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Economic self-reliance or social relations? What works in refugee integration? Learning from resettlement programmes in Japan and the UK

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Abstract

There is an urgent need to expand the scale and scope of refugee resettlement schemes, and yet country approaches to resettlement vary markedly and there is little cross-country learning from approaches and refugee experiences. In Japan, resettlement focuses on economic self-sufficiency through employment; whereas the UK, through Community Sponsorship volunteers, on providing social connections to facilitate integration. This paper explores the strengths and short-comings of each approach and examines the ways in which refugee resettlement programmes prioritising different integration domains might influence refugee experiences of integration more widely. Drawing on principles and domains set out in the Indicators of Integration Framework (Ndofor-Tah, C. Strang, A. Phillimore, J. Morrice, L., Michael, L., Wood, P., Simmons, J. (2019) Home Office Indicators of Integration framework 2019), insight is provided into the multi-dimensionality of integration and new understandings about the nature of social connections are offered. The findings highlight the context specific nature of integration policy and practice and underline the importance of a holistic approach. We conclude that resettlement initiatives might incorporate both employers and local communities working in collaboration to support newly arrived refugees but with some state involvement.

Keywords: Refugees, Resettlement, Economic self-sufficiency, Community sponsorship scheme, Integration

Introduction

As refugee situations have increased in scope, scale and complexity, there has been increased recognition of the need to expand the size of refugee resettlement programmes (UNHCR 2019). While projected global resettlement needs have reached more than 1.4 million in 2020, only 55,680 refugees submitted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) were resettled in 2018 (UNHCR 2019). Expanding access to third country solutions is one of four objectives set out in the Global Compact on Refugees (UNHCR 2018a). UNHCR has drawn up a strategy to expand the number of resettlement places and the range of countries engaged in resettlement.

Building on modest existing resettlement programmes launched in the 2000s, the United Kingdom (UK) and Japan are among the countries which have committed to further developing their resettlement programmes.

However, the schemes differ markedly in their approaches to resettlement with Japan focusing upon economic self-sufficiency through immediate employment; and the UK, through the Community Sponsorship Scheme (CSS), on providing refugee families with an informal support network of volunteers intended to facilitate integration. Both schemes are intended to rapidly aid resettlement and eventual integration, but emphasise different integration domains as their starting points. Given the argument that integration is inherently multi-dimensional and context specific (Ndofor-Tah et al. 2019), this paper compares and contrasts the ways in which refugee resettlement programmes prioritising different integration domains influence refugee experiences of integration more widely.

In the following section we outline theories of refugee integration before introducing the Indicators of Integration Framework (IOI) (Ndofor-Tah et al. 2019). The framework is underpinned by key principles which build on integration theory and empirical research; these principles provide the theoretical framing for the paper and guide data analysis. The paper then establishes the similarities and differences in approaches to refugee resettlement policy and practice in the two countries, and briefly outlines the different country contexts and experiences of migration and diversity. We then set out our methods used to collect in-depth interview data from refugees resettled under the resettlement programme in Japan and the CSS in the UK. Our findings explore the different foci of the two programmes, before concluding that both models have weaknesses as well as strengths, and that neither approach enables the holistic approach to integration outlined in the IOI.

Refugee integration

Despite long standing interest in migrant integration, there is still no agreement about what exactly constitutes successful integration, and in academic literature it remains contested (Castles and Miller 2003; Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas 2016). Theories from social psychology tend to focus on processes of social, psychological and cultural change emerging from exposure to other cultures. Over the years, thinking has evolved from the unidirectional school of thought with an emphasis on migrant assimilation or absorption into the dominant culture, to bi-dimensional and interactive perspectives (see Van Hieu 2008). Berry's influential model proposes two independent dimensions underlying processes of acculturation (maintenance of culture and identity, and identification with aspects of host society). Integration is said to occur when individuals can adopt the cultural norms of the host society, while at the same time retaining their own cultural identity (Berry 1997).

Such models have been criticised for assuming integration is a linear process along which the migrant moves ever closer to the host society, and for assuming a monocultural host society into which migrants acculturate (Van Hieu 2008; Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas 2016). Portes and Zhou's (1993) model of segmented assimilation acknowledged how stratification along class, ethnic and other lines in the host society itself might influence the integration process. They consider that migrants adapt to one

of three forms: acculturation and integration into mainstream 'white' America; assimilation into an 'underclass' of unemployment and poverty, or assimilation into a pre-existing ethnic enclave. Although the theory recognises socio-economic and structural influences on integration, it still assumes a one-way process in which migrants acculturate or integrate into a dominant society with little responsibility placed on the host society (Castles and Miller 2003).

More recent definitions have attempted to theorise integration as distinct two-way processes occurring in different dimensions. For example, Heckmann 2005) defines integration as ' *… a long-lasting process of inclusion and acceptance of migrants in the core institutions, relations and statuses of the receiving society*'. He has conceptualised integration as involving four dimensions or levels: structural integration (housing, employment etc.), cultural integration (acculturation), interactive integration (social relations and networks) and identificational integration (belonging). Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas (2016) suggest integration encompasses three analytical dimensions in which migrants may, or may not, become part of society: the legal-political, the socio-economic, and the cultural-religious. Importantly, their model recognises the role of host society and they argue that a focus on these dimensions requires attention to whether migrants are accepted and how they are positioned in each of the three dimensions. While this approach offers a potential framework for empirical analysis it offers a limited account of the multi-dimensional nature of integration. A more comprehensive framework which underscores and unpacks the multiple domains across which integration occurs was developed by Ager and Strang (2008) for policy makers and practitioners and focuses specifically on refugees.

