

Opening the Door to Employment:
An Evaluation of Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital
Area's Refugee Employment Services Program

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Abstract:

The United States annually accepts the most refugees for permanent resettlement than any other country (Singer & Wilson, 2007; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2012). However, most of the studies that critically examine and refine best practices on how to effectively work with refugee communities emerge from the United Kingdom due to its historical status as a refugee receiving country and the growth of its refugee resettlement program over time (International Organization for Migration, 2009, p. 13). This research study attempts to fill the current gap in refugee literature related to the U.S. through its evaluation of refugee employment services provided at Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area (LSS/NCA), a voluntary resettlement agency for refugees of Prince George's and Montgomery County, Maryland. Specifically, this study examines the factors that facilitate and hinder a refugee's employment possibilities in the U.S. Adopting a mixed methods research design, this research study collected survey data (n=26 clients) and focus group (FG) data (n=2 FGs) from male and female refugee clients. Overall, results demonstrate that although the services this agency offers play a vital role in helping refugees find employment, there are many more steps that must be taken in order to promote social integration and empowerment of refugee clients. Most clients express a desire for LSS/NCA to create a temporary, preferential-treatment employment program through the strengthening of LSS/NCA's relationship with local businesses and organizations. Programs which assist refugees in seeking employment must not only be maintained but strengthened through a participatory evaluation process. Employment programs for refugees are an integral part of the resettlement process and provide ongoing and enhanced cultural adaptation, English language learning, and well-being for this population.

I. Introduction

“If *they* want a job, *they* can come to us.”¹

Who are *they*? Where do *they* come from? What type of skills and education do *they* possess? All of these questions, and many more, need to be identified and answered when refugees are preparing to apply for employment in the United States (U.S.). The process of filling out an electronic or paper job application is an easy task for many Americans. However, for recently resettled refugees, the process is unfamiliar and complex. The anxiety of needing to find a job is only one of the many challenges that refugees must overcome during their first months in their host country. An overall positive resettlement experience is derived from a variety of factors, including the “extent of services available [at the resettlement agency], the degree of cumulative stress experienced by the immigrant, and the discrepancy between the individual’s expectations and the quality of actual life in the United States,” (Drachman and Halberstadt, 1992, p. 72). A in-depth understanding of the complexity of the resettlement process has prompted U.S.-based organizations to create new programs and opportunities to meet the needs of refugees throughout all stages of the resettlement process. One example is the upsurge of employment service programs and training opportunities for refugees provided at local community-based organizations. Such organizations have expanded their services through the use of federal and state funding to provide counseling and technical advice for refugees and asylees during the job search process.

An example of an organization which has adapted to meet the needs of its local refugee population is Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area (LSS/NCA). LSS/NCA is a Voluntary Refugee Resettlement Agency (Volag) that offers employment

¹ Anonymous food service employer, personal communication, Thursday, January 26, 2012. Silver Spring, Maryland.

services to clients at its Silver Spring, Maryland office. From my semester-long internship at LSS/NCA, I encountered a few potential employers at small, retail stores and food service establishments who were excited at the prospect of increasing their workplace diversity.² These individuals already had a pre-existing connection to the refugee community, whether through their own refugee status or knowledge of the realities faced by their fellow community members. However, the majority of the business owners and clothing store managers that I talked to when I conducted community outreach gave me responses characterized by disinterest and, sometimes, prejudice.

These types of reactions, though not uncommon, were difficult for me to hear because I am deeply compassionate toward members of local immigrant and refugee communities. Moran and Petsod (2003) confirm that despite the illegality of it, “[s]ome employers...discriminate...on the basis of national origin, immigration status, appearance, or accent,” (p. 16). This attitude has historical roots. Beginning in the 20th century and persisting throughout American history, the image of immigrants as performing solely unskilled jobs has been embedded into our consciousness (Ohio State University, “Responses to Immigration”). This view continues to be perpetuated today, as *New York Times* contributor, Tamar Jacoby affirms: “[i]mmigrant workers...are the only labor available to do many unskilled jobs,” (August 18, 2011). These myths were dispelled throughout my time working one-on-one with the refugee clients of LSS/NCA, where I encountered many clients who had received a university-level education and held previous employment as professionals in their home country. Ultimately, prejudice stems from fear, and many Americans are afraid of the increasing ethnic and linguistic diversity that is becoming more prevalent across the country (Popple & Leighninger, 2005, p. 171). However, these feelings of fear should not be covered up by generalizations about the newcomers.

² The internship occurred from January- May 2012.

In 2009, the U.S. resettled 60,191 refugees (U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants 2009). Additionally, the U.S. is the largest funder of UNHCR; in 2011, the U.S. contributed \$696,521,753 (UNHCR, 2012). The U.S. refugee resettlement program bears symbolic importance to the U.S. government as well. The U.S. Department of State affirms: “The U.S. refugee resettlement program reflects the United States’ highest values and aspirations to compassion, generosity and leadership” (2012). Thus, the U.S. refugee resettlement program has financial, political, and social implications. America’s continued commitment to resettling refugees ultimately rests upon the success of current programs that help this population become fully integrated into society. Employment service programs for refugees play an important role in these outcomes. For these reasons, my research aims to answer the following question: **What factors facilitate and hinder a refugee’s employment possibilities in the U.S.?** The study sample comprises 96 participants, 74 of whom are eligible refugee clients of LSS/NCA from Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 and 22 eligible clients from the first quarter of FY2012 whose files for employment have been closed—meaning the client has held a job for at least 90 days after working with an Employment Advocate at LSS/NCA.

This study, which has been inspired by the methods of participatory evaluation (Minkler and Hancock, 2003, p. 136), has two goals. First, it will directly assist LSS/NCA in identifying the ways in which they can improve their services for clients, given that there is currently no such evaluation in place. Second, it will also work towards LSS/NCA’s goal of client empowerment since the core of participatory evaluation is giving a voice to those who are directly affected by a program or issue and, in the process, understanding their experiences (Springett, 2003). By bearing witness to a refugee’s experience throughout the job search process, existing programs are strengthened and gain an emic understanding of

their clients' perspectives on the social services and programs. This study will form the basis of a future, large-scale research project with other refugee communities in the U.S.

II. Relationship to Current Research

Scholarship related to refugees and development has been published since the beginning of the 20th century. In the past twenty years, more focus has been dedicated to understanding refugees' realities after being resettled in their host country. This process is not only emotionally and physically trying, but immediately following their entry into the host country refugees face a continual stream of difficulties related to differences in language, culture, and social norms. Social workers and refugee resettlement agencies play an important role in helping refugees adapt to their new environment (Le-Doux and Stephens, 1992). Training opportunities and language learning have been the foci of programs and educational interventions spearheaded by these organizations. While the extant literature examines refugee resettlement programs in the U.K. (another major refugee receiving country), little research to date evaluates refugee employment placement programs in the U.S. This study, therefore, attempts to fill a critical gap in the literature.

Migration & Development

Migration has been given a lot of attention as a research topic in international relations literature because, at its core, it increases contact, communication, and cooperation between nations on an individual level. In the global arena, the United Nations (UN) is actively involved in refugee issues. All UN directives related to refugees come from the UNHCR, which was created in 1950 by the UN General Assembly (UNHCR, 2012). The basis for all of UNHCR's work comes from the 1951 Status on the Convention of Refugees. This document was signed by twenty-six countries in Geneva, Switzerland (Wilkinson, 2001, p. 2). The 1951 Convention defines and outlines the rights of refugees and asylees while also

providing information about which individuals cannot apply for refugee status, such as war criminals (UNHCR, 2012).

More recent discussions surrounding the 1951 Convention relate to its applicability to contemporary refugee issues, especially related to gender-based discrimination and the harm which women often try to escape in their countries of origin (Straw, 2001, p. 9). Additionally, the UN World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen (1995) “has incorporated the call to reestablish resettlers’ and refugees’ livelihoods and rights into its special Program of Action,” (Cernea & McDowell, 2000, p. 11). This international stance has important implications for this study because this study will examine the role of employment in the promotion of social integration, which aligns with the UN’s goal of “promoting full employment as a basic priority of economic and social policy,” (*ibid*).

Just as the UN aims to promote international cooperation, Stiftung (2011) also concurs that the appropriate treatment for international migration issues lies in cooperation among states. He proposes the establishment of a system of protocols for all countries to abide by when receiving migrants (p. 16). Another resolution for international migration can be taken from the broader international development perspective of Amartya Sen. In short, he believes that “[g]reater freedom enhances the ability of people to help themselves and also to influence the world, and these matters are central to the process of development” (1999, p. 18). With more freedom in their home countries people will not need to seek refuge abroad or in bordering nations in order to feel safe and express their rights. This area is of particular importance because “U.S. law...recognizes that refugees are people with well-founded fears of being prosecuted if returned to their homelands and that they have certain rights under international law, most fundamentally the right not to be returned to face persecution,” (Frelick, 2011, p. 138). This definition was adopted after the U.S. signed the 1951 Status on the Convention of Refugees. Thus, there is certainly a need to protect all individuals and

guarantee them their individual human freedoms, whether this occurs through the promotion of human rights in a refugee's home country so that they can eventually return or through their protection in democratic, developed countries like the U.S.

Contributions of Social Work toward Finding Viable Solutions

Other institutional but more micro-level solutions for refugee issues involve the improvement of social work practices in refugee receiving countries. When refugees first arrive they instantly confront language and cultural barriers in the host country. The majority of literature on social work practices with refugee clients views refugees as the consumer of social services, including the support given by social workers. This perspective is used to understand how social workers can work around the language and cultural differences in their interactions with refugees in order to achieve successful outcomes (Le-Doux and Stephens, 1992, p. 36). A social worker, P. Morrison, confirmed in his 1966 study that language and cultural differences were critical issues for refugees to overcome when placed in both New Zealand and regions of Europe. However, New Zealanders generally exhibited more tolerance to the newcomers (In Nash et al., 2006, p. 4-5), which facilitated refugees' transitions. The facilitating role of social workers and the social services from Volags are especially helpful during a refugee's first months of arrival and throughout the social integration process. Volags can also contribute by educating communities about the added value that diversity brings to their community.

However, Torezani, Colic-Peisker, and Fozdar (2008) found that there is a disconnect in Australia between social service providers and refugees with employment assistance. Instead of refining the traditional refugee training programs, there needs to be a shift in the paradigm to foment "a nexus between refugees' perceptions and use of employment service providers... in order [for refugees] to improve their employment outcomes and reach their occupational potential," (p. 148).

Nash, Wong, and Trinlin (2006) also discuss the new role that social workers are undertaking to assist their increasingly diverse client base. New procedures and interactions with immigrant, refugee, and asylee clients increasingly involve the intersection of “human rights, social justice and advocacy work...community development...and problem-solving with individuals and their families. Given the nature of the work involved, social workers in this field often need to have specialized knowledge and skills at all three levels” (345).

This research is relevant to the current study. LSS/ NCA plays a multidimensional role when staff members interact with clients. Even though the formal focus of LSS/NCA’s program in the Silver Spring Maryland office is Refugee Employment Services, based on my observations, it is clear that they also cover a variety of topics during every meeting with a client, including educational, emotional, and legal support and advice (e.g., explaining a worker’s rights in the U.S.).

A Refugee’s Experience

As confirmed by my interactions with refugees at LSS/NCA, there are many refugees that are annually accepted and resettled in the U.S. who are highly-skilled (i.e., they have possessed a professional job in the past and have obtained some level of post-secondary education). However, as Lamba (2008) notes in the case of Canada, “a refugee’s quality of employment in Canada is still below the quality enjoyed in his or her former home. Most refugees are under-employed in Canada relative to their employment status in their home country,” (p. 58). The same can be said for the majority of refugees who are resettled in the U.S.

Despite their qualifications and eagerness to find work, refugees in the U.S. face extensive practical constraints and structural barriers. A specific example of the struggles faced by refugees in the U.S. is relayed by the organization, *Friends of Refugees*. They posted on their website a newspaper report from 2010 that found that three Somali refugee women in

Jamestown, North Dakota went to a nursing home to apply for a job only to be told that it was no longer available. However, when an American woman, who was one of the refugee's friends, called the nursing home, the employer reported that the position was still open (Coen, 2010).

This type of attitude is not isolated to refugees in the U.S. In Birmingham, England there was a similar discriminatory incidence involving the hiring bias experienced by refugees. A man who was interviewed about the event explained that “the problem is that many employers are ignorant and think that refugee means “terrorist” or trouble-maker or someone who might be deported in a week,” (Worrall, October 3 2000). However, the importance of obtaining employment for a refugee is greater than just the prospect of earning money; its significance also has implications for the social integration process of refugees (Feeney, 2000, p. 343). In other words, employment opportunities help refugees to not only gain self-sufficiency and provide for their families, but also increase the understanding between the refugee community and the broader society in which they are working and living. Bloch (2000) confirms: “Although the resettlement of refugees is affected by a number of factors, there is some consensus that fluency in host society language skills and paid employment are both crucial for the successful resettlement of refugee people” (p. 197). Therefore, it is important to investigate whether such programs that aim to work toward the social integration of their refugee clients and assist them in obtaining employment are actually effective in reaching these goals.

Although there are presently not many studies published on individual refugees' experiences of social integration and the acculturation process in the U.S., one can draw insight from studies conducted in other Western countries on the resettlement process. Specifically, Phillimore's 2011 study which employed individual interviews with refugees from Birmingham, England found that British domestic policies that are currently in place do

not give refugees much choice throughout the resettlement process, leading to “psychosocial stress and [a] struggle to integrate,”(p.1). This reiterates the importance of centering refugees’ voices, previous experiences, and current expectations when designing policies and programs so that they are effective for all parties involved.

Ling’s 2008 interviews with Asian American women for her book, *Voices of the Heart*, also reveal similar social struggles of refugee women. Ha Che, a Vietnamese refugee who lives in St. Louis, Missouri, stated the following: ““When I first came here, I felt I could do a lot of things. But as time passed, I lowered my expectations and have tried to cope with new ways of life. A lot of people cannot cope with the new ways,”” (p. 331). In order for employment interventions to provide an ample amount of benefits for both local businesses and refugee community members, it is important for the employment programs to take advantage of the excitement and energy that refugees feel after initially settling in the U.S., eager to start a new life in a safer environment. This can be done through a community organization’s maintenance of strong ties to local businesses so that job placement is made efficiently and strategically.

Evaluations of Current Employment Programs

Even if strong community ties exist between refugee resettlement agencies and local businesses, other barriers prohibit the economic progress and employment prospects of refugees. In her 2009 study, Michelle Swearingen conducted a quantitative analysis on data from the 1980 and 1985 U.S. Census in order to determine whether the current framework for the refugee resettlement program, which is an economic expenditure on the part of the U.S. government, is a worthwhile expense for taxpayers. Her analysis concluded that the resettlement process is not functioning well. There is a need for many improvements, such as a focus on employment programs, finding ways to diminish the impact of the “gender wage gap” between male and female refugees, and increasing the number of resettled refugees in

the U.S. so that an improved program can positively impact more lives of refugees from around the world as this is consistent with the ideals of American foreign policy (p. ii). Gender dynamics among refugees are also examined by Boyd in her 1999 study. She found that in the case of Canada's refugee resettlement program for permanent resettlement there is more attention paid to gender sensitivity than in other resettlement nations. Nonetheless, "relative to men, women remain quite under-represented in the humanitarian-based flows to Canada," (p. 22). Therefore, gender factors must be considered and not ignored in refugee employment programs.

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) also published a report in March 2011 on the effectiveness of the current refugee resettlement programs and the employment outcomes of the refugees using data from 2009. The GAO revealed that the assistance that the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) provides to social service agencies so that they can fund programs and services for their refugee clients were relatively ineffective towards "improving the economic status of refugees," (p. 2). What is most concerning is the finding that in "fiscal year 2007 between 59 percent and 65 percent of refugees receiving cash assistance from ORR programs entered employment within 4 to 8 months. [However], by fiscal year 2009, these rates decreased to between 31 percent and 52 percent," (*Ibid*). The major questions that remain are: What types of skills do these refugees possess? Is skill level the priority factor in successfully finding employment in the U.S. within 4 to 8 months?

Lee (1998) also takes a critical view of refugee employment programs. His research involves a comparative analysis on employment outcomes between Southeast Asian refugee households and Southeast Asian nuclear family households. Despite attempts made by federally-funded refugee resettlement programs to curb these disparities, "the average number of weeks of job training for household members was not found to be effective for increasing [the] number of wage-earners," (p. 117). Lee's research sheds insight on statistics

of the ORR that reveal only a 5.6 percent participation rate of Vietnamese and 5.3 percent of other Southeast Asian refugees in job training programs upon arrival in the U.S. Therefore, even if job training programs exist as an essential part of a resettlement organization's services, it is important to track analytical data on participation rates among the different refugee groups in order to understand who is benefiting and who is remaining at the margins. Taken together, the results from the current systems of evaluation represent some of the institutional shortcomings of refugee employment programs. However, there is still a need to engage refugees in ongoing program evaluations at the individual level by asking them to share their perspectives on the programs.

Economic Outcomes for Refugees

Priority must also be placed on ensuring that employed refugees are treated equally in the workplace. Refugees will become frustrated if they realize they are not receiving equal pay, and they will be more likely to develop mistrust toward the greater society, inhibiting the formation of strong social cohesion. Recent research conducted by Connor (2010) investigates the existence of a “refugee gap” in wages, when refugees’ salaries are compared to the salaries of other immigrants for the same or similar jobs (p.1). His analysis concludes that even after accounting for extraneous variables, there does indeed exist a gap in wages, with refugees usually receiving lower financial compensation for their labor.

