COMING TOGETHER: UNDERSTANDING THE INTERSECTION OF UNACCOMPANIED REFUGEE MINOR STATUS AND COMMUNITY SERVICE REFERRAL AND ACCESS

By

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A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Psychology - Master of Arts

2015

ABSTRACT

COMING TOGETHER: UNDERSTANDING THE INTERSECTION OF UNACCOMPANIED REFUGEE MINOR STATUS AND COMMUNITY SERVICE REFERRAL AND ACCESS

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The purpose of this study is to understand the impact of different types of Unaccompanied Refugee Minor (URM) status (traditional URM, victims of trafficking, SIJS, and asylees) on availability and quality of community services (legal assistance, education, mental health, and employment) using a qualitative approach. All nine staff working with a URM resettlement program were interviewed using semi-structured interviews, and transcriptions were thematically analyzed.

The results of the study suggest that staff are able to identify unique needs of youth by status, but are unable to recognize and discuss how that impacts youths' experiences from service providers in the broader community. Most staff shared victim blaming explanations for differences in service utilization among youth without acknowledging systemic explanations. The author concludes with study limitations, recommendations for applied practice, and directions for future research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Terms
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
U.N.	United Nations
ORR	Office of Refugee Resettlement
DUCS	ORR's Division of Unaccompanied Children's Services
URM	Unaccompanied Refugee Minors
UAC	Unaccompanied Alien/Immigrant Children
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
TVPRA	William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act
SIJS	Special Immigrant Juvenile Status
LIRS	Lutheran Immigrant and Refugee Services
USCCB	United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
LSSM	Lutheran Social Services of Michigan

Introduction

The 1951 Refugee Convention developed an international definition of refugees as those who have fled their country of origin and cannot return due to persecution related to race, religion, nationality, social group membership, or political orientation (UNHCR, 2011). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is mandated by the United Nations (U.N.) to protect stateless people worldwide and work to reduce the number of stateless persons around the world. At the end of 2012, UNHCR estimates there were 45.2 million refugees worldwide, with 15.4 million of those meeting the definition of a refugee above according to international conventions (UNHCR, 2013). These individuals will be referred to as having legal refugee status. The remaining 29.8 million have fled their homes and are unable to return, but have not been granted official refugee status (e.g. internally displaced persons or persons in flight who have not settled or registered with the U.N.). The U.S. resettled 66,300 refugees in 2012 and accepted 70,400 new asylum claims (UNHCR, 2013).

A special category of refugees include those under the age of 18 who are unaccompanied or who arrive in the U.S. without caregivers able or willing to care for them. These young people are designated as Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URMs) by the U.N. The United States developed a federal program housed in the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within the Department of Health and Human Services to assist those classified as URM. Originally developed in 1980 to assist children from Southeast Asian conflicts, the U.S. URM program has since expanded to include unaccompanied minors who arrive in the U.S. without adequate caregivers and without refugee status (ORR, 2013). These youth are designated Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) and typically arrive as undocumented immigrants (Refugee Council USA, 2014). The process by which they attain some form of legal residency status usually includes

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detention by U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and intense interviews to determine whether they qualify for some type of Legal Permanent Resident status. Most of these youth are voluntarily repatriated to Mexico or Central America (Refugee Council USA, 2014; Jones & Podkul, 2012).

UAC youth includes minors seeking asylum, meaning they assert a claim to be fleeing persecution but do not have internationally recognized refugee status. They are typically requesting protection from the U.S. government. ORR received between 7,000 and 8,000 undocumented minors annually until fiscal year 2012, when the number of UAC dramatically increased to 14,000. The number further increased to 25,000 in fiscal year 2013 (Refugee Council USA, 2014). Often, these youth are granted URM status and benefits after detailed evaluations of their histories.

Another unique category of unaccompanied juveniles was created in response to children fleeing abuse and neglect in their home countries. This category is formally known as Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS). First established in 1990, SIJS allows undocumented minors to petition the federal government for legal status without requiring family involvement (Junck, 2012). It was recently revised to be applicable to minors seeking protection from trafficking under the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) of 2008, which increased the number of eligible youth. In 2010, SIJS was only used by 1,492 youth to receive legal permanent status, of the more than 265,000 under 21 who received legal permanent status (Junck, 2012).

