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Refugee Integration Opportunity Structures: shifting the focus from refugees to context

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Abstract

Whilst it is increasingly acknowledged that integration is “a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents”, the focus in integration theory, policy and practice has been placed upon refugees or migrants themselves. The role of receiving societies in supporting and providing the context for integration has not been systematically interrogated. This paper is original in its focus upon the role of receiving societies in shaping refugee integration outcomes. It attends to multiple interconnecting receiving society opportunity structures shifting thinking about refugee integration by asking how refugee receiving countries influence refugee integration. Introducing five sets of host society opportunity structures: locality, discourse, relations, structure and initiatives and support the paper highlights the impossibility of understanding integration outcomes using the uni-dimensional models that have largely dominated thinking to date. Instead a two-dimensional integration model is proposed which will allow for more nuanced understanding of integration processes and how they occur at different levels. The paper ends by outlining some ideas around how migration scholars to shift their focus from refugee characteristics to understanding better the influence of host society opportunity structures.

Keywords: Refugees, integration, context, opportunity structures

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Introduction

The words of European Commissioner Avramopoulos highlight the critical importance of integration for the European Union ‘Our migration and asylum policies will only succeed if the integration of migrants ultimately is successful too’. The question of how to integrate refugees into Europe has to some extent replaced the language of crisis which dominated the continent, indeed much of the Global North (wealthier, more developed nations), during the so-called refugee crisis of 2015-2016. The conceptualisation of the events of 2015-16 as a “refugee crisis” has been widely problematized – as a crisis of humanitarianism, of poverty and of European identity (Pace and Severance 2016). Furthermore, experience of “crisis” differed markedly across the globe with nations such as the UK and Canada, with their cold-water geographies, barely affected but with others such as Italy and Greece having to rapidly mobilise resources to house the thousands of men, women and children who arrived almost overnight. Nonetheless there is no doubt that the events of 2015-2016 were unprecedented for a number of countries. The scale of forced displacement reached its highest level since records began with 65.6 million people forcibly displaced by 2017 of whom 22.5 million were refugees, 10 million stateless and 189,300 resettled (in 2016) (UNHCR 2018). While the main refugee hosting countries are those bordering conflict zones and are outside of the Global North, concerns

about refugee integration have been expressed loudest in Europe and the Americas which host 17% and 16% of the population of displaced people respectively.

Although many consider the “crisis” to be over, displacement continues apace albeit with fewer people able to reach Europe and the US. The issue of refugee integration has probably never been more important but as I will show in this paper much thinking about integration has focused on the responsibilities or the outcomes of refugees with insufficient attention on the ways in which receiving society contexts shape refugee integration opportunities. In this paper I introduce the idea of refugee integration opportunity structures arguing for the need to develop a new approach to thinking about integration. I begin by describing the state of knowledge around integration in the Global North before introducing five refugee integration opportunity structures: locality, discourse, relations, structure and initiatives and support. Having set out the parameters of the proposed opportunity structures I outline some approaches that may enable migration researchers to focus to undertake research to aid understanding of the importance of opportunity structures. Finally, I call for policymakers to realign their attention on the ways that established communities influence integration opportunities for newcomers.

Research on integration in the Global North

Intellectual and policy debate around migrant integration has been ongoing since the 1930s, but more recently interest has focused on refugees as a specific category of migrant. Particularly post-1990s refugees have differed markedly from majority populations, with efforts to distinguish refugees whose asylum claim is recognised, from those classified as migrating for economic reasons. The former are entitled to state protection and in some case special measures to support their integration while often the latter receive much less support. Despite the long-standing interest in integration of new arrivals there is still no agreement about what exactly constitutes successful integration (Castles et al 2002). The term integration has been described as poly-semantic, with its adaptable nature one of the reasons it has been so widely changed and adopted (Abdou & Geddes 2017). Different definitions concern various degrees of specificity around which factors matter when thinking about integration. These have evolved over time from incorporation into “a common cultural life” (Park & Burgess, 1921, p. 735), to inclusion into social systems such as labour markets (Esser 2004), to social integration through inclusion and acceptance (Heckman 2006). Building on this evolution (Penninx & Garcés-Masareñas, 2016: 11) provide a broad definition that refers to integration as a process “*The term integration refers to the process of settlement, interaction with the host society, and social change that follows immigration*”.