Indicators of integration framework

One of the most comprehensive articulations of the multiple dimensions and holistic nature of integration processes is the UK Home Office's revised Indicators of Integration (IoI) framework (Ndofor-Tah et al. 2019). The framework draws on integration theory and empirical evidence building on the influential model of integration developed by Ager and Strang (2008). The social networks and employment models adopted in the Japanese and UK resettlement initiatives are both key indicators of integration in this holistic model of integration. The IoI framework presents 14 inter-related domains recognised as important for measuring integration; these domains are organised into four types of indicators of integration (see Fig. 1). *Markers and means* (employment, education, health and social care, housing and leisure) represent major areas of attainment generally recognised as critical to integration but also means to success in other domains.

Social connections recognise the key importance of three types of social networks to integration. Social bonds are relationships between people who share a sense of identity; social bridges are connections with people of a different background; and social links are relationships which connect people to institutions. Broadly, social connections support integration by facilitating access to information and resources and promoting a sense of belonging (Suter and Magnusson 2015) and are at the heart of the UK's CSS programme. Five *Facilitators* (language, culture, digital skills, safety and stability) represent the key areas of competence which facilitate or support integration processes.

Fig. 1 Indicators of Integration Framework (Ndofor-Tah et al. 2019)
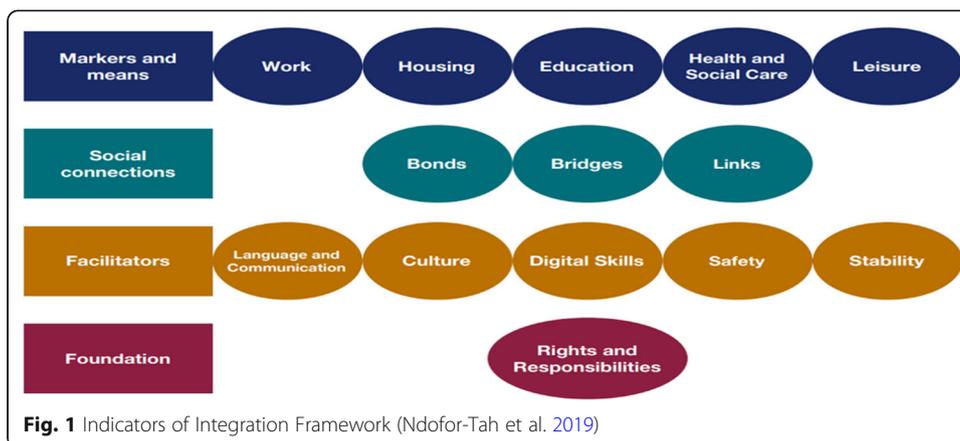
Foundation contains the domain of rights and responsibilities combining responsibilities and rights of both migrant and host community.

The IOI are informed by four principles. The first is that integration is a *multi-dimensional* process occurring across multiple domains (Ager and Strang 2008). This implies that success in a single area, such as having employment, does not by itself indicate integration. Contrasting the Japanese and UK resettlement cases enables us to explore the integration resources realised at different starting points: employment and social connections. The second principle is that integration is *multi-directional* requiring adaptation and change by all those involved. This understanding of integration may not be fully embraced or practiced in Japan where there is a clear inclination towards tabunka kyousei or "multicultural coexistence" (see Phillimore et al. forthcoming) which stresses assimilation and cultural homogeneity rather than celebration of diverse cultures but may be experienced differently in the UK with different attitudes towards and experience of multiculturalism.

The third is the principle of *shared responsibility*: refugees, members of the host community, institutions, local, and national governments all have roles in integration processes. As we set out below the Japanese resettlement model places much emphasis on refugees' responsibility conceiving this in terms of independence, but also suggests a role for employers. In the UK responsibility is shared with Community Sponsor (CS) volunteers.

Fourthly integration is *context specific* and can only be measured in relation to particular populations, and in a particular location, whether that be national, socio-geographic, neighbourhood, workplace etc. Factors such as refugee age, gender, and levels of vulnerability need to be considered. Contextual factors also include the broader socio-political environment and nature of neighbourhoods and workplaces (Phillimore 2020). Such contextual factors mean that no universal integration goals can be set.

Refugee resettlement in Japan

Japan has long experience with resettlement beginning with the Indo-Chinese refugee admission programme from 1979 to 2005 (Hashimoto 2019). This evolved into a semi-permanent resettlement programme in 2015. So far 194 individuals originating in Myanmar (50 families) have been resettled. Despite its small size, the resettlement

programme has become the main route to be protected as a refugee in Japan because chances of success via spontaneous asylum seeking are extremely low (Nyūkoku Kanrikyoku 2020).

