

Clark University

Clark Digital Commons

Worcester Inter-University Refugee Workshop

Integration and Belonging Hub

9-2022

Workshop Discussion Topics Responses

Integration and Belonging Hub

Follow this and additional works at: https://commons.clarku.edu/hub_refworkshop



Part of the [Migration Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Integration and Belonging Hub, "Workshop Discussion Topics Responses" (2022). *Worcester Inter-University Refugee Workshop*. 1.

https://commons.clarku.edu/hub_refworkshop/1

This Document is brought to you for free and open access by the Integration and Belonging Hub at Clark Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Worcester Inter-University Refugee Workshop by an authorized administrator of Clark Digital Commons. For more information, please contact larobinson@clarku.edu, cstebbins@clarku.edu.

Facilitator Notes and Discussion Questions

Session I: History and Context - Worcester and Central Massachusetts

Key Questions for Discussion (each table gets one question):

- What are some additional categories of displaced people, forced migrants, and other people in refugee-like situations from the historical record of Worcester?
- What types of support and help do we know of that was available for earlier groups of forced migrants?
- What do we know of early practices and expectations of refugee/forced migrant integration in Worcester and in the United States?

Session II: Methods and Ethics of Community-engaged Work with Refugees

Key questions for discussion (2 questions for 2 groups, other two for other groups):

- 1) What are some ways in which community-engaged scholarship and engagement might include certain assumptions about how integration works in cities?
- 2) How would our community-engaged practices be different if we took into consideration the transnational networks and ongoing relationships to mobility among community members from refugee backgrounds?
- 3) How might we as community-engaged scholars and students rethink the role of community development and community organizing practices in ways that center the experiences of forced migration and the complex relationship between refugees and racialization?
- 4) What might be some practical differences between centering diversity and a refugee-centered approach when it comes to community engaged scholarship and practice?

Answers:

- 1) Assumptions about orientation to place, misleading assumptions that people from similar cultural backgrounds need to be placed together can have unintended consequences
 - ❖ Assumptions embedded within the language of “integration”
- 2) Networks can be complex
 - ❖ Weaponization of social network against asylee fleeing gender violence
 - ❖ Centering safety, lived experiences, histories, and experiences of violence will reorient our approach
 - ❖ Dual or multiple socio-economic investments
- 3) Experiences :
 - ❖ Violence regarding gender and sexuality
 - ❖ Racism
 - ❖ Discrimination
- 4) Community engaged scholars :
 - ❖ Understand ethnicity and religion
 - ❖ Show humor and opportunities
 - ❖ Understand gender and sexuality

- ❖ Know what/how/when to ask. Learn about your question
- ❖ Be sensitive

5) Students :

- ❖ Migration and language
- ❖ Get to know people and get involved
- ❖ Teach about equality as well as equity
- ❖ Understand local people
- ❖ Be willing to know these refugees as individuals, not just the labels

Scenario #1

- Study design is wrong to begin with
- Adhering too much to existing models
- Differing expectations
- Need to rely on lived experience over theoretical models
- Can't state or assume that nonprofits know best

Scenario #2

- Feeling conflicted
- Ambivalence: culturally othered but aware of broader injustice
- Organizers need to be culturally aware
- Mutual lack of understanding
- Understanding police - different relations between the US & Congo
- New protest culture (for Micheal?)- concerns around security and identity

Scenario #3

- Push vs pull in refugee experience
- Important to understand bureaucratic requirements for refugees
- Important for volunteers to understand their role of accompanying and empowering, NOT speaking for refugees and forced migrants
- Recognizing unique histories and experience with trauma
- Language needs

Session III: Mapping and Counter-Mapping of Forced Migration in Worcester *Key questions (2 questions for 2 groups, other two for other groups):*

- 1) As university educators and students, do we have a role in bridging legal/policy categories of forced migrants, and sociological/experiential categories of forced migrants?
- 2) How do we understand and balance among the needs and interests of different stakeholders in engaged work with forced migrant communities?
- 3) How might we bring a historical understanding of forced migration, integration and belonging to our work with forced migrant communities?
- 4) How might we incorporate receiving (settled) communities in our engaged research with forced migrant communities?

Responses:

- 1) Universities can 1) help disseminate and promote information and 2) push back on legal political categories, and 3) think through the social impact of legal categories
 - ❖ University engagement can help push back on problematic categories, which are ultimately fluid.
- 2) Draw out multi-disciplinary stories; a need for unblocking/working across barriers. Having a more trauma-informed approach and center refugee experiences. A need for greater accountability in terms of donor-community relations; more downward accountability to communities receiving aid.
- 3) The importance of grounding ourselves in our own histories, the histories of different communities, and in the histories of forced migrant communities.
- 4) Reflect on ourselves as a part of a receiving community, and recognize the inequalities in what gets funded. The most prestigious and well funded research agendas do not necessarily take a critical lens, or hold ethical collaborations.

Moving Forward

- Conduct research “together” between different agents (ie. schools,)and disseminate findings that not only serve scholarly agenda, but broader agendas and needs
- Share the wealth and resources through conversations across institutions
- Communal data sharing and discussing needs to avoid research fatigue
- Importance of 1-2 page briefs!
- Stay tuned in with the fluctuations of arrivals for refugees
- Create online spaces for productive conversations, focused on what we as a settled population need to be doing

I believe this is the answer to qu4 in session 2

- What is “successful” integration/resettlement ?
 - ❖ The US gov vs new comers definition
- Intra-country mobility
- Economic security, language, cultural knowledge, education
- What does multi-directional integration look like (in the receiving society)?
- Intrafamily dynamics
- Transnational community identity vs location based
- What does it mean to belong to a community
- Context of racialized integration
- Is the burden only on resources to integrate?
- Forced migrants don't fit into easy ethno-national categories

Idk where this goes

- The idea of having those affected lead the conversations and agenda for community development

- Community informed research
- Understanding the identities (combination of refugee or racial tension)
- Understanding other forms of activism
- Acknowledgment
- Bring solidarity