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Collectivism and Uncertainty Avoidance in Narrative Oral Histories of Resettled Syrian Refugees

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Abstract

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MA, Rutgers University, 1999

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Emotional resilience among resettled refugees is an indicator of cultural integration and adaptation into a host country which in turn impacts schools, resettlement agencies, and refugee service organizations in how they can best meet the needs of refugees. The documented decline in emotional resilience among resettled Syrian refugees during the past decade is linked to the problem of cultural value disparities causing a resultant decline in mental health and socioemotional wellbeing. The purpose of this narrative qualitative study was to explore expressions of cultural value dimensions such as collectivism and uncertainty avoidance in oral histories of resettled Syrian refugees. Applying Hofstede's value dimensions as a theoretical framework to explore expressions of resilience through a culturally cognizant lens addressed the research gap in refugee resilience studies. The research question exploring expressions of collectivism and uncertainty avoidance in the refugee narratives was addressed by conducting a thematic content analysis using linguistic assessment on a data source of 26 publicly archived narrative oral histories collected from 2017 to 2018 from Syrian refugees resettled in countries other than the US. Study results indicated that constructs of collectivism informed participant narratives and impacted cultural adaptation more than elements of faith adherence or uncertainty avoidance. Expressions of family and community connections in particular rose to the forefront in the narratives. Positive social change can result from this study through increased understanding of refugee resilience using a cultural lens which can lead to improved refugee mental health, socioemotional wellness, and cultural adaptation.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated first and foremost to my Lord who never burdens a soul with a burden greater than that soul can bear and who has blessed me infinitely with faith and gratitude and enveloped me in love and patience through a family without whom I would be lost in this life. So much of who I am, what I do, and where I am going would never have been possible without my husband by my side as my biggest cheerleader, my greatest support, and the single most dedicated soul who has believed in me endlessly throughout these past 22 years even when I stopped believing in myself. To my children, Aya, Ali, and Layla, who have consistently been my reason why; I hope that I have made you as proud as you continue to make me every day. You constantly amaze me as you grow into the loving, kind, compassionate human beings that this world needs. To my parents, especially my father, who taught me the value of hard work, waking up early, and maintaining an even keel despite the most turbulent of storms and to my mother who taught me how to steer through that turbulence. To my three sisters, my husband's sisters, and the many friends who I consider sisters: your scientific degrees inspired me to dig deeper in my decidedly non-science-y field. And finally, this work is dedicated to the millions of refugees and globally displaced people whose stories of emotional resilience need to be told. You are the anchor by which we learn to love, to lead, to give, and to forgive despite the atrocities that this world may bring.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Refugees have served as a great source of study in recent years due to an exodus of forced migrants from various countries in response to trauma due to war, political upheaval, and natural disasters (Pieloch, McCullough, & Marks, 2016). This influx of forced migrants into countries throughout the Middle East, North America, and Europe has led to the formation of diaspora communities intent on protecting culture and faith in a new land (UNHCR, 2020). This study focused on understanding how resettled Syrian refugees experience cultural adaptation and resilience as expressed through collectivism and uncertainty avoidance in narrative oral histories.

In reviewing research on how refugees' cultural adaptability evolves after migrating from a traumatic situation and resettling in a host country, evidence shows that resilience is the defining characteristic in both children and adult refugees who can determine wellbeing postmigration (Pieloch et al., 2016; Sim, Fazel, Bowes, & Gardner, 2018). To arrive at this finding, researchers have used a variety of resilience factors to measure wellbeing as a path towards better understanding the impact of forced migration on cultural adaptability and relationship dynamics (Block & Walter, 2017). This study used the theoretical framework of Hofstede's value dimensions (1983) to explore resilience through linguistic constructs in collected Syrian refugee narrative oral histories.

In order to better understand the experience of Syrian refugee resilience as an indicator of cultural adaptation, the study explored expressions of resilience in first person refugee narratives gathered between 2017-2018. The first chapter of this study introduces the background, the problem statement, and the purpose of the study. It also

presents the research question, the theoretical framework, and the nature of the study. Definitions, assumptions, scope, and delimitations of the study are then discussed. Chapter 1 closes with a discussion of potential limitations, the significance of the study and a summary of the aforementioned points.

Background

Since the start of their country's Civil War in 2011, Syrian refugees have now become the largest population of forced migrants since World War II (UNHCR, 2020). With an internal displacement of approximately 6.2 million residents forced to flee their homes and an estimated 6.7 million civilians who have fled the country following the Arab Spring uprisings (Akbarzadeh & Conduit, 2016; İcduygu & Sert, 2019), the Syrian refugee crisis continues to escalate almost a decade after its start. The experiences of these forced migrants upon resettlement has often included trauma-induced breakdowns in resilience, defined as a decrease in social support and acceptance, difficulty attaining successful acculturation, negative education outcomes, inability to maintain religious adherence, avoidance of family and friends, and a loss of hope (Liu, Reed, & Girard, 2017). Mental health issues such as increased incidence of depression, anxiety, PTSD, panic disorders, OCD behaviors, along with socioemotional difficulties are also found to be a common occurrence among many members of displaced families and forced migrants (Hein & Niazi, 2016; Pieloch et al., 2016; Yaylaci, 2018). Although often assessed through a self-actualization resilience lens, in this study I explored expressions of resettled refugee resilience from a culturally cognizant lens that provided greater insight into value dimension disparities that can result in adaptation difficulties.

Problem Statement

The social problem of declining resilience and increased mental health struggles among resettled Syrian refugees leads to difficulty in cultural integration post resettlement (Afkhami & Gorentz, 2019). Due to documented Syrian refugee mental health struggles in resettlement, there is a marked decrease in emotional resilience post resettlement (Yasin, 2018). Applying a cultural values lens toward understanding the constructs of resilience offers a window into redefining resilience from a non-Western or self-centric perspective (Koltko-Rivera, 2006). Although refugee integration challenges have been studied from the psychological or social standpoint of resilience theory, I found no research that explored refugee integration in terms of cultural value dimensions as expressed in Syrian culture, with emphasis on collectivism and uncertainty avoidance (see Hofstede, 1983). Given such, further research is warranted that could explore the experiences of Syrian refugees through value dimensions to understand cultural integration and adaptation as a component of resilient resettlement (Koinova, 2016).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of conducting this qualitative narrative study was to explore how Syrian refugees, interviewed between 2017-2018, express the experiences of cultural integration and adaptation post resettlement through expressions of value dimensions in collected oral histories. Exploring resettled Syrian refugee resilience from a culturally cognizant self-transcendence perspective helps expand the understanding of cultural value dimensions' implications as resilience constructs (Eades, 2013; Koltka-Rivera, 2006). The examination of categorizing terms such as family, faith, home, safety, loss,

and happiness as linguistic constructs indicative of resilience in the narratives of resettled Syrian refugees will help interventionists develop more effective integration efforts informed by an increased understanding of collectivist constructs and uncertainty avoidance (see Hofstede, 1983).

Research Question

How do resettled Syrian refugees express collective family constructs and uncertainty avoidance in narrative oral histories?

Theoretical Framework

Hofstede's cultural value dimensions theory (1983) provides insight on how differing global values affect interaction and response from a social constructivist view and can help researchers gain a better understanding of how refugees experience resilience in cultural integration. While family resilience is often captured as the extent to which a family can recover from trauma or difficulty (Aguilar, 2018), resilience as a form of self-transcendence informed by value dimensions provides more fertile ground for exploration of a Syrian refugee perspective (see Hofstede, 1983). This is because Syrian culture is highly collectivist. Furthermore, resilience among the highly collectivist culture of Syrian refugees as categorized by Hofstede (1983) can be understood in conjunction with other value dimensions, such as uncertainty avoidance. Within Hofstede's value dimensions (1983), the concept of uncertainty avoidance is indicative of a culture characterized by high reliance on faith and a high comfort level regarding uncertainty about the future. Through thematic content analysis of oral histories, collectivism and uncertainty avoidance as value dimensions (Hofstede, 1983) were explored in the way

Syrian refugees share stories of their resettlement while capturing cultural integration experiences. A social constructivist lens applied to Syrian refugees' experiences provided a path towards better understanding experiences of self-transcendence (see Koltka-Rivera, 2006) in terms of resilience within a collectivist culture with low uncertainty avoidance (see Hofstede, 1983).

Applying the value dimensions model developed by Hofstede (1983) to assess culturally cognizant resilience through expressions of collectivism and uncertainty avoidance allowed deeper exploration of resettled Syrian refugee cultural adaptation. By assessing refugee resilience in the face of forced migration through the lens of value dimensions such as collectivism and uncertainty avoidance, greater understanding can be gained regarding transitioning into a new culture, as indicated in Arslangilay's (2018) study that explored refugee transitions into school culture. The research on the topic of cross-cultural transitions shows a trend of increased difficulty adjusting to school cultures when family dynamics are still changing post migration (Arslangilay, 2018). The resettlement stage for refugee migration facilitates the need for studies of resilience as a meaning making unit in understanding the cultural factors of resettled refugee resilience (Pieloch et al., 2016).

From a historical perspective of literature compilation and the application of a theoretical model guiding the understanding of cultural immersion (see Hofstede & Bond, 1984), this qualitative study captured an avenue of research that went beyond school culture studies (see Arslangilay, 2018) and into more expansive resilience research on resettled Syrian refugees. The missing link in much of the research on refugees is that the

focus has been on refugees resettled in the US, Turkey, Jordan, and Sweden (Skran & Easton-Calabria, 2020). Studies on Syrian refugees resettled in other parts of the world have been lacking. This study filled that research gap by exploring linguistic constructs in the narrative oral histories of resettled Syrian refugees resettled in Germany, Brazil, Italy, Lebanon, Canada, Greece, and Iraq rather than in more commonly studied locations throughout the Middle East, Asia and Europe.

Nature of the Study

The research method for this study employed a qualitative narrative approach using thematic content analysis on secondary data in the form of archived oral histories. I analyzed the narratives using thematic content analysis with a focus on linguistic assessment (see Roberts, 1989) of oral histories collected by the Duke University Oral Histories' Project (2018). The sample consisted of English-speaking, Syrian refugees expelled from their country post-2011. The countries of resettlement for Syrian refugees included in the oral histories from 2017 contained narratives from refugees resettled in Germany, Brazil, Italy, Lebanon, and Canada. The 2018 compilation included the oral histories of Syrian refugees resettled in Germany, Greece, and Iraq. This collection of narratives consisted of a total of 10 interview participants with 26 total interviews that I analyzed and coded qualitatively based on the transcription of each narrative.

The procedure for the study began with obtaining written permission from Duke University for the use of their archived oral histories of refugee stories of resettlement through the Rubenstein Library Archival Collection. Once I received the transcripts, I explored linguistic terms categorized under the codes of collectivism, uncertainty

avoidance, cultural adjustment, resettlement, refugee, and resilience. I chose these categories since they were terms rooted in the literature of refugee resilience research. The study sample was purposive in that the narrative oral histories had already been collected by Duke University (2018), and the sample consisted of 10 Syrian refugees interviewed between 2017 and 2018 with a total of 26 transcripts. Many of the recent qualitative studies on Syrian refugees have worked with samples of 8-10 interviews, case studies, and focus group respondents (Arslangilay, 2018; Sim et al., 2018; Sleijpen, Boeije, Kleber, & Mooren, 2016).

Definition of Terms

Collectivism: The way in which people in a society are integrated into groups with priority placed on valuing family, community, society, and country over prioritization of the self. Collectivism is often indicated through language choices of "we" over "I," in proximity in terms of nearness in physical space, and in communal relationship connections (Hofstede, 1983). On Hofstede's value dimensions scale, Syrian culture ranks highly on collectivism which means individuals from this cultural background tend to value family, community, and society more than the self.

Cultural Adaptation: Adjusting and integrating into a new culture by learning the language, understanding customs, and feeling a sense of belonging (Neuliep, 2017).

Individualism: This is a cultural value dimension that is more prevalent in Western society and describes a desire to reach self-satisfaction through individual pursuit (Hofstede, 1983).

Insha'Allah: An Arabic term used colloquially to indicate "God Willing" and inserted as a verbal marker of low uncertainty avoidance (Alsudis & Pillay, 2017).

Resettlement: This term describes the process through which refugees transfer from a temporary stay in an asylum country into another country that agrees to permanent settlement (UNHCR, 2020).

Resilience: In this study, the term resilience is defined as encompassing emotional, physical, psychological, spiritual, economic, family, and community wellbeing in the form of cultural adjustment and integration (Liu et al., 2017).

Self-Actualization: This term is at the pinnacle of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943) and embodies the idea that self-agency and self-reliance, primarily classified as Western individualistic traits, are a marker of resilience (Koltko-Rivera, 2006).

Self-Transcendence: This concept describes a level of emotional need that goes past self-actualization (Maslow, 1943) and moves towards overcoming the limits of the individual to achieve a more collective wellbeing (Koltko-Rivera, 2006).

Uncertainty Avoidance: This value dimension refers to the level of comfort a person has with ambiguity and uncertainty. The more comfortable someone is with ambiguity, the more likely they can adapt and adjust to unstructured situations (Hofstede, 1983). According to Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance scale, Syrian culture tends to rank very low in uncertainty avoidance which means there is a high level of comfort with the unknown and an acceptance of the idea that the future is not promised and nothing is absolutely certain.

Assumptions

To complete the study, I assumed that the interviewers were not biased in gathering the oral narrative histories. I also made the assumption that the refugee subjects had complete fluency in the English language based on the *NaTakallam* group level of proficiency because a linguistic analysis can lose its effectiveness through translation (Panter-Brick et al., 2018). And finally, I assumed participant honesty regarding the veracity of responses and that the refugees felt no pressure in naturally telling their stories through the oral histories.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of my study was determined through the use of secondary data in terms of transcript availability using Duke University's (2018) collected oral histories. The available transcripts consisted of the narratives of 10 resettled refugees in several different countries who provided a total of 26 interviews. The interviews conducted in 2017 consisted of three Skype sessions with each participant conducted in January, February, and March with six different participants from Canada, Italy, Lebanon, Brazil, and Germany. The interviews conducted in 2018 consisted of two Skype sessions held in January and February with four participants from Iraq, Greece, and Germany. In conducting the analysis, differences between demographics such as gender, education level, marital status, and religious affiliation were noted (see Table 1). In this way, different family dynamics were considered when exploring the concepts of collectivist constructs and uncertainty avoidance in refugee resettlement and adaptation. These

sources of data fit the research collection parameters that guided the original collection of oral histories that are archived at Duke University (Duke, 2018).

Because the oral history interviews were not gathered under any IRB regulations due to exemption, they are currently housed in the Duke University Archive of Documentary Arts and are available for public use. The materials were cited throughout the study as references that are housed at Duke University. All the interviewees signed release forms for the materials to be archived at the Duke University library and to remain publicly accessible to all. The interviewees assigned rights to Duke University, and the university provides the public with permission for the use of these transcripts for research. The students who collected the oral histories were instructed to allow the interviewees to talk at length and in their own way about their life narratives and to tell stories from their lives while reflecting on their experiences of resettlement.

The Duke University Oral History program participants worked with a group called *NaTakallam*, which is a language-learning start-up, to identify resettled refugees who willingly volunteered to participate in the oral history collection project. There was no plan to find interviewees to represent a specific country of refuge, economic situation, education level, marital status, age, gender, or sect (or any other restrictive parameter). Although most of the interviewees allowed their real names to be associated with their interviews for the archives, for the purpose of this study and all future research extracted from these transcripts, the names of interviewees were not, and will not, be used.

Limitations

Refugees are a vulnerable population who have already been the subject of much research and speculation (Darling, 2017; Heisbourg, 2015). While the researcher's background and position can be helpful in having precise knowledge of the subject of study, it can also cause increased researcher bias (Haider, 2018). Although researcher bias cannot be wholly eliminated, cognizance of this construct is key in improving research outcome. By taking a qualitative narrative approach and using oral histories from refugees who have not received social services from me or my organization, I was able to limit the scope of the research while still exploring this social phenomenon.

Although there was a limitation in design due to the use of archived data, the ethical considerations of anonymity and previously provided permission to be interviewed and recorded are well-preserved in the use of secondary research (Yigit, & Tatch, 2017). In the case of this study, the use of secondary data helped me avoid bias and the risk of traumatization of refugees that could occur through primary data collection. While this safety precaution is a protective measure for vulnerable populations, a limitation of using oral histories is that the available transcripts have dictated the sample size and pool. The open-ended oral history questions also do not allow for a focus on any one specific aspect or component of resettlement and integration. The study did not include restrictions of a specific age, other than adult respondents, or a specific gender or country of resettlement. The participant requirements were English-speaking resettled Syrian refugees interviewed between 2017-2018.

Significance

An exploration of Syrian refugees' reflections on resettlement through the lens of value dimensions can benefit federally sanctioned Voluntary Agencies (VolAgs) and caseworkers by providing a greater understanding of cultural implications for those who exhibit culturally variable value dimensions. In turn, this understanding can assist VolAgs, such as the International Rescue Committee, Church World Service, World Relief, and others, in facilitating more effective matching systems in terms of cultural integration informed by greater consciousness of culturally competent resilience (Jones & Teytelboym, 2017). Exploring the role of collectivism and uncertainty avoidance in refugee narratives can assist in developing intervention techniques that will help the constituents, and their resettlement caseworkers, teachers, and employers better meet the needs of this vulnerable population. The destigmatization that may result from gaining a greater understanding of the social phenomenon of refugee migration and resilience through understanding collectivist constructs and uncertainty avoidance will impact social change by decreasing the fear of the unknown and making the unfamiliar a bit more familiar through qualitative research and study (Pieloch et al., 2016).

Summary

This chapter focused on introducing the study concepts of background, problem statement, purpose of study, research question and theoretical framework. It also explored the nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope, and delimitations. Finally, limitations and the significance of the study were explored. The gap in the literature was

identified and the general direction of the study was provided. The next chapter will present the literature review related to this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In 1946, following World War II, as forced migrants fled from war and political crises in their home countries, the International Refugee Organization established the first global charter formally recognizing refugee status in terms of international resettlement rights (Esses, Hamilton, & Gaucher, 2017; Goodwin-Gill, 2017). Several decades later, in 1980, the US appointed official NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) known as VolAgs to assist in the refugee resettlement and transition process under the auspices of the 1980 Refugee Act (Kerwin, 2018; Jones & Teytelboym, 2017). Since that time, the number of refugees resettling in different countries throughout the world has increased significantly due to widespread turmoil and global crises related to political, economic, and environmental upheaval (Darling, 2017).

The Syrian refugee crisis that began in 2012 and continues through 2020 has resulted in the largest number of forced migrants leaving a specific country in the last decade (UNHCR, 2020). Due to the trauma of forced migration and struggles encountered upon entering the host country, resettled Syrian refugees may experience a decrease in resilience as a dynamic construct that is influenced by internal coping capacity in response to negative external experiences (Liu et al., 2017). The process of resettlement that follows refugee encampment can lead to the social problem of declining resilience and increased mental health struggles among resettled Syrian refugees, resulting in cultural adaptation difficulties (Afkhami & Gorentz, 2019). This narrative study was designed to qualitatively explore how recently resettled Syrian refugees

experience cultural adaptation through expressions of value dimensions in collected oral histories. Based on the current literature, cultural integration of resettled refugees is frequently framed through the lens of resilience research that explores the external impact of loss and forced migration on the sociopsychological responses of the refugee subject (Masten, 2016; Masten, Motti-Stefanidi, & Rahl-Brigman, 2019). However, researchers such as McSweeney (2002) also found that the implication of cultural differences plays a critical role in adaptation and integration.

To explore these concepts further, in this chapter I discuss the definitions of resilience across cultures and the application of resilience to resettled refugee experiences. Chapter 2 also includes the triple trauma paradigm and the trajectory of adaptation following traumatic experiences for refugees. The chapter continues with further exploration of resilience particularly among resettled Syrian refugees along with the impact of collectivism on the resettled refugee psyche. Finally, I discuss Hofstede's value dimensions (1983) as a theoretical framework through which cultural differences in responding to resilience can be explored.

