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Refugee Integration: Research and Policy

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More people are currently displaced from their homes by war and conflict than ever previously recorded, and many are displaced for decades. As a result, there is increasing interest in promoting stable, if not permanent, solutions. The success of these solutions is in part evaluated by how well refugees are integrating into their new communities. Integration, in its broadest sense, refers to inclusion and participation, both economically and socially. Although the focus is often on how refugees change to integrate, successful integration requires a social context that supports inclusion and participation. The focus of this special issue is on the ways in which policies of settlement at the international, national, regional, and local level support or hinder integration by affecting the social context. These policies can affect the social context by directly limiting economic and social participation, but also by intentionally or unintentionally shaping community attitudes. The articles in this special issue consider the impact of policies on the social context along the entire migration pathway, from asylum seeking and refugee camps, to resettlement in new countries or return to countries of origin. The articles come from a range of disciplines and countries but a common theme that emerges is how policies shape refugee identities, stereotypes and interactions in ways that then affect community welcome. These articles shed light on the importance of policies and initiatives that challenge our attitudes and beliefs about refugees as an important element for successful integration.

Public Significance Statement

Refugee settlement policies at the national and local level influence refugee integration by shaping refugees' ability to participate socially and economically. They also have long-term impact on integration by shaping community attitudes through their impact on stereotypes, perceptions of threat, and opportunities for positive interactions.

Keywords: refugees, integration, asylum seekers, intergroup relationships, policy

The *Convention Related to the Status of Refugees* (the Convention) defines a refugee as a person who has crossed international borders as a result of a “well-founded fear of being persecuted” on account of their religious, political, sexual, or other social identity, and whose country will not or cannot protect them or may in fact be the body that is persecuting them (United Nations General Assembly, 1951). Although the number of forced migrants vary

widely from year to year, the numbers of refugees have generally increased every decade since the Convention's establishment in 1951. Current numbers are greater than ever previously recorded (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2017). In 2016, there were 65.6 million people living in situations of forced displacement, 22.5 million of them displaced across international borders. The latter are refugees, 17.2 million of whom are under the mandate of the UNHCR and the remainder under the mandate of United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The recent increases in registered refugees have been paralleled by an increased number of asylum seekers. Asylum seekers are people who have applied for recognition as refugees under the Convention definition. In 2016 there were 2 million new claims made for asylum (UNHCR, 2017).

Although the vast majority of refugees (84%) reside in lower income countries, high income countries have also seen recent abrupt increases in numbers. Germany is in the top 10 hosting nations in terms of absolute numbers (UNHCR, 2013, 2017). Germany hosted 669,500 refugees by the end of 2016, and registered 772,400 new claims for asylum. Although the absolute number is high, because of the size of Germany's population this amounts to approximately 8 refugees per 1000 residents. Sweden hosts more refugees by population size. It is the only high-income

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country in this top 10 list, with approximately 23 refugees for every 1000 Swedish residents. By comparison, Lebanon, the country at the top of the list on this metric, hosted 160 refugees for every 1,000 residents. Nonetheless, the increase in the numbers of refugees and asylum seekers in high income countries has been rapid. It has been accompanied by an expansion of settlement support initiatives (e.g., Germany's 2015 refugee response, [Horn, 2015](#); Canada's Syrian resettlement initiative, [IRCC, 2017](#)) but also intense debate around the social and economic costs of hosting refugees ([Casati, 2017](#); [Costello & Mouzourakis, 2016](#); [Czyzmar & Schmidt-Catran, 2017](#); [Mulvey, 2010](#)). With this debate has come a rise in anti-immigrant attitudes, along with a shift in election patterns toward increased support for explicitly anti-immigrant parties (e.g., the Freedom Party in Austria, the National Front in France, and the Alternative for Germany) and initiatives (e.g., Brexit in the United Kingdom). In many cases, government policies have responded to this public and political pressure, as well as concerns about the costs of hosting refugees and asylum seekers, with increasingly restrictive settlement policies ([Szczepanikova, 2013](#); [Weber & Gelsthorpe, 2000](#)).

In this introduction to the special issue on *Refugee Integration: Research and Policy*, we reflect on the impact of policies of settlement and/or asylum at the level of organizations, municipalities, states, and regions on refugee and asylum seeker integration. There is no single definition of integration, but our focus here is on integration as inclusion and participation ([Castles, Korac, Vasta, & Vertovec, 2002](#)). Integration for all newcomers is facilitated or hindered by settlement policies, but refugees are particularly susceptible to changes in the social and political context. First, refugees typically arrive in more vulnerable circumstances than other immigrants. Refugees are less likely than voluntary migrants to arrive speaking the language of the country they settle in, have fewer economic resources and capital, more limited social networks and supports, and are more likely to have been exposed to trauma prior to and during migration ([Hynie, 2017](#); [Li, Liddell, & Nickerson, 2016](#); but see [Crawley, Duvall, Signoa, McMahon, & Jones, 2016](#)). Second, a broader range of their settlement experiences are subject to more restrictive policies. For example, nations have explicit policies regarding refugee and asylum seeker rights that limit their employment, access to social services, housing, and education ([Bloch & Schuster, 2002](#)).

