factors that prevented refugee and asylee participation are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

Individuals employed in organizations affiliated with providing services to refugees and asylees were recruited using purposive–convenience sampling methods. We contacted participating individuals employed by organizations based on (a) willingness to participate in the research, (b) organizational permission to participate, and (c) accessibility of employees

(Enekwe, 2016). We emailed the individuals an invitation to participate, including an introductory statement and outline of the research project (see Appendix C). Once people responded to the invitation and agreed to participate, we provided and explained informed consent forms (see Appendix D). After participants completed the informed consent forms, we scheduled semistructured focus groups through email by providing a list of available dates for focus group interviews.

Data Collection

This study's data collection source was primary data, with one mode of data collection. Data collection for this study included qualitative measures through semistructured focus groups. Focus group interviews focused on the population of individuals working as program staff in organizations providing housing resettlement services to refugees and asylees. Individuals meeting population criteria as outlined previously were selected to take part in the study (Mills & Gay, 2019).

Focus group protocol for individuals employed by organizations providing housing information and services to refugee and asylee populations consisted of nine questions (see Appendix E) and lasted approximately 90–120 minutes. We conducted three focus group interviews with a total of 10 participants via Zoom, a teleconferencing application. Specifically, two research team members facilitated the focus group while another researcher observed as a nonparticipant. We followed the developed focus group protocol for the facilitating researchers and observing researcher. Focus group interviews were audio recorded through Zoom for transcription. In case of equipment failure, all members of our research team also took notes.

Data Analysis

A qualitative approach provided an opportunity for a deeper understanding of lived experiences of refugees and asylees in accessing housing information and services. A qualitative approach also enabled us to develop a baseline understanding of experiences in accessing housing through perspectives of individuals employed by organizations providing housing information and programs in King County, and how these experiences impacted the ability of refugees and asylees to access housing services.

All data collected through focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed. Following the focus groups, all collected data were coded into appropriate sections and organized by common themes. The objective of this process was to capture experiences of refugees and asylees. These experiences were captured from the perspective of individuals employed by resettlement and housing organizations.

Analysis Procedures

This study sought to examine lived experiences of refugees and asylees in the United States in accessing information and housing services in King County, from the perspectives of individuals employed by organizations providing housing information and services. We conducted three semistructured focus group interviews involving individuals working as program staff in organizations that provide housing services in King County. One research team member transcribed data using Otter transcription software and another research team member verified for accuracy to enhance the study's findings (Stoecker, 2012). We then compared individual notes with each other and gathered general ideas and meanings of shared experiences from the initial review of data collected through focus group interviews. This process involved comparing data to form categories of like statements (Creswell, 2014). For this phase, we followed a

thematic coding process where “themes are patterns across data sets that are important to the description of a phenomenon and are associated with a specific research question” (Daly et al., 1997, p. 166).

Ivankova (2015) stated, “The process of qualitative data analysis involves an inductive approach that aims at reducing the volume of information by systematically organizing the data into categories and themes from specific to general” (p. 233). Thus, we then coded focus group transcripts manually to analyze data further. Transcripts were cross-coded by all research team members, which resulted in a collaboratively composed codebook (Tesch, 1992, as cited in Creswell, 2014). Cross-coding ensured agreement in coding and greater accuracy of theme analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). We then compared and discussed findings and outcomes, including highlighting specific major themes and any outliers from all focus group interviews.

Following Creswell’s (2014) suggestion, we collaborated and shared analysis throughout the coding process to ensure consistency in coding and interpretation. We then collated all data belonging to each category to perform a preliminary analysis. As necessary, we recoded existing data based on collaborative meanings and interpretations (Creswell, 2014). Each theme was then calculated to determine frequency and recurrence across focus group questions. We then compared study findings to information presented in the literature review. We also considered and examined how researcher biases could shape interpretation of findings throughout the analysis process.

Measure of Quality

In qualitative research, it is crucial to maintain trustworthiness throughout the research process (Creswell, 2014). In outlining measures of quality that contribute to trustworthiness, we

have identified our own positionality as it relates to the research topic. We also discuss the approaches we used to ensure credibility, dependability, and transferability of the research study.

Positionality

One hallmark of thorough research is inclusion of researcher reflexivity (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Explicitly identifying how researchers' identities, history, and experiences shape the study positions the researcher into the context of the study. Additionally, lived experiences can influence the lens that defines inquiry and interpretation of results (Eisner, 1992; Goodson & Sikes, 2009). Each team member has provided a short biographical statement to disclose our personal experiences in the context of this study.

Obed Kabanda. I am a Black African, heterosexual, cisgender male. At the time of this study, I was living in Seattle, Washington, and was a doctoral student at Seattle University. Qualified with a Master's of public health leadership, I founded and led a nonprofit for 17 years in Uganda, East Africa, prior to enrolling in the doctoral program in 2018. My experience working with underprivileged communities was founded in my childhood experiences observing social inequities, abuse, exploitation, and maternal death challenges, including housing as a social determinate of health. All of these experiences ultimately led to my interest in social justice work in my early career. My passion and interest, shaped by Ubuntu and Christian humane values and coupled with desire to contribute to social change, motivated me to establish a nonprofit, Action for Community Development, that would later turn out to be a platform for promoting social change. Early socialization has been produced in my life and has continued to inform my positionality, biases, and viewpoints; but, it has also informed my identity and research interests. My research interests at the time of this study fell in areas of social justice,

strategic and global partnerships, and related inequities as they relate to social change issues like housing and education.

As Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested, the nature of qualitative research sets the researcher as the data collection instrument; it is reasonable to expect researchers' beliefs, political stances, and cultural backgrounds were important variables that can affect the research process. Undertaking this study to explore refugee and asylee lived experiences in accessing housing services provided through programs in King County, Washington had presented some positionality and ethical issues for me. As a Black African who might have potentially undergone similar experiences with accessing housing services less than 5 years prior to the study in King County, I took intentional consideration of respect for potential possibilities of siding with individually shared experiences of fellow Black African participants. I actively sought to avoid "the risk of disclosing only positive results, [and] respecting privacy of study participants" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 55). In dealing with these ethical issues, I applied qualitative research principles of seeking to provide an understanding of a problem through experiences of individuals and particular details of their lived experiences rather than personal, emotional feelings. Consistency checking among my fellow research team members also helped me to avoid undue influence or biases during data analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Mill & Gay, 2019).

Chase Huffman. Understanding my positionality as a researcher helped shape the lens I brought to this study. It was important first to identify the framework through which I viewed my identity. In approaching identity and privilege as a researcher, it is best considered through the framework of intersectionality because multiple identities of an individual also exist at a personal, group, and systemic level (Adams & Zuniga, 2018). Intersectionality framework allows

understanding for both privilege and oppression from their relative position in a system rather than comparing one social identity against another. Adams and Zuniga further argued intersectionality also recognizes advantages and disadvantages a person may experience based on social categorization, while acknowledging individuals experience these social identities and advantages and disadvantages simultaneously.

Based on this framework, I identify as a White, cisgender, queer male. In a historical context, I grew up in a lower socioeconomic class with conservative values, although I grew up in a marginalized religious group. At the time of this study, I was working toward a doctoral degree after completing a master's degree in nonprofit management. Based on my social identity and context as a researcher, my research interests lied in ensuring inclusion throughout all levels of an organization, with a focus on leadership, learning, and organizational development.

Alicia Al-Aryan. Based on the described framework, I identify as a White and Middle Eastern, cisgender, heterosexual female. At the time of this study, I was living in Kirkland, Washington, with my senior mother and infant daughter. In a historical context, I grew up in a middle socioeconomic class in the suburbs of Minneapolis, Minnesota, in northern Minnesota, in The United Arab Emirates, and in Jordan. The dynamics of my family growing up exposed me to diversity in culture, religion, and values. My educational background includes undergraduate work in wildlife biology and deaf education, and a master's degree in secondary science education, with a focus on paleobiology. At the time of this study, I was working toward completion of a doctoral degree in educational and organizational leadership. Throughout my lifetime to date, I have had a servant leadership mindset and an interest in further work in human rights issues. My research interests have primarily focused on multicultural sensitivity and inclusion, disability inclusion, women in leadership, conservation, and education. I have

individual biases to address, including having immediate family members with immigrant status in the United States and Canada, and personal experience of witnessing individuals fleeing persecution in the Middle East in 2011. These experiences could have created an emotional response and bias toward participant's hardship in their experiences.

Credibility

Guba and Lincoln (1989) defined credibility as being confident in the truth of the findings. Creswell (2014) further described credibility as being the process by which a "researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures" (p. 201). This study involved exploring refugee and asylee lived experiences. Researcher activities aimed at promoting credibility in qualitative research should include (a) triangulation of data, (b) persistent observation, (c) peer debriefing, and (d) member checking (Creswell, 2014; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). We took on these standard activities to ensure credibility of research findings.

Specifically, we used semistructured interviews and maintained a flexible researcher stance during data collection. Using this method of interviewing contributed to rich and detailed data collected about participant experiences with information about housing services from the perspectives of individuals employed by housing organizations. We retained an open stance and used additional data collection methods to fully explore lived experiences of refugees and asylees in King County from the lens of employee shared experiences. Applying persistent observation, we used collected data to develop codes, concepts, and core categories to help examine data characteristics. We continuously read and reread data to analyze further, and we made relevant revisions to emerging themes and concepts accordingly. We recoded and relabeled emerging codes, concepts, and core categories, and studied data until the final theory provided our intended depth of insight (Creswell, 2014).

We also applied peer debriefing of experiential narratives from focus group interviews and used triangulation to ensure study findings were credible (Creswell & Poth, 2018). We approached analysis from a confirmability angle by ensuring an enhanced degree of neutrality in the research study findings. We also ensured findings were based on participant responses, and not on any potential bias or personal motivations of any research team member. We did not skew interpretations to fit a particular narrative due to potential research team member bias.

Dependability

In qualitative research, dependability refers to the study's consistency and repeatability based on adherence to procedures (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Ivankova, 2015). Because many strategies exist, it is also important to consider strategies specific to the methodology employed in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For this reason, we used strategies for ensuring dependability and trustworthiness. The first strategy was triangulation, evidenced by the difference in stakeholder groups, research participants, and data collection methods to gather concentrated information (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Ivankova, 2015). The second strategy we used was an audit trail record to maintain and detail all research process phases, including all procedures. By combining these two strategies, the study contained documented evidence of consistency of findings and repeatability for future research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Transferability

The primary research population included individuals employed by organizations providing housing information and services in King County, Washington. Participants were well suited to provide meaningful information by sharing their knowledge of available programming, interpretation of refugee and asylee experiences, and expertise. We outlined the research approach and findings transparently to ensure ease of understanding and detailed information for

data collection and analysis. We facilitated transferability judgment through thick descriptions of housing provider experiences in serving refugees and asylees. We described not just their experiences, but also contexts, to ensure meaning to an outsider. Transparency and thorough detail allowed study findings to be applicable to other organizations providing housing information and services in King County, in the state of Washington, and on a national level. The study can also be applied to other programming services available to refugees and asylees, such as health care and education.

Controls for Bias

We recognized there was a potential for both respondent and researcher bias by conducting a qualitative study. Such bias could have included social desirability bias, sponsor bias, habituation bias, or even researcher bias (Biddix, 2018). We aimed to minimize any potential respondent and researcher bias by addressing sources of those biases. From a respondent bias point of view, we avoided asking direct questions that might have pushed respondents to choose more socially acceptable answers than those reflecting what they genuinely experienced or believed (Creswell, 2014).

We theorized individuals employed by organizations providing housing services and information to refugees and asylees were most likely going to feel obligated to respond positively in focus group interviews. This obligation could have stemmed from fear they might lose their position in the organization. There was a likelihood of respondents providing responses they think might have been socially acceptable to avoid any form of repercussion because of their answers (Adams & Zuniga, 2018). To avoid this participant fear, we stressed autonomy and freedom for participants to express personal views without fear of loss of employment and assured respondents of anonymity when signing informed consent forms before participating in

the study. We also provided clarity and reassurance to respondents during focus group interviews about the freedom to express their views, and about anonymity and confidentiality, before delving into asking more profound questions.

From a researcher bias point of view, we avoided use of leading questions in structured focus group interviews; instead, we used a semistructured approach with open-ended questions to allow participants to shape the creation of knowledge and share their experiences and perspectives about the research questions (Kramer-Roy, 2015; Mills & Gay, 2019; Noel, 2016). We worked together to design the data collection tools and sought input from experts in the research partner's housing sector to ensure questions were good enough for full engagement from participants. This review included ensuring language used in the data collection tools was appropriate and neutral to avoid misunderstanding and potential for biased answers. Order of questions, including starting with entry questions, was necessary for the demographic intake survey to ensure appropriateness in building respondent trust and avoiding potential question-order bias (Biddix, 2018).

We also agreed not to use language or words biased against persons because of gender, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic group, disability, or age. We used language sensitive to labels, and acknowledged and referred to study participants appropriately. In data reporting, we avoided practices that would have suppressed, falsified, or invented findings to meet participant needs or those of individuals reading this study. We underscored the importance of not misusing research results to the advantage of one group or another (Creswell, 2007, as cited in Creswell, 2009). Before the study onset, we ensured there were no personal or professional relationships with participants. Finally, we released research findings with the study design outline to ensure

readers could make an accurate determination of credibility of the study in the form of detailed procedures (Creswell, 2009).

Ethical Considerations

To ensure ethical precautions, we treated all potential and active participants with respect. This respect included (a) respecting their privacy and maintaining confidentiality of personal information, (b) respecting their right to change their mind and ability to withdraw from participating without any penalty, (c) informing individuals of any added information that could have emerged during the research and could have altered risk and benefits of participation, and (d) informing participants what was learned from the research (Mills & Gay, 2019).

Several safeguards were used to further protect participant rights. All research participants were treated per the American Psychological Association standards and Seattle University Institutional Review Board standards. We also obtained ethics approval from the International Review Board of Seattle University before initiating participant recruitment and selection. Participants were provided written documentation of the purpose of the study, any potential risks and discomforts, benefits associated with the research, right to withdraw from participation, right to confidentiality, and questions about the research. Additionally, we obtained a signed consent form from each participant and each gatekeeper organization.

Timeline

The research spanned 15 months, from May 2020 to July 2021. The first phase of the process took about 2 months and included operationalizing the research problem and identifying and meeting with the research community partner, King County Department of Community and Human Services. This phase was followed by a full proposal development process, which took another 4 months and included developing clear research questions, a literature review, a detailed

data collection design, and seeking Institutional Review Board approval (see Appendix F). The data collection process, including mobilizing study participants and actually conducting focus group interviews, began in May 2021; this phase took another 1.5 months. Finally, data analysis and report writing took another month.

Summary

In this chapter, we described the study's methodological design. Our research approach was a qualitative method design with participants from King County, Washington who met outlined criteria necessary to participate. We also described specific data collection methods of focus group interviews in detail.

Data collection was based on instrumentation adapted from Preston et al. (2011) and Enekwe (2016). We analyzed collected data using a triangulation approach to answer research questions addressing the relationship between refugees and asylees and housing services programming available in King County, Washington from the perspective of individuals employed with housing organizations. We identified and described measures of quality through positionality, credibility, dependability, and transferability. Finally, we identified controls for bias, delimitations, and limitations of this study. This study provided an opportunity to further the research base and to make recommendations to improve current and future program accessibility.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative emancipatory research was to examine lived experiences of refugees and asylees in accessing housing through the perspective of individuals employed by organizations providing housing information and services in King County, Washington. It further sought to identify existing initiatives resettlement organizations affiliated with the King County Department of Community and Human Services had available to assist in securing housing and mitigating homelessness in the refugee and asylee population. The first three chapters of this dissertation presented an introduction to the problem, a review of the literature surrounding the topic, and an exploration of the emancipatory case study methodology used for this study.

This chapter presents results of this emancipatory case study. Discussion topics include (a) a summary of the research design, (b) an overview of the study settings, (c) an overview of participant profiles, and (d) study findings.

This chapter presents results that addressed the following research questions:

- Research Question 1: From the perspective of individuals employed by organizations providing housing and information services, what are perceived lived experiences of refugees and asylees in the United States in accessing information for housing services in King County?
- Research Question 2: From the perspective of individuals employed by organizations providing information and services, how do lived experiences of refugees and asylees impact their ability to access housing services and opportunities for integration in the United States?
- Research Question 3: What housing programs and services are most effective for reaching refugees and asylees in King County, Washington?

Summary of the Research Design

This study aimed to explore lived experiences of refugees and asylees in accessing housing information and services from the perspective of employees through an emancipatory research design. Data were collected from individuals working in King County, Washington. Two data collection instruments were employed in the study.

Data Collection Process

This section describes the process used to collect qualitative data in support of the emancipatory case study. Data were drawn from semistructured focus group interviews with 10 participants. Researchers sent a demographic survey to individuals who met inclusion criteria. These criteria included individuals who were (a) working full time or volunteering in an organization providing housing resettlement services to refugees and asylees in King County, Washington; (b) employed with the organization for a minimum of 2 consecutive years (c) employed in a program staff role providing direct housing services; and (d) were 18 years or older at the time of the study.

Individuals employed in organizations providing services to refugees and asylees were recruited using purposive–convenience sampling methods. We contacted participating individuals employed by organizations based on (a) willingness to participate in the research, (b) organizational permission to participate, and (c) accessibility of employees (Enekwe, 2016). We sent an email containing a brief explanation of the study to potential participants to begin the recruitment process. After participants acknowledged interest in participating, we sent a follow-up email with a demographic questionnaire and a Seattle University Institutional Review Board informed consent form (see Appendix D) to determine alignment with the study's inclusion criteria. The email also offered a list of available dates for focus group interviews.

Data Collection Instruments

Two instruments were employed in the research study for data collection. The first instrument was a brief survey to determine participant eligibility based on inclusion criteria. The second method for qualitative data collection was semistructured focus groups. These focus groups included individuals who worked with refugees and asylees in providing housing in King County. Participant roles in housing ranged broadly across the resettlement industry. For example, one individual was a resettlement agent and another was an apartment site manager. We established a focus group protocol (see Appendix E) and used it through each focus group. We then analyzed responses from the focus groups for themes related to the research questions.

Data Analysis

As detailed in Chapter 3, all collected data from each focus group were coded into appropriate sections and organized by common themes. The objective of this process was to capture experiences of refugees and asylees as they related to accessing housing services and information from resettlement organizations in King County, Washington. Refugee and asylee experiences were captured from the perspective of resettlement and housing employee experiences. Employees shared about the provision of housing information and services to refugees and asylees. All data collected from focus group recordings were transcribed and checked for accuracy by multiple researcher review and were cross coded. We gathered general ideas and meanings of shared experiences from an initial review of data collected through focus groups (Creswell, 2014).