Currently, URM can be refugees, entrants, asylees, trafficking victims, and minors with SIJS, and are all under the care of ORR. As described above, these youth enter into federal care with diverse immigration backgrounds. Today there are approximately 1,300 URMs under the

care of ORR in 20 cities in the United States, including two cities in Michigan. These youth typically enter the federal foster care system. They then receive services from agencies around the country run by Lutheran Immigrant and Refugee Services (LIRS) or The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), both of which may contract with the state to provide services. Within the past two years, the dramatic influx in UAC arrivals at the national level has reflected a specific trend of older arrivals being close to the age of 18. As a result, a wider range of services is required to prepare for self-sufficiency. Seventy percent of UACs are between 15 and 17 years old upon arrival (Jones & Podkul, 2012). Youth within this age range are pressured to develop many skills and relationships in a short period of time. Therefore, the provision of key services in the areas of mental health, education, legal, and employment are prioritized.

All of the minors under the care of ORR's Division of Unaccompanied Children Services are provided services through the URM program. However, not all children have permanent status. Those applying for status as asylees and SIJS are often working with courts for months or years to establish permanent residency. Ongoing uncertainty of the permanent resident status of youth can be an important obstacle moving forward and securing independence. However, it is unclear whether and to what extent this is a perceived obstacle for URM program staff, URM youth, or community service providers.

The remainder of this thesis will be organized as follows. First, the four different types of immigration status that a URM may have will be detailed (URM, asylee, SIJS, or T visa). Second, the body of literature addressing URM needs and access to the four key services of this study (mental health, education, employment, and legal assistance) will be outlined. Third, the method for this project will be described. Fourth, the results will be presented. Finally, the results will be discussed and the conclusions presented.

Literature Review

The following review of the literature was conducted between March and July 2014, immediately prior to the study for the most updated and accurate assessment of the types of status afforded unaccompanied minors, and their needs, at the time of the study. For assessing the state of immigration relief for unaccompanied minors, the review included legal briefs, Congressional reports, scholarly articles, nongovernmental, nonprofit agency reports, and scholarly, peer-reviewed publications. For assessing the needs of unaccompanied refugee and immigrant minors, the review started with prior literature reviews on unaccompanied and/or refugee children, and was supplemented with searches of scholarly literature in the areas of mental health, education, legal assistance, and employment. It is organized first by the types of status, including an overview of unaccompanied refugee minors, and the different types of status granted to undocumented unaccompanied minors (asylum, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, and t-visas for victims of human trafficking); and second by the main context areas of need, as outlined by the literature and previous collaboration with the URM agency, including mental health, education, legal assistance, and employment.

Unaccompanied Refugee Minors

People become refugees after being forced to flee their homes for a number of reasons. It is not always foreseen by residents, and refugees often do not have time to prepare during this pre-flight phase. Usually this period of flight occurs due to political persecution or civil war (Onyango, 1998; Lustig et al., 2004). The period of flight may come on suddenly, such as when a village is attacked in the middle of the night and residents flee into the woods. The journey to find a safe space can take hours, days or weeks (UNHCR, 2013). A child may become separated from their parents or other adult caregivers at any time during flight. They may be killed or lost

or otherwise unable to continue the journey. The U.N. maintains the most current and detailed counts of refugees worldwide. The estimates of refugee children, particularly unaccompanied refugee children, are much more difficult to estimate and have not always been recorded (UNHCR, 2013).

The State Department created the URM program as a way to provide care for children left without a parent or guardian as a result of conflict (ORR, 2013). URM policy and procedures vary widely internationally. The focus of this study was on a specific community in the U.S. and its URM resettlement program. Therefore, information presented regarding URM refers only to population and process descriptions within a U.S. context, except where specified. The URM program began in 1980 as a response to Southeast Asian conflicts. Similar to the adult or family resettlement process, the State Department identifies children overseas who are eligible for resettlement, but do not have an adequate guardian. Children accepted for resettlement by the State Department are prepared for resettlement directly with a foster family. In some cases, youth may be placed in other approved settings, such as group homes or residential treatment centers (ORR, 2013). Foster care remains the preferred option for URM placement. URM youth identified for resettlement by the State Department and the U.N. may participate in a pre-orientation that can include cultural orientation classes from one to five days and/or a guidebook, available in 16 languages (US Department of State, 2013).

