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Faithfully Providing Refuge: The Role of Religious Organizations in Refugee Assistance and Advocacy

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Abstract

The majority of voluntary agencies that resettle refugees in the U.S. are faith-based organizations. Although the federal government prohibits resettlement agencies from spending federal dollars on religious activities, faith-based resettlement agencies still find ways to incorporate religion in their organizational activities and to mobilize religious resources for refugee rights and services. Based on research with 36 refugee resettlement and assistance organizations in four cities, this paper explores the ways in which religious discourse and religious networks are incorporated in refugee resettlement and will also suggest possibilities for expanding the role of religion in advocating for greater refugee rights.

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What is Refugee Resettlement?

In 2000 the U.S. accepted over 72,000 refugees (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service 2000). While that number dropped precipitously following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, new refugee admissions to the U.S. began to increase in 2004. A central component to refugee resettlement in the United States are non-governmental organizations (NGOs). States and international governing bodies that assist and resettle refugees do so by funneling funds through NGOs (Crisp 2001; Loescher 2001; Zetter 1999). The process of resettling refugees in the U.S. is bifurcated. The beginning of the process, admission, is a process of the state. The U.S. State Department suggests guidelines on the maximum number of refugees to be admitted in a given year, and the President signs off on the final count. People applying for refugee status must have their application approved by the State Department (and now the Department of Homeland Security), or in the case of asylees[1], they must be approved by a U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) official or federal appellate judge. Thus, refugee admissions occur entirely at the federal governmental level.

But the process of resettling refugees who have been granted admission to the U.S. is a local process. Refugees are personally greeted at the airport by an agent of a sponsoring NGO or sponsoring family. They are taken to their new home and shown where to get groceries and how to apply for public aid. They are offered classes in English, or job skills training in occupations like electronics assembly, nursing, or nail technician work. They are coached for the U.S. citizenship exam. They join with other refugees in their community to share their experiences of life in the U.S. or to exchange news from their home country. All these things frequently happen through local nonprofit resettlement NGOs or mutual assistance associations (MAAs).

[1] Asylees are people who seek refuge once inside the U.S.; refugees are people who seek refuge from outside U.S. borders.

And yet, these two components of refugee resettlement are not divorced. There is a close relationship between resettlement NGOs and the federal government. The federal government, through the Office of Refugee Resettlement, provides the funding necessary for the services available to refugees during their first 120 days in the U.S. (these services are referred to as Reception and Placement). The Office of Refugee Resettlement makes other monies available to resettlement NGOs through grants, funding services such as small business start-up loans, fast-track employment assistance or job training programs.

Summary of the Refugee Resettlement System

Federal agencies set limits on new refuge admissions, and they approve which individuals are given refugee status. They also define the array of services that legally constitute resettlement. These services include, for the first 30 days; transitional cash assistance, food, housing, clothing, health screening, and referrals for other social and medical services. Other assistance includes welfare benefits (amounts varying by eligibility), employment assistance, and language instruction. The federal government subcontracts these resettlement services to NGOs. The government allocates all new refugee arrivals to a national voluntary agency (also called a volag), which in turn subcontracts with a local NGO to resettle each refugee. The national volag subcontracts with either one of their local offices or a mutual assistance association. Mutual assistance associations are secular ethnic organizations serving a particular immigrant group. A group of immigrants that has become more settled forms an association in order to assist others from that group adapt to life in the U.S. (thus providing “mutual assistance” to their compatriots).

Volags can be faith-based (such as Church World Service or Catholic Charities) or secular (such as International Rescue Committee or Ethiopian Community Development

Council). All local volags serve only refugees, providing the government-mandated resettlement services and occasionally other services intended to assist refugees to adapt and become economically self-sufficient. Not all mutual assistance associations serve refugees, and not all do resettlement. The ones that do resettlement tend to provide a broader range of services (especially cultural services), and may also provide services to non-refugee clients, depending upon the requirements of their funding. In general, volags focus on refugee resettlement whereas mutual assistance associations focus on assisting a particular ethnic immigrant group (which may be composed largely of refugees).

There are other organizations that provide assistance to refugees, but are not contracted to provide resettlement services. I call these organizations support agencies. This includes faith-based NGOs, secular NGOs, and government agencies that provide any type of assistance to refugees (or broadly to people in need, at least some of whom are refugees). Some support agencies provide cultural programming, including interceding between refugees and American institutions like schools or the police. Some support agencies recruit volunteers who collect items to furnish a refugee family's apartment, or provide refugees transportation to job interviews and other necessary appointments.

The Institutional Context of Refugee Resettlement

I conceptualize refugee resettlement as a network of overlapping social service, advocacy, religious, and cultural institutions. Resettlement NGOs collaborate with government agencies and other NGOs that provide social services to a variety of needy individuals to ensure that refugees have access to necessary social welfare services. They form relationships with local religious institutions (such as churches, mosques, synagogues, or temples). They advocate for the rights of immigrants and refugees. Some resettlement NGOs provide cultural activities and

ethnic celebrations. And resettlement NGOs that do not engage in these activities themselves frequently collaborate with other organizations that do. These different facets of resettlement, the Social Welfare System, Immigrant Advocacy, Immigrant Culture, and Religion in Civic Life, form the institutional network of refugee resettlement. This institutional network is depicted in Figure 1.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

Extant literature on faith-based and secular social service NGOs suggests that these two types of nonprofits provide different kinds of services and have different relationships with government agencies. Specifically, this literature suggests that faith-based NGOs less frequently collaborate with the government (Chaves and Tsitsos 2001; Twombly 2002) and focus on emergency relief services rather than long-term assistance[2] (Chaves and Tsitsos 2001). However, the typology of faith-based versus secular may be less salient in refugee resettlement than it is in other social service arenas. Other research on the historical development of religious involvement in refugee resettlement has shown that faith-based organizations in the U.S. have a long history of collaboration with the government (Nichols 1988). Additionally, while most faith-based volags are Jewish or Christian, many refugees arriving in recent years are Muslim or another non-Jewish, non-Christian religion. The history of collaboration with the government combined with increasingly settling refugees of different faiths might draw faith-based volags away from religious activities. However, I expect faith-based volags will still tap into their religious networks to acquire resources and mobilize for refugee advocacy.

Religion and Resettlement NGOs

Religion is often a factor in the root causes of refugee migrations. From genocides

[2] This finding is specific to congregation-based organizations, not necessarily stand alone faith-based nonprofits.

against Armenians and Jews to religious persecution of Christians and Jews in Ukraine, Bahá'í in Iran and Muslims in Bosnia, religion has long been implicated in why people must seek refuge elsewhere. Often people sharing the refugees' religion are the ones forming faith-based NGOs that provide assistance to the refugees. Jewish NGOs were the first faith-based groups to assist Jewish refugees from the Holocaust (Nichols 1988). But that is not to say that faith-based NGOs only serve co-religious refugees. Some of the largest national refugee assistance organizations, such as Catholic Charities and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, provide services to a broad array of refugee groups.

The relationship between the religious affiliation of faith-based NGOs and the religion of the refugees being served may be a complicated one. Increasingly, newly-arrived refugees are Muslim, while most faith-based resettlement NGOs in the U.S. are Jewish, Catholic, or Protestant. In the past, churches sponsoring refugees of different religious backgrounds have coercively proselytized, expecting refugees to convert in exchange for the church's assistance (Ong 2003). Conversely, contact with missionaries in refugees' home counties may create a familiarity along which trust between service providers and refugees can be built (Holtzman 2000). And if the refugees share the religious affiliation with the faith-based NGO, differences in religious practice between the U.S. and the sending country could restrict the connections between service providers and refugees (Gold 1996). Within resettlement NGOs, the religious beliefs and ethics of both refugees and resettlement workers become intertwined with the public sphere. Faith-based NGOs' position in resettlement allows them to lay claim to the otherwise secular activities of the state, thus participating in what Jose Casanova (Casanova 1994) refers to as the "deprivatization" of religion.