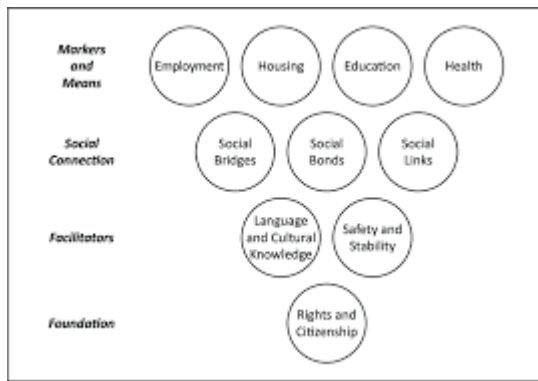
As far back as the 1950s attention has been drawn to the role that so-called receiving society has in facilitating integration. Fichter (1957) outlines the importance of relations of interaction between multiple parties highlighting the importance of reciprocity. In policy terms it is increasingly acknowledged that integration is “*a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents*” (European Commission 2004) but in reality the focus of policy and practice when devising integration strategies, interventions and measurements is upon support for migrants to become integrated and to measure success in terms of outcomes in areas such as employment or education. While many scholars do refer to the importance of accounting for all actors in integration theory, empirical attention is generally placed upon refugees or migrants themselves. Other than noting the importance of mutual adaptation, the role and impact of host societies in supporting and providing the context for integration has not been widely interrogated especially in ways that account for the multidimensionality of integration processes.

In this paper I argue that we need to move thinking about refugee integration beyond the focus on refugees as individuals or as groups by asking how do refugee receiving countries influence refugee integration? What opportunity structures shape refugee integration outcomes? How might we develop research programmes that take account of these opportunity structures and how they interact? These questions respond to the need to develop a better understanding of multi-dimensional and interacting integration processes to develop new theory around the role of receiving societies that can inform social policy development and practice. While integration is important with reference to all kinds of migration I focus herein upon refugees because the forced nature of their migration and impossibility of return means they face particular challenges despite sometimes having access to state integration programmes and support.

The body of knowledge around integration has emerged from several disciplines largely focusing upon migrants but using this broad term to include refugees. Work from social-psychology tends to focus on acculturation. Acculturation refers to processes of social, psychological and cultural changes emerging from exposure to other cultures. Acculturation models tend to look at the extent to which migrants adapt to local cultural and sociological contexts whilst retaining aspects of their original culture. This combination of adaptation and retention is argued to lead to the best psychological outcomes for migrants and is described by Berry as integration (1997). Sociological interest emerged in highly racialised US society and largely focused upon the settlement patterns of white European newcomers omitting consideration of racism and discrimination (see Park 1930). Qualitative sociology underpinned by ethnographic methods has attended largely to individuals' senses of identity and belonging and how these play out over time (ie Warner & Srole 1945). Much attention has recently been given to the social networks and social capital possessed by migrants and the role of these in adaptation (i.e. Phillimore 2012; Ryan 2008). Quantitative sociology has extensively explored labour market outcomes over time and across generations with one strand of research using social stratification theory (Heath & Li 2017). Economists have considered wage parity as equating to integration (see Gove 2017; Martinelli 2014). These approaches tend to examine outcomes in just one integration dimension.

A stream of work combining sociology, social-psychology and social policy has focused upon the multi-dimensionality of integration processes. The refugee integration indicators framework developed by Ager and Strang (2004; 2008) for the UK's Home Office has been widely utilised across Europe (Valenta & Bunar 2010), North America (Eby et al. 2011), Australia (Spaaj 2012) and even China (Chen & Wang 2015) to measure integration outcomes (see Figure 1). This framework identifies a series of integration domains: *“achievement and access across the sectors of employment, housing, education and health; assumptions and practice regarding citizenship and rights; processes of social connection within and between groups within the community; and structural barriers to such connection related to language, culture and the local environment”* (Ager & Strang 2008: 166). The domains are presented together to offer an analytical framework for the analysis of refugees' normative integration outcomes.

Figure 1: Refugee integration indicators (Ager and Strang 2008)



These domains, and subsequent attempts to capture multi-dimensionality (ie Grzymala-Kazłowska 2016; Spencer and Charlsley 2016; Penninx and Garcés-Mascreñas 2016) and to account for aspects of belonging at the same time as more functional domains (Ryan 2018) all emphasise migrant or refugee integration outcomes at an individual or group level, taking less account of the social, political or economic context in which individuals or groups integrate. Some studies do focus on the local, however rarely

taking account of the effect of that locality on integration. Crul and Schneider (2009) strongly emphasise the importance of local context using data on second generation immigrants to show how civic participation and immigrant belonging was shaped by institutional arrangements such as housing, religion and legislation proposing a comparative integration context theory to help account for differences between locales.