We each reviewed and transcribed data individually, followed by verification from each of the other research team members, for accuracy (Stoecker, 2012). We then coded focus group transcripts, which were transcribed using Otter software, for further data analysis.

Applying persistent observation, we used transcribed data to develop codes, concepts, and core categories to examine characteristics of the data. We then continuously read and reread the data, analyzed them further, and theorized to make relevant revisions to emerging themes and concepts accordingly. Emerging codes, concepts, and core categories were then recoded and relabeled, and we studied data until the final theory provided intended depth of insight (Creswell, 2014). This process resulted in final categorical themes developed for each code.

Study Setting

This emancipatory case study was conducted in King County, Washington, in the Pacific Northwest area of the United States. In 2019, there were approximately 1,950 refugees and 484 individuals granted asylum in the state (Baugh, 2020; Krogstad, 2019). There were also approximately 113 organizations located in King County providing resettlement services, including housing. The primary organizations operating in King County included Jewish Family Service of Greater Seattle, World Relief Seattle, Diocese of Olympia, International Rescue Committee, Refugee Women's Alliance, Lutheran Community Services Northwest, and the Eastside Refugee and Immigrant Coalition.

Study Participants

Study participants were individuals employed with organizations providing housing services and information for refugees and asylees in King County, Washington (see Table 2). The organizations included an international resettlement agency, a local resettlement agency, a local organization providing wrap-around services, and a nonprofit affordable housing provider. An alphabetical letter was assigned to each participant to protect their identity, and a total of 10 participants were assigned letters A through J.

Table 2. Participant Profiles

Pseudonym	Organization Type	Role Type	Years of Experience	Immigration Identity
Participant A	International resettlement agency	Caseworker	2	-
Participant B	International resettlement agency	Program coordinator	5	-
Participant C	International resettlement agency	Resettlement coordinator	3	-
Participant D	Nonprofit affordable housing provider	Housing services	11	Refugee
Participant E	Local resettlement agency	Resettlement coordinator	3	Immigrant
Participant F	Local organization providing wrap-around services	Housing coordinator	6	-
Participant G	Nonprofit affordable housing provider	Site manager	12	-
Participant H	Nonprofit affordable housing provider	Site manager	2	-
Participant I	Nonprofit affordable housing provider	Housing services	15	Refugee
Participant J	Nonprofit affordable housing provider	Resident services	7	-

At the time of the focus group interview, Participant A had been employed for 2 years at an international resettlement agency. During this time, they worked as a refugee resettlement caseworker, primarily helping clients get settled into their new homes upon arrival and through the resettlement period.

At the time of the focus group interview, Participant B had been employed for 5 years working at an international resettlement agency. They initially worked as a resettlement caseworker, and then as a coordinator, for a federally funded employment program providing housing services.

Participant C had been employed for 3 years at an international resettlement agency, initially as a housing coordinator. At the time of the focus group interview, they were working as a resettlement coordinator.

At the time of the focus group interview, Participant D had been employed with a nonprofit affordable housing provider for 5 years. They worked with refugees and asylees for 11 years in various roles in housing and housing services. Participant D identified as a refugee.

At the time of the focus group interview, Participant E had been working with a local resettlement agency for 3 years. They also served as a prearrival service coordinator, directly working with refugees for housing support. Participant E identified as an immigrant, but not as a refugee or asylee.

At the time of the focus group interview, Participant F had been employed for 3 years as a senior housing coordinator with a local organization and had a total of 6 years of experience working with refugee and asylee populations. Although the organization was not a resettlement agency directly, it provided wrap-around services to the refugee population in King County, Washington. Wrap-around services included services that supported integration and self-sufficiency in the resettlement process, such as English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, employment and job training, and childcare support.

At the time of the focus group interview, Participant G had a total of 12 years of experience in various housing programs. They had most recently been employed as a site manager of housing properties for low-income residents at a nonprofit affordable housing provider.

At the time of the focus group interview, Participant H had been employed for 2 years as a building site manager with a nonprofit affordable housing provider. They had worked with affordable housing initiatives for 11 years.

At the time of the focus group interview, Participant I had worked for 1 year as a resident services coordinator with a nonprofit affordable housing provider. They had 15 years of

experience in housing services, including experience with the Seattle Housing Authority. Participant I identified as a refugee.

At the time of the focus group interview, Participant J had worked with a nonprofit affordable housing provider for 7 years and was serving as a director of residence services. Prior to housing services, they worked for the Office of Refugees with the Department of Health.

Participant Demographic Characteristics

After the established recruitment period, no individuals from the primary population of refugees and asylees were successfully recruited for participation. From the secondary population, 10 individuals employed by organizations providing housing information and services in partnership with King County Department of Community and Human Services were eligible and volunteered to participate in this study. We used purposive–convenience sampling with a targeted sample size of 10 or more individuals employed by organizations providing housing services to refugees and asylees. The individuals' tenure in providing services and information for refugees and asylees ranged from a minimum of 2 years to a maximum of 15 years, with an average tenure of 6.5 years. Although no specific identifying data were collected from researcher observations, there was a wide variety of diverse expressions of identity representing a range of lived experiences. Additionally, several participants came to the United States under refugee, asylum seeker, or immigrant status.

Findings

After reviewing collected data from focus groups, we categorized findings based on the research questions. In this section, we describe common themes that emerged as they correlate to each research question.

Research Question 1 – Overview of Themes

Research Question 1 asked: From the perspective of individuals employed by organizations providing housing and information services, what are perceived lived experiences of refugees and asylees in the United States in accessing information for housing services in King County?

Following an emancipatory case study approach, we acknowledged refugee and asylee participation in the study is minimal. Several factors contributed to this limitation and are discussed in the discussion section of this paper. Participants in this study included several immigrants and refugees. We incorporated these individuals' experiences into data collection and analysis for a broader perspective of lived experiences of refugees and asylees in King County.

The most frequently emerging themes included (a) a need for affordable housing; (b) a need for education, including English and ESL; (c) difficulty in navigating new systems and communities; and (d) identification of many systemic barriers refugees and asylees face, including identity bias, importance of family reunification, policy and policy changes, a push for empowerment, and the role of cross-sector collaborations.

Affordable Housing. The most commonly mentioned theme throughout the focus groups was affordable housing for refugees and asylees. Participants indicated housing affordability was a challenge for the general population in Seattle, which has been compounded for refugees and asylees. Overall housing affordability, supply of affordable housing, strategies used by refugees and asylees for affordability, and long-term affordable housing were included in the discussion of lived experiences around affordable housing. Participants primarily discussed affordable housing for refugees and asylees as a need not being fully met. Participant C described:

> There's just such a high need for affordable housing for everyone in this area, and so there's a small group of affordable housing units, and then everyone is trying to come in and get them. And then on top of that, I think adding the challenges that our participants face of not really, not speaking the language, not knowing how to navigate the housing system, not having access to a computer to be able to submit an application for yourself.

Participant F further described housing affordability, sharing "Oftentimes, what we're seeing is that, because of the lack of affordable housing, families and individuals when they first arrive are placed in permanent housing that are not necessarily affordable, and so they're not able to sustain their housing." Participant J further shared:

> And so, coupled with that, the depth of affordability of affordable housing. Even our two-bedroom units can be $1,600 a month or even more in some cases, which is affordable relative to like Seattle for a two bedroom. But, you still need to have a pretty decent income, and you all know, if you have a family, you almost certainly need two incomes in the household.

Participants indicated housing was the foundation for resettlement and integration. For example, Participant A stated:

> Having a safe and stable environment is a huge factor in just how well a family or an individual can resettle. Do they have a place that can feel like it is their own and is it relatively safe and secure?

Participant D further claimed, "There is a need for a roof over their head before they can do anything else, and housing is really an essential first step for every newly arrived refugees and asylees."

Even in housing access and affordability, the realities and assistance for an individual identified as an asylee have been vastly different from those identified as a refugee. Participant B explained:

> There really is no requirement from the government, in any way, shape, or form, for us to provide housing for asylees, unless they are enrolled in the program that I coordinate, which is an employment program; it's not a housing program. That kind of touches on a separate soapbox I have of putting employment before housing when we say housing first, housing first. But in reality, our programs are structured to prioritize employment over housing.

Participant B further described the affordable housing experience for asylees:

> Most of the asylees we're working with are coming through the defensive process and are single. In the past maybe 2 or 3 years . . . for cost reasons we were putting asylees, maybe four people to a two bedroom and having adults share rooms. We just realized that that was just not working for asylees, in terms of mental health, and in terms of conflict mitigation. So, recognizing the need for definitely a private space.

Participants also described strategies refugees and asylees used for obtaining affordable housing. Participant I expressed:

> Some of them may come in and then may live in their sponsor's house or something temporarily, and then they get a job and then lack housing. I know that is a temporary thing that they may rent that house. Or sharing room, because I know that for the Asian culture, they have a lot of people that own their houses and then people sharing the room, so the cost is much lower, like $500 or $400 and including utilities and everything. So, I know that a lot of, many immigrants now, or the refugee, that they might use that room

> for their temporary housing. And it's pretty affordable to them, rather than just having a job and getting the information from the family and stuff that might help in their transition so that they actually are able to settle in.

Participant D stated:

> Most of them when they arrived, I would say, have a friend who came from the same refugee camp. And they're staying with them for a couple months until they find like a good job, housing, that they can move into.

Throughout the discussions, long-term challenges of affordable housing also surfaced. Participant I disclosed:

> Being a refugee, well, I'm sure that everyone has a dream to be a homeowner. I believe that is going to be their long-term goal. Somebody gets very small stuff in a very short time to become a homeowner; some of them they take much longer. So, it's based on a lot of factors. But, I know that of course in my head, trying to get employment and they even work harder than a normal person than they do on two jobs, or three jobs, longtime or overtime in order to save more money for the expensive housing. They also live together. So, they rather pick a house, you know, or another room, so they can share with each other in a living room in an extended family.

However, many challenges prevent refugees and asylees from obtaining long-term, affordable housing. Many participants highlighted this challenge. Participant E summarized:

> I would say that for the long term, there are chances that people get connected with affordable housing. Because even if they are employed, their income will not be as much as the other people are receiving because they have been living here for a longer time. A big portion of their income will go to their housing, apartment, payment, or whatever.

Participant D described:

> As they stay longer, this family size increases and is a challenge for a lot of housing, especially apartments in our area. The max is three-bedroom apartment, and they will have to rent a home that is really expensive outside where they can afford.

Participant H clarified:

> And now, some years later they have three or four children, and they need a larger space, and I just don't have any units available. And they'd like to stay in the area because of going to school, etc. So having the capacity for larger apartments that are available, there just aren't that many of them.

Participant C further recounted:

> We had a case where a family moved into a two-bedroom because they were a family of five. They had older children that were overseas and then 6 months later were able to join them, which is awesome, but then running into the issue of the housing that they are living in is now too small for that family size. Then asking, will the apartment let them move? They can't break their lease and so then, a family having to be split up with now those older children have to move to their own separate apartment and then this family is having two different housing costs to pay for.

Education. All participants defined education as a challenge and a need for individuals newly arriving in the United States. The concept of education was broad in range and included formal education, skill development for employment opportunities, and learning ESL. Additionally, participants mentioned learning tenant rights and cultural orientation in relation to education. Generally, there was a sense both education and English language learning were necessary for increased wages, making housing more affordable. Eight out of 10 participants

specifically mentioned learning English or taking ESL classes as a priority for individuals arriving in the United States. Participant D described the need as "able to get housing for like 6 months to 2 years so that they can work on their training or ESL and get better and find a good job so that you can afford long-term housing." Participant A further explained, "Our families have situations where they do have access to that, seeing, like maybe a higher rate of participation and English classes are likely to get a job and just sort of adjusting." Participant I described education in terms of their experience, saying "A lot of our refugees are not able to secure employment, you know, because they can't understand basic instruction or are not able to communicate and; therefore, you know it's harder for them to access employment." Participant I continued describing their experience with a client, and shared:

> So, in order to get a better job, he had to understand English, so he completed his GED. He had to get a high school education in order to get a better job and better pay. I think education is one way to improve their skills to have a better life.

The second component of education discussed by half of participants was the idea of cultural orientation. Participant F detailed cultural orientation:

> Talking about, you know, like how things are different here. If we look around there's so many different cultures around us, right? But then, maybe like teaching, they say things like what's appropriate and what's not appropriate. Again, things that are maybe common to us, who's lived here for a while, might not be common to, you know, a newcomer.

Participant H further described cultural orientation with new housing:

> Learning how the society works is really important if you're coming from a place where the culture is very different. You know, how do you connect with a school, how do you find a vehicle, how do you get on a bus.

Participant C mentioned cultural orientation as "extremely helpful in explaining a wide variety of things from the role the organization is going to play in your resettlement process to health and safety things if there's an emergency." However, Participant C further cautioned about cultural orientation in organizations:

> Just because you're able to check most of the boxes on a file or just because you got 11 out of 11 on the quiz that was given, does not mean that you fully understand everything that goes into your new life in America.

Participant A further called on this point, stating "I would say that is sort of one and done class time periods and so as far as I know, not a lot of written materials to take home from that." Participant E also offered an idea, sharing "It is a great idea for the clients, or for the refugees, to have cultural orientations. I think for the authorities here it's also important to introduce people who are new and their culture."

In addition to the forms of education mentioned previously, two other concepts emerged about education. The first is tenant rights, which Participant A explained as:

> Continuing to make sure that they're educated in terms of at least their rights in terms of housing, but just understanding what their rights are, depending on what the timing situation is, the eviction moratorium this past year, things like that. What the apartment can and can't do.

The second concept mentioned was financial literacy. Though the ramifications of this are detailed in a later theme, Participant C described their program, sharing:

> As part of the financial literacy curriculum that they've developed over time is like a little bit of an intro level of homeownership, like how long is it going to take, what are the key tenets of it, what is credit, how are we going to build credit, that kind of thing.

System Navigation. Related to education, and more specifically related to cultural orientation, the idea of navigating systems and communities recurred throughout discussions. Participant A posited refugees and asylees were "trying to navigate this entirely new culture, this new place, new language, new almost everything." Participant A continued, saying "I think newcomers to our area in providing information to being in the knowledge of what's going on and how to navigate things while you're learning" as something refugees and asylees could benefit from. Participants D and H echoed this sentiment multiple times throughout the focus group. Participant H recognized "it's just a matter of having someone to talk to, and that could be an agency, or a church or social group or something else. Just to have someone that you talk to who understands where you're coming from."

An essential and immediate concept many participants mentioned was learning how to navigate systems for housing and, simultaneously, navigating systems surrounding them, such as food and healthcare. Participant C described a situation they frequently observed, sharing:

> Maybe your relative speaks really good English but they're not always with you or they have a job and so they can't go to the apartment office with you to ask like, hey, do you have availability? And so, on top of facing coming into a system that everyone is facing, the issue of trying to find a place that's affordable, that's available right now, then adding those extra challenges.

Participant J also identified these experiences as very common:

> I would say, you know, unless someone is a pretty proficient English speaker, frankly, they will need a substantial amount of hands-on assistance from like a case management provider in order to just get through our application process, which is extremely document and administrative heavy because of how affordable housing is regulated. So,

> you need someone who has like, you need direct assistance from someone who speaks English and has a decent level of administrative skill to access affordable housing.

Other participants noted how systems around housing are also difficult to navigate. Participant I shared a personal experience, stating:

> I remember looking for an apartment and when I did go to a grocery store and pick up some basic things like rice, chicken, salad, oil, you know, some several basic items. So, the next day we just like getting them on the kitchen and took them to the [Chinese Information and Service Center], and they are helping them to access Medicaid.

Participant D further detailed, “They would need transportation to these place that they need to get to—library for appointment, scheduling appointments for their kids.” Participant D also explained the financial aspects of navigating new systems:

> They have rental assistance through all these resettlement agencies but all that they have is money to buy food and other things, but these going to big stuff that they need to pay off. Everything in their home, literally essential things inside their home, is also important and we also try to find things that are free or low cost for them that they can settle in and call it home.

Barriers. The concept of barriers was common throughout all focus groups, with six of 10 participants identifying barriers as part of lived experiences of refugees and asylees. As it specifically relates to accessing housing information and services, participants identified barriers to processes and procedures, barriers to family reunification, and discrimination issues. Participant G highlighted their experience, sharing:

> Once we communicate with them, that's our role to get that process started like immediately. Most of the time we have, we can get all the paperwork we need, it's a lot of paperwork, but as long as we stay on top of it.

Participant H further illustrated barriers, sharing:

> I still have language issues with some of my residents, where we share very little of the same language. And that is, especially when it comes to paperwork. I mean, initially, of course, being able to communicate about an application about what's available to screen someone for a possible apartment.

From the resettlement agency perspective, Participant A claimed:

> I'd say, even just that initial getting into housing of one working with participants to try to expedite the process of getting your documents as soon as possible is very long at times especially in asylees in particular. I would say the times to get social security cards even set up with food cash benefits can take months, sometimes, especially now, but it could take a while. So, uncovering that understanding that I mean immigrants don't have a rental history here in the U.S. and don't have credit histories and some of that is another barrier, obviously not being employed in that whole, like, even employment process being delayed because of documents and so it just kind of compiles on to each other to extend accessibility or inaccessibility.

Participant E explicitly detailed the implications of processing delays, sharing:

> Once we pick them up either we should take them to their apartment or take them to a hotel or Airbnb. Most of the time if we don't have the funds to provide your hotel, that comes from the resettlement money. And then there was a small portion of money left for them to pay for the application fee and the deposits and all the other fees.

Participant E continued, sharing:

> The landlord wants our clients to be actually in the country, and be eligible to sign their papers, and then they start the process of the application, which may take 1 week or 2 weeks. During this period is where we face a problem, because we don't have places for these people to have them live.

Another barrier refugees and asylees face is family reunification. This is related to application processing procedures. Participant C expounded:

> Recently, some phone calls of someone knowing that their family is coming, and they've been working for a while, and wanting to get them get an apartment before their family gets here so that they have a place for their family to go when they pick them up from the airport. And apartments not always working within that of like well, your wife has to be here to sign the lease agreement, and not understanding that she can't because she's just not here yet but she will be, but I need a place for her to live when she first gets here.

Participant G described another scenario they see as preventing family reunification, stating:

> I've ran into situations where there's a period of 6 months where, let's say someone comes over. And, you know, wants to provide for the family and the like, essentially. But if they do that and sign the lease, there's a 6-month waiting period for anyone to join that household.