Literature Search Strategy

To facilitate the exploration of research on refugee resilience and cultural adaptation, I visited several databases. The research for this study was conducted by first exploring the Walden University library databases and resources. The databases used through Walden's collection consisted of ProQuest Central, CQ Researcher, EBSCO, ERIC, SAGE Journals, PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, PTSDpubs, BioMedCentral, DOAJ, HaPI, HSSR, WHO, UN Data, Taylor and Francis Online, NAMI, and SocINDEX. In

addition to the Walden University databases, Google Scholar was also used by searching peer-reviewed articles from 2016 to 2020. The topics explored in the databases and through Google Scholar pertained to refugee resilience, trauma, and cultural adaptation/adjustment. The key search terms and phrases that were used to conduct the literature review research for this study consisted of the following: *history of refugee resettlement, recent refugees, Syrian refugees, refugees and resilience, definitions of resilience, Masten's theory of resilience, resilience and culture, resilience and faith, youth and refugee resilience, families and refugee resilience, resilience types, barriers to achieving resilience, family resilience, economic resilience, emotional resilience, community resilience, psychological resilience, physical resilience, mental resilience, spiritual resilience, inheriting resilience, learning resilience, triple trauma paradigm, mental healthcare and refugees, resettled refugee coping strategies, PTSD recovery and resilience, depression and anxiety among refugee families, effects of school atmosphere on refugee children, refugees and trauma, emotional responses to trauma, spiritual impact on trauma recovery, resettled Syrian refugee barriers to adaptation, barriers to cultural integration, identity fracturing, beyond Maslow's hierarchy, emotional needs assessments, refugee health screenings, cultural differences in resilience responses, cross-cultural adaptation, cultural integration, refugee resettlement and cultural integration, Hofstede's value dimensions, value dimensions applied to family studies, individualism versus collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, narrative oral histories, refugee narrative oral histories,* and *linguistic assessment of oral histories.*

Refugee Resilience

According to the American Psychological Association's (2020) definition, *resilience* describes the ability to adapt well in the face of adversity and/or trauma. However, the concept of being well-adapted may differ based on the lens through which wellness is defined (Liu et al., 2017). A common modern interpretation of the concept of resilience can be found in Masten's (2018) research which coincides with the APA's (2020) focus on the positive outcome of resilience framed in terms of self-actualization, self-love, and self-esteem as indicators of wellness. The limitation in using this resilience research as a blanketed approach is that, across cultures, conceptualizations of the self may vary and do not always equate to a monolithic interpretation of wellness (Koltko-Rivera, 2006). Contrary to Masten's (2018) view of resilience and the APA's (2020) definition, Liu et al. (2017) found that resilience cannot be conceptualized solely from an individualistic notion of psychological wellbeing. Liu et al. (2017) found in their research that various coping mechanisms of internal and external resilience should be evaluated through a culturally competent lens that allows for a more effectively integrative multisystem model of measurement that takes into account cultural responses to socioecological trauma.

Afkhami and Gorentz (2019), found that a culturally competent approach to resilience was more effective than applying narrower views of resilience to evaluating behavioral and mental health needs for newly resettled refugees. Ameli, Sinaii, Luna, Cheringal, and Berger (2018) conducted resilience assessments and found that factors of spiritual wellbeing, family relations, and emotional wellness were possible measures of

overall psychosocial propensity towards positive cultural adjustment. While some researchers recognize the importance of promoting wellness in refugee communities using a culturally competent paradigm, redefining resilience through a cultural lens tailored to resettled refugees is still being informed by trends in refugee resettlement (Im, Rodriguez, & Grumbine, 2020; Blount & Acuquaye, 2018).

Definitions of Resilience

Among these trends in resettlement research, there are variations in the way in which resilience is defined. Resilience research often uses terminology such as recovery, adaptation, and wellness to describe the ability for someone to cope with stress and adversity (Aburn, Gott, & Hoare, 2016; Aguilar, 2018; Masten, 2018). However, these terms often refer to individual outcomes of overcoming struggles through a linear trajectory that does not always consider the different manifestations of traumatic encounters and the range of human responses based on faith, culture, family dynamics, and emotional capacity (Liu et al., 2017). According to Ungar (2016), different responses to changes in life trajectories may not be measured on current resilience scales because they fall outside the narrowly defined parameters of positive outcomes for wellness. By rethinking the most frequently used definitions of resilience, Liu et al. (2017) found that resilience could be redefined as a developmental trajectory of coping mechanisms based on the diverse factors of worldviews and experiences that transcend a one-size-fits-all model. Due to the existing ambiguity in defining the construct of resilience, this study looked at the different categories of resilience that come together through a culturally competent lens to allow victims of trauma and stress, such as resettled refugees, to adapt

to their circumstances and new surroundings, despite adversity, in a way that is culturally-specific.

In Western psychology, the self is often viewed as the core fountain of personal and psychological resilience (Maslow, 1943). This view of resilience does not necessarily encompass an understanding of whole-being wellness that goes beyond highly individualistic constructs of self-care and self-compassion (Warren, Smeets, & Neff, 2016). Although a self-centric model of resilience focuses on internal mechanisms to fuel the concept of wellness, Aguilar (2018) suggests that resilience can be taught and enters the individual psyche through external exposure to resilience-inducing factors rather than by being nurtured through internal coping mechanisms. While some researchers have developed studies that correlate with Aguilar's (2018) perspective of resilience as a teachable skill (Gardner & Stephens-Pisecco, 2019), others argue that resilience is not acquired, but is instead inherited as a latent trait that is activated by difficult circumstances (Denov, Fenning, Rabiau, & Shevell, 2019). According to Masten (2018), resilience is foundational and implicit in children, whether built by exposure in the home or inherited as a trait from parents. Alternatively, Wong, Pargament, & Faigin (2018) argue that resilience is a by-product of hardship and is only developed over time with aging and adulthood.

Researchers that explore resilience among refugees vacillate on the source of the capacity to achieve a sense of wellbeing but agree that forms of resilience among refugees can encompass physical and mental resilience (Alameddine et al., 2019), community or cultural resilience (Sharifi, 2016), emotional resilience (Aguilar, 2018),

and spiritual resilience (Manning, Ferris, Rosario, Prues, & Bouchard, 2019). In each of these spheres, resilience is viewed as the capacity to maintain stability and viability despite biological, psychological, social, and relational threats to wellbeing (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012; Sleijpen, Mooren, Kleber, & Boeje, 2017). However, the inadequacy of resilience measuring scales can be a stumbling block in resilience studies, particularly when working with refugees who often have different linguistic and cultural conceptualizations and interpretations of questions on the screening used (Mendenhall & Kim, 2019).

The concept of physical resilience is rooted in the notion that when physical needs are met, wellbeing can be achieved through absorption, adaptation, and transformation to physical surroundings (Alameddine et al., 2019). Other researchers assess physical resilience as a product of physical wellbeing in terms of health, wellness, and capacity for physical care (Cetrez & DeMarinis, 2017; Goodman, Vesely, Letiecq, & Cleveland, 2017). Researchers also argue that psychological and psychiatric wellbeing can fall under the category of physical resilience and the category should be expanded due to the integral impact of mental health on the physical state of someone who encounters traumatic life changes (Horlings & Hein, 2018).

While physical and mental resilience play a significant role in a refugee's internal wellbeing, community resilience is also viewed as an important external source impacting the ability of refugees to attain resilience when attempting to adapt to a new culture and community (Sleijpen et al., 2017). Sharifi (2016) views the experience of community resilience for resettled refugees from an ecological perspective using the lens of the

micro and mesosystem in terms of building community connections and Fader, Legg, and Ross (2019) expand upon the ecological systems approach by recognizing the role of culture in community-building for forced migrants. Culture is not the only element that contributes to socioemotional wellbeing from a resilience standpoint though (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012). According to Akesson and Sousa, (2019), refugee resilience is also rooted in the family dynamic of parental and child relationships. On the other hand, Denov et al. (2019), view the extended family in collectivist cultures as more impactful than the nuclear family on overall resilience due to an intergenerational inheritance of resilience traits through filial connections.

In piecing together the various elements of resilience, emotional and spiritual resilience compose the inner-most layers of overall wellbeing and capacity to overcome challenges (Allan & Charura, 2017; Masten, 2016; Masten & Barnes, 2018). When assessed through resilience measures, Ameli et al. (2018) found that the link between emotional and spiritual resilience informs the psychosocial wellbeing of individuals facing traumatic experiences. However, other researchers found that emotional resilience can exist without a spiritual connection since spiritual resilience may be adopted over time and with age (Manings et al., 2019; Warren et al., 2016). For many refugees recovering from post-traumatic stress disorder, spiritual resilience fosters a sense of meaning-making that informs their ability to develop emotionally resilient coping mechanisms (Allan & Charura, 2017; Ni Raghallaigh, 2018). According to Panter-Brick et al. (2018), these positive coping mechanisms rooted in spiritual and emotional wellbeing can impact the acculturative and adaptive process in resettlement. Researchers

who assessed developmental risk and the impact on children's and families' resilience following forced migration found that coping mechanisms rooted in the emotional and spiritual realms in conjunction with physical and communal wellbeing, result in healthy resilience building among refugee families across collectivist cultures (Masten et al., 2019; Osofsky & Osofsky, 2018).

Refugee Resilience across Cultures

This healthy resilience building among refugee families is also informed by the cultural background of the refugee and the country of resettlement they are adapting to. Through the exploration of the physical, psychological, community, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of resilience, the process of forced migration is viewed as a traumatic experience that removes concrete connection to home and impacts the processing of trauma (Scannell, Cox, & Fletcher, 2017). In an assessment of trauma and mental health using a screening that also tested for resilience, Gadeberg, Montgomery, Frederiksen, and Norredam (2017), found that the link between resilience and reaction to trauma from a mental health perspective exists strongly among resettled refugee children and youth. According to Johansen and Studsrod (2019), recovery from this trauma is also evident among unaccompanied refugee minors who can rebuild holistic resilience by engaging in positive interpersonal communication with family, peers, and community.

The way that resettled refugees communicate, particularly across cultures, can shift the way resilience is defined and put into practice (Liu et al., 2017). Community resilience in action may look very different for a refugee from the Middle East who views community as deeply intertwined and connected as opposed to a refugee from certain

parts of Asia who may be more introverted and may define community from a more individualistic perspective (Hofstede, 1983). According to researchers studying the experiences of resettled refugee children, when anchored to a traditional view of resilience, cultural differences are often overlooked and so refugee resilience may not be properly understood (Pieloch et al., 2016). Likewise, cultural worldviews may impact the manifestation of resilience in the processing of trauma and the way in which faith, family, and expectations impact that process (Sleijpen et al., 2016; Sullivan & Tobin, 2014).

In a qualitative study conducted by Panter-Brick et al. (2018) on resilience among Syrian refugees in Jordan, differences in cultural worldviews were explored through the development of a culturally grounded definition of resilience. The researchers worked with Syrian refugees in a Jordanian host community and validated the Arabic language version of the CYRM (Child and Youth Resilience Measure). One of the approaches used in the study was the story-telling approach in informal interviews conducted in the Arabic language with 15 boys and 11 girls from refugee families in Jordanian camps. Values such as “having a role model” and “the ability to improve” were captured as linguistic indicators of resilience. Notions of community were complicated due to references to tribal affiliations by the interview subjects, but family ties were recorded as critical, as evidenced in the analyzed interviews (Panter-Brick et al., 2018).

Following the interviews, in-depth focus group discussions were conducted with 20 Syrian refugee girls and 16 Syrian refugee boys in the Zaatari camp in Jordan (Panter-Brick et al., 2018). In the focus group discussions, the researchers found that certain statements translated from English into Arabic had negative connotations. For instance, a

statement such as “My family watches out for me” was connotatively translated by the focus group as a negative type of surveillance from parents. Words such as “fun” and “citizen” as well as “spirituality” did not translate well, and the focus group participants asked for different terms to be used to indicate a sense of belonging or wellbeing. The results of this study showed that resilience among young Syrian refugees is more intricately linked to adaptability from a cultural context rather than to wellbeing from a more self-centric perspective. The study also indicated the need for more language-specific research to conduct these types of interviews without translation since context and cultural relevance are both embedded in language (Panter-Brick et al., 2018).

Similarly, qualitative interviews conducted by Sim et al. (2018) with Syrian refugee families in Lebanon explored the effects of war and displacement on family functioning. Using the family stress model and the intergenerational trauma model, Sim et al.’s (2018) study explored how Syrian refugee families in Lebanon responded to the trauma of forced migration. In both Panter-Brick et al.’s (2018) study and Sim et al.’s (2018) study, researchers found a link between cultural worldviews and the degree of adaptation or integration experienced during resettlement. However, neither of these studies applied a theoretical framework that particularly explored expressions of experiences through the lens of specific cultural value dimensions.

Resilience through Refugee Resettlement

The cultural worldviews of refugees are often carried through the initial fleeing to an asylum country and into the eventual resettlement in a country that offers permanent residence. The resettlement of refugees describes the secondary process of migration post

initial fleeing from country of origin due to war, famine, trauma, oppression, or other reasons that make the home country unsafe or un-inhabitable (Delacrétaz, Kominers, & Teytelboym, 2016). Fracturing of identity and trauma rooted in loss of home, security, safety, and family, along with feelings of rejection and mistrust are often the outcome of the resettlement process (Lloyd, Pilerot, & Hultgren, 2017). According to Loyd, Ehrkamp, and Secor (2018), along with fractured identities, resettled refugees also experience a fracturing of all that is familiar which leads to struggles in obtaining physical resilience in transition. Alternatively, some researchers report results that indicate physical resilience can be gained through resettlement if the cultural elements of familiarity are rebuilt in the new physical locale (Ratkovic et al., 2017).

In research conducted on young resettled refugees, study results indicate that physical resilience is intertwined with community resilience in school settings due to a sense of belonging that develops among resettled refugee students and their peers (Arslangilay, 2018; Gardner & Stephens-Pisecco, 2019). For those resettled refugees who are not school aged, rebuilding family and shared faith values play a large role in emotional and spiritual resilience (Denov et al., 2019; Panter-Brick et al., 2018). For many resettled refugees of different faith backgrounds and cultures, the diverse categories of resilience merge because of historically strong connections to family, faith, culture, and community (Delacretaz et al., 2016).

South Asian and Latino Refugees

The merging of these historically strong connections is not a new phenomenon among refugees today. Tracing through refugee narratives from various ethnicities and

backgrounds, familiar threads of tradition and cultural practices create tapestries of resilience during the period of transition and adaptation in resettlement among different cultural groups (Hein & Niazi, 2016). However, these mosaics of resilience are not stain-free and simultaneously encompass the long term effects of trauma throughout the resettlement process (Blount & Acquaye, 2018). In evaluating refugee movement from as far back as the mid to late 1970s, researchers such as Kim et al. (2019), found that Vietnamese refugees who migrated following a war that ravaged the country for over two decades exhibited severe indications of trauma and psychological distress in the wake of forced migration. Just as Kim (2016) identified the evidence of trauma in resettlement for Latino and Asian refugees, Koinova (2016) assessed the impact of transnational resettlement for refugees of several different backgrounds across different periods of time. Koinova's (2016) research indicates that the most resiliently sound refugee resettlement occurs when refugees are empowered earlier on in their migration journeys and can move from a mind frame of victimhood to self-agency. According to Fruja (2017), this movement towards self-agency can be facilitated by public acceptance and positive cultural adaptation that is linked to improved resilience.

One of the many barriers to self-agency for resettled refugees is the element of uncertainty that plagues the refugee psyche through the resettlement process (Fleay & Hartley, 2016). According to Kim's (2016) study, in the case of Vietnamese refugees, the adjustment to resettlement proved to be mentally, socially, and emotionally challenging just as it was for later Latino and other South Asian refugees who began to resettle in the US following their own stories of forced migration. As the process of resettlement

unfolded, many early refugees fleeing their home countries were able to adjust and claim their place in their new homes with a sense of resilience that was passed on to their first and second generation children (Darling, 2017). However, the trauma of first flight into camps and bordering countries correlates early on with a refugee focus on physical survival instinct in the first transitional period of resettlement (Delacretaz et al., 2016). Researchers have found that for many Asian and Latino refugees post resettlement, the socio-affective factors of unemployment, education adjustment, limited language acquisition and other cultural and relational struggles could result in sustained emotional trauma and lack of resilience linked to severe mental health outcomes (Blount & Acquaye, 2018; Kim, 2016). Following the exodus of Asian and Latino refugees, another group of refugees began to resettle in countries around the world.

Middle Eastern and Muslim Refugees

As the 1980s came to a close, a new deluge of refugees began to experience forced migration followed by resettlement in the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, and certain countries in South America in the mid to late 1990s and into the first decade of 2000 (Jamil et al., 2002). Fleeing to safer spaces across the world, these newly resettled refugees found their emotional resilience threatened by the lack of welcoming reception from the communities they entered (Landmann, Gaschler, & Rohmann, 2019). Discrimination, prejudice, and feeling like outsiders all threatened the wellbeing of these new refugees. While Kim (2016) found the impact of untreated mental health issues to be at the core of many of the adjustment difficulties of previously

resettled refugees, Waxman (2001) found that these newly resettled refugees struggled with identity fracturing and trauma recovery along with a lack of economic resilience.

Partnered with a drop in community resilience, the emotional resilience of many of these forced migrants also threatened to capitulate under the burden of prejudice and discrimination in the host country (Komolova, Pasupathi, & Wainryb, 2020). According to Sajjad (2018), who studied Iraqi refugees in the late 20th and early 21st century, the trajectory of diminished resilience post trauma for refugees is compounded by issues of identity and lack of acceptance in the host country. These personal elements that threaten emotional resilience were evident among the Muslim refugees from Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Iraq after the Serbian genocide and Operation Desert Storm (Komolova et al., 2020). Yet, this group of refugees was also not the first to experience identity fracturing or hiding of identity due to stigmatizations of faith.

As a result of these prejudices, an internalization of negative constructs resulted in self-doubt and self-loathing for many of these newly resettled refugees that in many ways echoed the experiences of Jewish refugees following the Holocaust (Alperin, 2016). Due to stereotypes and the unfamiliarity of the faith practiced by many of these refugees, families were met with mistrust in several of the host countries, which added a layer of complexity in terms of barriers to cultural integration (Hein & Niazi, 2016). According to Blount and Acquaye (2018), previously resettled refugees indicated faith, spirituality, and religion as substantial components that informed hope through the resettlement struggle. Koinova (2016) found that refugee diasporas attempted to reduce the trauma of cultural adaptation through dissociation with their religious identity to feel more welcomed by the

host culture and to mitigate the difficulties of identity assimilation. Through increasing self-criticism and decreasing spiritual resilience, many of these Muslim refugees struggled to develop emotional resilience post resettlement (Warren et al., 2016).

In the first decade of the 21st century, another Muslim population faced forced migration. Following closely on the heels of the Arab Spring in 2011, Syria experienced civil unrest that resulted in a migration of refugees who fled into neighboring countries (Yazgan, Utku, & Sirkeci, 2015). In the process of entering camps during this first phase of flight, many Syrian refugees encountered a drop in family and community resilience due to the fracturing of family relations. According to Akbarzadeh and Conduit (2016), separation of nuclear family units from extended family members due to death, detention, or inability to escape severely affected the mental health and wellbeing of the refugees. Esses et al. (2017) found that the resultant splintering of families and breakdowns in relational structures could be a factor leading to difficulty in cultural adjustment, correlating to a drop in emotional resilience. This drop in emotional resilience was further explored by Eades (2013) in researching individualized trauma to post-traumatic growth among refugees and finding that a thicker description of resilience is needed to contextualize the relational aspects of trauma. According to Eades (2013) trauma must be approached using an emic perspective that is not one dimensional and considers the three unique stages of trauma for refugees from a culturally cognizant lens.

Triple Trauma Paradigm

The stages of trauma that Eades (2013) references in which community is disassembled incorporates the splintering of families as described by Esses et al. (2017)

as an equally impactful factor that can lead to a drop in refugee emotional resilience. The distress stemming from family separation, loss of life, home, safety, and financial security, also leads to trauma that is persistent and may take the form of PTSD or other long term mental health illnesses for resettled refugees (Kreidie & Kreidie, 2016). Lindert, Carta, Schäfer, and Mollica (2016) found that mental health struggles of refugees were exacerbated by re-traumatization rooted in a loss of emotional, physical, community and family resilience. Kira (2019) and Koinova (2016) also found that the response to trauma can be woven into family narratives and passed on to later generations in refugee families if self-agency is not restored to enable emotional resilience. Just as Denov et al. (2019) found resilience to be an inherited trait, trauma, particularly in its three stages, can also be passed on in refugee families if not resolved. Evidence-based research indicates that the stages of triple trauma for refugees include preflight, flight, and postflight trauma that can leave deep emotional and mental scars throughout the resettlement process if not countered with an emotionally resilient approach (Holt & McLean, 2019; Vossoughi, Jackson, Gusler, & Stone, 2018).

Preflight

In the preflight stage, according to Im et al. (2020), refugee families can experience harassment, intimidation, imprisonment, torture, violence, war, isolation, societal breakdown, and chaos in their home country that necessitates basic physiological needs to be met and eventual psychosocial support for recovery. Other researchers believe that a simple rebuilding of emotional resilience is not enough and to achieve mental resilience there must be more intense mental health treatment in the form of

psychiatric diagnoses and medical remedies (Rothe et al., 2019). Due to the variable length of the preflight stage, exposure to trauma can differ in intensity and can have differing impacts on refugee resilience. The preflight stage among Syrian refugees can be protracted in terms of longevity due to a crisis that has spanned almost a decade and has spawned the largest number of internally and externally displaced citizens from one nation (Akbarzadeh & Conduit, 2016; Heisbourg, 2015). Preflight fears for family wellbeing, physical safety, economic security, and psychological recovery often inform decisions of migration despite a lack of certainty in diasporic outcome (Sleijpen et al., 2016). According to Olliff (2018), one of the strongest paths towards recovery of resilience from the preflight trauma stage is through humanitarianism and engaging resettled refugees in volunteerism to help others through their own trauma recovery.