Just as the route to asylum does not begin and end with resettlement, the pathway to refugee integration, and the construction and perception of refugee identities, spans the full range of migration. Thus, this special issue includes articles that explore the impact of local political and social policies across the entire migration experience, from asylum seekers and refugees, to permanently settled refugees, through return and resettlement. In doing so, the articles are both international and interdisciplinary. They examine policies and integration in several different countries and continents and explore these issues through different analytic frames in an effort to provide a global picture of this global phenomenon.

Refugee Migration

One can debate what the starting point is for refugee migration, but one concrete and decisive moment is the point at which people

cross international borders and formally request asylum in another country. Asylum can be sought as a refugee, or under other humanitarian conditions, including environmental disasters. Accessing protection under the Convention, however, begins with submitting a claim for recognition as a refugee. Asylum seekers are not eligible to the protection provided refugees until their claim has been approved. However, the Convention also provides guidelines regarding the rights of asylum seekers, although interpretation of these guidelines varies widely ([Hatton, 2017](#); [United Nations General Assembly, 1951](#)). People claiming asylum as refugees must be approved by the UNHCR, or the state in which they are seeking asylum, by demonstrating that they meet the Convention criteria. During times of large-scale exodus, as is currently happening in Syria, originating from the country generating these mass migrations may be determined sufficient for being given prima facie refugee status ([Rutinwa, 1994](#)).

Once refugee status has been recognized, refugees should have access to rights and protections set out by the Convention but, again, these are interpreted differently by different governments at different times ([Segona, 2005](#)). The refugee system was designed to support short-term solutions until permanent solutions to the forced displacement can be found. Refugees are thus typically not provided the means for long-term settlement; they are expected to leave once a permanent solution to their situation is found. Restrictions on access to housing, employment and services can therefore continue while temporary support of various kinds is provided ([Bloch & Schuster, 2002](#)). The greatest restrictions are found in refugee camps. The camps are planned and organized to manage crisis situations and to facilitate the distribution of goods and management of a large and fluctuating population for short periods of time. Both formal and informal camps are usually situated in rural areas, with many being established at a distance from other settlements. In 2016, however, fewer than a third of refugees lived in formally managed camps, while about 60% of refugees were living in private residences in urban settings ([UNHCR, 2017](#)). Moreover, the model of short-term refuge seems increasingly less relevant. Permanent solutions are attained for very few of the displaced; most end up in what [Hyndman and Giles \(2016\)](#) described as "extended exile." Since the late 1990s, the average length of displacement has ranged between 10 and 15 years but for those in protracted exile situations (those lasting 5 years or longer), the average length of displacement has increased to over 20 years, with some of the largest "temporary" refugee camps now in their third decade of existence ([Devictor & Do, 2017](#)).

There are three possible permanent solutions for refugees. The preferred solution according to many states, and the UNHCR, is voluntary return to the country of origin. In 2016, the number of refugees returning increased over previous years, but was still only 552,200 of the 22.5 million refugees. The second permanent solution is naturalization, or permanent integration into the country in which people have sought asylum. There were only 23,000 naturalizations reported in 23 countries in 2016, with Canada leading in terms of numbers at 16,300 ([UNHCR, 2017](#)). The third permanent solution is resettlement, whereby refugees are screened and selected while in their country of asylum and resettled permanently into a third country, the vast majority through programs with UNHCR. In 2016, 189,300 refugees were resettled, with the United States, Canada, and Australia receiving the greatest num-

bers. Thus, although much of the work in this special issue focuses on integration for those refugees who have found permanent solutions, the manner in which long-term refugees integrate into their settings of asylum is an important question that is also addressed (Carvalho & Pinto, 2018).

Refugee Integration

The struggle to build international policies that support access to permanent solutions is matched by the challenge of encouraging national and local policies that support refugees as they try to integrate into new communities. Although refugees face challenges as a result of negative impacts of their premigration and migration experiences, new challenges emerge at the end of the migration pathway. Successful integration has direct effects on well-being but may also mediate or moderate the effects of prior trauma (Hynie, 2017; Li et al., 2016; Miller & Rasmussen, 2017). Refugees' ability to integrate, however, is strongly determined by policies that shape their social and material context.

Most theories define successful integration for newcomers as equitable access to opportunities and resources, participation in the community and society, and feelings of security and belonging in their new homes (Ager & Strang, 2008; Hynie, Korn, & Tao, 2016; Phillimore & Goodson, 2008; Smith, 2008). Several midlevel models of integration exist that offer a framework for considering how policy affects the process of integration at these multiple levels. Ager and Strang (2008), for example, provided an influential and comprehensive model of integration with four levels: markers and means (housing, health, employment, education), which reflect what they call functional aspects of integration; social connections (social bonds, social bridges, social links), which represent different kinds of social relationships; facilitators (language and cultural knowledge, safety and stability); and foundation (rights and citizenship). These different levels of integration affect each other, such that changes in one level can support changes at other levels.

