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Who Volunteers at Refugee and Immigrant Nonprofits? Results from Two Studies

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Abstract: Refugee and immigrant nonprofit organizations rely on their volunteers to carry out services that are critical for supporting their mission. The primary aim of this paper is to explore the types of volunteers who support refugee and immigrant nonprofits. We report findings from two independent, but complementary studies. Study 1 examined the individuals who formally volunteered before and during the COVID-19 pandemic at refugee and immigrant nonprofit organizations. In our analysis, we employed a logistic regression to understand to what extent volunteering at refugee and immigrant organizations is associated with demographic characteristics, religiosity, political views, and civic engagement. We compare volunteers assisting refugees and immigrants to volunteers serving other causes and all individuals who volunteer in the US. In Study 2, we aimed to know individuals volunteering for refugees and immigrants more deeply and conducted 15 in-depth semi-structured interviews with volunteers who supported Afghan evacuees between August 2021 and August 2022 through a refugee resettlement organization or a community sponsorship group. Findings from Study 1 indicate that volunteers supporting refugees and immigrants are more likely to be part-time workers, born outside of the US, are more liberal in their political views, and are more likely to be religious than volunteers who serve other organizations. Results from Study 2 show that volunteers were not new to volunteering for refugee and immigrant causes, were often motivated by personal or family experiences with migration or displacement and were affiliated with a congregation or synagogue. Volunteers showed that they went beyond traditional resettlement support that focused on

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providing immediate needs and were also active in political advocacy for refugees and immigrants. We conclude by providing exploratory insight into the individuals that support refugee and immigrant nonprofits and we offer practice implications relating to sustaining this unique group of volunteers.

Keywords: nonprofits; refugees and immigrants; volunteering; Afghan resettlement

1 Introduction

Nonprofit organizations (NPOs) are an important facet of civic life in US society as they provide critical infrastructure for enhancing civic engagement and directly supporting individuals and communities (Urban Institute 2021). In the United States, social care for refugees and immigrants is primarily the province of nonprofits. Although the US government sets policies and, at times, funding for services for specific migrant groups such as refugees, asylees, and unaccompanied minors, they do not provide direct care (Halpern 2008). NPOs may also advocate for policies related to migration or provide social services to marginalized migrant groups, including refugees, asylum seekers, or undocumented immigrants (Garkisch, Heidingdfelder, and Beckmannn 2017; Mason and Fiocco 2016; Shields, Drolet, and Valenzuela 2016). Many NPOs serving refugee and immigrant populations rely heavily on volunteers, particularly for carrying out support services and facilitating the integration of newcomers (Erickson 2012; Fratzke and Dorst 2019; Lorenzana 2022; McCallum 2018). However, little is known about the volunteers that support and sustain the NPOs providing care for refugee and immigrant populations and causes.

Our research explores the types of volunteers that assist refugees and immigrants in the US. We report findings from two independent yet complementary studies. Study 1 utilized data from the research project *Generosity Trends and Impacts: Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic in the USA*, which examined volunteering, donations, and prosocial behaviors before and during the COVID-19 pandemic (Cnaan et al. 2022). This study was carried out in April 2022 and we subset the sample to individuals that reported volunteering before or during the pandemic. We explore the differences between individuals that volunteered in refugee and immigrant domains relative to volunteers who engaged in other nonprofit domains. Since the questionnaire was not earmarked to focus solely on volunteering with refugees and immigrants, the results drawn from our subset of interest are not generalizable to a specific population such as the US. We address this issue in two complementary ways. First, we treat the results from Study 1 as initial, exploratory insight into unique individual-level characteristics of volunteers at refugee and immigrant NPOs. These findings call on future research to expand on our results.

Second, we pair these conclusions with a separate, but related qualitative study that gained in-depth insight into a group of volunteers working with Afghan newcomers through a refugee resettlement organization or a community sponsorship group between August 2021 and August 2022. We conducted semi-structured interviews between February 2022 and August 2022 and elicited new insights about this group of volunteers. Collectively, the findings from both studies create foundational explorations of who volunteers with refugees and immigrants through NPOs whose mission is to help these newcomers in the United States. Specifically, we address the following questions:

1.1 Study 1

What demographic characteristics are associated with formal volunteering at refugee and immigrant nonprofit organizations?

To what extent is religiosity associated with formal volunteering at refugee and immigrant nonprofit organizations?

To what extent do liberal political views and being civically engaged explain volunteering at refugee and immigrant nonprofit organizations?

1.2 Study 2

What role does inclusive citizenship, social solidarity, and social justice play in volunteers' engagement with refugee and immigrant causes?

How are volunteers motivated to support the resettlement and integration of new refugee and immigrant groups?

How do volunteers stay engaged in refugee and immigrant volunteering?

Our study addresses an important gap in the literature regarding who volunteers at refugee and immigrant NPOs. By exploring volunteers' individual-level characteristics (Study 1) and their motivations and perceptions about their volunteering (Study 2), we offer an initial picture of the volunteers supporting refugee and immigrant causes in the US context. Specifically, Study 1 offers descriptive insight into the individuals who volunteered for refugees and immigrants before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, while Study 2 provides a deeper understanding of how individuals are attracted to this line of volunteering, including their perceptions of citizenship and social justice, their motivations, and what kept them engaged in volunteering. We find that for our data, refugee and immigrant NPOs and their volunteers may hold unique characteristics and motivations, which is critical for understanding how volunteers engage with this type of volunteering and what

sustains them. Finally, we provide an understanding of these volunteers in the context of political activism and social solidarity as an important part of these volunteers' identity.

The following section outlines the literature on the role of the voluntary sector in helping refugees and immigrants and the literature on volunteerism with refugee and immigrant populations. We then present our methods and the findings from both studies. In the discussion and conclusion section, we connect our findings with the previous literature on volunteering with refugee and immigrant populations and propose implications for practice. Lastly, we provide suggestions for future research on volunteering at refugee and immigrant NPOs.