Religion encompasses more than organizational affiliation; it is also about organizational

practices, organization rhetoric, and organization networks. Resettlement NGOs can observe religious holidays, use religious doctrine and language to guide the mission of their activities, and connect with other religious organizations, specifically houses of worship that may be able to provide material and human resources. Additionally, there is a rich tradition of immigrant advocacy in various religious traditions (Christiansen 1996; Gold 1997; Kurtz and Fulton 2002; O'Neill and Spohn 1998), and faith-based NGOs might collaborate with other religious organizations in their advocacy efforts. Therefore, the place of religion in refugee resettlement goes beyond NGOs with a religious affiliation. Secular resettlement NGOs can also use religion in their work, which complicates the simple delineation between faith-based and secular organizations.

Religion can operate within organizations in three different ways: in practices, in rhetoric, and in organizational networks. Religious practices include observing religious holidays, offering religious education, or even proselytizing. Examples of religious organization rhetoric are justifying organizational practices with religious doctrine, or making religious references in organizational literature. And organizations can have religious networks by forming relationships with faith-based NGOs and houses of worship (such as churches, synagogues, temples, or mosques). The U.S. federal government put many limitations on how NGOs receiving federal dollars can resettle refugees. Included in these limitations is a restriction against sectarian activities. The question remains of how this limitation affects the relationship between faith-based resettlement NGOs and the government. Additionally, it is still possible for faith-based resettlement NGOs to express their religiosity through their organizational rhetoric and networks.

Religious Roots of Human Rights Language

Although the major world religions contain vast differences and contradictions between them, scholars have identified some shared elements that have given birth to the current concept of human rights. Lauren (1998) cites the "universal interest in addressing the integrity, worth, and dignity of all persons and, consequently, the duty toward other people who suffer without distinction" (p. 5). He identifies this universal interest in the Torah's shared fatherhood of God to all people, the Buddhist valuing of all people regardless of their social position, the place of charity as a pillar of belief in Islam, and Christian parables told by Jesus including the story of the good Samaritan. Reformations within Hindu thought also support equality and the inherent divinity (and thus worth) of all people (Mitra 1982). Scholars have even found roots of human rights in Confucianism (Lauren 1998; Slingerland 2004). While not all these religious traditions conceptualize human rights in the same way or in a way consistent with more secular conceptions (such as in the United Nations 1948 Declaration of Human Rights), these scholars argue that across major world religions there is room for a consistent language of human rights.

Methodology

I use qualitative data collected from 58 interviews with staff and volunteers at 36 refugee resettlement and assistance organizations in four metropolitan areas; Los Angeles, Chicago, Sacramento, and Minneapolis. The 36 organizations consisted of 20 volags, 10 MAAs[3], five support agencies, and one county government resettlement office. The four cities were chosen because they represent both traditional gateways (cities that have a long history of receiving refugees, i.e. Los Angeles and Chicago) and emerging gateways (cities that have recently received refugees at a faster rate than the national average, i.e. Minneapolis and Sacramento). It is important to compare traditional gateways to emerging gateways, as the emerging gateways

[3] Four of the 10 MAAs in my sample were contracted to resettle refugees; the remaining six MAAs provided non-resettlement services to refugees.

may not have the same well-developed infrastructure for handling new immigrants as the traditional gateways have[4] (Singer 2003b). Figure 2 illustrates the trends in refugee admissions for these four cities between 1987 (the earliest year the INS provided refugee data by metropolitan area) and 2001. Los Angeles has far more refugee admissions overall, but it experienced its peak in 1991 with 17,963 refugees; admissions have been in decline since 1994. Chicago's refugee admissions have remained relatively constant across time, averaging around 3,000 annually. While Chicago has experienced an increase since 2000, the annual growth since 1987 is only 11.5% (compared to Sacramento's 34.4%). Both Minneapolis' and Sacramento's refugee admissions have been on a gradual upward trend since 1987, with steeper increases in recent years. While Minneapolis' annual increase is only 7.7%, it has a much smaller immigrant population per capita than Chicago (14.5% compared to Chicago's 21.7%[5]).

[INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE]

Interviews cover the services NGOs provide, how they fundraise, what needs the refugees they serve have and how they try to meet those needs, how the NGOs mission and religious affiliation (in the case of faith-based NGOs) shapes the work the organization does, and what vision they have for "successful" resettlement. In addition to interviews with NGO and government agency staff, I collected some data through participant-observation with NGO activities involving refugees and I analyzed organizational literature. The organizations included in the sample are presented in Tables 1 through 4.

[INSERT TABLES 1 THROUGH 4 HERE]

[4] The immigrant duration structure is also likely to be very different in a new gateway as compared to a traditional gateway. For example, in Washington DC (which is a new gateway), 47.5% of immigrants arrived in the 1990s (Singer 2003a), whereas the immigrants in Los Angeles on average arrived earlier.

[5] Percentages of foreign-born population come from the 2000 Census.

Does Faith Make a Difference?

Contrary to the findings of research on other types of faith-based organizations, religious affiliation of a resettlement NGO does not translate into a distant relationship with the government. In my sample, faith-based volags had closer ties with the state than the MAAs. They received much of their funding from government agencies (mostly from the State Department and Office of Refugee Resettlement), they had more contact with government representatives, and they generally were more active in government lobbying. For example, the directors of Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Ministries in Chicago and Catholic Charities in Los Angeles had both taken trips in the last year to Washington DC to directly lobby government officials, and the directors of several faith-based volags in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area had joined with the mayor of Minneapolis on a trip to Thailand to visit the Hmong refugees in the Wat Tham Krabok refugee camp that were about to enter the U.S. For faith-based and secular volags, it was common to either write letters directly to government agents or to provide information to national volag offices that would be used by the national offices for advocacy. Conversely, of the MAAs in my sample only the Bosnian and Herzegovinian American Community Center in Chicago had organized a trip to speak with elected officials. While all MAA directors had some contact with local government agents and some wrote letters to elected officials advocating for their refugee clients, their engagement with the government was generally much less than either faith-based or secular volags.

The real difference between resettlement organizations is not between faith-based and secular; it is between volags and MAAs. Despite their lack of religious affiliation, MAAs in my sample tended to encourage religious practice among refugees more frequently than faith-based or secular volags. This surprising finding is due to three factors: 1) the relationship of both faith-

based and secular volags to the state, 2) the relationship of volags and MAAs to refugees, and 3) the role of religious activities in immigrant community development.

Faith-based and Secular Volags and the State

As I stressed earlier in this paper, refugee resettlement is tightly regulated by the federal government, and if a faith-based NGO wants to resettle refugees, that NGO must engage with the federal government. Recently the State Department issued specific instructions on what services must be provided in Reception and Placement (referred to as "Operational Guidelines"), down to the number of silverware settings each refugee family should have. Included in these specifications is the prohibition against any sectarian activities in resettlement. Under this level of control, faith-based volags do not have much choice but to operate similarly to secular volags, at least in their provision of resettlement services (which uses entirely federal funds).