In principle, resettling refugees are identified as eligible for resettlement by UNHCR but countries determine their own criteria for deciding which refugees they welcome from those identified by UNHCR (Hashimoto 2018). Japan is an ethno-nationalistic society (see Phillimore et al. forthcoming) with an ageing population, and labour market shortages in some sectors wherein accessing social welfare is stigmatised and financial independence viewed as the cultural norm (see Liu-Farrer et al. forthcoming). The Japanese Government applies restrictive selection criteria and determines that only '*refugees who demonstrate integration prospects in Japanese society and who are expected to find a gainful employment to lead an independent life*' are qualified for resettlement (Naikaku Kambō 2008a). This proviso ensures that only refugees who can engage in fulltime employment within 6 months of arrival will be resettled.

Once selected as candidates, refugees go through comprehensive health checks and receive two to three weeks of cultural and language orientation as well as pre-departure orientation. Upon arrival in Japan, refugees attend the Refugee Assistance Headquarters (Refugee Assistance Headquarters (RHQ) 2018) Reception Centre in Tokyo, where two fulltime caseworkers are assigned for each family. They enter a six-month state provided orientation programme which includes 429 h of Japanese language training and 90 h of cultural orientation. Adult refugees participate in vocational training and school age children attend induction classes. After this period caseworkers arrange employment for adult refugees, arrange school enrolment for children, locate housing, and complete the administrative procedures for refugee families to start a new life (Refugee Assistance Headquarters (RHQ) 2018). Most refugees are dispersed on a no-choice basis to areas in or proximate to the Tokyo metropolitan area, although since 2018 refugees have been sent to southern Japan where there is little experience of hosting refugees.

Upon relocation, they receive income support from the government for 180 days while they attend on-the-job training in their allocated workplace (Naikaku Kambō 2008b). Refugees are employed in industries with a shortage of low-skilled labour, such as agriculture, cleaning, construction, and manufacturing. An interpreter supports refugees in the first month to help them understand their tasks and provide health and safety briefings. Meanwhile, support from the central government quickly dwindles, as it expects the refugees to be more or less independent after the initial RHQ integration course. Once relocated support is offered by local caseworkers working only on a part-time and semi-voluntary basis. They assist refugees with day-to-day life to help them connect with local stakeholders. Social welfare provision is generally restricted and strongly discouraged in Japan, and more than one adult refugee per family needs to be employed to earn enough income to meet their daily needs. Refugee adults are expected to adapt quickly to a completely different environment and to earn wages, to make ends meet, while taking care of their children. Although refugees are employed, generally considered a key measure of integration, there is a leap in experience between their days at the reception centre where all needs were publicly provided, and independent living. The Japanese resettlement model could be described as a self-reliance model, wherein refugees are responsible for all aspects of their integration in local

communities, and there is little official institutional responsibility. Social connections receive little attention with emphasis placed firmly on refugees' financial independence.

Refugee resettlement in the UK

The UK has a different history of migration and asylum from that of Japan and has a relatively long standing experience of resettlement initiatives (Beirens and Fratzke 2017), although until recently resettlement numbers remained under 750 per year. In response to the crisis in Syria the UK significantly expanded its resettlement programme to launch the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) in 2014 which sought to resettle up to 20,000 refugees by 2020. This programme accepts refugees of any nationality who have fled the conflict in Syria for whom it is unsafe to return to their country of origin (UNHCR 2018b).

The UK's Community Sponsorship Scheme (CSS) was introduced as part of VPRS in 2016 and since then nearly 450 refugees in around 62 families, have been resettled. In contrast to Japan, resettlement refugees in the UK are not subject to additional screening for employability potential. The resettled population may contain adults or children with relatively high long-term physical and psychological health needs and caring responsibilities (Collyer et al. 2018). Under the CSS refugees receive a one-day pre-departure briefing and on arrival in the UK are met at the airport by a CSS group. Sponsors are groups of volunteers who work together to provide funding and integration and settlement support to a family (Home Office 2016). Once a group agrees to support a refugee family the family is dispersed to the group on a no-choice basis. The group need not have any experience working with refugees, with many having no prior experience, but they must meet certain criteria, including securing appropriate funds and housing and being able to demonstrate how they will support integration. The minimum formal responsibility to support the family lasts for one year, with responsibility for housing lasting two years, after which time the sponsoring group can choose how much support they offer. Refugees are financially supported by the UK Government able to access Universal Credit, the social welfare safety net available to all eligible UK residents, which is widely acknowledged to place recipients below the poverty line (Craig and Katikireddi 2020). The CSS has come under criticism by some seen as a way that the state can absolve itself of responsibility for supporting refugees both socially and financially while others view it as the ultimate expression of solidarity and community (Guma et al. 2019). CSS groups can be located in any part of the UK. Although the UK has been thought of as a multicultural country with a long history of migration and refugee families may be sent to diverse multicultural urban areas, but many groups have established in rural or semi-rural areas with no experience of diversity.