2 Background and Significance

2.1 The Role of the Voluntary Sector in Migration and Refugee Support

For many years, refugee and immigrant NPOs and the volunteers that support their mission have played a critical role in addressing the needs of immigrant groups, particularly the most marginalized migrant groups, including refugees, asylum seekers, and undocumented immigrants (De Graauw 2008; Garkisch, Heidingdfelder, and Beckmannn 2017; Mason and Fiocco 2016). Unlike most Western democracies, in the United States, the government does not directly provide refugee resettlement support and delegates this task to NPOs (Halpern 2008). In the receiving host communities, public perception of refugees and immigrants can range from ambivalence or hostility due to perceptions of scarcity in employment and resources, contributing to xenophobia and social exclusion in the host society, to more inclusive and positive perceptions of immigrants as contributing to the social and economic well-being of society and valuing social and cultural diversity (Esses, Brochu, and Dickson 2012). NPOs serving refugee and immigrant groups operate within these different political and social environments when delivering services to newcomers (Bloemraad, Chaudhary, and Gleeson 2022). NPOs often play a dual role of political advocacy for the refugee and immigrant communities they serve and as providers of direct services (Kende et al. 2017; Libal, Felten, and Harding 2019).

Volunteers assisting refugees and immigrants may support the integration and inclusion of newcomers through social welfare provision or promote immigration as a public and social value (Fehsenfeld and Levinsen 2019; Lorenzana 2022). In various institutional, collective, and individual activities, volunteers may also support newcomers by providing legal assistance or participating in political advocacy

efforts (Kende et al. 2017; Langford 2022; Van der Leun and Bouter 2015). Refugee resettlement agencies often utilize volunteers to support the resettlement needs of new refugees, such as asking volunteers to teach ESL classes, set up an apartment for a new refugee arrival, or provide transportation to medical appointments (Yarris, Garcia-Millan, and Schmidt-Murillo 2020). Volunteers have played a more significant role in refugee resettlement initiatives in recent years. After the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, the US Department of State implemented the Sponsor Circle Program for Afghans in October 2021. Thousands of private sponsors (volunteers) supported the arrival of Afghan evacuees (US Department of State 2022). Uniting for Ukraine (U4U) was also initiated to assist Ukrainians seeking protection after the Russian invasion of Ukraine and requires sponsors to support Ukrainians with financial assistance and other basic needs (US Citizenship and Immigration Services 2023). In response to growing calls to implement a formal, comprehensive private sponsorship program for refugee resettlement, the United States formally instituted the Welcome Corps Program in January 2023. Welcome Corps allows groups of US citizens or lawful permanent residents to sponsor the resettlement of new refugees to the US (US Department of State 2023). To carry out the Welcome Corps initiative, a cadre of committed volunteers is required to fulfill refugee resettlement needs (Prantl 2023).

Volunteering with refugees and immigrants is a unique type of volunteering (Meijeren, Lubbers, and Scheepers 2023b). These newcomers have a wide range of needs that must be addressed in a very short period. For instance, they need to quickly find employment, housing, and services for their family members (from school to children to navigating a complex health system). They also need to acquire a command of the English language and the ability to commute in a country with minimal public transportation (Potocky and Naseh 2020). Working with this population requires many interactions with immigrant and refugee families, accepting their frustrations, encouraging them, and sympathizing with their plight to survive (Lau and Rodgers 2021). Such commitment takes significant time and dedication from the volunteers (Kende et al. 2017).

Volunteers have offered various forms of support to new groups settling in the US, as government services often do not support the basic needs of refugees and migrants based on the type of immigration status they hold (Gomez and Meraz 2021). For example, in the US, those with a Temporary Protected Status and Asylum Seekers are ineligible for social benefits and Asylum Seekers are not allowed to work for the first six months after submitting their asylum application (Fix and Haskins 2012). Asylum Seekers (individuals seeking humanitarian protection after arriving to the US) are often considered the most vulnerable, as many need to rely on the help of family, friends, community members, non-profits, or religious congregations to support their basic needs (Workie, Hinkle, and Heredia 2022). In the era of

international migration and increasing forced migration, refugees and immigrants often face insufficient infrastructure for reception and integration in host country contexts (Karakayali and Kleist 2016). Volunteers fill important gaps in services not provided by the US government and, thus, become a force of integration and acting inclusive citizenship and social solidarity (Schwiertz and Schwenken 2023). Volunteer work for refugees and immigrants also reveals the political side of this type of volunteering, including discussions on how inequality and exclusion shape the lives of refugees and immigrants (Fleischmann and Steinhilper 2017). These individuals volunteer their time to support marginalized groups of refugees and immigrants in US society, which leads to questions on what distinguishes volunteers serving refugees and immigrants from other volunteers. Although volunteering is multi-faceted and often includes both individual characteristics and perceptions of society and societal needs (Bekkers 2005; Chambre 2020), understanding what distinguishes refugee and immigrant volunteers from other volunteers would provide invaluable insight into how volunteering sustains support for refugee and immigrant populations, adding to the emerging theoretical and empirical knowledge of this type of volunteering.

Volunteers assisting refugees and immigrants are a specific sub-group of volunteers. Currently, limited literature aims to understand the individuals who participate in this type of volunteering, particularly in the US context. However, extensive literature exists that describes why people volunteer, what motivates individuals to volunteer, why volunteers choose to pursue specific volunteer tasks, and why they persist (Bekkers, De Vries, and Tummers 2016; Clary, Snyder, and Stukas 1996; Clary et al. 1998; Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen 1991; Wilson and Musick 1997). For instance, while people of higher socioeconomic status are more likely to volunteer (Musick and Wilson 2008; Smith 1994), people with different demographic characteristics vary in their tendencies to what sector they volunteer in (Musick and Wilson 2008; Wilson 2000; Wilson 2012). Other empirical studies have focused on the psychological dimensions influencing volunteer behaviors, suggesting that volunteers fulfill psychological and pragmatic functions through their involvement, including self-esteem, social connection, reciprocity, or other self-oriented motivations that emphasize the individual benefits gained from volunteering (Clary et al. 1998; Cuskelly, Kappalides, and Hoye 2019; Hoye and Kappelides 2021). Other contextual factors that may impact someone's decision to volunteer include the organization's prestige, an invitation from friends, workplace or school expectations, media coverage, and the political climate (Baer et al. 2016; Enjolras 2021). Support for a specific volunteer cause may also include a personal connection to the organization and the cause. MacNeela (2008) found that personal relevance (a personal link to the organization) may help explain the longevity of service to the organization as the perception of having benefited from the services of an organization facilitates a

perceived obligation. Furthermore, political worldviews and life experiences may also lead people to volunteer in different organizations. People who were injured or sick may wish to volunteer to assist health organizations. Similarly, people who believe in equality and human rights are more likely to volunteer with human rights NPOs (Vantilborgh et al. 2011).

