



**UCLA** Center for the Study of **International Migration**

## Seeking Refuge, Finding Inequality: Refugees Navigating Their Way

Friday, April 22, 2022 | 12:00PM - 1:30PM Pacific Time

Will be held via Zoom (This Event May Be Recorded)



**Author: Annette Lareau**

Annette Lareau is the Edmund J. and Louise W. Kahn Endowed Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania. She is the author of award-winning books *Unequal Childhoods* and *Home Advantage*. Her most recent book is *Listening to People: A Practical Guide to Interviewing, Participant-Observation, Data Analysis, and Writing It All Up*, (Chicago).



**Author: Blair Sackett**

Blair Sackett is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania and incoming Postdoctoral Fellow at the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs at Brown University. Supported by funding from the Fulbright-Hays, her research examines how institutional policies and practices shape refugees' access to resources and rights in Kenya and the United States.



**Discussant: Catherine Besteman**

Catherine Besteman is the Francis F. and Ruth K. Bartlett Professor of Anthropology at Colby College. Her most recent books include *Militarized Global Apartheid* and *Making Refuge: Somali Bantu Refugees and Lewiston, Maine*.

Upon arrival to the United States, resettled refugees receive limited, yet valuable institutional supports: help from case workers, eligibility for government benefits, and a legal status which enables participation in American institutions. Thus, scholars have suggested that refugees have a more favorable context of reception than other types of immigrants, and particularly those with liminal legal status. Yet, as we show, eligibility for services does not equal access. Drawing on qualitative interviews and ethnographic observations of refugee families from the Democratic Republic of the Congo resettled to the US, *Seeking Refuge, Finding Inequality* shows that refugee families had to navigate many complex institutions at once—banks, workplaces, schools, and social service programs. These institutions were rife obstacles and errors, which could tangle into institutional knots, or complex blockages, impeding access even to resources for which they were eligible. Some knots had a ripple effect as problems in one institution reverberated, leading to new unrelated problems in different institutions. We show how these institutional obstacles are costly to solve and consequential, impeding upward mobility. By highlighting these obstacles, *Seeking Refuge* draws attention to the institutional mechanisms that shape the context of reception for refugee families.

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