Rates of refugee resettlement have fluctuated since the beginning of refugee resettlement programs, and URM resettlement reflects similar fluctuations. Each year, the State Department proposes a refugee resettlement ceiling to the President, broken down by region of the world. The proposed admissions ceiling for fiscal year 2014 was 70,000 adults and children (U.S. Department of State, 2013). In the 1980s, unaccompanied Southeast Asian children made up the

largest percentage of URM in foster homes around the country, and Central American children were increasingly being designated as URM after fleeing civil wars and economic hardship (Mortland & Egan, 1987; Byrne & Miller, 2012). In the 1990s, numbers of unaccompanied children increased after a series of civil wars disrupted the Great Lakes region of Africa, and unaccompanied children made up a larger portion of the U.N.'s registered unaccompanied refugee children (U.S. Dept. of State, 2013). Sudanese unaccompanied minors, commonly called *The Lost Boys of Sudan*, made up a larger portion of resettled URM in the early 2000s. Eighty-nine Sudanese URM were resettled in the mid-Michigan area between November 2000 and April 2001 (Bates et al., 2005). Despite the URM program's brief history in the United States, it is legitimized by international efforts to bolster the safety and care of unaccompanied refugee minors, as identified by the UNHCR. However, not all children in similar circumstances receive such formal identification, and sources of relief for them are less clearly defined, as outlined below.

Undocumented Unaccompanied Children

The URM program provides care for unaccompanied children resettled through the UNHCR, and also for those resettled through a more convoluted pathway domestically. Undocumented unaccompanied youth are apprehended by U.S. law enforcement and detained in short-term shelter facilities until a determination can be made regarding further action (Byrne & Miller, 2012). These children are officially, albeit unfortunately, designated Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC). Most UAC are voluntarily repatriated but those that present a possible case for refugee or asylum status are referred to ORR and may stay and pursue legal residency through a variety of options (Byrne & Miller, 2012; Drevlow & Siman, 2012). As Central American conflicts increased, the threat of gender-based violence and forced gang membership

has become more severe, reflecting dramatically increased rates of URM from Central America since 2012 (Refugee Council USA, 2014). The Office of Refugee Resettlement provides care and services for these youth as well, who often cross the U.S. border without documentation and are apprehended by U.S. law enforcement (Byrne & Miller, 2012). The majority of unaccompanied minors referred to ORR are now from this population, as opposed to an overseas population identified by UNHCR. Of the children apprehended in the U.S., 90% are reunited with family members in the U.S., 6% are voluntarily repatriated, and 1% is referred to ORR for long term foster care based on their eligibility for some sort of immigration relief (Drevlow & Siman, 2012). The remaining 3% age out of ORR care and are released to the community with a plan for continuing their case (approved by ICE) or are transferred to adult detention to continue their immigration case (S.D. Cuervo & A. Simy, personal communication, June 17, 2014). ORR works with other organizations to determine the best long-term solution for these youth.

Regardless of how children arrived in ORR custody, the services provided are intended to be comprehensive. These youth are resettled in federal foster care if no guardian can be found (ORR, 2013). The goal of all ORR services for unaccompanied children is self-sufficiency (ORR, 2013). They are then eligible for all of the services provided in domestic foster care, with the addition of: a) financial support; b) case management; c) independent living skills training; d) educational support including vouchers; e) English language assistance; f) career and college counseling; g) mental health services; h) legal assistance with immigration status; i) cultural activities; j) recreational activities; k) social integration support; and l) cultural and religious preservation (ORR, 2013). The ability of individual agency sites and communities to provide each of these services varies, and some services (e.g., recreational activities) have been made conditional to grant funding. The literature provided a glimpse into the types of services that

should be emphasized for unaccompanied children. Past budgets for resettlement services have suggested that understanding how to allocate extremely limited funding is critical to resettlement and community services. In fiscal year 2013, ORR budgeted for 14,000 unaccompanied immigrant children, despite an expected 20,000 arrivals. This led to an expected deficit of $125 million (LIRS, 2013). More broadly, LIRS conducted a random sampling of resettlement service providers in their network and found that on average, it costs over $5,000 per person to provide the goods and services associated with placement and initial resettlement services (LIRS, 2012). This conservative estimate is not limited to unaccompanied children, who require more services and care than adults.