Flight

Following closely on the heels of preflight trauma, flight trauma includes physical and emotional discomfort when facing natural elements, fear of the unknown, illness, robbery, malnutrition, isolation, and other forms of loss, violence, and uncertainty (Yazgan et al., 2015). Libal, Felten, and Harding (2019) found that many refugee agencies encourage recovery from flight trauma by pushing for self-sufficiency through English language programs and job placement under the Western notion that emotional resilience is linked to individual success and self-actualization. However, Fader et al. (2019) determined that the development of community resilience through team related activities such as sports, may be a greater remedy than pushing for self-sufficiency for flight trauma recovery among collectivist cultures. Likewise, collective communities

indicated stronger resilience outcomes following flight trauma through classroom settings in which inclusivity is fostered and in religious gatherings that helped families form stronger bonds (Gardner & Stephens-Pisecco, 2019; Wong et al., 2018). Despite these potential positive approaches to flight trauma, residual emotional and mental health disorders often result from this stage and can pose a public health challenge that is often overlooked due to poorly translated refugee health screenings such as the RHS-15 (Hollifield et al., 2016; Lindert et al., 2016). Due to the uncertainty and insecurity experienced during the flight stage, resilience capacity can be reduced if flight trauma is not dealt with in a culturally cognizant way (Panter-Brick et al., 2018; Sullivan & Tobin, 2014). This stage segues into the final stage of the triple trauma paradigm.

Postflight

Once the refugee family is resettled, the experience of postflight trauma may accompany the process of resettlement (Esses et al., 2017). Blount and Acquaye (2018) found that greater wellness and resilience were evident among refugee families when postflight resettlement occurred in communities and countries where a more collectivist culture is promoted. Since disappointment, disillusion, and loneliness can closely follow the resettlement process in the postflight stage, refugees often feel unwelcome and devoid of community resilience in host countries that promote a more individualistic culture (Celebi, Verkuyten, & Bagci, 2017; Yigit & Tatch, 2017). Feelings of communal connection through resettlement agency programs, schools, places of worship, and places of employment can assist in easing anxiety and difficulty in the postflight stage (Easton-Calabria & Omata, 2018; Hasan, Mitschke, & Ravi, 2018). Even with local refugee

service agencies working consistently to provide a positive transition in the postflight stage, residual trauma from the preflight and flight stages can still cause invisible afflictions that manifest as a decline in mental and emotional resilience which in turn can make cultural adjustment even more difficult (Afkhami & Gorentz, 2019; Cullen & Walton-Roberts, 2019).

Trajectory of Adaptation

Following the stages of trauma, there are another three stages that resettled refugees tend to experience in terms of adaptation. These are the stages of cultural adaptation which according to Ellis, Winer, Murray, and Barrett (2019) can determine the resilience of refugees particularly in terms of mental health outcomes. According to Yohani, Brosinsky, and Kirova (2019), the general trajectory of adaptation for refugee families moves through three identified stages of arrival, reality, and recovery. Neuliep (2017) suggests that these three stages are buffeted by initial culture shock and reentry shock upon return to a country of origin in the traditional scope of intercultural experiences when resilience may be called into question. However, Graham and Pozuelo (2017) liken the intercultural adaptation cycle to a U-curve with several different highs and lows in terms of experiences affecting acculturative resilience based on background, age, and experiences.

Low socioeconomic status, language barriers, unmet expectations, loss of identity, unemployment and other negative outcomes can seriously affect the transition in the postflight period and can hinder resilience during the process of adaptation (Motti-Stefanidi, 2018; Libal, Felten, & Harding, 2019). As refugees negotiate elements of

assimilation, acculturation, and enculturation in their resettlement journeys, diverse experiences impact the process of adaptation and how well refugees adjust to the host culture (Lee, Titzmann, & Jugert, 2019). According to Goodman et al. (2017) the response to the trauma resulting from the triple trauma paradigm can impact the outcome of resilience for refugees during the adaptation period.

Arrival: Honeymoon Period. During the initial stages of entry into the country of resettlement, emotions similar to those experienced through the U-curve of cultural adaptation may exist but can also be impacted by age and stress (Graham & Pozuelo, 2017). Hansen and Huston (2016) identified a positive correlation between physical resilience and health during this honeymoon period of adaptation. Majumdar (2018) also found that emotional resilience levels were high during this period when refugee and immigrant families are filled with hope and anticipation of positive change, fueled by positive expectations regarding the host country. However, Neuliep (2017) found that the honeymoon period may not last very long and can give way to culture shock early on for the incoming refugee or immigrant. Randall, Carson, Stenvig, and Bohn (2016) also found evidence of culture shock usurping the honeymoon period early on in the sample of transitioning refugees they studied.

Reality: Frustration. As time goes on, reality can deplete emotional resilience and replace feelings of hopefulness with frustration. According to Ehrkamp, Loyd, and Secor (2019) memories of life pre-war, trauma, or hardship begin to cloud the present and make it difficult for the resettled refugee to adapt to the new host country. Bergquist, Soliz, Everhart, Braithwaite, and Kreimer (2019) found that issues of identity also

factored largely in the frustration felt during the reality stage of adaptation. Celebi et al. (2017) found that refugee frustration can be the result of stigmatization, educational impediments, housing issues, identity fracturing, and language barriers. Hutchinson and Dorsett (2012) found that emotional resilience for refugees drops greatly during this period of frustration. Goodwin-Gill (2017) also found another factor of frustration during this stage of adaptation correlated with a steep decline in economic resilience due to refugee laws that restrict the amount of aid given to resettled refugees.

Recovery: Adjustment. The recovery period following the decline in resilience encountered during the reality stage of adaptation can be drawn out and does not follow the same trajectory for everyone (Afkhami & Gorentz, 2019). Delacretaz et al. (2016) in their study concluded that if economic resilience is achieved during the period of recovery for resettled refugees, then there will be more positive outcomes for physical and emotional resilience as well. On the other hand, Aguilar (2018) and Akesson and Sousa (2019) posited that emotional resilience must be developed first during the period of adjustment and that the overall wellbeing of the resettled refugee hinges greatly on family dynamics and connections. Although the recovery period would seem to present a linear trajectory of improved circumstances, Icduygu and Sert (2019) found that many of the challenges in the frustration phase continue to plague resettled refugees in what would be expected to be a stage of adjustment. In order to successfully navigate the stage of recovery, recommendations include resettlement in areas of linguistic and cultural familiarity to build community resilience, securing living wage employment for economic resilience, and achieving a sense of stability and healing from past trauma for

mental and physical resilience (Puvimanasinghe, Denson, Augoustinos, & Somasundaram, 2019). While the theoretical movement through these stages is described as linear by Graham and Pozuelo (2017), studies of cultural adaptation indicate the practical outcome of adaptation is not quite as clearly defined and does not always move in a normative fashion from stage to stage (Hansen & Huston, 2016; Salehyan, 2018).

Resilience among Resettled Syrian Refugees

Cultural adaptation through these stages may differ across refugee worldviews and the area of the world in which they are rooted. The most recent refugee crisis in this decade is the Syrian refugee crisis which began after the country's political upheaval in 2011 and since then has resulted in 5.6 million Syrian refugees forced to migrate for safety and security concerns (UNHCR, 2020). The pattern of migration resulted in a large percentage of refugees resettling in Turkey, Greece, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, Europe, South America, and the US (Akbarzadeh & Conduit, 2016; Yazgan et al., 2015). According to Celebi et al. (2017), ethnic identification and discrimination along with the fear and trauma experienced by forced migrants during the preflight and flight stages resulted in declined resilience outcomes for resettled Syrian refugees. Hutchinson and Dorsett (2012) presented findings that indicated the drop in resilience among Syrian refugees was closely linked to fracturing of identity and a subsequent drop in emotional resilience associated with spiritual and family disconnection.

Despite indicators that Syrian refugee resettlement revitalized and strengthened economies in the US and abroad (Kerwin, 2018; Wright & Moorthy, 2018), negative attitudes still prevailed and continue to exist in many host countries (İcduygu & Sert,

2019). While resettlement agencies exerted a great deal of effort in assisting refugees, widespread approval of incoming refugees consistently decreased throughout the years (Olliff, 2018). From growing resentment in Europe, the US, Turkey, Greece, and several locations in the Middle East, discrimination and stereotypes against refugees widened the integration gap and made it more and more difficult for Syrian refugee families, children, and individuals to positively acclimate to their new residences and to experience positive psychosocial outcomes (Ballard, 2017; Yigit & Tatch, 2017).

Barriers to Resilience

The struggles for Syrian refugees in resettlement often begin in the camps or in the first flight locale upon leaving Syria since the resettlement process can only be initiated after the refugee has left the unsafe country and set up a temporary residence in an encampment in a bordering country (Akbarzadeh & Conduit, 2016). Ongoing uncertainty based on where the refugee individual or family might match, economic fears and insecurity, and splintering of extended families can cause a great deal of stress on the morale and psyche of the resettled refugee (Fleay & Hartley, 2016; Delacretaz et al., 2016). Another barrier to refugee resilience among resettled Syrian refugees is explored by Yasin (2018) who found that community resilience generally declines due to a lack of community connection in the new host country. As members of a highly collectivist community (Hofstede, 1983), Syrian refugees visualize family as extending much further than the self and past the nuclear family primarily referenced in more individualistic cultures. Since the host country matching process can sometimes seem arbitrary, extended families often find themselves split up in various countries with different

sanctions that can also be a source of stress for the incoming refugee (Khallaf, 2016; Jones & Teytelboym, 2017).

Education barriers. Among the barriers faced by incoming refugees, education barriers that include difficulty learning the host country's language, inability to transfer a college-degree or career certification to the new country of residence, and deterrents in accessing education for children are the most common stumbling blocks reported by Syrian refugees struggling with issues of cultural adjustment (Arslangilay, 2018; Campion, 2018). Aguilar (2018) explored the impact of education on emotional resilience and found that the presence of emotional resilience improved educational outcomes while at the same time positive educational outcomes fostered greater resilience among students. Pastoor (2017) also emphasized the importance of incorporating resilience approaches through social-emotional learning modules to address the diverse learning contexts of unaccompanied young resettled refugees.

For school-aged children, many schools in the host countries are understaffed and do not have the resources needed to provide viable linguistically and culturally compatible education avenues to refugee children (Symons & Ponzio, 2019). In school systems that incorporate a strong resilience component, Gardner and Stephens-Pisecco (2019) found that educators felt empowered to in turn empower students through resilience approaches. Syrian refugee children who resettled with their families in areas in which adequate schooling was provided indicated more positive adaptation than those who enrolled in underprivileged districts that could not provide educational support with a resilience approach (Pieloch et al., 2016; Yaylaci, 2018).

Employment barriers. For many refugees entering into host countries in which self-reliance is considered critical, seeking employment can be a daunting task due to lack of language competence and cultural adaptability (Campion, 2018; Delacretaz et al., 2016). According to Warren et al. (2016), self-reliance in terms of employment is equated with self-compassion in a Western context, but that may not be the case in more collectivist cultures where self-reliance is not necessarily valued as an admirable trait. Along with differing views of self, personal and structural barriers such as limited opportunities and inability to find employment compatible with home country education level or skills can factor into the roadblocks of employment (Campion, 2018; Icduygo & Sert, 2019). The transition of Syrian refugees into host countries that are not welcoming to refugees can also make the employment process even more difficult (Lloyd et al., 2017). Both education and employment barriers can be impacted by wellness barriers that affect the overall resilience of resettled refugees.

Wellness barriers. Wellness barriers for Syrian refugees exist in the realm of physical, emotional, and social wellness and are closely informed by the different levels of resilience (Blount & Acquaye, 2018). According to Al Qadire, Aljezawi, and Al-Shdayfat (2019), barriers to seeking medical care due to lack of knowledge of the system, lack of funds, insurance barriers, language barriers and other struggles can deter refugees from seeking wellness even with illnesses as serious as cancer. Hansen and Huston (2016) identify the link between physical wellness and overall resilience among resettled Syrian refugees and note that improved physical resilience is directly correlated with emotional resilience.

Emotional resilience experienced through emotional wellness is linked to social wellness in that it is often built on concepts of the self in relation to connections with others (Certez & DeMarinis, 2017). Emotional and social resilience differ from psychological wellness due to the focus on socio-relational connections and adjusting using coping mechanisms that regulate emotion (Yohani et al., 2019). The sphere of social wellness can hinge on how present and integrated the resettled refugee feels in the host country (Darling, 2017). This sense of connection with a host culture can strengthen family relations as well and improve resilience in many spheres (Denov et al., 2019).

Uncertainty Avoidance as a Construct of Resilience

In working towards a social wellness paradigm that is culturally cognizant, the worldview of refugees needs to be considered (Eades, 2013). The level of comfort evident in terms of uncertainty can play a role in determining the social wellness and emotional resilience of a refugee since the more comfortable someone is with uncertainty, the more likely they will respond positively to uncertain circumstances (Hofstede, 1983). In Middle Eastern culture, the concept of *insha'Allah* (God willing) is a frequent indicator of low uncertainty avoidance due to the surrendering of human will to a Higher Power (Alsudis & Pillay, 2017). This concept is captured among adherents of different faiths from Syria and is particularly prevalent among believers of the Muslim faith. The low level of uncertainty avoidance equated with Syrian culture is often in direct contradiction to the high level of uncertainty avoidance practiced by more self-centric cultures that focus on self-reliance and control of one's own future (Easton-Calabria & Omata, 2018). According to Koltko-Rivera (2006), self-reliance can be

equated with self-actualization which is also categorized as a more Western attribute as opposed to self-transcendence which is more in line with low uncertainty avoidance cultures where the controlling of external circumstances through the self is not considered the pinnacle of wellbeing. This disparity in cultural worldviews can often cause difficulty in cultural adaptation and integration through the process of resettlement (Icduygu & Sert, 2019).

Collectivism and Identity through Resettlement

Along with differing levels of uncertainty avoidance, different views of community, family, and connections can also exist among refugees and the country of resettlement (Eades, 2013). Strengthening family relations as an avenue towards improving resilience is often an effective pathway for refugees with collectivist worldviews since it allows for socioemotional needs to be met through the practice of familiar value dimensions (Hofstede, 1983). When resettled refugees' socioemotional needs are not met and overall resilience declines, issues related to cultural and faith identity fracturing can occur due to discrimination and ostracization **(**Çelebi et al., 2017).

For Syrian refugees, collectivism as a construct plays a large role in the view of self in relation to others (Merkin & Ramadan, 2016). Whether exhibited through physical proximity or emotional connectedness with neighbors, extended family, or friends, Syrian refugees indicated a greater sense of empowerment and agency when identifying a stronger pull of community in their host country (Erden, 2017; Reichwein, 2019). Abi-Hashem (2018) found that greater community connectivity and a sense of collective coping assisted in trauma recovery and resilience for resettled Syrian refugees in Lebanon

and other countries. Yaylaci (2018) also found that re-traumatization for resettled refugees is more likely to occur when there is a decline in resilience due to identity fracturing or a lack of collectivism. This re-traumatization, in turn, can cause a decline in mental resilience and result in serious mental health struggles along with identity fracturing (Mohamed & Thomas, 2017).

Outcomes of identity fracturing. Community, family, financial, faith, and mental health issues are often linked to identity fracturing for resettled Syrian refugees (Yigit & Thatch, 2017). Among the most prevalent mental health issues encountered by resettled Syrian refugees are diagnoses of depression and PTSD (Keles, Friborg, Idsøe, Sirin, & Oppedal, 2016). Koinova (2016) found that community resilience among the refugee diaspora helped mitigate the impact of trauma and was an indicator of greater mental resilience. However, researchers also found that the impact of the camps in the flight phase contributed to mental health difficulties upon resettlement (Vossoughi et al., 2018).

According to Wright and Moorthy (2018), declines in mental and emotional resilience linked to identity fracturing were also impacted by economic struggles of resettled refugees. On the other hand, Robertson, Wilding, and Gifford (2016) found that refugees lacking in the sense of community and family connections shifted the view of self and had greater impact on resilience declines than any external influences. Moving away from a collectivist model of extended family networks and towards a more individualistic view of the nuclear family also caused integration difficulties and a decline in family resilience (Khawaja, Hebbani, Obijiofor, & Gallois, 2017). Children of

refugee families indicated difficulty integrating due to struggles in parent/child communication linked to cultural identity fracturing (Pieloch et al., 2016). Another component of identity fracturing existed in spiritual and faith struggles experienced post trauma for resettled Syrian refugees (Allan & Charura, 2017).

Cultural Differences

The process of identity fracturing is often an outcome of cultural differentiation and an inability to adjust to unfamiliar cultural expectations. Regardless of country of resettlement or cultural expectations, resilience is affected by cultural outlook and level of adjustment (İcduygu & Sert, 2019). According to Hofstede and Bond's research (1984) cultural integration difficulty is most often experienced due to the process of entering into a host culture that may have terminal and instrumental values that differ from a refugee's place of origin. These differences often surface when evaluating what each culture prioritizes and how these values may impact resilience. Hasan et al. (2018) also found that faith played a significant role in bolstering emotional resilience for Syrian refugees. However, upon entering host countries in which faith was not an integral part of the culture, refugees struggled with their spiritual resilience at times (Majumdar, 2018).

Prioritization of the self also differs across cultures and impacts the cultural adaptation process and overall resilience outcomes for resettled Syrian refugees (Warren et al., 2016). Refugee resettlement agencies follow a linear approach along the lines of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943) in transitioning refugees to ensure that physiological needs are met, followed by safety and security. However, love and belonging and the upper echelons of the hierarchy of esteem and actualization tend to be more difficult for

resettlement agencies and counselors to help refugees achieve (Goede & Boshuizen, 2019; Lonn & Dantzler, 2017). This difficulty is rooted in the cultural differences linked to the perspective that self-actualization is the pinnacle of the needs' hierarchy. Self-actualization can be equated with self-reliance which is a very Western notion and may not be the best lens with which to view the refugee experience from a culturally competent perspective (Easton-Calabria & Omata, 2018). Moving past the limitations imposed by Maslow's hierarchy (1943) for meeting refugee needs would necessitate greater understanding of how a collectivist culture might process or assess what would be considered successful, well-adjusted integration (Koltko-Rivera, 2006). Self-reliance and emotional independence, as linked to self-esteem and actualization in the Western sense do not necessarily translate into the same form of resilience for collectivist communities (Masten, 2018). This recognition of differences in cultural views and the impact those differences have in affecting the cultural adaptation in refugee resettlement can be better understood through a theoretical framework that delineates cultural value dimensions.

Theoretical Framework

In exploring the cultural dimensions of resettled refugee adaptation, the experience of Syrian refugees is largely linked to the influence of Arab culture on how post traumatic resilience is processed (Obeidat, Shannak, Masa'deh, & Al-Jarrah, 2012). By adopting a thicker description of resilience that encompasses more of an insider view, researchers can step away from a narrow Western therapeutic approach and adopt more of a culturally cognizant view towards understanding refugee resilience (Eades, 2013). To better understand the impact of cultural components on the processing of trauma and

the resultant resilience approaches for resettled Syrian refugees, Hofstede's cultural value dimensions (1983) provide a strong theoretical framework for exploration.

Hofstede's Cultural Value Dimensions

The value dimensions that Hofstede developed in 1983 consist of five specific elements to evaluate how people interact in organizational settings across cultures. The dimensions encompass individualism versus collectivism, power distance, long-term orientation, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity versus femininity. Over time, each of these value dimensions has evolved and has been applied to cross-cultural interactions outside of the scope of organizational communication (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011). However, application of these value dimensions to refugee adaptation and the understanding of resilience through a cultural value lens has not been evidenced through research on resettled Syrian refugees.

Individualism versus collectivism is the first construct explored in Hofstede's (1983) research. This construct explores the different approaches to community and the self. The more individualistic a culture is, the less likely community resilience and family resilience play a role in successful integration. However, the more collectivist a culture is, the more likely community and family resilience impact emotional wellbeing. Syrian refugees rank highly on the collectivism scale since they fall into the Arab cultural category in Hofstede's evaluation (1983).

Another interesting value dimension that relates to Syrian refugee resilience is uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1983). This concept is applicable to resilience and resettled refugees due to the impact of uncertainty and the processing of uncertainty on

mental health (Hofstede, 2018). Since Syrian refugees rank low on uncertainty avoidance, their levels of emotional resilience may increase due to their comfort level with uncertainty. This is also a faith-based construct that exists in low uncertainty avoidance faiths (McSweeney, 2002). The integration of the "God-willing" conceptualization helps mitigate the stress of uncertainty for Syrian refugees who largely integrate this faith concept in their processing of life circumstances (Hasan et al., 2018).

The dimensions of power distance, long-term orientation, and masculinity versus femininity are other important value dimensions that help researchers understand cultural integration and adaptation (Venkateswaran & Ojha, 2019). High and low power distance applies to views of authority. Long-term orientation is linked to future rewards and vision. Masculinity versus femininity is a construct linked to the way a culture views a specific trait such as family, ego, competition, and nurturing tendencies (Hofstede, 1983). While all these value dimensions provide cultural insights, the two most applicable to this study were collectivism and uncertainty avoidance.

Summary and Conclusion

In exploring the literature seeking to understand the experiences of resettled refugees and their process of adaptation and integration into a host country, this chapter looked at the impact of resilience from a culturally cognizant viewpoint. Resilience definitions were provided with an application towards the adaptation experiences of resettled Syrian refugees during the last decade. Cultural and faith-based lenses were used for a more integrative approach to resilience for resettled Syrian refugees. Categorizations of resilience research in the realms of emotional, psychological, physical,

community, and spiritual resilience were explored. The chapter also found that economic and family resilience are important constructs that can provide insight into the lived experiences of resettled refugees.

A review of literature addressing cultural shifts and paradigms in resilience application was also provided along with an assessment of literature on the triple trauma paradigm and the trajectory of adaptation as linked to resettled refugees. Barriers to education, employment, and wellness were discussed as well as the impact of collectivism and identity refracturing on resettled Syrian refugees. Additionally, the theoretical framework of Hofstede's value dimensions (1983) was introduced with particular focus on collectivism and uncertainty avoidance as a way to better understand the adaptation strategies of resettled refugees.