In addition to process and procedure barriers, refugees and asylees also faced discrimination across many facets of their identity. Participant E briefly noted "we hear that our clients are facing discriminations; they're not being served by the landlord because of their refugee status." Participant C reported:

> Having to walk into an apartment office, and the landlord is already showing bias against you because they can tell you are from another country. And not being willing to work with you because your English might not be as strong as the average person that they're working with. . . . You can clearly tell a landlord is being prejudiced against a participant because of them being from another country originally and, that is huge and very frustrating, and this adds on to the layers of issues that they're running into.

Bias and discrimination occur on a systemic level as well. Specifically citing ableism, Participant B depicted the impacts of discrimination:

> Let's say, they now have a medical condition that would prohibit them from working and are no longer able to be on the program, who is going to pay the rent? This agreement that we have with the apartment is no longer valid. We are no longer required to pay the rent.

Participant C recounted a similar experience with a client, sharing:

> There was an asylee that did not have any family in the area but was clearly struggling with some pretty severe mental health challenges and maybe some more developmental delays in certain situations of being considered disabled, and trying to see if we could get them enrolled on a program in order to help them. And I think that was early on one of the big times that I saw a huge gap of just the governmental programs that we have and the capacity that we have within our staff does not allow for people that have learning disabilities or any sort of disability to, as a single individual, to be enrolled in a program and provided with housing assistance. Because this person still needed a place to stay, but we could not help them because they wouldn't be able to find a job right away.

Research Question 2 – Overview of Themes

Research Question 2 asked: From the perspective of individuals employed by organizations providing housing information and services, how do lived experiences of refugees and asylees impact their ability to access housing services and opportunities for integration in the United States?

As previously indicated, following an emancipatory case study approach, we acknowledged refugee and asylee participation in this study was minimal. Employees who worked to provide housing services and information to refugees and asylees had worked with several immigrants and refugees. The interaction between employees and clients provided insight into the perceived experiences in accessing housing services and opportunities for integration in the United States.

Answers to focus group interview questions provided information related to Research Question 2. These questions and answers addressed immediate and long-term housing needs and overall needs for refugees and asylees from the perspective of employees in organizations providing housing and information services. This examination included an exploration of gaps in housing and additional services.

When specifically considering immediate housing needs and overall needs for refugees and asylees, many themes emerged. These themes included (a) access to affordable housing, (b) access to education, (c) barriers as experienced by organizations and clients, (d) access to services, and (e) navigation of legal, educational, and community systems.

When specifically considering long-term housing needs and overall needs for refugees and asylees, many themes emerged. Main themes included (a) access to services and wrap-

around services; (b) affordable housing; (c) barriers related to housing size need and availability; and (d) access to education, navigation of systems, and skill development for empowerment.

When specifically considering gaps in housing service provisions and how gaps impact refugee and asylee access to housing information and services, several themes emerged. These themes included (a) protocol related to policy and practice, (b) screening challenges faced in securing housing, (c) identity bias in host community members and housing providers, and (d) limited housing supply.

Participants shared their perceptions of immediate and long-term housing needs and overall needs of refugees and asylees. They also shared their perceptions of what gaps or barriers refugees and asylees experienced accessing housing services and information. Participant A described their experience and outlined themes by stating:

> I would say also just in terms of having a safe and stable environment is a huge factor in just how well a family or an individual can resettle. Do they have a place that it can feel like is their own, it's relatively safe and secure? And it's trying to navigate this entirely new culture, this new place, new language, new almost everything? And so, I think working with our students and families have situations where they do have access to that, seeing, like, maybe a higher rate of participation and English classes are likely to get a job and just sort of adjusting.

Impact on Immediate Housing and Overall Needs. When considering immediate housing and overall needs, access to additional services was a primary theme that emerged. Additional services described by participants included childcare, employment services, housing assistance, language services, medical coverage services, mental health services, rental assistance, technology access, transportation services, and overall wrap-around services. Of the

services identified by individuals employed in organizations providing housing services and information as immediate and long-term housing and overall needs, the most frequently mentioned services included employment services, technology access, and language services. Participant F provided an overview of additional services needed by newcomers, sharing:

> Basic food. Medicaid health care, access to health care providers. ESL classes, cultural orientation, . . . access to childcare, as well as mental and behavioral health. Because oftentimes you know we have families that have been traumatized. They come here and they still have all that [posttraumatic stress disorder], and they're not able to overcome. And so that gets in the way of being able to see yourself beyond that right to become self-sufficient. So having access to mental and behavioral health. Even community access, trying to connect families with the community that they originate with, so that they have more resources that can help them navigate into their new country.

Employment services were the most commonly mentioned service when participants considered additional services. Employment services encompassed areas such as job placements, access to higher-paying jobs, job support, and access to employment opportunities. Organizations focused on resettlement efforts did offer employment services, as highlighted by Participant E, who stated:

> We have the opportunity to provide interpretation for them to connect them with their resources, for example, employment, finding a job for them. We also have the employment team that are looking at the market, finding jobs for them. And in the meantime, even while they're seeking a job, they're participating in our employment program.

Participant F identified the importance of employment to sustain housing, sharing:

> I would say, more affordable housing and employment. Because it's hard to sustain your housing if you don't have any, any employment. So, I think that that goes hand in hand. . . . In terms of employment due to language barrier, a lot of our refugees are not able to secure employment because they can't understand basic instruction or are not able to communicate. Therefore, you know it's harder for them to access employment. And so, if you don't have employment, I mean you don't have to have finances to pay your bills or become self-sufficient.

Participant F continued to discuss how increases in temporary housing would influence employment, sharing "While they're trying to situate in their new country, learn some kind of skills or employment skills, a skill set that would help them look for more permanent housing that they can afford." Participant J highlighted the need for higher paying jobs and employment services to attain these higher wages, along with other needs such as technology and housing unit sizes. Participant J stated:

> I would echo that. I mean we see even within our own organization that people who don't have strong English are able to access our highlighted higher paying roles internally. I think that's true broadly throughout the county is like, there are jobs that you can get but it tends to be very low on the wage scale. And so, coupled with that it's like the depth of affordability of affordable housing. So, even like our two-bedroom units can be, you know $1,600 a month or even more in some cases, which is affordable relative to Seattle for a two bedroom, but you still need to have a pretty decent income. And you all know, if you have a family, you almost certainly need two incomes in the household. Area income—probably I would say, again, internet access is another part of that. But fundamentally, I think it's like, long term, higher paying jobs, and more deeply

> affordable housing units or vouchers are great too. We tend to see that when people have a decent income and are in one of our units, we need very little assistance, frankly; but, usually they've overcome other barriers. And at that point, all is well.

Technology access was the second most commonly mentioned service when participants considered additional services. Technology access encompassed areas such as access to internet services, technological equipment, and training on how to use technological equipment and the internet. Participant J continued to highlight technology as part of opportunity for integration by stating, "There's a lot of resources, especially on housing, they are not literally advertised, or accessible, in different languages right now. Internet access could be another one I would add too." Participant H identified technology as a long-term need for providing an opportunity for integration, sharing:

> What else, for those long-term needs? Well, technology, for one thing, computers or laptops something some ways to access the internet. And I guess that would include some training to use it just to make sure, you know, there are some folks who just are not familiar with technology or who are not doing that; but, that would be a big thing going forward.

Language services was the third most commonly mentioned service when participants considered additional services. Language services related mainly to access to language interpretation. Participant H described language issues that tended to arise when working with clients, stating:

> I think language would be important. I still have language issues with some of my residents, where we read text, they're very little of the same language. And that is, especially when it comes to paperwork. I mean, initially, of course, being able to

> communicate about an application about what's available to screen someone for possible apartment. That, that's key. So having access to the language sort of makes a lot of other things available.

Participant J reiterated the importance of access to language services and interpretation, stating "I would definitely second access to language services and interpretation."

Impact on Long-Term Housing Needs and Overall Needs. When considering long-term housing needs and overall needs, in addition to affordable housing and access to services, a couple of other themes emerged. These themes included access to education and systems navigation.

Education. Participants described several themes relating to education, including (a) education related to language, specifically English language learning; (b) access to education in the community school system; (c) cultural orientation; (d) legal rights for refugees and asylees and understanding tenant rights; (e) education for skill development related to employment; (f) education for skill development for financial literacy; and (g) educational access overall.

Employees in organizations providing housing services and information identified several areas related to education as long-term overall needs. The areas most frequently mentioned were (a) education related to English language learning, (b) access to education in the community school system, and (c) cultural orientation. Education for English language learning was most commonly mentioned when participants considered education and encompassed availability and access to English language learning classes. Similarly, Participant H shared experiences with language challenges, stating "I think language would be important. I still have language issues with some of my residents."

Access to education in the community was the second most mentioned area when participants considered education and encompassed areas such as access to schools for children and adult learners. Participant I highlighted experiences related to refugee access to education for integration, stating:

> I think education, because when I came to America with my whole family . . . in order to get a better job, we had to understand English. Had to get a high school education in order to get a better job and better pay. I think education is one way to improve skills to have a better life.

Cultural orientation was the third most frequently mentioned area when participants considered education. Cultural orientation encompassed learning the culture of the United States and local host communities. Participant H shared:

> You know, I put myself in the shoes of refugees, and think, what would I want if I moved to another country where the culture was very, perhaps, very different? I would want to know there was someone there that I could meet with who I can say, why do these people and these new people I'm living with, why do they do this, how do you work this but how do you find this? So, just having social interaction with people from a familiar culture in America, I think would be important. Finding a language group or a church, or a social club, or something where you were a refugee can ask questions, you know, that it might be hard to ask your building manager.

Navigation. Themes related to system navigation included navigating different organizations in the community, connecting to food access, building credit, and navigating the legal system. Workers in organizations providing housing services and information identified several areas related to navigation as immediate housing and overall needs. The areas most

frequently mentioned were navigating systems in the community and connecting to food access. Navigating systems in the community encompassed school enrollment for children, housing systems, navigating a new culture, and how to schedule appointments for self and family members. Participant D described their experiences, sharing:

> I work a lot with families who have young children and schooling transportation is a big issue as well. For a new society, when they first meet when they come to any site, say that when they come to a new country, there is a need for a roof over their head before they can do anything else, and housing is really essential first step for every newly arrived refugee and asylee and immigrants. And they wouldn't need transportation to go to these places that they need to get to, making library appointment, scheduling appointments for their kids, is a challenge as [Participant H] mentioned, languages that we work with. . . . And so, I mainly work with families, so I make that schooling and transportation is a big issue that basis for the newly arrived refugees and asylees.

Participant E also discussed topics related to navigation, sharing:

> In connection with these people and giving them information about resettlement agencies and how they are working with them in the community, . . . we have programs where we are taking out these people in the city, showing them how to use the bus, and how to communicate with your landlord. We have housing orientation with our clients, and we also ask them to give them information about how the housing system is working, how they should pay their rent the month they should pay their rent.

Connecting to food access was the second most commonly mentioned area when participants considered system navigation. Food access encompassed areas such as connection to

grocery stores, culturally appropriate food options, and affordability of food items. Participant J described food access in the community, sharing:

> Access to community, absolutely trust and care. Then, yeah, I don't know but seems a lot of the same things other people need: affordable transportation, affordable childcare. Healthy places to live. Yeah, culturally appropriate food. But, again, that's really more, I feel like that's kind of part of being in a community.

Housing Only: Immediate and Long Term. When participants considered immediate and long-term housing needs, access to affordable housing and identified barriers were primary themes. Participant C provided an overview of common themes of challenges newcomers face that can impact their experience in accessing housing, sharing:

> As housing coordinator, I saw just there's such a high need for affordable housing for everyone in this area and so, it's like, there's a small group of affordable housing units, and then everyone is trying to come in and get them. And then on top of that, I think adding the challenges that our participants paint the face of, not really, not speaking the language, not knowing how to navigate the housing system, not having access to a computer to be able to submit an application for yourself. Maybe your relative speaks really good English, but they're not always with you or they have a job and so they can't go to the apartment office with you to ask like, hey, do you have availability? And so, on top of coming into a system that everyone is facing the issue of trying to find a place that's affordable, that's available right now, then adding those extra challenges.

Affordable Housing. Themes related to affordable housing included access to affordable housing, shared housing, and the number of accessible, available, and affordable housing units.

When considering access to affordable housing and opportunities for integration, Participant D shared a success story, stating:

> We have, really, a bunch of successful stories where residents live in low and affordable housing and were able to become successful after getting jobs, many jobs, and go to school, and eventually move out because they bought a home.

In addition to an initial need for larger affordable housing units, there is also an ever-evolving need for housing size. Participant C shared:

> Recently there's been issues of family, like we had a case where a family moved into a two bedroom because they were a family of five and that's the size that they could fit into, and they had older siblings growing up with older children that were still overseas and then 6 months later were able to join them. Which is awesome, but then, running into the issue of the housing that they are living in is now too small for that family size, and then the issue of, well, will the apartment let them move? They can't break their lease. And so then, a family having to be split up with now those older children have to move to their own separate apartment, and then this family is having two different housing costs to pay for because the apartment can't move them to a larger unit or doesn't have one available. So, I think that's an issue I've also had, like recently some phone calls of someone knowing that their family is coming, and they've been working for a while, and wanting to get them a get an apartment before their family gets here so that they have a place where their family can go when they pick them up from the airport. And apartments not always working within that of like, well, your wife has to be here to sign the lease agreement and like, not understanding that like, well she can't, because she's just not here yet; but, she will be. But, I need a place for her to live when she first gets here. I

> think long term, especially if one person from a family is here and works with us and when we're family joins like running into those issues, is that kind of what you're yearning to get into for family.

Barriers. Access to translation and language services in general, access to translation and language services for completing paperwork and applications for housing and services, and size of housing units available were barriers for organizations and clients in housing access and information. Participant H described how language was a barrier for integration:

> Language. And that is, especially when it comes to paperwork. I mean, initially, of course, being able to communicate about an application about what's available to screen someone for possible apartment. That, that's key. So, having access to the language, sort of makes a lot of other things available.

Participant C further elaborated on how language barriers have impacted ability to access housing and information, sharing:

> Just having to walk into an apartment office, and the landlord is already showing bias against you because they can tell you are from another country. And not being willing to work with you because your English might not be as strong as the average person that they're working with. And that's something that I see not all the time, but it's just really frustrating when you can clearly tell a landlord is being prejudiced against a participant because of them being from another country originally, and that is huge and very frustrating.

Participant J highlighted the importance of a larger supply of affordable units to accommodate larger family sizes, both immediately and long-term as families grow. They stated, "I would say more large affordable units. I don't think they even need to be deeply affordable.

But also, more two and three [bedroom units] would be more appropriate." Participant H also highlighted the long-term impact of housing size needs when considering opportunities for integration, stating:

> Really long-term, longer-term issue for me that I'm running into in my building is families that immigrate here as small families, like, one or two children, and now, some years later they have three or four children, and they need larger space. And I just don't have any units available, and they'd like to stay in the area because of permissions or going to school, etc. So, having the capacity, like [Participant E] said, for larger, larger apartments that are available at all, there just aren't that many of them.

Additionally, Participant D discussed how housing size needs evolve as families grow with time, and echoed the need for larger affordable housing units, sharing:

> The long-term housing, really, is something that we can advocate for from the housing refugee housing office or something like that. And then, I've seen a lot of low-income housing. Families who get into a low-income housing and are stable enough to save and as [Participants H and D] mentioned, they stay longer the family size increases, and this is a challenge for a lot of housing, especially with apartments in our area. The max is a three-bedroom apartment. . . . With a four bedroom, the family won't be able to afford anything that is over four bedrooms; they will have to rent a home that is really expensive.

Participant D continued discussing how refugees and asylees find affordable housing, and how additional transitional housing options to support opportunities for integration would impact their experience, sharing:

> I hear a lot of residents, I asked them, you know, you know we candidate and asked [the residents] where they come from and how did they afford housing in this state? And most of [the residents] when they arrived have a friend who came from the same refugee camp. And, and they are staying with them for a couple of months until they find a good job, housing, that they can move into. So, what I was thinking, why couldn't we advocate for the state to [provide] zero housing or whatever housing authority for the county or Seattle area that the families want to settle, you know, the vouchers, and give them temporary housing? And then once they settle in, and they have a job, that they can afford their own place, they can move out and leave that place for the next family who arrived.

Housing Service Provision Gaps. When participants considered housing service provision gaps related to opportunities for integration, several primary themes emerged. These themes included (a) current policy and practice, (b) screening challenges faced by refugees and asylees, (c) bias in host communities and housing providers, and (d) limited housing supply.

Policy and Practice. Themes that related to current policy and practice surrounding housing services and information access included (a) eligibility and length of services, (b) impact of employment on eligibility, and (c) corporate housing provider participation and compliance requirements.

Participant B highlighted situations surrounding eligibility of services and how requirements for organizations have changed, impacting refugee and asylee housing experiences. They stated:

> In terms of that 6 month, like, hey we're gonna pay the rent for 6 months but run into some really huge problems when there is someone who has rented an apartment, under this agreement that [Participant C] has said to the apartment of like hey we're going to

> cover the rent for 6 months. If, for instance, that person becomes employed early, and for most of the employment programs, federal and state assistance stops a month after you start working. And so, for instance, if someone we say hey, we're going to be paying rent for 6 months but then someone gets a job at 2 months in, which is pretty early. And then, you know, after month 3, they're stuck paying their own bill and sometimes they can't make it, because the financial assistance provided by the programs has ended, but they're not quite making enough money, and so then there's this huge gap. Or if they were removed from the program for some other issue, let's say, they now have a medical condition that would prohibit them from working and are no longer able to be on the program. Who is going to pay the rent? This agreement that we have with the apartment is no longer valid. We are no longer required to pay the rent. And so that leaves huge issues.

Participant C highlighted service gaps associated with corporate partnerships for housing and the overlap of experiences with screening challenges faced by clients, which impacted their housing access. They shared:

> I think the gap between an apartment complex and especially, I think it's normally not like the direct landlord that you're working with that has issues, but normally a lot of the apartments in the area are no longer owned by a mom-and-pop apartment complex that's owned by those people that you're working with. A lot of them are owned by corporations, and those corporations have specific requirements, like having at least 6 months of rental history in the U.S., meeting a certain credit score, which are also in place to protect that corporation, and for individuals that are the average person that they're working with. Makes sense, but I would say the gap of just the lack of

> understanding of larger corporations and then trying to, you're trying to work within a system that wasn't created with the participants that you're working with in mind. So then, how do we navigate that to make it more of, it's just difficult if you think about it, very simple levels. We are providing minimum 3 months of rent secured for cases. Normally, the programs that they are on are providing almost up to 6 months of rent, which a lot of the times for participants, that's the length of the lease term that we are having them. So essentially, you're going to say us as an organization is guaranteeing that you will have rent paid for, and sometimes that's not enough to make three times the rent. So, I think that's another challenge of just that individual at the apartment is like yeah, I would love to rent to refugees, but the corporation that owns that apartment complex won't allow it, or it takes you a round of having to explain the situation and so it might take a little bit longer.