Although integration research often focuses on changes in newcomers themselves, integration is a process whereby both the receiving communities and the newcomers change, and change each other (Castles et al., 2002; Omidvar & Richmond, 2003; Strang & Ager, 2010). The holistic integration model (HIM: Hynie et al., 2016) builds on Ager and Strang's (2008) model to strengthen the emphasis on changes within the social context and on the interrelatedness of the different levels. In the HIM, social context includes the nature of the relationships between refugees and other members of their communities (social bonds within their communities and social bridges to other community members); general community attitudes and beliefs about refugees (community welcome), which can shape everyday experiences and interactions; and institutional adaptation, which refers to the extent to which institutions and organizations that interact with refugees recognize and adapt to their unique needs, such as challenges they face in accessing formal documents from their country of origin, or the need for interpretation services. The HIM also adds the subjective aspects of sense of belonging and security (cf. Strang & Ager, 2010).

The interrelatedness of the more functional aspects of integration is not surprising. Individuals with more limited language skills will have a greater difficulty finding employment or accessing

education; those with inadequate housing risk poorer physical and mental health; and low levels of income and language skills predict accessibility of educational opportunities. However, these functional levels of integration also influence, and are influenced by, the social context that refugees reside in, and the more psychological aspects of integration. For example, employment, education, and language skills have been shown to have a bidirectional relationship with the strength of social connections, especially relationships with those from other ethnic communities (Hynie et al., 2016; Kearns & Whitley, 2015). Poorer mental health has consistently been associated with limited language skills, poor housing, and underemployment (Bogic, Njoku, & Priebe, 2015; Hynie, 2017; Li et al., 2016).

Settlement policies at multiple levels directly influence structural variables related to what Ager and Strang (2008) called the functional markers of refugee integration, like employment, health care, and housing. However, settlement policies also shape public opinion and so may have effects on multiple aspects of the social context. Policies can also influence public attitudes and perceptions through media and communication campaigns, and by shaping how community members interact with these newcomers, or by placing refugees in situations that elicit behaviors or characteristics that then influence how these newcomers are perceived (Casati, 2017; Castles et al., 2002; Mulvey, 2010). More inclusive integration policies have been found to be associated with more positive attitudes toward immigrants, a finding that has been attributed to their impact on how immigrants are perceived (Callens & Meuleman, 2017). Public attitudes toward refugees and asylum seekers can affect refugees' abilities to form new social relationships with other groups in the community. They can also affect the willingness of institutions to implement policies that meet refugees' unique needs. Public attitudes also shape policies and political debate, resulting in a cycle of mutual influence (Bansak, Hainmueller, & Hangartner, 2016). Thus, settlement and immigration policies at multiple levels can affect refugee integration both directly, by enhancing or limiting their access to the more functional aspects of integration, and also indirectly by influencing social environments to be more or less welcoming.

Perceptions of Threat

Realistic Threat

Economic burden. Perceptions of threat are a key element in attitudes toward immigrants and refugees and in policy responses to them. Realistic group conflict theory (Bobo, 1983; Jackson, 1993; Sherif, 1967) proposes that prejudice and intergroup conflict emerge when members of a group feel threat to their group from the outgroup. It can be real or perceived, and not only to material resources that are controlled by one's ingroup, such as jobs, health care, or housing, but also to the ingroup's relative social status (Bobo, 1983, 1988; Kinder & Sears, 1981). In high-income countries, concerns that refugees and asylum seekers will be an economic burden are prevalent (Casati, 2017; Costello & Mouzourakis, 2016; Esses, Hamilton, & Gaucher, 2017; Mulvey, 2010) with those perceiving higher economic burden also reporting less support for hosting asylum seekers and refugees in their countries (Bansak et al., 2016; IPSOS, 2016; McKay, Thomas, & Kneebone, 2012). Some report concerns about competition for employment

(Eamets & Pataccini, 2017), but the debate also revolves around the provision of services. These include emergency medical care, housing, language training, children's education, and even processing of asylum claims, all of which place demands on services and staff at both the national and regional level (Blochliger, Dumont, & Liebeg, 2017). Although some studies find that hosting refugees may be economically beneficial because of their participation in the local economy (Omata & Weaver, 2015; Taylor et al., 2016), the largest benefits are in the long-term, whereas hosting costs are sustained immediately and are thus more politically salient (Dadush, 2017).

Ironically, policies that are often intended to address concerns about the costs of hosting asylum seekers and refugees may increase costs by reducing their economic participation. Hayes and Endale (2018) noted that policies limiting financial support to refugees create the need for refugees to find employment soon after arrival, but this can run counter to the goal of learning to speak the language of the new home. Given that language abilities are a major determinant of refugees' ability to find adequate, or even any, employment (e.g., Bogic et al., 2012), policies limiting employment, or demanding employment too quickly on arrival, can have long-term costs. Policies around the asylum determination process may also be costly in the long term. Prolonged waits for asylum hearings, for example, and extended stays in restrictive asylum accommodations are associated with a decrease in the likelihood of finding employment, thus limiting successful asylum claimants' abilities to participate in the local economy and increasing their need to rely on social services for support (Bakker, Dagevos, & Engbersen, 2014; Hainmueller, Hangartner, & Lawrence, 2016).