While refugee resilience has been studied in the past, I found no evidence in the research reviewed exhibiting usage of cultural value dimensions as a lens through which to explore narrative accounts of resettled Syrian refugees' cultural adaptation. This study uses open-ended oral histories as narrative data to explore this gap in the literature. Knowledge in the disciplines of resilience research and refugee studies was expanded through the application of an organizational communication theory to understand how resettled Syrian refugees express collective family constructs and uncertainty avoidance in narrative oral histories. The next chapter introduces the research method used for this study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

This qualitative narrative study was designed to explore how resettled Syrian refugees, interviewed between 2017-2018, experience cultural integration post resettlement through expressions of value dimensions in collected oral histories. The focus of the study was the exploration of resettled Syrian refugee resilience using a self-transcendence lens by examining defining linguistic constructs indicative of collectivism and uncertainty avoidance through codes and categorizing terms (see Hofstede, 1983; Koltka-Rivera, 2006). Gaining greater understanding of how these value dimensions apply in cultural adaptation and integration for the selected population adds to the current cannon of resilience research on the topic of resettled Syrian refugees.

This chapter focuses on the research design and the rationale for conducting this study. The chapter also includes a discussion on the role of the researcher and the study methodology, which explains the logic behind the participant selection, the instrumentation process, the procedures for recruitment, participation, data collection, and the data analysis plan. The chapter closes with a discussion of trustworthiness, ethical procedures, and a summary of the aforementioned areas.

Research Design and Rationale

In this study, I addressed the question of how resettled Syrian refugees express collective family constructs and uncertainty avoidance in narrative oral histories. The central concepts explored in this study were the expressions of resilience through value dimensions of collectivism and uncertainty avoidance as a way of understanding the cultural adaptation experiences of resettled Syrian refugees. The research design for this

study began with identifying a priori codes rooted in the concepts of cultural value dimensions to better understand the narratives that were analyzed. These a priori codes were developed based on the recognition that in an individualistic culture, resilience expressions are often equated with the concept of wellbeing achieved through self-actualization (Maslow, 1943) and defined by the seven C's of resilience (see Figure 1; Barger, Vitale, Gaughan, & Feldman-Winter, 2017). In a collectivist culture such as that of Syrian refugees (Hofstede, 1983), self-transcendence aligns with wellbeing in terms of adaptability and resilience encompasses expressions such as those exhibited in Liu et al.'s (2017) study of refugee cross-cultural resilience. The codes are thus linked to expressions of resilience as shown below in Figure 1.

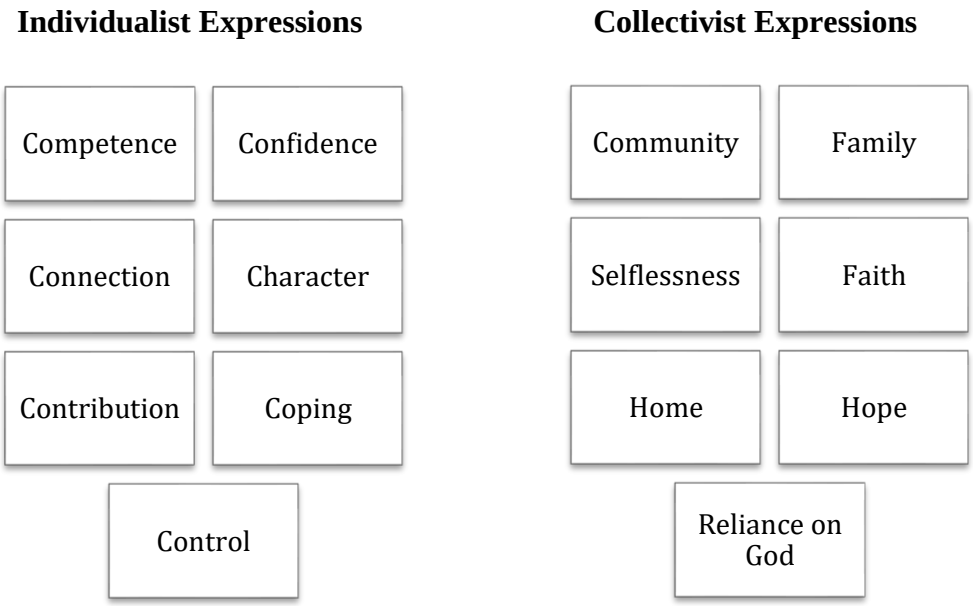

Figure 1. Expressions of resilience across cultures.

The research tradition that guided this study was a qualitative narrative approach. Qualitative research, used as a meaning-making method for studying an emergent

phenomenon, allows for exploration and understanding without presumptions regarding the outcome of the research question guiding the study (Bryman, 2017). Understanding the expressions of resilience used by recently resettled Syrian refugees in narrative oral histories is a study that fits qualitative research parameters due to its exploratory design (Maxwell, 2009). The analysis of this study consisted of a thematic content analysis with a focus on linguistic assessment (Roberts, 1989) of resettled Syrian refugee narrative oral histories collected by Duke University students from 2017-2018.

Role of the Researcher

Because this study used secondary data gathered from an archived collection at Duke University (2018), I took on the role of analyst through the analysis of the previously collected data. I did not have any contact with the refugees who provided these oral narrative histories. The narrative histories were collected and transcribed without coercion or compensation by the student interviewers. The refugees who shared their stories in these interviews gave full written permission for the histories to be stored at Duke University and to be used as data by any interested researchers who sought access to the transcripts.

Researcher bias in interviewing was removed from this study since there was no contact between me and the study participants. The data had already been collected but had not yet been used in research (Duke, 2018). Differentiating the roles of researcher as observer and participant is a critical component in minimizing reflexivity and optimizing credibility in qualitative research (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). By taking a qualitative approach and using a participant pool that does not receive social

services through my nonprofit refugee intervention organization, the scope of the research was limited while still providing proper analysis to the social phenomena (Bryman, 2017). Although researcher bias cannot be completely eliminated from a qualitative study, cognizance of this construct is key in building a solid research foundation. While my background in providing refugee services and position can be helpful in having knowledge of the subject of study, it can also cause bias that was minimized by removing possibilities of conflict of interest and power differentials by using secondary data (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Methodology

According to a research review led by Pieloch et al. (2016), qualitative resilience research on refugees frequently adopts the methodology of interviews and focus groups conducted in the refugee participant's native tongue with translation following transcription. Ethnographic research and case studies are also evident in refugee resilience research but are not conducted as frequently as interviews (Pieloch et al., 2016). Grounded theory method can also be applied to refugee research as seen in the second stage of Panter-Brick et al.'s (2018) research on refugee resilience. However, for this study, I approached the topic of refugee resilience from the perspective of thematic content analysis using linguistic assessment of previously collected narratives as secondary data. Narrative methodology was used in this study because it allowed for a deep exploration of individual experiences as told in their own voices and from their own perspectives. Meaning was derived from the content analysis of the narratives.

Participant Selection

For this proposed study, the methodology applied was an analysis of 26 archived transcripts of narrative oral histories collected between 2017 to 2018 through interviews conducted by students at Duke University. Similar to ethnographies, narrative oral histories provide a story-like approach to describing social phenomena (French, 2019). Vodniza, Hernandez, and Serrano (2017) found that memory mining activities with refugees helped them recreate their forced migration and allowed them to share their experiences in narrative oral history form. Oral histories from refugees can be collected in written or oral form depending on sensitivity to potential re-traumatization (Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017). Rethinking oral history narratives as more than just an art form but as a viable source of qualitative data has yielded a wealth of information to better understand refugee experiences (Smith & Waite, 2019). The selection of the participants for my study was based on the fact that 2016 marked the largest flight of forced migration from Syria to other countries following the 2011 Civil War which allows for participants interviewed the following 2 years to have recent recollections of early resettlement experiences.

Population and Sampling

The Duke University collection of transcribed oral histories (2018) was used as the data source for this study. The sample size was 10 participants who were interviewed two or three times regarding their stories of resettlement for a total of 26 archived transcripts from interviews conducted between 2017 and 2018. The participants consisted of English-speaking, Syrian refugees who left Syria after the 2011 political upheaval

seeking asylum in a border country and then resettled into a country of permanent residence. The countries of resettlement for this sample were Germany, Brazil, Italy, Lebanon, Canada, Greece, and Iraq. The sampling strategy was convenience sampling because it was determined by the available transcripts of English-speaking refugees who participated in the oral histories project (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). The criteria were that the oral histories had to be transcribed from interviews conducted in English between 2017 to 2018 of resettled Syrian refugees. Participants are known to meet the criteria based on the identifiers connected to each transcript housed in the Duke University Archive of Documentary Arts. The sample size saturation level was reached for this study based on the number of accessible transcripts that fit the participant criteria.

Instrumentation

The data collection tools applied in this research study focused on the use of secondary data. While observations and interviews can be productive ways of gathering data for qualitative study (Ravitch & Carl 2016), using secondary data in the form of narrative oral histories provides a unique perspective that allows the researcher to become even more impartial while looking at the linguistic constructs during analysis rather than getting swept up in the interview observation. First cycle coding began with *a priori* codes (see Appendix) that captured the expressions of resilience as mapped in Figure 1. Second cycle coding was used to develop categories and sub-categories that helped identify themes (Russell & Ryan, 2003). Coding began manually and then was conducted using the MS Word search function to identify and find the linguistic codes.

The first cycle coding consisted of narrative coding methods under a literary/language approach (Saldana, 2016). Along with the narrative coding, provisional coding was also applied since the a priori code list suggested key words rooted in the literature before the data was analyzed (Saldana, 2016). Since language and meaning were inextricably tied together in the first cycle coding, the second cycle coding was approached with pattern coding to identify major themes in the data (Polkinghorne, 2005). Following the first and second cycle coding, code weaving assisted in identifying the emergent themes from the thematic content analysis (Saldana, 2016). The themes identified helped establish relationships between the categories of meaning developed from the linguistic expressions of resilience captured in the oral histories (Roberts, 1989).

Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection Procedures

In these transcripts, the interviewees were invited to talk at length and in their own way about their life narratives and to tell stories from their lives while reflecting on their experiences of resettlement. Collection methods for narrative oral histories from refugees differ depending on linguistic ability and accessibility, but in this case, refugees who were fluent in English and wanted to practice conversational speaking were invited to participate in speaking to students on the topic of their resettlement experiences. Duke University library houses this narrative oral history project as transcripts of student-conducted interviews of English-speaking resettled refugees. These transcripts were analyzed through a linguistic approach in which the choice of words to describe certain experiences were assessed through a cultural value dimension lens that informed the impact of uncertainty avoidance and collectivism on resettled refugees (Roberts, 1989).

Rather than simply counting words, the transcripts were assessed using a corpus linguistic technique that provided greater insight into resettled refugee cultural adaptation experiences in terms of resilience (Haider, 2018).

In order to access the transcripts, I registered as a Rubenstein scholar as per the direction of Patrick Stawski, the Duke University's Human Rights' Librarian and Nancy Kalow, the overseer of the Arabic Communities Oral Histories project at the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University. Upon registering as a Rubenstein researcher, I then placed a request for the appropriate digital materials' collection set through the digital Duke University library requesting the digital materials recorded under RL11095-LFF-0001. The transcripts were then placed in a virtual Box folder for remote viewing.

Since the transcripts are public files, they will always be available at the discretion of the Duke University library in the archives. My access to the transcripts in the Box folder will expire based on the end date of personal accessibility that I specified in my request (December 9, 2020). In protecting the names of the participants in this study, a code was assigned to each participant so that there were no nomenclature identifiers. Once I completed my analysis, I closed the Box library access, much like a digital library return of materials. My access will expire on the specified date unless I request a renewal of access.

Data Analysis Plan

In following the process of moving inductive codes into categories and themes, (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003), the codes that were explored in this study were terms related to the codes of collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, cultural adjustment,

resettlement, refugee, and resilience (Figure 1). The coding approach began with these six a priori codes followed by literary/language coding using provisional coding of defining terms and then I moved onto pattern coding with categorizing terms to establish themes. For this study, patterns of code that form categories in qualitative data analysis were assessed using Roberts (1989) linguistic assessment for thematic content analysis using manual coding as well as the MS Word search function.

Following first and second cycle coding, my memos and summary of impressions helped develop the themes extracted from the research as the last stage of the coding process and as a way of unifying the collected data and identifying clearer areas of meaning-making units (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). From a thematic saturation standpoint, the language throughout the transcript was explored thoroughly through the linguistic assessment lens. Using the qualitative analysis search function on MS Word helped manage the coding process and helped in creating categories and linking themes.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability form the framework of establishing trustworthiness in a qualitative study (Bryman, 2017). Since research ethics often inform the crux of validity in a study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016) the study framework provides a structured and disciplined approach towards evaluating the validity and trustworthiness in a qualitative study. Many qualitative studies indicate high levels of credibility and transferability (Arslangilay, 2018), while others exhibit dependability and confirmability as evidenced through replication of the studies (Koinova, 2016), and still others exhibit all four elements of trustworthiness (Panter-Brick et al., 2018).

Credibility

Researchers have indicated that qualitative interviewing transcription and analysis is where bias that affects credibility and reliability can often be introduced, particularly if there is difficulty in translation (Panter-Brick et al., 2018; Sim et al., 2018). Since credibility establishes internal validity, this study used saturation as a measure of credibility by exploring all 26 interviews conducted on the 10 resettled Syrian refugee subjects interviewed by the Duke University Oral History project (2018) from 2017 to 2018. The transcripts had already been put through a process of peer review since more than one student interviewer was present as the oral history was recorded and transcribed. The recordings were checked by the transcribers several times to ensure there were no transcription errors in recording the oral histories.

Transferability

When evaluating trustworthiness, transferability is another important concept that must be developed in the process of conducting a qualitative study since it refers to external validity (Bryman, 2017). In delving into the realm of qualitative research data collection, transferability is akin to replicability of results but also encompasses protecting privacy, minimizing harm, and respecting the shared experiences of the study participants as critical components in ensuring the safety and protection of the population being studied (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Transferability was evident in this study because the transcripts are available to the public and linguistic analyses can be conducted by other researchers using a similar methodology as conducted in this study. There also existed a variation in participant selection since the oral histories were collected from

both male and female Syrian refugees resettled in several different countries and from different socioeconomic backgrounds and family situations.

Dependability

The implications for research in recognizing the link of personal ontology is the understanding that unique perspectives can be applied to the same gathered data depending on how it is viewed by the researcher (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Since adopting a completely 'blind' perspective cannot occur due to human biases, recognition of an ontological slant must be noted in the research write-up, following analysis (Bryman, 2017). In the categorization of thematically grouped concepts, ontology also played a role and the researcher remained cognizant of the evidence of this ontological slant. The dependability of this study exists in the fact that a theoretical framework was used to guide the coding and linguistic analysis so that the results can be replicated in the future if the study is conducted by other researchers. An audit trail naturally exists since the transcripts of the oral histories are housed in the Duke University library and are accessible to the public.

Confirmability

In using secondary data as the source for analysis, the confirmability of this study was established through a lack of contact between the researcher and the subjects. The transcripts assessed fell under the category of non-probability sampling since the diversity of subjects allows the researcher to narrow the sampling scope by focusing on specific characteristics or traits of individuals within a larger population (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). By narrowing down the scope in this way, I was able to concentrate on people

from a specific country and culture. Since qualitative research focuses on meaning-making, it is common for increased specificity to be used in gathering data as it was in this study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The approach of who was part of the sample size was objective and pre-determined by transcript availability. The linguistic assessment formed the crux of the exploration in this study and provided further confirmability.

Ethical Procedures

The Duke University project developer, Nancy Kalow, who oversaw the students gathering the oral histories, provided written confirmation that all of the interviewees signed release forms for the materials to be archived at Duke University's Archive of Documentary Arts, which is where they are currently housed in the Duke University library. The interviewees assigned the rights of ownership to Duke University, which provides access to these transcripts to researchers, students, and the general public for use as secondary data. The subjects voluntarily agreed to speak about their life experiences and to have these life experiences recorded via video or audio and transcribed for preservation at Duke University. The online language learning group, *NataKallum*, posted the information about the oral histories project and participants were invited to have a conversation in English with an American student at Duke University. No incentive was given to the participants and the students were instructed to conduct the interviews as conversations rather than approaching the participants with a set of specific questions.

In terms of the ethics regarding analysis and reporting, the participants remained anonymous and names were changed to codes throughout this study. For the linguistic

assessment through thematic content analysis, Haider's (2018) study shows that using corpus linguistic techniques reduces but does not remove bias. In order to decrease interviewer bias and to establish greater credibility, it is critical to ensure that the investigator does not impose a view of "othering" onto the test subjects and does not misinterpret transcribed interviews due to differences in cultural context and connotations (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). By using previously transcribed narrative oral histories for this study, I increased the ethicality of the study since no personal bias could be introduced through the interviewing process and the interviews were all collected in the English language (Duke, 2018). When working with vulnerable populations or even those who are emotionally invested in the topic, minimizing harm in asking questions that do not cross the thresholds of pain by re-opening emotional wounds is an important ethical protection that needs to be taken (Goodman et al., 2017). In working with refugees who have experienced trauma, rushing through data collection or exhibiting a lack of cultural comprehension can cause harm towards the participants (Panter-Brick et al., 2018).

Other areas of concern regarding ethical qualitative research involve issues of unequal power distance, selective hearing on the part of the researcher, and difficulty connecting in shared experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To mitigate the impact on the data and analysis, researchers must consider these power differential variables in research and coding. These concerns were not an issue in this study due to the use of secondary data. Respecting shared experiences by being aware of these elements are all crucial aspects of trustworthy, valid, and credible qualitative research (Bryman, 2017).

Summary

This chapter focused on the design of this qualitative study which consisted of conducting a thematic content analysis using linguistic assessment on secondary data of transcribed Syrian refugees' narrative oral histories collected from 2017 to 2018. The chapter also presented the rationale of the study and the role of the researcher as observer and analyzer of the data. The study methodology was discussed which explained the logic behind the participant selection, the instrumentation process, the recruitment procedures, information about participation, data collection and the analysis plan. Finally, trustworthiness of the study was established through an exploration of credibility, transferability, dependability. and confirmability along with an assessment of the ethicality of the procedures, analysis, and approach used. Chapter 4 presents the study results.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to explore the expressions of cultural adaptation and integration of resettled Syrian refugees interviewed between 2017-2018 through the lens of collectivism and uncertainty avoidance as expressed in recorded oral histories. The study was designed to use a culturally competent approach to better understand expressions of emotional resilience of resettled refugees in collected narratives. The research question that guided the study asked: How do resettled Syrian refugees express collective family constructs and uncertainty avoidance in narrative oral histories?

This chapter begins with an overview of the study setting which is followed by an explanation of the sample population demographics. Following these sections is a description of how the data was collected and how the analysis of the data was conducted along with a discussion of the trustworthiness of the findings regarding credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Chapter 4 ends with a presentation of the study results and a summary of the chapter.

Study Setting

This study was conducted using narrative oral history transcripts housed in the Rubenstein Archives of Duke University (2018). The interviews were conducted via Skype in 2017 and 2018 between Duke University students and resettled Syrian refugees in seven different countries who volunteered to participate through the *Natakallam* language group for an undergraduate language education project. The narrative oral histories were not collected under IRB review and with no preplanned research directive,

as oral histories are classified as a narrative art form and can be stored digitally and made available to the public for later research use (Larson, 2019). Since the transcripts constitute secondary data, I did not meet with any of the participants nor do I personally know who they are, which limits researcher bias throughout the study. Voice recordings of the interviews were included in the oral history files, which I listened to while reviewing the transcripts to ensure accuracy and to identify any vocal variations, pauses, or other intonations that might impact the transcript analysis.

Demographics

The transcripts consisted of interviews collected in 2017 and 2018 from 10 different resettled Syrian refugee adults. Six participants were interviewed three times each in January, February, and March of 2017. In the 2017 group of interviews, the demographics consisted of two male participants resettled in Germany, one female in Canada, one male in Italy, one female in Lebanon, and one male in Brazil. Four participants were also interviewed twice each in January and February of 2018 and the demographics consisted of one female in Iraq, one male in Iraq, one male in Greece, and one male in Germany. This made for a total of 18 interview transcripts from 2017 and 8 interview transcripts from 2018 for a total of 26 transcripts. Participants IR1 and IR2, interviewed in 2018, are married to each other and have a 5-year-old daughter. They are the only participants with children. Religion, marital status, and education were self-identified by the subjects within the context of the narrative oral history and recorded accordingly. Ismaili and Shiite are considered minority sects of Islam in Syria (Table 1).