Screening Challenges. Participants described several themes related to screening challenges refugees and asylees faced in accessing housing services. These themes included (a) application requirements and how limited credit and rental history impact the process, and (b) criminal background checks.

Participant F discussed barriers refugees and asylees experienced in the screening process for accessing affordable housing, stating, "First barriers I want to say, lack of rental history and maybe credit score, lack of credit score. I think those are the two main things, in terms of accessing housing." Participant J echoed Participant F in highlighting experiences related to the screening process, sharing:

> Yeah, as far as our screening criteria goes, it would be lack of rental history, is the big one. Sometimes it's even that they have rental history and it's impossible to verify. I

> think, yeah, access to information about housing availability is one thing. And also, like, income, or having a housing voucher or ability to pay for housing, I guess in some. Yeah, like a voucher or some type or actual income.

Similarly, Participant G explained impacts of these screening challenges:

> So, I understand that frustration because a lot of times we just turn away people who, you know, have these clients like, ready to go. You know, they stabilize somewhat and just that reason we have to turn them away. So, I totally understand that is the obstacle in the process.

Limited Housing Supply. Participants described several themes related to limited housing supply for refugees and asylees. These themes included (a) limited availability of transitional housing; and (b) available, safe, and secure apartments. Participant H shared about the need for an increase in transitional housing options, stating:

> I do like the idea [Participant E] mentioned about having some sort of transitional housing, or a place where refugees could go for a short term, as they are looking for a place to rent for a longer term. That seems like that's a gap in the process of bringing people to this country is having a place that is safe, secure, basic, and then, you know, short term. And also, inexpensive or provided for free, short term.

Participant F also highlighted the lack of available affordable housing and discussed transitional housing, sharing:

> Access to more affordable housing would be great. But oftentimes, what we're seeing is that, because of the lack of affordable housing, families and individuals when they first arrive are placed in permanent housing that are not necessarily affordable, and so they're not able to sustain their housing. So, maybe looking into more transitional housing where

> they have at least like half a year or up to a year where they're paying 30% of their income while they're trying to situate in their new country, learn some kind of skills or employment skills, a skill set that would help them look for more permanent housing that they can afford.

Participant F continued, sharing:

> Transitional housing, I think I see a lot of benefits. I think that our refugees can benefit a lot out of it, because it takes a while for somebody, brand new to the country, to assimilate and learn a new culture and the language and all these other barriers along with that. So, that will give them a lot of time to settle in and become more self-sufficient and sustainable.

Research Question 3 – Overview of Themes

Research Question 3 asked: What housing programs and services are most effective for reaching refugees and asylees in King County, Washington?

As previously shared, we acknowledged refugee and asylee participation in this study was minimal. Employees who provided housing services and information to refugees and asylees worked with several immigrants and refugees. This interaction between employees and clients provided insight into the perceived lived experiences of refugees and asylees in accessing housing services and opportunities for integration in the United States. We analyzed for broader perspectives of lived experiences pertaining to the effectiveness of housing programs and housing services targeting refugees and asylees in King County.

Overall, the top three emerging themes included (a) provision of additional services surrounding housing; (b) supporting housing coordination; (c) facilitating cross-sector collaborations. Additional themes that emerged more closely related to Research Questions 1 and

2 are (d) education, including cultural orientation and ESL; (e) support for integration; (f) empowerment of refugees and asylees; (g) provision of temporary housing; (h) addressing technology access barriers; (i) housing policy and practice; (j) helping clients with system navigation; (k) funding; and (l) provision of immigrant support services.

Additional Services. The majority of participants (eight out of 10) shared their experiences in providing other housing services to refugees and asylees whom they have served in various organizations. Themes related to additional services included (a) direct housing assistance, (b) medical coverage, (c) childcare, (d) mental health support for asylees and refugees with posttraumatic stress disorder, (e) legal support, (f) employment services, (g) community connections, (h) education navigation, and (i) language services. Overall, the most common themes about additional services included access to medical coverage, ESL classes, and community connections for interaction with familiar social groups.

Individuals employed by organizations have been providing aid to refugee and asylee families by providing access to and coordinating referrals for medical and behavior health services and childcare assistance programs to reduce childcare costs and bills. Participant I shared:

> I think the most important thing from my past experience when working with that population . . . I know that they also need healthcare coverage, that would be very important for them. So, I think that would be good to help them to connect with the health care coverage, and also, other than that they will want to learn more English. So, there is community connection that we connect them with ESL classes or something, especially for the parents, for a new cultural class, so they would be more adapt to the new American culture for living here. I'm so grateful that having a resident service on

> site for housing, so we will be able to connect the residents with different community resources that they need, including the employment, health care coverage, say, Medicaid . . . and also connecting with the community. . . . Or, they may have their own church or something, you know, it'll help them to be connected with the community. There are resources out there to visit their own languages so they will be more comprehensive.

Some participants described employment, childcare, rental assistance, and mental health services as being key. From personal experience, Participant J shared:

> Broadly, we have a services program that's really geared towards addressing housing stability issues, so we knew at that time of connecting people with rental assistance through the pandemic. Well, we've always done that. That's always how we have been sort of update part of our eviction prevention work in connecting people with rental assistance, case management services, usually behavioral health case management services, which is something we're very frequently referring refugees or asylees to. We do a lot of work helping people get on, like childcare assistance programs to reduce the cost of childcare and identifying childcare. It's a big part of what we're doing in our family buildings and connecting people to other assistance programs that will help reduce their bills. We do a small amount of work, one on one with residents or those interested in new employment opportunities, and we have staff who work one on one with them to identify new jobs, build a resume, things like, set up an email.

Participant F disclosed, in addition to rental assistance, most families are connected to some employment opportunities and community resources:

> So, the few things I can think of right now are rental assistance. When families are trying to connect to some sort of employment or secure some kind of employment, and that

> comes with case management too. So, the case manager then will try to connect the families with employment, help them navigate through that employment services, and try to get them help through other maybe leveraging funding, reaching out to other external resources or even, you know, internally to see what other programs they might be eligible, so they can leverage funding until they are able to secure their housing.

Housing Coordination. Six of 10 participants listed different housing coordination services offered as part of what they attribute to successful resettlement of refugees and asylees. When considering all of the emerging themes for effective housing programs and services available for refugees and asylees, housing coordination was the second most commonly mentioned theme. Participants expressly referred to supporting communication with landlords, coordinating lease contract processes, coordinating host homes, coordinating provision of household goods and basic needs like furniture or cooking utensils, coordinating housing application processes, following up with families to submit required documentation, and rental assistance. Participant E described housing coordination as starting from scratch, to communicating to families, to finding an affordable apartment meeting client needs, sharing:

> Our activities with clients, or as a resettlement agency, as I mentioned, is starting from scratch. The people who are arriving, very brand new in the United States for the first time, we are getting in touch with them, and how we get in touch with them is because they are being assigned as cases for us. Then, we'll reach out to the family members to see if they have any family members here who can help; most of them they don't. Then, they're very dependable on us. The first thing we do is find an apartment for them here to live, and that's where my research with supporting these cases starts . . . because housing is, or finding an affordable apartment, or else it's very difficult, especially for the people

> who are brand new, they don't have any records, they don't have credit, they don't have incomes. This is the typical part that we are dealing with.

Most participants mentioned supporting refugee and asylee families with application processes, including clarifying expectations by providing language support services as part of housing coordination. For example, participant H stated:

> So, as a building manager, specifically I take applications and process applications. Then, once someone has been settled in an apartment, I coordinate with teammates to make sure that there are services available. . . . So, my primary interaction is to work with agencies that bring references and applicants to us, and then to complete that application process, and then to hand off follow up to our resident services coordinators and keep in touch with the family, of course, to make sure that they have access and language access to know what we're asking of them and that sort of thing.

Housing coordination included employees and organizations facilitating the coordination process for temporary host homes for refugees and asylees while also considering shared home preferences and criteria. This coordination occurs during host home–client matching, which includes organizing a housing orientation. Participant B shared their experience, stating:

> So, a host home is pretty easy to guess what that is. But, it is temporary housing, up to 2 weeks for most cases, but there are certain exceptions for extended stays. There are certain partnerships that we have with certain volunteers and certain host homes, which would allow longer term stays. So, a host home goes through our volunteer orientation, which includes training on cultural humility and refugee issues, immigration issues. It's pretty intense; 2 hours long initially. And then there's usually follow-up trainings for specific volunteer roles. There's also then a home visit from the host home coordinator or

> the volunteer coordinator to make sure that the house is stable, secure. They take notes, making sure that you know the host homes preferences are honored and recorded. So for instance, some households might not be comfortable with a single man in the house or they might have pets, and we know that sometimes people don't want to stay in a home with pets, and so that kind of thing is recorded and put into our database, or [Customer Relationship Management database], so that those matches can be made conscientiously. Then, upon entry into the host home, there is an orientation meeting between the person who's staying at the host homes and the hosts, and that is mediated by the host home coordinator.

Cross-Sector Collaborations. Six out of 10 participants shared experiences about different forms of cross-sector collaborations facilitated to help newly arrived asylees and refugees access housing information and services. Participants described cross-sector collaboration as being an effective way of resettling refugees and asylees. Considering cross-sector collaborations, participants referred to common themes, including facilitating community connections for other community services and resources, linking client families to access other income-restricted public housing, and other affordable housing programs. Other forms of cross-sector collaborations included referrals to other private providers to help with housing and rental assistance, prevention of evictions, and facilitating partnerships for long-term housing, including for Section 8 vouchers. In some of their shared experience, Participant J stated:

> In terms of accessing our housing, a lot of that is done through partnerships, specifically for asylees and refugees. For formal and informal partnerships, we have certainly set aside units that we will only fill through Muslim Housing Services for example, or Mary's Place, not explicitly serving that population. We have other formal agreements

> with the [Young Women's Christian Association], Wellspring Family Services. Those units tend to not turn over very quickly, so there's not a high volume of people getting into housing every year from those service providers. But, we also have a lot of sort of informal partnerships. Like, [Refugee Women's Alliance] was actually a really good example. We have a staff member who formerly worked with us. [Refugee Women's Alliance] has kept some of those connections alive in different ways. And, yeah, we're always interested in working with social service providers.

Participants shared experiences they had with other housing partners to provide housing assistance for refugee and asylee families awaiting approval for Section 8 from the housing authority. Participant F shared:

> We also have families that are interested in applying for [Housing and Urban Development] housing authority, whether that's through Pierce County or King County or Seattle Housing Authority. Those are not always very easy to access. So, in the meantime, we tried to help them move into low-income housing where we also partner with Bellwether and you guys have a lot of great properties and affordable housing that we are able to successfully access for some of our clients and get them housed permanently, while they're waiting to get approved through the housing authority, or in the process of getting Section 8 vouchers. And then, during that period, we assist the families with an ongoing rental assistance until we're able to connect them to employment, so that they can sustain their housing.

Experiential Considerations for Enhancing Effectiveness of Housing Programs and Services. To further understand which housing programs and services might require improvements to become even more effective for serving refugees and asylees in King County,

we sought individual housing employees' views on areas of housing programs they thought needed improvement. Further analysis revealed seven in 10 participants indicated an area of improvement included the need to increase funding for affordable housing, followed by the need for improving programs and services, and implementing changes in the approach to delivering services. Other shared areas for improvement included long-term policy changes aimed at increasing refugee and asylee time for self-sufficiency, acclimation and assimilation, housing accessibility, and employee wellness–agency and work–life balance.

Participants had specific requests with increasing funding. These needs included (a) increasing housing staff capacity, including recruiting more staff, building staff language capacity, and increasing staff language capacity and cultural awareness; (b) increasing funding for housing services, such as increasing support for affordable and low-cost housing, rental assistance, establishing large housing units, and private low-income housing; (c) increasing housing accessibility, including addressing issues of housing proximity to employment locations, and general housing accessibility; and (d) increasing private funding to support construction of more private, affordable housing. Participant C shared their experiences, stating:

> In a perfect world of having a place that is close to where they work, that is safe, a place where they can have their own space, that is free, which I know is never gonna happen. But, allowing people to not have to worry about paying over $1,000 plus in rent every month when they first get here, to be able to save, to be able to not feel that stress of, I need to get a job so I can pay rent so that I'm within the compliance of this program, so that I can be self-sufficient, and get all these things done. Just being able to focus on the huge life change that they've just had. Trying as workers to be more aware of doing more training on and having more of a mindset of working with people that have experienced

> trauma, and what that means to be coming alongside them during like their first 3 to 6 months in a new country and what that entails of meeting those requirements. We'll also be in there to support them of connecting them to services that can help them with that.

Participant B added:

> I'll just summarize my three points which second [Participant C] - trauma stewardship, with our participants and ourselves. Number two, increased staffing, and that's connected to trauma stewardship; but, frankly, there's not a lot of stuff to deal with that is complicated and we're great at churning through typical cases. But when we hit a bump, we really see the limitations of our staff capacity, and I'll say that of my own job, and of myself for sure. And number three, and this is more systemic, I mean they're all systemic, right? It's about staff training, staff hiring, and management. Lastly, pursuing privately funded programs or pushing for policies to make more giving for governmental programs because, really, a lot of the limitations we're hitting here are, there's not enough money from the government and the government has expectations that are not reflecting the needs of the population.

Common themes for improving programs and services targeting refugees and asylees included improvements in employment support services, continuous provision of important housing information, support for interorganizational learning about housing best practices, improving mental health services more for post-COVID-19 global pandemic psychosocial support, and other COVID-19 response services. Participant I shared:

> More funding sources, more funding for staff. I think that would be great. Also, to learn from other cultures, other countries, how to adapt to their housing programs, you know,

> which ones are workable, or something like that. Which one may work best for us, because I want to think different countries might have a different way to do it.

Participant D shared more, emphasizing key considerations for improvement of services post-COVID-19 global pandemic, stating:

> I would say, I'm hoping about basically going back to the new normal, that we can get as soon as possible, because there's a lot of changes that the COVID pandemic has brought to our residents, and it's mentally, socially, you know, challenges that they face every day. We clearly see the admin changes, that are concerning. And we hope that, as a housing agency, we can provide more services. We, developing new programs like we just started the employment support, you know, assistance to help them build a resume, with filling out application online if they need help with that and just, you know, helping them get back in the workforce, to have a stable income again. But, that has been truly challenging as well, because of the pandemic.

In reference to the theme focused on change in the approach to providing housing services and programs, participants specifically shared about the need for a focus on (a) client empowerment, such as supporting self-sufficiency programs and skills/tools to navigate housing systems; (b) holistic services including wrap-around services; and (c) trauma stewardship support services. Participant A stated:

> Probably just adding on, improving how we deliver certain housing information probably could be a little bit more refocused towards the long-term housing sort of situations or scenarios. Again, not exactly sure what that would be, but really trying to empower and have the people access to the tools and skills necessary to navigate, just this very complex

system, as much as possible, while still meeting the very intense requirements we have for the initial period as well.

Perspectives on Existing Services Meeting Refugee and Asylee Housing Needs. In an attempt to better understand housing programs and services most effective for reaching refugees and asylees, we sought participants' perspectives on whether services they provided were meeting housing needs of refugees and asylees. Further analysis revealed all 10 participants agreed services provided at their organizations were meeting refugee and asylee housing needs. Participants also observed services provided generally met government requirements for assistance for refugees and asylees in fulfilling housing needs. Other reasons participants agreed included: (a) refugee and asylee screening for housing was simplified and even waived, including language support service access to non-English speaking clients; (b) case managers across housing providers effectively guided refugees and asylees in navigating housing access; (c) service providers provided available and affordable housing services to refugees and asylees; (d) service providers provided landlord guarantees in situations where asylees and refugees had limited or no rental or credit history, or no income at all; and (e) service providers provided access to housing vouchers.

However, analysis of participant experiences also revealed services they provided were lacking in some ways. Almost all participants mentioned services were not fully meeting the needs of refugees and asylees. Among reasons given for this experience included (a) not meeting housing needs of refugees and asylees due to a lack of consideration of the holistic needs of clients; (b) increased scarcity of affordable housing compared to the growing demand; (c) exclusions due to income-based housing; and (d) landlords requiring income verification in some instances, which can result in housing denial.

Participant experiences shared during focus group interviews about the gaps in services support the reasons discussed previously. For example, caseworkers helped refugees and asylees by providing guidance in navigating housing services. When asked if the services their organizations were providing were meeting the needs of refugees and asylees, Participant F stated:

> I would say yes and no, at the same time. Yes, in terms of connecting them to case managers who are there to help them and provide housing guidance, you know, connecting them to resources, as well as advocating for them in terms of their needs and whatever it is that they're trying to access in the community. And, I would say no, as we often hit that wall where it's beyond our control, maybe that's accessing affordable housing, getting them into, you know, some other social services that are beyond our control.

Participant D shared how abolishing the requirement of rental history in housing screenings can improve housing access for refugees and asylees. They stated:

> I am not familiar with . . . [the] screening process for our organization. My role is to help whoever gets into the apartment to introduce myself as a formal resource person if they need help getting resources. For what I've heard, previously we looked into like 2 years rental history good record and stuff. But currently, what I'm hearing is that we abolished all of that; we just look into, do you have anyone backing you up with the rent and stuff.

Participant J shared about additional services their organization provided for meeting basic, affordable housing needs for refugees and asylees. When asked if services their organization provided are meeting the needs of refugees and asylees, Participant J stated:

> I feel like there's a few ways to interpret that question. Like, once they're in our housing, yes, basic needs are being met and people tend to be pretty stable. I recently reviewed all the evictions that happened in our housing over the past like, 4 years, and they're pretty much exclusively single men. Don't know why, like their origin, but we basically don't ever evict any families or lose families due to affordability issues with their house with us. Certainly, they encounter other issues; but, we kind of feel like we're meeting the basic element of our mission of providing safe, affordable housing. Once people are in, in terms of like, access to our housing, my sense is that we're barely scraping the surface in terms of the need for more affordable units. Like, we're trying to add more capacity to all our affordable housing providers, but it does feel like the need for more units, for multiple populations, keeps exceeding the supply and the depth and affordability of units.