In England policy has redirected attention from national policy to local strategy based on the argument that integration happens within communities (DHCLG 2018) and in the context of austerity measures. This move reflects the so-called “local turn” (Emilson 2015) in integration studies observed by scholars such as Scholten and Penninx (2016) and connects the local with national policy interventions to consider multi-level integration governance. Yet proposals for measurement of integration outcomes in the domains Ager and Strang (2008) use to construct their framework, tend to focus on the extent to which migrant communities mix, the educational attainment or employment levels of migrants or integration governance (Emilson 2015) rather than the conditions in which integration activities take place. Where the framework has been used it has tended to use refugee outcomes as a means to understand success (Strang et al. 2018). The updated Indicators of Integration framework launched in 2019 to some extent remedies these shortcomings (Ndofor-Tah et al. 2019). The extensively revised framework stresses the multi-dimensionality, multi-directionality, shared responsibility and context specific nature of integration pushing focus towards the roles and responsibilities of local and national stakeholders at individual and collective levels while continuing to think about multi-dimensional factors that shaping refugee integration outcomes. This paper provides a starting point to think how these ideas might be addressed through introducing the potential of refugee opportunity structures to help aid our understanding of integration processes.

From uni-dimensional to two-dimensional integration

Attempts to theorise integration processes have seen multiple developments over the last fifty years beginning with unidimensional approaches. Gordon’s (1964) assimilation model describes migrants as moving along a continuum between maintenance of their own culture to full adoption of the so-called host culture, at which point integration was deemed complete. Portes and Zhou (1993) acknowledged socio-economic influences on integration, proposing a segmented assimilation theory wherein migrants assimilated into different parts of society dependent on ethnicity and/or class. Such uni-dimensional theories have been criticised for assuming equal opportunities for migrants often holding them responsible for their own failure or success (Bourhis et al. 1997; Van Hieu 2008) thereby absolving host communities of responsibility (Castles et al 2002). Bi-dimensional models arose from such critique with Berry’s (1980) acculturation model proposing two dimensions: migrants’ decision as to whether to retain their cultural identity and their willingness to engage with “majority” communities. While this model allowed for integration to occur alongside retention of cultural identity it still assumes migrants will integrate into a dominant culture. The assumption of adaption

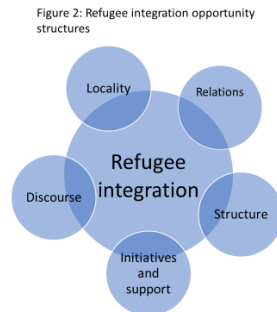
being the sole responsibility of migrants, together with a failure to consider both social justice in identity formation, and migrants' socio-economic realities led to a failure of explanatory power. In particular these bi-directional approaches could not explain the uneven outcomes across different migrant groups (Van Hieu 2008). Models such as the Interactive Acculturation Model (IAM) offer more scope for explaining migrant realities because they account for the orientation of host society towards migrants as well as migrant orientation (Bourhis et al. 1997). IAM acknowledges the importance of migrant/host interactions and to a lesser extent the influence of policy but given that outcomes still focus on migrant adaption into a dominant culture (Van Hieu 2008), it is still unable to explain the extent of variation in integration outcomes.

Building on criticisms of the above models Van Hieu (2008) proposes a two-dimensional approach using an anti-oppressive and social justice lens that requires both resident and migrant populations to change norms and behaviours while highlighting the relations between the two. Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas' (2016:14) process of becoming incorporates three structures (legal/political, social/economic, cultural/ religious), three levels (individual, organisational/ collective, institutional) and two parties (immigrants, receiving society) although as yet this model has not been widely implemented empirically and like many of the other models, excluding Ager and Strang (2008) is has not been used in relation to refugees. While the two-dimensional approach offers a potential framework for empirical analysis, the multi-dimensional nature of integration (Castles et al 2002) means this is not adequate. The '*accelerating social change and temporariness, transnationalism, increasing diversification and challenges of fragmentation and fluidity*' (Gryzmala-Kazłowska & Phillimore, 2017:8) necessitates an innovative, multi-disciplinary, multi-scalar approach to understanding integration processes that takes full account of the spatial, relational, political, cultural and temporal contexts in which integration occurs and identifies the influence of multiple aspects of host societies on integration processes.