Table 1

Participant Demographics (N = 10)

Participant ID	Country of resettlement	Gender	Marital status	Religion *self-identified*	Education *highest degree*	Interview year
GM1	Germany	Male	Single	Muslim	Masters Telecomm	2017
GM2	Germany	Male	Married	Shiite	Bachelors English Literature	2017
CN1	Canada	Female	Single *(Current Boyfriend)*	Not Religious	HS Diploma	2017
IT1	Italy	Male	Single	Ismaili	Bachelors Computer Science	2017
LB1	Lebanon	Female	Single	Christian	Bachelors Nutrition	2017
BR1	Brazil	Male	Single	Muslim	HS Diploma	2017
IR1	Iraq	Female	Married *(To IR2)*	Muslim	Bachelors English Literature	2018
IR2	Iraq	Male	Married *(To IR1)*	Muslim	Bachelors Music Education	2018
GR1	Greece	Male	Single	Not Identified	HS Diploma	2018
GM3	Germany	Male	Single *(Previously engaged*)	Muslim	Bachelors Nursing	2018

Data Collection

As outlined in the data collection plan in Chapter 3, the transcripts retrieved for analysis were collected from the Rubenstein Archives in the Duke University Archival Library (Duke, 2018). After completing an online request form on the archive's website on June 9, 2020, following notification of my IRB request approval (06-09-20-0542099), the library sent me an email confirmation and then provided access to all of the 2017 and 2018 interview transcripts on June 12, 2020 through a library Box link with access through December 9, 2020. Along with the interview transcripts, the collection included interviewer field notes from each interviewer for each transcript as well as the Skype audio recordings and the initial assignment questions. I listened to all the audio recordings and studied all the transcripts and the field notes prior to beginning my analysis.

Data Analysis

Once I downloaded the files from the Rubenstein Archives (Duke, 2018), I matched up each interview transcript with the affiliated interviewer field notes and audio. The 10 participants were assigned Participant IDs to protect their privacy. I read each transcript once first for clarity and understanding. Then, I followed along with the audio recording as I re-read each transcript and noted any areas of vocal variety such as upward or downward inflections, vocalized pauses, verbal fillers, changes in volume and pitch, and any other verbal elements that seemed inconsistent with the general tonality of the transcript. Following this listening and re-reading, I reviewed each interviewer's field notes while recording my own reactions to the narratives in a reflective journal.

The interviews were conducted by three students for each of the recorded sessions. Each file for each participant in the 2017 interviews included the audio recording of the oral history on three separate occasions in January, February, and March of 2017. Each of the participants in 2018 were interviewed on two separate occasions in January and February of 2018. There were six participants in 2017 for a total of 18 transcripts, 18 audio recordings, and 54 interviewer field notes' documents. There were four participants in 2018 for a total of eight transcripts, eight audio recordings, and 24 interviewer field notes. After reviewing all this material, I went back to the transcripts to identify and record the information needed for the demographics chart. Following the creation of the demographics chart, I revisited my a priori coding matrix (Table 2) and revised the codes and defining terms based on review of the transcripts. Six tables were then created for categorizing terms for each of the defining terms under each code in which the categorizing terms were derived from the transcripts and literature (Table 3-8).

Table 2

A Priori Codes and Defining Terms

Collectivism	Uncertainty avoidance	Cultural adjustment	Resettlement	Refugee	Resilience
Family	Faith	U-Curve	Safety	Loss	Actualize
Hope	Trust in God	Trauma	Shelter	Forced	Self-Transcend
Community	Future	Flight	Difference(s)	Migrant	Survival
Selflessness	Expectations	Home	Language Acquisition	Self-Deprecate	Happiness

Table 3

Categorizing Terms for Collectivism

Family	Hope	Community	Selflessness
Family	Tomorrow	Friend(s)	Giving
Parent(s)	Life	Neighbor(s)	Caring
Child/ren	Wish	Connection	Others
Husband	Dream	Community	Responsible
Wife	Hope	Syria(n)	Help
Son(s)	Peace	People	Individual
Daughter(s)	Opportunity	Communal	Self(less)
Sister(s)	One day	Sympathy	Collective
Brother(s)	Mercy	Apart	
Mother		Communicate	
Father		Support	
Cousin(s)			
Uncle(s)			
Aunt(s)			
Grandparent(s)			
Girl/Boyfriend			
Fiancée			

Table 4

Categorizing Terms for Uncertainty Avoidance

Faith	Trust in God	Future	Expectations
Trust	Spiritual(ity)	Plan	Commitment
Prayer	Belief(s)	Next	Expect
Religion	Submit	Future	Reliance
Church	God	Loan	Rely
Mosque	Thank(ful)	Visa	Free
Muslim	God's Will	Go back	Prices
Christian	Change	End war	Work
Jewish		Past	Education
Shia (Shiite)		Optimistic	Job
Sunni			When
Ismaili			

Table 5

Categorizing Terms for Cultural Adjustment

U-Curve	Trauma	Flight	Home
Adjust	Fear	Distance	Warm
Integrate	Pain	Alone	Stay
Understand	Cry/Crying	Camp	Country
Adopt	Scared	Hard	Heart
Integration	Hunger	Flee	Residence
Assimilation	Thirst	Dark	Welcome
Learn	Anger	Escape	
Culture	Sad	Run	
Acquire	Depression	Leave	
Citizen	Lonely		
Blend	Tears		

Table 6

Categorizing Terms for Resettlement

Safety	Shelter	Different	Language Acquisition
Protection	Living	Identity	Words
Income	Settle	Customs	Arabic
Money	House	Treatment	English
Food	Apartment	Education	Fluent
Security	Place	Foreign	Study
Alive	Poverty	Stranger(s)	Courses
Afford	Needs		

Table 7

Categorizing Terms for Refugee

Loss	Forced	Migrant	Self-deprecate
Miss	Choice	Homeless	Name
Kill(ed)	Separate	Displaced	Not good
Die/Death	Split up	Journey	Apologize
Lose/Lost	Obligated	Refugee(s)	Sorry
Loss	Struggle	Border	

Table 8

Categorizing Terms for Resilience

Actualize	Self-Transcend	Survival	Happiness
Wellness	Succeed	Survive	Happy
Develop	Love	Thrive	Joy
Strength	Freedom	Make it	Excited
Strong	Courage	Respect	Content
(In)Dependent	Values/Ethics	Human	Dignity
Proud	Morals	Alive	

Evidence of Trustworthiness

In maintaining the trustworthiness of this study, procedures that established credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were all put in place to ensure that this qualitative study design met the elements of trustworthiness for a content analysis using linguistic assessment (Maxwell, 2009). Using a narrative approach in this qualitative study allowed for the evaluation of the oral history transcripts through a coding and categorizing approach that used textual information to better understand the relationship between culturally competent expressions relayed in the documents. This

approach provides evidence of trustworthiness in fulfilling the purpose of content analysis by moving past narrow pattern and frequency finding towards greater understanding of the phenomena of linguistic expressions used by the sample population in this study (Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas, 2013).

Credibility

The credibility of the study was established using saturation as an internal validity check in terms of the transcripts analyzed (Bryman, 2017). There were 26 transcripts available from 2017-2018 that were collected from interviews conducted in English by Duke University students. The records provided for this study by the Duke University Rubenstein Archive Library included the original audio recordings of the interviews, the field notes of each interviewer, and the transcripts for every interviewee for each time the subject was interviewed. The six subjects interviewed in 2017 were interviewed three times each for a total of 18 transcripts, 18 audio recordings, and 54 interviewer field note documents. The four subjects interviewed in 2018 were interviewed twice each for a total of 8 transcripts, 8 audio recordings, and 24 interviewer field notes.

To establish credibility, I listened to all the recordings, none of which required translation since the subjects all spoke English fluently and relayed their narratives in the English language. While listening to the audio recordings, I followed along with the transcripts to ensure that the transcription accurately captured the content and context of the narrative. I also kept a reflective journal (Ortlipp, 2008) in which I took notes on any specific vocal variations, changes in tone, volume, pitch, prolonged pauses, or verbal garbage such as “uhm” or “ahh” that may have significantly affected the narrative

meaning. The transcripts were then reviewed again while compared to the field notes in which the interviewers provided their responses to nonverbal cues that they picked up on through the Skype interviews along with their perceptions of continuity in the narratives.

Transferability

While the internal validity was established through the process of ensuring credibility, the external validity of the study was established through transferability (Polkinghorne, 2005). The participants' privacy was protected in this study by providing ID codes for each of the participants so that in future studies replicability will not violate the protection of a vulnerable population (Bryman, 2017). For future researchers seeking to explore the data used in this study, the information is made public by the Duke University Rubenstein Archive Library and can be accessed by anyone interested in conducting further research (Duke, 2018). The linguistic assessment used in this study indicated the categorization of terms applied in conducting the content analysis which can be replicated in future studies as well using different codes and terms.

Dependability

The theoretical framework that guides this study is rooted in Intercultural Communication theory and the audit trail detailing the choices of categorizing terms based on my notes and reflective journal allows for dependability if replication were to occur (Ortlipp, 2008). Because the transcripts are accessible to the public, replication of the study can take place using categorizing and defining terms that fit different theoretical frameworks. The process of linguistic assessment through content analysis that was followed to conduct this study is dependable in its accepted application as a sound

analytical tool for qualitative narrative studies (Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas, 2013). Different themes may be identified based on the strategies used to assess the language in the narrative oral histories.

Confirmability

Because confirmability focuses on ethical representation of the study participants' views rather than the biases of the researcher (Maxwell, 2009), this study ensured that the researcher's ontological slant was understood and evident and did not obscure the data analysis. By reading all the field notes of the interviewers and listening to the audio of the written narrative transcripts, several different perspectives were considered in the coding of the categories for analysis. Also, the establishment of credibility, transferability, and dependability lead to confirmability in the study (Bryman, 2017). Trustworthiness of the study was determined by meeting all the above elements.

Study Results

To answer the question of how resettled Syrian refugees express collective family constructs and uncertainty avoidance in narrative oral histories, different codes were identified and used to guide the analysis. The areas of exploration that helped form the a priori codes were rooted in Hofstede's cultural value dimensions theory (1983) and consisted of the codes of collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and cultural adjustment. Three other categorical codes linked to refugee resettlement were explored under the headings of resettlement, refugee, and resilience to better understand the participants' perspectives (see Table 2).

Each of the a priori codes were then broken down into four categories with terms that fit under each category that helped define the categorization. The terms were found in the transcripts and the associated quotes were analyzed for contextual meaning in seeking to understand the expressions linking back to collectivism and uncertainty avoidance. The linguistic assessment focused on analyzing the four categorizing terms for each of the six a priori codes by applying an MS Word Find search to identify defining terms under each category. The categorizing terms were then explored in the context of the quotes as delineated below.

Collectivism

In Hofstede's (1983) assessment of collectivism, family, hope, community, and selflessness were terms frequently found in describing the organizational interactions of individuals from collectivist backgrounds. In the participants' transcripts, the categories provided guidance in each of these areas with terminology that fit within each category as described below. Variations of each term were accounted for regarding singular or plural usage and when used as different parts of speech in the narratives.

Family. According to Abi-Hashem (2018) and Cetrez and DeMarinis (2017), refugees from collectivist communities such as Syria often rely heavily on family relations and connections to be able to cope with the hardship of forced migration and cultural adaptation. To maintain these connections, resettled Syrian refugees often seek out ways to keep in touch with family members who are physically separated from them. For instance, Participant GM1, a Muslim male Syrian refugee resettled in Germany, said in his January 2017 interview:

> I speak with my family 6 to 7 times per day. Because whenever I go to the internet and I see that there is … (muffled) … there is rockets … (muffled) … I am oh my God uh uh when I'm at the university inside the class and I call my family in What's App and Viber, just to make sure they are safe. (GM1, January 2017)

Several other participants also emphasized the importance of staying connected with family members, particularly parents who were still in Syria, through phone calls and video chats: "When I wake up the first thing I have to do is call my mom. Everyday. I have to do it. After that I will start my day." (BR1, March 2017)

This need for reassurance and maintaining connection with family by checking in on parents is frequently rooted in a constant worry and fear for the parents' safety:

> It's uh very hard to describe how you feel when you know that parents are in very dangerous situation and even you can't know how they are. I can't ever…. So it's not easy and this this is not for me. It's for all refugees who have parents in Syria. They all always everyday call and ask about them because we all know. (GM1, January 2017)

Seeking the wellbeing of physically distant family members for the participants was often equated with a sense of guilt due to their desire yet inability to be closer to their family. Exemplifying the acknowledgement of guilt, participant BR1 stated,

> And I'm always talk with my mom, every day in my … almost two or three times a day because I'm the only one here and I know how much she love me. And I'm

> really sorry that I'm far from, to be far from my family but there's nothing to do. I have to. (BR1, January 2017)

Participants indicated that the lack of physical proximity to their family members amplified the sense of being unable to take care of their parents. Participant GM1 said:

> And for me in my case one of the reasons that I decided to come with the visa, that I'm the only child of my parents. And my parents, they are living in pretty dangerous situation. And I can't expect—I can't imagine that—if they need me and want… (muffled)… I can't be there and I can't take plane and come to… I'm the only child for my parents and I don't want um I can't admit that I will not be able to see them at all or only be able to Skype talk. (GM1, January 2017)

Similarly, Participant BR1 identified strongly with a sense of cultural obligation regarding being with his mother, particularly as an only son: "I'm the only boy for my mom and in my culture I should be with my mom because I'm the only boy for her. I have to do everything she wants, especially when she gets old, and I'm not there." (BR1, March 2017)

From a cultural perspective, the collectivist view of family interconnectedness was emphasized often in terms of the expectation of staying with your family until marriage. Participant GM1 explained:

> …children will uh still live with their family until they get married, it's not like Europe. And this is like challenge we face here for example. So here for example, a student at the university starts to live alone or with friends, here no, we're still living with our family until we get married, this is like conservative like and like

> relations without marriage is forbidden and it's uh a sin it's considered a sin in my country. Like uh so now here, for example in Europe or in US or Canada, there's like an open mind society so like yeah this one of the challenges a different way of thinking. (GM1, March 2017)

Likewise, Participant GM2's personal account of how he views his family aligns with the collectivist concept of being together and maintaining tightly knit ties as a cohesive family unit.

> My family consists of five sisters, two brothers…. They used to visit us all the time. I mean us: my father, my mother, my sister who is not married, and me. So, and they we were very happy with that. We were very close. There's no, in the family, there's no entireties. You think that all of them one entirety. One soul. One body. Yeah. (GM2, January 2017)

Not only was there emphasis in the narratives on the interconnectedness between the resettled refugees and their parents, but also on the interconnectedness between family and life itself. Equating family and life was a common theme in the narratives for many participants. Participant BR1 captured this interconnectedness by saying:

> I think I have special relation with my family…. I cannot pass the day without talking to my mom or my sisters…. We used to get together every day. You have your family and you have your life and I have my life and we can be in touch…. I discovered that I really miss this feeling of family. Because I'm living alone for a long time but uh even if you have money even if you have your own life. The part of the family you will always miss it in your life. You always need it in your life.

> It not depend about money, it not depend about the place where you are. This part in your life you cannot live without it. Family, sisters, brothers, mom, dad….
>
> Because for me the family is the life. When I think about the life I think about my family. I cannot think of something alone. (BR1, March 2017)

Hope. Despite the pain of separation from family, the hope of reunification in Syria sustains many of the interviewed resettled refugees through that pain. Participant GM1 said: "One day I know I will go back to Syria…" (GM1, January 2017) and continued in his second interview with the recurring theme of returning home to Syria by anticipating the end of the war.

> So, I think all they have dreamed, like me, that we, the situation will change, like, that the war will end in Syria. The war will end one day. And we can go and like participate in the reconstruction of Syria, give a hand in the building of Syria one day. (GM1, February 2017)

The hope of returning to Syria to be back with family is also connected to bigger dreams that include securing a positive career and simply living in peace. Participants GM1 and GM2 expressed similar sentiments when GM2 stated: "I want to live in peace, I want to lie in peace. I don't want to—I cannot hear the sound of these things anymore. I can't fight anymore." (GM2, February 2017)

Similarly, Participant BR1 equated the end of the war with his reunification with family: "I still have faith that someday I will be back to be with my family. I still feel faith that the war will end in the Middle East. The people can live in love again. As we

used to live. With another religion with another culture. I still have faith, in that." (BR1. March 2017)

For Participant GM1, hope is also intertwined with the realization of his dreams to succeed in his career also back in his home in Syria:

> And if I want to talk about my interests, or my dream here in Germany, actually I would like to—I have the dream to graduate, I have the dream to be accepted or to be allowed in a Ph.D. program, to um, I have to, to make a Ph.D. here in Germany and after that I hope one day I can go and work there in my country. (GM1, March 2017)

Collective hope in the ending of the war, returning to Syria, and never giving up was indicated by Participant GM3 as what carried him through the trauma of flight and resettlement:

> But it wasn't destroyed my dream about still alive and carry on in my life. It was makes me more stubborn to move for all these things, and say, I never give up, I'm gonna still carry on…. I'm not survivor, I'm a warrior. And the warrior, they got hurt, they lose sometimes, but they not give up. The only way I give up: to die. (GM3, January 2018)

Community. According to Hofstede (1983), collective concepts do not only include maintaining strong family ties, but also maintaining ties and close connections with surrounding community. The description of friends and community members as being one body is similar to the description of family interconnectedness. As Participant GM2 described: "If I want to talk emotions, about thinking, I don't stop thinking about

them. I don't stop feeling them. This feeling prevails… And everything good I feel; they feel the same to me actually. But we are apart only bodily." (GM2, January 2017)

The importance of human connectivity is also captured by Participant GM2 when he said: "And the connections. If you have connections you can achieve your goal." (GM2, March 2017)

These connections that participants spoke of were reflective of similarities, shared interests, language, culture, and experiences that formed tight-knit bonds between friends and community members that were missed upon resettlement as described by Participant GM1:

> I live with my family, and there was peace. Syria was very nice before the war…. I had a lot of friends and they are all like me, we are all engineers or lecturers, we used to meet uh each other every day night in one of the cafes… And now we have not seen each other since after for uh more than five years. (GM1, January 2017)

While emotional closeness is described as a key factor for the connections built in Syria, the participants also described physical proximity as an important part of building community. Participant CN1, a female resettled refugee in Canada, described Syria as:

> it's just so… simple place, and my apartment there was, like big, not so big, because there is no very big apartments, but it was nice, and um, the buildings are so close to each other, so you don't see a street and then you see another building. No. you just see the other building in front of your building. So you can say hi to your neighbor easily. You don't have to shout. Maybe you can also drink coffee

> on the balcony with your neighbor. It's like so crowded area. But it was nice. (CN1, January 2017)

Participant CN1 continued by sharing her perspective on the differences in the interactions experienced within her community in Syria and in her area in Canada: "Here… people are so closed. Like they don't really communicate as much as my country. And back home, if you want to go to groceries, the man there will make a conversation with you for half an hour." (CN1, February 2017)

This feeling of being closed off from neighbors, friends, and community in the area of resettlement was a sentiment echoed by Participant IT1, a male resettled in Italy who said: "And you don't know anybody there, only my brother was living there, don't have friends, you don't have anything…. No friends, no relations. Living separately, carefully." (IT1, January 2017)

Not knowing others seemed to affect every aspect of life for the resettled refugees. While using close relations and people you know to get a job would be considered unethical and an act of nepotism in many individualistic cultures (Hofstede, 1983), in the collectivist culture of Syria, this would be considered helping and a part of community building as Participant IR2, explained:

> Here, the problem, we cannot find job if we do not know someone who work inside organization. You should know someone who work in a organization until you can uh… they pay for you and they accept you. In Arabic we say, 'wasta.' Wasta, this is … so like, I give money for someone, he help me to hire me to a new job. (IR2, January 2018)

Despite being resettled in the collectivist country of Iraq, Participant IR2 did not feel the communal collectivist sense since he did not know anyone in the country which is a critical part of building community ties in cultural integration (Ballard, 2017).

Selflessness. Taking the responsibility to care for others, particularly family and community, is captured under the collectivist concept of selflessness rather than a more individualized conceptualization of self-reliance (Easton-Calabria & Omata, 2018). Participant BR1 explained: "…Because even that I have my family there. I have to help my family there. I cannot think only about myself that my future, I have my future and my mom, my sisters…. So I cannot only think about myself." (BR1, January 2017)

Likewise, Participant GM1 similarly emphasized the importance of helping family members and responsibly caring for them despite the physical distance:

> …we live with our family until we get marriage. So we don't like, for example, at the age of fifteen/eighteen, we leave our family and we live alone as our friends or – no, we live with our family and so I live with my family and I was twenty-nine years old. And if I were in Syria, I were still living with my family. So many people prefer to stay with their family, and especially, uh, because, um, they had to, um, they had to, um, to work in order to, um, in order to, um, to, um, to spend on their family, in order to buy food. Because if they leave their family, then there is no one responsible for them. (GM1, January 2017)

Not only did many participants feel responsible for their family, but they also expressed confidence that their family would be there to selflessly help them when help

was needed. Participant GM2 described a situation in which his family's selflessness was displayed towards him:

> So, I called my family, I told them… I can't get married, I can't do anything because there is no money…. My sisters sold all of the gold they used to have from their husbands. And they sent it to me, and I called a friend in Iraq, and he sent me also some money. (GM2, January 2017)

This sense of selflessness towards family and community is ascribed to cultural expectations by some of the participants. Participant GM3 in a 2018 interview said:

> Our culture is generous culture and nice culture, but as well we have so many mistakes in our culture. Like, we grow up to focus on others more than we focus on ourselves. Because how we work is like a circle. We give without waiting for someone to give us back, but we still give because we know that someone else is going to give it to you back. (GM3, January 2018)

While many of the participants felt a lack of this selflessness in their resettlement residences, interviewees such as Participants IR2 and BR1 were hopeful that love would motivate selflessness:

> We need love. People need love, we should love your neighbors, your friends your uh, who live around you, the decency…. We need just peace, and we need love. And people, we need to feel about us. If I don't care you why, and you don't care me, what meaning our life? Our life it should be better, if I make you happy and you make me happy, its uh, what we need. You respect me, I respect you, we feel about another people, other people we need. (IR2, February 2018)

Equating a sense of love with happiness, respect, and selflessness was also the approach presented by Participant BR1 in a 2017 interview when he said:

> when some people, you don't know them, and they help you, this way you can see love. You can feel that there's really many people that still feel love and they still giving love for another people. And this is kind of love when someone help you and he don't waiting, he's not waiting for you to give him something for his help. That's kind of love. (BR1, March 2017)

Participant GM2 recognized that despite misperceptions regarding the lack of selflessness he might experience in an individualistic culture, he was pleasantly surprised by his experiences with people in Germany where he was treated with love and respect: "We are very grateful to these people, because we had also misconceptions about the people in Europe and the United States. We thought that they are selfish, they love themselves, they are cheap, they don't like to give anything, but they were not like that." (GM2, March 2017)

Collectivism Theme: Importance of Family Connections

Whether exploring the topic of family, hope, community, or selflessness under the category of collectivism, the theme of building and maintaining connections was prevalent in many of the transcripts. Physical connections through multiple daily phone calls to friends and family in Syria surfaced as a constant act of connection in several of the participants' narratives (GM1, BR1). Likewise, lack of proximity and visits to family members and neighbors were often cited as a difficult aspect of transitioning post-migration and a motivator to return and rebuild Syria (GM2, CN1, IR2). Building those

connections as a way of giving back of ones-self was also evidenced in the narratives as an important cultural component of care and compassion (GM3, IT1).