Participant E echoed the challenge of landlords continuing to insist on evidence of income as a requirement, and shared:

> One thing that has become an obstacle for us to work with the landlords is that of the income limitation. Most of the time, they're asking you for your income, I think, three times of your apartment rent, something like that, which is typical for us and for our clients to provide that. However, we left that out, the income that they receive monthly, and also the income that they are receiving from the benefits from the government, such as the [Department of State and Health Services]. That will be sufficient to cover their rent, but to make that, for example, if rent is $1,500 a month, the guy has to make three times, for example, $4,500 a month, to show for the landlord to become eligible for that apartment. And that's very difficult, even though we are the ones who are supporting. The plan is for us to bring certain documents and tell them that this guy is making that

much money. However, he doesn't need that much money. He only needs money to pay his rent for his food, which he can.

Throughout the study, participants mentioned evidence of income had been increasingly challenged due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. With loss of jobs in the service industry, many refugees and asylees lost their employment. Additionally, social distancing measures and inability to meet clients face to face forced many organizations to adapt their approach to serving their clients.

COVID-19 Global Pandemic Considerations

Given the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic during the time of this study, participants were asked to share how organizations they work with have been impacted. Topics that emerged when considering the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic on the delivery of housing information and services included (a) access to food banks, (b) construction delays, (c) closure of businesses, (d) delay in governmental documentation, (e) loss of income, (f) provider adaptations such as transitioning to remote work in the organizations, and (g) technology access. Overall, due to a decrease in the number of arrivals and need for initial resettlement services, there were no major disruptions. Participants mentioned an ongoing need for wrap-around services, such as ESL, childcare, and mental health services; but, overall, organizations were able to continue with general operations.

Participants reported having to shift to remote service delivery due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. To ensure clients were able to continue to access services and to pay bills and rent online rather than in person, organizations took measures to ensure people had accessible technology and training. Participant A shared:

> We still have been able to get people into housing, which is great. But then, to not be able to sit down with them and kind of have an interpreter and go through the lease and walk through the apartment with them . . . is detrimental in the sense that they're not fully understanding it as well as they possibly could have.

Participant B added, "We're having to completely shift how our whole team operates, because when you would normally be able to just have the participant come to your desk, and we would talk over things, then having to do that remotely."

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we presented study findings and described major themes from a thorough analysis of data collected from focus groups with 10 participants who were working with housing providers in King County at the time of the study. Research Question 1 sought to explore the opinions of housing employees on lived experiences of refugees and asylees in the United States and how they access information for housing services in King County. Using data collected from employee experiences, the analysis established four major themes, including (a) affordable housing, (b) education, (c) system navigation, and (d) barriers.

Research Question 2 addressed housing employee perspectives on how lived experiences of refugees and asylees impacted their ability to access housing services and opportunities for integration in the United States. Analysis of data from participants who worked with resettlement and housing agencies at the time of the study revealed three major themes, including (a) immediate housing and overall needs, (b) long-term housing and overall needs, and (c) barriers in access and gaps in essential services.

Research Question 3 sought to explore what housing programs and services were most effective for reaching refugees and asylees in King County, Washington. Analysis of data from

participants who worked with resettlement and housing agencies at the time of the study revealed three major themes, including (a) additional housing services, (b) housing coordination, and (c) cross-sector collaborations.

Chapter 5 discusses findings and interpretations, recommendations, and areas for future research, including implications for housing programs and services targeting refugees and asylees.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Chapter 5 presents a discussion of this emancipatory case study's findings. Topics of discussion include (a) a brief overview and purpose of the study, (b) discussion of the findings, (c) limitations and strengths of the study, (d) recommendations and implications of the study, and (e) recommendations for future research. Recommendations discussed are consistent with research findings and the literature review.

Overview and Purpose of the Study

This qualitative emancipatory research focused on examining lived experiences of refugees and asylees in accessing housing from the perspective of individuals employed by organizations providing housing information and services in King County, Washington. It further sought to identify existing initiatives provided by these organizations affiliated with the King County Department of Community and Human Services to obtain housing, ensure housing is stable, and mitigate challenges that may have led to homelessness in refugee and asylee populations. We applied an emancipatory case study approach to the study given that two or more intersections of identity oppression existed in the population of interest (Kramer-Roy, 2015). The study provided an opportunity to better understand housing programs, services, and information available, and how individuals in King County access these services. Additionally, the study sought to provide a deeper understanding of barriers and existing service gaps to accessing stable housing, while also presenting opportunity for integration and self-sufficiency.

Chapters 1–4 presented an introduction to the problem, review of literature surrounding the topic, exploration of the emancipatory case study used for this study, and an overview of findings.

Three research questions guided this research and are the focus of the following discussion:

- Research Question 1: From the perspective of individuals employed by organizations providing housing and information services, what are perceived lived experiences of refugees and asylees in the United States in accessing information for housing services in King County?
- Research Question 2: From the perspective of individuals employed by organizations providing information and services, how do lived experiences of refugees and asylees impact their ability to access housing services and opportunities for integration in the United States?
- Research Question 3: What housing programs and services were most effective for reaching refugees and asylees in King County, Washington?

Discussion of the Findings

In Chapter 4, we presented the study findings and described major themes that emerged from a thorough analysis of data collected from focus groups with 10 participants who worked with housing providers in King County, Washington at the time of the study. Research Question 1 addressed lived experiences of asylees and refugees from the perspective of employees in organizations providing these services, which identified four major themes, (a) affordable housing, (b) education, (c) system navigation, and (d) barriers.

Research Question 2 addressed how perceived lived experiences impacted their ability to access housing services and opportunities for integration in the United States, including three major themes: (a) immediate and long-term housing needs, (b) immediate and long-term overall needs, and (c) barriers in accessing and gaps in essential services.

Research Question 3 addressed what housing programs and services were most effective for reaching refugees and asylees in King County, Washington. Three major themes surfaced, including (a) additional housing services, (b) housing coordination, and (c) cross-sector collaborations.

This chapter focuses on the discussion of the findings and interpretations; recommendations; and areas for future research, including implications for housing programs and services targeting refugees and asylees.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 addressed lived experiences of individuals who have been identified as refugees and asylees in the United States in accessing information for housing services in King County from the perspective of employees working to provide housing information and services. Using data collected from employee experiences, the analysis established four major themes, including (a) affordable housing, (b) education, (c) system navigation, and (d) barriers.

Affordable Housing. Throughout the focus groups, many aspects of housing affordability surfaced as central to lived experiences of refugees and asylees. The general sense throughout all focus groups was access to affordable housing was a challenge for refugees and asylees. This concept was reflected in the themes describing overall housing affordability, supply of affordable housing, the many ways refugee and asylee populations obtain affordable housing, and how experiences in accessing affordable housing led to long-term housing needs.

All participants specifically identified immediate housing as a significant barrier because individuals will often need to fund stays in hotels or other temporary housing until they gain access to more permanent housing through resettlement agencies and other organizations providing housing services. Participants indicated safe and stable housing was the critical first

step in the resettlement process; when this step is not available, it can hinder the resettlement process. Shaw and Poulin (2015) identified these challenges as barriers to accessing housing, which did not meet the needs of refugees and asylees. Corbett and Noyes (2008) further clarified organizations' lack of coordination and communication can lead to confusing and incoherent guiding information as newcomers arrived in their new community.

Critical analysis of these findings supported refugees and asylees have been experiencing marginalization leading to material deprivation (Young, 2014). These individuals have been experiencing systemic oppression based on an identity grouping, leaving them without shelter upon arrival in the United States (Adams & Zuniga, 2018; Young, 2014). Additionally, cultural imperialism is another form of systemic and group oppression refugees and asylees face (Adams & Zuniga, 2018; Young, 2014). As housing systems have become universalized for the U.S. citizen experience, many challenges of finding immediate housing have been due to othering and invisibility of refugee and asylee experiences (Young, 2014). Overall, data collected from participants echoed and extended existing literature in identifying the need for immediately available and affordable housing.

Beyond the immediate arrival challenges refugees and asylees experienced, additional circumstances served as a barrier to housing affordability. Although housing has been the foundation for resettlement, newly arriving individuals have often been pushed toward employment early in the process. Participants described how prioritization of employment has often left refugees and asylees with low wages and no ability to save their income. Existing literature documented experiences of refugees and asylees in obtaining housing, explaining they have been receiving low wages, living in high-cost housing when compared to income, and have

frequently forgone assistance to relocate for job opportunities and housing affordability (Enekwe, 2016; Preston et al., 2011; Weine et al., 2011).

In the theoretical framework of this study, multiple faces of oppression were evident in the prioritization of employment upon arrival. The first, exploitation, occurred when individuals were forced into low-wage jobs, very often in the service industry. Young (2014) argued, "These jobs entail a transfer of energies whereby the servers enhance the status of the served, to place them in an aristocracy – the rule of the best" (p. 280). Second, through placement in low-wage employment, refugees and asylees often experienced oppression as powerlessness because service industry jobs often deny autonomy and respectability, which diminished social capital and established further barriers to homeownership (Young, 2014).

Data collected in this study deviated from existing literature in the exploration of relocation and secondary migration. None of the study participants identified relocation and secondary migration as a systemic problem; however, literature revealed this has been a problem (Enekwe, 2016; Shaw & Poulin, 2015). Study participants shared challenges that corroborated with existing literature on how refugees and asylees have been denied self-sufficiency, hindering their integration (Preston et al., 2011; Weine et al., 2011). Further, study participants indicated refugee and asylee households often required a minimum of dual incomes for the household. This requirement directly tied to existing literature stating households required multiple individuals to bring in full-time income to continue to afford housing after temporary rent payment assistance eligibility expired from initial housing placement (Enekwe, 2016).

Education. This study revealed refugees and asylees have experienced education challenges upon arriving in the United States. Across the study, participants referred to education in a broad sense, including formal education, English as a Second Language (ESL), skill

development for employment, and cultural orientation. Study findings indicated newcomers have needed and have been looking for educational opportunities; however, those needs and expectations were not met. Participant I described how "A lot of our refugees are not able to secure employment, you know, because they can't understand basic instruction or are not able to communicate and; therefore, you know, it's harder for them to access employment." This claim supported existing literature stating newly arriving individuals have often been placed into jobs and discouraged from engaging in deeper education (Baran et al., 2018; Shrestha, 2011; Steimel, 2017). Refugees and asylees have experienced this oppression as marginalization due to having been deprived of meaningful engagement in society and cultural imperialism as they have been excluded from normalized versions of work based on their culture and language (Adams & Zuniga, 2018; Young, 2014).

Study findings also extended the literature in understanding the dilemma refugees experienced with education and employment. Steimel (2017) argued self-sufficiency practices in the resettlement process have prevented newcomers from rejecting an offer for employment. These practices have systemically left refugees and asylees in low-wage positions, resulting in ongoing financial strain (Enekwe, 2016; Shaw & Poulin, 2015; Weine et al., 2011). Steimel further argued refugees have also been frequently located in low-income neighborhoods and further removed from meaningful employment and educational opportunities. This concept is also reflected in the findings that secured employment is oftentimes located outside of available housing locations, compounding challenges to access.

Findings indicated exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, and cultural imperialism are all categories of oppression experienced by refugees and asylees in relation to education (Young, 2014). They have been denied deeper engagement, forced into jobs that may be

misaligned with their skills, and denied autonomy in their employment decisions or desire to advance their education. Although education could serve as a means for greater self-sufficiency, immigration systems have perpetuated dependence on assistance, which further denies privileges associated with full citizenship (Adams & Zuniga, 2018; Young, 2014).

System Navigation. Another theme frequently described in the study findings was the challenge of navigating new systems. Study participants identified learning to navigate new systems could have a more formal solution, such as a class supported by a resettlement agency, or an informal solution, such as an individual that understands the culture of newly arrived individuals and can help answer questions. Study participants further explained many refugees and asylees have been left to navigate these systems alone, without proficiency in English, and with only some administrative understanding. Participant J stated, "Unless someone is a pretty proficient English speaker, frankly, they will need a substantial amount of hands-on assistance from a case management provider in order to just get through our application process, which is extremely document and administrative heavy."

Findings of this study directly corroborated with existing literature about how refugees and asylees often had to navigate multiple organizations and services without an understanding of how systems work (Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies, 2016; Basolo & Nguyen, 2009; Hanley et al., 2018; Shaw, 2014; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). The experience of navigating systems can be experienced as powerlessness and cultural imperialism as forms of oppression (Young, 2014). Shaw and Poulin (2015) argued successful integration must include full and easy access to many services; yet, the system for resettlement is decentralized. At a federal level, the Office of Refugee Resettlement (n.d.) has recognized the role of resettlement agencies in guiding individuals through processes of service

agencies to obtain necessary services and resources. However, study findings indicated this role was not being fully met, with the burden of navigation frequently falling to the individual upon arriving in the United States.

Barriers. An overarching theme throughout this study findings was refugees and asylees have faced many barriers in accessing housing information and services upon their arrival in King County. These barriers included challenges with processes and procedures, family reunification, and discrimination based on identity. Study findings also indicated these barriers were interrelated, resulting in an individual experiencing multiple barriers to accessing housing and information simultaneously. Housing providers requiring signed leases was identified as a challenge creating instability upon arrival. Participant E claimed:

> Once we pick them up either we should take them to their apartment or take them to a hotel or Airbnb. Most of the time, if we don't have the funds to provide your hotel, that comes from the resettlement money.

Amplifying this problem was leasing practices, which required individuals to be physically present to sign a lease agreement. Participant E added:

> The landlord wants our clients to be actually in the country, and be available to sign their papers, and then they start the process of the application, which may take 1 week or 2 weeks. During this period is where we face a problem, because we don't have places for these people to have them live.

It is important to note this structural inequality related to housing has been embedded at institutional and societal levels (Adams & Zuniga, 2018). Although participants often identified funding as the root cause, they frequently did not challenge systems and norms surrounding

housing information and service barriers. Acceptance of the system and norms are links to hegemony and continued oppression of refugees and asylees under current practices.

Additionally, housing provider policies often required families to take on the expense of another apartment because practices have not allowed flexibility for family reunification. Participants in the study specifically highlighted spouse reunification where individuals could not sign lease agreements before a spouse's arrival because both parties needed to be present to sign the lease agreement. Participants also highlighted situations of older children and parent reunification upon arriving in the country as a problem because the family has often been required to sign lease agreements for multiple units, creating a cost burden for multiple housing payments. Participant experiences are important to note because they further extend existing literature on experiences of refugees and asylees upon immediately arriving in the United States. Although literature has identified challenges in navigating housing upon arrival, it does not clarify housing practices and policies as a root cause of initial housing instability (Enekwe, 2016).

Discrimination and biases have occurred in the resettlement and housing process, further compounding challenges for housing access. More than half of respondents indicated refugees and asylees experienced discrimination based on language, country of origin, family size, disability, and citizenship status. Dion (2001) noted discrimination occurred across gender, citizenship status, country of origin, and family size, and findings have illustrated housing provider policies and practices back this discrimination. Families have frequently arrived in the United States separately, which has created challenges individuals would likely not experience. Many housing policies mandate all adults must sign the lease. Participant G explained reunified families are often faced with a frustrating choice of having a place to live upon arrival or waiting

until the whole family is present. Participant G stated, “Let’s say someone comes over and wants to provide for the family and the like, but if they do that and sign the lease, there’s a 6-month waiting period for anyone to join that household.”

Additionally, research findings showed discrimination has often been tied to ability to achieve self-sufficiency. Study participants identified conditions preventing individuals from being employed full time, which often resulted in a termination of services and housing agreements. Participant C explained:

> The governmental programs that we have and the capacity that we have in our staff does not allow for people that have learning disabilities or any sort of disability to, as a single individual, be enrolled in a program and provided with housing assistance.

Research has indicated self-sufficiency is often used as the gateway for full citizenship participation (Sue, 2018; Young, 2014). Moreover, literature identified a denial or limitation of full citizenship status to social identity groups who have not been fully independent from needing government assistance services (Sue, 2018; Young, 2014).

All of the barriers identified throughout the study findings indicated oppression has been experienced as exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, and cultural imperialism (Young, 2014). Any mention of violence as a form of oppression was missing from participant perspectives of lived experiences of refugees and asylees. Analyzing study findings through a critical lens revealed oppression in multiple forms has been a part of lived experiences of refugees and asylees upon arriving in the United States, and it has existed at individual, institutional, and societal levels (Adams & Zuniga, 2018; Young, 2014).

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 addressed how lived experiences of refugees and asylees impacted their ability to access housing services and opportunities for integration in the United States, as described from the perspective of individuals employed by organizations providing information and services. Analysis of data from participants working with organizations providing housing services and information revealed three major themes: (a) immediate housing and overall needs, (b) long-term housing and overall needs, and (c) barriers in access and gaps in essential services.

As indicated in the literature review and supported in study findings, resettlement and integration have not immediately occurred upon arrival to the United States; rather, they have occurred on a continuum (Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998). This resettlement–settlement continuum included acclimation, adaptation, and integration. In the acclimation and adaptation stages of the continuum, refugees adjust to a new life in the United States. This phase included obtaining housing, learning English, obtaining employment, and becoming familiar with the community (Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998). As refugees become acclimated and adapt to their new country of resettlement, the integration process is underway. Study findings echoed the need for refugees and asylees to access sustainable housing, English classes, sustainable employment, and become immersed in the community to progress through the continuum and attain self-sufficiency and integration.

Impact on Immediate Housing and Overall Needs. When considering refugee and asylee access to housing services and its impact on opportunity for integration, many themes emerged that supported existing literature. The themes discussed highlighted the importance of housing as a foundation to the process of acclimation, assimilation, self-sufficiency, and integration into the United States. The need for housing first was a frequent topic throughout the

findings because integration and self-sufficiency have been the focus of resettlement programs in the United States; ideally, refugees achieved these soon after arrival (Shaw & Poulin, 2015).

Although many factors are involved and are necessary for integration, findings indicated housing has been the top priority. However, housing alone was not sufficient; participants repeatedly reported throughout the focus groups housing must be safe, stable, and secure. This necessity for safe housing is consistent with existing literature supporting secure, affordable, and good quality housing as crucial in facilitating the integration process (Dion, 2001; Murdie, 2008; Shaw & Poulin, 2015; Steimel, 2017). Murdie also highlighted how housing has been important in the initial settlement stage and access to good quality, safe, and affordable housing is vital for refugees; it provides a stable base and sense of well-being, both physically and mentally.