As yet there have been no empirical analyses of integration simultaneously examining the multi-dimensional, multi-scale dimensions of receiving societies upon refugee integration although a number of studies have sought to incorporate multi-dimensionality (i.e. Shaw & Poulin 2015; Yu et al. 2007). This absence demands urgent attention given current efforts to resettle 100,000s of refugees in the Global North. The concept of opportunity structures provides a useful mechanism for understanding how multi-dimensional features of refugee receiving societies influence refugee integration.

The idea of opportunity structures were originally introduced by Cloward and Ohlin (1960; 2013) to consider adolescents' pathways to success in society. Kitshelt (1986: 58), focusing on the mobilisation of political movements defines opportunity structures as the "*specific configurations of resources, institutional arrangements and historical precedents for social mobilisation*". The term has been used in relation to education, politics, employment, and more recently to migrant integration. Koopmans et al., (2005), use opportunity structures to undertake cross-national and cross-local comparisons of migrant political participation. Murie and Musterd's (2004) examination of social exclusion refers to opportunity structures as modes of integration that can mitigate the impact of social exclusion. In the same vein opportunity structures can be considered to have potential to undermine or facilitate integration. Understanding opportunity structures as sets of resources, arrangements and pathways which can facilitate or block integration through mechanisms such as inclusion, racism and xenophobia, policy and practice offers potential for examining multi-dimensional aspects of receiving society contexts that can shape refugee integration opportunities.

Combining the domains approach of Ager and Strang (2008) with the notion of opportunity structures, I outline five domains of opportunity structure (see Figure 2), drawing together findings from the existing literature. These are discussed below and consist of locality, discourse, relations, structure and initiatives and support. Existing work in these areas tends to be largely qualitative, consisting of



small samples, focused at micro-level and examining outcomes for specific ethno-national groups with little attention to refugee needs. No systematic investigation has yet been undertaken of how these opportunity structures, individually or intersectionally, shape refugee integration and thus they offer the possibility of a new direction for research around refugee integration which is truly multi-dimensional.

Locality

As noted above there has been a local-turn in integration studies with the past decade seeing an increasing number of studies focusing upon the actions of local governments in the context of multi-level governance (Zapato-Berreto et al. 2017; Jorgensen 2012; Scholten 2013). But the focus in this work is on governance structures rather than the effect of locality upon integration outcomes. Hadj Abdou (2019) has called for greater critical attention on the effect of local governance on outcomes and experiences. Locale is important given that asylum seeker and refugee dispersal policies are a key part of many states' immigration policies. The rationale behind such policies include the following rationales: "spreading the burden" of refugee support so that arrival zones are not overwhelmed, reducing costs by placing refugees in low cost accommodation, deterring immigration by moving refugees away from social and support networks and addressing skills gaps or repopulating declining areas (Stewart 2012; Robinson et al. 2003). Dispersal policies have been much criticised for increasing isolation, placing newcomers in areas where they are more likely to experience racism and institutionalising the marginality of asylum seekers and refugees (Griffiths et al. 2006). The tendency to place refugees in socially deprived areas where there is available low-cost housing (Anie et al. 2005; Phillimore and Goodson 2006) implies poor economic opportunities and inadequate infrastructure for dispersed refugees. Yet not all refugees are resettled to deprived areas. Those arriving as privately sponsored refugees (PSRs) in Canada live close to their sponsors, while some mechanisms for choosing where to live were available to refugees arriving in Sweden prior to 2015 (Borevi and Bengtsson, 2014).