Moran and Petsod (2003) also support the claim that there is a significant wage gap between immigrants and native-born workers in the U.S.³ They highlight the following result: “Forty-three percent of immigrant and 44 percent of refugee families with full-time workers have incomes below 200 percent of native-born workers,” meaning that these individuals are classified as the working poor in American society (p.11). Codell et al. (2011)

³ His definition of immigrations includes individuals who legally enter the U.S., refugees that have been resettled in the U.S., and asylees that have been granted asylum status in the U.S.

also found that the more years an individual spends as a refugee before arriving in the U.S., the lower their chances are to obtain “meaningful employment,” in Salt Lake City, Utah (p.1). They suggest the use of vocational training to improve the employment outcomes for refugees in the U.S.

One factor that can greatly increase a refugee’s chances of finding employment is the existence of an established social network for refugees to draw upon to help ease the adjustment process into the area that they are resettled. If refugees are resettled into an area with others of a similar ethnic background, they will be more likely to expand their social network sooner and, possibly, find a job through their new, personal connections. A social network “refers to the web of social relationships that surround individuals... Homogeneous networks, networks with more reciprocal linkages, and networks with closer geographical proximity were also more effective in providing affective and instrumental support (Heaney and Israel 2008, p. 190-2). The study, *Employment Retention, Area of Origin and Type of Social Support among Refugees in the Chicago Area* supports these conclusions; this case study found that when Southeast Asian asylees are not resettled into an area where there is an already existing Southeast Asian community, they are “less successful in maintaining stable job placements when compared to... [their] Eastern European counterparts,” in the same geographical area who have social linkages to draw upon (Majka & Mullan, 1992, p.1).

Lamba also supports the claim that refugees tend to stick with “kin and friends to increase their employment opportunities,” (2008, p. 47). One factor that helps promote the strengthening of refugees’ social networks is the fact that the ORR, under the government agency of Health and Human Services (HHS) considers “informational-related factors such as friction of distance, migration chains, labor procurement, and resettlement intermediaries,” when deciding the geographic placement for refugees in the U.S. (Brown, Mott, Malecki 2007, p. 1). A migration chain is a pre-existing refugee community, usually composed of

individuals of the same ethnic group. This is important for refugees and government agencies because it makes it easier to facilitate a refugee's cultural transition by seeking support from fellow refugees in the community. Moreover, it makes the logistical processes of connecting refugees to social services easier since pre-existing organizations will have already been working with refugees in the area. These two factors help decrease the stress and confusion that will be experienced by the refugee during the resettlement process in the U.S.

Improving Employment Possibilities through Education

Even though the influence of social support systems is crucial for refugees, interventions aimed at improving employment opportunities through training and education have also been studied in order to evaluate their effectiveness. More recent approaches to improve social integration of refugees in the United Kingdom have focused on social capital theory and the use of informal learning (Morrice, 2007). However, workforce development programs, which rely heavily on theories of human capital, have also been noted for their successful results in improving the economic prospects for refugee workers.

Programs are most effective when they: (1) integrate skills training and language and literacy acquisition, (2) work with employers to assist in meeting the needs of immigrant workers, (3) educate immigrant workers about cultural and workplace norms, and (4) target sectors that offer advancement opportunities (Moran and Petsod 2003, p. 22).

It is important that these four conditions are taken into consideration to improve employment opportunities for refugees and asylees because, as Moran and Petsod reveal, immigrants in America make up one eighth of the laborers in the American workforce, but they comprise one fourth of low-wage workers (p.1). New pedagogical literature also increasingly underscores the necessity to make human capital training more culturally-responsive. Instead of assuming that one model will work for all refugee communities, we

must acknowledge that “‘human development is a cultural process,’ (Rogoff 2003, p. 3)...[W]e have to be careful not to assume essentialist stances, assuming that all East-Asian parents hold particular beliefs or that Chinese caregivers behave in particular ways with children,” (Anderson and Morrison 2011, p. 134). Educational and training programs play an integral role in the creation of employment opportunities for refugees, but it is time for changes to be made to them so that they consider more contextual and cultural components.

Riemer (2001) reports on a successful employment placement program which draws upon the pre-existing skills of Southeast Asian refugees to build and sustain a relationship with a local woodworking company in the U.S. called Concordance Steps. This company has hired many Vietnamese, Cambodian, and other refugees from Southeast Asia (p. 112). Instead of assuming that refugees will take any job, the community worked to identify the skill sets of the refugees and find ways for local businesses to employ refugees in similar fields. This method has not only worked to dispel cultural and social myths about refugees, it has also increased economic and emotional outcomes for the refugees.

In sum, such strong relationships go a long way in promoting the social integration of refugees, with give and take from both parties. Even though refugees needed to “scale down their expectations and narrow their dreams, they were appreciative of the respect of supervisors and colleagues at Concordance, challenged by the demands of the work itself, and grateful for the company’s wage and benefit package,” (p. 141). Producing positive employment experiences for refugees needs to be at the forefront of employment service programs. Concordance Steps should not be the exception; the creativity and utility evident in Concordance Steps should characterize every refugee employment service program.

III. Methodology

Context

In order to further the goal of ensuring empowerment and economic stability for refugees in the U.S., this research project will answer the following question: What factors facilitate and hinder a refugee's employment possibilities in the U.S.? This question is important to answer because "[t]he barriers refugees encounter [range from] understanding communication, learning new skills, and adapting to new communities and patterns of employment [which] contribute to their loss of self-esteem, and increase their needs for cross-cultural awareness," (Adkins, 1993, p. 82). The primary hypothesis (H1) is that the most important factor hindering a refugee's employment possibilities in the U.S. is lack of knowledge and/ or proficiency in the English language. The secondary hypothesis (H2) is that the most important factor facilitating a refugee's employment possibilities in the U.S. is access to resources (i.e., emotional, social, and financial resources) pertaining to employment services from LSS/NCA. These hypotheses were developed through my knowledge of the existing literature describing the employability of refugees in their host country, and the salient finding that ensuring the right of refugees to work in their host country promotes social inclusion (Bloch 2000 in Mullins & Jones, 2009, p. 107).

Despite the acknowledgement of the economic and social importance of refugees' employability, currently, there is relatively little research evaluating employment services for refugees that are resettled in the U.S. The most relevant research that currently exists was conducted in 1993 on The Spring Institute's Workstyles employment program for the refugee community of Denver, Colorado (Adkins). This employment intervention is a "two-week intensive course focusing on pre-employability and personal effectiveness skills, utilizing a competency-based approach. The content includes developing resumes, completing application forms, practicing interviews, and making phone calls about jobs," (*ibid*, p. 83). In

other refugee receiving countries, there have been analytical studies on the provision of employment services, for example, in Australia (Torezani, Colic-Peisker, and Fozdar 2008), Canada (Lamba 2008), and the United Kingdom (Bloch 2000). Therefore, the present evaluation study on the employment services provided by LSS/NCA will closely relate to Adkin's goal but also work toward filling the current gap in literature about U.S.-based employment programs for refugees.

Like most nonprofits, it can be stated that LSS/NCA views "themselves as accountable along three different levels or dimensions: (1) upward to individual donors, funders, and their national voluntary agency; (2) laterally to one another and themselves, as the staff, volunteers, community board members, and the community agencies with whom they work; and (3)

downward to their clients and beneficiaries and the local community," (Christensen and Ebrahim 2006, p. 198). These three interrelated yet distinct parties are important to be aware of because they effect

Figure 1.1: TAP Key Partners (Lutheran Social Services New Staff Orientation Manual, p. 3-4).

Maryland Office of Refugees and Asylees (MORA)

Montgomery County Refugee Training Center at Montgomery College (RTC)

Suburban Washington Resettlement Center

The International Rescue Committee (IRC)

Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC)

Kurdish Human Rights Watch (KHRW)

Arbor Education and Training

and explain the ways in which an LSS employee must divide his/her time, resources, and attention. In Figure 1.1 the key partnerships that LSS/NCA maintains are listed. These organizations are either funders or other agencies assisting the local refugee community.

The office in which I intern is in Silver Spring, Maryland, although LSS/NCA has multiple offices throughout the Washington metropolitan area. In Silver Spring, the focus is on employment services, which is made possible through the "federally-funded Targeted

Assistance Program (TAP) [which] provides supplemental support to States for services to refugees under the Refugee Resettlement Program,” (Lutheran Social Services New Staff Orientation Manual, p. 2).

The overarching goal of TAP is to promote the self-sufficiency of clients through employment. There are five ways in which this goal is achieved: (1) recruitment and referral; (2) intake and assessment;

Figure 1.2: TAP Program Goals FY2012 (Lutheran Social Services New Staff Orientation Manual, p. 3).

- **Intake:** 160 clients
- **Job placement:** 128 clients (80%)
 - **Full-time placements:** 102 clients (80%)
 - **Part-time placements:** 26 clients (20%)
- **90-day retention:** 109 clients (85%)
- **Full-time jobs with benefits:** 82 clients (80%)
- **Average hourly wage:** \$9.00

(3) training and support services; (4) job development and job placement; and, (5) job retention and job upgrade (*ibid*). The specific goals of TAP for FY2012 can be read in the Figure 1.2 above.

There is a need for assisting refugees with the job search process because it is an extremely difficult task for this population. Torezani, Colic-Peisker, and Fozdar (2008) describe:

The main challenges refugees face when seeking employment include poor English, non-recognition of skills and the lack of local job experience and referees. These are challenges that refugees share with other CALD⁴ migrants, but given that refugees come from culturally and/or linguistically distant contexts and may also be dealing with trauma, they face a comparatively greater disadvantage. (p. 138)

⁴ CALD stands for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

Although this study is limited to a relatively small sample of refugee clients at one nonprofit organization, the fact that it draws on emic perspectives is an important contribution in providing a detailed understanding of the specific employment challenges for refugees. This study is supported by statements in Potocky-Tripodi's (2009) chapter in the *Social Workers' Desk Reference* entitled "Effective Practice with Refugees and Immigrants." She writes: "Social workers should continually evaluate their practice and the policies and procedures within their agencies to determine how they might better serve and be more effective with refugee and immigrant clients," (p. 948). The implementation of an evaluation study at LSS/NCA is both necessary and beneficial to this organization and its mission.

Conceptualization

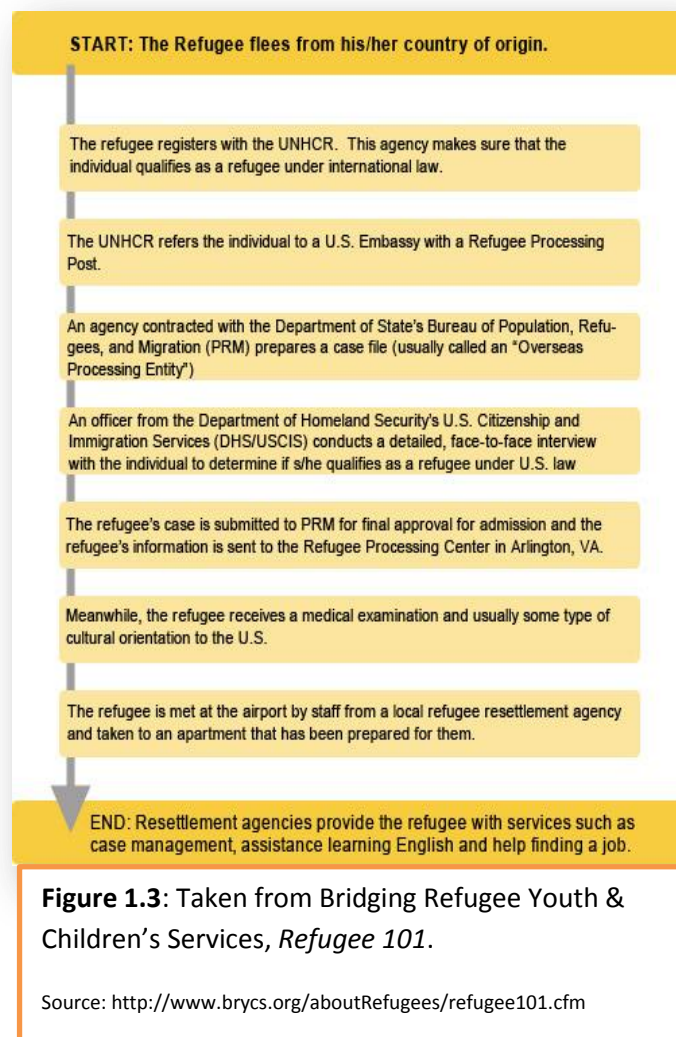
Clients from LSS/NCA are the population of focus for this study.

The criteria include those clients that are eligible for TAP services at LSS/NCA, specifically,

"refugees, asylees, victims of human trafficking, and Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders,"

(Lutheran Social Services New Staff Orientation Manual, p. 3).⁵

A Special Immigrant Visa from the U.S. Department of State is granted to Iraqi and Afghan



⁵ Only clients with SIVs who "have had their status for no more than five years, live in Montgomery or Prince George's counties, and are not enrolled in another federally-funded refugee employment program," are provided employment services (Lutheran Social Services New Staff Orientation Manual, p. 3).

translators/ interpreters who were contracted by the U.S. Armed Forces; this law was established under “Section 1059 of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY2006,” (U.S. Department of State).

Figure 1.3 details the refugee resettlement process for refugees who are coming to the U.S.

The major difference between the process for asylees and refugees is that an asylee enters the U.S. and then applies to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to remain here.

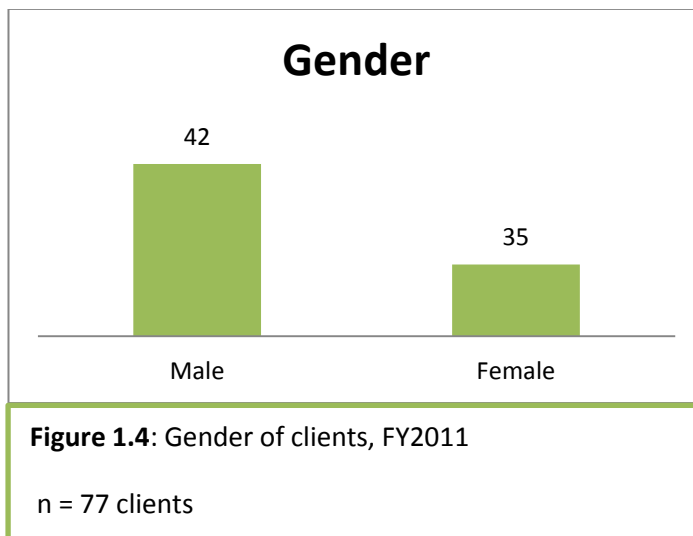
Nonetheless, the commonality is that both types of applicants are “unable or unwilling to return to his or her country of nationality, or to seek the protection of that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution...based on alien’s race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion,” (USCIS). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) also emphasizes the difference between economic migrants and refugees in their statement: “Migrants...choose to move in order to improve the future prospects of themselves and their families. Refugees have to move if they are to save their lives or preserve their freedom. They have no protection from their own state.” The clarification of these terms is necessary for the understanding of this study and the backgrounds of the clients who participated.

Sample Descriptive Data

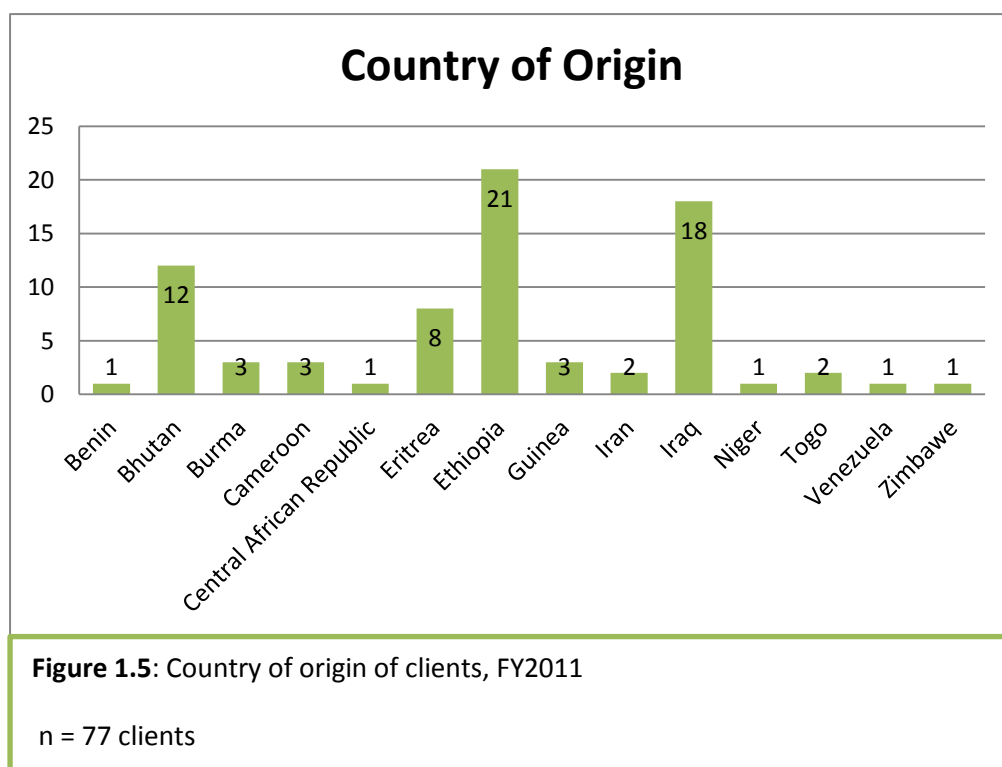
This study includes the clients who had their case closed during FY2011 (October 2010- September 30, 2011) or by February 12 of FY2012 (October 2011- September 2012). A case is closed only after the client has worked at a job for 90 days and submitted his/her first three pay stubs to prove this. Clients are still eligible for employment services even after their case is closed for up to five years from the date of when they had their initial intake at LSS/NCA completed. The study examined clients of LSS/NCA who participated in the employment services program. The dependent variable is change in the employability of the client after receiving employment services for at least 90 days. H1 will only be tested through survey

data. H2 will be tested through survey data and separate focus groups held with male and female clients.