Violence and crime. Another source of perceived threat from refugees is violence and crime. For over a decade, opinion polls have been finding that a substantial minority of the general public in many countries suspect that terrorists are using the refugee system as a means of entering countries (Frelick, 2007; Pew Research Centre, 2016). It is not just fear of terrorism; local crime rates are also often attributed to refugees and asylum seekers (e.g., Alkouzaa, 2018; McDonald, 2017). The association of migrants with crime is not a new phenomenon, but the use of criminal processes with migrants is part of an increasing policy trend toward what has been called "cimmigration," or the confounding of criminal and immigration law (Aiken, Lyon, & Thorburn, 2014; McKay et al., 2012). This has been particularly true regarding asylum seekers in the past decade.

DeBono (2018) argues that policies taken regarding the Mediterranean crossing of asylum seekers into Europe have heightened perceptions of asylum seekers as a threat to security. In 2015, when the European Union developed a "hotspot" approach to processing migrants with irregular entry pathways, the approach emphasized using a crisis framing and criminal processes (e.g., detention, fingerprinting). Pickering and Weber (2014) analyzed the public discourse around the detention of asylum seekers in Australia and the construction of asylum seekers as criminals and security threats. The authors analyzed the media releases of the immigration ministers of the major political parties in the months following the release of an expert panel called the Houston Report (Houston, Aristotle, & L'Estrange, 2012). Several key messages were constructed and promoted regarding deterrence policies and the need to secure borders, with offshore detention promoted as a

means to reduce the number of marine arrivals. Pickering and Weber noted that the Conservative government in power at the time then focused on the illegality of marine arrivals, which justified a punitive response and a law enforcement approach as a means of reestablishing control.

DeBono (2018) argues that the processes of crisis framing and criminalization facilitate the dehumanization of migrants (Esses, Veenvliet, Hodson, & Mihic, 2008; Esses, Veenvliet, & Medianu, 2012; Haslam & Loughnan, 2014). Dehumanization is a process whereby individuals or groups are perceived as lacking human attributes, such as complex emotions, morality, or warmth, and are thus deemed to resemble animals, or machines (Haslam, Loughnan, Reynolds, & Wilson, 2007). The consequences of dehumanizing a group is that they are seen as falling outside of the realm of our moral obligations. The dehumanization of a group can thus result in reduced prosocial behavior and increased antisocial behavior toward them (Castano & Giner-Sorolla, 2006; Čehajić, Brown, & Gonzalez, 2009; Haslam & Loughnan, 2014). For refugees, this has been associated with more negative attitudes toward them, and less support for resettling them in the country (Esses et al., 2012).

Factors influencing perceptions of threat. Perceptions of threat are hypothesized to be influenced by one's own vulnerability, and thus to be greater among those individuals who are experiencing more difficult economic conditions or vulnerability (Esses et al., 2017; Kuntz, Davidov, & Semyonov, 2017). In a study of Danish voting patterns, Dustmann, Vasiljeva, and Damm (2016) found municipalities with higher previous unemployment and crime rates and larger numbers of refugees shifted more to the right in their voting patterns than communities with better economic or safety rates. These perceptions of vulnerability have also been documented in regions which have experienced a greater number of acts of violence attributed to terrorism (Davidov & Semyonov, 2017). More threat is also perceived among those who identify more strongly with their ingroup (Tajfel & Turner, 2001) and care more about relative social status (e.g., Social Dominance Orientation, Costello & Hodson, 2011; Dunwoody & McFarland, 2017; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994; Uenal, 2016). Thus, perceptions of threat from immigrants and refugees are stronger among those with a stronger nationalist identity (Coenders & Scheepers, 2004; Davidov & Semyonov, 2017; Dustmann et al., 2016).

A number of studies on intergroup attitudes have tested the theory that the relative size and visibility of a minority group is related to perceptions of greater threat, which then result in more negative attitudes (Schlueter & Davidov, 2013; Quillian, 1995; Weber, 2015). Policies or messages in the media and in public discourse that emphasize these aspects can then be expected to activate more negative attitudes. Several studies have found associations at the national level between the relative size of immigrant groups and perceptions of threat, modified by national economic conditions. In a recent review, Weber suggests that the findings have been somewhat inconsistent, with the effects not emerging at the local or regional level (Weber, 2015). Despite the connection to national economic conditions, the nature of the "threat" perceived by large numbers of immigrants may be related more to symbolic threat rather than a real competition for resources (Cea D'Ancona, 2015).

Symbolic Threat

Symbolic threat is the perception that outgroup members are threatening the ingroup's values, morals and norms. This can occur in the absence of any material threat (Bobo, 1983; Stephan, Ybarra, & Bachman, 1999) although some work looking at threat and asylum seekers suggests that they are very highly related (Suhnan, Pedersen, & Hartley, 2012). The symbolic threat that is often associated with immigrants and refugees is that they will reject local beliefs and customs, and thus bring about changes in cherished values and norms (Hartley & Pedersen, 2015; Wirtz, van der Pligt, & Doosje, 2016). In the current context in Europe and North America, these concerns have been strongly linked to anti-Muslim attitudes, and thus attitudes toward Muslim refugees are more negative than toward refugees of other religions (Bansak et al., 2016; Czymara & Schmidt-Catran, 2017; Poushter, 2016). Research has also shown more resistance to the settlement of African newcomers than those from Asia or Europe, and so the negative attitudes are not limited to religious differences alone (Bose, 2018; Czymara & Schmidt-Catran, 2017).