Employment is often viewed as the most important integration outcome for refugees and a means to access other integration resources such as wider social networks, improved language skills and better housing (Ager and Strang 2008). Refugees' employment outcomes tend to be measured by their country of origin or their gender or compared to the national or regional average with little consideration given to the availability of employment opportunities locally (Cheung and Phillimore 2014). Other measures such as stability of and satisfaction with housing and self-reported health fail to take into account local resources despite some evidence that dispersal places asylum seekers, who subsequently gain refugee status, into areas with low quality housing (Phillips 2006). The quality and availability of local resources in the areas in which refugees reside inevitably shapes their integration outcomes. While the secondary or onward migration of refugees from their original dispersal areas has been argued to be a sign of failure to integrate locally, evidence from Sweden suggests that moving on can lead to better integration outcomes (Andersson and Solid 2003). The places where refugees

live are likely to have a profound impact upon integration processes. Comparing four Danish municipalities Careja (2019) found that opportunities open to refugees varied according to local governance structures but elsewhere there has been scant consideration about how the socio-economic contexts into which refugees are placed impact on integration opportunities. The availability of work, good quality housing and healthy living conditions in the localities that refugees reside, represent integration opportunity structures. More attention needs to be paid to the ways that local area conditions and resources shape integration outcomes and how outcomes differ between refugees who are dispersed and those who are not.

Discourse

The nature of political and media discourse on immigration has been shown to be highly influential on public opinion (Blinder and Richards 2018). Different discourses have dominated across time and place, varying by country, and between local and national levels. Baubock (2003) highlights claims made that cities are frequently assumed to be more open to “others” and calls for empirical investigation of such claims. Different places may offer different levels of welcome or resistance. During the events labelled as “refugee crisis” discourse was framed in terms of threat and morality with the framing influenced by the ideology and overall left versus right positioning of political leaders, and media outlets and by the position of each country as frontline/transit or final destination for refugees (Triandafyllidou 2018). Public opinion about refugees varies according to these frames and the extent to which different frames dominate media and political discourse. Where right-wing populist and nativist agendas dominate (Wodak & Krzyzanowski, 2017) stigma and fear are generated in the general population (Wodak & Forchtner, 2014). While, worldwide there is a belief that many refugees are “bogus” economic migrants (and so un-deserving) and associated fears that the influx of refugees will overburden welfare states, and increase terrorism, there are stark differences between countries. For example, while a median of 50% across 10 EU countries see refugees as a burden, Sweden and Germany stand in opposition, seeing refugees as hard-working and talented (Wike et al. 2016:1). Some argue that mainstream discourse dehumanising refugees is a form of “symbolic bordering” (Georgiou 2018) intended to de-politicise refugees after displacement. Feller (2005) considers the social construction of refugees as problematic – security risks or burdens on the state – may in itself be considered a form of discrimination with potential to undermine refugee wellbeing. Media and political coverage of refugees contributes to the construction of shared representations of forced migrants which have consequences for attitudes, emotions, and behaviour towards them (Quinsaat 2014; Greussing and Boomgaard, 2017).

Thus, media and political discourses are likely to play a key role in refugee integration because they shape the kinds of reception and the emotional orientation of receiving communities. Previous work offers limited evidence of the negative impact discourse can have at the level of individual refugees’ willingness to seek healthcare (Bradby et al, 2017, Bradby et al forthcoming). Yet there is little knowledge about refugees’ awareness of these discourses and the impact that exposure to negative public discourse has on integration. Thus, media and political discourses represent a receiving society opportunity structure which may differ at local and national levels. More knowledge is needed about the ways that receiving society discourses differ spatially and shape refugees’ ability to integrate.

Relations.

The extent to which a receiving society is open and welcoming to refugees varies and depends on many factors including as we have seen above, discourse. Two contradictory movements around the reception of refugees can be identified, one at the national level which is often hostile, and one at the local level, which is thought to be more welcoming. The first reflects negative political discourses

whereas the second, often played out as so-called “sanctuary movements”, offers an alternative to national integration agendas based on solidarity, mobility and citizenship (Squire 2011). Certainly, in the UK Platts-Fowler and Robinson (2015) find evidence that refugees do better in places where diversity is the norm while Spicer (2008) argues refugees fair better in inclusive rather than exclusive neighbourhoods. Glick Schiller and Caglar (2009) have long-argued that different cities offer different opportunities for refugees depending on the extent to which their human capital is valued. Elsewhere it is contended that even inclusive neighbourhoods may not offer appropriate integration opportunities if interactions with local people are fleeting (Daley 2007) rather than deep and enduring (Wood and Landry 2007). Attitudes towards refugees are not fixed. Rises in xenophobic attacks on asylum seekers and refugees especially on reception centres (i.e. USA Today 2015; Guardian 2017) have been recorded post-refugee crisis. Attacks are often quasi-justified by politicians stating that they reflect local populations fear of being “swamped” by refugees (Zunes 2017) and signal the need for harder borders.