The UNHCR has identified the sponsorship route as fundamental to its vision of expanding and developing third country resettlement (UNHCR 2019). The CSS is promoted as benefitting refugees through creating a welcoming community and promoting social cohesion (Ibid). Refugees gain from ready-made social networks with volunteers providing intense social support (Phillimore and Reyes 2019). Research on the importance of social networks in the lives of refugees, and the correlation with positive settlement outcomes is well-documented (e.g. Koser 1997; Hanley et al. 2018; Suter and Magnusson 2015; Cheung and Phillimore 2014). Underpinning the implementation of

the programme in the UK is the assumption that personalised social support will accelerate the integration and settlement process (Phillimore and Reyes 2019). The extent to which such social networks facilitate integration across other areas such as employment, language learning and development of cultural knowledge remains to be seen. Given the importance of context in refugee integration arguably the location to which they are sent is likely to shape their integration experiences (see Phillimore 2020).

Comparing and contrasting UK and Japan

In this paper we compare and contrast the resettlement and integration experiences of refugees focusing on refugees from Myanmar who have been resettled to Japan since 2010 and refugees from Syria who have been resettled as part of the UK's CSS scheme since its introduction in 2016. There are similarities and differences between the two schemes which make this exercise compelling and offer potential learning to aid integration and resettlement policy development in countries with resettlement initiatives. Firstly, at the time of writing a small number of families have been resettled under these schemes in each country: 50 in Japan and 60 in the UK. Secondly the families are resettled regardless of family connections and thus are generally not living in proximity to an established co-ethnic community or other refugee families. Thirdly many families are resettled and relocated on a no-choice basis often to areas with no experience of living with, or supporting, refugees. Yet there is a fundamental difference between the schemes and in attitudes to resettlement and integration as we have set out above.

The Japanese scheme is focused upon self-reliance with refugees arriving to employment after attending a cultural orientation programme and thereafter receiving negligible support. The UK scheme is focused upon social support with refugees' independence and employability facilitated through interactions with a large volunteer body whose responsibility is to aid their integration. UK CSS refugees arrive directly to the community with no pre-dispersal support offered but they do have access to social welfare benefits. Further, although both groups of refugees are selected according to UNHCR criteria, Japanese refugees are screened on the basis of their potential to become self-reliant whereas UK resettlement refugees are not, with family groups potentially including refugees with significant health problems. The similarities and differences in the two schemes enable us to look expressly at different approaches to integration examining the ways in which integration with different starting points: via employment and social networks, plays out across the wider integration domains focusing on the principles of multi-dimensionality, multi-directionality, context and the shared responsibilities of employers and communities.

Methods

This paper uses findings from two qualitative research projects exploring refugee integration, one each in the UK and Japan. Both datasets contain detailed information on the integration experiences of refugees. The composition of the samples is similar in that refugees arrived as a family. UK respondents originated from Iraq and Syria and had been living as registered refugees in bordering countries until they were resettled. All were Arabic speakers. Respondents in Japan were resettled from refugee camps in Thailand or urban areas in Malaysia having originated in Myanmar. Although all were

resettled as families, in most cases they had lost or left behind close family members. Different questions were used in each of the UK and Japan studies however these broadly explored the same topics looking at arrival and resettlement experiences, the kinds of connections and support received and how these had enabled (or not) integration. In neither set of interviews was the term integration utilised, instead we opted for terms that were easier to comprehend such as resettlement, fitting in, and feeling at home. In both countries we sampled respondents from different contexts. In Japan these were respondents employed across a range of different companies which had different numbers and experiences of foreign employees. The companies with a more diverse workforce used both Japanese and other languages in the workplace and stated that they were tolerant of diverse values. In the UK we sampled respondents from both urban areas with high levels of ethnic diversity, and rural areas with little ethnic diversity.

Qualitative methods were utilised in both countries. In Japan, Kabe, with the aid of an interpreter, began by undertaking group discussions and interviews with refugees employed in different companies. Ten respondents (four men and six women) were asked to write down key words about their integration experience adding places they accessed and resources they used during resettlement. Discussion was facilitated about how their experiences contributed to their wider integration. The findings from these interviews helped to develop the topic guide for semi-structured interviews with refugees identified through the original group of ten, and subsequent snowballing. Some 24 interviews, aided by an interpreter, were held in 2019, 14 with men and 10 with women all of whom were employed and had resided in Japan for different lengths of time. Ten had lived in Japan for between two and three years, seven for between four and six years and seven between seven and nine years. Each interview took between one and three hours.

Contact was made with potential interviewees by a member of the research team, and the research objectives and ethical processes explained. After informed consent was received interpreters were employed. Interviewers explained that the interview was confidential and would have no impact on their lives. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed and translated into Japanese. Transcripts were reviewed by the research team to identify preliminary coding categories before all transcripts were coded.

In the UK refugee interviews were undertaken by Hassan in Arabic. The interviews were part of an independent formative evaluation of the UK's new CSS undertaken by the University of Birmingham and internally funded. The aim of the project was to help to shape the fledgling CSS programme by identifying strengths and weaknesses in the scheme. Some 38 refugee interviews were undertaken with 17 men and 21 women. Interviews were semi-structured and took between 60 and 90 min. Refugees had lived in the UK between six months and two years with 26 in the UK over a year. Questions were developed along the themes outlined above and the topic guide piloted to check for ease of use. Respondents were identified via the UK's Home Office. Reyes approached 26 CSS group leaders to ask if they would participate in the study. Agreement was received from all but three groups. Group leaders then asked the refugee adults they supported if they would agree to share their contact details with Hassan. All but one family agreed. Respondents were then contacted in Arabic via telephone or WhatsApp to ask for interviews. Care was taken to explain the interview process, confidentiality and anonymity. Interviews were recorded and in the first instance a summary

of findings was created in English. Later interviews were translated in full and then coded in NVIVO.