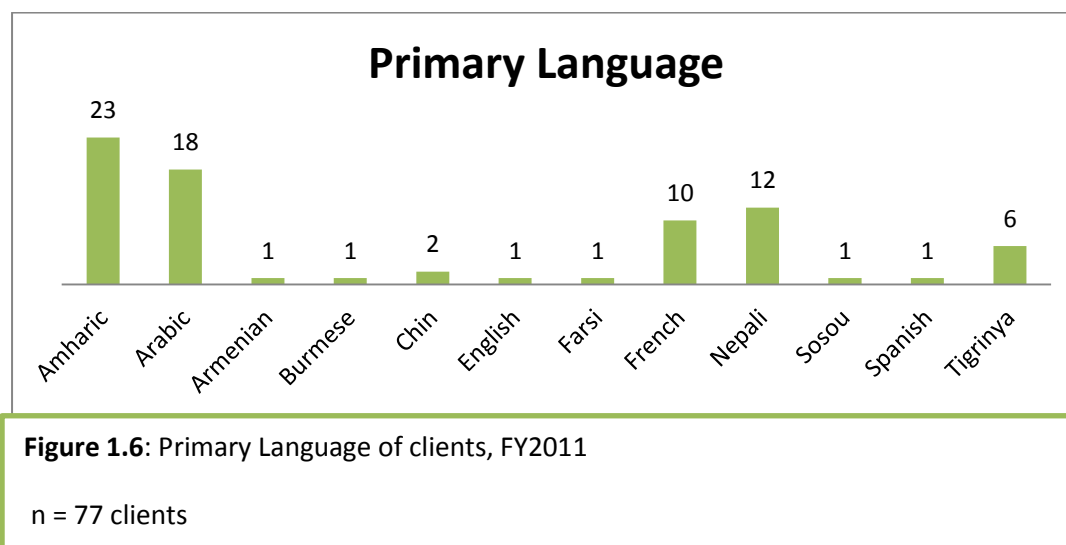
The pool of clients from FY2011 and FY2012 is diverse. There were forty-two male and thirty-five female clients from FY2011, as illustrated in Figure 1.4.



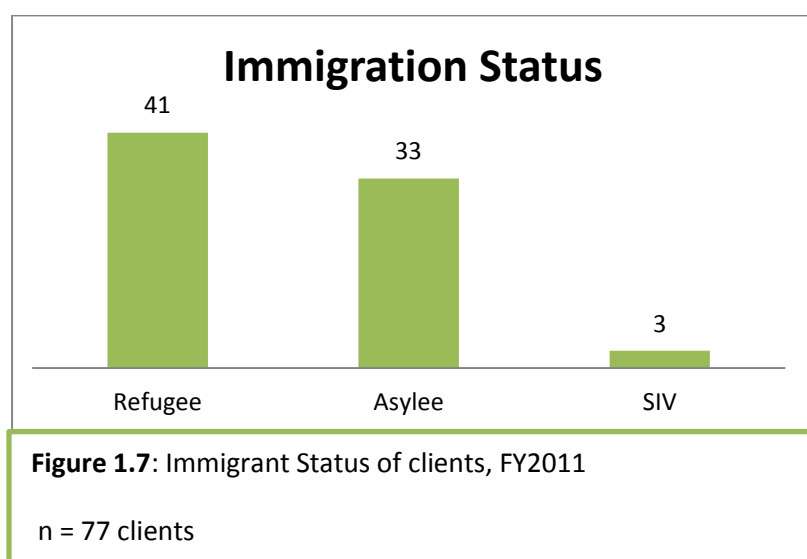
The clients were from a majority of nations around the world (Figure 1.5). The top three nations were Ethiopia, Iraq, and Bhutan.



This is also why it is not surprising that there is language diversity among the FY2011 clients, which can be viewed in Figure 1.6, with 23 clients speaking Amharic, 18 speaking Arabic, and 12 speaking Nepali as a primary language. Primary language means the language that the client speaks fluently and has spoken for the majority of his/her life.



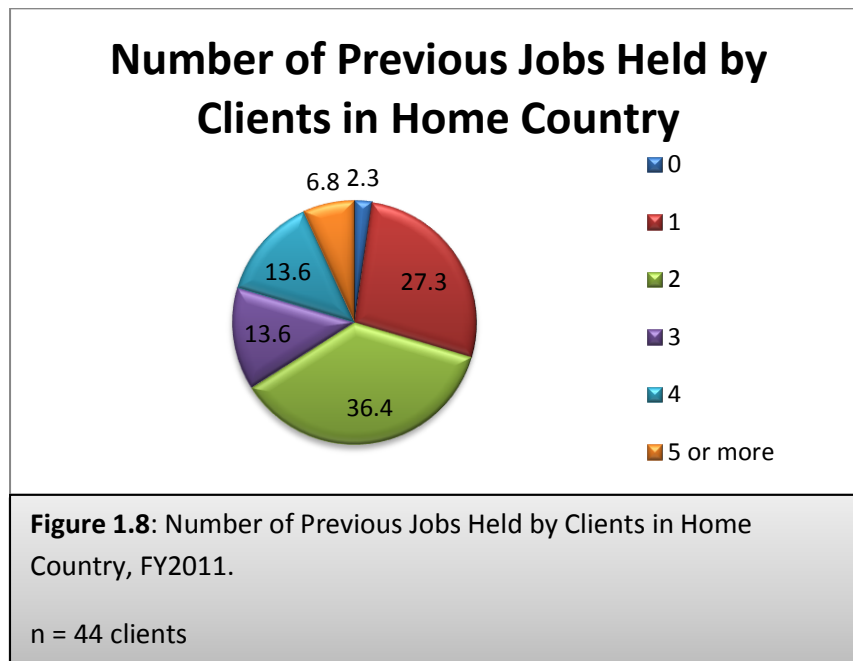
Forty-one clients have a refugee status, 33 of whom are classified as asylees, and three who received SIVs (Figure 1.7).

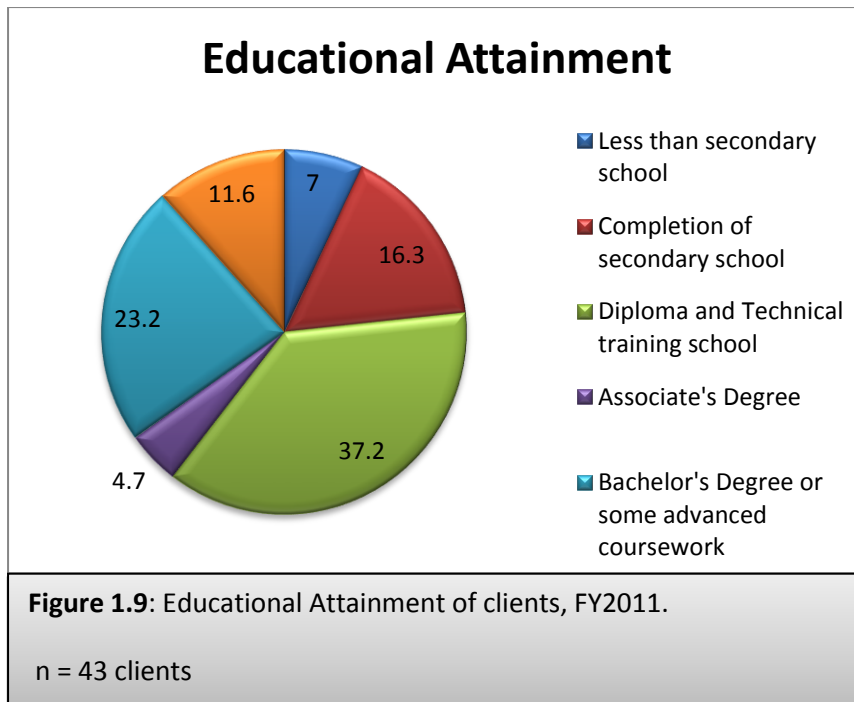


The diverse skill levels are not surprising after one views the Educational attainment (Figure 1.8) and number of previous jobs held in home country (Figure 1.9). Previous

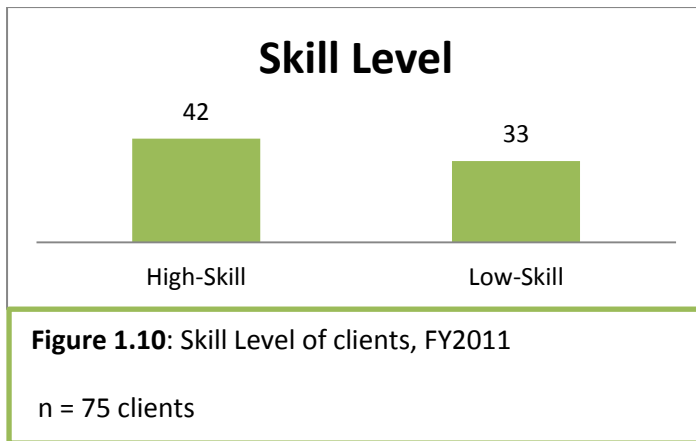
employment measures the number of jobs or other professional experiences (such as an internship or volunteer experience) that the client has held prior to coming to the U.S.

Educational attainment is the level of education that has been completed by a client, ranging from less than secondary school to advanced degrees, such as a Master's in Law. The most interesting characteristic is the close overlap between the 36.4% of clients having held two previous jobs in their home country and 37.2% of clients having received their secondary school diploma/ some technical training, as conveyed in Figure 1.8 and 1.9, respectively. However, if a client meets both of these categories, he/she will be a more competitive job applicant in his/her home country but not necessarily in the host country.

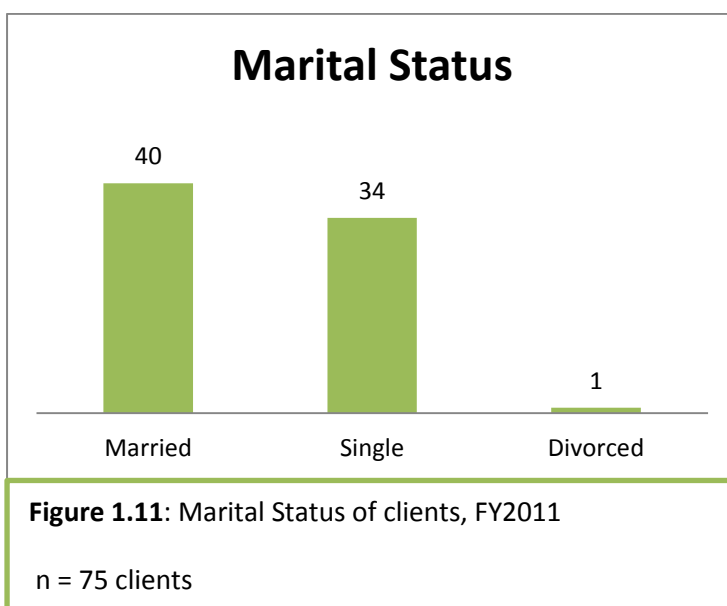




The graphic displaying skill level is Figure 1.10, with forty-two clients classified as being highly-skilled and thirty-three classified as having a low-skill level. The boundary of high-skill versus low-skill is slightly ambiguous because each client's skills level depends on a variety of factors, including English language proficiency, educational attainment, previous work experience, additional professional certifications and training, among other factors. However, when a case worker begins working with and interacting with a client it is relatively easy to determine in which category they should be placed. For example, an individual with a diploma and most previous experience working in customer-service jobs will be placed in the low-skill category, whereas an individual with an Associate's Degree and experience working in a hospital will be highly-skilled for organizational purposes. As previous studies have already illustrated, the skill-level placement has a direct impact on which jobs a client will be eligible for upon arrival in the U.S.



The majority of clients are also married, but one client is listed as being divorced, which is the only case of this throughout both FY2011 and FY2012 (Figure 1.11). It is important to consider marital status because if a woman is married her social role may be primarily as a caretaker for the family, and she may be prohibited to seek employment because of time constraints or enduring cultural norms. However, this observation may not hold true in the U.S. context, as was the case when Ling interviewed Southeast Asian women refugees in 2008. One participant expressed the following: ““I do not feel that being a woman has much bearing on me as a person and what I choose to do; at least not as much as my Asian background does,”” (p. 341). This reveals that for refugees, ethnic identity may be more pervasive in shaping opportunities than gender identity.



For FY2012, gender was almost evenly distributed, with 11 clients as male and 12 as female (Figure 2.1). Marital status shows that similar to FY2011, most clients are married (Figure 2.2).

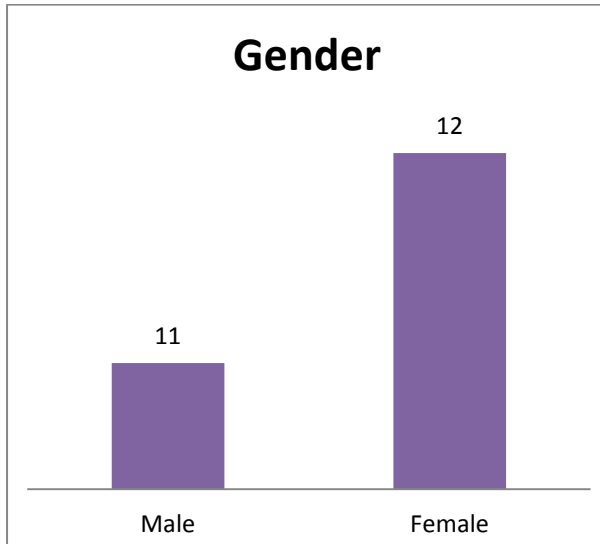


Figure 2.1: Gender of clients, FY2012

n = 23 clients

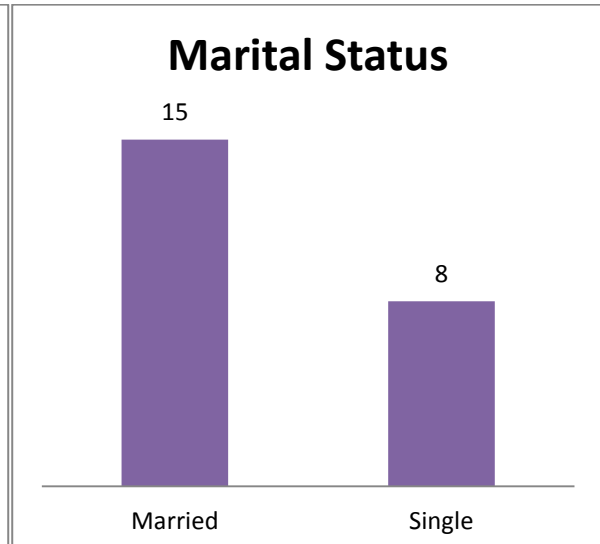


Figure 2.2: Marital Status of clients, FY2012

n = 23 clients

Iraq, but the change is that Cameroon was the third highest sending country and Bhutanese immigrants were not resettled into the area at all (Figure 2.3).

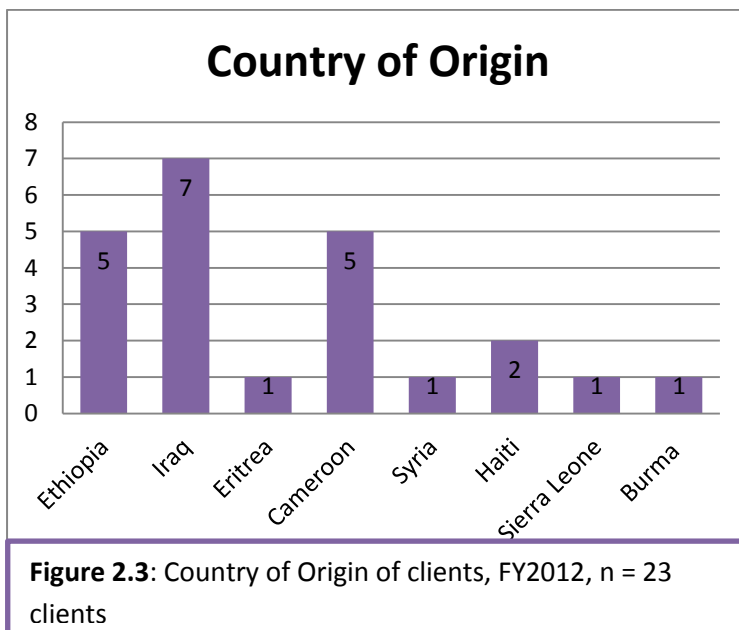
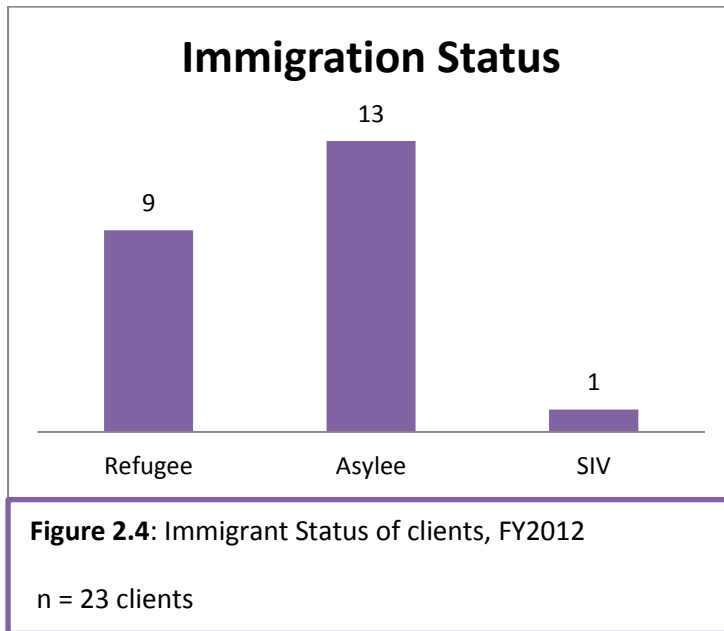


Figure 2.3: Country of Origin of clients, FY2012, n = 23 clients

Despite the majority of clients coming from Iraq in FY2012, there was only one client who received a SIV, but thirteen clients were asylees and nine were refugees, as displayed in Figure 2.4.