Policies intended to create more tolerant settings can actually activate feelings of threat, resulting in more negative attitudes toward outgroups. A recent study conducted in Switzerland, for example, suggests that when governments that have historically played a strong role in supporting religious practices change their policies toward greater religious openness, they also change their cherished local traditions. The result is that members of religious outgroups are now seen as the cause of these changes and thus a symbolic threat to local values (Helbling & Traunmüller, 2016).

Fairness and equity. One particular value that is invoked in the discourse around asylum seekers is that of fairness. Media coverage of asylum seekers and refugees has increasingly been couched in a discourse of suspicion regarding their need for protection (Bansak et al., 2016). Refugees are eligible for protection and rights that are not extended to other migrants, including entry into the country through a different pathway from that which is available to voluntary migrants. Concerns about whether refugees and asylum seekers are deserving of these rights and exceptions repeatedly emerge as predictors of attitudes toward refugees and asylum seekers. A qualitative mail survey with 585 Australians (McKay et al., 2012) found that concerns about irregular entry of asylum seekers were often presented in terms of fairness and the importance of using "due process."

However, the importance placed on fairness may be a justification rather than a cause of negative attitudes. A longitudinal study with over 200 Australian participants (Louis, Duck, Terry, Schuller, & Lalonde, 2007) tested the role of individual difference variables and social norms as well as perceptions of fairness and threat in supporting negative attitudes toward asylum seekers. The authors found that perceptions of procedural and structural fairness mediated the relationship between perceived structural threat and using civic action (e.g., voting) to support exclusionary or punitive measures. Thus, respondents who felt threatened appeared to be using claims of fairness to justify their attitudes, emphasizing the complex links between these different influences on attitudes.

Empathy

Empathy has been proposed as a key element in increasing positive attitudes toward outgroups and reducing prejudice (Ped-

ersen, Walker, Paradies, & Guerin, 2011). Empathy may be particularly salient in attitudes toward refugees as an outgroup because humanitarian concerns are explicitly invoked in discussions pertaining to their rights and well-being. Empathy can be a cognitive variable, where one can imagine the thoughts and feelings of others in their situation (perspective taking), or an affective variable, in terms of feeling as if, or for, another person (empathic matching or concern; Batson & Ahmad, 2009; Todd & Galinsky, 2014). For example, a study by Pedersen and Thomas (2013) found that Australians with greater feelings of empathy toward asylum seekers reported less prejudice toward them. Feelings of empathy made a unique contribution, above and beyond dispositional empathy, and the cognitive elements of perceived similarity and difference from asylum seekers.

Agencies, organizations, and individuals concerned with improving the welfare of refugees and asylum seekers often evoke empathic feelings in their efforts to motivate people to vote, volunteer, or donate to support asylum seekers and refugees (Johnson, 2011; Pupavac, 2008). In their analysis of political discourse in Australia, Pickering and Weber (2014) noted that the Australian Liberal government framed offshore detention as strategy to save the lives of vulnerable migrants whose lives were at risk because of unscrupulous people smugglers, thus eliciting an empathy rationale. The authors describe the Greens' party messages as rejecting the deterrence framings but countering with a discourse primarily focused on care, compassion, and the well-being of migrants, emphasizing empathy rather than human rights.

Empathy and the "Deserving" Migrant

DeBono (2018) and others (e.g., McKay et al., 2012), however, raised concerns about how public discourse and policies are compartmentalizing refugees into those who are, and are not, deserving of empathy. DeBono argued that policies around the Mediterranean arrivals aimed at protecting the vulnerable serve to separate migrants into those who are vulnerable and thus deserving of special protections and processes (e.g., minors or those with disabilities) and those who are not, and who are therefore deemed not to need of protection. This categorization of asylum seekers maps onto beliefs that many asylum seekers are not genuine refugees (McKay et al., 2012; IPSOS, 2016), a belief that has been promoted through political discourse and media messages (Esses, Medianu, & Lawson, 2013). These authors all note that beliefs that many refugees are not deserving of protection has then been used as a justification for limiting entry to asylum seekers.

A study of European attitudes toward asylum seekers conducted by Bansak and colleagues (Bansak et al., 2016) demonstrated the interplay of concerns around economic threat, symbolic threat and empathy. The authors had 18,000 voters in Europe rate profiles of asylum seekers that varied on nine characteristics: gender, age (21, 38 or 62 years of age), fluency in the local language, previous employment, country of origin (Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq, Kosovo, Pakistan, Syria, Ukraine), reason for migrating (persecution vs. economic opportunities), vulnerability (none, posttraumatic stress disorder, experienced torture, no surviving family, having a handicap), and whether or not there were inconsistencies in their asylum testimony. Ratings of these asylum seeker profiles were more positive when the profiles elicited humanitarian concerns, with those fleeing persecution and reporting vulnerabilities being

perceived more positively. Economic considerations were also important, with more positive responses provided for profiles of people who had been previously employed and who were fluent in the host country language, and who were not close to retirement age, consistent with concerns about the economic impact of resettling asylum seekers. Finally, attitudes were more negative toward Muslim profiles, consistent with anti-Muslim trends that are being witnessed internationally, that have been attributed at least in part to symbolic threat.