Full ethical approval from the relevant universities was received in both countries. Quotations used herein have been selected to illustrate the themes identified in data analysis and to offer the range of experiences identified across the studies. Given the qualitative nature of the studies we make no attempt to quantify the frequency of expressed views.

Findings

Refugee resettlement and employment in Japan

Access to employment was generally highly valued among refugees interviewed in Japan and was linked to self-esteem and well-being. Gender differences were observable with male refugees more likely to value employment as a means of earning money to pay for their children's school fees and to support their families. These men were proud of their achievements, being able to work and taking financial responsibility for their families which helped them to feel that they were fitting in to life in Japan; as one man described.

> *I now go to work 5 days a week and work there so hard. At work my colleagues sometimes want me to help them and my boss gave me a good evaluation. This makes me valued and independent in Japan.* Male, 54, 107 months in Japan.

Interviews revealed that employment was not only a means of earning an income but also a place where refugees could make friends and talk to each other about their lives; women in particular talked about employment as a place where they could find someone to talk to about problems and get advice. However, the culture of the workplace and the number of foreign employees in the company were key determinants of whether refugees were able to build these social connections. The role of the line manager was important in establishing a workplace culture in which refugees were accepted and included. As one woman described.

> *When I started working here, no one spoke to me, but they smiled. It took some time to establish relationships with my colleagues. After my boss valued me as an employee in front of everyone, then my colleagues began inviting me to their lunches and weekend gatherings. They now also tell me that I could ask them for help.* Female, 35, 24 months in Japan.

Refugees who worked in companies with large numbers of foreign employees reported being much more likely to build social connections with colleagues, both Japanese and foreign. These connections were described by some refugees like a type of familial social bond that enabled integration support that reached beyond the workplace. Respondents reported that colleagues provided them with a variety of help, including, for example, developing linking connections with wider institutions and accompanying them to the hospital or city hall when needed. They also mentioned that although they could not speak Japanese well, they felt a sense of safety knowing that

their colleagues had experience of supporting other foreign employees and would therefore support them.

A woman refugee working in a catering factory told us that she "*felt better*" when foreign and Japanese employees who had faced similar problems with child-rearing offered her help. She explained how over time she developed friendships and new cultural knowledge from her colleagues and help with other aspects of everyday life. Colleagues had also showed interest in her culture, giving her a sense of integration as being a two-way process.

> *I prepared for my children the Japanese food I learned to make at work, and they were happy. When I talked to my colleagues about it, everyone was interested and began to teach me various Japanese dishes. When I learn a new meal at work, I am happy that my children are happy with it, so I do my best at work. One day, my colleagues asked me to teach them dishes from my culture. I was proud of myself. They are Japanese and foreigners from many different countries. They always invite me to lunch and snack time.* Female, 38, 60 months in Japan.

The role of colleagues was important as it was often the only real source of help with integration that refugees received locally. For example, the handouts from schools frequently contained specialized phrases and ideograms which many refugees struggled to understand even if they spoke some Japanese. It was generally women refugees who had to deal with such problems, and they felt that they could not seek assistance from the local support workers or their remote caseworkers with such everyday problems.

> *I don't feel comfortable listening to an interpreter through Skype because it is annoying. Also, I feel that it is difficult to ask local settlement support staff for help because I don't usually have much contact with them. As a result, we end up neglecting the problem, even if it is essential.* Female, 42, 24 months in Japan.

But female colleagues were often able to help with such problems. Refugee women who built close relations with their colleagues described them as being "sisters"; they could ask for assistance which made them feel comfortable and accepted. Individuals working in companies where colleague support was forthcoming were thus able to access resources in other integration domains with these networks generating friendship, a sense of safety in Japanese society and cultural knowledge.

However, not all respondents had such positive experiences, and this appeared to be related to the culture and diversity of the workforce and the willingness of their colleagues and employer to take responsibility for supporting integration. Some refugees reported that Japanese colleagues were not inclined to interact with or support them which limited their social connections. Individuals said they often felt alone and unsupported. Some reported being made to eat their lunch in a different room from Japanese employees and not being included on company outings. Lack of Japanese language skills were frequently cited by refugees as the reason why they were excluded from social activities and interactions. This lack of communication made it difficult for respondents to ask basic questions about the job, let alone about aspects of integration outside of the workplace.

When it comes to making groups, they don't want to have foreigners in them. They don't let me in because I can't speak Japanese. When I ask questions about my job at work, they sometimes ignore me because I don't understand the language. Male, 39, 48 months in Japan.

Respondents reported attempting to identify common ground with Japanese colleagues through which they hoped to foster positive rapport. Such a relationship could develop connections outside the workplace through this shared identity, but they were largely unsuccessful.

I have a Japanese colleague whose child goes to the same school. I told him about it at work, but we didn't get along particularly well after that. No interaction was created. It was regrettable that we couldn't get along with each other because we are parents with children who go to the same school. Female, 37, 24 months in Japan.