The studies that have focused on the volunteers assisting refugees have offered some theoretical and empirical insight into explaining volunteer behaviors and motivations (Kals and Strubel 2017; Jiranek et al. 2013; Meijeren, Lubbers, and Scheepers 2023b; Yarris, Garcia-Millan, and Schmidt-Murillo 2020). Volunteers who support refugees have a broader and more inclusive scope of justice (Kals and Strubel 2017) and often value social justice and show concern for those perceived as outsiders or not considered part of the national intergroup (Meijeren, Lubbers, and Scheepers 2023b). Although volunteer motivations are complex, as people can be drawn due to varying motivations and factors, perceptions about social justice and equality may be a defining characteristic of refugee volunteering, and this function of volunteering has often been overlooked. Jiranek et al. (2013) found support for including the social justice function in understanding volunteer motivations and suggested that the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) developed by Clary et al. (1998) is limited as it mainly includes self-oriented motivations to volunteer. However, other-oriented dimensions of volunteering, including social justice or perceived political and social responsibility, may explain motivations that reflect deeply held values of serving marginalized groups and supporting equality. In addition, equality promotion is conceptually distinct from similar constructs, such as empathy-induced altruism and prosocial motivations, as they have different goals. Empathy-induced altruism is a helping motivation for whom empathy is felt, and equality promotion to maintain a moral principle (Batson et al. 1995). Meijeren, Lubbers, and Scheepers (2023b) also found support for utilizing the social justice function for the VFI, as individuals who volunteered for refugees often valued social justice, an important facet of this type of volunteering. Perceived collective responsibility for promoting the well-being of members of the group and community and emphasizing taking care of the needs and interests of marginalized members in society may be an important and distinguishing aspect of refugee and immigrant volunteers' identity that is different from other volunteers (Kende et al. 2017).

2.2 Key Contributions

Few studies have focused on volunteering at NPOs serving refugees and immigrants, particularly in the US context. The studies that do exist primarily focus on the European context (Boersma et al. 2019; Jones and Williamson 2014; Meijeren,

Lubbers, and Scheepers 2023a; Meijeren, Lubbers, and Scheepers 2023b; Meyer and Simsa 2018; Vandevoordt 2017; Van Der Veer 2022). These mostly European-based studies suggest that volunteers helping refugees and immigrants are, on average, of higher educational level and higher subjective health, are motivated by humanitarian concerns, hold communal liberal worldviews, and seek meaningful roles in life. One characteristic of volunteering with refugees and immigrants uniquely in the US is their religiosity. Volunteer initiatives are often facilitated or carried out by members of faith communities or through community groups or individual volunteers (Libal, Felten, and Harding 2019). Historically, religious congregations played a significant role in refugee resettlement, and some were active in the Sanctuary Movement throughout the 1980s, which aimed to protect the rights of Central American Asylum Seekers and stop their deportation by the US government (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2011; Gonzalez 2020; Panter-Brick 2020). Interestingly, a significant proportion of the literature on volunteerism and immigrant populations primarily focuses on immigrants as volunteers (Ambrosini and Artero 2023; Greenspan, Walk, and Handy 2018; Handy and Greenspan 2009; Sveen et al. 2023; Wang and Handy 2014). These studies suggest that volunteering by refugees and immigrants facilitates social and economic integration, especially when the volunteering is outside one's ethnic enclave.

Surprisingly, little is known about the group of volunteers who are the backbone of serving refugees and immigrants in US society. Our two complementary studies provide more information about the volunteers who assist refugees and immigrants. We first present an exploratory quantitative study on volunteering before and during the pandemic, which looked at individual-level characteristics of refugee and immigrant volunteers. We then present a qualitative study on volunteers who helped resettle the Afghan evacuees during the pandemic.

3 Study 1: Study of Volunteering Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic

3.1 Methods

The first study, commissioned by the Generosity Commission (Giving USA), draws on primary data from a nationally representative survey of 2538 US adults fielded online between April 1 and April 18, 2022. Respondents were randomly recruited through SSRS's probability-based panel. The administered survey aimed to understand participants' volunteer and donation behaviors before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Respondents were asked a variety of multiple-choice questions in

addition to confirming pre-recorded information based on panel records. Survey questions were developed by the research team with input from leading scholars, the most relevant questions are described below. A copy of the survey is available upon request. The partnering firm performed survey administration and quality control measures, and the final responses were weighted in calibration with important demographic dimensions, including national sex, age, and religion distributions. Appendix A holds further information on sampling procedures, questionnaire administration, and data weighting.

For this study, we focus on formal volunteering and examine the individuals who volunteered for refugee and immigrant NPOs before and during the pandemic compared to other individuals who volunteered in the US. A total of 1,033 individuals from the original dataset responded that they performed “unpaid activities (except maybe for expenses)" for an organization either before or during the pandemic. This collection of 1,033 people represent the sample of our research. We note that subsetting the original dataset to our sample of interest removes the ability of our findings to be generalizable. As such, we treat this section as an exploratory analysis that presents descriptive findings and motivates our second study. Within our subset, 37 respondents said that during at least one period, they performed these unpaid activities for “immigrant/refugee assistance organizations.” For this question, respondents could also select “other” and write additional organization types that they felt our survey question had missed. We reviewed all responses and recoded open-ended answers as appropriate.