Uncertainty Avoidance

In Hofstede's and Bond's (1984) exploration of uncertainty avoidance, faith, trust in God, future, and expectations were categories frequently found in describing the organizational interactions of individuals from cultures with low uncertainty avoidance backgrounds. In the transcripts, defining terms under these four categories created the over-arching signposts for contextualizing the meaning of content within each category. Variations of each term were accounted for regarding singular or plural usage and when used as different parts of speech in the narratives. The terms guided the extraction of the data and the analysis by placing quotes in categorical context based on terminology and meaning derived from contextualization of the narratives.

Faith. As described in his cultural value dimensions theory, Hofstede (1983) identified high levels of faith adherence as an indicator of lower uncertainty avoidance. Many participants identified strongly with faith but also minimized the distinction between religions and valued religious diversity within their Syrian cultural background. As Participant GM1 explained:

> We have like a religious diversity: we have Muslims, we have Christians, and we have like mosque next to church, churches, in Syria we live all in peace with each other. I have many Christian neighborhood and many Muslims and many other sects or other parts, uh parties, people from the other parties. (GM1, March 2017)

Participants GM2 and GM3 also corroborated the lack of differentiation between people of faith and the organized religion they ascribed to in Syria: “So, they were Sunnis or Shiites, or they are Christians. No problem.” (GM2, February 2017)

Participant GM3 stated: “In Syria, Muslims and Christians, and all the religions, they celebrate Christmas, you know, all of us together… you know… they have no wall between—only in Syria you can see that.” (GM3, January 2018)

Most participants approached faith with a more universalist approach that appears more collectivist and communal in nature rather than a sectarian perspective dividing groups by organized religion or religious identifiers. Participant GM2 stated:

> … the main lesson of God that He created us not to be enemies. This belief runs that I am Muslim, I am better than the others. Or I am Christian, I am better than the others. The people need to be aware that after 2000 years of Jesus Christ or 1,500 years from Mohammed that God didn’t create these guys and sent them to say that he is better than the other…. (GM2, March 2017)

The idea that faith can exist in many different shapes and forms regardless of religious affiliation could be seen in Participant CN1’s statement: “You just see people wearing veils, and it’s fine, but not all the people wear veils, and not all the people are religious…– it’s not wrong, but we are not all the same. So people don’t understand that.” (CN1, February 2017)

In her second 2017 interview, Participant CN1 reiterated her stance on the limitations of ascribing to a particular belief system by saying: “I hate to talk about

religions – I am not religious. But any religion can make you so limited in adjusting to a new home." (CN1, March 2017)

Likewise, Participant IT1 used an identifier regarding the religious label he might fall under but echoed Participant CN1 words by saying: "I am not a religion man, a religious man, but originally from a minority in Syria called Ismaili." (IT1, January 2017)

While Participant GM3 identified as Muslim, he explained that his father was Shiite and his mother was Sunni but that he did not see the religious identifiers as walls or divides. He also expressed his heartbreak at seeing his country so divided by religion:

> Maybe I realize it from your name if your Christian or not, otherwise I cannot realize. We live all of us as one family, and that [sectarianism] destroyed our environment as peaceful environment…. Those people who came, they used Islam in a wrong way. They use the name of Allah – the God – in wrong name, to encourage more people. (GM3, January 2018)

Participant BR1 also wanted to make it clear that his religion was not the cause for the violence that erupted in Syria, He stated: "Even we're Muslim, that not mean we're terrorist or when we enter some place that we gonna destroy the place." (BR1, January 2017)

While faith was viewed as an important aspect in each participants' life, the concept of faith seemed to be much more tied to love, family, connections, culture and hope than it was tied to organized religion. Participant BR1 explained:

> Without love, you cannot feel faith. Without faith, you cannot feel love. Both of them, it's one depend on another. They should be together. You cannot feel one

> without the other. Because, for example, I was in depression, I passed the depression. I was without faith. And when I get out of this depression, I feel that I didn't give love for anyone. And even, I didn't feel love with myself. Because I don't have faith. So both of them, uh, each one depend on the other. (BR1, March 2017)

Trust in God. Lower uncertainty avoidance is often intertwined with trust in God and a firm reliance on handing your matters over to a higher theological power regardless of the situation (Block & Walter, 2017). With this trust in God, many participants expressed their ability to keep going despite traumatic circumstances. Participant GM2 said: "I trusted God that I will find any other way except this way. And I trusted God, and I said I'm ready to walk from Aleppo to Hama…." (GM2, January 2017)

It was clear from Participant GM2's narrative that thanking, trusting, praying to, and relying upon God all played an integral role in his ability to overcome his hardships. He explained his journey of forced migration by saying: "I crossed the borders. I was very afraid, but I crossed the borders, thank God, to Lebanon…. All the time I am praying to God. From that time until now, or before that. All the time, I need to do that." (GM2, January 2017)

In his reliance upon God, Participant GM2 also acted upon the second stage of grief by bargaining (Ellis et al., 2019). He spoke of one of his most traumatic experiences in prison and said: "I stood up and I talked to God. I said please, I cannot put up with this situation…. Either let me free from this place or let me die…. I want to die. Please take

my soul away from my body…. I pray God from the bottom of my heart." (GM2, February 2017)

The act of bargaining with God during periods of grief was also expressed by Participant IR2 whose wife (Participant IR1) was in the hospital in Iraq due to Leukemia. He explained the self-talk he engaged in during that time when he would say to himself and his wife: "Okay, maybe if we give what we have for people, maybe God help us." (IR2, February 2018)

Bargaining in the hopes that prayers will be answered is predicated upon strong belief in the power of God and acknowledgement of faith. As Participant GM1 explained:

> You know… I have always believed in God. Not because of something that I inherited from the people. I was all the time trying to inquire, to know more about religion…. I was always trying to read and to deepen my knowledge and religion—because I felt it was something very important- it's the most important thing in life to know about the creator, of God. (GM2, February 2017)

In the interview conducted with Participant GM2 a month later in March of 2017, he continued to stress his reliance upon God. In responding to the question of what got him through the hardships and difficulties encountered as a refugee, he said:

> Patience… and trust in God – to trust God, because the trust of God will lead you to every, to the best places – to be dependent on Him. Whether you are Christian, whether you are Jewish, whether you are Muslim. I think it's very good to trust in Him and not to be arrogant. (GM2, March 2017)

Participant BR1 also identified his trust in God as a motivating factor in getting him through difficulty. “I don’t know how God was helping me in that moment, but I believe God was always with me at that time when I was there. At Turkey, in Morocco and until now, I thank God, I believe He was always with me.” (BR1, January 2017)

In his third interview in March of 2017, Participant BR1 explained how trusting God’s plan allowed him to decrease the sense of worry he might have about the future.

> But now I believe that in a moment your life gonna change totally. Everything in you life gonna change in one moment. Not in a minute, in a moment…. So now I don’t give the things more size. I’m always think, normal. Everything happen to me it’s normal. I’m not giving any, how you say, any more size for anything. I’m always put the things in small size. I’m not thinking a lot in things, in anything, cause I know that some moment everything gonna change…. God have a plan for us. If something bad or something good happen to you, God always have a plan for that. I still believe that, everything that I pass bad, I still believe that the God have great things to me…. I believe that everything happen in our life it’s for something. And I’m not gonna stop believe in God…. I have my faith in God that he want me to be ready for something. I don’t know if it’s gonna be soon or far from now but he want me to be ready for something. (BR1, March 2017)

Future. While trust in God and maintaining strong faith may have assisted many of the participants in coming to terms with the difficult circumstances of their pasts, several participants did not have a clear vision for the future. Participant GM2 responded when asked about his plans for the future by saying: “I don’t know actually, I’m I don’t

have any plans. The future is very difficult to build. It's very difficult to build. The first year here it was very good—there was nothing to think about" (GM2, February 2017).

Although some of the participants hoped for a future in Syria with a return opportunity to rebuild their home country, many felt that the only future they could envision would be in their current country of resettlement. Participant GM1 stated: "So that's why there's no possibility at all to plan the future there in Aleppo. So that's why, um, I decided to um – I decided to begin a new future in other country" (GM1, January 2017).

In other cases, the near future existed of succeeding in the current country while the distant future included a wish to return to Syria. Participant CN1 explained her perspective by saying: "I want to get used to my new home here. I want to study very well, I want a good future in some job, or study or something, it's for me. And also I want to one day come back to Syria and help and rebuild everything, with any skill that I will have at that time…. This is my dreams" (CN1, March 2017).

In order to succeed in this vision of moving forward, Participant GM1 believed: "We have to forget about the past, the past if it's bad or if it's good…. The people are living in their past" (GM2, March 2017).

On the other hand, too much hope for a future back in Syria seemed to also be viewed as an unattainable pipe dream by participants such as LB1 who said:

> And every, every month, they keep on saying this, like in two months, we will go back. In 3 months, we will go back, things are getting better, we are going back. And they never like give up on this idea and … it was difficult for them because

> they were far and they were like so disappointed and they were so depressed. (LB1, February 2017)

Based on his personal experiences as a resettled refugee, the parting advice given by Participant IR2 regarding the future was:

> Don't think about the future. People here, all people afraid for future. I want to say for all communities in the world, for to be happy in the future and now, what you have better, or what you can do better for future. Future you don't get it, but now, everything around you, do what you can. (IR2, February 2018)

Expectations. In line with Participant IR2's advice not to think about the future, many participants also suggested letting go of expectations as a measure of self-protection and as a coping mechanism. Participant GM1 spoke of his personal losses and how he would often not expect to awaken from his sleep due to the surrounding devastation in Syria.

> When I go to sleep, I say when I wake up tomorrow I will not wake up tomorrow because many of the people, many of my friends and some of my relatives who, while they are sleeping a kind of rocket hit their building and one of their family members were killed. So we used to live in fear. I lived in fear for more than four years, every day. (GM1, January 2017)

Participant CN1 also expressed disappointment in terms of expectations for work and education that many refugees have upon resettlement and the disappointment that would often come with those dashed expectations. She said, "They are not allowed to

work. They are not allowed to be educated. They are not allowed to go to universities" (CN1, January 2017).

In her next interview in February she continued talking about the false hope that things might get better regarding her options upon resettlement and how she gave up on expecting a positive outcome. "So they're supposed to do something about it and said and promised many times that they will do something about it and they never did. I don't want to say 'my expectations.' I expect nothing from them." (CN1, February 2017)

Uncertainty regarding expectations also existed for Participant IT1 regarding the future of Syria. When asked what he expected in the future, he said: "So it's really complicated and I can't guess …what will happen now. …I don't know because every day there is new thing happening in Syria. And new thing, unexpected… will happen..." (IT1, February 2017).

Uncertainty Avoidance Theme: Insignificance of Religious Differences

In assessing the role of uncertainty avoidance in the cultural adaptation process of resettled Syrian refugees, elements of faith, trust in God, outlook on the future, and expectations revealed the theme of stressing similarities in terms of religious differences among others rather than highlighting disparities. Across faith beliefs, many participants stated that they did not notice differences between religious sects or denominations and that getting along with each other is what kept them close to their communities in Syria (GM1, GM2, GM3). Although awareness of theological differences existing among the different faiths was acknowledged, many participants felt that love and trust in God transcended faith boundaries (BR1, GM2, IR2). This perspective on faith being more

unitarian than divisive also colored expectations of the future with hope that there would be a collective return to Syria with rebuilding despite the differences that initially were used as a propaganda tool of division (CN1, LB1, IT1).

Cultural Adjustment

While assessing cultural adjustment, Graham and Ponzuela (2017) found that concepts of the U-curve, trauma, flight, and home are terms that could apply to the stress of movement and resettlement into new cultural landscapes. In the transcripts, the categories provided guidance in each of the areas with terminology that fit within each category as shown below. Variations of each term related to cultural adjustment (Table 5) were accounted for regarding singular or plural usage and when used as different parts of speech in the narratives.

U-Curve. The trajectory of the U-Curve and the difficulty in adaptation was expressed by several participants such as when Participant GM1 explained:

> Suppose you sent, suppose, suppose that you are in a new country, you don't speak the language, you don't have job, you don't have money, you don't have anything. So, you will have a lot of challenges, like for example I want to talk about Syrians here in Germany, they can't speak German, they have no money, they don't know anyone, totally different culture, totally different way of thinking, totally different, for example, religion – here there's no like bunch of Muslims like in for example in – consider like 70 people of the citizens are Muslim and there are 20 percent like Christian. But here for example, so, many [unknown word]. And I know that for integration it's not easy for all people, for

> other people it's – so I'm not sure that if the war end many people will go back, and especially that our families are stays, staying in Syria, they stay, they are in Syria. So that's why it's very difficult… because like family reunion is not easy. (GM1, March 2017).

Participant GM2 agreed that adaptation was not easy for refugees upon resettlement. "It's not easy, in any place it is not easy – to adapt to the life" (GM2, January 2017).

In Participant GM2's third interview in March 2017, he continued to expand upon his personal struggle to adapt to his resettlement placement by saying: "This is word that you can say adaptation, adaption or adaptation, to adopt to the place, yeah- adaptation. I tried always to adapt to the situation to the conditions and not to give up" (GM2, March 2017).

Trauma. The difficulty of adaptation was complicated for many of the study participants due to trauma-induced struggles resulting from separation, loss, and mental health issues. Incidents during the pain of separation were clearly captured by Participants IR1 and IR2 who fled Syria and had to leave their infant daughter behind:

> I left my daughter in Syria. I didn't bring her with me, yeah, because I couldn't bring her with me…. Then after four months, I go out and I tell my husband, I need my daughter. Every day I was crying on (about) her…. She didn't know me. She didn't [know] that I am her mother. (IR1, January 2018)

The husband of Participant IR1 agreed that the experience of leaving their daughter was very traumatic. "My daughter… she stay with my mother and my sister.

And you know when… children stay without their mother, it is very difficult" (IR2, February 2018).

For many participants, the pain of separation and the resulting trauma brought about many mental health issues that were ignored or not addressed during resettlement. According to Participant CN1, the lack of support in the form of culturally competent therapy made it difficult to seek help that is needed.

> And about the whole mental issues stuff, I think just get people support. Any kind of support. If they need to talk, let them talk about it. If they don't want to talk, don't push them about their mental issues…. In our culture, to say 'I am mentally not okay' that means that you are crazy, so you can't say about it. (CN1, March 2017)

Fear and trauma went hand-in-hand in many of the descriptions of how the participants were feeling. Participant GM1 hesitated when asked to speak about politics and explained that he could not practice freedom of speech since this was not considered a right in Syria. "So I don't prefer to talk about politics, because I'm afraid that my family there are – still live in Syria" (GM1, January 2017).

The fear of family being harmed was prevalent in other narratives as well. Participant GM2 also stated: "I was afraid that they would call my family and try to investigate also with them…. For three days I was very afraid…. It was hell underneath" (GM2, February 2017). The result of Participant GM2's fear was that he felt: "Traumatized, traumatized, I am traumatized. I cannot put up with that anymore" (GM2, February 2017).

A candid description of how this trauma could lead to suicide ideation was captured by Participant GM2 when he said:

> I pass depression here in Brazil. I spend like one year in depression. I was thinking… I was thinking I wanna really end my life. Two times this idea came to my head that I have nothing to stay alive anymore…. Um when I went to see my family, and I saw my mom, that gives me a, more reasons to stay alive, actually. (BR1, January 2017)

Participant LB1 also expanded on how the fear of loss and trauma was the motivating factor that forced her and her family to resettle in Lebanon.

> …we were all afraid because because there was like people were talking about kidnapping young eh, young people that are rich or having companies or anything so my dad was afraid that maybe they kid… uh, uh, that me and my brother could be in damage, so he decided to let us move to Lebanon. (LB1, January 2017)

Flight. In an attempt to escape the difficulties encountered in Syria, the participants recounted their flight tales and how in many ways the fleeing was almost more difficult than staying in Syria. Several participants like Participant GM1 believed they would never have left if they had a chance to stay in Syria. Participant GM1 said "…let's suppose there was no war in Syria, absolutely one hundred percent I would not leave my country" (GM1, January 2017). In recalling the difficulty of the flight journey, Participant GM2 said: "I fled and I walked for about 6 kilometers in the forest…" (GM2, January 2017).

After walking for so many miles, he came upon a group of people who he wanted to surrender to out of fear and exhaustion.

> One of them said… 'Hello, or As-salamu'alaykum.' I said, 'As-salamu'alaykum, I fled, I fled from there, actually. I just want you, if you want to kill me, I just—first of all, just need to drink something, to eat something, I'm very, very hungry….And if you want to kill me, then there's no problem, but at least, try to bury me, and to call my family to them…. (GM2, January 2017)

The men wound up helping Participant GM2 because he hid the fact that he had fled from Syria and instead simply said that he was injured and lost. He explained:

> I didn't say that I fled because if you leave or if you flee then you are – you have betrayed your country. …a lot of people cannot flee, and they stay there. But they stay at their houses…. And, after all, you have to have the courage." (GM2, February 2017)

Home. Despite not wanting to leave their home country of Syria, the forced migrants felt that they did not have a choice but to leave. Participant GM1 described the situation by saying: "I tried to be in Syria as long as possible, but um I reached point that if I stayed there in Syria I will not—first of all, there's like a big risk on my life, and I will not be able to build my future, I will not be able to get married…" (GM1, January 2017).

The struggle to acclimate through resettlement was also agonizing for participants who could not forget their birth-country of Syria. Participant GM1 explained: "My home is Aleppo. My home, ya. I always miss Aleppo. And even when I see like a photo from

Aleppo, I miss it, and I feel 'this is my home'" (GM1, February 2017). Likewise, Participant GM2 expressed similar sentiments: "Germany cannot be country for me at all. I can appreciate this country. I can work for this country. But I cannot… forget about my country or my memories" (GM2, March 2017).

Participant CN1 also spoke of the lack of adjustment and the inability to identify the country of resettlement as her home.

> Well I don't feel like I'm home. But I feel comfortable. Like everything is different, the nature of people is different. For example, if you want to visit a friend back home you don't call him, you just go and show up. That's it. End of the story. Here, you have to make an appointment, and this kind of stuff is too complicated. So this is stuff that's too different. …it's completely different, nothing reminds me of home. I can buy hummus here, so that reminds me of home. Hummus. But nothing else. (CN1, February 2017)

For Participant IT1, the feeling of home also could not be fully realized in his country of resettlement. When asked whether or not he felt at home in Italy, he said: "umm kind of but not like a real home. You can't feel like you are in your home like your original country. …I can say that I am displaced and I don't have a home now" (IT1, January 2017).

Cultural Adjustment Theme: Effect of Host Community on Adaptation

Under the category of cultural adjustment, defining terms of the U-Curve of cultural integration, trauma, flight, and home emerged in the transcripts. The theme that held these elements together was the effect of the host community on refugee adaptation.

Issues of integration related to the lack of knowing people in the country of resettlement as well as the trauma of leaving loved ones behind emerged frequently in the narratives (IR1, GM1, GM2, CN1). Fleeing home and experiencing depression and sadness due to the loneliness and unfamiliarity of resettlement also deterred adaptation for the participants (LB1, GM2, IT1). The feelings of depression were often linked to the displacement and the impact that the surrounding host country residents had on the refugees.

Resettlement

The concept of resettlement includes terminology linked to safety, shelter, differences, and language acquisition (Afkhami & Gorentz, 2019; Darling, 2017) as descriptors referring to resettlement. In the transcripts, these resettlement categories provided guidance in each of the areas with terminology that fit the defining terms described below. Variations of each term were accounted for regarding singular or plural usage and when used as different parts of speech in the narratives.