In companies where refugees struggled to establish social connections, they became isolated and withdrew from social contact. For example, one woman reported how her unhappiness and struggle to communicate at work led her to dislike Japanese people in general.

Because I don't speak Japanese, I am often blamed for someone else's failure and warned by my boss. After that, I stopped talking to the Japanese at work. I do not like the Japanese. Female, 40, 24 months in Japan.

Another respondent described how she preferred to quit her job and stay at home to avoid Japanese colleagues.

Even if I go to a volunteer circle to learn Japanese, volunteer teachers are my colleagues from the workplace. They make fun of my Japanese and me at work and in the volunteer circle behind my back. So, I don't want to go to work. For now, I want to stay at home. I was busy working so hard every day; I could not even afford to make friends. Female, 38, 107 months in Japan.

Caseworkers offered no support to refugees on how to access work with a different employer meaning respondents' options were limited. Thus, while the Japanese resettlement model enables early financial independence and in some cases the development of social networks that progress to friendships, ultimately refugees become stuck in the same company. Even when they have a positive experience in a company, they become dependent on their employer and their colleagues and struggle to be socially mobile because they lack support outside of the workplace. Furthermore, full time employment limits opportunities for connections to the wider local community and broader cultural orientation; there was little evidence of how they could progress over the longer term.

Refugee resettlement, social support in the UK

As noted above, social support is at the heart of the UK's CSS and volunteers provided refugees with wide ranging connections. Volunteers linked refugees to institutions and

accompanied them to register with a doctor's surgery, with schools, colleges and for welfare benefits. They helped to explain the CSS to those working in institutions, activities that were particularly important where often frontline staff had not previously encountered refugees or even people born overseas. Volunteers played an important facilitation and brokering role highlighting the needs of refugees and encouraging them to adapt their services to meet need (Phillimore et al. 2020).

> *Teachers at kid's school were also very helpful. They always came over to ours and talked to us.* Female, 30, 24 months in UK.

However, interviews revealed that the types of connections they developed depended upon social and geographical context. This in turn played out differently in terms of the different resources, or social capital, emanating from their connections and the ways in which such resources were able to support integration across different indicator areas.

Eleven refugees had been resettled to groups residing in urban areas with high levels of ethnic diversity and in some cases close to established Arabic speaking communities. The co-ethnic social connections attained via these relationships might be termed bonding capital and supported integration outcomes in other integration domains. These respondents reported that their location and sometimes introductions from CSS volunteers had enabled them to meet other refugees, or other Arabic speakers. Through these connections they accessed emotional resources including a sense of comfort and belonging, and important cultural knowledge from the perspective of former newcomers who understood their situation. These contacts also provided male refugees with support to understand and access the local job market.

> *With my fellow Syrians I exchange experiences and ideas of how to get a job with Arab speakers. Male, 38, 14 months in UK.*

Women refugees reported a sense of safety and security because they felt part of a community, they could socialise in familiar ways and reported that this impacted positively on their wellbeing. Frequently, refugees reported that they did not wish to overburden CSS volunteers by asking for help and that co-ethnic bonding networks provided a different conduit for assistance. Within co-ethnic communities' reciprocity was possible through exchanging different kinds of resource, i.e. shared food or childcare.

However, refugees living in ethnically diverse areas noted that they lacked English friends. There was a sense that their CSS groups were prepared to offer only functional support and operated purely as "*service-providers*". Meaningful interaction was said to be difficult because of the lack of a common language.

> *I wish to have English friends. I am very sociable person, but I don't have the means to talk to them.* Female, 30, 6 months in UK.

While such connections were reassuring, they did little to help newly arrived refugees feel they belonged locally. In these areas volunteer relations frequently remained as bridging connections with little sense of their having an emotional dimension.

However, CSS volunteers offered wide ranging support that helped refugees to make sense of British culture.

> *English are much more helpful, I ask them about many things, and they help me all the time. They are local and know more about issues.* Male, 49, 26 months in UK.

Volunteers accompanied refugees to medical, financial, and social appointments helping to explain institutional cultures and systems as they went along. Financial help was frequently offered from gifts of school uniform and toys for children, to help when welfare benefits were delayed and access to furniture and white goods.

> *The group makes sure that we have enough money and help us with any money related issues at all times, such as topping up phones* etc. Female, 33, 18 months in UK.

For refugees settled in rural areas and areas where there few or no other co-ethnics, the social bonds looked rather different. While some refugees still connected with other co-ethnics virtually, everyday connections were built with local people. Bonding networks are made with "people like me" and in these areas this meant connections across religious and ethnic cleavages. Refugee women with children developed relationships with volunteers who were also mothers finding common ground as parents and meeting initially via their children, before gradually developing friendships based on mutual care and support.

> *They also helped when I was in labour. CSS member took the kids to her house for 2 days and cared for them with her children until I got out of hospital with my new baby.* Female, 23, 20 months in UK.

Other refugees reported developing close relationships with specific volunteers. Over time refugee and volunteer families intertwined across generations and described each other as "like family".

> *They found that my son had learning difficulties, they bought him a tablet, a recorder and a mobile …. Most useful help was their kindness with my kids. They are like their grandparents. If they knew I needed help they offer help and plan even before any problem arises.* Male, 36, 11 months in the UK.