The restriction against sectarian activities is not a problem for the staff working at faith-based volags. Staff sharing the religious beliefs of their organization understand resettlement as divinely-mandated service, not an opportunity to practice religious rituals or spread their religious beliefs. Roger from Catholic Charities put it succinctly when he told me, "we serve refugees not because they are Catholic, but because we are." Beth at Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society explained the role of religion in her organization's resettlement services this way:

> Do we do that [resettlement] with a Jewish dimension? Yes. And the Jewish dimension is helping people realize that America is a place that welcomes all, and helping people that have come from a land where maybe sometimes being a Jew was considered worse than dirt; that America has a proud history where Jewish people have been involved in its evolution, development and whatever. Do we apply those same kinds of principals to other communities that we help? Absolutely.

When I asked Nadia of Jewish Family Services Refugee Resettlement Program in Los Angeles if her organization was Jewish, she balked at the label, saying, "It is, you know, it depends what you call Jewish." She pointed out that her resettlement program served refugees from different

religious backgrounds and was therefore non-sectarian, even though most of the refugees they currently served were Jewish. Even Deborah and Jason at World Relief, a faith-based volag which is affiliated with the National Association of Evangelicals, did not perceive a contradiction in their religious mandate and the non-sectarian resettlement work they do. To them, resettling refugees is a way of serving God's children, not an opportunity to evangelize. Jason explained it this way:

> There is not a lot of examples in the evangelical community of organizations that have a long history of effectively doing social service… the history of the tension there is that I think evangelical churches in the past had a very low esteem for social services, for addressing physical needs, and were only concerned with evangelism and spiritual conversion. That really outweighed everything. I personally come at this saying, "There needs to be a balance. You can't have one without the other; you need to do both."

Volags are the primary channel through which the state contracts for refugees to be resettled. This is evident in that both faith-based and secular volags resettle more refugees than MAAs. But more importantly, the services volags provide are more narrowly focused on the primary interest of the state in resettlement, which is for refugees to achieve economic self-sufficiency as soon as possible. In addition to resettlement, most of the volags in my sample (except those with very small numbers of staff, sometimes one or two people) offered other services, such as English instruction, job counseling and placement, and computer classes. Almost all of the additional services volags offered were intended to improve the employability of refugee clients.

Few volags, either faith-based or secular, offered home country cultural programs. Reception & Placement includes training in *American* culture, but MAAs carry out most of the home country cultural activities. The notable exceptions were the International Institute of Minnesota, which organized a cultural festival intended to educate native-born Minnesotans about different

immigrant cultures, and Catholic Charities in Los Angeles, whose director contributes to the production of a Vietnamese radio program and magazine.

MAAs, on the other hand, provide a broader array of services to refugees, resettlement is a small part of what they do, and in fact most MAAs function in a support capacity rather than resettling refugees themselves. Of the four cities in my sample, only in Chicago did MAAs make a significant contribution to resettling refugees. All MAAs provide some cultural services, which are extended to any refugee or other immigrant within their specific national origin group (and sometimes even outside that origin group). While they still frequently mention economic self-sufficiency as a goal of resettlement, they view their mandate in much broader terms than most volags. Also, many government agencies categorize MAAs separately from volags, referring to them as "quasi-formal" organizations. When distributing calls for proposals, government agencies are increasingly requiring all quasi-formal organizations to collaborate with volags or other government agencies on proposals for funding refugee services. This has the effect of making some MAA staff feel like their organizations are considered secondary or marginal in resettlement. The director of one MAA describe the problem to me this way:

> Interviewee**:** The government says, your MAA is suppose to be here for a short period of time to help the refugees and immigrants, and then you're suppose to disappear. Well, Catholic Charities is still around, Lutheran Social Service is still around. We don't see it that way.
>
> SN: They want to work with these larger resettlement agencies, and they don't want to work with a smaller MAA?
>
> Interviewee: No. Because they see it as, you know, they view us as, you don't have the capacity.

Not every government agency views MAAs as secondary; Dr. Nguyen Van Hanh, the director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, identifies MAAs along with volags as one of the pillars of

refugee resettlement[6]. However, as a general rule MAAs are not as tightly connected to federal and state government agencies, which might make them more vulnerable to cuts in government funding but does give them to freedom to act without government restrictions.

Volags Resettle Refugees, MAAs "Do Everything"

When both volags and MAAs are contracted by the federal government to resettle refugees, why do some MAAs, uniformly secular agencies, engage in more religious practices than faith-based volags? I believe the key is to the way MAAs relate to refugees. The MAAs are funded to do resettlement just like the volags, and their resettlement activities are devoid of sectarianism (as is required by the government). But they seek out other funding, which gives them much more flexibility in their activities. But why don't the faith-based volags do the same? I think it has a lot to do with the MAAs being organized around broader missions of constructing immigrant communities. When I asked MAA directors what services their organizations provided, more than one director told me that they "do everything." For example, the Sacramento Lao Family Community provides employment counseling, juvenile offender counseling, cultural activities that both offer celebrations for native Hmong and Mien as well as educate native-born Americans about various Lao cultures, and they advocate on behalf of Lao refugees with the local schools and police. The Bosnian and Herzegovnian American Community Center in Chicago offers men's and women's support groups, a children's choir and after school program, advocates and translators for Bosnians who are ill and need assistance navigating the medical system, and a collaborative relationship with a nearby university to offer degree programs for Bosnians living in the U.S. and those still in Bosnian-Herzegovinia. The Center for Asian and Pacific Islanders run a food pantry, employment assistance and job training,

[6] Dr. Nguyen Van Hanh made these comments at an April 2005 meeting of the Los Angeles County Refugee Forum, which took place at the office of the International Institute Los Angeles.

financial literacy, family literacy (teaching parents to read to their children), as well as many more services in a way their director Lan asserts are "culturally-grounded." The array of services provided by MAAs seems nearly boundless, and goes far beyond the scope of mere economic self-sufficiency. Refugee MAAs, like the MAAs started by other immigrants, are intended to create an immigrant community.

Religion and Community Development

Building an immigrant community can involve more than just cultural activities; it can include religious activities as well. When faith-based NGOs enacted religious practices, it was always to build community, not to proselytize. For example, Beth at the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society in Chicago was proud of how her organization passed out food baskets to their Muslim refugees during Ramadan. Because Jewish Family Service in Sacramento resettled predominantly Jewish refugees in recent years, their director Olga could offer Jewish activities to her refugee clients in addition to the government-mandated resettlement services. MAAs have a unique opportunity to engage in religious practices, as their mission is to build and support an ethnic immigrant community. MAAs serving an homogenous religious group can enact religious practices as a way of binding their refugee clients into a single community. If most Bosnian refugees are Muslim, than facilitating Muslim practices can be an opportunity to build community bonds between Bosnian refugees. Therefore, staff at the Bosnian and Herzegovinian American Community Center in Chicago can freely pass out eating schedules for Ramadan to their refugee clients without fearing alienating anyone.