A guiding question for the first analysis revolved around the personal attributes of individuals who volunteered for refugee and immigrant NPOs, including demographic characteristics, political views, civic engagement, and religiosity. Our dependent variable was the binary indicator for whether a volunteering individual engaged in activities at refugee and immigrant nonprofits. We had a robust list of independent covariates. The respondents’ demographic information was derived from pre-recorded information from the survey panel. We considered the variables of age, gender (male or female), marital status (married or not), education (greater than high school diploma or not), and race/ethnicity (White non-Hispanic, Black non-Hispanic, Hispanic, other). Additionally, socioeconomic variables were collected. One socioeconomic factor was their employment status comprised of full-time, part-time, not employed (i.e. temporarily unemployed or not employed), and other (i.e. homemakers, retired, and students). The second socioeconomic variable considered was a factor of household annual income (less than $50,000 per year, between $50,000 to $100,000 per year, and more than $100,000 per year).

We also considered several other attributes to curate a full picture of survey respondents. Specifically, respondents were asked about birth status (born in the US

or not). To increase the accuracy of this question, it was acknowledged that this question might be sensitive for some survey-takers and that all responses would remain anonymous. We also recorded their political views using a Likert-type scale (very conservative, somewhat conservative, moderate, somewhat liberal, and very liberal) and operationalized civic engagement through the variable of voter registration (registered to vote or not). Lastly, we looked at individuals' religiosity and religious attendance. Religiosity was presented in a Likert-type scale using a ten-point sliding range where 0 indicated that religion had no impact on their daily actions and 10 indicated that all actions were influenced by their religion. Religious attendance was a record of how frequently they attend a place of worship (weekly, monthly, or less than one month).

The first study explored how individuals who volunteer for refugee and immigrant NPOs differed from volunteers who donated their time to other organizations within our dataset. Our analysis relied on logistic regression and an increasing collection of robust covariates to uncover important facets of respondent identities and behaviors. A total of 37 individuals reported involvement with refugee and immigrant nonprofits, while an additional 996 respondents were involved in other types of NPOs. Due to the small number of observations that reported volunteering in refugee or immigrant organizations (3.5 %), we implemented a bias adjustment for rare events within our regression. Results from the analysis elucidate the demographic, socioeconomic, political, civic, and religious dimensions in which these two types of volunteers differ for our data.

3.2 Findings

Table 1 displays summary statistics for our entire sample in addition to separate views for those who formally volunteered with refugee and immigrant nonprofits and individuals who formally volunteered at nonprofits serving other causes. We focused on the distinction between refugee and immigrant volunteers (column 2) and people who did not volunteer with this type of organization (column 3). Within our data, refugee and immigrant organization volunteers were more likely to be born outside of the US, with about 29.7 % reporting that they were not born in the US, compared to only 9.4 % of the other volunteers. They reported higher religiosity (6.1 compared to 5.6) and were more likely to attend religious services on a weekly basis (24.2 % compared to 19.7 %). Refugee and immigrant volunteers were younger on average (44.9 years old compared to 48.9) but more likely to be married (56.8 % vs. 51.6 %) and have a higher level of education. Additionally, individuals who identified as Hispanic comprised almost 30 % of the refugee and immigrant volunteers, which was much higher than other volunteers (13 %). Refugee and immigrant volunteers

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of variables by volunteer behavior.

Variables	All volunteers (*n* = 1,033)	Refugee and immigrant volunteers (*n* = 37)	Non-refugee and immigrant volunteers (*n* = 996)
Age average (SD)	48.8 (18.5)	44.9 (19.6)	48.9 (18.5)
Gender			
Male	47.8 %	48.6 %	47.8 %
Female	52.2 %	51.4 %	52.2 %
Marital status			
Married	51.8 %	56.8 %	51.6 %
Not married	48.2 %	43.2 %	48.4 %
Education			
HS diploma or less	28.9 %	18.9 %	29.3 %
Greater than HS diploma	71.1 %	81.1 %	70.7 %
Race/Ethnicity			
White non-hispanic	64.4 %	54.1 %	64.8 %
Black non-hispanic	13.6 %	13.5 %	13.7 %
Hispanic	13.7 %	29.7 %	13.2 %
Other non-hispanic	8.2 %	2.7 %	8.4 %
Employment status			
Full time	50.7 %	45.9 %	50.9 %
Part time	15.1 %	32.4 %	14.5 %
Other	23.5 %	16.2 %	23.8 %
Not employed	10.6 %	5.4 %	10.8 %
Household annual income			
Less than $50,000	37.1 %	35.1 %	37.1 %
$50,000 but less than $100,000	35.1 %	40.5 %	34.9 %
$100,000+	27.5 %	24.3 %	27.6 %
Birth status			
Born in US	89.8 %	70.3 %	90.6 %
Not born in US	10.2 %	29.7 %	9.4 %
Political views			
Very conservative	12.2 %	21.6 %	11.8 %
Somewhat conservative	22.1 %	10.8 %	22.5 %
Moderate	37.8 %	21.6 %	38.4 %

Table 1: (continued)

Variables	All volunteers (*n* = 1,033)	Refugee and immigrant volunteers (*n* = 37)	Non-refugee and immigrant volunteers (*n* = 996)
Somewhat liberal	16.9 %	27.0 %	16.6 %
Very liberal	10.5 %	18.9 %	10.1 %
Voter registration			
Registered	86.4 %	86.5 %	86.3 %
Not registered	13.6 %	13.5 %	13.7 %
Religiosity (scale 1–10) average (SD)	5.6 (3.8)	6.1 (3.9)	5.6 (3.7)
Religious attendance			
Less than once a month	47.9 %	40.5 %	48.2 %
Monthly	32.2 %	35.1 %	32.1 %
Weekly	19.8 %	24.3 %	19.7 %

Table 2: Results for logistic regression analysis with rare event adjustment.