Anxiety and Uncertainty

General feelings of uncertainty can serve to exacerbate feelings of threat, and thus can motivate people to more extreme sociopolitical positions, including more right-wing or anti-immigrant political groups (Hogg & Adelman, 2013; Hogg, Kruglanski, & van den Bos, 2013). Interestingly, Silva et al. (2018) argue that a lack of policy clarity regarding refugees can result in a such a state of uncertainty. They hypothesized that these feelings of uncertainty lead to polarization of attitudes to reduce uncertainty, and thus more extreme negative, but potentially also positive, positions. In support of their hypothesis, they found that manipulating whether participants had knowledge that the government had clear policies regarding the settlement of refugees predicted less perceived threat and more positive attitudes toward refugees.

Intergroup Anxiety

Attitudes toward outgroup members have also been found to be determined by feelings of anxiety at the level of the individual, rather than the group. Stephan and colleagues argue that interacting with outgroup members can result in what they call *intergroup anxiety*, or concerns that the interaction could lead to negative personal outcomes, such as embarrassment, rejection, or exploitation (Stephan & Stephan, 1985; Stephan, Ybarra, & Bachman, 1999). Anxiety about interacting with refugees has been found to predict less positive attitudes toward them (Murray & Marx, 2013) and less willingness to support equal opportunity legislation on their behalf (Turoy-Smith, Kane, & Pedersen, 2013). Extended contact with outgroup members has been found to reduce these feelings of anxiety and improve intergroup attitudes.

Research conducted in Austria, for example, found that although voting for far-right parties has recently increased overall, those communities that were actually hosting refugees, and thus where members of the host community had the greatest likelihood of actually encountering and interacting with refugees, showed the lowest increase in far-right support (Steinmayr, 2016). In a mixed-methods study in Australia (Turoy-Smith et al., 2013), few of the participants reported having had any contact with refugees and many expressed confusion about who refugees were. Those who did have contact, however, tended to report positive or mixed experiences (rather than just negative) and the quality of those contact experiences predicted prejudice toward refugees both directly, and indirectly, through anxiety. Those who came from a region that had resettled a large number of asylum seekers were more likely to report generic contact and that contact tended to be positive. Schulz and Taylor (2018) suggested that positive contact with one outgroup can generalize to others. In their study in Northern Ireland they showed that the quality of previous inter-

group interactions between Protestants and Catholics can result in more perspective taking and improved intergroup attitudes. Importantly, they also showed that these can then generalize to a novel outgroup, in this case, Syrian refugees. The results suggest that policies designed to promote better intergroup relations in existing groups can benefit relationships with newcomers, at least under some conditions.

Stereotypes and the Construction of the Refugee Identity

Policies and public/media discourse that make an effort to elicit empathy or provide support for refugees often enact stigmatizing stereotypes of dependence or lack of agency because they are effective (Gupte & Mehta, 2007). For example, Bansak et al. (2016) found that support for refugees is grounded in a framing of refugees as in need of charity, rather than a discourse of justice and rights. This framing was also described above, in some Australian political messages. However, this construction of refugee identity is stigmatizing (Gupte & Mehta, 2007). It is not surprising then that some of those who resettle actively reject a refugee identity (Kumsa, 2006; Ludwig, 2016).

Policies regarding asylum and resettlement play a large role in the construction of this refugee identity by shaping the social and physical spaces that refugees inhabit. Carvalho and Pinto (2018) described the process by which the refugee identity is constructed in a refugee camp in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The physical segregation of refugees in camps is the first step in creating a refugee identity as distinct from other migrants and residents. The profound uncertainty, enforced idleness and hopelessness about their future, and the dependence that they have on humanitarian agencies, then link the refugee identity to helplessness. In their study, Carvalho and Pinto argued that this helpless identity was maintained by the way that agencies managed the camp. Agencies typically determine everything in refugees' lives, including how much and what food they would live on, the location and nature of housing, and opportunities for employment and education. While in the camps, a passive and dependent population makes management and distribution of goods easier for the organizations, and the inhabitants, access to these services and supports is tied to this identity (cf. Ilcan & Rygiel, 2015).

The perception of refugees as helpless victims persists following resettlement and is a defining feature of the refugee stereotype. Media portrayals of refugees and asylum seekers emphasize these characteristics. These perceived traits of dependence and humanitarian need do motivate positive attitudes and support for the resettlement of asylum seekers and refugees (Bansak et al., 2016; Kotzur, Forsbach, & Wagner, 2017), but once resettled these perceptions may undermine the well-being of refugees, and their ability to integrate as full and equal members of their new communities.

Two papers in this issue explicitly address how policies and social context shape refugee identities following permanent settlement. Lukunka (2018) interviewed former Burundian refugees as they attempted to reintegrate into their home communities following return from asylum. As with refugees in other settings, the returnees in Lukunka's study were perceived as helpless and dependent outsiders. Many struggled to find economic stability, having no access to land for farming and reporting being underpaid

for employment. Nonetheless, the support that was provided to returnees, in the form of housing or food, was resented by residents who had not left during the conflict, and this exacerbated tensions between those who stayed and those who had returned. Participants felt that their needs were not recognized by authorities, and, if anything, they experienced corruption and bribery. The result was a solidifying of a separate identity from the “stayees.”