The primary language of clients was closely linked to the country they came from in FY2011, and the same pattern can be observed for FY2012, with there still being a diverse representation of seven languages, but the top three being Arabic, Amharic, and French (Figure 2.5).

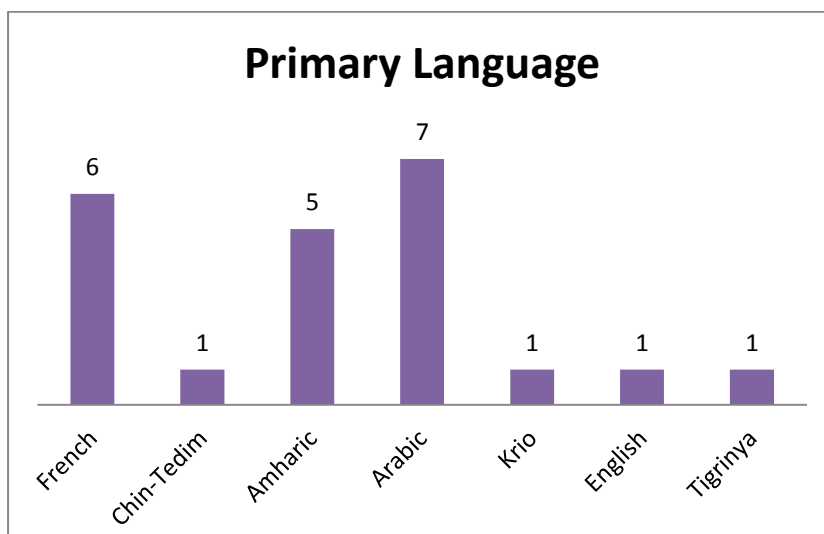
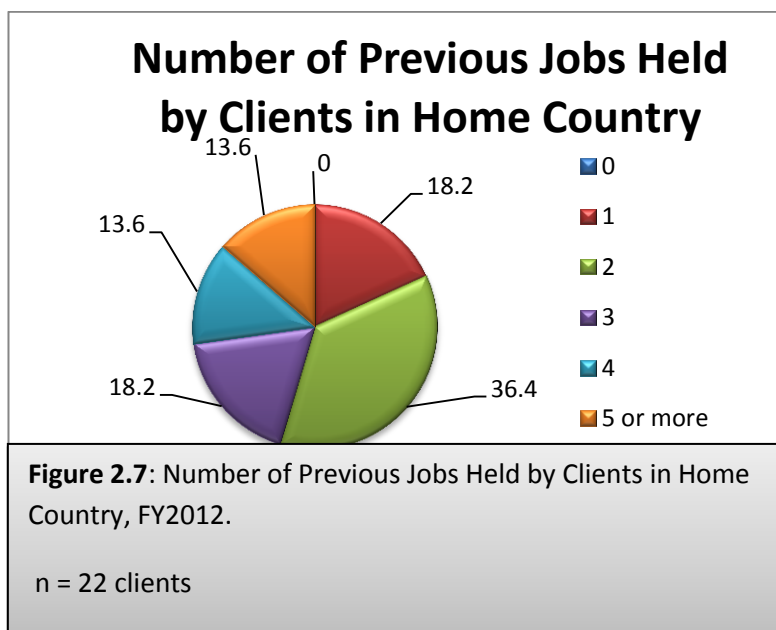
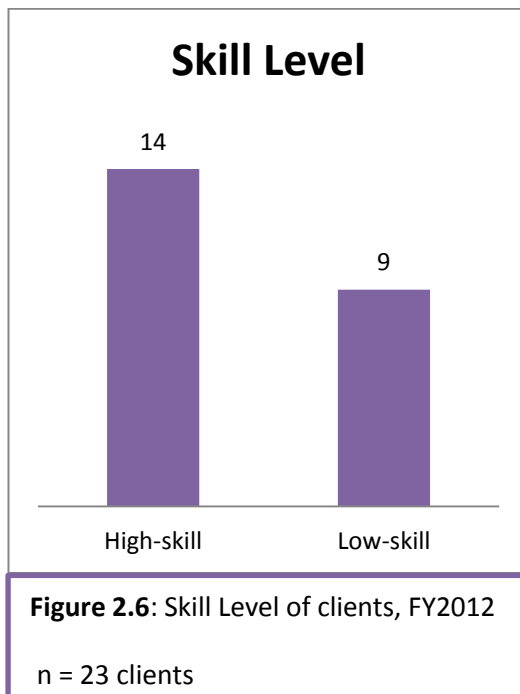
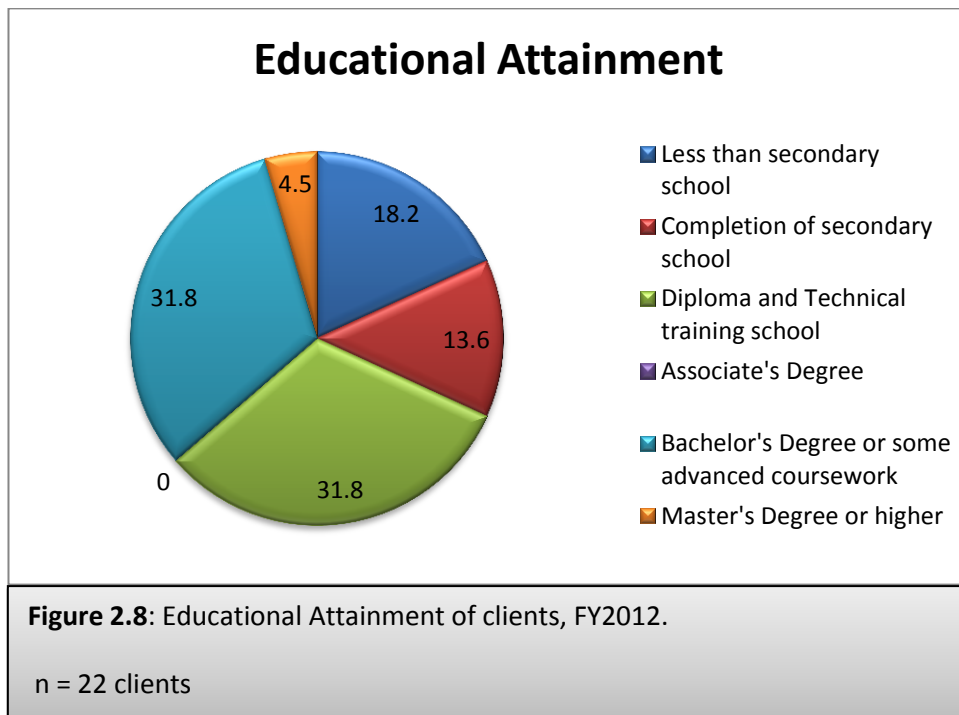


Figure 2.5: Primary language of clients, FY2012, n = 23 clients

Fourteen clients were highly skilled and nine were classified as low-skilled (Figure 2.6). The highest percent for the number of jobs clients held in their home country still remains at two, with 36.4%, shown in Figure 2.7. However, for educational attainment (Figure 2.8), one can see that the same percentage of clients (31.8%) had a Diploma/ Technical Training as the amount of clients having a Bachelor's Degree/ some advanced coursework, which is a change in the client base demographics from FY2011.





Research Design

This study adopted a mixed methodology research design. The primary methodology used were qualitative focus groups guided by a community-based participatory research (CBPR) model, which involves “starting where the people are,” to include community members’ perspectives in every stage of the research process (Minkler and Hancock 2003, p. 136). As Minkler and Hancock describe, “focus groups are among the most popular [form of assessment], typically involving six to twelve diverse community members under the direction of a trained moderator...designed to elicit their belief about...the changes they’d like to see,” (2003, p. 143). The primary tenets that a researcher must consider when using CBPR are outlined in Figure 1.12 adapted from Brown and Vega 2003 (p. 401). The majority of the questions listed in Figure 1.12 were considered using critical reflection throughout the research process.

Figure 1.12: A Protocol for Community Based Research (Adapted from Brown and Vega 2003, p. 401).

1. How will research processes and outcomes serve the community?
 - a. Will community people be hired?
 - b. Will community people be trained?
 - c. Will the research build on community assets and enhance them?
 - d. Will there be continuity over time?
2. How will the community be involved in defining objectives of the research?
3. Are researchers committed to doing the follow-up necessary to implement larger applications?
4. How will the community be involved in the analysis of the data?
 - a. What are the hypotheses?
 - b. What are the biases?
5. What perceptions about the community are likely to be created or persist as a result of analysis and publication of the results? Will the spirit of confidentiality be violated as a result of making public the research findings?
6. How, when, and by whom should findings be released?
7. What is the focus of the research vis-à-vis addressing long-term community needs?
8. Are the research methods sufficiently rigorous yet true to community based principles that incorporate perspectives and beliefs of community residents?

Figure 1.13, which contrasts conventional evaluation and participatory evaluation was also helpful to clarify the research process. Self-reflexivity is a key process in this research. I reflected on my role as an outsider (white university-educated student) but at the same time as an insider (volunteer intern at LSS/NCA). At the same time, I am a newcomer and perceived as an outsider given that I am only with the organization for a semester and I am not refugee nor from the community. Adopting a CBPR approach allowed me to focus the evaluation goals on increased client empowerment and identification of factors that play a role in the integration process of refugees and asylees who are seeking employment. The goal “to empower local people to initiate, control, and take corrective action,” (Brown and Vega 2003, p. 401) is also significant because through the evaluation promotes LSS/NCA’s goal of empowering the refugee community through a deep reflection and understanding of what the

clients believe to be the current strengths and weaknesses of LSS/NCA's employment services.

Figure 1.13: Differences Between Conventional Evaluation and Participatory Evaluation (Adapted from Springett 2003, p. 269).

<i>Conventional Evaluation</i>		<i>Participatory Evaluation</i>
Who	External Experts	Community, project staff facilitator
What	Predetermined indicators of success, primarily cost and health outcomes or gains	People identify their own indicators of success, which may include health outcomes and gains
How	Focus on "scientific objectivity," distancing evaluators from other participants; uniform, complex procedures; delayed, limited access to results	Self-evaluation; simple methods adapted to local culture; open, immediate sharing of results through local involvement in evaluation process
When	Usually completion; sometimes also midterm	Merging of monitoring and evaluation; hence frequent small-scale evaluations
Why	Accountability, usually summative, to determine if funding continues	To empower local people to initiate, control, and take corrective action

Additionally, the advantages and disadvantages of internal versus external evaluators are detailed in Figure 1.14. My position as partly an insider and partly an outsider is beneficial.

As an external evaluator I am "trained in evaluation methods," but as an insider I am also "familiar with... the program and [I] can interpret personal behavior and attitudes," of clients (Springett 2003, p. 276).

Figure 1.14: Advantages and Disadvantages of External and Internal Evaluators
(Adapted from Springett 2003, p. 276).

<i>External</i>	<i>Internal</i>
<p>Can take a fresh look at the program</p> <p>Not personally involved</p> <p>Is not part of the normal power structure</p> <p>Gains nothing from the programs but may gain prestige from the evaluation</p> <p>Trained in evaluation methods; may have experiences in other evaluations; regarded as an expert by the program</p> <p>An outsider who may not understand the program or the people involved</p> <p>An outsider who may not understand the program or the people involved</p>	<p>Knows the program well</p> <p>Finds it hardest to be objective</p> <p>Is part of the power and authority structure</p> <p>May be motivated by hopes of personal gain</p> <p>May not be trained in evaluation methods; has no more (or very little) training than others in the program</p> <p>Is familiar with and understands the program and can interpret personal behavior and attitudes</p> <p>Known to the program, so poses no threat of anxiety or disruption; final recommendations may appear less threatening</p>

The use of CBPR was not only selected for improved quality of data collection but also to increase participant's motivation to participate in the study. Participants that are involved in CBPR methods are usually willing to assist in evaluations because they are able to see the impact that their opinion will have on the existing program and the potential changes that they can offer to improve the services (Springett 2003, 265). The credibility of the CBPR approach is not only supported and used for small-scale programs, but it also is endorsed by the World Health Organization in their "recommendations to policymakers on the evaluation of health promotion," (*ibid*). Similar to Bloch's methodology in her 2000 study on

employment and English language acquisition programs in Newham, United Kingdom, this study uses CBPR tenets to investigate why “[t]he work that refugees find tends not to reflect their skills and previous experience,” (p. 198).

Data Collection

Data collection began with the identification of closed cases for FY2011 and closed cases for FY2012 as of February 12, 2012.⁶ There were a total of 96 eligible clients for this study. For FY2012, there were a total of twenty-three closed cases, but one client moved from Montgomery or Prince George’s county so their case was closed prior to the 90-day retention period. For FY2011, there were a total of seventy-seven closed cases, but two clients had moved prior to making it to the 90-day retention period and one client was served for the maximum period of five years.

After all of the files for the cases were collected, the clients’ first and last name, gender, address, phone, email (if applicable), country of origin, date of entry into the U.S., immigration status, skill level (if applicable), previous employment (if applicable), educational attainment (if applicable), primary language, secondary language (if applicable), date of case opening, date of case closure, current employment, and marital status. Items were not applicable if the information could not be gathered from the client’s file, or if a client’s resume was not available in the computer database. When this information was recorded, clients were also each given a specific identification number (1A- 23A for FY2012 and 1B- 83B for FY2011), which is used in place of any names or other identifiers in the discussion of findings and in the Appendix.

Client information for FY2011 and FY2012 was placed in an excel spreadsheet with no identifying data, which can be viewed in Appendix A.2. The information displayed in the

⁶ After this point, when FY2012 is used, it is implied that it only includes the cases that were closed by February 12, 2012.

chart was used to randomly select all participants for the two focus groups—one for only male clients and one for only female clients. Outreach was conducted to ten males and ten females in hopes of obtaining an 80% participation rate, and occurred from March 5 to March 21, 2012. However, after contacting all randomly selected participants and finding that most clients were unresponsive or busy during the date and time of the focus group, I expanded my outreach to include all open and closed cases. By hanging an informational flyer in the office for all clients to see and giving a copy of the flyer to all participants who expressed interest in participating as a reminder to come to the office at the date and time of their focus group session, I was able to obtain more focus group participants. See Appendix F.1 for a sample of the flyer.

For the initial process of random selection, each eligible client was numbered, starting with 001 and ending with 097 with segmentation based on gender. A random number generator that is available via a statistical website was used. This device randomly selects numbers from an available data set based on the size of the sample. However, only two of the randomly selected female participants and one of the randomly selected male participants were willing/able to attend the focus group at its scheduled date and time on March 22, 2012. Additionally, since participants verbally or electronically via email confirmed their presence at the focus group, this form of confirmation was not binding. The final number of participants for both the male and female focus groups was not confirmed until they took place. Clients were incentivized to come through the provision of a Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Farecard that was guaranteed to the first 8 male and female focus group participants who confirmed their attendance via phone or e-mail by March 21, 2012.

Five clients showed up for the male focus group, which was held on March 22, 2012 from 10:00 am- 12:00 pm. Four clients showed up for the female focus group, which was held on March 22, 2012 from 1:00- 3:00 pm. Both focus group sessions occurred in the

conference room of the LSS/NCA office in Silver Spring, Maryland. The focus group guide can be seen in Appendix D.1. Though most of these issues and questions were discussed, the richness of focus groups stems from the unexpected yet descriptive data that one can obtain from participants. All focus group participants were required to complete a consent form prior to participating. This form can be viewed in Appendix E.1. All focus group participants received a Metro Farecard valued at \$7.25, the maximum amount of transportation fees they may have incurred for the commute, to offset transportation costs and incentivize clients to participate.

For survey participants, 35 eligible male and 35 eligible female clients were contacted via phone to come into the office to complete the survey. Survey distribution began on February 22, 2012 and ended on March 21, 2012. Twenty-six clients filled out the survey. Participants were given a consent form prior to the completion of the survey (see Appendix B.1). Instructions about the survey were provided to two supervisors to cover the time when I was unavailable (Appendix C.1). The survey instrument can be found in Appendix A.1.

IV. Findings

Survey Data

The survey data provides a breadth of information on social, employment, and empowerment issues, which can be used to test H1. The aggregate results from the 26 surveys collected from eligible clients are contained in Appendix B.2. The item that directly relates to H1 is item 3: “My language was a barrier to my employment in the U.S.” However, the results are variable, with 19% stating strongly agree, 26% agree, 15% disagree, 7% strongly disagree, and the highest percentage at 30% neutral. Therefore, the results are inconclusive. It is unclear whether the most important factor hindering a refugee’s employment possibilities in the U.S. is a lack of knowledge and/or proficiency in the English language.

Table 1: Items from the survey with most salient findings

Item 1	I wanted a job when I arrived in the U.S.
Item 5	I know more about American culture after working here.
Item 7	Overall, I am satisfied with my job in the U.S.
Item 8	I already had a resume before coming to LSS/NCA.
Item 9	The employees at LSS/NCA treated me with respect.
Item 10	Without the help of LSS/NCA I would not have found a job in the U.S.
Item 13	My social role changed when I came to the U.S.
Item 14	I had difficulty adjusting to American culture.
Item 15	I learned how to professionally network from LSS/NCA.
Item 16	I learned computer-skills with the help of LSS/NCA programs at Montgomery College.
Item 17	I gained valuable professional training with the help of LSS/NCA program at Montgomery College.
Item 19	I know how to find a job on my own after working with LSS/NCA.
Item 20	I feel valued as a client of LSS/NCA.
Item 21	Overall, I am satisfied with the employment services of LSS/NCA.