In many cases I found that religious homogeneity was not a prerequisite to engaging in religious activity. The Vietnamese community in Sacramento has sizeable numbers of both Christians and Buddhists, and Bach Viet, a Vietnamese MAA, took advantage of these religious

ties by collaborating on a grant proposal with a local Christian church and Buddhist temple. The Vietnamese Association of Illinois and the Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago both hold celebrations recognizing religious holidays for Vietnamese and Ethiopians, even though there is religious pluralism in those communities and even though they serve other immigrant populations besides Vietnamese and Ethiopians. Their religious rituals affirm and celebrate ethnic identity; they do not attempt to convert refugees as some sponsoring church congregations have done in the past

In the MAA environment, religion and culture frequently were intertwined. For Bosnian refugees, Muslim identity can be a source of cultural identity as well. The genocide that caused the refugee migration was directed at Muslims because of their religion, so observing Muslim holidays is a way to construct Muslim identity as a shared experience among refugees, even those who are not Muslim. For example, when a Catholic Bosnian in Chicago woman was attacked outside her apartment building by a man who told her to "go home, Muslim," she refused to identify herself as a Catholic. She told the director of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian American Community Center, "I am a Bosnian Muslim – no one can tell me that I am not." She felt that identifying herself as a Muslim was a way of connecting to the Bosnian refugee community in Chicago, and she insisted on embracing that identification even though she did not share Muslim beliefs. For refugees that were interested in finding a local house of worship, Anna and Sandrine at Catholic Charities tried to connect them to a religious community that had members of the refugees' ethnic group as well. Anna and Sandrine found this especially useful for refugees without family in the U.S., as a religious and ethnic community could provide support that family otherwise would.

When MAAs observe religious holidays or rituals, they cannot do so with government money, and they certainly cannot incorporate such activities in resettlement services. But because their primary mandate is to build an immigrant community, MAAs tend to seek out diverse sources of funding, and they do not depend as much on the resettlement dollars from the federal government. I think a major reason why faith-based volags do not seek private funding for religious activities is because they focus on resettlement and not on building an immigrant community.

Despite the similarities in faith-based and secular volag practices, one thing faith-based volags do more than secular volags is development relationships with local religious institutions. All of the faith-based volags in my sample received some assistance from local churches or synagogues, either in the form of monetary donations or in-kind donations of furniture and other household goods necessary to set up an apartment for newly-arrived refugees. For the most part, these relationships tended to be co-religious; Catholic volags maintained relationships only with Catholic parishes, Jewish volags only with synagogues, Protestant volags only with Protestant churches. Faith-based volags kept their ties with religious institutions co-religious as a professional courtesy to other faith-based volags; they did not want to interfere with other volags' donation sources. The exception to this rule was in Chicago, where there were many more inter-religious relationships between volags and religious institutions. But Chicago is a unique case; the resettlement system in that city is much more integrated than the other cities in my sample, with more dense organizational networks[7]. But for all the faith-based volags in my

[7] Many directors of resettlement NGOs in Chicago told me that their city's resettlement system was unique, due to the leadership of the State of Illinois Department of Health and Human Services director. The directors encouraged me to speak to him about how he designed Illinois' resettlement system, which I plan to do.

sample, the ties to religious institutions and NGOs were support ties; encouraging refugees to attend religious services or engage in particular religious practices were prohibited.

Staff at faith-based volags did frequently talk about religious doctrine that called them to this work, constructing refugee resettlement as divinely mandated. Essentially, they described an "ethic of refuge" that drew upon the beliefs and practices of their organization's unique religious affiliation but yet was open to other religions. Expressing a religious ethic for resettlement, while undoubtedly sincere, also served some essential organizational purposes. First, it allowed the NGOs to stay true to their religious mission without being overtly religious in their practices. In other words, the NGO could be a Jewish or Christian organization without encouraging or requiring the refugees it served to be Jewish or Christian. Secondly, it created room for the faith-based NGOs to be open to all religions, so that the religious beliefs of all their refugee clients were respected, and various religious institutions could be rallied in support of those refugees.

While faith-based resettlement NGOs may not be any more religious than secular NGOs in their practices (Nawyn Forthcoming), they do express their religiosity through organizational rhetoric and networks. Faith-based NGO staff are acutely aware of government limitations on their religious activities, but they still view their work within a framework of religious faith. Deborah from World Relief in Sacramento told me, "I think it's a faith, you know, it's connected to your faith. You know, as a government contracted organization, you know, we can't go out and do religious activities per se. So we don't make any effort to proselytize, but I think it impacts our attitude." Roger at Catholic Charities expressed it this way: "we serve refugees not because they are Catholic, but because we are." I describe in more detail the religious rhetoric used by faith-based resettlement NGOs, and how it is mobilized in the service of refugees. Also, I show how the religious rhetoric of faith-based resettlement NGOs intermingles with the secular

rhetoric of international human rights discourse to form a cohesive "ethic of refuge" that NGO staff use to justify their work. This ethic of refuge comprises the ethical and moral language used to justify the admittance of and social welfare assistance extended to refugees, what Ruben Rumbaut (1989) called the structure of refuge. Finally, I explore the ways in which refugee resettlement and assistance NGOs use this ethic of refuge to serve and advocate for refugees.

Religious Doctrine and Judeo-Christian Values

All of the faith-based resettlement NGOs in the United States are affiliated with Judaism or Christianity. Thus, there are many common doctrinal elements to the religious rhetoric of faith-based NGOs. The basic themes within the ethic of refuge are; 1) extending hospitality, 2) the Divine's concern for refugees, 3) themes of refugeehood in religious history, 4) service to those in need, and 5) the sanctity of human life (regardless of nationality or other social position). The religious rhetoric of Jewish and Christian resettlement NGOs reflect these basic themes. For example, Regina at Exodus World Service, a faith-based support agency in Chicago, stated, "we felt that there was a faith-based mandate that we had, as Christians, to walk with the stranger, and that that was something that the Christian community wasn't doing to the degree that we wanted to see it engaged in that type of service." She felt there was a mandate for Christians to show hospitality, or "walk with the stranger," and in order to provide that opportunity to Christians she co-founded World Exodus. Regina gave the title "New Neighbor Program" to their one-on-one mentoring program in order to reflect the ethic of "loving one's neighbor" that she felt was an important part of Christianity.

Shane at Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Ministries spoke of a "biblical imperative to feed the hungry or to help a stranger." He stated that "Christ was a refugee. He was a refugee as an early child fleeing from the Middle East to Africa," so therefore it was important part of the

Christian faith to welcome refugees. Beth at Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society connected hospitality to the Jewish faith, saying, "the Jewish dimension [to our services] is helping people realize that America is a place that welcomes all." Judith at Jewish Children and Family Services also felt that the Jewish faith including a mandate to help others, saying it is "the Jewish way of life to help, to help people and helping those who are helping captives… a lot of Jewish religion speaks about helping people who need help."

Some faith-based staff also emphasized equality when discussing the importance of helping refugees. Caroline at Opening Doors (which was affiliated with several Protestant volags and local churches) quoted scripture in her explanation of her personal convictions about assisting refugees. She said, "Well, in terms of me, personally, in the first chapter of Genesis, God said, 'Let us make man in his image.' He didn't put any 'let us make white, upper middle class, man in his image.' You know, he didn't fit any qualifications on that… and I take that very seriously." Resettlement staff not only use equality rhetoric to support their work, but to educate the public about refugees, specifically using equality as a synonym for similarity. In their educational programs and written materials, resettlement staff promote the notion that refugees are "just like you," thus minimizing the sense that native-born Americans might have that refugees are an Other. By arguing that refugees are the same as everyone else, resettlement staff attempt to increase empathy for refugees and make it more difficult to deny refugees assistance.