In addition to housing, participants identified many immediate needs that must be accessible for asylees and refugees to begin the integration process upon arrival. As previously discussed, experiences surrounding the following themes connected to the opportunity for integration. The opportunities for integration included (a) access to education in the community school system for children, (b) access to English language learning, (c) medical coverage, (d) cultural orientation, and (e) learning. Access to these services is consistent with the continuum for integration model, outlined by the Canadian Council for Refugees (1998), which stated resettlement and integration do not immediately occur upon arrival to the United States; rather, they occur on a continuum. This resettlement–settlement continuum includes acclimation, adaptation, and integration. In the acclimation and adaptation stages of the continuum, refugees adjust to a new life in the United States. As supported by study findings, the continuum correlates with immediate housing and overall needs. This phase includes obtaining housing, learning English, obtaining employment, and becoming familiar with the community (Canadian

Council for Refugees, 1998). As refugees become acclimated and adapt to their new country of resettlement, the integration process is underway.

Findings also indicated opportunities for integration are dependent on areas outside of housing and employment. These findings are consistent with existing literature highlighting factors beyond economic independence that must be considered when evaluating integration and self-sufficiency, including language, education, health and well-being, civic values, participation and engagement, housing, social connection, and belonging and safety in the community (Office of Refugee Resettlement, n.d.; Shaw & Poulin, 2015).

Another commonly mentioned theme throughout the findings focused on cultural orientation. Study findings and existing literature examining refugee integration highlighted the importance of social bonds in the new community (Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998). Cultural orientation provides an opportunity for refugees and asylees to learn about societal norms in the United States and the host community where they are being resettled. Beyond newcomers learning about the new culture and community, host communities would benefit from learning about cultures of the newcomers. This option provides an opportunity for host communities' members to have a deeper understanding of newcomers and to potentially create a more welcoming community. Cultural orientation has also provided a space to begin breaking down cultural imperialism inherent in current practices. As newcomers and receiving communities interact, refugee and asylee cultural norms become less invisible and othering (Young, 2014). Cultural orientation also presents an opportunity for refugees and asylees to engage in the community as well.

Shaw and Poulin (2015) further explained social support as a key component of refugee adjustment and resettlement experiences, leading to affirmation through shared experience and

positive mental health. Not only does social support present an opportunity for integration by social bonds, but it also increases access to additional services, community navigation, and language learning. The need for social support is consistent with literature stating refugees and asylees need to be actively engaged in participation in the new community and existing members of the community need to be prepared to facilitate this participation (Czischke Ljubetic & Huisman, 2018). Alemi and Stempel (2018) further indicated social support of being connected to other individuals of the same ethnicity and national origin did not mitigate any effects of discrimination.

The interconnected nature of integration appeared frequently throughout study findings. Primarily, integration is participation in the United States in economic, social, cultural, and spiritual affairs while maintaining aspects of refugee native culture (Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998; Enekwe, 2016; Shaw & Poulin, 2015). This integration includes becoming active through employment, seeking education, engaging in the community, and accessing services. As refugees have had a greater sense of belonging in their new communities and have developed a new social network, this support has reinforced integration efforts, leading to empowerment (Erden, 2017).

Impact of Long-Term Housing and Overall Needs. Beyond immediate housing, research findings indicated a need for financially sustainable housing in the long term. Once housing is established, refugees and asylees are ready to continue the journey of making a new life in the United States. Based on study findings, additional services need to be accessible to ensure opportunities for self-sufficiency and integration. These services include childcare, employment services, housing assistance, language services, medical coverage services, mental health services, rental assistance, technology access, transportation services, and overall wrap-

around services. Although the current system attempts to limit need for services, the push for self-sufficiency, and short period when services are available, lends itself to oppression as exploitation and marginalization (Adams & Zuniga, 2018; Young, 2014).

When considering long-term integration, participants identified long-term needs were still primarily focused on the short-term phase of the continuum identified in literature. As previously described, the described needs are both associated with short-term goals in resettlement and long-term goals of integration (Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998). These spheres are interconnected and can be interdependent upon each other. Strong indicators have shown refugees who have successfully integrated in the economic sphere experienced greater success in integration in other spheres. Participants only identified career advancement through skill development as a long-term goal consistent with integration. This goal deviates from outlined literature, which included several other long-term goals necessary for integration. However, findings did support interdependence of housing, overall needs, and how access to housing has impacted opportunity for integration. These findings are consistent with existing literature about integration as a gradual, multidirectional, multidimensional, interactive, and complex process (Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998; Czischke Ljubetic & Huisman, 2018; Shaw & Poulin, 2015). Findings revealed mental health access for trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was necessary and provided an opportunity for self-sufficiency and integration.

Mental Health, PTSD, and Trauma Processing. As indicated in the literature review and supported by research findings, refugees and asylees begin their integration process at a disadvantage compared to other resettled populations; their journey is fueled by safety concerns, fleeing dangerous homelands, and filled with traumatic experiences (Alemi & Stempel, 2018; Beiser & Hou, 2006; Noh et al., 1999). Having fled their country of origin and often suffering

from traumatic experiences, it is necessary to examine what factors either enabled or prohibited refugees' empowerment and integration in the resettlement process. Numerous participants in the focus group highlighted the necessity of a holistic approach with a focus on mental health, PTSD, and trauma stewardship for any potential integration. Findings indicated refugees and asylees may experience social–emotional limitations and may be unable to move forward toward self-sufficiency and integration without attention to processing trauma. This finding is echoed in existing literature because oppression experienced through organizations providing resettlement services negatively impacted refugee and asylee abilities to recover from trauma and impeded integration into their new community (Alemi & Stempel, 2018; Beiser & Hou, 2006; Noh et al., 1999).

Furthermore, as refugees and asylees experienced discrimination at individual, group, and societal levels, discrimination has been reinforced at all levels of interactions in the housing process (Adams & Zuniga, 2018; Dion, 2001). The identity bias refugees and asylees face in many different areas has been described in the findings of this study and existing literature; discrimination amplifies trauma and distress refugees or asylees may already be experiencing (Alemi & Stempel, 2018; Beiser & Hou, 2006). Beiser and Hou also argued the experience of discrimination for refugees and asylees has often been expressed as betrayal because individuals were leaving a situation of persecution based on their identity. At a systemic level, this discrimination can be recognized as oppression in the form of marginalization and powerlessness (Young, 2014).

Barriers in Access and Gaps in Essential Services. Although there are many areas resettlement organizations have been successful in providing access to necessary services for asylee and refugee integration opportunities, study findings revealed barriers and gaps in

delivery of essential services. Based on study findings, several main themes emerged when specifically considering gaps in housing service provision and how these gaps have impacted refugee and asylee access to housing information and services. These themes included (a) protocols related to policy and practice, (b) screening challenges faced in securing housing, (c) identity bias in host community members and housing providers, and (d) limited housing supply. When considering housing service provision gaps related to opportunities for integration, several other themes emerged. These themes included (a) current policy and practice issues, (b) screening challenges faced by refugees and asylees, (c) identity bias in host communities and housing providers, and (d) limited housing supply.

Study findings highlighted impacts of existing biases between landlords and refugees/asylees in providing housing. Findings indicated this barrier was further complicated when property was owned and operated by a corporation rather than a local business or family. Although there have still been successful partnerships developed at the corporate level in providing housing for refugees and asylees, the process often takes substantially longer, leading to depletion of resettlement funds spent on transitional housing at a hotel or other short-term rental property. Critical analysis of these findings indicated discrimination was occurring at individual and institutional levels; although, the impact has been leading to oppression in the forms of powerlessness and marginalization (Adams & Zuniga, 2018; Young, 2014). Study findings correlated with literature about how integration and self-sufficiency have been further complicated by the impact of identity and discrimination in the resettlement process. Further research has indicated individuals with a strong identity tied to their ethnicity and nation of origin often experienced greater distress and discrimination with organizations that provided resettlement services (Alemi & Stempel, 2018; Beiser & Hou, 2006; Noh et al., 1999). Noh et al.

also stated discrimination experienced by organizations providing resettlement services has been strongly correlated to symptoms of depression.

Barriers to accessing affordable housing information and services have stemmed from bias and discrimination across service providers. For example, Participant C described:

> The landlord is already showing bias against you because they can tell you are from another country and not being willing to work with you because your English might not be as strong as the average person that they're working with.

However, discrimination is even more systemic because participants noted a marked difference in services between individuals who arrive as refugees and individuals who arrive as asylees. Participant B detailed:

> There really is no requirement from the government, in any way, shape, or form, for us to provide housing for asylees, unless they are enrolled in the program that I coordinate, which is an employment program; it's not a housing program.

Study findings around differing experiences between refugees and asylees echoed existing literature. Murdie (2008) stated individuals seeking refuge will experience more difficulty and less stability in housing than individuals arriving with refugee status. Participants and existing literature indicated discrimination and oppression have occurred at all levels of interactions, largely in the form of marginalization, even when including the difference in citizenship status between refugees and asylees (Adams & Zuniga, 2018; Young, 2014). Young further argued extreme marginalization occurred with denial of basic necessities such as shelter and food, which had been occurring for asylees in King County.

Participants also highlighted systemic discrimination, included disability discrimination. Participant B explained:

> Let's say, they now have a medical condition that would prohibit them from working and are no longer able to be on the program, who is going to pay the rent? This agreement that we have with the apartment is no longer valid. We are no longer required to pay the rent.

Study findings extended existing literature in detailing how discrimination, and in turn oppression, have been expressed throughout the resettlement process. Literature indicated this discrimination has worsened trauma and distress refugees and asylees experience (Alemi & Stempel, 2018; Beiser & Hou, 2006). Additionally, Beiser and Hou claimed refugees expressed their distress as betrayal because they were often fleeing systemic oppression and persecution, which continued in the new country upon arrival. Noh et al. (1999) also argued discrimination experienced by refugees and asylees showed a correlation with symptoms of depression. When considering study findings with existing literature, there has been an indication of systemic oppression through cycles of mental health trauma that may have prevented refugees and asylees from continuing to receive services and housing accommodations necessary for integration. This oppression was consistent with marginalization and denial of services, which has appeared to be occurring at institutional and societal levels (Adams & Zuniga, 2018; Young, 2014).

When considering barriers for employment and service gaps, study findings were supported by existing literature. Steimel (2017) explained prioritization of self-sufficiency required refugees and asylees to accept their first legitimate job offer, which has prevented them from pursuing education or higher-level careers aligned with their previous experience and training. Limitation on employment opportunities, presented in both literature and study findings, perpetuated limitations on refugees' earned wages, which often created a financial burden resulting in sacrificing of other household requirements such as food and other necessities.

Study findings and existing literature also pointed out gaps between financial resources of refugees and asylees and access to good quality rental housing. A limited supply of housing units, low vacancy rates, high rents, poor quality units, and perceived discrimination in the private rental market have contributed to difficulties refugees faced in securing appropriate and affordable accommodations (Murdie, 2008). Employment oppression can be identified as powerlessness, which then leads to marginalization (Young, 2014). By experiencing housing choice and employment opportunity restrictions, refugees and asylees may experience restrictions in many other life choices, which could impede opportunity for full integration (Dion, 2001; Steimel, 2017; Sue, 2018; Young, 2014).

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 sought to explore what housing programs and services were most effective for reaching refugees and asylees in King County, Washington. Analysis of data from participants working with resettlement and housing agencies revealed three major themes, including (a) support for additional housing services, (b) housing coordination, and (c) cross-sector collaborations.

Additional Housing Services. Overall, participants described access to medical coverage services, ESL classes, and community connections or interaction among familiar social groups as the most effective additional housing services provided to refugees and asylees. Study findings further revealed housing organizations provided access to employment opportunities and other community services and facilitated referrals for behavioral health services and childcare assistance programs. These findings align with existing literature, which suggested refugee and asylee successful transitions must include full access to a package of well-being services, including employment, health, finances, education, and housing (Shaw & Poulin, 2015). Both

study findings and literature indicated decreasing marginalization of newly arrived refugees and asylees is possible by providing these additional services (Young, 2014).

As newly arrived immigrants, refugees and asylees arriving in King County from various parts of the world have been met with high housing costs and essential well-being needs that could potentially push them to the extremes of homelessness if no support is available to help them (King County Hospitals for a Healthier Community, 2019). In line with these findings, existing literature indicated Washington is one state that has been running a housing and essential need referral program, which has specifically provided access to rental assistance and essential needs items for low-income individuals unable to work for at least 90 days (King County Hospitals for a Healthier Community, 2019). Study findings revealed most housing providers indicated rental assistance and essential needs programming should be effectively implemented to ensure refugees and asylees are successfully resettled (Washington Department of Social and Health Services, 2020).

Findings further aligned with existing literature indicating most nonprofits provide additional support for medical assistance, access to English language classes, and transportation access to alleviate financial burden associated with housing costs (Lutheran Community Services Northwest, n.d.). In line with the findings on the provision of additional services, existing literature further suggested resettlement agencies' role in the resettlement process included guiding refugees through the process of accessing community resources such as schools, medical care, language services, core social services, and obtaining a required governmental identification such as a Social Security Card (National Immigration Forum, n.d.; Office of Refugee Resettlement, n.d.).

Housing Coordination. Given the new environment and unfamiliar housing system refugees and asylees experience upon arrival in King County, or elsewhere in the United States, navigating the housing system has become a primary challenge. This study revealed housing providers were effectively providing housing coordination services to support refugees and asylees. Housing coordination specifically included supporting communication with landlords, coordination of lease contract processes, host homes, provision of household goods and basic needs, housing application processes through documentation submission, and coordinating payment of rental assistance checks. These findings aligned with existing literature emphasizing the role of resettlement organizations and other nonprofits in providing housing support to new immigrants (Murdie, 2008). Murdie also posited refugees and asylees have had limited financial resources and have been in need of some form of assistance on arrival in the United States, specifically assistance with housing coordination, which starts with meeting newly arrived refugees. For example, the Office of Refugee Resettlement (n.d.) suggested funding from the Department of State and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for a one-time allowance per refugee can help resettlement agencies become financially equipped to support the process of refugee resettlement in the first 30–90 days after their arrival, including arranging housing and providing home furnishings, climate-appropriate clothing, and food.

As revealed by most participants in this study, housing organizations have worked with arriving refugees and asylees to ensure every qualified client had access to housing and other basic needs. This practice was found to be effectively done across providers, which might explain why most participants shared they have not had any evictions of families due to lack of income. It is also important to note individuals who have had access to a caseworker sharing their cultural or linguistic background experienced greater success in housing stability (Shaw &

Poulin, 2015). This cultural or linguistic connection further indicated breaking down cultural imperialism inherent in the process of coordinating housing upon arrival can minimize discrimination and oppression refugees and asylees experience (Adams & Zuniga, 2018; Shaw & Poulin, 2015; Young, 2014).

Cross-Sector Collaborations. The study revealed participants' understanding of cross-sector collaboration as an effective way of resettling refugees and asylees. By referring to cross-sector collaborations, participants specifically meant collaborative processes facilitating community connections for other community services and resources, linking client families to access other income-restricted, public, and other affordable housing programs. Other forms of cross-sector collaborations included referrals to other private providers to help with housing and rental assistance, prevention of evictions, and facilitating partnerships for long-term housing, including for Section 8 vouchers. These findings are aligned with what Corbett and Noyes (2008) suggested is a systems integration approach fostering a blended systemic collaboration among partners working together in delivering services to targeted immigrant populations. According to Corbett and Noyes, this approach was best done if partners considered implementing joint programmatic reviews while building synergistic approaches to collaboration, communication, convergence, and coordination as they deliver human-centered services.

Participants shared collaborative engagement experiences with housing partners working together, with most participants referring to fellow housing providers who might have had services they did not offer. Participants shared their experiences related to cross-sector collaborative engagements, which could be explained by King County Housing Authority's systemic approach. This approach included engaging and working with different housing

partners to connect individuals and households to affordable housing programs (King County Housing Authority, n.d.-c). The approach also included nonprofit and private housing partnerships, considered primary vehicles for housing services, to effectively support qualifying individuals and households to access various housing services more collaboratively (King County Housing Authority, n.d.-b). Nonprofit housing partners in King County also offered collaborative, supportive services for low-income households that included identifying and securing stable and suitable housing and obtaining household items by linking individuals to other service providers (Refugee Women's Alliance, n.d.).

Limitations and Strengths

The study did have a few limitations to consider. The primary population of the study was initially limited to refugees or asylees who received services through the King County Department of Community and Human Services. This population may not have generalizability to other organizations providing services outside of the King County Department of Community and Human Services system. Due to the sensitivity of immigration issues surrounding asylees and refugees, coupled with the unavailability of individuals willing to participate as refugees and asylees, we depended on data generated from focus group interviews with housing provider employees. This population was a limitation to the study because we did not collect data of experiences directly from refugees and asylees. However, some of the housing provider employees identified as former refugees and asylees, and we assessed participant responses to the research questions from the lens of employees experienced in working with organizations who provided services and information to refugees and asylees. Second, the limited sample size of individuals employed in organizations providing housing information and services for this study limited generalizability of findings, which may not be applicable beyond the context of this

research. Third, financial and time constraints for the project limited recruitment because recruitment materials could not be translated into multiple languages, and no incentive was provided to encourage participation. Finally, the primary study population was defined as individuals who were identified as refugees and asylees in accordance with U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Citizenship and Immigration Services. Thus, results may not be applicable or generalizable to other immigration statuses as defined by the Immigration and Nationality Act - Title 8 United States Code 1101 (1952).

The study also included several strengths. First, we effectively and efficiently communicated with interested participants in the recruitment process to ensure minimum sample size requirements were met in the limited time frame. Second, study participants reflected a diverse population in terms of years of service, organization scope, employment role, and identity. As a result, a thick, rich dataset was generated for analysis (Geertz, 1973). Third, the emancipatory case study approach allowed for flexibility in determining the degree that existing research was applicable. Additionally, we were able to identify deeper meaning through the experiences shared. Finally, partnership with King County provided greater access to a breadth of organizations that provided housing programs and information in King County, Washington.

Implications of the Study

Study implications were primarily centered around three major themes that emerged through focus group interviews. These themes included (a) prioritization of education over employment, (b) alignment between available services and indicated needs of the population, and (c) empowerment related to integration.