Those who developed bonding connections with CSS volunteers accessed wide ranging resources which facilitated integration across the indicator areas which included insight into UK culture, opportunities to learn and practice English language skills, and emotional support. Reciprocity was achieved through shared childcare and sharing of food. Although not all relations became deep, volunteers in less diverse areas were flexible in the support they offered. Interviews with volunteers reported elsewhere suggested that this was because they were aware that it was harder for refugees to be independent in remote areas with little public transport and poor access to services (Phillimore and Reyes 2019). For example,

volunteers helped male refugees to learn to drive offering driving lessons in their own cars. Most refugees living in these areas spoke of gradually developing a sense of belonging and feeling that they fitted in.

> At first, I was feeling foreign and strange but now we are more familiar with every-thing. Only the language remains to be a little problem. I found that people here com-municate when they smile to each other on the street. Female, 30, 24 months in UK.

But not every refugee developed bonding connections, and some reported having no close relationships whatsoever. These respondents spoke of feeling isolated and depressed. Some had tried to develop relationships with local people but despite offering help with tasks and being friendly they could not move beyond superficial social relations.

> They are neutral, there is no mix. I would love to help. Last time, my neighbour he was digging a tree nearby his house. I went and helped him. I felt relaxed and happy that I helped my neighbour. … .. Then nothing changed, the relationship con-tinued formal, good morning and good afternoon. Male, 36, 18 month in UK.

Women without bonding connections were unable to develop a sense of belonging and de-scribed how their wellbeing was undermined. Lack of bonds was more prevalent in rural areas and where there were no co-ethnic communities. Even if they had developed relations with local people, respondents in less diverse areas reported the absence of bonding relations with co-ethnics as problematic despite the help and friendship offered by volunteers.

> After few months of living here, I felt emotionally exhausted because I needed to speak Arabic. Male, 54, 4 months in UK.

Regardless of geographical and social context, lack of support to access employment was a prominent theme, particularly among refugee men. Men expressed frustration with being un-able to gain work and reported feeling "useless" and depressed that they were not able to sup-port their family and attain the self-reliance reported by male refugees in the Japanese resettlement programme. Accessing work was even slower in rural areas as the type and num-ber of jobs available were more limited, and public transport was poor and expensive.

> It is a nice area and the people here are very kind, but it was difficult for us …. Trains to the city are long, unavailable and expensive. Last week, I waited at the station for 1 h then we were told that the train was cancelled. I was in the cold for 1 h, I caught the flu. Male, 36, 6 months in UK.

So, while the UK's CSS model supported refugee integration across a number of domains, with refugees making at least some progress in language learning, educa-tion, becoming networked locally, addressing health problems and developing a sense of belonging. Most male refugees reported extreme frustration at their inabil-ity to access work. No matter how good their connections with CSS volunteers the inability to be self-reliant was problematic and even detrimental to integration across other indicator areas.

> *I expected to not become depressed, stressed and hate my life, but here I feel a new type of pain and distraught, I do not feel like a man anymore, I mean I don't feel like I can look after my own family. I feel like a human that has expired and is useless.* Male, 50, 14 months in UK.

Discussion

This paper has explored the ways that refugee resettlement programmes prioritising different integration domains shape refugee experiences of integration more widely. The theoretical framing for this paper draws on the principles underpinning the Indicators of Integration (Ndofor-Tah et al. 2019). The four intersecting principles are discussed in turn: context, multi-dimensionality, multi-directionality and shared responsibility. Integration theory highlights the importance of the socio-cultural and economic context into which refugees are expected to integrate at both national level (Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas 2016), and at level of neighbourhoods and workplaces (Phillimore 2020; Platts-Fowler and Robinson 2015). Japan and UK provided two contrasting *contexts*, one a relatively homogeneous host society, the other a more diverse and multicultural context. However, it was the local level - community and company - that shaped the nature of social connections formed and broader integration experiences of refugees in this study. In Japan, refugees working in companies with large numbers of foreign employees reported being more likely to build social connections with colleagues than those working in less diverse companies. In the UK refugees in areas with high levels of ethnic diversity established co-ethnic connections, whereas those in rural areas were more likely to have closer relationships with their English CS volunteers. In both contexts, diversity appears to enable refugees to access a wider range of social connections which included bonds as well as bridges. Linked to this, the second element of our theoretical framing is the *multi-dimensional* nature of integration. Although the extent of the inter-connections between domains depended on context, in both Japan and UK we show how possessing social bonds supported integration in other domains (Ndofor-Tah et al. 2019; Suter and Magnusson 2015). For example, generating feelings of safety, expressed through respondents as a sense of belonging. Bridging connections too were also connected to other domains. In both countries bridging networks enabled the development of linking connections to institutions but also importantly to the cultural knowledge refugees needed in order to settle and to opportunities to practice the local language.