Connecting Judeo-Christian Values to Other World Religions

Although all the faith-based resettlement NGOs in my study were either Jewish or Christian[8], the staff at these NGOs sometimes spoke of religious values in terms of all world religions, or attempted to connect the Judeo-Christian religious values of their organization with

[8] One support agency, the U.S. Bahá'í Refugee Office, was affiliated with the Bahá'í religion. This was the only non-Jewish or Christian faith-based NGO in my study.

non-Christian or Jewish faiths. Caroline at Opening Doors in Sacramento stated, "We have on staff two people who are more or less Buddhist, one very explicitly so, and in Buddhism they talk about Buddha nature, that everything, every sentient being, has Buddha nature, you know. And so again you recognize the Buddha nature [when you help refugees]." Beth at Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society stated that "one of the most moving things that we've ever done is at Ramadan, providing food baskets for the celebration for Ramadan," and she related this service to Muslim refugees to her responsibility as a Jewish person not to "shut her eyes to the world" when terrible things happen to other people. Shane at Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Ministries gave an explanation of his NGOs name change from "Interchurch" to "Interfaith" that illustrates the point of rhetoric that spans different religious orientations:

> The first things that I realized was that while our links are to the mainline protestants… many of the supporters and other houses of faith that work with us to help refugees resettle may not be strictly Christian. We have people of the Jewish persuasion or Buddhist persuasion that might work with us. Certainly the people with whom we work, those whom we are privileged to serve, by and large are not Christian. They are Buddhists, most certainly Muslim, and a hand full of others.

Shane expressed an interfaith ethic of refuge, saying "I think any of the good faiths of the world; all of the world's faiths preach the idea of helping our neighbor. The so called golden rule is to treat your neighbor as you wish to be treated yourself." It is not just Interfaith's networks of resources that span religions; Shane's rhetoric about refugee assistance bridges different religions as well. Resettlement staff who used interfaith language to talk about their work did so to create a sense of inclusiveness with their refugee clients. From 2000-2003, six of the 10 largest nationality groups came from predominantly Muslim countries (Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovinia, Iran, Liberia, Somalia, and Sudan). During those same years, over 10,000 refugees arrived from predominantly Buddhist Vietnam, and the arrival of Hmong refugees during 2004-2005 brought in even more non-Christian and non-Jewish refugees. When I asked staff at Jewish

and Christian resettlement NGOs about how their organization's religious affiliation effected their work, they frequently cited preponderance of non-Christian, non-Jewish refugees they resettled. Maintaining an interfaith ethic of refuge enabled resettlement staff to use Judeo-Christian ethics without excluding their refugee clients. Also, interfaith language created room for building relationships with potential supporters from non-Christian and non-Jewish organizations. Shared ethical concerns provide points of similarities that facilitate organizational collaborations.

Secular Human Rights Rhetoric

Both secular and faith-based staff frequently used secular human rights discourse when explaining the ethics of their work. While this discourse has roots in various religious traditions, the absence of explicit religious reference reflects the influence of the international human rights discourse that emerged particularly post-World War II during the formation of the United Nations (Dacyl 1996; Redman and Whalen 1998). Secular resettlement NGO staff most frequently expressed the ethic of refuge in terms of increasing the number of new refugees admitted to the U.S. Refugee admissions and human rights have been intertwined from the beginning. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, created in 1948, responded directly to the non-admission policy directed at German Jews, Roma, and other refugee groups fleeing Nazi persecution in the 1930s (Kjærum 2002). Thus, an interest in human rights and a desire for increased refugee admissions go hand in hand. Katya at International Rescue Committee in Los Angeles, referring to the total number of new refugee arrivals, told me that "what you see here for the entire county is what our agency alone used to resettle." Senada at Catholic Charities was also concerned about refugees trying to enter the U.S., saying, "there are about 15 million refugees all over the world. And you know, they are waiting to enter third country." Beth at

Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society in Chicago used this illustration to express her frustrations about the sharp decrease in refugee admissions following September 2001:

> Now you have to think about Wrigley Field… think about the fact that Wrigley Field holds more people than all the refugees that were allowed into the United States. There are 13 million refugees in the world and sorrowfully we let in 22,000.

Like many other resettlement staff, Joshua at the International Institute in Los Angeles felt that increasing new refugee admissions was the most important thing to change about the current resettlement system in the United States:

> The thing I would change the most is getting people out of harms way, getting more people who we've authorized to come here… that's most urgent because people are sitting there. Just yesterday I got a press release from our national office describing what has happened to refugees in Africa. They were [stuck in refugee] camps and some 150 of them were killed.

Every resettlement NGO director I spoke with thought that the current number of admissions was too low, and many considered low admissions as the top problem in the resettlement system. Increasing the number of refugee brought safely to the U.S. was the clearest example of human rights rhetoric in the ethic of refuge.

Secular resettlement NGO staff also expressed the ethic of refuge in terms of giving voice to disenfranchised refugees. Hoa from the Vietnamese Association of Illinois described her organization's advocacy program that trained native-born volunteers "to use their voices to speak up on behalf of refugees because refugees are impacted by policies over which they have no control." Jasmine at the Bosnian and Herzegovinian American Community Center concurred that an important task for her organization was to "speak for people who cannot speak."

The rhetoric of faith-based NGO staff is often similar to the rhetoric of secular NGO staff. Understandably, people working in refugee resettlement tend to value the rights of refugees over state sovereignty, whether they are working in a faith-based or secular setting. Staff at secular NGOs differ from staff at faith-based NGOs in that they draw upon the secular rhetoric

of human rights rather than religious doctrine or scripture. But the words and ideas they use are similar to those invoked by faith-based staff. Secular NGO staff frequently talked about the humanity of refugees, placing the importance of human life above the interests of government. Lan at Center for Asian and Pacific Islanders stated, "the government is suppose to be helping people. They have a basic obligation [to help people] regardless of their [immigration] status." Kelly, who volunteered with refugees at Heartland Alliance, felt that her personal experience with refugees made them seem like real humans rather than "a bunch of statistics, or numbers," and that once you realize that refugees are real humans with needs, "you can't ignore them." And Shane at Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Ministries expressed the importance of hospitality in more secular terms:

> It is our job to ensure that if nothing else as concerned citizens of the United States that we do ensure that our country continue to welcome the hungry, the down trodden, that we do still stand as the shining beacon of hope for these people wherever they may be because believe me, one of the few things that they ever have left of them is hope.

Both faith-based and secular resettlement staff feel extreme frustration with the small number of refugees admitted to the United States, relative to the number of people currently in refugee camps. As Joshua noted, many of these camps have poor security and minimal health resources, making the camps themselves almost or just as dangerous as the situations from which people fled. People working on resettlement want more refugees to enter the United States, and are less concerned about state sovereignty than saving the lives of refugees. Therefore, human rights rhetoric, drawing upon either religious or secular principles, comprises a central component to the ethic of refuge.

Advancing the rights of human beings over the rights of states became much more important for resettlement NGOs after September 11, 2001. In the months immediately following the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, refugee admissions were halted. Refugees

who had already been approved for admission were denied access and their cases were re-evaluated under the new security restrictions overseen by the Department of Homeland Security. Even after the U.S. government began admitting refugees again, they entered a political climate that was more hostile. Many resettlement NGOs that had not conducted advocacy activities before September 11 started public education campaigns and outreach efforts to schools, churches, and businesses to advocate for refugee rights. The International Rescue Committee in Los Angeles started a speaker's bureau to educate people in the local community about refugees, because as their director Katya explained, "some people mix refugees with illegals." Katya could more easily justify the right of refugees to be in the U.S., whereas it is more difficult to argue that the state does not have the right to control undocumented immigration. Resettlement NGO staff also need to rhetorically separate refugees from terrorists, as Shirley at Lutheran Social Services described:

> I mean I think part of it was just making sure people understood that refugees were not terrorists and you had to go out and say that quite a few times; that these are people who have been waiting to come here, they are victims of terrorism themselves.