The link between perceived discrimination and mental health has been established with regard to disadvantaged groups (Schmitt et. al. 2014). A little evidence is available suggesting that hostility from local people and experiences of racism have a negative impact on refugee integration outcomes going beyond wellbeing, although we know little about the impact of welcome on refugees. In the UK refugees reported being afraid to leave their homes for fear of verbal or physical attack (Phillimore 2011) while an analysis of the Survey of New Refugees (SNR) showed that refugees who had reported experiencing racism had poorer health and employment outcomes than those who did not (Cheung & Phillimore 2014). In Canada, Beiser and Hou (2017) found a relationship between perceived discrimination and refugee mental health for men but not women.

Local authorities in collaboration with citizen’s movements as well as civil society actors increasingly collaborate to implement an alternative model of ‘global migration governance from below’ (Walia 2014; Bauder 2017). Most projects examining welcome or sanctuary movements have been concerned with their organisation, motivations and governance and not how positive social relations might shape integration. Research examining in depth the impacts of relations with local and national communities on refugee integration has yet to be implemented. In Canada it is argued that integration outcomes are better for privately sponsored rather than government sponsored refugees (Oda et al. 2018; Hyndman et al. 2017) but how such outcomes relate to the quality of local relationships would bear further examination. The nature of host/refugee relationships and extent to which communities are welcoming or hostile is a further opportunity structure. Investigation is needed about how local and national relations with host communities differ across locales and shape refugee integration.

Structure

The nature of immigration and integration regimes have potential to shape refugee integration outcomes. Szczepanik (2016) describes the distinction made in discourse between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ refugees. Good refugees are those who wait in camps to be selected by states in the Global North and once chosen are given full refugee status and extensive integration support. Bad refugees arrive spontaneously without invitation, must prove they are genuine through lengthy and sometimes traumatic determination processes and if successful receive less support than good refugees. There is little evidence regarding the difference in outcomes between those classified as good/bad refugees despite the different treatment they receive from reception to integration interventions. However, we know from the Canadian experience that the immigration pathway followed by resettlement refugees shapes their integration outcomes (see above) and their integration needs (Yu et al. 2007) with resettlement refugees faring better than spontaneous (Hou and Bonikowska, 2016).

Asylum systems have attracted much criticism for their potential to undermine refugee integration processes. Asylum seekers may be detained or accommodated in asylum centres, sometimes in rural areas offering few facilities (Bakker et al. 2014). Often asylum seekers must wait years for a decision or lurch between having their case under consideration and being undocumented: living below the radar after their claim has failed. Evidence from Sweden suggests that the length of time refugees had to wait for a decision on their case impacts on access to employment in the long-term with longer waits associated with lower employability (Hainmueller & Hangartner 2016).

In the UK restrictive asylum policies impact on integration outcomes specifically around the tendency for the UK Government to offer temporary refugee status¹. *“It could be argued that temporary status is not compatible with the desire to have active citizens engaged in all aspects of economic, social and political life.”* (Stewart and Mulvey 2014:1034). Such approaches build on psychological damage associated with lengthy waits for asylum decisions thereby keeping refugees in a state of violent uncertainty (Grace et al. 2017). Increased temporariness is associated with uncertainty – a problem specifically for spontaneous refugees who must re-apply to remain after three to five years and achieve certain milestones in the interim (language, avoidance of criminal record) as well as covering the costs of a new application (Stewart and Mulvey 2014). On the other hand resettlement refugees arrive with their case pre-decided and frequently with permanent status. Rather than fighting to remain and spending years on very low levels of support they can access most welfare services and are provided with housing and education.

Naturalisation can provide a more stable foundation upon which refugees can rebuild their lives, but access is often conditional (on language, behaviour, passing exams) and may require abandonment of existing nationalities (Grace et al. 2017). Family reunification regulations have potential to shape integration since family separation has been found to cause psychological, social and economic harm to refugees (Okhovat et al. 2017) and strong family relationships are considered a protective factor for health (Hynie, et al., 2013; McLeary 2017). The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights (2017) notes that lack of rights can diminish integration and increase suffering. Yet access to reunification has become more restricted in many countries with pre-conditions applied to families, windows for application reduced, and minimum income levels introduced. Thus, a range of structural factors associated with immigration and integration policy can be argued to be opportunity structures. The nature of structural factors and the ways they shape integration outcomes bear further investigation but should include asylum determination processes and practices.