	Model 1 (base)	Model 2 (+poli, soci)	Model 3 (+religion)
	Odds ratio (Std Err.)		
Age	0.938 (0.04)	0.944 (0.05)	0.936 (0.05)
Age squared	1.001 (0.00)	1.000 (0.00)	1.001 (0.00)
Gender (base = male)	0.930 (0.36)	1.071 (0.38)	0.930 (0.40)
Marital status (base = married)	0.637 (0.39)	0.655 (0.42)	0.663 (0.44)
Education (base = greater than HS)	0.551 (0.46)	0.537 (0.49)	0.547 (0.530
Race/Ethnicity (base = White non-hispanic)			
Black non-hispanic	1.300 (0.53)	1.091 (0.57)	0.748 (0.64)
Hispanic	2.539[b] (0.41)	1.696 (0.47)	1.383 (0.50)
Other non-hispanic	0.466 (1.04)	0.208 (1.10)	0.179 (1.11)
Employment status (base = full time)			
Part time	2.725[b] (0.41)	2.807[b] (0.44)	2.826[b] (0.45)
Other	0.926 (0.52)	0.987 (0.54)	0.770 (0.57)
Not employed	0.891 (0.79)	0.805 (0.83)	0.457 (1.11)

Table 2: (continued)

	Model 1 (base)	Model 2 (+poli, soci)	Model 3 (+religion)
		Odds ratio (Std Err.)	
Household annual income (base = less than $50,000)			
$50,000 but less than $100,000	1.228 (0.43)	1.112 (0.46)	1.137 (0.48)
$100,000+	0.985 (0.53)	0.894 (0.56)	0.804 (0.60)
Birth status (base = born in US)		6.946[a] (0.49)	8.013[a] (0.57)
Political views (base = moderate)			
Very conservative		3.757[b] (0.55)	2.961 (0.59)
Somewhat conservative		0.947 (0.64)	0.957 (0.65)
Somewhat liberal		3.448[b] (0.52)	3.512[b] (0.55)
Very liberal		3.478[b] (0.57)	4.135[b] (0.60)
Voter registration (base = not registered)		1.905 (0.59)	1.958 (0.62)
Religiosity			1.059 (0.06)
Religious attendance (base = less than once a month)			
Monthly			1.137 (0.46)
Weekly			1.353 (0.56)
N	1,033	1,033	1,033
AIC	326.27	310.29	294.85

[a]$p < 0.001$, [b]$p < 0.05$.

also had a higher proportion of part-time workers (32 % vs. 15). Being registered to vote was reported as a similar rate across groups.

Table 2 displays results from our logistic regression models with bias adjustments for rare events. The main results are presented in their odds ratio form. Model 1 included demographic characteristics, Model 2 additionally incorporated political views and civic engagement, and Model 3 incorporated all key independent variables (demographics, political views and civic engagement, and religiosity). Very few variables showed a significant difference, and this was especially the case regarding socio-demographic variables. Even the two religiosity variables were insignificant in these regression models. Of most interest, we see that holding a birth status from outside of the US was significantly positively related to working with refugee and immigrant nonprofits. Those with such a status held 6 to 8 times higher odds in being involved in these types of organizations, which was significant at the 0.001 level. Other relevant results showed that those with part-time employment status and those who held liberal political viewpoints had higher odds of being involved in refugee and immigrant nonprofits.

4 Study 2: In-Depth Study of Volunteers Who Supported Afghan Resettlement

After more than four decades of conflict in Afghanistan, Afghan displacement has accounted for one of the largest protracted refugee situations in the world. Prior to the US withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021, 6 million people were displaced outside of the country, and 3.5 people were internally displaced as a result of conflict, violence, persecution, and poverty (United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees 2023). Since the US withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Taliban control of the country in August 2021, 1.6 million people have fled the country and the US government evacuated and resettled over 76,000 Afghans across 46 states (Kessler 2022). Through Operation Allies Welcome, Afghans arriving to the US could access resettlement services and qualify for a humanitarian parole status. Humanitarian parole is a humanitarian protection status that allows individuals to live and work in the US but does not usually provide a pathway to permanent residency and citizenship (Urban Institute 2023). At the time, refugee resettlement organizations were understaffed and underprepared for many Afghan arrivals in need of resettlement support due to significant funding cuts made by the Trump administration in their effort to dismantle the federal refugee program (Darrow and Howsam 2020). Furthermore, their arrival coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic. Many resettlement agencies across the country mobilized volunteers to support Afghan evacuee resettlement (Libal and Harding 2021). In addition, the US Department of State launched the Sponsor Circle Program for Afghans, allowing community groups to sponsor Afghans for resettlement in the US under the Operation Allies Welcome program (US Department of State 2021). Our study focused on the people who volunteered to help these newcomers.

4.1 Methods

Along with the national quantitative study examining the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on refugee and immigrant organizations, we carried out a second study of 15 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with volunteers who supported the resettlement of Afghan evacuees through a refugee resettlement organization or a Sponsor Program Circle for Afghans. The data was collected between February 2022 and August 2022. Participants were recruited through Nationalities Service Center, a refugee resettlement agency located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and through snowball sampling. Six volunteers came from the refugee resettlement organization (Nationalities Service Center), and nine were part of a Sponsor Program Circle for

Afghans. Nationalities Service Center conducted outreach to their volunteers, and willing participants contacted the author directly by email. Other participants were recruited through the social networks of earlier interviewees. Volunteers who supported Afghan resettlement through a sponsorship circle were located in different US cities.

Prior to conducting the individual interviews, a questionnaire was developed to guide the interviews. The interviews lasted between 45 and 60 min and were conducted in English. All participants were above 18 years of age and volunteered with Afghan evacuees. The interviews were conducted via Zoom, recorded, and transcribed for data analysis. Volunteers provided verbal consent to participate in the study. Lastly, both studies were approved by the IRB of the authors' university. The qualitative analysis for this study relied on a thematic analysis of the collected data. Qualitative research is relevant for gaining in-depth insight into volunteers' motivations for supporting refugee and immigrant populations and causes, as it allows the interviewees to discuss their perceptions and experiences and facilitates inductive reasoning and a great understanding of concepts and processes (Braun and Clarke 2006). During the analysis phase, the researchers read and re-read the transcripts to become more familiar with the data. Then, initial codes were generated for data that was meaningful and important. The first author then searched for themes, interpreted the codes, and sorted them into overarching themes. Lastly, the analysis was transformed into an interpretable writing related to the research questions and literature review. The following sections present the findings of our generated themes.

4.2 Findings

The thematic analysis yielded three major themes regarding volunteer engagement, motivations, and perceptions about volunteering for refugee and immigrant populations and causes and is displayed in Table 3.