Items that had at least 50% of the respondents (or 13 participants) select the same answer were 1, 5, 9, 20, and 21. These items and the additional items that showed the most significant results are displayed above in Table 1. It can be stated that the majority of participating clients wanted a job when they arrived in the U.S., learned more about American culture after working in the U.S., believe that the employees at LSS/NCA are

respectful, feel valued at LSS/NCA, and are satisfied with the services of LSS/NCA. Despite a refugee's acknowledgment of the need to obtain a job in the U.S., clients do not feel knowledgeable enough to be able to find a job on their own. This finding, shown in the results from item nineteen, is important for LSS/NCA to be aware of because it may explain why most clients take advantage of the ability to come back for job searching help even after their file has already been closed.

The role of LSS/NCA cannot be diminished, as the results of item 10 reveal, because 30% of clients strongly agree that without the help of LSS/NCA they would not have found a job in the U.S. Even though 30% of clients also responded neutral to this item, the results at least show that there is a consensus among clients that the services are needed and should not be removed. The results from item 7 also reinforce the important role of LSS/NCA because most clients are satisfied with the job that LSS/NCA helped them obtain in the U.S.

The responses from item 8 also convey that most clients were aware of employment practices because they already had a resume prior to entering the U.S. This knowledge of hiring norms and employment practices greatly influences the expectations that refugees have regarding job possibilities in the U.S. In social settings, refugees must also adapt to their American lifestyle and change their roles. Item 13 demonstrates that 48% of the clients agreed that they needed to shift their social roles. The responses from item 14 also shed light on the adjustment issues faced by refugees. However, the results of this one are not as consistent and only 37% of clients stated that they had difficulty adjusting to American culture.

Results that shed light on where LSS/NCA can improve its services include items 16 and 17. Most clients selected the neutral option when asked if they learned how to professionally network from LSS/NCA. Additionally, the results from item 16 about

computer skills and classes at Montgomery College were even more spread out, with the same amount of clients (22%) stating that they did and did not learn more about computer skills. Lastly, even though the majority of clients (37%) stated that they gained valuable professional training with the help of LSS/NCA at Montgomery College, there is still a large amount of neutral responses and some who disagree. Therefore, not all clients know about or are given the opportunity to take advantage of these training and opportunities. The most important step towards increasing the employability of refugees and achieving their empowerment among greater society is allowing all refugees clients at LSS/NCA the opportunity to further their educational careers and increase their skills base.

Focus Group Data

The overall consensus from both the male and female focus groups is appreciation and support for the work of LSS/NCA. Both male and female focus group participants described LSS/NCA in a similar manner. As a mid-20 year old, male from Gambia stated, “They open all doors for us, really.”⁷ Similarly, the 40 year old, female from Iraq expressed, “LSS is the link, the bridge for employment. They open the door for us.”⁸ All salient quotes have been organized by metatheme and can be read in Appendix C.2.

In general, clients view LSS as part of the community because of its location, in that it is easy for clients to access and even walk to. They also enjoy that there are no strict appointment schedules so that they can come in when they want, reassured that they will receive help with the job application process or employment issues. A male refugee from Cameroon who has been in the U.S. for three years stated that “it was easy, very, very, easy to come...everyone is very social, very kind, very helpful.”

⁷ Statement by a mid-20-30 year old refugee client from Gambia during the male focus group session held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in the LSS/NCA conference room.

⁸ Statement by 40 year old refugee client from Iraq during the female focus group session held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in the LSS/NCA conference room.

All of the male and female focus group participants either found out about LSS from a friend who had been there or from one of the referral agencies that also works with refugees and asylees in the community. The mid- 20 year old female from Ethiopia suggested that LSS continues to strengthen its partnerships with other organizations so that more eligible refugees and asylees can learn about LSS and receive employment assistance. She also expressed gratitude for the employment and emotional services from LSS/NCA by stating: “The emotional support [from LSS] is equal to the resume building. They try to console me and tell me that it is okay. They are really good people. The emotional support... is what sustains you because you have a lot of stories, regardless, [when] compared to someone who is raised here [and] living with a family...My family is not here. You think of them every day and you need someone, as a refugee or asylee, because emotional support is the main component.”⁹

Table 2: Meta-themes from focus groups

I. Cultural Adaptations and Frustrations
II. Obstacles to Employment in the U.S.
III. Improvements for LSS/NCA

I. *Cultural Adaptations and Frustrations*

The perspectives and ideas offered by both male and female clients during the focus group sessions have been organized by meta-themes, which are listed in Table 2. The refugee and asylee focus group participants frequently commented about the cultural and social differences which are experienced in the workplace. This trend has been labeled Cultural Adaptations and Frustrations. Most notable is the belief that even though clients are receiving higher wages when compared to what they were earning in their home countries, they are all

⁹ Statement by mid-20 year old refugee client from Ethiopia during the female focus group session held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in the LSS/NCA conference room.

working in positions that they are under-qualified for and more money is needed in the U.S. to survive and cover the costs of basic necessities. In the work place, rules are also stricter and clients are much more hesitant to ask questions for fear of losing their jobs.

Additionally, one female client from Iraq, who is in her mid-40s complained of not being able to sit down at a chair or in the store while waiting for customers to help. She stated, “We [were] shocked. [We must] keep working to not lose any money [or] any minutes. In our country we have time to drink tea, to talk, to go to the bathroom... it’s flexible but here it is strict... This American system, they like standing... everywhere you are standing. This is a bad, bad, bad thing.”¹⁰ This client does not understand why standing is the norm for most low-skilled jobs when cashiers would never have to stand in Iraq. Because of this workplace change, this Iraqi refugee needed to quit her first customer service job after three months because the physical demand of standing for 8 hours at a time was too much for her.

The male refugee from Cameroon also commented that he realized early on when he was a customer service representative that co-workers did not like it when he asked them about their family and private life, which was a major difference in workplace customs for him to adjust to. Additionally, the perception of time was a difficult adjustment for the Cameroonian client; he described, “We Africans do not know what time is. We do not have any culture of time.... Here 8 hours of work is 8 hours of work.”¹¹ One positive social change was that refugees commented that they receive much more social services in the U.S. than they did in their home country. They are able to receive health care, food stamps, and, sometimes, a quality education for free, depending on if they qualify for tuition reimbursement from LSS/NCA to enroll in professional training or English language classes

¹⁰ Statement by a 40 year old refugee from Iraq during the female focus group session held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in the LSS/NCA conference room in reference to a question about the American workplace.

¹¹ Statement by a mid 30-40 year old refugee from Cameroon during the male focus group session held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in the LSS/NCA conference room in reference to the cultural differences in the workplace between the U.S. and his home country.

at a local, community college. Despite the better provision of institutionalized social services, all of the clients commented on the weakness of their personal, social networks. It has been difficult to leave their home country and the members of their “nuclear family,” as a mid-20 year old female from Ethiopia expressed. Another challenge is that even if the clients have been able to make friends with fellow-refugees, there is not enough time in the day to see them. “Time here is precious,” stated a male refugee from Gambia.

A mid-20 year old female Ethiopian refugee also stated that LSS has helped her understand the “interview culture” of the U.S. She learned about what types of clothes should be worn, what types of questions will be asked, and what the interviewer is expecting to learn from her. Despite these types of advantages that are given to refugee clients of LSS/NCA, a female Iraqi refugee expressed that she is still frustrated with her employment status in the U.S. and the difficulty that exists in finding employment in the U.S. She aptly states: “Oh my God good question actually. Why? Because it’s easy, so easy in our country [in] Iraq to find [a] job. When I graduate my name from the institute goes directly to the government... You are employed somewhere. That’s it. [It’s] so easy.”¹² Thus, it is a difficult task for refugees to adjust to not only the American culture but also understand the norms of the hiring process as newcomers.

II. *Obstacles to Employment in the U.S.*

Refugees face major challenges when applying for jobs in the U.S. Refugees are also frustrated that the majority of low-skilled jobs for which they can apply for in the U.S. are part-time when they need a full-time job. Refugees blame this on the current economic situation that has not only affected the U.S. but also the global marketplace. Another issue that the female focus group agreed upon was their dislike of applying for jobs online because

¹² Statement by a 40 year old refugee from Iraq during the female focus group session held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in the LSS/NCA conference room in reference to a question about the ease of finding a job in her home country when compared to the U.S.

they feel as though they apply for many jobs and never hear back from anyone. The female, Iraqi refugee was especially frustrated with this trend, and she thinks that applying online is a futile process. She expressed: “We deserve everything [that is] very good and a high [quality] level as we [had] before in our countries, but here [it is] slow steps... First [apply] online [which is like] applying on air. Then you see [that] you need this certificate... it keeps going.”¹³

One challenge that was only expressed by one client—a mid-20, female Ethiopian refugee—was the need to have both her Master and Bachelor degrees from other countries evaluated in order to prove to employers that she is highly-qualified for the types of positions that are her “dream job.” She stated: “It has also been difficult for her to overcome the high levels of competition that exist not only in the American workplace but also in the preliminary job search process. “[Even though] I can say that I have a BA degree, my degree is not valued because it is [from] outside of the U.S. Here it has to be evaluated. I think that’s what has been an obstacle for me to get a job... [What] I’m saying is like here it’s so, so competitive. It has [also] been really challenging in Ethiopia, there is always competition everywhere, but here there is more competition.”¹⁴

The other difficulty expressed by clients is the language barrier as a discriminatory factor in the hiring process. Even if refugees are very proficient in English, they will still have a different accent that most Americans which conveys to employers their status as a foreigner. Employers need to remember that refugees have legal authorization to work in the U.S. Despite this, two male focus group participants and one female participant specifically

¹³ Statement by a 40 year old refugee from Iraq during the female focus group session held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in the LSS/NCA conference room in reference to a question about the frustrations involved in applying for jobs in the U.S. She believes that when you apply online for a job your application vanishes into thin air because she never hears any response from the employer.

¹⁴ Statement by a mid-20 year old refugee from Ethiopia during the female focus group session held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in the LSS/NCA conference room in reference to a question about the challenges involved in finding a job in the U.S.

alluded to a job interviews where they were given odd stares or asked to answer the same questions twice because the employer stated that they could not understand them. When clients found out that they did not receive the job despite their relevant qualifications they knew it had to do with their level of English language proficiency and obvious accent. This observation relates to my primary hypothesis because it supports the claim that a client's lack of knowledge or proficiency in English is an important factor hindering a refugee's employment possibilities in the U.S., though I cannot state from my focus group data that proficiency in English language is the most important factor for determining a refugee's employment outcomes. Because of this, more investigation into the extent of the influence of English language proficiency and the employability of refugees and asylees should be explored.

III. *Improvements for LSS/NCA*

A frequent recommendation from clients is for there to be more external funding for LSS so that the organization can help more refugees through the hiring of additional employees. During the female focus group, the younger, Ethiopian refugee suggested that there should be at least one full-time staff member who speaks Amharic so that there is a better understanding of Ethiopian clients' needs. In particular, she noted that Ethiopian women are not used to having a voice in decision-making; this cultural aspect, coupled with the language barrier, poses difficulties for the employees of LSS/NCA as they try to serve their clients in the best way possible.

One change in the current structure of the employment services that the male focus group also agreed upon was the need for daily or even weekly emails to be sent to clients about relevant jobs for to which they should apply. This could take on the form of a weekly list-serv that is emailed to all clients with job openings categorized by field so that clients can browse all of them but also easily figure out which ones they are the most qualified for.

Sending a general email to all clients with job openings would also not take up much time for the employees at LSS/NCA, and it would put the onus on the clients to look through it and then apply for the jobs they are interested in.

Both male and female focus group members were also in agreement that LSS/NCA needs to collaborate more with the other refugee, community organizations, such as the Refugee Training Center and Montgomery College, and local businesses. The 40 year old, female Iraqi participation suggested that “LSS needs to make [a] recommendation, [or] some card [that says] we are from LSS. LSS [does] not know their clients [any]more...LSS needs to follow-up with them [the employer]. [The employer] will put them under, how [do] you say, training [or] temporary [employment] for one-month to see if she is good, if he is good, [and] are they doing well.”¹⁵

Similarly, the 30 year old, male Cameroonian participant described his thoughts on suggested improvements by stating, “The job is there but [we] do not know someone who can introduce us. That’s frustrating... You must be recommended by someone, someone to present you. We must have confidence in LSS. We must trust in them [because] they are the open hand. [They have] the power to introduce us [because] they are professionals. We do go by ourselves but we suffer difficulties. [We] need to be presented and recommended by LSS.”¹⁶ The strengthening of LSS’s organizational partnerships, both with educational institutions and potential employers for LSS clients, would provide benefits to both clients and the employees at LSS/NCA: the clients would derive more benefits from these skill-building workshops and academic courses, which, ultimately, improves their employment outcomes and the type of job opportunities that they can seek through the assistance of LSS/NCA.

¹⁵ Statement by a 40 year old refugee from Iraq during the female focus group session held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in the LSS/NCA conference room explaining what she suggests LSS/NCA does to improve its services for future clients.

¹⁶ Statement by a mid 30-40 year old refugee from Cameroon during the male focus group session held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in the LSS/NCA conference room in reference to the changes he would like to see at LSS/NCA for future refugee and asylee clients.

V. Discussion

Even though H1 was easily discerned, though not fully supported, from the focus group data, H2 is not as obvious to conclude from the focus group data. Both male and female clients expressed the valuable emotional support they received from LSS/NCA. Specifically, the employees at LSS/NCA encourage the clients to keep applying for jobs despite their feelings of frustration and disappointment. The male focus group participant from Gambia stated that the job advice he received from LSS eventually resulted in a job when an LSS employment advocate took the client to a job fair and introduced the client to his current employer. However, this client also stated that after being with LSS for one year, he does not feel prepared to find a job on his own if he needed to. Though he was hopeful in that after being with LSS for five years and no longer eligible for the employment services, he will have a better understanding of the employment application process and more social connections from which he can draw upon to find employment in the future.

Although clients recognize that the expansion of LSS is dependent upon more external funding, they express hope for the future and believe LSS will be able to obtain more resources from public-private partnerships and grants. Clients firmly believe that the employment services they receive are essential to their wellbeing in the U.S., and if funders and the local government knew this then there should be no problems receiving more financial support. LSS' provision of resume building was specifically cited by many male and female focus group members as being an extremely helpful tool for clients. Participants stated that they felt more confident and knowledgeable of their background and skills after the creation of an official resume with a LSS employee. Focus group participants also noted that they would not have been able to create a resume without the assistance of LSS/NCA because they do not have a personal computer. This service should continue to be provided by LSS/NCA to all clients.

Despite these successes, there are still feelings of confusion expressed by clients. The younger, female Ethiopian refugee voiced her confusion about not really understanding what she needs to do next in her life in order to feel more secure and satisfied with her employment status in the U.S. She stated, “Sometimes I feel like I do not know what I need. Am I not focused? Do I have to go back and start an undergraduate degree?...I need something; a full-time job with benefits so I can have a kind of hope for the next years. I am a little bit confused as to what I can say, not frustrated. But [I am confused with] where I am now... I do not know in what way I can dig out that thing [I need]. I just want to know the clear path of my life.”¹⁷ Even though she is grateful for the emotional support and connections that LSS has been able to give her, she believes there should be more individualized job counseling so she can understand her professional needs and then reach her goals. This theme also emerged from the results of the survey data. Items 15, 16, and 17 (see Table 1 of “Findings”) also confirm that LSS/NCA can improve its services by providing clearer communication about job training and educational advancement opportunities with local universities and community colleges.

VI. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to understand what factors facilitate and hinder a refugee’s employment possibilities in the U.S. Through the use of twenty-six surveys and two focus groups with clients of LSS/NCA it has been found that although the services this agency offers play a vital role in helping refugees find employment, there are many more steps that must be taken to achieve social integration of the clients into the greater society. Most clients express a desire for LSS/NCA to create a temporary, preferential-treatment employment program through the strengthening of LSS/NCA’s relationship with local businesses and

¹⁷ Statement by a mid 20- 30 year old refugee from Ethiopia during the female focus group session held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in the LSS/NCA conference room in reference to a question about her future employment opportunities.

organizations. This finding is significant since no other studies with refugees have revealed the need for a temporary employment program.

Study Limitations

Although the findings from both the survey data and focus group sessions provide important feedback for LSS/NCA the study has several limitations. The findings of this research project cannot be generalized to other refugee employment programs since each organization has a diverse refugee clientele and faces different organizational constraints.

The results of “Opening the Door to Employment...” also faced limitations in data collection due to time restrictions. The survey data collection only spanned a three-week period. Additionally, clients who work from 9:00 am - 5:00 pm were unable to participate in the survey, unless they had internet access at home to complete the survey, or if they had a day off and decided to come into the office. These issues help to explain why only 26 clients out of the total “n” size of 96 completed the survey, resulting in a 27% response rate. The use of a survey method was not as feasible as anticipated.

The use of a pre-pilot survey would have been useful to find out if clients understood the survey items. Even though the time constraints did not permit the use of a pre-pilot survey, I believe it would have been more useful to sit with each client as they completed the survey to answer any questions about the vocabulary used, resulting in greater accuracy of my findings. However, this would not have permitted the use of the electronic distribution of the survey, and there would have been fewer surveys from which to analyze.

Eligible clients’ willingness and ability to participate in the focus groups was also limited because sessions were held during the weekday, which conflicted with some clients’ work schedules. After careful reflection, I have realized that the results from the focus group were much more insightful. Surveys are difficult to distribute to a diverse population when

the majority of the participants do not speak English as a first language. However, with the focus groups, participants seemed to have a better understanding of the questions, and it was easier for them to vocalize, instead of writing down, their thoughts. One drawback is that the focus groups were more prone to selectivity bias than the surveys. The focus groups were a bigger time commitment than the completion of the brief survey, so most clients who participated may have been waiting for an opportunity to provide feedback on the services of LSS/NCA. This means that the results of the focus groups may have been biased towards a more critical outlook, and the opinions of the participants of the focus groups should not be generalized to represent the opinions of the entire population of clients at LSS/NCA.