The first implication of the study was services and policies would better serve the population if there were a shift from focusing on prioritization of employment to focusing on

acclimation, assimilation, self-sufficiency, and integration. This shift could be achieved by focusing primarily on education, including ESL classes, job skills training, cultural orientation, and system navigation. Study findings and existing literature both indicated a strong connection to the community and opportunities for meaningful employment leading to more successful achievement of both short- and long-term integration goals. Ager and Strang (2008) argued neighbors and neighborhoods have provided learning opportunities from established members of the community, which enabled newcomers to become more constructive and active members of the community. Haines (2010) stated, “Self-sufficiency (like employment) has often been treated at the rudimentary have-it-or-not level, which is then translated operationally into whether or not refugees are receiving public assistance” (p. 24). Haines further argued this limited definition of self-sufficiency failed to answer who this definition applied to, and, more importantly, it failed to consider holistic complexities of well-being and resources. Many factors have extended beyond economic self-sufficiency that must be considered when evaluating opportunities for self-sufficiency and integration (Office of Refugee Resettlement, n.d.; Shaw & Poulin, 2015).

The second implication of the study findings was policies, procedures, and services have not been aligned with needs of refugees and asylees arriving in the country. This implication was largely presented through federal, state, and local level requirements attached to funding that consistently have left refugees and asylees reliant on social services. In addition to these policies, availability of housing meeting affordability and size needs should be evaluated and implemented to accommodate newcomers. Study findings and literature indicated affordable housing was frequently inadequate and created financial strain perpetuating housing instability for refugees and asylees. Boenigk et al. (2020) indicated many organizations have had rigid policies and procedures that create environments hostile to the needs of arriving refugees and

asylees. Boenigk et al. (2020) further claimed, “A well-functioning service system should link refugees and their needs with other actors and resources at different system levels” (p. 8). Shaw and Poulin (2015) also argued inadequate services were a barrier to achieving self-sufficiency, which has frequently left individuals’ needs unmet.

The third implication of this study was research and practice of empowerment need greater attention in the field. Existing literature indicated refugees and asylees have often been disempowered due to few choices in their resettlement. Steimel (2017) argued the employment first focus with a goal of self-sufficiency has driven policy and practice to become disempowering for refugees and asylees. Study findings indicated a greater focus on empowerment and opportunity can mitigate challenges experienced in resettlement and lead to more successful integration. Available literature indicated many refugees and asylees have experienced misalignment in skills and education; thus, they have experienced low employability (Baugh, 2020; Shaw & Poulin, 2015; Steimel, 2017). Related to empowerment is a more holistic focus on needs of refugees and asylees to include a mental health focus and opportunity to establish roots in the community. Literature argued refugees and asylees have frequently experienced discrimination, betrayal, and symptoms of PTSD and depression (Beiser & Hou, 2006; Noh et al., 1999).

Recommendations for Practice

These study findings have produced multiple recommendations for refugee and asylee housing services and information access. Primary recommendations for access and increased opportunity for self-sufficiency and integration are centered on extended case management, coordination of services and cross-sector collaboration, and transitional housing provisions.

The first recommendation of this study is for extended case management. As described by Shaw and Poulin (2015), extended case management has been recognized as an effective approach to ensuring blended access to resettlement services and programs for refugees in the United States. At the time of this study, newly arrived refugees and asylees with access to programs are eligible for services for an average of 6 months. Service provisions can be extended, but only on a case-by-case basis, and dependent upon organizational funding and capacity for extension. By implementing extended case management in King County and increasing length of initial resettlement case management services to a minimum of 24 months after arrival, the opportunity for newly arrived refugees and asylees to progress on the integration continuum, while reaching higher levels of self-sufficiency, may see significant improvement. This opportunity is grounded in the focus of overall well-being for individuals and navigation from a more holistic lens of resettlement (Baugh, 2020; Mossaad, 2019; Shaw & Poulin, 2015).

Other resettlement programs in the nation have successfully implemented extended case management and modeled service delivery through a collaborative, supportive approach. In the evaluation of extended case management by Shaw and Poulin (2015), a model of the extended case management program assigned each resettlement case worker a maximum of 30 families. Case management was provided to individuals for a period of 24 months. A case manager facilitated the program, beginning with weekly home visits during the 1st month of resettlement, and progressing to once a month for the first 6 months, then once every 4 months, until termination of the extended programming at 24 months (Shaw & Poulin, 2015). Further, the recommendation included pairing case workers to refugees and asylees with similar cultural backgrounds, supporting the importance and impact of social bonds and their effect on service access. Outcomes associated with extended case management have been positive for the overall

well-being of individuals through integration and sustained economic self-sufficiency through employment at the end of extended case management programming. Implementing this model throughout the United States, and specifically King County, may create a more positive resettlement experience for refugees and asylees.

The second recommendation of this study is for local government agencies and partners to consider strengthening already existing coordination and cross-sector collaborations for housing information and service delivery. Government agencies and their partners have already operated in a systemic approach, including engaging and working with different housing partners to connect individuals and households to affordable housing programs; thus, it will be important to consider best practices of identifying areas of homogeneity, including institutional and programmatic similarity, to make the delivery of services more effective for the targeted populations (Corbett & Noyes, 2008; King County Housing Authority, n.d.-c). Corbett and Noyes also suggested a systems integration approach that fostered a blended systemic collaboration among partners working together. They continued by explaining this approach is best done if partners considered implementing joint programmatic reviews while building synergistic approaches to collaboration, communication, convergence, and coordination as they deliver human-centered services. Strengthening and reimagining cross-sector collaboration and coordination will aid in providing a guarantee for effective access to housing information and services with continued best practice sharing and program learning necessary for program improvements.

The third recommendation for this study focused on transitional housing. Study participants described a need for short-term housing available for refugees and asylees upon arrival in the United States. Participants specifically cited current housing practices created

barriers for individuals to gain access to housing prior to arrival. Additionally, with limited funding refugees receive for resettlement, these funds frequently have needed to be dedicated to housing, such as hotel and application and processing fees. Participants indicated short-term, rent-free housing that allowed newcomers to locate and apply for affordable housing, located in proximity to employment and in a community they may connect with, would significantly improve the integration process. Literature indicated this transitional housing would create empowerment for individuals arriving in the United States while ensuring an available space to aid in reunification of families and saving funds from employment. Shaw and Poulin (2015) argued a majority of refugees indicated their financial situation in the first 6 months of arriving in the United States was worrisome. Basolo and Nguyen (2009) stated housing processes have left many refugees and asylees in neighborhoods with higher crime and decreased access to opportunities. However, Erden (2017) argued a social support network with shared experiences and understanding of the resettlement process helped newcomers feel empowered and aided their self-sufficiency.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although this study had many implications for housing programs in King County, Washington, there are areas of opportunity for future research to explore. This study revealed there is much more to accomplish in assisting refugees and asylees with stable and affordable housing. First, future research should focus on documenting lived experiences of refugees and asylees, inclusive of individuals who are not proficient in English. Study participants indicated English proficiency has been a barrier in refugee and asylee lived experiences. The second opportunity for future research is to study interactions and connections between service organizations providing housing information and service in King County, Washington. Many

study participants identified formal and informal partnerships; yet, little is known about the coordination and efficacy of these partnerships. The third area for future research should focus on effects to extend services and support beyond the initial 6 months. This extension would further identify how timing impacts lived experiences and integration outcomes for refugees and asylees. Finally, further research on empowerment and refugees and asylees is needed because this is a relatively new development in the field of study.

Summary

This emancipatory case study was conducted to examine lived experiences of refugees and asylees in accessing housing information and services through resettlement organizations operating in King County, Washington. The study further identified what existing initiatives resettlement and housing organizations affiliated with King County Department of Community and Human Services have had available to assist in securing stable housing and mitigate homelessness in the refugee and asylee population in King County.

We acknowledged refugee and asylee participation in the study was minimal due to refugee and asylee unavailability to participate. The 10 participants who attended focus group interviews were individuals who worked with housing and resettlement organizations to provide housing information and services to refugees and asylees. The focus group interviews did have several individuals who identified as immigrants and refugees. We incorporated these individuals' experiences into data collection and analysis for a broader perspective of lived experiences of refugees and asylees in King County.

Research Question 1 explored lived experiences of refugees and asylees in the United States in accessing information for housing services in King County, and four overarching

themes emerged, including (a) affordable housing, (b) education, (c) system navigation, and (d) barriers.

Research Question 2 addressed how lived experiences of refugees and asylees impacted their ability to access housing services and opportunities for integration in the United States. Analysis of data for Research Question 2 revealed three major themes, including (a) immediate housing and overall needs, (b) long-term housing and overall needs, and (c) barriers in access and gaps in essential services.

Research Question 3 addressed housing programs and services most effective for reaching refugees and asylees in King County. Three overarching themes emerged, including (a) additional housing services, (b) housing coordination, and (c) cross-sector collaborations.

Although this study was limited to 10 individuals who worked with housing and resettlement organizations in King County, study participants reflected a diverse population in terms of years of service, organization scope, employment role, and identity. As a result, this diversity provided a comprehensive, thick, and rich dataset that aided investigation of generated housing information and service access experiences, and deeper analysis in the context of refugees and asylees. The emancipatory case study approach allowed for flexibility in determining degree that existing research applied to study findings, and in providing a basis for recommendations, implications, and this conclusion.

References

Adams, M., & Zuniga, X. (2018). Core concepts for social justice education. In M. Adams, W. J. Blumenfeld, D. C. J. Catalano, K. S. DeJong, H. W. Hackman, L. E. Hopkins, & X. Zuniga (Eds.), *Readings for diversity and social justice* (4th ed., pp. 523–531). Routledge.

Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies. (2016, May). *Newcomer housing: Barriers, needs, and experiences*. https://www.amssa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/InfoSheet31-Housing.pdf

Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Rule of 2015, 80 C.F.R § 5173 *et seq.* (2015). https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2015/07/16/2015-17032/affirmatively-furthering-fair-housing

Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). Understanding integration: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 21*(2), 166–191. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fen016

Alemi, Q., & Stempel, C. (2018). Discrimination and distress among Afghan refugees in northern California: The moderating role of pre- and post-migration factors. *PLoS ONE, 13*(5). https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0196822

All Home. (2020). *Count us in: Seattle/King County point-in-time count of individuals experiencing homelessness.* King County Regional Homelessness Authority. https://kcrha.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Count-Us-In-2020-Final_7.29.2020.pdf

Anker, D. E., & Posner, M. H. (1981). The forty year crisis: A legislative history of the Refugee Act of 1980. *The San Diego Law Review, 19*(1), 9–90. https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/sanlr19&div=6&id=&page=

Balk, G. (2019, January 14). New milestone in King County: Immigrant population tops 500,000. *The Seattle Times*. https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/data/new-milestone-in-king-county-immigrant-population-tops-500000/

Baran, B. E., Valcea, S., Porter, T. H., & Gallagher, V. C. (2018). Survival, expectations, and employment: An inquiry of refugees and immigrants to the United States. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 105*, 102–115. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2017.10.011

Basolo, V., & Nguyen, M. T. (2009). Immigrants' housing search and neighborhood conditions: A comparative analysis of housing choice voucher holders. *Cityscape: A Journal of Policy Development and Research, 11*(3), 99–126. https://www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/cityscpe/vol11num3/ch5.pdf

Baugh, R. (2020, September). *Annual flow report: Refugees and asylees: 2019*. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics. http://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2019/refugee_and_asylee_2019.pdf

Beiser, M., & Hou, F. (2006). Ethnic identity, resettlement stress and depressive affect among Southeast Asian refugees in Canada. *Social Science & Medicine, 63*(1), 137–150. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2005.12.002

Bhatta, B. (2010). *Analysis of urban growth and sprawl from remote sensing data.* Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-05299-6

Biddix, J. P. (2018). *Research methods and applications for student affairs*. Jossey-Bass.

Boenigk, S., Fisk, R., Kabadayi, S., Alkire, L., Cheung, L., Corus, C., Finsterwalder, J., Kreimer, A. A., Luca, N., Omeira, M., Paul, P., Santos, M. F., & Smidt, N. (2020). Rethinking service systems and public policy: A transformative refugee service experience framework. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing, 40*(2), 165–183. https://doi.org/10.1177/0743915620962815

Brick, K., Cushing-Savvi, A., Elshafie, S., Krill, A., Scanlon, M. M., & Stone, M. (2010). *Refugee resettlement in the United States: An examination of the challenges and proposed solutions*. Columbia University School of International Affairs.

Brown, A., & Scribner, T. (2014). Unfulfilled promises, future possibilities: The refugee resettlement system in the United States. *Journal on Migration and Human Security, 2*(2), 101–120. https://doi.org/10.1177/233150241400200203

Canadian Council for Refugees. (1998, February). *Best settlement practices: Settlement services for refugees and immigrants in Canada*. https://ccrweb.ca/sites/ccrweb.ca/files/static-files/bpfina1.htm

Collins, P. H. (2000). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Corbett, T., & Noyes, J. L. (2007, November 8–10). *Human services systems integration: A conceptual framework* [Paper presentation]. Annual Meeting of the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, Washington, DC, United States. https://www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/dps/pdfs/dp133308.pdf

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum, 1*(8), 139–168. http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8

Creswell, J. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. SAGE Publications.

Czischke Ljubetic, D., & Huisman, C. (2018). Integration through collaborative housing?: Dutch starters and refugees forming self-managing communities in Amsterdam. *Urban Planning, 3*(4), 156–165. https://doi.org/10.17645/up.v3i4.1727

Daly, J., Kellehear, A., & Gliksman, M. (1997). *The public health researcher: A methodological guide*. Oxford University Press.

Dion, K. L. (2001). Immigrants' perceptions of housing discrimination in Toronto: The housing new Canadians' project. *Journal of Social Issues, 57*(3), 523–539. www.hnc.utoronto.ca/pdfs/home/Dion_Discriminatio-in-TO_JS.pdf

Eisner, E. (1992). Objectivity in educational research. *Curriculum Inquiry, 22*(1), 9–15. https://doi.org/10.1080/03626784.1992.11075389

Enekwe, B. (2016) *Refugees and resettlement: A qualitative analysis of refugee integration through social & support services* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Maryland]. Digital Repository at the University of Maryland. https://doi.org/10.13016/M2XR44

Erden, O. (2017). Building bridges for refugee empowerment. *Journal of International Migration and Integration, 18*(1), 249–265. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-016-0476-y

Fair Housing Partners of Washington State. (2016, January). *Fair housing in Washington state: 100 FAQs for property owners and managers* (9th ed.). King County Office of Civil Rights. https://kingcounty.gov/~/media/exec/civilrights/documents/100Qs.pdf

Flores, N. (2017, March 3). *City of Seattle 2016 homeless needs assessment*. City of Seattle: Human Interests Blog. https://humaninterests.seattle.gov/2017/03/03/city-of-seattle-2016-homeless-needs-assessment/

Galley, C. (2018). *The connection between homelessness, immigration, and displacement*. Center on Human Rights Education. Retrieved September 18, 2020.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. Basic Books.

Goodson, J., & Sikes, P. (2009). Studying teachers' life histories and professional practice. In P. Sikes (Ed.), *Life history research in educational settings* (pp. 57–74). Open University Press.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation.* SAGE Publications.

Haines, D. W. (2010). *Safe haven?: A history of refugees in America*. Kumarian Press.

Hanley, J., Mhamied, A. A., Cleveland, J., Hajjar, O., Hassan, G., Ives, N., Khyar, R., & Hynie, M. (2018). The social networks, social support and social capital of Syrian refugees privately sponsored to settle in Montreal: Indications for employment and housing during their early experiences of integration. *Canadian Ethnic Studies, 50*(2), 123–148. https://doi.org/10.1353/ces.2018.0018

Heckathorn, D. D. (1997). Respondent-driven sampling: A new approach to the study of hidden populations. *Social Problems, 44*(2), 174–199. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3096941

Immigration and Nationality Act, Title 8 USC 1101. (1952). https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=granuleid:USC-prelim-title8-section1101&num=0&edition=prelim

International Organization for Migration. (2020). *Key migration terms*. Retrieved August 21, 2020, from https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms

International Rescue Committee. (2020). *What we do*. http://www.rescue.org/what-we-do

Ivankova, N. V. (2015). *Mixed methods applications in action research: From methods to community action.* SAGE Publications.

Kerwin, D. M. (2010, December). *More than IRCA: US legalization programs and the current policy debate.* Migration Policy Institute. https://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/legalization-historical.pdf

Kimmel, M., & Ferber, A. L. (2017). *Privilege*: *A reader*. Westview Press.

King County. (2017). *King county inclusive communities pledge.* https://kingcounty.gov/~/media/elected/executive/equity-social-justice/2017/InclusiveCommunitiesPledge3-16b-17.ashx?la=en

King County Affordable Housing Committee. (2019). *Building a foundation: First annual report of the affordable housing committee.* Department of Community and Human Services. https://www.kingcounty.gov/~/media/depts/community-human-services/housing-homelessness-community-development/documents/affordable-housing-committee/AHC_AnnualReport2019_10-16-2020.ashx?la=en

King County Department of Community and Human Services. (n.d.). *Housing, homelessness and community development division.* King County. https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/community-human-services/housing.aspx

King County Hospitals for a Healthier Community. (2019). *King County community health needs assessment 2018/2019.* King County. https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/health/data/community-health-indicators/~/media/depts/health/data/documents/2018-2019-Joint-CHNA-Report.ashx

King County Hospitals for a Healthier Community. (2021). *King County community health needs assessment 2021/2022.* King County. https://kingcounty.gov/depts/health/data/community-health-indicators/~/media/depts/health/data/documents/2021-2022-Joint-CHNA-Report.ashx

King County Housing Authority. (n.d.-a). *About us: Agency overview.* Retrieved December 9, 2020, from https://www.kcha.org/about/overview

King County Housing Authority. (n.d.-b). *About us: Housing programs.* Retrieved December 9, 2020, from https://www.kcha.org/about/programs

King County Housing Authority. (n.d.-c). *About us: Key facts.* Retrieved January 13, 2021, from https://www.kcha.org/about/facts

King County Immigrant and Refugee Commission. (n.d.). *Background and goals of the King County immigrant and refugee commission.* Kingcounty.gov. Retrieved December 14, 2020, from https://kingcounty.gov/elected/executive/equity-social-justice/Immigrant-and-Refugee/Immigrant-Refugee-Commission/Background-and-Goals.aspx

King County Office of Equity and Social Justice. (n.d.). *Equity and social justice strategic plan.* Kingcounty.gov. Retrieved August 21, 2020, from https://kingcounty.gov/elected/executive/equity-social-justice/strategic-plan.aspx

Kirk, G., & Okazawa-Rey, M. (2018). Identities and social locations. In M. Adams, W. J. Blumenfeld, D. C. J. Catalano, K. S. DeJong, H. W. Hackman, L. E. Hopkins, B. J. Love, M. L. Peters, D. Shlasko, & X. Zuniga (Eds.), *Readings for diversity and social justice* (4th ed., pp. 10–15). Routledge.