4.3 Volunteer Engagement and Commitment to Refugee and Immigrant Causes

Almost all volunteers interviewed for this study had previously volunteered or were already volunteering with refugees and immigrants before the US withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021. When Afghan evacuees arrived in the US, many volunteers contacted Nationalities Service Center asking what they could due to support Afghans in the Philadelphia area. Other volunteers (in Philadelphia and other US cities) were recruited due to their previous volunteer work with refugees. One of the

Table 3: Overview of themes.

Themes	Codes grouped into themes
Theme 1: *Volunteer Engagement and Commitment to Refugee and Immigrant Causes*	– Volunteers involved in Afghan resettlement had previously supported refugee and immigrant organizations and causes. – Volunteers were already well connected to organizations serving refugees and immigrants.
Theme 2: *Volunteer Motives: Personal Connections to the Cause*	– Personal or family history related to migration or forced displacement. – Religious congregation affiliation.
Theme 3: *Social Solidarity, Social Inclusion and Citizenship: Expanding Beyond the Traditional Volunteer Roles to Support Political Advocacy*	– Awareness of social justice issues impacting refugee and immigrant communities. – Supporting Afghan resettlement was not solely based on humanitarian needs, volunteers indicated the importance of supporting their right to stay in the US. – Afghan adjustment act (allows a pathway to permanent residency and citizenship for Afghans who received a humanitarian parole status).

resettlement agency volunteers stated that before supporting Afghan resettlement, he was supporting refugee and immigrant organizations since 2016. This volunteer stated that his involvement at Nationalities Service Center started in the early period of the Trump administration and its restrictive policies on immigration and refugee resettlement. This volunteer initially became involved for social justice reasons and has supported refugees since.

> *I was already a volunteer at NSC prior to the surge in Afghan refugees. I started volunteering in 2016 during the early part of the Trump administration and was recruited by colleagues associated with Take Action Philly which hosts talks about important policy issues.*

Another volunteer from a community sponsor circle in North Carolina stated that a refugee resettlement agency reached out to her directly due to her reputation as a committed volunteer in refugee resettlement and refugee advocacy efforts over the last several years. The resettlement agency asked if she could form a community sponsorship group to support the resettlement of an Afghan family. This volunteer played an important role in supporting the long-term needs of resettled refugees in her community. This volunteer stated:

> *So, Church World Service Durham reached out to me last August by email, and asked if I thought we would have capacity to help resettle the Afghans, and I responded that I was confident we could get a group together, and she instantly responded back. How many families can you take it?*

Some volunteers mentioned that the resettlement agency in Philadelphia (Nationalities Service Center) put out a call for help to their volunteers. One volunteer specifically stated:

> *NSC put out a call to their volunteer list saying hey we have a good problem which is that we have received an overwhelming amount of donations, and they couldn't stay afloat of just organizing, opening packages, sorting, and receiving. They were looking for someone to come in and take time to help them sort and organize donations.*

These volunteers were not necessarily volunteering for a particular refugee or immigrant group but for organizations committed to supporting refugees and immigrants in general. For instance, a volunteer had spent time volunteering with refugees from Afghanistan and Iraqi Kurdistan in a resettlement context and had been a committed volunteer since. This volunteer continued volunteering in resettlement for a year prior to supporting Afghans. As he noted: *"Previously, I spent close to a year working with Afghan refugees also people from Kurdistan Iraq."* Another volunteer noted: *"I had worked with HIAS PA [HIAS Pennsylvania] in the past in 2016. I was a part of a team that was helping to support a Syrian family."*

4.4 Volunteer Motives: Personal Connections to the Cause

The themes that emerged regarding motivation to work with Afghan evacuees centered around personal connection to immigration or forced displacement, and religiosity. Some of the volunteers were part of a religious congregation that sponsored Afghans. One volunteer stated he himself was a refugee, which motivated him to support other refugee causes. His Jewish identity and background was also an important factor in why he decided to help other refugee and immigrant groups. This volunteer was involved in refugee resettlement through the resettlement agency and a community sponsorship group.

> *I am a refugee myself. I was born in Romania and managed to escape to Italy, but for the next twenty years, I was stateless. So, I started off as a refugee and I have been moving to different countries since. I have empathy for people who move to a new country and especially people who have to move, who have to leave. Resettlement, in general, HIAS in general. It's also my Jewish background and culture. An important part of the reason why I wanted to help refugees and immigrants in general and refugees in particular.*

Another volunteer connected their Jewish identity to their support for refugees and immigrants. This volunteer stated: *It is because of my Jewish heritage and finding a safe harbor from all kinds of persecution.* In addition, a volunteer connected their Quaker beliefs with their motivation to support refugees and immigrants and stated: *My religious community is the Society of Friends. I am a Quaker, and a central tenet is that of God in very person.*

While few volunteers had experienced displacement, many of the volunteers stated that close family members had experienced forced displacement and motivated them to support refugee and immigrant organizations. For example, one female volunteer stated:

> *I am the daughter of a refugee. My dad came to New York when he was two years old, but he was born in a displaced persons camp in Germany after World War II. Kind of just recognizing you know, I am also here due to the generosity of those who came before me.*

Another volunteer echoed similar experiences with the student volunteers that she works with in a small university group that supports refugee causes. She said: "*So many students that join our group, many say yes. I am first generation, or my family had to flee.*" In addition to family connections to migration and displacement, one volunteer witnessed the impact of ICE raids on immigrants in her community. Witnessing the unjust treatment of immigrants in her community motivated her to volunteer at refugee and immigrant organizations. In her words:

> *I've cared about issues of immigration and refugees for a long time. First of all, my family came here, my great grandparents, fleeing persecution and war but for the grace of God, you know and what if our borders have been closed back then, they would have died so it feels very personal that way. I was living in New Mexico for the last eight years before moving here a couple years ago and it's in the middle of the Trump presidency and the ICE raids were getting really bad. I made a lot of connections in the Hispanic community there and working with people there. It was just awful it was tearing the community apart. My husband was a teacher and he had students whose mother had been deported, and they hadn't seen their mother, and you know and it was just really awful things you know people being taken at gunpoint in front of their kids.*