Hayes and Endale (2018) approached identity for those in forced migration situations from a different perspective, looking at identity formation among adults who arrived in the United States as resettled refugees as children, and the impact of the settlement context on this process. They highlighted the dangers in focusing on individual level risk and protection factors rather than the broader social context that war-affected youth settle into, namely the problematizing of what are normal pathways of acculturation. Consistent with other recent research on newcomer identity (Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2010), the youth in Hayes and Endale’s study spoke of creating new identities that were separate from both their origin and their current community. However, despite moving past a refugee identity into a bicultural or hybrid new identity, grounded in their current situation, they found themselves still being labeled in these terms. Hayes and Endale’s findings suggest that the youths’ different systems were not integrated, resulting in a navigation of parallel systems and thus multiple, parallel, or merged identities. Ironically, they noted that Berry’s critique of the two world hypotheses (e.g., Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006) is that it is not that there are two worlds but that the world is dichotomized by the larger macrosystems that the youth are nested within. To the extent that the worlds are perceived or interacted with in this way, however, two worlds will emerge.

Interpersonal Contact

Intergroup contact can encourage the development of integrated, and less stigmatized, newcomer identities, and foster positive intergroup relationships. This can be an argument for policies promoting refugee resettlement into small communities. In smaller communities newcomers may have a greater likelihood of interacting with other community members, which may then result in a more welcoming community context. Resettlement of refugees into small communities has been an increasingly popular strategy in several countries, in part to address needs for population growth and labor in more rural regions (Bose, 2018; McDonald-Wilmsen, Gifford, Webster, Wiseman, & Casey, 2009; Wiginton, 2013). However, research on resettlement of refugees into small communities does not necessarily support this assumption. A review of resettlement experiences of refugees in small towns and agricultural areas in Australia reports that some resettled refugees had difficulty developing social networks, feared discrimination and felt socially isolated because of a lack of a coethnic community (McDonald-Wilmsen et al., 2009). Bose’s case study of the challenges and opportunities that arise when refugees are resettled into a small Vermont town shows how these resettlements can be hindered by residents’ resistance to the resettlement of refugees (Bose, 2018).

The positive impact of intergroup interactions as described above depends on the quality as well as quantity of the contact between groups (MacInnis & Page-Gould, 2015; Thomsen & Birmose, 2015; Tropp & Page-Gould, 2014). Thus, simply placing

groups in proximity is not enough to ensure positive interactions. Moreover, limited interactions of poor quality can increase negative intergroup relationships (MacInnis & Page-Gould, 2015). A number of conditions have been identified that need to be met in order for contact to lead to positive attitudinal changes. These include feelings of intimacy and equality between the group members, having shared goals and cooperation to achieve them, and institutional norms that support positive intergroup relationships (Tropp & Page-Gould, 2014). Policies that segregate refugees and asylum seekers from the rest of the community, or that limit contact to minimal and/or unequal interactions between groups and individuals, will undermine efforts at integration.

Resettlement of refugees into small towns in North America is not just imposed by central governments but can be sought after and often negotiated by local communities who seek to build their population, or protect it from decline. Some of these communities then take active steps to facilitate integration by implementing local policies to create welcoming contexts (e.g., Smith, 2008). Several of the articles in this special issue describe interventions that are intended to promote positive intergroup contact as part of a program to promote welcoming communities. In many cases, supporting high-quality intergroup contact plays a key role. For example, in her case study of the Natural Helpers Program, Lamping, Bertolo, and Wahlrab (2018) describes a successful integration program that embodies many of the elements deemed to be essential to the promotion of positive intergroup contact. The initiative is grounded in the shared commitment to principles that require all of the stakeholders, including those holding positions of power, to create a space for newcomers’ claims for justice and recognition. The initiative is also reshaping the city overall, as the Natural Helpers are engaging agencies and identifying ways to shift how these agencies provide services to be more adaptive to the needs of forced migrants. This initiative is explicitly enacting the two-way change, between both newcomers and hosts, that is required for integration to happen. Lamping argues that this reframing was only possible under the umbrella of the larger welcoming community initiative that the city had taken on.

Predictors of Quality Contact in Integration Interventions

Both Atkinson (2018) and Hayes and Endale (2018) describes the importance of interpersonal relationships between refugee newcomers and other members of the community as successful pathways to integration, rather than interventions that depend on relationships to organizations. Atkinson focuses on a mentorship program for refugees in Australia, interviewing both mentors and mentees about their experiences. Atkinson develops a notion of forging a new identity, that of a shared learning community with shared goals, which encompasses both mentors and mentees, and reflects on what is learned and discussed within this new community. Although both mentors and mentees were very positive about the program, Atkinson also notes that the relationships could challenge the assumptions and comfort zones of mentors when mentees did not conform to their expectations.

This finding highlights one of the challenges of initiatives promoting intergroup contact as a means of building integration. Research on volunteerism has found that the giving of assistance between groups of differing status can be an affirmation of the

social dominance of those providing help (e.g., Nadler, 2002; Schellhaas & Dovidio, 2016). Although assistance offered by higher power groups is often welcomed by those with less power or status, it depends on the nature of, and motivations for, the help. When higher status groups offer dependency help, providing solutions rather than supporting the recipient to build their own solutions, the assistance can be perceived as reinforcing the inequality between groups (Nadler & Chernyak-Hai, 2014). As a result, it can be perceived negatively by the lower status group, even when it is offered out of genuine caring (Halabi & Nadler, 2017).