Study Strengths

Despite the above-mentioned limitations, this study contributes to filling a gap in the current refugee research because no other investigations have noted a desire on behalf of refugee and asylee clients to receive preferential treatment in the job search process. Most studies note the barriers to employment and the ways in which social service agencies are increasing the employability of their clients. However, if a strong partnership would be created between the employer and refugee/asylee community clients, whereby clients are temporarily placed in a low-skill job for six months or less, this would allow for clients to focus on adjusting to the cultural and social issues that are thrown upon them at the same time, instead of trying to also worry about securing economic stability. Although such a program seems radical, and it could only be sustained in communities where there is a constant flow of new refugees, these findings point to the need for future research in this field so that more insight can be gained into how refugees envision this temporary, preferential-treatment employment program.

Another asset of “Opening the Door to Employment...” is its use of CBPR methods. The refugees and asylees that participated in this study were excited to finally have the chance to share their opinions. All too often, scholarly research relies on methods that assume

a certain population's realities. The in-depth information and perspectives that have been documented in this investigation can be used to directly inform future research of my own and others. A result of this study is that the clients were able to reflect on what they still need from LSS/NCA and use problem-solving skills to think about what solutions would fix these issues.

Implications for Future Research

This case study evaluated the employment services provided to refugee and asylee clients at Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area. "Opening the Door to Employment..." has found that the services are effectively addressing some but not all of the needs of the clients. As newly-arrived individuals in the U.S., refugees and asylees are often not fluent in English and not accustomed to the formal job application process. Through survey data and focus groups, clients expressed a satisfaction with LSS/NCA's resume-building assistance, overview of the job application process, and emotional support that is offered. However, according to former and current clients, this social service agency is currently lacking a sufficient number of employees to provide more job opening updates and linguistic assistance during client appointments. The overriding change that both male and female clients would like to be implemented is preferential treatment in the job search process. Ideally, clients want LSS/NCA to have stronger connections with community employers so that refugee and asylees can be temporarily but quickly placed in a job after arriving in the U.S. due to their client status with LSS/NCA.

The findings of this research also support the need for continual funding for refugee and asylee employment service programs. Without the programs and people at LSS/NCA, many refugees and asylees would not gain valuable advice and information that is needed for them to become employed and understand the workplace culture. No one sums it up better

than the 30-40 year old male refugee from Cameroon who stated the following during the closing of the male focus group:

“The final word? The final word. All I can say is to encourage LSS for what they are doing. They are doing so much to help us believe. To help us survive. We can only thank them for what they are doing. They are doing so much. They are doing a good job for the society and I pray for that.”

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VIII. Data Collection Materials**Appendix A.1: Employment Services Survey****Employment Services Survey**

To help us improve our employment services to better meet your needs, please complete this survey and return it to Miranda Schaeffer, the Employment Services Intern at LSS/NCA located at 817 Silver Spring Avenue #301, Silver Spring, Maryland, 20910. Please do not write your name on the survey. All responses will remain confidential.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Employment					
I wanted a job when I arrived in the U.S.					
I found it easy to get a job in the U.S.					
My language was a barrier to my employment in the U.S.					
I learned new skills at my current job.					
I know more about American culture after working here.					
I feel accepted in the workplace.					
Overall, I am satisfied with my job in the U.S.					
Employment Services					
I already had a resume before coming to LSS/NCA.					
The employees at LSS/NCA treated me with respect.					
Without the help of LSS/NCA I would not have found a job in the U.S.					
The employees at LSS/NCA were easy to talk to.					
Overall, I am satisfied with the employment services of LSS/NCA.					
Social Roles					
My social role changed when I came to the U.S.					
I had difficulty adjusting to American culture.					
Training and Education					
I learned how to professionally network from LSS/NCA.					
I learned computer-skills with the help of LSS/NCA programs at Montgomery College.					
I gained valuable professional training with the help of LSS/NCA programs at Montgomery College.					
Overall					
I am happy with the job LSS/NCA helped me find.					
I know how to find a job on my own after working with LSS/NCA.					
I feel valued as a client of LSS/NCA.					
Overall, I am satisfied with the employment services of LSS/NCA.					
Additional Comments:					

Appendix B.1: Consent to Participate in Research: Survey Questionnaire

Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Study

The purpose of this questionnaire is to evaluate the employment services that you received at Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area (LSS/NCA). This questionnaire will contribute to the completion of my senior project and the improvement of services at LSS/NCA for future clients. Be as honest as possible. There are no right or wrong answers. Please, do not write your name on the form—it will be anonymous, meaning no one will know which questionnaire belongs to whom.

Research Procedures

Should you decide to participate in this questionnaire, you will be asked to sign this consent form or verbally tell Miranda Schaeffer that you agree to participate after all of your questions and concerns have been answered. This study consists of an individual survey that will be administered to you at:

LSS/NCA Employment Services Office

817 Silver Spring Avenue, Suite 301

Silver Spring, Maryland, 20910.

You will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to the employment services you received at LSS/NCA and your personal employment history.

Time Required

Participation in this study will require 15 minutes of your time.

Risks

There are no risks to you by completing the questionnaire. You will most likely enjoy it and remember that you will be contributing to the improvement of employment services provided by LSS/NCA for future clients.

Benefits

You will contribute to the improvement of employment services for future refugee and asylee clients.

Confidentiality

The results of this research will be read by my advisor, other members of the university community, including professors in the School of International Service and staff members of the University Honors Program, and myself. The employers at LSS/NCA will have access to the results, but your responses will be anonymous, meaning I am the only person who will know what answers are yours and who participated in the focus group; your identity will not be revealed. I retain the right to use

and publish non-identifiable data that summarizes my results. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to me.

Participation & Withdrawal

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You do not need to answer all of the questions.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

Researcher's Name: Miranda Schaeffer

Advisor's Name: Maria De Jesus

Department: School of International Service

Department: School of International Service

American University

American University

Telephone: 610-401-7464

Telephone: 212-885-6392

Email Address: Miranda.Schaeffer@american.edu

Email Address: dejesus@american.edu

Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject

Dr. David Haaga

Matt Zembrzuski

Chair, Institutional Review Board

IRB Coordinator

American University

American University

202-885-1718

202-885-3447

dhaaga@american.edu

irb@american.edu

Giving of Consent

I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate. All of my questions have been answered. The investigator provided me with a copy of this form. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

Name of Participant (Printed)

Name of Participant (Signed)

Date

Name of Researcher (Signed)

Date

Appendix C.1: Instructions for Employment Services Survey when Principal Investigator is out-of-the-office

If Miranda is in the office (Mondays 9-5, Wednesdays 9-1, and Thursdays 9-3) please let her distribute the survey to the eligible participant. If not, please follow these instructions.

1. Locate the surveys

-They are in the manila folder labeled “Surveys” in Miranda’s intern basket.

2. Locate the list of eligible participants, which is in alphabetical order.

-Client is eligible for the survey if their case was closed in FY2011 or FY2012.

-Do NOT give the survey to anyone who is not on the list.

3. Once client’s name is identified on the list, please put today’s day so that it is recorded when the client came in.

4. Hand client the stapled papers.

-The first two pages are the consent form. Please make sure that client understands what they are signing up to do. They need to initial at the end of the consent form. If they want to contact me about the study, have them copy down my contact information that is contained on the second page. Do NOT let participants keep the consent form, as it is for my records to ensure my compliance with research ethnics.

5. Client should now be ready to take the survey. Please do not sit with them during the survey, as it can introduce bias into the results. Have them first try to answer the survey items on their own and leave confusing items blank. Then assist them with the interpretation of any unanswered items, if necessary. Please, do not try to influence the results of the survey in any way.

6. Thank the client!

Appendix D.1: Focus Group Template for Moderator

Date:

Location:

Focus Group Number/ Gender:

Number of Participants:

Focus Groups

Introduction

Hi, my name is Miranda Schaeffer. I am graduating in May from American University here in Washington, DC. I am currently interning with LSS/NCA with Employment Services, and I am enjoying my experience thus far. I want to thank you all for attending this focus group. Your perspectives are very important. The purpose of this conversation is to understand your perspectives on the services that you received as a client of LSS/NCA. No need to worry about not being able to share how you feel; no employees of LSS/NCA will know who participated in this group today. I will electronically record your responses only because I won't have time to write down everything that you say, and what you share is important. Your participation will have no bearing on the future services that you may seek from LSS/NCA. Rather, your responses will help to improve the services that LSS/NCA is providing to you and future refugees/ asylees who may need assistance in the future. At the end of the session, you will also each be given a paper survey to fill out. I will read the questions aloud, but your answers to this are also confidential. Before leaving, I will be sure to give you all a metro fare card to reimburse you for any travel costs that you may have incurred in order to come here today, and to thank you for taking the time to come here today. If you feel uncomfortable at any time during the group, you do not have to answer the question and you can stop anytime without any consequence. The focus group will last approximately two hours. Does anyone have questions prior to beginning?

Important to remember:

-One speaker at a time, but feel free to respond to (agree/ disagree) with your fellow respondents.

-I am here to learn from you. There are no right or wrong answers. I encourage you to use examples in your answers.

-You are the experts who have worked with and interacted with LSS/NCA. I only have questions pre-written in order to guide the group and make sure that we can stay on track in a timely manner.

-To help us get to know each other a little first, please share your name and your favorite color! (I will go first).

Questions:

1. What is your country of origin?
2. How long have you been in the U.S.?
3. How did you hear about the employment services of LSS/NCA?
 - Probe:
 - a. From a former client
 - b. Family member
 - c. Community member/ organization
 - d. Resettlement agency personnel
 - e. Other—please describe or name
4. How does your current job compare to your job that you may have had in your home country?
 - a. Treatment from employers.
 - b. The job is not challenging/ does not meet your skill-level.
5. Were you excited to work in the U.S.?
 - a. Or scared? Describe how you felt when you realized that you would need to obtain a job? i.e. Especially if there was a serious financial need to obtain a job.
6. Describe one of your best experiences you had when you worked with someone at LSS/NCA.
 - a. Were you surprised at the services you were given and the way in which they treated you?
7. Do you think there are additional benefits (besides monetary) to working in the U.S.?

OR What have you gained, besides money, by working in the U.S.

 - a. Cultural knowledge
 - b. Improvement in English
 - c. Increase in social connections/ new friends
 - d. Other factors that affect social integration
8. What is the greatest difficulty of working in the U.S.?
9. If you are married, how do you and your husband or wife balance your working schedules?
 - a. How do you deal with child care if you have children?
10. How would you describe your economic situation upon arrival in the U.S. and in your home country?
 - a. Compared to your current economic situation.
11. What was the most surprisingly aspect of the job search process?
 - a. Can be good or bad
12. Do you remember how many jobs you applied for?
 - a. Were you able to apply for any on your own, i.e. with your personal computer or filling out applications in-person with employers?
 - b. OR Did you rely primarily on the office members (Employment Advocates) of LSS/NCA to assist in applying?
 - c. How did this make you feel?

13. Did you ever feel like giving up because you did not think you would ever find a job?
 - a. Did you tell your Employment Advocate about these feelings (if you did not, why?), if so, how did they react?
14. What parts of the employment process did the Employment Advocates (EA) assist you with?
 - a. Which was the most helpful for you?
 - i. Resume-building
 - ii. Job board/ identification of open positions to which you were qualified for
 - iii. Assistance in filling out the application, online or in-person
 - iv. Interview preparation
 - v. Interview (EA went to interview with you and/or provided you with directions)
 - vi. Emotional support/ counseling as needed and even if unannounced
 - vii. Linking you to other social services and community-organizations (i.e. English language courses and other classes provided by Montgomery College or Montgomery College's Refugee Training Center)
 - viii. Connecting you to other migrants (asylees and refugees) who are in similar situations as you
15. After working with an EA at LSS/NCA did you feel more prepared to enter the American workforce?
16. Are you currently employed?
 - a. If not, what happened after the 90 days (which is when client's case should have been closed with LSS/NCA)?
 - i. Fired or quit?
17. What do you (or did you) like about working?
 - a. U.S. v. home country employment
18. What don't you like?
 - a. U.S. v. home country employment
19. Do you think that having a job in the U.S. changed your social role, especially in your family, when you think about the role you fulfilled in your home country?
20. Is there anything else that you think is important to share with me about your employment experiences in the U.S. and your relationship with LSS/NCA?

Thank you for your participation today.

Appendix E.1: Consent to Participate in Research: Focus Group

Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Study

You are being asked to participate in a focus group to evaluate the employment services that you received at Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area (LSS/NCA). A focus group is a small group of 6-8 people who talk for a set amount of time on a selected topic. This focus group will contribute to the completion of my senior project and the improvement of services at LSS/NCA for future clients. You can feel free to be as honest as possible. There are no right or wrong answers. No employees of LSS/NCA will know who participated in this focus group today and your responses will be kept anonymous, meaning no one will be able to identify that you participated.

Research Procedures

Should you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form or verbally tell me that you agree to participate after all of your questions or concerns have been answered. This study consists of a focus group and individual survey that will be administered to you at

LSS/NCA Employment Services Office

817 Silver Spring Avenue, Suite 301

Silver Spring, Maryland, 20910.

You will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to the employment services you received at LSS/NCA and your personal employment history. Your responses will be electronically recorded only because I won't have time to write down everything that you say, and what you share is important.

Time Required

Participation in this study will require 2 hours of your time.

Risks

There are no risks involved in the participation of the focus group or the completion of the survey.

Benefits

You will receive a \$7.25 metro fare card for your participation in this study. You will contribute to the improvement of employment services provided by LSS/NCA for future clients.

Confidentiality

The results of this research will be read by my advisor, other members of the university community, including professors in the School of International Service and staff members of the University Honors Program, and myself. The employers at LSS/NCA will have access to the results, but your responses will be anonymous meaning I am the only person who will know what answers are yours and who participated in the focus group; your identity will not be revealed. I retain the right to use

and publish non-identifiable data that summarizes the results. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to me.

Participation & Withdrawal

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without any consequences. You do not need to answer all of the questions.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

Researcher's Name: Miranda Schaeffer

Advisor's Name: Maria De Jesus

Department: School of International Service

Department: School of International Service

American University

American University

Telephone: 610-401-7464

Telephone: 212-885-6392

Email Address: Miranda.Schaeffer@american.edu

Email Address: dejesus@american.edu

Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject

Dr. David Haaga

Matt Zembrzski

Chair, Institutional Review Board

IRB Coordinator

American University

American University

202-885-1718

202-885-3447

dhaaga@american.edu

irb@american.edu

Giving of Consent

I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate. All of my questions have been answered. The investigator provided me with a copy of this form. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

☐ I give consent to be audio taped during my interview. _____ (initials)

Name of Participant (Printed)

Name of Participant (Signed)

Date

Name of Researcher (Signed)

Date

Appendix F.1: Flyer advertising the focus group sessions



YOUR VOICE MATTERS!

We are interested in hearing about your opinion and thoughts on the Employment Services of LSS/NCA that you received as a client.

Two focus groups will be held on **Thursday, March 22** at in the LSS/NCA Employment Services Office.

One focus group of **8 men from 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM.**

One focus group of **8 women from 1:00 – 3:00 PM.**

You will receive a **\$7.25 metro Farecard** for your participation

Questions?

Interested in Participating?

Please contact Miranda Schaeffer, the Employment Services Intern

Cell Phone: 610.401.7464

Office Phone: 301.588.0183

Email: Miranda.Schaeffer@American.edu

What is a focus group? A focus group is a small group of 6-8 people who talk for a set amount of time on a selected topic.

This focus group will contribute to the improvement of employment services at LSS/NCA for future refugee and asylee clients. Your responses will be kept anonymous, meaning no one will be able to identify that you participated.

IX. Data Collected**Appendix A.2List of Eligible Client Participants, Non-identifying Data**

FY2012: 1A – 23 A

FY2011: 1B – 77B

Key

Resume was not on file so background information was limited.

Client moved out of Prince George's or Montgomery County, Maryland and no longer eligible for LSS/NCA services.

Resume was not on file and moved out of the county.

Client received services for over 5 years and is no longer eligible for LSS/NCA employment services.