Initiatives and support

As described above, social networks and specific integration programmes can support refugee integration (Cheung and Phillimore 2017). This domain focuses on specific programmes and initiatives as played out through two main approaches to supporting integration: the first is through migrant and refugee community organisations (MRCOs), and the second through state programmes. Integration can be facilitated through investing in the development of MRCOs often viewed by policymakers as effective self-help mechanisms facilitating relationships between refugees and the state (Phillimore & Goodson 2010; Shields et al. 2016) perhaps creating the bridging capital that refugees are sometimes considered to lack. Co-management and co-governance models have been proposed wherein MRCOs collaborate with the state to deliver integration services (Brandson and Pestoff 2006). Little is known about the effectiveness of such models in supporting refugee integration. Studies on Southern European cities have highlighted the crucial role played by migrant-led NGOs and associations that provide services and advocacy for migrants (Campomori 2005; Zincone 1998; Esteves 2008; Moré n-

¹ Usually five years

Alegret 2002). However they do not look specifically at refugee organisations. Evidence from the UK shows that MRCOs are often expected to adapt refugees so that they fit into existing governance and practice models rather than supporting state adaptation to meet refugee needs (Phillimore & Goodson 2010). Little is known about the ways in which the actions of MRCOs help shape refugee integration outcomes.

The second approach is to develop state integration programmes. These can be developed and implemented at national, regional or even local levels and generally consist of language training, cultural orientation and support with accessing employment. Often passing an exam at the end of the programme is obligatory for those who wish to remain or seek naturalisation (i.e. Netherlands, UK) and attendance can be optional or compulsory (Carrera 2016). Some programmes include access to specialised psychological support, volunteering opportunities and childcare (Phillimore 2012). Little evidence exists concerning the effectiveness of integration programmes as they tend not to be robustly evaluated. Meta analyses of immigrant employment programmes have demonstrated the types of initiatives which can enhance employment levels (i.e. Butschek & Walter 2014; Joonas & Nekby 2012) but do not identify refugees as a separate category despite the knowledge that refugee employability levels can be far lower than that of other kinds of migrants (Phillimore & Goodson 2006).

There have been some evaluations of programs aimed at refugee youth (i.e. Nakeyar et al. 2018; Spaaij et al. 2019; Northcote & Casimiro 2009) but looking at the impact of very specific locally-based interventions rather than national initiatives aimed at supporting integration across domains. Valenta and Bunar (2010) show that state sponsored integration programmes in Scandinavian countries have improved the employability of those who attend, particularly women, but that inequalities between refugees and the general population have not been eradicated. Shaw and Pouline (2015) offer an evaluation of an Extended Case Management Refugee Resettlement Programme based in Salt Lake City and were able to demonstrate improved integration outcomes for beneficiaries which varied from improved wellbeing, housing and employment. Importantly this study looked at progress over time thereby tracking the long-term effect of the initiative. Elsewhere it has been suggested that programmes focus on control and coercion without responding effectively to integration needs (Gebhardt 2016). The impact of integration initiatives and support or absence of such programmes, can also be considered as opportunity structures.

Researching Opportunity Structures

Two main approaches have informed our understanding of integration, both mostly take a uni-dimensional approach. First, analyses of administrative and survey data have been used to assess migrant (but less so refugee) integration outcomes, around access to employment but also health, education outcomes, voting behaviour, and the nature and density of social connections (Bean et al. 2012). The use of such datasets to examine refugee integration is far less common, given that identification of refugees within datasets can be difficult. Some surveys have been designed to measure refugee integration outcomes, such as the Survey of New Refugees (SNR) in the UK (Cheung and Phillimore 2014) and Survey Integration New Groups (SING) in the Netherlands (Bakker et al. 2016) but they are implemented sporadically, and do not consider opportunity structures. Some surveys focus on just one or two integration indicators or specific ethnic groups with sample sizes too small to account for the effect of locality (Lamba and Krahn 2003).

However, some countries have administrative data wherein residents are allocated an identification number, and refugees can be identified. Such data allows assessment of outcomes across integration domains, evaluation of the effectiveness of integration interventions, and comparing refugees' outcomes with those of the general population (Valenta and Bunar 2010). These surveys have the

potential to be linked to wider administrative data including instruments assessing attitudes to immigration (and sometimes refugees), the density of civil society activity, levels of deprivation, housing prices, and more, to enable analyses of the relationship between refugee outcomes and some receiving society opportunity structures. This potential has not yet been realised.