Because resettlement NGOs administer federal welfare programs, they serve as agents of the state. However, when it comes to the rights of people to cross national borders in order to achieve safety, resettlement staff are deeply invested in the ethics of human rights.

Melding the Sacred with the Profane

The ethical rhetoric of secular and faith-based resettlement NGOs intertwine to form a cohesive "ethic of refuge." NGOs use the ethic of refuge as a bridge between secular and faith-based organizations, creating a common language, common set of interests, and common agenda between them. This allows faith-based NGOs to collaborate with secular NGOs in ways that may not occur outside of refugee resettlement. As Demeke from the Ethiopian Community

Association of Chicago put it, “if our needs coincides with their interests, we work with them.” Peter at the U.S. Bahá’í Refugee Office stated that:

> Basically at one time or another, if there is a human rights organization or an organization which works for the same type of principles that the Bahá’ís have, which are the elimination of prejudice, the equality of men and women… if there’s an organization that holds those principles, at one time or another our organization… probably worked with that organization.

The U.S. Bahá’í Refugee Office used the common ground of human rights to collaborate on a project with Amnesty International, a secular human rights organization, in which the two organizations worked on the United Nations’ Convention to End Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

The similarities between religious and secular rhetoric is what make it possible to understand the two as part of a cohesive ethic of refuge. But it is the interaction between faith-based and secular NGOs that creates a unified ethic. The ethic of refuge provides a universal language with which different types of NGOs can communicate with each other, forming collaborative relationships around their shared principles and goals. It is how Bach-Viet, a secular mutual assistance association, can collaborate on a Healthy Marriages program for refugees with a Christian Church and a Buddhist Temple in Sacramento. It is how Opening Doors and Lutheran Social Services, both faith-based volags, can collaborate on projects with secular MAAs. Their shared goals, expressed in either religious or secular rhetoric, allow faith-based and secular resettlement NGOs to form overlapping organizational networks. As Harold of Sacramento Employment and Training Agency put it, in regards to collaborations “there is nothing mandated. It is more of a, ‘we’ll all benefit from doing this together.’” Every city in my sample had a coalition organization of refugee service providers that meant at least once a month, with the shared discussions providing more basis for a similarity in rhetorical strategy.

And by working together on refugee resettlement, the rhetorical strategies of faith-based and secular NGOs continued to develop in overlapping language, further reifying the ethic of refuge.

Using Religious Rhetoric to Mobilize Religious Networks

Faith-based and secular resettlement staff invoke similar language when describing the ethic of refuge, but differences likely exist in how powerfully each discourse mobilizes resources. Faith-based staff use their religious ethic of refuge to motivate members of the Christian or Jewish communities to help refugees, whereas it is unclear how useful a secular ethic of refuge is for mobilizing individuals outside a faith community. Faith-based and secular NGOs in my sample used volunteers about equally. The real divergence may be in how easy or difficult it is to recruit both volunteers and material resources[9]. For faith-based NGOs, common religious values between an NGO and a faith community facilitate recruitment of volunteer labor and in-kind donations. Beth at Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society used her networks with synagogues in Chicago to mobilize a wealth of resources for refugees:

> Synagogues have been involved in giving space to us to run citizenship classes, they have been involved in celebrations of new citizens, they have been involved in welcoming new refugees to communities… when refugees from Kosovo came, synagogues were very active in actually going to airports and meeting Kosovo refugees and bringing them baskets and donating food and shelter and support and friendship.

Sveta at Jewish Family Services also sought assistance from synagogues in Sacramento. When organizing a Jewish cultural event, she said, "I ask them for community hall… [and] they gave me this big room and it was very nice. Just because they are affiliated with us." One of Jason's primary responsibilities at World Relief is to lead outreach and recruitment at churches in the Minneapolis area, and he used a religious ethic of refuge to speak with church members. He

[9] Religious or secular affiliation is not the only factor in volunteer recruitment. NGOs' use of volunteers is also affected by the need for volunteers. NGOs with very small numbers of new refugee arrivals, particularly those resettling predominantly family reunification cases, have fewer need for volunteers.

rarely had the opportunity to address an entire congregation, but found that speaking to smaller groups within the church, like a youth group, proved successful :

> We had a youth group this last winter that helped a family from Sudan. What they did is they went back to their parents and said, "Here are these people that need furniture and household goods," and they collected it.

Stella at St. Anselm's Cross Cultural Center employs the ethic of refuge to gain assistance from local churches sharing St. Anselm's affiliation with the national volags Church World Service, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, and Episcopal Migration Ministries. Stella provides reports about the work they do to these national volags, who in turn send updates to their affiliate churches. The churches in turn contact Stella about donating to St. Anselm's.

It was common among faith-based resettlement NGOs to use the ecclesiastical structure of denominations and the faith-based national volags to tap resource networks. These ecclesiastical structures are not available to secular NGOs. Joshua at the International Institute explains that "we [resettlement NGO directors] just kind of have agreed that the Jewish community will seek support from Jewish or from temples and the Catholics will seek support from the Catholic churches, etc. So we don't recruit faith-based groups to avoid stepping on toes of other organizations." It was more common for secular volags to have collaborative relationships with faith-based NGOs rather than religious institutions like churches, mosques, or synagogues. Faith-based NGOs, on the other hand, had access to networks with both secular NGOs and houses of worship, which gave them expanded capabilities of mobilizing resources compared to secular NGOs.

Faith-based NGOs employ scriptures supporting a divine mandate to assist refugees. The World Relief national office in Baltimore, Maryland makes scriptural mandates explicit in their organizational literature. Their website states that "God makes it clear that He takes extraordinary interest in refugees and He expects His people to do the same." Specific Biblical

scriptures are cited as proof that God loves refugees (Proverbs 31:8-9 and Deuteronomy 10:16-19), that God will bless those that help refugees (Hebrews 6:10, Proverbs 28:27, and Deuteronomy 24:19-21) and refuse to answer the prayers of people who turn their backs on refugees (Proverbs 21:13)[10]. Exodus World Service, the faith-based support agency in Chicago, focuses entirely on recruiting volunteers and in-kind donations from area churches. Exodus World Service also cites scripture as part of their volunteer mobilization. The manual for their New Neighbor Program (connecting church members to refugees for one-on-one mentoring and relationship building) cites Deuteronomy 10:19 ("*Love the sojourner therefore: for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt*") and Matthew 25:34-35 ("*Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world… for I was a stranger and you welcomed me*"), among others. Cited scriptures focus on showing hospitality to strangers, and in several places the manual identifies Jesus as a refugee. Such invocations of religious teachings (and especially to a religious teacher as a refugee) undoubtedly provides faith-based NGOs with a powerful tool to mobilize resources.

The religious rhetoric and accompanying networks of faith-based volags give them an audience and potential pool of resources to which secular volags and MAAs do not have access. Michael at International Institute of Minnesota believed that recruiting volunteers was easier for faith-based NGOs than for secular agencies like his, saying, "the churches have the whole ecclesiastical structure that they appeal to, we don't use that method." Secular NGOs tended to recruit volunteers and donations from area universities, and some operated joint programs with local colleges and universities, like the Bosnian and Herzegovinian American Community Center in Chicago did with Loyola University. But faith-based NGOs could also take advantage of these

[10] The web address for this page as of this writing is:
http://www.wr.org/getinvolved/volunteer/usministries/godlovesrefugees.asp

networks. Additionally, it is also possible that the secular rhetoric of human rights is not as powerful a motivating tool as religious rhetoric. When I asked secular NGO staff how they obtained private donations, most admitted they received very few donations, and those NGOs that successfully acquired donations usually enlisted refugee ethnic communities. But former refugees who have only recently resettled themselves cannot provide many resources for newly arrived refugees, so these networks do not provide the amount of resources to secular NGOs as religious networks provide to faith-based NGOs[11].