4.5 Social Solidarity, Social Inclusion and Citizenship: Expanding Beyond the Traditional Volunteer Roles to Support Political Advocacy

Many volunteers in our study were socially aware of issues of injustice and inequality relating to refugee and immigrant issues. This theme primarily focused on some of the roles they played in supporting Afghans through political advocacy. For the situation of Afghan evacuees, many volunteers stated that they were active in

varying civic engagement efforts to support the Afghan Adjustment Act. The Afghan Adjustment Act legislation allows Afghans who came to the US on humanitarian parole to adjust their status to become permanent residents, giving them a pathway to citizenship. One volunteer explained it:

> *Here we've been working with our representative trying to convince him to help sponsor the Afghan Refugee Adjustment Act and I went to a meeting yesterday with the Lutheran Services, about the Afghan Adjustment Act that's just been introduced into Congress so I'd sent out a letter this morning about how we might organize to support that.*

Another volunteer we interviewed recognized that categorizing Afghans as "temporary" forced migrants (humanitarian parolees) and not full refugees put Afghans in a vulnerable position. This volunteer also indicated the importance of the Afghan Adjustment Act in protecting Afghans from deportation.

> *The Afghan Adjustment Act is critical, because such a significant proportion of the people who came on in that evacuation are not classified as refugees. They're classified as humanitarian parolees, which means if somebody really needs to get out, we will rescue them. But at any moment that our government decides that the risk is no longer there, they can send them back.*

Another volunteer stated that they participated in political advocacy for the Afghan Adjustment Act. Specifically, this volunteer was meeting directly with their congressional representative to ask them to sponsor the legislation. In his words: *A few of us met with our representative on zoom to discuss supporting refugees and specifically asking him to sponsor the Afghan Adjustment Act.*

While many volunteers actively participated in advocacy work to promote the inclusion and integration of Afghan evacuees, other volunteers indicated that more could be done to provide adequate support for Afghans and refugees overall. One of the volunteers indicated that the US government was not doing enough for Afghans. In addition, they stated that the poor social safety net in the US has a negative impact on refugees and immigrants in the US as they do not have adequate support from government services.

> *I thought that the way that the US pulled out of Afghanistan was inhumane as it left behind many people. I also think that the government could be providing a lot more financial support for Afghans and refugees in general. We have a pretty poor social safety net here in the US so Afghans and refugees in general have inadequate support from the government.*

5 Discussion

The two complementary studies address an important gap in the nonprofit and volunteer literature. Specifically, the two studies offer an initial, exploratory view of the individual volunteers who support refugee and immigrant NPOs regarding their individual-level characteristics, motivations, and perceptions about volunteering for refugee and immigrant populations and causes. Regarding socio-demographic characteristics, there were almost no differences between the study volunteers and other volunteers. The only exception was that individuals who volunteered with refugee and immigrant NPOs were more likely to be part-time workers than other volunteers in the US. This finding aligns with the volunteer literature which suggests that part-time workers are more likely to volunteer in general, partly due to the reduced work hours and more time available to pursue volunteer roles (Wilson 2012; Wilson and Musick 2008).

In Study 1, volunteers at refugee and immigrant NPOs were more likely to be born outside the US – individuals who are either immigrants and not US citizens or immigrants who are naturalized US citizens are more likely to volunteer at refugee and immigrant NPOs. Our qualitative insights in Study 2 indicated that individuals were often motivated to volunteer due to their personal experience or family history with migration or displacement. These two findings aligned with the literature on personal relevance as a motivation to volunteer for a specific cause and is a more meaningful part of their volunteer identity and motivation to support this cause. In the volunteer literature, a personal connection to the organization and the cause it serves has been associated with positive initial perceptions of the organization, volunteer opportunities may arise from these personal links, and a stronger psychological contract between the volunteers and the organization they serve (McCallum 2018). For example, personal relevance may explain the longevity of volunteer service at an organization because the perception of being a former beneficiary of services at a nonprofit organization sets up a perceived obligation to support that cause (MacNeela 2008).

In the US, religious congregations have often served refugee and immigrant communities in various capacities, including social activism and providing basic needs (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2011; Langford 2022). However, our findings from Study 1 and Study 2 differed. In Study 2, many of the volunteers who supported Afghans were associated with a religious congregation that supported Afghan evacuees or held religious beliefs that motivated their volunteer work for refugees and immigrants. However, religiosity was not significant in our regression analysis in Study 1. We note the non-generalizability of our studies and call on future research to further explore the role of religiosity in explaining volunteering for refugee and immigrant

populations and causes. Specifically, the connection to religious identities, beliefs, and organizations in influencing volunteering for refugee and immigrant causes.

Study 1 showed that within our data, refugee and immigrant volunteers were more liberal in their political views. However, civic engagement was not significant in our regression analysis and refugee and immigrant volunteers had similar voter registration rates as other volunteers. We recognize that voter registration only captures a small facet of civic engagement, and other domains of civic engagement activities, including participating in political rallies, signing petitions, and canvassing, should be considered in future research examining the relationship between civic engagement and volunteering for refugee and immigrant NPOs. It is also important to note that if the volunteers at refugee and immigrant NPOs are more likely to be born outside of the US, a proportion of the volunteers may not be US citizens, and therefore, ineligible to vote. Therefore, we recognize that voter registration does not fully capture civic engagement among this volunteer population in Study 1 and is an important limitation. In Study 2, however, volunteers were actively involved in supporting the rights of refugees and immigrants in the US in various contexts and were involved in political advocacy for the Afghan Adjustment Act. These volunteers went beyond their main duties of providing Afghan evacuees their basic needs during the resettlement process and aimed to support their full integration into US society by advocating for legislation that would provide a pathway to citizenship and protect Afghans from deportation in the future.