Safety. The concept of safety as discussed by the participants included physical, financial, and emotional protection. Participant GM1 said that he would feel safe returning to Syria when:

> the economic situation will be enhance, will be start to enhance, and the currency will – because, many people want to go to Syria and start, uh, start like a new business, like they are just waiting the war to end, especially the Syrian. (GM1, March 2017)

Participant CN1 spoke of how her father sought safety through resettlement. “He just wanted this place to be safe. Without war, without bombing, children, womens, old men, who just doesn’t want to fight” (CN1, January 2017). Similar to CN1’s account of how her father sought out safety by fleeing war-torn Syria, Participant IT1 sought the same type of safety by resettling in Italy. “But, uh, you can say that the most thing that I was looking for is to feel safe and this is what I get here in Italy, not like in Lebanon or in Syria. And that’s what I want exactly now” (IT1, January 2017).

Shelter. For many of the participants, safety was also encompassed in protective shelter that met their needs upon resettlement. However, basic needs were not always met in the way the participants had imagined. “The government support them [refugees] with money, and it’s a very little amount of money, it’s just enough in order to cover your needs, like food, and uh, like just your daily needs” (GM1, March 2017).

Participant CN1 felt unsafe upon resettlement, despite her new home, due to unresolved mental health issues that were not addressed.

> Because I think… before I feel like I’m totally fine with my new home and uh I don’t feel safe, well I feel safe, and this is my new home, but I don’t feel settled, like I really need to… I think there is many things that have to come first before I can take care of my mental health. Like for example my family is still in Syria, I’m worried about them. How I can go to counselor and talk like nothing… I don’t know, but I think I can’t just move on…. But yeah, like, it’s not about me…. So, you won’t help them really. First, get them house, get them food, get them privacy, like a really normal human life, and then talk with them about their

> mental health…. I think there's essential needs that have to be given for us, for people in general who need help, and then you can talk with them about their mental health, because they will be ready to move on and to feel better. (CN1, March 2017)

Different. Part of the process of forced migration and resettlement for the participants included adjusting to the differences encountered along the way. Participant GM1 captured his reaction to these differences by saying:

> For all the Syrian, I think we feel that we are strangers here. Because, completely different culture. Completely different concepts. Completely different way of thinking. So you can't feel that you are at home, because you are – there's a lot of restrictions." (GM1, February 2017)

Participant LB1 expanded on what these differences look like in terms of education. She said: "In Syria we had like different education, different education by gender. We had like, boys' schools and girls' schools. And um maybe this is why they would prefer this because they are used to it" (LB1, March 2017).

The differences in education, culture, and experiences were also captured by Participant GM3 who spoke of the individualism that he was surprised by upon his resettlement journey to Europe.

> This is the way we grow up, and this is the way we learn. How can I give someone else of a different culture and in his culture he grew up totally different as how I grew up. We grew up to give to others, because we know that someone else is going to give to us without looking for something back. But in Europe

> everyone focuses on themselves. Because here you grow up as an individual. You should support yourself as an individual. But in our culture, we focused so much on growing up as a group, as s family as a big family. Helping in life, helping your family. (GM3, January 2018)

Participant GR1 also identified the lack of collectivism in Greece in terms of family connections as a difference that affected him. He explained:

> They say, 'Oh, you're over eighteen, you are not family anymore.' It's my father! 'But, you're over eighteen, you are a whole other human.' That's not how it works, you know, in our countries. Now when you are in Greece, now when you are in Europe, this is the new rules. (GR1, February 2018)

Language acquisition. The differences in terms of resettlement for many of these participants was also reflected in the difficulty in learning the language of the country of resettlement. While all of the participants were fluent in English, many of them struggled with learning the language and dialect of their country of resettlement. They also recognized the importance of language acquisitions as Participant GM1 stated: "Because I know that if I want to find job I have to I have to I have to be fluent" (GM1, February 2017).

In situations in which the participants were able to learn the language of their country of residence, they recognized the benefit in that language acquisition. Participant GM2 stated with gratitude: "I thank God that I learn the language. I am respected between people because I commit the law…. I want to dependent on myself. I want to be effective. I want to be in a secure place here" (GM2, March 2017).

Participant CN1 spoke of how she struggled to learn the language so that she could get by in Canada. “So I studied by myself at home to just pass the high school, um, age, something like that. So my English is not so good, when you don’t understand just tell me, we didn’t understand” (CN1, January 2017). She continued in her February interview by describing how it was also difficult for her family members to acclimate to their new country due to lack of language acquisition.

> First year was very bad, like the… not year, first few months were so bad for them because they don’t speak English, and everyone look at them like ‘Oh, you don’t speak English, you are stupid,’ and they get bullied a lot in their school so they hated it. And then, when they learned the language more, they get used to everything. They learn fast. Quickly. Now it’s easier for them. But at the beginning it was so difficult for them. (CN1, February 2017)

For many of the participants, language is identified as the key to success in the country of resettlement. In explaining this importance, Participant IT1 stated,

> So the language is everything here. You need to study the Italian language. Without the language, you can’t do anything here because I speak English—maybe not very good English, but I think good English—but English is not a common language here in Italy. …So I think when you be able to speak Italian, everything will be easy here. Italian is everything here, the Italian language. (IT1, January 2017)

The initial shock experienced upon arrival in a country of resettlement in which the participant does not speak the language was described by other participants as well.

Participant BR1 explained his experience by saying:

> I get off the airplane and I was thinking, oh my God, where am I, where am I going? What this kind of language this people are talking? Is there anyone speak English? No. Is there anyone speak Arabic? No. How can I understand? How can they understand me? I want to say that I want to eat and no one understand me. It was a terrible moment in my life. (BR1, January 2017)

For Participant IR1, studying the English language prior to fleeing Syria helped him throughout the forced migration process. “I like to speak English. It was my dream to study English actually. So, I decided from high school to study English and I go to university and I graduate. It was my dream to study English and to speak English” (IR1, January 2018).

Since the English language helped Participant IR1 in his life, he spoke of how he would want to teach his daughter English as well.

> Of course it is important to uh teach her uh English, more than Arabic and Kurdish, eh because English it is the language of the world. Wherever you go, if you know English, you can work, you can speak to anyone you want, because it is the language of the world yeah. (IR1, February 2018)

Resettlement Theme: Isolation and Lack of Communication

In exploring the topic of resettlement, terms linked to safety, shelter, differences, and language acquisition factored heavily in the narrative transcripts. Safety was captured in terms of physical, emotional, and financial security while shelter encompassed elements of home and daily needs being met (GM1, CN1, IT1). Differences and language

acquisition were linked due to the expressions of cultural differences felt acutely in terms of limited interactions and lack of collectivism resulting in isolation from not knowing the language of the country of resettlement (IR1, BR1, GM2).

Refugee

As a cultural identifier and frame of reference for understanding expressions of family collectivism and uncertainty avoidance, the a priori code of refugee appeared frequently in the self-talk of the study participants' narratives. Since the term refugee is often embraced or rejected as a personal identifier (Celebi, Verkuyten, & Bagci, 2017), it was important to include as a code with the categorizing terms of loss, forced, migrant, and self-deprecation as seen through defining terms and linguistic choices in the narratives since these terms can be linked to refugee self-perceptions (Kira, 2019). Variations of each term were accounted for regarding singular or plural usage and when used as different parts of speech in the narratives.

Loss. The journey of seeking refuge for all the participants was tinged by many varying degrees of loss. Whether experiencing a loss of family, friends, lives, homes, livelihoods, or everything familiar, each participant recounted some form of loss that had occurred for them through their experiences as forced migrants. Participant GR1 spoke of the death of all his family members due to the war in Syria.

> End of 2016 – we didn't move the whole family, we actually lost the family. One of the times we were at work, me and my younger brother, uh.. (pause). Well, I came back home one day and there was an airstrike in our area, and our house got damaged – the whole building actually collapsed, collapsed down, and---

> everyone in it died. So… yeah. So, there was no actually family anymore. It was just me and my brother and his wife, because they were living separately. (GR1, January 2018)

Participants GM1 and IT1 both spoke of the loss of their friends who were just like them. "… so many of my friends they were killed in this war. Actually, most of them, they are all um – they are not militant, they are citizens, just people. One of my friends, for example, is a doctor, the other is an engineer." (GM1, January 2017) and "I lost many people in Syria. I lost many friends in Syria, it was another way to find a new relations, new friends" (IT1, March 2017).

For Participant BR1, the loss he experienced was both in his friends and his physical property.

> So when the war start… they destruct my home, exactly. And my car was in the same place and I lose my car either. You know, I start with my friends to make this kind of revolution going on the street. We start to say that we don't want this president. After that, I lost all of my friends. My good friends that I spend, um, a lot of time with him. (BR1, January 2017)

Losing friends, homes, cars, family members and so much more was described by many of the participants as the most harrowing of experiences. Participant CN1 said:

> When you lose everything, you won't care about what you're going to take to another country. You won't feel anything. You won't care. …I miss my friends. I used to miss my home, but not anymore like before. I miss small stuff that I had that connect me with the past. Like photos for me when I was child, or maybe a

> doll that I had, or like shoes that I kept for occasions…. So it's this kind of details. You just miss sitting with your friends…. So yeah, I think I miss everything. (CN1, January 2017)

The impact that these experiences of loss had on the study participants and on their emotional and mental health can be seen in Participant CN1's account:

> …At the beginning of the war and everything, I was like… my emotion was kind of normal, like when I lose someone I used to feel sad, and that's normal, like you feel sad when you lose someone. But after that, no. When I lose someone I don't feel sad. I feel numb. I feel nothing. Like even now, I talk about the really sensitive subjects, but I don't feel something, I don't feel like crying, I just feel numb. (CN1, March 2017)

Partnered with loss, some participants described a feeling of humiliation and insensitive responses to their loss while going through the resettlement process. Participant GR1 who had lost almost his entire family in the bombing felt ridiculed by the questions asked of him in his resettlement application interview:

> And the guy in the interview start asking me like 'How did you feel when you came home and your whole family was dead?' What are you waiting for me to say? Imagine your whole family dying. And then there is people, they asking me, 'Eh… what kind of… ways of torture did they do to you in prisons…?' What kind of asylum is it – it's literally treating people like animals. (GR1, January 2018)

The trauma described by Participant GR1 in the resettlement process was echoed by many of the participants as they describe their experiences of forced migration.

Forced. The trauma of loss, the humiliation of trying to rebuild as a stranger in a new land, and the struggle of forced separation weighed heavily on the minds of many of the participants who described the fear and their resultant reactions to that fear post resettlement. Participant GM1 said: "Even now here in Germany, when it's like the New Year's celebrations, when I hear the sound of the firework—oh I always remember the sound of the war. I imagine the war and I feel afraid" (GM1, January 2017).

For many participants, being forced to migrate due to the circumstances in Syria made them feel powerless as in the case of Participant GM2 when he said:

> Actually I didn't want that. There's nothing like 'I don't want that.' There's something of obligatory, 'I must do that.' Maybe 'need' is stronger than 'must.' …it was not out of my will. So there was no other place to go to…. So I was obligated. (GM2, January 2017)

Participant CN1 also felt like she had no choice but to flee her country of Syria and Participant BR1 expressed similar sentiments of feeling forced and powerless in decision making about migration. "Well, we didn't really decide… we didn't have the choice. Like, um, so… our home was destroyed, and also the whole area, kind of" (CN1, January 2017). Participant BR1 emphasized this point by saying:

> It was not my choice. It was not my choice. Till the war start, was my work amazing. I was growing up…. I was doing very well. But it's not something in my hand. I'm not feel sorry because it's not in my hand. I'm not the only one. There is millions like me. So I don't feel so sorry about what happened to me…. I didn't

> decide to leave my family, I didn't decide to go out Syria…. Everything that happen to me was out of control. (BR1, March 2017)

As much as the forced migration was intended as a safety seeking journey, for most participants, resettlement did not heal old wounds. Participant GM3 stated:

> I try to face it as reality. Because we left the war, but the war didn't leave us because it's still in our body. I get hurt and we have it in our body, in our mind, and in our feeling. The war starts, I take my decision after my sister died in the war—after my sister died from bombs coming from the opposition at our flat. (GM3, January 2018)

In Participant GM3's follow up interview in February, he reiterated his point by explaining that forced migration may have removed the refugees from a place of war but it did not remove the trauma of war from inside those who experienced such trauma. Participant GM3 said: "But, if we are as refugees, we left the war, the war didn't leave us" (GM3, February 2018).

Migrant. Although forced migrant is the terminology often used to describe refugees, many of the refugees did not see themselves in these terms. Participant GM1 said:

> …when people call me a refugee I don't say anything. I even don't say I'm a student. I just smile and say oh okay. Because if I'm not refugee, I'm Syrian, and my cousin is refugee, uh my friends are refugee. So it's something not bad. No we had to be actually, it's not our choice. For Syrians who became a refugee, they don't decide to be. (GM1, February 2017)

Another derogatory experience that many participants mentioned was the feeling that they were treated like animals at different points of their migration. Participant CN1 said: “And the journey wasn’t very easy from Lebanon to Canada. …We went first to Jordan and from Jordan to here. …But in Jordan they treat us very badly, very badly at the airport. Like animals” (CN1, February 2017).

Self-deprecation. While all the study participants spoke fluent English, they often self-deprecated and apologized for their language, the difficulty of the pronunciation of their names, and the assumed lack of coherence in their narratives. For instance, Participant GM1 interjected apologies for his English not being strong by saying: “My English is not that good, so um just speak slowly if you could” (GM1, January 2017) and “I am sorry for my poor English, haha” (GM1, March 2017).

Participant GM2 similarly apologized for his language skills by saying: “Sorry but maybe you will not understand me” (GM2, January 2017) and “I’m sorry my English got worse because I’m all the time thinking in German” (GM2, January 2017).

This participant also apologized for talking too much and for the network connection by saying: “I’m sorry I talked so much” (GM2, January 2017) and “I’m very sorry about this crazy network here in Germany” (GM2, February 2017).

In all of these cases, the interviewers reassured the participants that they were easily understood, that they did not talk too much, and that the connection was fine. Yet, participants such as Participant IT1 and IR2 both continued to apologize not just for their language but also for their situations. “And I know my English is not very good” (IT1, January 2017) and “Sorry for my tragic circumstances!” (IR2, February 2018).

Refugee Theme: Refugee Response to Emotional and Physical Loss

The linked terminology under the category of refugee found in the narratives consisted of terms categorizing loss, forced, migrant, and self-deprecation. The concept of loss encompassed losing friends, family, homes, possessions, livelihoods, and dignity due to war, death, destruction, and the resettlement process (GR1, IT1, CN1). Under the categorizations of forced and migrant, many participants spoke of lack of autonomy and the trauma and lack of humanity in not having a choice other than going through the degradation of resettlement (BR1, GM2, GM3). Many of the participants adopted a tone of self-deprecation with frequent apologies throughout their narratives when speaking about their emotional and physical losses (GM2, IR2).

Resilience

Despite the losses, the emotional trauma, the difficulty in adaptation, and the language struggles, many of the participants still indicated signs of resilience through their experiences. Resilience among refugees can be captured in concepts of actualization, self-transcendence, survival, and happiness (Allan & Charura, 2017) as found in the characterization of resilience particularly among resettled Syrian refugees (Denov, Fennig, Rabiau, & Shevell, 2019). In the transcripts, the categories provided guidance in each of the areas with terminology that fit within each area as described below. Variations of each term were accounted for regarding singular or plural usage and when used as different parts of speech in the narratives.

Actualize. As the highest level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943), self-actualization is often characterized by feelings of pride and strength in self. For

Participant GM2, he talks about pride but rather than self-pride, he mentions how his family used to be proud of him.

> I used to live in Syria. The life was very easy. I used to live with my family and all the people used to live with their families. I used to live with my family. I work there. I studied there. My family was very proud of me that I studied in the university. And I got a job after my – many jobs – after my graduation. (GM2, January 2017)

The idea of self-development was also difficult for participants to understand when asked about the concept. Participant GM2 said:

> If I want to talk about self-developing, it's not easy. It costs a lot of money. Everything was not – it was relatively good if you want to live on this money. But this money doesn't help you to arrive to your target, to your goal. (GM2, January 2017)

Self-Transcend. Moving the conversations away from actualization and more towards self-transcendence elicited more meaningful and relevant responses from the participants. Participant GM2 described the collective nature of selfless support rooted in familial love by saying:

> So my family they were around me to support everything beautiful. And my friends. So if you want to complain about anything there a lot of people who hear you. And a lot of people who love you, actually. If there is interest or if there is not interest, they love you. They like you. (GM2, January 2017)

Likewise, Participant CN1 captured self-transcendence as moving beyond Maslow's

hierarchy (1943) but only when the lower levels are met. She spoke of a refugee emotional and mental wellness program for children that did not quite hit the mark:

> It was sad because you are giving this child something not really what he needs right now. He needs food, he needs a home, he needs to have clean clothes, he needs to go to school. He doesn't just really need to have this kind of values as we accept each other, we love each other, we have all live in peace, or we have gender discrimination. It's very important stuff. It's very very very important. But this child will just forget all this kind of stuff because you are teaching him in the school how to live in peace but when he walks in the street here is just a Lebanese child that will just beat him in his face, or slap him, or tell him you are a donkey, you are a Syrian, go home… when he goes home he will come back to the same bad reality. (CN1, January 2017)

She continued her explanation regarding what she felt the resettled refugee children actually needed as opposed to what they were being offered by saying:

> … these children needed *now* something else. Like they needed food, they needed home. The last thing they needed was someone to take care of their mental health. And I think for all refugees now is the same. You need first to take care of their safety, home, get them like a good feeling, and then you can help them to get a counselor or to talk to somebody, or I don't know. (CN1, March 2017)

The concept of family love as an indicator of self-transcendence was also evident in Participant BR1's narrative. He described love and family as:

> It means life for me. It means everything. You cannot be successful in anything in your life if you don't feel love with it. Your work, your study, your family, your children, your mom. …family is everything. They support you when you are down. They support you when you are up. They support you when you feel bad, feel good. All the day they are by your side. (BR1, March 2017)

Survival. The concepts of family, friends, love, support, self-transcendence, and self-development were described as factors critical to survival for many of the study participants. Participant CN1 said: "…you will find something else to survive. You will find people, to sit with, to communicate with, to laugh with, to hide with them in places from bombing" (CN1, January 2017).

These survival elements that support the refugees as described in the participant narratives are often critical components of their being unseen to those who surround them in the country of resettlement. Participant GM1 stated:

> They don't know that behind every one of refugee there's a story. There's like a nice family. There's like uh a whole life he left behind. They just see numbers. Okay, numbers. They don't consider Syrian as a human. As other people all around the world. (GM1, March 2017)

Sometimes survival seemed so out of reach at the lowest moments of their forced migration journey that participants are shocked they made it through. "It was unimaginable moment for me. I didn't believe I am free again. I'm alive again…. But thanks God I was breathing" (GM2, February 2017).

Yet, many participants explained that survival is not always an option. Participant CN1 shared the situations of her friends who struggled internally and externally as refugees and forced migrants. She said:

> I have friends who committed suicide because of depression. Um… Other mental health problems… I think all the same, like they feel numb in many emotional stuff, they don't feel like before, I don't know, some people became so selfish, some people became so nice, like it's different from one person to another. It's a survival situation, so each person became, like, we all became different. But each one became different in a different way. (CN1, March 2017)

Happiness. For many of the participants, survival seemed to be the final stop in their resettlement journeys. When asked to describe what might make them happy, most participants thought back to the days before the war and wished for that time to return. Participant GM1 said that he would be happy:

> …when the war stop… it will be a great day. I will be very happy, not only me, I will be happy, or I will be happy because my family stay there, that mean they will be safe, they will be secure, yeah because they will be not at risk at any time. (GM1, March 2017)

Likewise, Participant GM3 anchored his hopes for happiness to the future by saying, "I'm gonna be super happy when I'm gonna meet this good thing that happen to me. Maybe after like 10 years in the future when I get nationality" (GM3, January 2018).

This participant's hope for future happiness was also perpetuated by the dream of rebuilding love again in addition to receiving his German nationality. Participant GM3 described his source of happiness as:

> But I still have this hope inside me to build again the happiness, like [I'm] gonna there just to build happiness there because we need someone to build, but we need someone to give – build emotion again. The love to each other, the trust, not get scared. All this thing, we need someone, like special people. How we have special people to build again? We need special project to renew emotion – renew building and renew emotion. (GM3, February 2018)

Other participants saw happiness in terms of others. In response to the interviewer's mention of his future plans, Participant GM2 said: "I will be happy for that. And I will be happy for your success because I am happy for everything success in this life" (GM2, March 2017).

Participant IR2 also spoke of making others happy despite his sadness. He said: "My situation, it is bad…. I'm make people happy, and I'm sad. It was uh… it was uh, my situation is so… bad and I cannot uh… so sad in the house, and I cannot have speak with children and say, "I'm happy" and I don't feel that I'm happy" (IR2, February 2018).

Resilience Theme: Rebuilding Love, Trust, and Happiness

Concepts of actualization, self-transcendence, survival, and happiness surfaced in the narratives with terms linked to feelings of pride, positive self-development, holding onto values, and experiencing freedom again. All of these concepts were also dependent

on being surrounded by friends and family in order to be able to trust others and experience happiness (CN1, GM1, GM3). Support in the form of emotional, physical, and financial support from loved ones was also an integral concept that appeared throughout the narratives under the defining terms for the category of resilience.