Atkinson (2018) also notes that mentors evoked the construct of a shared humanity, which can be a construction of a shared identity that facilitates positive experiences of intergroup helping (Halabi & Nadler, 2017). However, in intergroup contact situations between majority and minority groups there is also the danger that this construction of identity may be an instance of a color-blind ideology (Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004). Color-blind ideologies are statements of equality, often accompanied by a resistance to discussing between-group differences. The endorsement of a color-blind ideology by those in dominant social groups can ultimately deny the experiences of exclusion or discrimination faced by minority group members and has been found to undermine the positive benefits of intergroup contact (Tropp & Page-Gould, 2015; Saguy, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2008).

Among volunteers at agencies working with resettled refugees, perceiving refugees as helpless can serve interpersonal or value needs among the volunteers, who can enact the script of themselves as active citizens with refugees as benefactors of their efforts. As a result, proposed support for refugee newcomers can be created in ways that fail to meet their needs (e.g., the one-stop solution described by Lamping et al., 2018) and the demands for agency by refugees can lead to misunderstandings, discomfort and conflict (Atkinson, 2018; Lamping et al., 2018). Notably, some volunteers in these papers challenged this frame, and the Natural Helpers program described by Lamping began to create intentional acknowledgment of newcomer agency, structures and processes to engage newcomers as stakeholders in the program, rather than as beneficiaries.

Reframing the Discourse

The papers in this issue suggest that intergroup contact can be effective in supporting integration when it supports ongoing relationships. But the benefits are limited if refugee stereotypes go unchallenged. Several articles address initiatives that challenge the stigmatized identity of “refugee.” Lenette (2018) notes that the media can also be a site of resistance to dominant discourses around refugees, as is the case of political cartoons. Lenette argues that cartoons provide a window into the major issues being discussed in public discourse. Moreover, these not only reflect but shape public discourse by drawing attention to contradictions and hypocrisies in public and political discourse “at a glance.” Cartoons may perhaps reach people who might not otherwise read more detailed documents on the topic and thus have a far-reaching impact.

Others note that although refugee identity is stigmatized, the shared identity can be built on for activism to create change. In Carvalho’s and Pinto’s study of residents in a refugee camp and

Lukunka’s study of returnees to Burundi, refugee identity was segregated, but also connected to two important elements: social support and citizenship. Participants in these settings were able to use these identities to build mutually supportive networks that provided immediate material and information support, as well as building their collective power to change the conditions of their lives in the future through collective action. In Lukunka’s study of Burundi returnees, local residents who had stayed during the conflict (“stayees”) indicated admiration for the resilience and agency of the returnees as they organized for change, suggesting that these activities also changed their public image. Importantly, the returnees also worked collectively to claim their rights, as is consistent with the notion of active citizenship discussed by Lamping et al. (2018).

The Natural Helpers initiative that Lamping described is an example of how an agency re-imagined intergroup helping to promote a welcoming community and support integration. By working with the Natural Helpers (community members with migration experience who were already offering assistance to other members of the community), agency members were challenged to rethink the traditional frames of refugees as helpless and the need for volunteers to step in and fix problems. Even the process of training needed to be reconceptualized, away from the trainees being passive recipients of information to an interactive space with dialogue and opportunities for practicing skills and processes. Through community consultations and engagement with the Natural Helpers, the agency was challenged to engage in “intentional recognition” of forced migrant newcomers as community stakeholders. In this framing, the primary goal of resettlement is not to provide services, as such, but to build community relationships and a welcoming community.

Policies, Social Context, and Refugee Integration

The articles in this special issue describe how policies at the level of political bodies (Bose, 2018; DeBono, 2018; Lukunka, 2018; Schulz and Taylor, 2018), social institutions (Carvalho & Pinto, 2018, Hayes and Endale, 2018; Lenette, 2018) and organizations (Atkinson, 2018; Lamping et al., 2018) create social contexts that can facilitate or impede refugee integration. What is clear from these articles is that integration is not just about the skills and efforts of refugees themselves, but rather the interaction between refugees and their social environments. A central aspect of the integration process is public opinions and attitudes, which both shape and are shaped by governmental policies, and which determine opportunities for inclusion and participation on the part of refugees.

Policies respond to real needs and challenges of costs and the distribution of services. However, they are also influenced by, and influence, constructed refugee identities. The articles in this issue reveal the dominant stereotypes of passive, helpless victims, and immoral and violent criminals. On resettlement, those who arrive through refugee programs often struggle to leave behind the refugee identity and develop a new identity as citizens of their new home. In situations of extreme segregation, refugees engage their shared identity to demand greater opportunities for agency, opportunity and hope for the future.

The most promising policies to support refugee integration are those that challenge these stereotypes by creating opportunities for

agency and autonomy, and for building positive relationships with members of the communities refugees reside in or settle into. As noted in several of these articles, the challenge of refugee integration is the creation of new communities, where all are welcome.

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