Our qualitative data offered an important facet of volunteers' motivations and perceptions about their volunteer engagement. Social justice-minded volunteers are more likely to support refugees and immigrants and value equality between citizens and non-citizens, and those perceptions about social justice towards refugees are important motivations for volunteering (Kals and Strubel 2017). Social justice function for volunteering is distinct from other volunteer motivation constructs, such as altruism. While empathy-induce altruism focuses on helping someone from empathy that is felt, the social justice function perceives volunteering as a way to maintain a moral principle and promote equality through volunteering (Jiranek et al. 2013). Our findings suggest that volunteers helping refugees and immigrants may be more motivated by social justice, and refugee and immigrant NPOs should consider the importance of social justice for their volunteers and leverage civic engagement activities and political advocacy to sustain volunteering for refugee and immigrant communities. Refugee and immigrant NPOs may utilize their volunteers to write letters to their elected representatives, raise awareness about refugee experiences in their local community, or organize political campaigns focused on how immigration policies impact refugee and immigrant communities and what roles volunteers may play in supporting immigration policy change.

Lastly, our findings from Study 2 suggest that many refugee and immigrant volunteers are habitual volunteers. They are committed to the cause and volunteered

years before for the same or similar organizations and causes. This finding suggests that the pool of relevant volunteers is limited. Relying on the same pool of volunteers is a risk for the relevant NPOs. They should be cognizant of this reality and work to expand the number and sources of volunteers.

6 Limitations

By integrating two complementary studies focused on the individuals who volunteered for refugee and immigrant NPOs, we were able to gain exploratory insight into the individuals volunteering for refugees and immigrants from two different approaches. Study 1 allowed us to understand individual-level characteristics associated with this specific form of volunteering and our interview data from Study 2 provided an in-depth understanding of their motivations and perceptions about their volunteer work. However, the small sample of individuals who volunteered for refugee and immigrant nonprofits in both studies means that our findings cannot be considered generalizable, and we recommend that more research is needed to better understand the types of volunteers that support and sustain refugee and immigrant NPOs. In addition, Study 1 takes an exploratory approach to the data analysis and we mainly present descriptive findings to help us better understand how volunteers may differ in regard to their individual-level characteristics when compared to other types of volunteering. Due to the lack of representativeness in our sample, our findings cannot state how and to what extent these characteristics are relevant for specific populations beyond our data. In addition, our qualitative data reflects a participants' insights and experiences in a temporal context (volunteering to support Afghan resettlement) and does not represent all refugee and immigrant volunteers. Therefore, we suggest that the findings and conclusions made here should be taken with great care and consideration.

Future research on this topic should draw from our findings to further assess the factors that bring individuals to volunteer for refugee and immigrant NPOs. Specifically, we recommend that more research is needed that focuses on how volunteering at refugee and immigrant NPOs may change over time. For example, whether the types of volunteers supporting refugee and immigrant NPOs change when there is an emergency need for support services or when changes to refugee resettlement funding and services impact volunteering. These suggestions would provide additional insight for volunteering for refugees and immigrants during times of crises and uncertainty in support services. We also recognize that our two studies only examine formal volunteering (volunteering through an organization) and informal volunteering is left out of the analysis. Future research on volunteering for refugee and immigrant populations should include those who volunteer informally and to

what extent these types of volunteers differ from those who formally volunteer with refugees and immigrants.

7 Conclusions

Our findings explored how volunteers who support refugees and immigrants are different from other volunteers in the US. The two studies presented here address the limited research on the individual volunteers that support refugee and immigrant NPOs in the US context. While volunteering is often complex and multi-faceted, our findings suggest that the individuals who support refugee and immigrant NPOs may be unique regarding their motivations and worldviews. Refugee and immigrant NPOs and their volunteers are critical for supporting refugee and immigrant communities in the US. By understanding the volunteers who support refugee and immigrant causes, NPOs may better sustain volunteer engagement. In addition, engaging the local community in which refugees and immigrants reside can help alleviate the burden placed on newcomers to integrate into US society, in which there is insufficient infrastructure for support services, and help them adjust to their new situation. Volunteers in the local community can fill in important gaps in support services and help rebuild refugees' and immigrants' social support systems. Lastly, as migration crises are likely to emerge in the coming years and decades due to conflict, war, persecution, and climate change, it is critical that the organizations serving refugees and immigrants be able to navigate impending challenges that may impact their ability to sustain volunteering for marginalized refugee and immigrant populations in the US.

Appendix A

Introduction

The research team partnered with the firm SSRS to collect and process the data used in this paper. Survey administration was performed April 1 through April 18, 2022, and the final sample consisted of 2,538 U.S. adults. Information in this appendix details the sample and questionnaire design, survey administration, and quality control measures.

Sample Design

Respondents were reached through SSRS's opinion panel, a probability-based web panel comprised of a nationally representative group of individuals. Members were recruited for this survey through either mailed invitations sent to randomly sampled addresses or dual-frame random digit dialing. The SSRS Omnibus survey platform assisted in this sampling procedure.

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was developed by the research team. A list of questions was created then sent out to top researchers in the fields of volunteering, philanthropy, and third sector research. After incorporating their feedback, collaboration was held with SSRS to determine question formats and programming. SSRS held 11 pretest cognitive interviews to ensure feasibility of the survey. Feedback from these interviews was made available to the researchers and necessary changes were made. The final survey was programmed in Confirmit Computer Assisted Web Interviewing and extensive checking was performed to ensure correct skip patterns and sample splits were in place.

Survey Administration

Respondents were incentivized with an electronic gift card of $5 value for this 10 min survey. Pretest interviews were conducted March 24th through 28th. This was followed by a soft launch of the survey on April 1st with subsequent email invitations and reminders. The survey closed on March 18th, 2022.

Response Rate/Cooperation Rate

5,858 panelists were invited to take this survey and 2,538 completed it. A total of 68 respondents took the survey in Spanish.

Quality Control

The following processes were included to ensure the highest quality of data.

– Pre-administration testing of survey to check skip patterns.

– Data cleaning for out of range values, errors in data fields, insufficient time-to-completion, failed quality control questions.

Weighting Procedures

Weighting was used to compensate for patterns of non-response. The aim of weighting was to ensure the demographics of the respondents matched the U.S. population. Weighting was performed by SSRS and was comprised of three major steps: 1) base wages; 2) non-internet adjustment; and 3) calibration to population. Further information on weighting procedures is available upon request.

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