Kramer-Roy, K. (2015). Using participatory and creative methods to facilitate emancipatory research with people facing multiple disadvantage: A role for health and care professionals. *Disability & Society, 30*(8), 1207–1224. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2015.1090955

Krogstad, J. M. (2019, October 7). *Key facts about refugees to the U.S.* Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/10/07/key-facts-about-refugees-to-the-u-s/

Lutheran Community Services Northwest. (n.d.). *Helping refugees build a new life in the Northwest.* Retrieved December 17, 2020, from https://lcsnw.org/program/refugee-resettlement-program-2/

Mills, G. E., & Gay, L. R. (2019). *Educational research: Competencies for analysis and applications* (12th ed.). Pearson.

Mossaad, N. (2019, March). *Annual flow report: Refugees and asylees: 2017.* Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics. http://www.dhs.govsites/default/files/publications/Refugees_Asylees_2017.pdf

Murdie, R. A. (2008). Pathways to housing: The experiences of sponsored refugees and refugee claimants in accessing permanent housing in Toronto. *Journal of International Migration and Integration, 9*(1), 81–101. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-008-0045-0

National Immigration Forum. (n.d.). *Factsheet: U.S. refugee resettlement.* https://immigrationforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Refugee-Factsheet-_Final_Updated-FY20.pdf

National Immigration Law Center. (2018). *Rental housing programs: Public housing, Section 8, rural housing, and low-income tax credit housing.* https://www.nilc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/rental_housing_1005.pdf

Noel, L. (2016, June 27–30). *Promoting an emancipatory research paradigm in design education and practice* [Conference presentation]. Design Research Society 50th Anniversary Conference, Brighton, United Kingdom.

Noh, S., Beiser, M., Kaspar, V., Hou, F., & Rummens, J. (1999). Perceived racial discrimination, depression, and coping: A study of Southeast Asian refugees in Canada. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 40*(3), 193–207. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2676348

Office of Refugee Resettlement. (n.d.). *Resettlement services*. Administration for Children & Families. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/refugees

Office of Refugee Resettlement. (2015, November 24). *State of Washington - programs and services by city.* Administration for Children & Families. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/contact-information/state-washington-programs-and-services-locality

Office of Refugee Resettlement. (2021, February 18). *What we do*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/about/what-we-do

Preston, P., Murdie, R., D'Addario, S., Sibanda, P., Murnaghan, A. M., Logan, J., & Ahn, M. H. (2011). *Precarious housing and hidden homelessness among refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants in the Toronto metropolitan area*. Centre for Research on Immigration and Settlement. https://refugeeresearch.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Preston-et-al-2011-Precarious-housing-for-newcomers-in-Toronto.pdf

Qureshi, H. A. (2018). Theoretical sampling in qualitative research: A multi-layered nested sampling scheme. *International Journal of Contemporary Research and Review, 9*(8), 20218–20222. https://doi.org/10.15520/ijcrr/2018/9/08/576

Radford, J. (2017, November 2). *How U.S. refugee resettlement in each state has shifted since 2002.* Pew Research Center. http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/11/02/how-u-s-refugee-resettlement-shifted-in-states-since-2002/

Refugee Processing Center. (2021, June 30). *Admissions & arrivals: Refugee admissions report*. Retrieved July 26, 2021 from https://www.wrapsnet.org/admissions-and-arrivals/

Refugee Women's Alliance. (n.d.). *Housing and homelessness prevention.* https://www.rewa.org/services/housing-and-homelessness-prevention/

Seattle Housing Authority. (2019, July). *Housing choice voucher (HCV) program administrative plan.* https://www.seattlehousing.org/sites/default/files/SHA_AP_V3_2019_1.pdf

Shaw, S. A., & Poulin, P. (2015). Findings from an extended case management U.S. refugee resettlement program. *Journal of International Migration and Integration, 16*(4), 1099–1120. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-014-0374-0

Shrestha, C. (2011, May). *Power and politics in resettlement: A case study of Bhutanese refugees in the USA.* United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. https://www.unhcr.org/4dca7f129.pdf

Simich, L., Beiser, M., & Mawani, F. N. (2003). Social support and the significance of shared experience in refugee migration and resettlement. *Western Journal of Nursing Research, 25*, 872–891. https://doi.org/10.1177/0193945903256705

Somerville, P. (1998). Explanations of social exclusion: Where does housing fit in? *Housing Studies, 13*(6), 761–780. https://doi.org/10.1080/02673039883056

Spreen, M. (1992). Rare populations, hidden populations, and link-tracing designs: What and why? *Bulletin of Sociological Methodology, 36*(1), 34–58. https://doi.org/10.1177/075910639203600103

Spreen, M., & Zwaagstra, R. (1994). Personal network sampling, outdegree analysis and multilevel analysis: Introducing the network concept in studies of hidden populations. *International Sociology, 9*(4), 475–491. https://doi.org/10.1177/026858094009004006

Steimel, S. (2017). Negotiating refugee empowerment(s) in resettlement organizations. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies, 15*(1), 90–107. https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2016.1180470

Stoecker, R. (2012). *Research methods for community change: A project-based approach*. SAGE Publications.

Sue, D. W. (2018). Microaggressions, marginality, and oppression: An introduction. In M. Adams, W. J. Blumenfeld, D. C. J. Catalano, K. S. DeJong, H. W. Hackman, L. E. Hopkins, B. J. Love, M. L. Peters, D. Shlasko, & X. Zuniga (Eds.), *Readings for diversity and social justice* (4th ed., pp. 22–26). Routledge.

Turkington, R. (1997). Housing, "race," social policy and empowerment. *Netherlands Journal of Housing and the Built Environment, 12*(3), 343–345. https://doi.org/10.2307/41107709

United Nations. (n.d.). *Universal declaration of human rights.* Retrieved July 18, 2020 from https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-of-human-rights/

United Nations General Assembly. (1951). Geneva Convention. https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocity-crimes/Doc.30_GC-I-EN.pdf

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (n.d.). *Glossary.* Global Focus. Retrieved August 21, 2020 from https://reporting.unhcr.org/glossary/u

U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). Geographic mobility by selected characteristics in the United States. https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2020/demo/geographic-mobility/cps-2020.html

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2009). *Report to the congress - FY 2009.* Office of Refugee Resettlement. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/orr/orr_fy_2009_annual_report_to_congress.pdf

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (n.d.). *Housing choice vouchers fact sheet.* Retrieved December 18, 2020 from https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/about/fact_sheet

U.S. Department of State. (2020). *Report to Congress on proposed refugee admissions for fiscal year 2021*. https://www.state.gov/reports/report-to-congress-on-proposed-refugee-admissions-for-fy-2021/

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. (n.d.). *Housing and essential needs referral program.* Washingtonstate.gov. Retrieved December 9, 2020 from https://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa/program-summary/housing-and-essential-needs-hen-referral

Weine, S. M., Hoffman, Y., Ware, N., Tugenzberg, T., Hakizimana, L., Dahnweigh, G., Currie, M., & Wagner, M. (2011). Secondary migration and relocation among African refugee families in the United States. *Family Process, 50*(1), 27–46. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1545-5300.2010.01344.x

Welch, S. (1975) Sampling by referral in dispersed population. *The Public Opinion Quarterly, 39*(2), 237–245. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2748151

Young, I. M. (2014). Five faces of oppression. *The Philosophical Forum, 19*(4), 270–290. https://www.sunypress.edu/pdf/62970.pdf

Appendix A

Employee and Volunteer Intake Survey

Q1 Are you at least 18 years old?
- o Yes
- o No

Skip To: Q11 If Q1 = No

Q2 For the organization you represent, are you an employee or a volunteer?
- o Employee
- o Volunteer

Skip To: Q3 If Q2 = Employee *Skip To: Q6 If Q2 = Volunteer*

Q3 Are you currently employed by an organization providing resettlement housing services for refugees and asylees in King County, Washington?
- o Yes
- o No

Q4 Have you been employed by your current organization for at least 2 consecutive years?
- o Yes
- o No

Q5 In your role at your organization, do you work directly with refugee and asylee populations?
- o Yes
- o No

Skip To: Q10 If Q5 = Yes *Skip To: Q11 If Q5 = No*

Q6 Do you currently volunteer with an organization providing resettlement housing services for refugees and asylees in King County, Washington?
- o Yes
- o No

Q7 Have you volunteered with the organization for a minimum of 3 consecutive years?
- o Yes
- o No

Q8 Have you maintained a minimum of 150 volunteer hours annually at your organization?
- o Yes
- o No

Q9 As a volunteer, do you work directly with refugee and asylee populations?
- o Yes
- o No

Q10 Informed Consent Signature

Q11 Thank you for your time! if you meet the selection criteria, we will reach out to you to schedule your participation in a focus group.

Appendix B

Letter to Organizations – Request for Collaboration

Project Title: **Refugee and Asylee Housing Resettlement Experiences in King County, Washington**

Dear [Name],

Doctor of Education and Organizational Learning and Leadership student researchers from Seattle University together with the King County Department of Community and Human services are collaborating on a project to better understand the experiences of refugees and asylees in accessing housing. The project will involve focus groups and optional in-depth interviews with refugees and asylees. In addition to the refugee and asylee population, interviews will be conducted with employees and/or volunteers of organizations providing housing support.

The focus group discussions with refugees and asylees will explore their experiences in securing housing that is suitable, affordable, appropriate and stable, and the means they use to overcome any challenges, particularly the social networks that assist them. The opportunity for follow- up interviews will be available to enable the research team gain deeper understanding of individual refugees/asylees experiences beyond the focus group discussions. The interviews for individuals employed by organizations providing housing support will focus on the nature of the barriers that the refugees and asylees served by the organization encounter when searching for housing, and resources available in the housing search.

The focus on individuals identifying as refugees and asylees is because less is known about their housing experiences in King County and may face more challenges than other individuals relocating to the area in finding housing. We are also interested in establishing and strengthening partnerships between King County and organizations providing housing services to the refugee population.

With that, we are requesting your organization to consider assisting us in the recruitment process and to serve as a liaison to the refugee and asylee population, as well connecting us to employees and/or volunteers that are directly involved with providing housing services. The assistance of your organization in connecting our research team to the study population is crucial to the success of this study. If you are interested in participation, please respond to xxxxx@xxxxx.edu, so we can collaborate.

If you have any questions, please contact [redacted] at xxxxx@xxxxx.edu or (XXX) XXX-XXXX. **We appreciate your consideration and look forward to hearing from you.**

Sincerely,

Alicia Al-Aryan, Chase Huffman, and Obed Kabanda

Appendix C

Letter to Individuals– Request for Participation

Project Title: **Refugee and Asylee Housing Resettlement Experiences in King County, Washington**

Dear [Name],

Doctor of Education and Organizational Learning and Leadership research students from Seattle University along with the King County Department of Community and Human Services are collaborating on a project to better understand the experience refugees and asylees have in finding suitable, affordable, appropriate, and stable housing in King County, Washington. The project will involve focus group discussions, and interviews with individuals working at organization providing housing services, and refugees and asylees accessing provided services.

The focus groups with organization workers will focus on the nature of the barriers that refugees and asylees encounter when searching for housing, and resources available for these groups in their search for housing. Focus group discussion with refugees and asylees will focus on their experiences securing suitable, affordable, appropriate and stable housing, and how they overcome any challenges, particularly the social networks that assist them. The research team is focused on refugees and asylees because less is known about their housing experiences, and they are likely to face more challenges than other populations in finding housing.

Through analysis of the findings from surveys, focus groups and interviews, we plan to develop recommendations for King County for housing program service accessibility. We will disseminate news about the project through email, a public dissertation defense presentation, and a report and summary.

If you are interested in participation, please respond to xxxxx@xxxxx.edu with your best contact information. When we hear back confirming your interest, additional information for the next steps will be provided.

If you have any questions, please contact [redacted] at xxxxx@xxxxx.edu or (xxx) xxx-xxxx. **We appreciate your interest and look forward to hearing from you**.

Sincerely,

Alicia Al-Aryan, Chase Huffman, Obed Kabanda

Appendix D

Informed Consent for Individuals Employed by Organizations providing Housing Information and Services

TITLE: Refugee and Asylee Housing Resettlement Experiences in King County, Washington

INVESTIGATORS: Alicia Al-Aryan, Chase Huffman, and Obed Kabanda

ADVISOR: Dr. Taylor Colette, College of Education, XXX-XXX-XXXX

PURPOSE: You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to investigate housing experiences of refugees and asylees in King County, Washington. Many refugees, asylees, and asylum seekers face challenges accessing and securing housing. To further understand the services that may help refugees and asylees/asylum seekers, we are studying the housing experiences of refugees and asylees in King County, Washington. You will be asked to complete participation in a focus group that will include between five and eight other employees or volunteers in a discussion of the challenges that refugees, asylees, and asylum seekers encounter when accessing housing. The focus groups will take about 90–120 minutes.

SOURCE OF SUPPORT: This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree in Education and Organizational Learning and Leadership at Seattle University.

RISKS: We do not foresee any risks or discomfort from your participation in the research.

BENEFITS: The focus group discussions will give you some useful information about the housing experiences of refugees, asylees, and asylum seekers, and an opportunity to share best practices with other settlement and housing workers.

INCENTIVES: You will receive no gifts/incentives for this study. Participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY: All information you supply during the research will be held in confidence and unless you specifically indicate your consent, your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research. All participants in the focus group will be asked to ensure anonymity of participants and confidentiality of the discussions; however, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in a focus group setting. We ask all participants to respect others' privacy and keep all information shared confidential. The information will be collected from transcriptions of the recorded focus group discussions. Your data will be safely stored in encrypted digital storage for 3 years and only research staff will have access to this information. When the research study ends, any identifying information will be removed from the data, or it will be destroyed. All of the information you provide will be kept confidential. After 3 years all tapes and digital records will be destroyed. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law. However, if we learn you intend to harm yourself or others, we must notify the authorities.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: Your participation in this study is *voluntary*. You may withdraw your consent to participate at any time without penalty. Your withdrawal will not influence any other services to which you may be otherwise entitled.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request. The results will be published in a report with an executive summary identifying the main priorities for improving current services. The executive summary will be provided to refugees, and asylees who participate in the study and to settlement service agencies, and housing help centers in King County.

Alicia Al-Aryan, Chase Huffman, and Obed Kabanda

[Phone Numbers Redacted]

[Email Addresses Redacted]

VOLUNTARY CONSENT: I have read the above statements and understand what is being asked of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason, without penalty. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any concerns about my participation in this study, I may call Alicia Al-Aryan (XXX-XXX-XXXX), Chase Huffman (XXX-XXX-XXXX) and Obed Kabanda (XXX-XXX-XXXX). If I have any concerns that my rights are being violated, I may contact Dr. Michael Spinetta, Chair of the Seattle University Institutional Review Board at (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

Participant's Signature Date

Investigator's Signature Date

Investigator's Signature Date

Investigator's Signature Date

Appendix E

Focus Group Protocol for Individuals who work for Organizations That Provide Refugee and Asylee Housing Services

Interview Protocol Project: Employee Focus Group

Time of Focus Groups:

Date:

Place:

Facilitator:

Co-facilitator:

Observer:

Interviewees:

Thank you for joining us today. We are [researcher names], doctoral students in the Education and Organizational Learning and Leadership (EOLL) program at Seattle University. Our research project is focused on gaining perspectives of asylees or refugee and the process of accessing housing services in King County. We are particularly interested in your views about accessing housing services, and what your experience in helping asylees or refugees to access housing services in King County. We will ask you questions about the housing, your experience with King County Department of Community and Human Services, and your perspective on housing services for asylees or refugees. We are looking for your personal experience and some specific examples about what you have experienced.

Questions

1. How long have you been working in refugee resettlement?
    a. What is your current role as a refugee resettlement agent in providing housing? How long have you been in this role?
2. Please provide background of your agency and how it operates in providing housing services?
3. What are the housing services that are in place for refugees that are resettled here to be successful?

4. In your experience, what are the most immediate housing needs for refugees resettled here to be successful?
    a. Beyond housing, what are the other immediate needs for refugees resettled here?
5. In your experience, what are the long-term housing needs for refugees resettled here to be successful?
    a. Beyond housing, what are other long-term needs for refugees resettled here to be successful?
6. In your experience, are the housing needs of refugees met by the services provided by your organization? (Probe for a yes response and or for a no response)
    a. What type of coaching/guiding information etc. do you think would be beneficial to newcomers?
    b. How does your organization provide in terms of information about access to additional housing services? Is this on an ongoing basis?
7. Please describe any gaps in housing service provisions that you have noticed through your work. Can you identify or share more about any barriers preventing access to housing services by refugees and asylees?
8. Has COVID-19 impacted your ability to provide housing information and services to refugees and Asylees that your organization serves? If yes, how?
9. How could your organization improve their services to refugees and asylees?

Thank you all for helping us with this focus group today. We want you to know that your responses are completely confidential. If you have any questions or comments, feel free to contact us.

Appendix F

SEATTLEU

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

[redacted]

May 18, 2021

Obed Kabanda, Chase Huffman, Alicia Al-Aryan
College / Dept.
Seattle University

Dear Obed, Chase, and Alicia,

Thank you for completing all revision requests. As I indicated in my May 12 email, your protocol **FY2021-009 Refugee and Asylee Housing Resettlement Experiences Within King County, Washington** is now approved until **June 10, 2021**, and you may begin your study.

Note the following post-approval IRB policies, and always use the most current forms on our website:

- If you wish to make any changes in the course of your study, you must first submit a **Modification Request** and obtain *written* IRB approval before implementing any modifications.
- If any **unexpected problem** arises that introduces an unforeseen risk or complication, please notify the IRB immediately.
- Otherwise, by **June 10, 2021**, you must notify the IRB of your study ending, so we can officially close the protocol to remain compliant with Federal and SU human subjects protections policies. In the report you must clarify what will happen to any identifiable data (e.g., will be retained/stored by faculty adviser) as described in the approved protocol.
- If you wish to continue with the project beyond the IRB approval period, you will need to submit a **Modification Request** to transfer lead PI status to your faculty adviser. You may then continue to work in collaboration with the SU faculty affiliate in the role of an unaffiliated co-investigator.
- Finally, if for any reason, you discontinue the project, please notify the IRB immediately, so we can mark the protocol as withdrawn.

If you have further questions, I'm happy to assist. Best wishes with your research project.

Best wishes,

[redacted]

Andrea McDowell, PhD
IRB Administrator

cc: Dr. Colette Taylor, Faculty Adviser