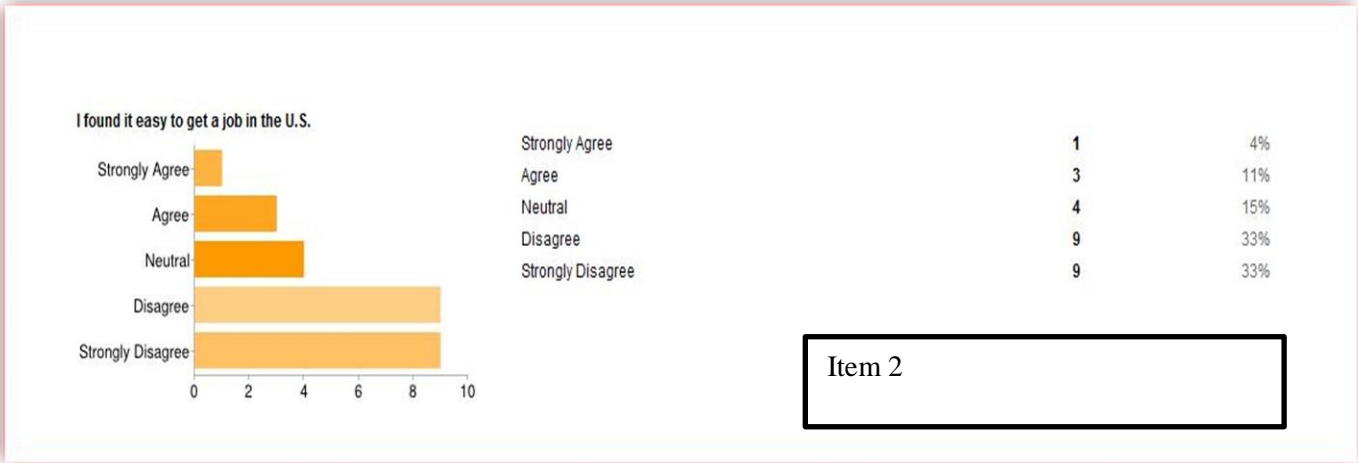
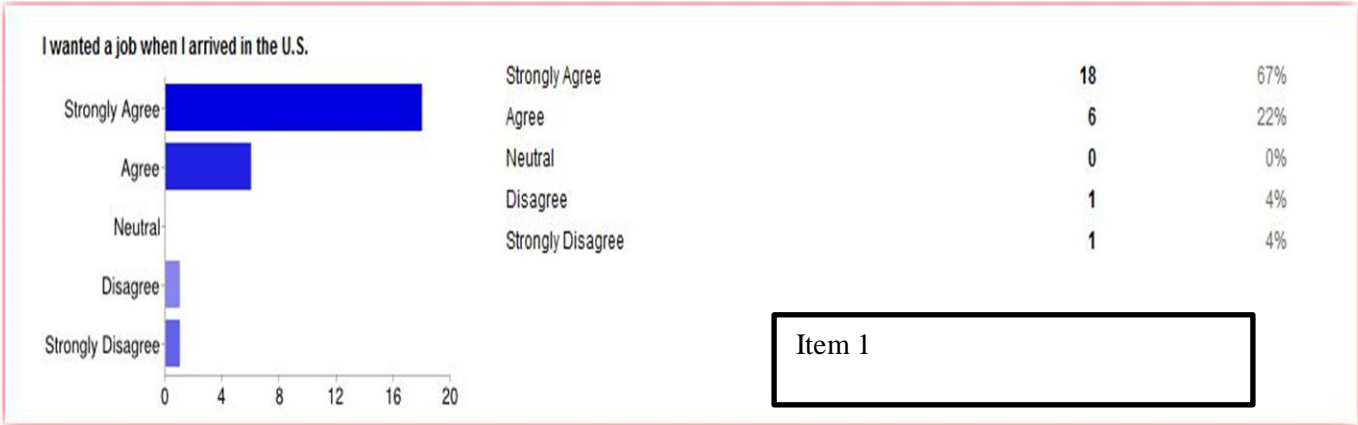
Client has been re-opened but was previously closed after working the same job for 90 days.

ID Number	Gender	Country of Origin	Entry into US	Status	Skill Level	Previous Employment (how many jobs prior to entering US)		Education	Primary Language	Secondary Language	Beginning Date	Closing Date	Marital Status
1A	Male	Cameroon	12/28/2010	Asylee	Low-skill			3 GED in-progress	French		10/4/2011	1/27/2012	Married
2A	Female	Burma	7/12/2011	Refugee	Low-skill			None, MC English for the American Workforce	Chin-Tedim		10/3/2011	1/20/2012	Single
3A	Female	Ethiopia	1/4/2011	Asylee	High-skill			B.A. level and 3 Associate	Amharic	Oromo	10/3/2011	11/8/2012	Married
4A	Male	Iraq	10/12/2010	SIV	High-skill			B.A. level and 2 Diploma and professional development	Arabic	Kurdish	10/2/2011	1/20/2012	Single
5A	Female	Iraq	9/8/2010	Refugee	High-skill			2 B.A. and certification	Arabic		11/1/2011	2/1/2012	Married
6A	Male	Ethiopia	1/4/2011	Asylee	High-skill			4 B.A. and certification	Amharic	Oromo	10/4/2011	1/17/2012	Married
7A	Male	Haiti	9/21/2010	Asylee	High-skill			4 B.A. and certification	French	Creole	10/3/2011	1/30/2012	Married
8A	Female	Iraq	2/24/2010	Refugee	High-skill			2 M.A. and law certificate	Arabic	Kurdish, Turkish	10/3/2011	1/30/2012	Married
9A	Female	Sierra Leone	7/13/2011	Refugee	High-skill			Diploma and volunteer experience	Krio	English	10/3/2011	1/19/2012	Single
10A	Female	Haiti	9/19/2011	Asylee	High-skill			Diploma, experienced teacher	French	Creole	11/5/2011	2/1/2012	Married
11A	Female	Iraq	9/1/2010	Refugee	high-skill			B.S. and 2 related medical certifications	Arabic	Kurdish	10/2/2011	1/25/2012	Married
12A	Male	Syria	8/3/2011	Refugee	high-skill			3 B.S.	Arabic		12/2/2011	1/2/2012	single
13A	Female	Cameroon	4/10/2009	Asylee	Low-skill			1 diploma	English		10/4/2011	1/13/2012	single
14A	Male	Iraq	10/21/2010	Refugee	Low-skill			did not finish high school	Arabic		10/10/2011	1/13/2012	single
15A	Male	Iraq	4/20/2010	Refugee	High-skill			2 B.S. and 3 certifications	Arabic	English	10/4/2011	1/20/2012	single
16A	Male	Cameroon	5/27/2009	asylee	High-skill			diploma and 2 construction training	French	Fafa	10/3/2011	1/30/2012	married
17A	Female	Cameroon	8/25/2010	asylee	Low-skill			diploma and nursing 2 assistant training	French		10/4/2011	1/20/2012	single
18A	Male	Cameroon	2/11/2009	asylee	Low-skill			1 security officer training	French	English	10/1/2011	1/20/2012	married
19A	female	Ethiopia	1/6/2010	asylee	high-skill			diploma and nursing 4 training	Amharic	English	10/1/2011	1/18/2012	married
20A	female	Eritrea	11/29/2009	asylee	Low-skill			Diploma and beauty services experience	Tigrinya	English	1/24/2011	6/17/2011	married
21A	male	Ethiopia	9/20/2010	asylee	high-skill	n/a		n/a	Amharic	English	12/1/2011	2/1/2012 (but then began new job so case was immediately continued)	married
22A	male	Iraq	6/28/2011	Refugee	Low-skill			restaurant owner and 6 maintenance work	Arabic		11/5/2011	2/11/2012	married
23A	female	Ethiopia	10/16/2010	asylee	Low-skill			diploma and Home 2 Health Aide Certification	Amharic		12/2/2011	2/12/2012	married

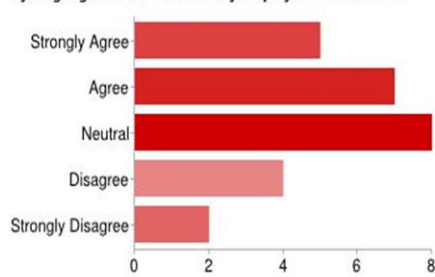
1B	Male	Iraq	10/29/2009	Refugee	high-skill	n/a	B.A/B.S. training at Montgomery College	Arabic	English	2/24/2011	6/8/2011	single
2B	Male	Ethiopia	9/2/2010	Refugee	low-skill		1 College	Amharic	Oromo	6/10/2011	8/18/2011	married
3B	Female	Iraq	6/17/2010	Refugee	high-skill		2 n/a	Arabic	English	8/2/2011	11/4/2011	single
4B	Female	Eritrea	5/12/2010	Asylee	high-skill		1 n/a	Tigrinya	English	1/24/2011	7/18/2011	single
5B	Male	Iraq	7/1/2010	Refugee	high-skill		3 diploma and interpreter training	Arabic	English	5/1/2011	8/12/2011	married
6B	Female	Iraq	4/13/2010	Refugee	high-skill		5 B.A. diplomas and interpreter training	Arabic	English	6/23/2011	9/29/2011	married
7B	Male	Iraq	8/18/2010	Special Immigrant Visa	high-skill		4 training	Arabic	English	6/10/2011	8/10/2011	single
8B	male	Iraq	9/1/2010	SIV	HIGH-skill		5 B.A.	Arabic	English	9/2/2011	12/6/2011	single
9B	Male	Iraq	4/15/2010	Refugee	high-skill		4 Associate's Degree Diploma and Pharmacy	Arabic	Russian	6/7/2011	9/8/2011	single
10B	Female	Iraq	2/4/2011	Refugee	high-skill		2 Tech	Arabic		9/8/2011	12/20/2011	single
11B	Male	Iraq	7/16/2008	Refugee	high-skill		2 B.A.	Arabic	English	6/3/2011	10/6/2011	single
12B	Male	Iraq	7/22/2010	Refugee	high-skill	n/a	n/a	Arabic		3/1/2011	6/17/2011	married
13B	Male	Iraq	8/30/2010	Refugee	high-skill	n/a	n/a	Arabic		11/1/2010	2/2/2011	single
14B	Male	Iraq	10/14/2010	Refugee	high-skill	n/a	diploma	Arabic		2/11/2011	6/17/2011	married
15B	Male	Eritrea	8/3/2010	Refugee	low-skill	n/a	n/a	Tigrinya		10/14/2010	1/24/2011	single
16B	female	Burma	10/21/2010	refugee	low-skill	n/a	n/a	Burmese	English	7/1/2011	10/25/2011	married
17B	male	Ethiopia	2/4/2011	Asylee	High-skill		4 B.S. and pharmacy certification	Amharic	English	7/5/2011	10/25/2011	married
18B	female	Ethiopia	4/14/2008	asylee	low-skill	n/a	n/a	Amharic		12/2/2010	3/28/2011	married
19B	male	Ethiopia	9/23/2010	refugee	low-skill	n/a	n/a	Amharic	Tigrinya	8/4/2011	11/4/2011	married
20B	male	Eritrea	7/15/2009	asylee	high-skill		2 electrical engineer	Tigrinya	English	11/16/2010	11/22/2011	married
21B	male	Ethiopia	4/27/2010	asylee	high-skill		1 CNA	Amharic	English	12/8/2010	5/9/2011	Married
22B	female	Guinea	5/27/2010	asylee	low-skill		2 care taker	French		7/11/2011	10/25/2011	single
23B	female	Ethiopia	7/11/2009	asylee	low-skill		1 diploma	Amharic	Oromo	3/8/2011	6/17/2011	married
24B	female	Central African Republic	1/12/2011	refugee	low-skill		2 diploma	French	Sango	7/5/2011	10/25/2011	single
25B	female	Guinea	6/15/2007	asylee	high-skill		1 nursing experience, diploma	Sosou	French	12/2/2010	3/28/2011	married
26B	Male	Eritrea	8/3/2010	refugee	low-skill	n/a	n/a	Tigrinya		10/14/2010	1/26/2011	single
27B	Male	Venezuela	10/22/2009	asylee	high-skill	n/a	n/a	Spanish		11/2/2010	2/16/2011	married
28B	Female	Bhutan	10/15/2008	refugee	low-skill	n/a	n/a	Nepalese	Hindi	11/4/2010	2/28/2011	married
29B	Female	Zimbabwe	12/11/2009	asylee	high-skill		4 teacher	English	Zuu	5/11/2011	8/9/2011	Married
30B	Female	Bhutan	2/3/2011	refugee	high-skill		4 B.S.	Nepali		9/19/2011	12/19/2011	married
31B	Male	Cameroon	4/14/2008	asylee	low-skill	n/a	n/a	French	English	11/15/2010	2/15/2011	single
32B	Female	Ethiopia	7/19/2010	asylee	low-skill		4 Diploma	Amharic		9/2/2011	12/20/2011	married
33B	Female	Togo	11/22/2010	asylee	high-skill		2 certified healthcare worker, midwife	French	English	3/1/2011	6/13/2011	Married
34B	Female	Eritrea	4/24/2006	asylee	low-skill		1 n/a	Amharic		6/1/2011	7/5/2011	married
35B	female	Ethiopia	10/6/2008	asylee	high-skill		2 office assistant M.S. International Business	Amharic	Gurage and English	10/5/2010	1/21/2011	single
36B	female	Niger	10/17/2008	asylee	high-skill		0	French	English	12/23/2010	5/13/2011	Single
37B	male	Bhutan	12/14/2010	refugee	low-skill	n/a	n/a	Nepali	English	7/6/2011	9/8/2011	single
38B	female	Butan	12/14/2010	refugee	low-skill	n/a	n/a	Nepali	English	7/6/2011	9/8/2011	single
39B	male	Bhutan	2/19/2008	refugee	low-skill	n/a	n/a	Nepali	English	7/6/2011	9/8/2011	single
40B	male	Bhutan	2/19/2009	refugee	low-skill	n/a	n/a	Nepali		9/21/2011	12/20/2011	single
41B	female	Iran	9/29/2010	refugee	low-skill	n/a	n/a	Armenian	English	4/20/2011	7/26/2011	single
42B	male	Eritrea	8/24/2010	refugee	low-skill		1 up to 10th grade	Tigrigna		3/3/2011	6/17/2011	
43B	male	Iraq	1/19/2010	SIV	High-skill		7 B.S. Civil Engineer	Arabic	English	10/12/2010	1/13/2011	married
44B	female	Iran	7/10/2009	asylee	high-skill	n/a	n/a	Farsi		1/5/2011	4/7/2011	Single
45B	female	Iraq	10/20/2010	refugee	high-skill		2 B.S. Computer Science	Arabic	English	1/7/2011	5/18/2011	single
46B	female	Iraq	10/20/2010	refugee	high-skill		2 2 years Pharmacy	Arabic	English	1/7/2011	6/7/2011	single
47B	male	Ethiopia	6/23/2010	asylee	high-skill		2 economics certificate Montgomery College	Amharic		3/7/2011	9/20/2011	married
48B	male	Togo	7/9/2010	asylee	low-skill		1 English courses	French	English	8/16/2011	11/28/2011	single
49B	male	Eritrea	7/15/2010	refugee	low-skill	n/a	n/a	Amharic	Tigrinya	7/1/2011	10/13/2011	single
50B	female	Benin	11/19/2009	asylee	high-skill		2 Master in physical geography, GNA/CNA training	French		4/6/2011	7/5/2011	married

51B	male	Iraq	8/27/2008	refugee	low-skill	n/a	n/a	Arabic	English	4/20/2011	7/21/2011	married	
52B	male	Cameroon	2/16/2010	asylee	high-skill		3	M.S. biochemistry	French	English	5/12/2011	8/9/2011	single
53B	male	Iraq		refugee	high-skill		3	B.S. Computer Science	Arabic	English	6/1/2011	9/14/2011	single
54B	male	Eritrea	6/29/2010	asylee	n/a	n/a	n/a	Tigrinya	English	3/8/2011	6/10/2011	single	
55B	female	Bhutan	7/28/2008	refugee	low-skill		3	diploma	Nepali		5/2/2011	8/29/2011	married
								diploma and carpentry					
56B	male	Ethiopia	5/22/2009	asylee	high-skill		1	training	Amharic	English	10/1/2010	1/6/2011	married
57B	male	Burma	12/13/2010	refugee	low-skill	n/a	n/a	Chin			5/2/2011	8/9/2011	married
58B	female	Iraq	1/28/2009	refugee	high-skill		2	associate's degree and accountant training	Arabic	English	4/1/2011	7/1/2011	married
59B	female	Ethiopia	6/27/2011	asylee	high-skill		3	B.A. Law	Amharic	English	9/9/2011	12/20/2011	single
60B	male	Ethiopia	4/30/2009	asylee	n/a	n/a	n/a	Amharic	English	11/1/2010	2/8/2011	married	
61B	male	Bhutan	9/1/2010	refugee	low-skill	n/a	n/a	Nepali			2/25/2011	5/9/2011	married
								Master in Law and					
62B	male	Bhutan	2/3/2011	refugee	high-skill		3	Philosophy	Nepali	English	8/11/2011	11/28/2011	married
63B	female	Bhutan	9/1/2010	refugee	low-skill	n/a	n/a	Nepali			6/24/2011	9/21/2011	married
64B	female	Bhutan	9/1/2010	refugee	low-skill	n/a	n/a	Neapli			4/8/2011	8/16/2011	married
65B	female	Guinea	5/27/2010	asylee	low-skill	n/a	n/a	French			3/17/2011	6/17/2011	single
66B	female	Ethiopia	9/9/2010	refugee	high-skill		2	high school diploma and medical experience	Amharic		9/15/2011	12/19/2011	single
								certified Security Officer, Home Health Aide, CPR/First Aid, and Building Maintenance					
67B	male	Cameroon	4/30/2009	asylee	high-skill		2	Engineer	French	English	11/5/2010	2/16/2011	married
68B	male	Ethiopia	2/21/2009	asylee	high-skill	n/a	n/a	Amharic	English	6/13/2011	9/20/2011	single	
69B	female	Ethiopia	8/30/2010	asylee	low-skill	n/a	n/a	Amharic	English	2/9/2011	4/7/2011-- file closed at the request of client	married	
70B	male	Bhutan	2/23/2010	refugee	low-skill	n/a	n/a	Nepali		3/7/2011	6/17/2011	married	
71B	male	Burma	7/21/2010	refugee	low-skill	n/a	n/a	Chin	Burmese and English	3/29/2011	7/7/2011	married	
								Diploma/ Electrical Technician, Civil Aviation Training, and Certified Apartment					
72B	male	Ethiopia	4/30/2010	asylee	high-skill		1	Maintenance Technician	Amharic	English	1/11/2011	4/25/2011	married
								High school diploma and coursework at tech					
73B	male	Ethiopia	2/24/2010	refugee	low-skill		2	school	Amharic	English	3/19/2011	6/15/2011	
74B	male	Ethiopia	5/12/2009	asylee	high-skill	n/a	n/a	Amharic	English	2/3/2011	5/10/2011	married	
								M.A. Governance and					
75B	female	Ethiopia	7/14/2010	asylee	high-skill		1	Development	Amharic	English	4/4/2011	10/26/2011	single
76B	female	Ethiopia	9/2/2010	asylee	low-skill		1	diploma	Amharic		5/3/2011	8/12/2011	married
77B	female	Ethiopia	8/23/2010	refugee	high-skill	n/a	n/a	Amharic	English	12/2/2010	3/28/2011	Divorced	

Appendix B.2: Graphs depicting aggregate data collected from survey



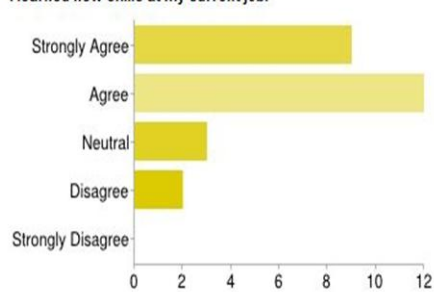
My language was a barrier to my employment in the U.S.