Faith-based and secular resource networks shared one striking similarity; most resource mobilization (as well as advocacy on behalf of refugees) occurred through national institutional networks. When Caroline at Opening Doors needed material donations, she did not go directly to local congregations; rather, she worked through the denominational structure of member churches associated with her national volag affiliates, Church World Service and Lutheran Refugee and Immigration Services. Similarly, Katya at International Rescue Committee in Los Angeles leaves private fundraising to the national IRC office, rather than taking on that task within her local organization. While there is some grassroots organizing of volunteers and collecting donations from congregations, much of the contact between local faith-based resettlement NGOs and individual congregations initiates through regional or national offices. This is analogous to findings by Kurtz and Fulton (Kurtz and Fulton 2002) and Olson (Olson 2002) that mainline Protestant activism frequently occurs with national offices. This is also affirms, at least in part, Skocpol's (Skocpol 2003) thesis that professionalized NGOs commonly

[11] Resettlement NGOs with access to a long-settled refugee community or relatively affluent refugees (generally Eastern European) were able to raise significant funds from this community. The Bosnian and Herzegovinian American Community Center and Catholic Charities in Los Angeles (with strong ties to the Vietnamese community in Los Angeles and Orange Counties) held fundraising events within their respective refugee communities. However, local NGOs rarely organized fundraising events among refugees.

engage in political activity, shifting responsibility for civic engagement from local communities to national offices. However, faith-based networks differ from secular networks in that local congregations still provide a readily-available grassroots audience for public education and resource mobilization. Faith-based refugee organizations clearly address these audiences with their religious rhetoric, and based on my interviews with faith-based NGO staff, those audiences are responding.

Conclusions

These findings indicate a relationship between faith-based groups and the state that is unique to refugee resettlement. While other faith-based NGOs doing social service provision have more distant relationships with the government, those doing refugee resettlement have closer relationships than secular MAAs. This is due to the way refugee resettlement has developed in the U.S., and the way faith-based organizations formed relationships with the government to help resettle refugees early on. Also, it reflects the division between volags (which focus on resettlement more narrowly) and MAAs (which focus on a more broad conception of immigrant community). The MAAs have more latitude in their mandate, and while economic self-sufficiency is an important goal of resettlement, they see their role as helping refugees adapt culturally as well as financially. This latitude allows them to incorporate religious activities into their programming, as religion is often a component of immigrant culture. Although faith-based resettlement NGOs are prohibited from spending federal dollars on religious activities, they still operate as religious organizations through their rhetoric and networks. In the literature that they publish and the language their staff uses, faith-based resettlement NGOs explicitly express their religiosity. Whether Jewish, Catholic, or Protestant, faith-based resettlement NGO staff draw upon the (not exclusively) Judeo-Christian values of

showing hospitality to the stranger, assisting those in need, and valuing human life over state's rights to justify the importance of their work. The literature that faith-based NGOs publish describes God's calling to His people to provide aid and comfort to refugees. And faith-based NGOs invoke images of Jewish suffering or Jesus' status as a refugee to encourage Jews and Christians to assist in the resettlement effort. Faith-based NGO staff sometimes attempt to describe the ethical principles underlying resettlement in interfaith language, connecting to ethics in other world religions. Interfaith language may be expressed in generic terms that lose their specific religious quality, faith-based NGO staff use interfaith language to construct a sense of inclusiveness to all refugees and to other refugee organizations, regardless of religious affiliation. Finally, all resettlement NGO staff use human rights rhetoric to argue for increased refugee admissions and assistance.

There are many similarities between religious and secular rhetoric in refugee resettlement. Both rhetorical strategies connect to the concept of international human rights, which values the rights of people above the rights of states. My study only looks at a cross-section in time of these two types of rhetoric, so I cannot determine with certainty how they each developed over time within resettlement work. However, my data clearly show that resettlement staff use the similarities between religious and secular rhetoric to build organizational networks across religious or secular affiliations. My data demonstrated that resettlement NGOs, like other service providing agencies, do compete for scarce resources. However, resettlement staff described more collaboration than competition, using the similarity in the ethical principles and goals underlying their work to building relationships with other resettlement agencies regardless of religious or secular affiliation.

I anticipated that religious rhetoric would serve as a more powerful tool in accessing human and material resources, and I did find some support for that. However, the fact that faith-based resettlement NGOs were able to access more resources through their organizational networks was confounded by their affiliation with a particular religion. In other words, it might not be the power of religious rhetoric to mobilize resources, but rather the mere access to those resources through a religious affiliation. I suspect that affiliation and rhetoric go hand in hand. While a Jewish resettlement NGO may have access to synagogues that can provide meeting space and furniture donations, the NGO must first mobilize the members of the synagogue to provide those resources, and that mobilization occurs through a rhetoric that entices the synagogue members to act.

Organizational affiliations also make it difficult to know the usefulness of an interfaith ethic of refuge. Faith-based NGOs avoid crossing religious boundaries to access resources, as they do not want to encroach on another organization's funding stream. Secular NGOs also generally avoid accessing resources from religious institutions for the same reason. Therefore, while an interfaith ethic of refuge may make it possible for faith-based NGOs from different religions to communicate, or for faith-based NGOs to collaborate with secular NGOs, it is impossible to know how effective an interfaith ethic of refuge is for mobilizing resources from a broad donor audience.

Perhaps the real power of an interfaith ethic of refuge lies in its capacity to educate the public about the situation of refugees and to advocate for increased admissions, more services, and to elicit more compassion for refugees. While the secular rhetoric of human rights has long been a part of refugee assistance and resettlement, religious rhetoric contains the emphasis on human rights but adds doctrinal mandates of compassion and caring for refugees and a divine

calling to serve refugees. Yet faith-based resettlement staff use religious language that is not exclusive to Christianity or Judaism; rather, it has a generic quality that weaves together similarities across different faiths. The similarities in religious rhetoric across different religious traditions make an interfaith ethic of refuge appealing to people from diverse religious backgrounds, and many faith-based resettlement NGOs in my study used an interfaith ethic of refuge in their advocacy efforts. Unfortunately, I do not have data on how effective those advocacy efforts were. However, I expect that such language could be an effective tool in a political climate in which politicians frequently interweave vaguely Judeo-Christian language with patriotic imagery[12]. One could speculate that in a time of increased religious language and references to the divine, using an interfaith ethic of refuge to advocate for refugees would be a more effective strategy than trying to appeal to the public in secular terms alone.

[12] For a timely example of this language, read President George W. Bush's March 1, 2005 address to the Compassion in Action Leadership Conference (available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/03/20050301-4.html).