Second, there is a body of qualitative work examining refugees' experiences of resettlement. These studies provide useful insights into experience at local level (Phillimore et al. 2018; Carter and Osborne 2009) but fail to examine opportunity structures in a systematic way, often tangentially referring to locality or policy. Further, they are too limited in breadth and depth to inform the development of theory around the role of receiving societies. Studies of immigration and integration governance can aid our understanding of the role of structural factors, yet work tends to typologise governance types with little consideration of how policy and practice connects with refugee integration outcomes (Scholten and van Breugal 2017). A new approach to understanding the relationship between refugee integration and opportunity structures is needed to move beyond the state of the art to shed light on the role of receiving countries.

Such an approach would need to be underpinned by a series of principles. First a comparison between states and cities with different refugee integration and immigration policies, immigration histories, politics and economies would have the potential to reveal and explain the key influences of receiving society opportunity structures on refugee integration outcomes. Second integration success should be measured via comparing refugee integration outcomes to those of the general population (controlling for sociodemographic differences) using domains identified from indicator frameworks (i.e. Ndofor-Tah et al. 2019) enabling understanding of the effect of locality. Third success can be measured subjectively according to refugees' self-rated assessment of feelings of integration, belonging and at-homeness (Marlowe 2017; Phillimore 2013; Dagevos et al. 2018). Fourth integration is experienced at individual and household levels. Outcome measures focusing on groups or area are the composite of collective experiences which vary from person to person and over time. Fifth integration opportunity structures are interdependent and operate at multiple levels, so account needs to be taken of spatial levels, relationality, and upon individual experiences and characteristics. Sixth integration processes evolve over time and are multi-directional, reversing and progressing in response to opportunity structures (Bhatia and Ram 2007). Seventh integration opportunity structures can support both positive and negative integration outcomes and integration trajectories are non-linear. Finally, the study of integration requires an interdisciplinary approach in terms of theory and method.

Understanding refugee opportunity structures could be possible using a series of country case studies ideally selecting cases that have appropriate micro-data such as the Netherlands or Canada. Prepared data could be analysed to investigate dimensions of refugee integration outcomes (dependent variables) and their links to receiving country opportunity structures at the individual, family, group, neighbourhood, and municipality levels (independent variables). This would initially involve univariate and bivariate descriptive analyses of the variables of interest based on the variable types under consideration (e.g., tabulations, cross-tabulations, anova, correlations) and later more advanced analyses using regression models to identify influencing factors. Given the dimensional nature of the dependent variables, these can be analysed on their own or together using methods (i.e. factor analysis) enabling analysis of multi-dimensionality across opportunity structures as well as comparison between cases. Quantitative approaches should be supplemented with qualitative within neighbourhoods selected on the basis of different levels of refugee integration. Qualitative methods could potentially include narrations and visualisations exploring experiences and influences of opportunity structures via approaches such as walking interviews or photo elicitation. Discourse

experiments in the same neighbourhoods could help explore the relationship between policy and discourse adapting Blinder and Jeannet's (2014) media experiment design to explore how different discourses impact on refugees' feelings of belonging, home and acceptance.

Conclusions

The discussion of refugee integration opportunity structures has demonstrated that there are multiple influences on refugees' ability to integrate that are beyond the control of individual or even groups of refugees. The nature of integration opportunities depends on multiple factors including the types of immigration and integration policy and practice, resettlement countries' orientation and attitudes towards refugees and migrants and the state of local and national economies and civil society. The relative importance of such influences will vary from place to place and at different times in refugee integration trajectories. Some progress has been made looking at some aspects of these opportunity structures in some places although with most attention paid to migrants rather than refugees. Research is needed to examine the influences of opportunity structures on refugees' integration outcomes. Such research should be both comparative and multi-method. Highlighting and researching opportunity structures will allow the development of policy and practice that can have positive effects on the relationship between opportunity structures and integration. The focus on opportunity structures would occur in addition to our existing preoccupation with refugee integration outcomes and thus bring together opportunity structures with individual factors. Combining both perspectives we can begin to develop a rounded understanding of the two-dimensional nature of integration and start to think about how we can change norms and behaviours to attempt to help established communities and localities to adjust to the arrival of newcomers while supporting refugees to adapt to their new lives.

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