Our theoretical framing recognises that integration is not a linear process (Van Hieu 2008). Rather it is *multi-directional* that it is possible to feel integrated in some contexts and marginalised in others (Cheung and Phillimore 2013; Ndofor-Tah et al. 2019). We observed that in Japan in the absence of social connections refugees could become isolated and withdraw from efforts to connect with Japanese society. In the UK the absence of employment for male refugees was problematic with individuals describing losing hope over time and feeling isolated and depressed. Arguably in both these situations integration processes were reversed at least in some domains. Perhaps the situation will change for UK refugees over time, as most had been in the UK just over a year, although evidence suggests that long-term unemployment for resettled refugees is the norm rather than the exception (see Collyer et al. 2018). Inherent in the

Japanese resettlement programme is early entry into full-time employment but this appeared in some cases to circumscribe the life worlds of respondents as they had limited opportunities to integrate across other domains in the longer-term. They lacked opportunities to engage in higher education or language classes, or establish wider social connections locally.

Reflecting more recent thinking around the bi-directional nature of integration (Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas 2016), the final principle is that of *shared responsibility.* There were indications that actors at the local level were taking responsibility to promote integration, although different parties took different levels of responsibility for supporting integration depending on context. In Japan refugees were heavily dependent on employers and colleagues with employers having a major role in providing training and supporting skills development, but less focused on development of social relationships. In the UK responsibility sat with CSS volunteers who bring with them a range of connections and skills to support integration, but without the support of employers. Findings were not uniform in the UK, and refugee experiences differed across social and geographic contexts. In both countries, volunteer or employee relations supported the development of social links but some refugees reported a deep sense of isolation as they lacked social connections. In the UK most lacked financial independence and while they possessed connections with volunteers not all felt those connections equated with care that enabled the sense of safety needed to feel at home.

Our contrast highlights the importance of considering cultural norms when thinking about refugee integration. Japanese society has long been thought to revolve around companies, with being employed and self-reliant key to being regarded as a productive member of society and dependence on social welfare stigmatised. Male refugees thus reported a strong attachment to work, with their self-esteem appearing to be reinforced by adhering to Japanese values. In the UK, much emphasis is placed upon language acquisition and social mixing. Although achievements in these areas were important to refugees, especially women, being employed and supporting one's family was said to be a core value for male refugees and inability to achieve these ends problematic.

This paper has highlighted that in both countries integration is gendered (Cheung and Phillimore 2016), with women prioritising the development of social bonds and men prioritising financial self-sufficiency. Different refugee populations are settled in UK and Japan, so we have used the principles and domains of the Indicator framework to contrast models, rather than integration outcomes. Both models have strengths and short-comings and highlight interactions between domains and the importance of the theoretical insights embedded in the framework. Evidence was offered around the critical importance of both employment and social connections for access to support across other domains (language, wellbeing, cultural knowledge) and in terms of refugees' development of a sense of belonging. Both cases offer new understanding about the nature of social bonds which are frequently typified as "people like me" generally defined in the broader literature as co-ethnics (Pieterse 2003). Time is a key factor here and it seems over time bridging relations evolve to bonds as individuals encounter common ground in areas such as employment or parenthood. More research is needed to identify the factors which influence the crossover point from bridges to bonds.

What is notable in the cases of both Japan and the UK is that responsibility for refugee integration is devolved either to employers or volunteers. While both clearly play a

valuable role it is important to reinforce the need for the state to take ultimate responsibility for refugee resettlement. Japan's conflation of refugees with low-skilled labour undermines the overall purpose of resettlement programmes: to resettle the vulnerable and facilitate integration. The failure in both countries to offer state supported infrastructure in terms of access to caseworkers, long-term intensive language training and support to gain work (the UK) or to be socially mobile (Japan) may ultimately undermine life chances. Currently the quality of support that refugees receive is inconsistent because it is left to the discretion of employers and volunteers.

With the impetus to grow resettlement schemes globally and the dire need for resettlement places, it is useful to reflect on what our findings mean for future developments. Neither scheme offered a truly holistic approach, but the importance of refugees benefiting from shared responsibility for wider integration, whether with an employer or a community was evident. Work is recognised in policy as a key marker of integration, and as this research shows, is incredibly important to refugees themselves. However, our findings suggest that integration into employment alone may not lead to better integration outcomes in the longer term, and that policy should also attend to other domains. The Japanese case suggests that without finding ways to enable social mobility rather than permanent down-skilling, alongside support in other indicator areas such as language learning and the development of social networks outside of the workplace, long-term integration goals around communication and contributions to wider society may not be achieved. On the other hand in the UK we see that social networks alone are not enough and without a strategy to develop employability refugees may feel less integrated over time as they struggle to achieve the desired independence. Thus, resettlement initiatives might incorporate both employers and local communities working in collaboration, and underpinned by some state infrastructure, to support newly arrived refugees particularly where local areas or companies have little experience of diversity. While such an approach may be more costly, ultimately front-loading support may prove more beneficial for refugees and policymakers, in reducing the long-term dependency seen in the UK (Collyer et al. 2018) or the social immobility evident in Japan.

Authors' contributions
Phillimore: Led the article making substantial contributions to the conception, design and draft of the work. Morrice: Substantively revised the draft and contributed refugee integration theory and drafted the UK Policy sections. Hashimoto: Drafted Japanese policy parts of the paper and commented on the draft. Kabe: Interviewed Japanese participants, drafted the Japan empirical contributions and commented on the draft. Hassan: Interviewed Syrian refugees and commented on the draft. Reyes: Interviewed CSS volunteers, formatted and revised the draft. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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