Strongly Agree	5	19%
Agree	7	26%
Neutral	8	30%
Disagree	4	15%
Strongly Disagree	2	7%

Item 3

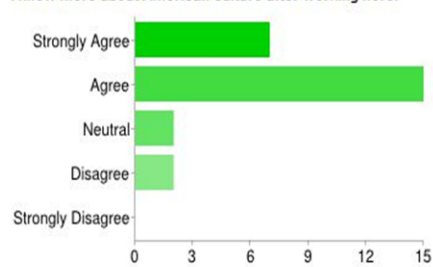
I learned new skills at my current job.



Strongly Agree	9	33%
Agree	12	44%
Neutral	3	11%
Disagree	2	7%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%

Item 4

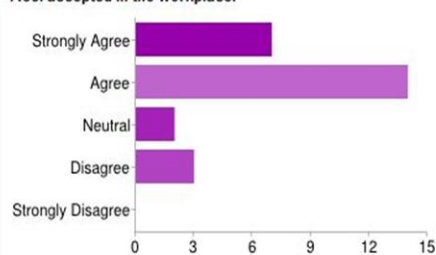
I know more about American culture after working here.



Strongly Agree	7	26%
Agree	15	56%
Neutral	2	7%
Disagree	2	7%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%

Item 5

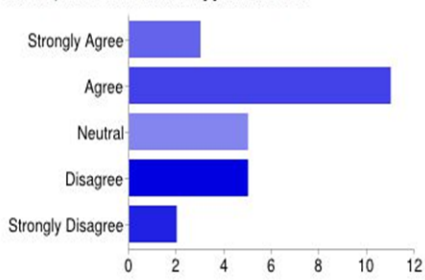
I feel accepted in the workplace.



Strongly Agree	7	26%
Agree	14	52%
Neutral	2	7%
Disagree	3	11%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%

Item 6

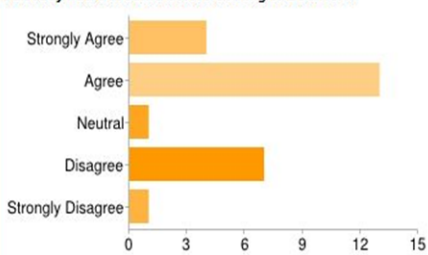
Overall, I am satisfied with my job in the U.S.



Strongly Agree	3	11%
Agree	11	41%
Neutral	5	19%
Disagree	5	19%
Strongly Disagree	2	7%

Item 7

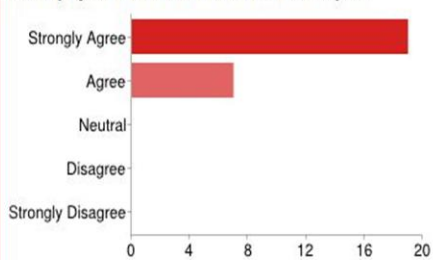
I already had a resume before coming to LSS/NCA.



Strongly Agree	4	15%
Agree	13	48%
Neutral	1	4%
Disagree	7	26%
Strongly Disagree	1	4%

Item 8

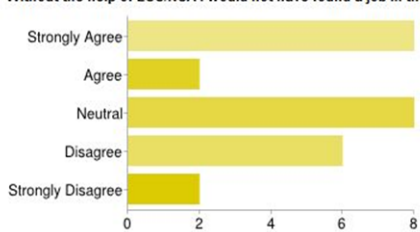
The employees at LSS/NCA treated me with respect.



Strongly Agree	19	70%
Agree	7	26%
Neutral	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%

Item 9

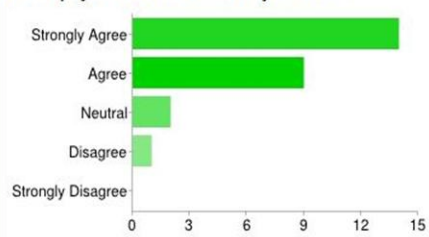
Without the help of LSS/NCA I would not have found a job in the U.S.



Strongly Agree	8	30%
Agree	2	7%
Neutral	8	30%
Disagree	6	22%
Strongly Disagree	2	7%

Item 10

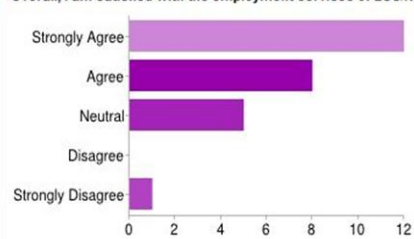
The employees at LSS/NCA were easy to talk to.



Strongly Agree	14	52%
Agree	9	33%
Neutral	2	7%
Disagree	1	4%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%

Item 11

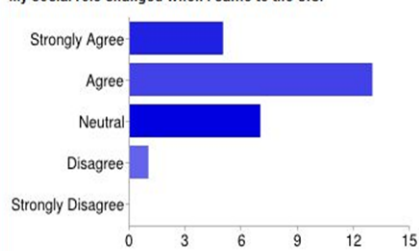
Overall, I am satisfied with the employment services of LSS/NCA.



Strongly Agree	12	44%
Agree	8	30%
Neutral	5	19%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly Disagree	1	4%

Item 12

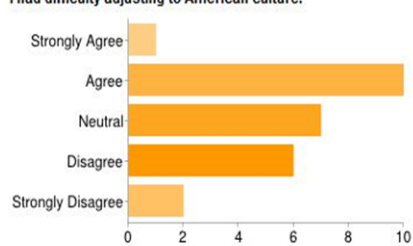
My social role changed when I came to the U.S.



Strongly Agree	5	19%
Agree	13	48%
Neutral	7	26%
Disagree	1	4%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%

Item 13

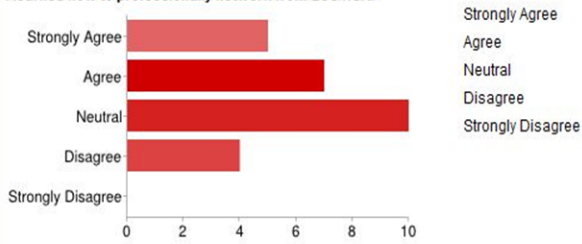
I had difficulty adjusting to American culture.



Strongly Agree	1	4%
Agree	10	37%
Neutral	7	26%
Disagree	6	22%
Strongly Disagree	2	7%

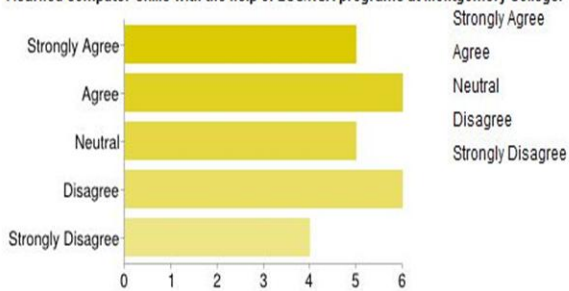
Item 14

I learned how to professionally network from LSS/NCA.



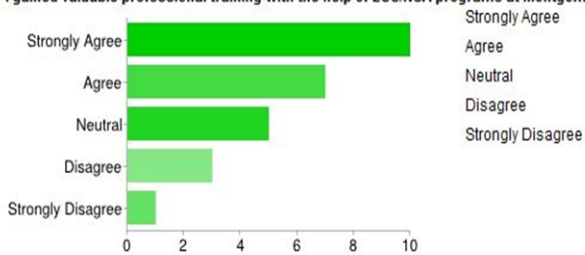
Item 15

I learned computer-skills with the help of LSS/NCA programs at Montgomery College.



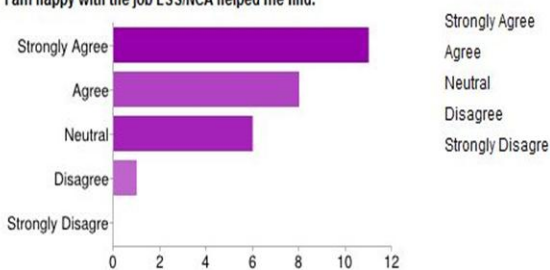
Item 16

I gained valuable professional training with the help of LSS/NCA programs at Montgomery College.



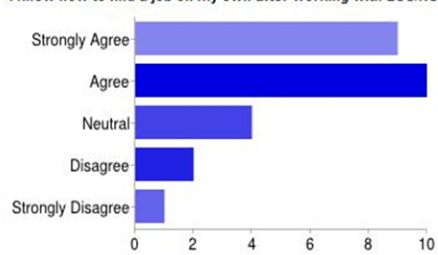
Item 17

I am happy with the job LSS/NCA helped me find.



Item 18

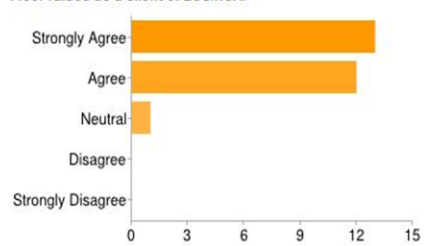
I know how to find a job on my own after working with LSS/NCA.



Strongly Agree	9	33%
Agree	10	37%
Neutral	4	15%
Disagree	2	7%
Strongly Disagree	1	4%

Item 19

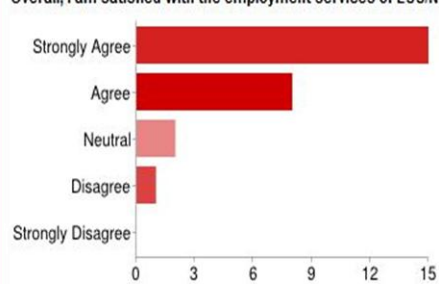
I feel valued as a client of LSS/NCA.



Strongly Agree	13	48%
Agree	12	44%
Neutral	1	4%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%

Item 20

Overall, I am satisfied with the employment services of LSS/NCA.



Strongly Agree	15	56%
Agree	8	30%
Neutral	2	7%
Disagree	1	4%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%

Item 21

Appendix C.2:

Meta-themes and quotes from focus groups

Theme	Male Quotes	Female Quote
<i>Praise for LSS/NCA Employment Services</i>	<p>“They open all doors for us, really.”¹⁸</p> <p>“When you don’t know where to go they’ll help you.”¹⁹</p>	<p>“LSS is the link, the bridge for employment. They open the door for us.”²⁰</p> <p>“The emotional support [from LSS] is equal to the resume building. They try to console me and tell me that it is okay. They are really good people. The emotional support... is what sustains you because you have a lot of stories, regardless, [when] compared to someone who is raised here [and] living with a family... My family is not here. You think of them every day and you need someone, as a refugee or asylee, because emotional support is the main component.”²¹</p>
<i>Cultural Adaptations and Frustrations</i>	<p>“We Africans do not know what time is. We do not have any culture of time.... Here 8 hours of work is 8 hours of work.”²²</p> <p>“I like [it] here in [the] U.S. [In] my country [there was] no help [for] me [to] go to school. [The] teacher [was] no good... in Iraq [the] teacher [was] no good. Here [the] teacher help[s] people [which is] good, very good. My job [is] very good [and they are] nice people... [The] store Mega Mart [has] 99 cents vegetables, [which is] cheap... anything [for 99 cents].”²³</p>	<p>“We [were] shocked. [We must] keep working to not lose any money [or] any minutes. In our country we have time to drink tea, to talk, to go to the bathroom... it’s flexible but here it is strict... This American system, they like standing... everywhere you are standing. This is a bad, bad, bad thing.”²⁴</p> <p>“To me, I feel that we earn more compared to my country, we earn more here, but at the end we do not have anything because you have to pay rent, you have to pay if you are catching the bus or train, you have to eat, and the money will just go like that [snaps her fingers]... My kids are not here but I have to send them money but the money is not there, but I work.”²⁵</p>

¹⁸ Statement by a mid-20-30 year old refugee client from Gambia during the male focus group session held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in the LSS/NCA conference room.

¹⁹ Statement by 40 year old refugee client from Ethiopia during the male focus group session held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in the LSS/NCA conference room.

²⁰ Statement by 40 year old refugee client from Iraq during the female focus group session held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in the LSS/NCA conference room.

²¹ Statement by mid-20 year old refugee client from Ethiopia during the female focus group session held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in the LSS/NCA conference room.

²² Statement by a mid 30-40 year old refugee from Cameroon during the male focus group session held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in the LSS/NCA conference room in reference to the cultural differences in the workplace between the U.S. and his home country.

²³ Statement by a 30 year old refugee from Iraq during the male focus group session held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in the LSS/NCA conference room in reference to lifestyle comparisons between Iraq and the U.S.

²⁴ Statement by a 40 year old refugee from Iraq during the female focus group session held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in the LSS/NCA conference room in reference to a question about the American workplace.

²⁵ Statement by a 40 year old refugee from Cameroon during the female focus group session held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in the LSS/NCA conference room in reference to the cost of living in the U.S.

		<p>“Oh my God good question actually. Why? Because it’s easy, so easy in our country [in] Iraq to find [a] job. When I graduate my name from the institute goes directly to the government... You are employed somewhere. That’s it. [It’s] so easy.”²⁶</p>
<p><i>Obstacles to Employment in the U.S.</i></p>	<p>“Why are all the jobs here part-time... part-time, part-time, part-time.”²⁷</p> <p>“English is a limit to work experience. That’s why we require LSS behind us... Preference is [given] to U.S. citizens [for jobs]. I have the right [to work] but in DC I experienced this [form of discrimination].”²⁸</p>	<p>“[Even though] I can say that I have a BA degree, my degree is not valued because it is [from] outside of the U.S. Here it has to be evaluated. I think that’s what has been an obstacle for me to get a job... [What] I’m saying is like here it’s so, so competitive. It has [also] been really challenging in Ethiopia, there is always competition everywhere, but here there is more competition.”²⁹</p> <p>“[When] I was in Kenya [I was] in a refugee camp for seven years... When I was in Kenya I was working in a restaurant for myself, but in American, no, I do not have any job now.”³⁰</p> <p>“We deserve everything [that is] very good and a high [quality] level as we [had] before in our countries, but here [it is] slow steps... First [apply] online [which is like] applying on air. Then you see [that] you need this certificate... it keeps going.”³¹</p>
<p><i>Improvements for LSS/NCA</i></p>	<p>“[There should be] education for those who want it. I took these apartment maintenance classes for the skills, [and] I got the certificate. I got the license but the</p>	<p>“Sometimes I feel like I do not know what I need. Am I not focused? Do I have to go back and start an undergraduate degree?... I need something; a full-time job with</p>

²⁶ Statement by a 40 year old refugee from Iraq during the female focus group session held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in the LSS/NCA conference room in reference to a question about the ease of finding a job in her home country when compared to the U.S.

²⁷ Statement by a mid 30-40 year old refugee from Cameroon during the male focus group session held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in the LSS/NCA conference room in reference to his frustration with the job opportunities that are available.

²⁸ Statement by 40 year old refugee client from Ethiopia during the male focus group session held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in the LSS/NCA conference room in reference to employment-based discrimination that he has experienced due to his ethnicity and refugee status.

²⁹ Statement by a mid-20 year old refugee from Ethiopia during the female focus group session held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in the LSS/NCA conference room in reference to a question about the challenges involved in finding a job in the U.S.

³⁰ Statement by a mid 20- 30 year old refugee from Ethiopia during the female focus group session held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in the LSS/NCA conference room in reference to a question about her employment history.

³¹ Statement by a 40 year old refugee from Iraq during the female focus group session held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in the LSS/NCA conference room in reference to a question about the frustrations involved in applying for jobs in the U.S. She believes that when you apply online for a job your application vanishes into thin air because she never hears any response from the employer.

	<p>job is not there. [The class] is very helpful.”³²</p> <p>“The job is there but [we] do not know someone who can introduce us. That’s frustrating... You must be recommended by someone, someone to present you. We must have confidence in LSS. We must trust in them [because] they are the open hand. [They have] the power to introduce us [because] they are professionals. We do go by ourselves but we suffer difficulties. [We] need to be presented and recommended by LSS.”³³</p>	<p>benefits so I can have a kind of hope for the next years. I am a little bit confused as to what I can say, not frustrated. But [I am confused with] where I am now... I do not know in what way I can dig out that thing [I need]. I just want to know the clear path of my life.”³⁴</p> <p>“LSS needs to make [a] recommendation, [or] some card [that says] we are from LSS. LSS [does] not know their clients [any]more... LSS needs to follow-up with them [the employer]. [The employer] will put them under, how [do] you say, training [or] temporary [employment] for one-month to see if she is good, if he is good, [and] are they doing well.”³⁵</p>
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³² Statement by late 40s-50 year old refugee client from Ethiopia during the male focus group session held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in the LSS/NCA conference room in reference to the educational training he received from LSS/NCA but the lack of jobs that were available in that field upon completion of the training.

³³ Statement by a mid 30-40 year old refugee from Cameroon during the male focus group session held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in the LSS/NCA conference room in reference to the changes he would like to see at LSS/NCA for future refugee and asylee clients.

³⁴ Statement by a mid 20- 30 year old refugee from Ethiopia during the female focus group session held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in the LSS/NCA conference room in reference to a question about her future employment opportunities.

³⁵ Statement by a 40 year old refugee from Iraq during the female focus group session held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in the LSS/NCA conference room explaining what she suggests LSS/NCA does to improve its services for future clients.