Summary

The research question that guided this study focused on understanding how resettled Syrian refugees express collective family constructs and uncertainty avoidance in narrative oral histories. During data analysis, six categories of a priori codes were used to identify four defining terms under each code. These a priori codes were collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, cultural adjustment, resettlement, refugee, and resilience. The defining terms that emerged guided the analysis through the compilation of categorizing terms that were used to identify the data segments that were analyzed with the intent of better understanding the phenomena of refugee resettlement from a culturally cognizant resilience lens. The data analysis indicated that overlap existed in the way the participants expressed their perceptions and experiences with emergent themes that often tied back to concepts of the collective regardless of the categorizing term that was applied. The six themes that emerged in each category consisted of the (a) importance of family connections; (b) insignificance of religious differences; (c) the effect of host community on refugee adaptation; (d) isolation and lack of communication; (e) refugee response to emotional and physical loss; and (f) rebuilding love, trust, and happiness. In answering the research question, the analysis showed that the way resettled Syrian refugees express collective family constructs and uncertainty avoidance in narrative oral histories is

through using language that focuses on links between connections, similarities, people, interactions, emotions, and rebuilding family and emotional support. The next chapter explores these results further along with the implications of the results on refugee resilience research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to understand how Syrian refugees interviewed between 2017-2018 expressed their experiences of cultural integration and adaptation post resettlement through expressions of family collectivism and uncertainty avoidance in narrative oral histories. The social problem addressed was declining resilience among resettled Syrian refugees that leads to difficulty in cultural integration post resettlement (Afkhami & Gorentz, 2019). The gap in the literature that existed was a lack of exploration of resettled refugee resilience using a cultural value dimensions lens. To address this gap, I analyzed 26 narrative transcripts collected from 10 different resettled Syrian refugees from interviews conducted throughout 2017 and 2018. The analysis process consisted of a thematic content analysis using linguistic assessment on the archived transcripts (Duke, 2018). This analysis was conducted using the theoretical framework of Hofstede's (1983) cultural value dimensions theory to focus primarily on constructs of collectivism and uncertainty avoidance through the process of cultural adjustment following forced migration and resettlement. Six themes emerged from the analysis that showed a clear link between each area of expression and the way in which participants responded. The link among the themes showed that the linguistic expressions in the narratives were couched in concepts of connectivity, building relationships based on similitude, and learning how to communicate as a path towards recovery and rebuilding of love and trust. This chapter explores these themes further to gain a better understanding of the expressions and how they add to the research cannon in the field of culturally cognizant refugee resilience.

Emergent Themes from Codes and Categories

In conducting the analysis for this study, six themes emerged under the a priori code categorizations. Fist, under the code of collectivism, the theme that emerged was the importance of connections. Second, the code of uncertainty avoidance yielded the theme of stressing similarities. Third, the code of cultural adjustment exhibited the theme that surrounding people greatly affected refugee adaptation. Fourth, the theme of isolation and lack of communication surfaced under the code of resettlement. Finally, the last two codes yielded the fifth theme of emotional and physical loss under the code of refugee and the sixth theme was rebuilding love, trust, and happiness under the resilience code. These six emergent themes helped answer the research question by showing that collective family constructs and uncertainty avoidance expressions are captured through links of building connections based on similarities and interactions that promote positive emotions. According to the expressions in the narratives, the participants indicated that these links help rebuild a sense of family, community, and emotional support rooted in adaptation, love, trust, and happiness.

Interpretation of the Findings

The emergent themes identified through this study's content analysis using linguistic assessment were consistent with the findings that collective family constructs and uncertainty avoidance expressions emerge frequently in the narrative oral histories of resettled Syrian refugees. The form in which these expressions emerged are categorized under the six themes of building connections, highlighting similarities, identifying the way people affect adaptation, acknowledging isolation and lack of communication,

working through emotional and physical loss, and seeking to rebuild love, trust, and happiness. Using Hofstede's cultural value dimensions (1983) to inform this analysis, along with Roberts (1989) linguistic approach to content analysis, categorizing terms rooted in refugee resilience research and in Hofstede's (1983) value dimensions helped guide the categorization of the a priori codes and the breakdown of defining terms that formed the crux of the qualitative analysis.

Theme 1: Importance of Family Connections

For many of the participants in this study, the concept of collectivism was couched in language linked to family, hope, community, and selflessness. This is echoed in the analysis of Hofstede's research conducted by Venkateswaran and Ojha (2019) who noted that useful potential applications of Hofstede's concepts exist in applying the definitive characteristic of each value dimension to philosophical assessments of social science disciplines that exist outside of the narrow realm of organizational communication. In assessing the evolution of the application of the values dimension theory, Hofstede revisited his own theory years later and provided a prediction of the future wide-spread use of cultural value dimensions in different disciplines (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011).

Applying this expanded notion of the concepts of collectivism, the expressions of the participants in this category were not limited to the commonly associated terms of family and community, but also encompassed concepts of hope and selflessness. All these concepts together exhibited the theme of connections and the role those connections play in positive resettlement adaptation. In many participants narratives, the term

"family" was often repeated to emphasize what was missed the most in the process of forced migration. To continue to keep the family connection alive, the participants spoke of the frequency of how often they would call their parents each day and of their sense of obligation towards family and their desire to be with family despite the great distance (GM1, BR1, GM2).

The concept of community also factored heavily in many narratives and confirmed resilience research that emphasizes the importance of community on refugees in easing the process of resettlement (Fader et. al, 2019). The connections that were so foundational for the study participants forged a large part of the identity of the interviewed resettled Syrian refugees because their identity was rooted in the concepts of collectivism (CN1, IT1, IR2). This difficulty in adjusting to an individualistic world due to the reluctance of stepping away from characteristics such as hope and selflessness as attributed to a collective consciousness can make it difficult for refugees to integrate into the host country as identified by Berquiest et al. (2019).

Theme 2: Insignificance of Religious Differences

While the exhibition of low uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1983) can factor in as a trait attributed to resettled Syrian refugees (Fleay & Hartley, 2016; Loyd et al., 2018), when assessed in terms of the collected transcripts, the resultant theme yielded a slightly different direction than I expected. Using the defining terms of faith, trust in God, the future, and expectations, I analyzed the transcripts through an application of how Hofstede's value dimension of uncertainty avoidance in Arab culture is indicative of strong faith, high levels of trust in God, comfort in the uncertainty of the future, and little

to no emphasis on expectations (Obeidat et. al, 2012). In categorizing the terms for uncertainty avoidance in this way, the construct of faith was particularly informed by assumptions rooted in spiritual resilience studies (Manning et. al, 2019) and studies establishing the important role of the Muslim faith among resettled Syrian refugees (Hasan et. al, 2018; Hein & Niazi, 2016). According to Hasan et al. (2018), over 95% of resettled Syrian refuges in the US self-identify as Muslim and indicate that their Islamic faith provides comfort, strength and empowerment through the process of resettlement and adaptation.

Approaching the transcripts with this in mind, it was interesting to note that only 50% of the participants self-identified as Muslim (GM1, BR1, IR1, IR2, GM3) while the other 50% either identified as not religious (CN1, GR1), Christian (LB1), or belonging to a different sect of Islam that did not really inform their identity (GM2, IT1). The theme that emerged in this category focused more on stressing similarities rather than on the role faith plays in guiding resettled refugees in the path of resilience. Just as McSweeney (2002) indicated in his study that differences exist in how Hofstede's value dimensions can be broadly applied, these differences were also evident in the transcripts. Participants did not necessarily identify with uncertainty avoidance rooted in different religious traditions but rather focused on similarities shared across faiths (GM1, IT1, CN1). The future envisioned by many of the participants is one in which there is a rebuilding of Syria without divisions and an integral concept of *tawakkul* (reliance on God) as cited in Abi-Hashem's (2018) study regardless of what faith someone may ascribe to. However,

the emphasis on cultural and faith differences and divisions among locals in the countries of resettlement took many participants by surprise (GM1, IR2, IT1).

Theme 3: Effect of Host Community on Adaptation

In the transcripts analyzed for this study, under the category of cultural adjustment, the theme of people affecting adaptation emerged through the use of the defining term of the U-curve, as delineated in Graham and Pozuelo's (2017) study, along with the defining terms of trauma, flight, and home. While much research has been conducted on the impact of trauma on resilience among resettled Syrian refugees (Akesson & Sousa, 2019; Cetrez & DeMarinis, 2017; Eades, 2013; Goodman et. al, 2017), for this study, the linguistic assessment results indicated that the way people in the country of resettlement responded to the resettled Syrian refugees was a higher indicator of resilience in adaptation than personal response to trauma. Extrinsic motivation to be there for family members, to fit in with community, and to be seen as "okay" were all cited as more powerful tools that moved the participants towards greater positive adaptation (CN1, GM1, BR1) rather than seeking mental health help as purported in several previously conducted studies (Afkhami & Gorentz, 2019; Blount & Acquaye, 2018; Ellis et. al, 2019).

Collective concepts of togetherness, fitting in, and feeling at home when surrounded by family members and community surfaced under this category of cultural adjustment as well. According to Johansen and Studsrod (2019), interpersonal relationships play a large role in community engagement and integration for young unaccompanied refugees. This finding was also evident in the transcripts of the adult

participants in this study who indicated that their interpersonal relationships in the country of resettlement impacted their level of adjustment (CN1, IT1, BR1, LB1).

Theme 4: Isolation and Lack of Communication

In conducting the linguistic assessment under the code of resettlement, concepts of safety, shelter, difference, and language acquisition were the focal points of exploration. Despite entering this analysis with the perspective that the lower echelons of Maslow's hierarchy (1943) would play the largest role in establishing resettlement security, the narratives told a different story. Rather than focusing on having physiological needs of safety and shelter met as the building block towards wellness, the participants highlighted the struggles of isolation and a lack of communication as more prominent obstacles to positive adaptation in resettlement (GM1, LB1, CN1). Feeling like strangers and not being able to communicate competently were frequent complaints by the participants in describing their transitions (GM2, GM3, GR1). This theme coincides with studies highlighting differences in communication practices and styles between resettlement host countries and Syria (Merkin & Ramadan, 2016).

The role of language acquisition was mentioned by almost every participant in stating the importance of language education prior to resettlement (IR1, BR1, IT1) which aligns with Gardner and Stephens-Pisecco's (2019) study in stressing the critical role of school and education in fostering refugee resilience amidst a reconceptualization of how language can be taught to resettled refugees (Pastoor, 2017). Likewise, several participants stated in their narratives that local partnerships with nonprofits, as explored in Cullen and Walton-Roberts' (2019) study, form an additional level of connection since

as pointed out by Symons and Ponzio (2019), schools are not able to teach refugee language acquisition alone and community centers, mosques, churches, and other organizations may be able to help. Another struggle experienced in resettlement that surfaced in the narratives, is the focus on feeling different, left out, lonely and disconnected due to isolation from not knowing the language or culture (CN1, GM1, LB1).

Theme 5: Refugee Response to Emotional and Physical Loss

Under the code of refugee, the defining terms consisted of loss, forced, migrant, and self-deprecation which were terms that originated in an understanding of how refugee diasporas respond to trauma based on a study of Bosnian resettled refugees (Koinova, 2016). While some participants spoke of the loss of cars, homes, livelihoods and physical property (BR1 & CN1), most participants mentioned the loss of family, people, loved ones, and deep emotion or the ability to feel sadness (GR1, GM1, GM3). While counseling using Maslow's hierarchy (Lonn & Dantzler, 2017) has been proposed as an effective approach for rebuilding emotional resilience in refugees, the participants used language that focused more on a desire to share their pain past individualized trauma (Eades, 2013) within their families rather than with outside counselors which aligns with an understanding of how intergenerational resilience may be built by families who experience war and displacement (Denov et. al, 2019).

When it came to personal labels and identifiers such as the title of 'forced migrant' along with the act of self-deprecation with apologies for sharing too much or for a lack of language skills, some participants rejected the notion of being called a refugee

or forced migrant (GM1 & CN1) since this was as a divider and mark of differentiation or as Sajjad's (2018) study indicated, a political schemata that works against refugee hopes of cultural integration. The desire to be connected and to feel a sense of belonging took precedence in many of the narratives over the act of migration or the definition of what it means to seek safety and shelter when forced from your home country. Thus, the theme that emerged from this category was coping with emotional and physical loss and the participants indicated that a sense of empowerment did not come from the lower echelons of Maslow's hierarchy as proposed in Goed and Boshuizen-van Burken's (2019) study but instead came from a more self-transcendent view rooted again in connections.

Theme 6: Rebuilding Love, Trust, and Happiness

The final code that was explored in the transcripts was the code of resilience. Under this code, defining terms of actualization, self-transcendence, survival, and happiness were applied with a breakdown of terminology rooted in an understanding of global resilience (Masten, 2014 & 2018) and self-transcendence beyond Maslow's hierarchy (Koltko-Rivera, 2006). Feelings of familial pride and self-development were important factors that came up in the narratives as participants described what they were working towards (GM2 & CN1). The theme that emerged from these defining terms in the narratives focused on the rebuilding of love, trust, and happiness which aligned with the concept that emotional resilience goes beyond Abi-Hashem's (2018) view of coping with trauma and into Aguilar's (2018) study results that builds on resilience rooted in family support and transcendence past coping.

Concepts of love and trust rooted in a rebuilding of home and family were consistent themes in the language used to describe what survival really looks like for a resettled Syrian refugee and what it would mean to be happy (GM1, GM2, GM3). While self-reliance is often equated with the concept of self-actualization in Maslow's hierarchy (1943), the language used to describe a sense of thriving in the narratives veered away from the self and focused more on the family and the community which aligns with the concept of rethinking refugee self-reliance as a measure of resilience and cultural adaptation (Easton-Calabria & Omata, 2018). The optimism towards the future expressed by several participants was echoed in the idea that something good was bound to happen and that this hope is precisely what keeps refugees feeling resilient and continuing to move forward (GM2 & GM3).

Summary of the Findings

Based on the six themes that surfaced from the linguistic analysis, a common thread that bound the concepts of resilience and cultural adaptation together for the resettled refugees was the sense of closeness to others, particularly family, friends, and community. More than religious adherence and faith directives, the participants highlighted the lens of collectivism across each of the six categories explored. The thread of collectivism emerged prominently in the way the participants stressed the importance of staying connected with others back home despite thousands of miles of separation. The thread continued with the emphatic highlighting of similarities in faith and the recognition of the impact the host community can have on cultural adaptation. In identifying isolation and lack of communication as the most significant integration hurdle

in tackling emotional and physical loss, another thread of collectivism was revealed that culminated in the optimistic outlook of rebuilding love, trust, and happiness through a collective upheaval of the current climate in Syria. The study findings answered the research question by showing the strong link between expressions of collective family constructs as captured linguistically in the resettled Syrian refugees' narrative oral histories. Expressions of uncertainty avoidance existed in the narratives as well but did not surface as strongly as the concepts of collectivism and did not adhere to the expectations of being faith motivated as initially predicted.

Limitations of the Study

Some of the limitations anticipated at the outset of this qualitative study included the ethicality of interviewing a vulnerable population and research bias due to my role in refugee intervention work. However, these anticipated limitations did not prove to be problematic since the oral histories analyzed were gathered by students at Duke University and obtained as secondary data from the university archives (2018). In accordance with recommendations for protecting participant identities in qualitative studies (Maxwell, 2009), codes were used as identifiers rather than names. The use of secondary data presented a limitation in that questions could not be asked of the participants and no meetings occurred between myself as the researcher and the participants. However, since the narrative oral histories were recorded and transcribed and field notes were provided, I was able to obtain all three elements for each participant which helped bring the secondary data to life while removing potential researcher bias or potential harm towards a vulnerable population.

Another limitation may have existed in the design of the study in that a quantitative or mixed methods approach could also have yielded results to better understand the expression used in the narrative studies. My choice to use a qualitative approach to align with my research question resulted in using a thematic content analysis method. In identifying the themes, linguistic assessment following Roberts (1989) approach was applied to the analysis which may have limited the study since there are several other ways that themes can be identified in qualitative research (Russel & Ryan, 2003). Depending on the method used, language and meaning construction can differ and can yield different results based on researcher interpretation (Polkinghorne, 2005). The coding strategy for this study was rooted in the literature (Saldana, 2016) and maintains the trustworthiness of the results in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Recommendations

Although the field of resilience research may seem saturated (Masten, 2014, 2016, 2018; Masten & Barnes, 2018), research on resettled Syrian refugees leaves a great deal to be explored through the incorporation of more culturally integrative models (Liu, Reed, & Girard, 2017). Using Hofstede's value dimensions (1983) as an exploratory framework can help researchers rethink refugee stories and view definitions of refugee resilience from a different lens as suggested in Smith and Waite's (2019) study. Further research recommendations using these transcripts abound in the richness of the narrative oral histories and what can be learned from this archived data set (Duke, 2018).

Studies on refugee empowerment that build on Erden's (2017) study or continued exploration of understanding refugee mental health from a cultural context as previously studied by Ellis et. al (2019) can be developed further from these transcripts. If researchers were to adopt a quantitative approach, the data set could also be used to explore linguistic frequencies and to possibly create a new refugee resilience scale instead of the current model that is considered not quite as culturally cognizant as it could be (Mendenhall & Kim, 2019). Many other themes might also be explored in further research by using value dimensions such as power distance and masculinity versus femininity (Hofstede, 1983). A longitudinal study could also be considered to see how perceptions of resettlement, resilience, and adaptation change for resettled Syrian refugees after ten years post resettlement or in other countries.

Implications

The emergent themes from the research conducted in this study can lead to positive social change in better understanding the underpinnings of refugee resettlement and the expressions of collectivism using a more dynamic approach to acculturation research (Lee, Titzmann, & Jugert, 2019). Each of the emergent themes pointed to collectivism as a critical component of adaptation and resilience building for the resettled Syrian refugees whose narratives were analyzed for this study. Although none of the transcripts derived from participants resettled in the US, many of the findings apply to refugee resettlement in the US as an individualistic culture that would benefit from understanding the collectivistic view expressed in the narratives (Libal, Felten, & Harding, 2019).

The positive social change that this study can potentially impact exists at the individual, family, organizational, and policy levels. From an individual level, promoting wellness has often focused on self-actualization and self-reliance (Blount & Acquaye, 2018). However, Themes 1 and 4 both showed that the resettled refugees expressed their need for connection, communication, and a reprieve from isolation more than a need for counseling as a way of building resilience and experiencing smoother cultural integration.

At the family level, supporting refugees in transition should evolve from the current focus of resettling only parents and minors (Lloyd, Pilerot & Hulgren, 2017). By encompassing what was identified in Themes 1 and 3 regarding the importance of extended family and friends, families could be kept together in the resettlement process rather than fractured across countries. Considering the impact of the transition on the families, Theme 2 can also help educators and communities accept refugees with a greater sense of building connective bridges rather than building divisive walls by taking into account the importance of togetherness and feeling accepted in the country of resettlement.

On an organizational level, resettlement agencies may reconsider including components of collectivism as evidenced in Theme 5 as a screening factor to improve the efficacy of refugee distress evaluation scales as per Hollifield et. al's (2016) suggestion that these screenings need to be revised. Finally, from a policy perspective, the results of this study could promote positive change for the refugee resettlement matching system. Jones & Teytelboym (2017) suggested that the system is currently ineffective and haphazard in many countries. Once the organizational and policy changes are considered,

then an application of the emergence of Theme 6 in this study can help promote the definitively needed change in perceptions and attitudes towards resettled Syrian refugees (Yigit & Tatch, 2017) because of the universal desire to rebuild love, trust, and happiness wherever the refugees may be resettled.

Conclusion

In conducting this qualitative narrative study, using a culturally competent lens to better understand refugee resilience revealed a new way of approaching the understanding of linguistic expressions in the narrative oral histories of resettled Syrian refugees. Although the initial research question sought to understand how resettled Syrian refugees expressed collective family constructs and uncertainty avoidance in their narratives, the findings showed that concepts of collectivism rose to the forefront in the participant expressions with a focus on connections, family, and community. In seeking greater understanding of these expressions, the narratives indicated that building connections, stressing similarities, feeling accepted, and moving beyond isolation towards recovery from emotional and physical losses culminated in a desire to rebuild love, trust, and happiness despite the refugees' past trauma and difficult experiences.

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Appendix: Coding Matrix

A Priori Code	Defining Terms	Categorizing Terms	Transcript #	# of References
Collectivism	Family	Parents Children Spouse Uncle Aunt Cousins Grandparent Together Our Everyone Shared		
	Hope	Future Tomorrow Good Life Wishing Dreaming Hoping		
	Community	Friends Neighbors Helpers Connections We Syrian		
	Faith	Trust Prayer Religion Prophet Mosque Sacred Spiritual		
	Selflessness	Giving Caring Others Not me		

	Home	Syria Country Heart		
Uncertainty Avoidance	Reliance on God	Spirituality Belief Commitment		
	Insha'Allah	God Willing Arabic		
	Surrender	Devotion Submission		
Cultural Adjustment	U-Curve	Adjusting Integrating Understanding Adapting Fitting in Assimilation Learning Culture Acquisition Citizen		
	Trauma	Fear Pain Crying Scared Hunger Thirst Anger Sadness Depression Loneliness Tears		
	Flight	Distance Alone Camps		

Resettlement	Safety	Money Food Security Alive		
	Shelter	New Home Help		
	Different	Identity Language Culture		
Refugee	Loss	No Home Emptiness Grief		
	Forced	No Choice Separation Splitting up		
	Migrant	No Country Homeless Displaced		
Resilience	Wellbeing	Self-actualization		
	Adaptability	Self-Transcendence		