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FIGURE 1. The Institutional Context of Refugee Resettlement

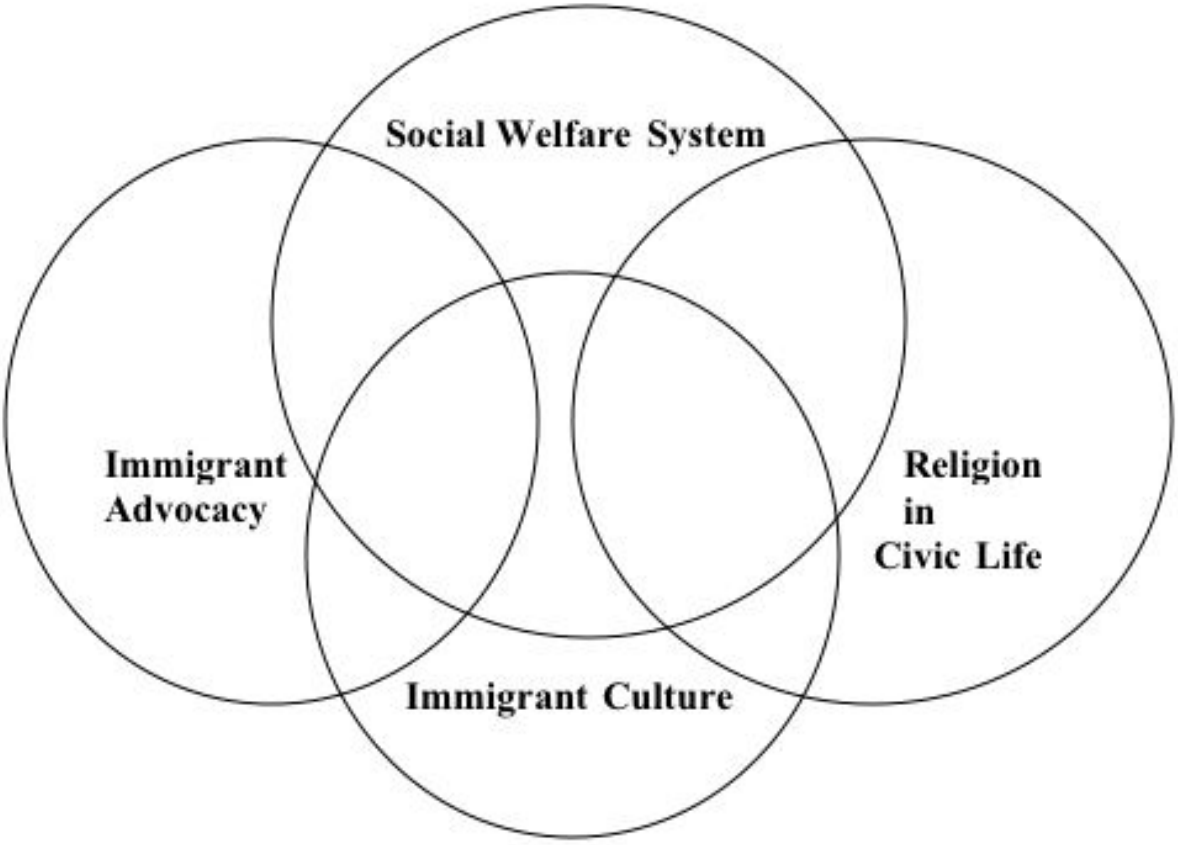

FIGURE 2. Refugee Admissions by Metropolitan Area, 1987-2001

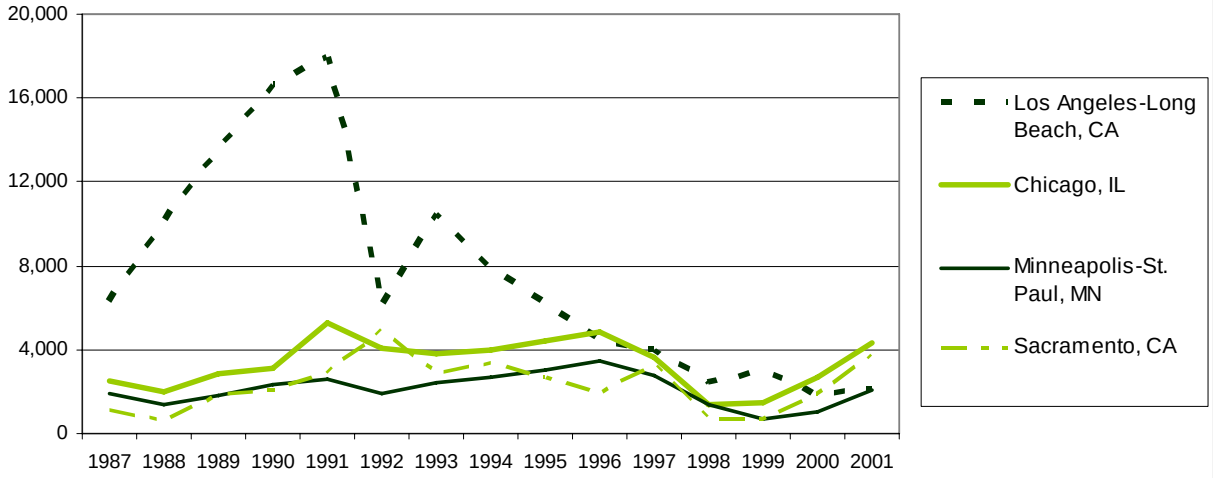

TABLE 1. Refugee Resettlement Agencies in Chicago		
Name of Organization	**Affiliation**	**Type of Organization**
Bahá'í Refugee Office of the United States	Bahá'í	Support
Bosnian Herzegovinian American Community Center	Secular	MAA (resettlement)
Cambodian Association of Illinois	Secular	MAA (non-resettlement)
Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement Program	Catholic	Volag
Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago	Secular	MAA (resettlement)
Exodus World Service	Mainline Protestant	Support
Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights	Secular	Volag
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society of Chicago	Jewish	Volag
Interfaith Refugee & Immigration Ministries	Mainline Protestant	Volag
Vietnamese Association of Illinois	Secular	MAA (resettlement)

TABLE 2. Refugee Resettlement Agencies in Los Angeles		
Name of Organization	**Affiliation**	**Type of Organization**
African Community Resource Center	Secular	MAA (resettlement)
Armenian Evangelical Social Services Center	Evangelical	Support
Catholic Charities Immigration and Refugee Services	Catholic	Volag
International Institute	Secular	Volag
International Rescue Committee	Secular	Volag
Jewish Family Service	Jewish	Volag
Program for Torture Victims	Secular	Support
St. Anselm's Cross Cultural Center	Mainline Protestant	Volag
United Cambodian Community	Secular	MAA (non-resettlement)
World Relief Southern California	Evangelical	Volag

TABLE 3. Refugee Resettlement Agencies in Minneapolis/St. Paul		
Name of Organization	**Affiliation**	**Type of Organization**
Center for Asians and Pacific Islanders	Secular	MAA (non-resettlement)
Hmong Cultural Center	Secular	Support
International Institute of Minnesota	Secular	Volag
Jewish Family and Children Services	Jewish	Volag
Lao Assistance Center of Minnesota	Secular	MAA (non-resettlement)
Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota	Mainline Protestant	Volag
Catholic Charities Migration and Refugee Services	Catholic	Volag
Minnesota Council of Churches	Mainline Protestant	Volag
World Relief Minnesota	Evangelical	Volag

TABLE 4. Refugee Resettlement Agencies in Sacramento		
Name of Organization	**Affiliation**	**Type of Organization**
Bach-Viet Association, Inc.	Secular	MAA (non-resettlement)
International Rescue Committee	Secular	Volag
Jewish Family Service	Jewish	Volag
Opening Doors	Mainline Protestant	Volag
Sacramento Lao Family Community	Secular	MAA (non-resettlement)
Sacramento Employment and Training Agency	Government	Government
World Relief Sacramento	Evangelical	Volag