The TVPRA of 2008 provided many of the protections to unaccompanied children that were denied by earlier legislation (Byrne & Miller, 2012). Byrne and Miller (2012) noted the advances for children's rights in the TVPRA. It included mandates for non-adversarial immigration proceedings for children's asylum claims and provides legal access for immigration attorneys, safe repatriation to countries of origin, and allowed Health and Human Services to appoint guardians ad litem for child trafficking victims in immigration hearings. Similar to other special immigration statuses, these protections have been subject to debate over their appropriateness and effectiveness. Once in ORR's long term foster care, children are again subject to an immigration relief screening to find the appropriate solution: asylum , SIJS, or T visa (Drevlow & Siman, 2012). The U.S.'s URM program includes not only refugee youth from the UNHCR, but also unaccompanied minors that have immigrated to the U.S. without formal refugee status. These youth now make up the majority of youth in the URM program. Their options for relief are outlined below, including asylum, SIJS, and t-visa, respectively.

Asylum Seekers

Children seeking asylum most closely resemble UN.-designated refugees. To be granted asylum, youth petitioners must prove a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or member of a social group (Drevlow & Siman, 2012). This is generally harder for juveniles than adults because it is more difficult for children to understand and describe belief systems or cultures (Drevlow & Siman, 2012). Prior to the TVPRA changes, children had to present their case in Immigration Court within a strict one year filing deadline of arrival. Immigration Court was an adversarial, adult-centered context which did not require children to have legal representation or assistance. Since the implementation of TVPRA in 2009, children can apply for asylum through United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in a non-adversarial petition, without a filing deadline for UAC, and ORR has been charged with providing pro bono representation or other legal advocacy (although some children remain unrepresented). Asylum applications for UAC youth remain the most difficult type of immigration relief and take the longest time to process (Drevlow & Siman, 2012). Once granted, they are reclassified as URM and enrolled in the URM program. Because asylum is so difficult for minors to justify, many youth apply for asylum concurrently with other forms of immigration relief, such as Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, described below.

Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS)

SIJS was originally established for abused, neglected, or abandoned children in 1997, although children were required to supply the burden of proof of abuse or neglect themselves (Junck, 2012). Prior to 2008, DHS had to consent for youth to apply for SIJS. Additionally, those granted SIJS were not eligible to participate in the URM program. The TVPRA significantly

reduced barriers to accessing SIJS by eliminating the one year filing deadline and including mandated legal assistance, although hardly any of the eligible youth applied for it. In 2010, only 1,492 immigrant children obtained residency through SIJS out of the 265,808 immigrants under 21 who successfully obtained residency (Junck, 2012). This may have been due to a lack of awareness about the process and availability among service providers and courts. It is often the only option for legal residency for UAC (Junck, 2012). In order to be granted SIJS, a child first must be under the jurisdiction of family or probate court (Drevlow & Siman, 2012). After dependency is established, it must be documented in court that the child's family is unwilling or unable to care for him, and repatriation is not in the child's best interest. Once SIJS is granted, youth are eligible for URM program enrollment. However, immigration removal proceedings continue throughout the application process, so youth are simultaneously involved in multiple court cases. If SIJS is not granted, the petitioner must leave the country at age 18. As further evidence of the complex nature of SIJS proceedings, youth can apply for SIJS up to the age of 21, but most dependency orders expire at age 18, which voids their eligibility (Drevlow & Siman, 2012). For youth in Drevlow and Siman's study who applied for SIJS and asylum concurrently, all were awarded SIJS before their asylum case was resolved. This illustrates how an expanded immigration relief option remains complicated and tenuous for youth. In order to receive SIJS, youth must navigate both a local family or probate court and a federal immigration court. While the procedure is complicated and can be lengthy, it remains much less so than receiving a t-visa for victims of human trafficking, as described next.

Victims of human trafficking (T visa)

The T visa was established with the original Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) in 2000 for victims of human trafficking to find immigration relief (Drevlow & Siman, 2012). It

is valid for three years, after which recipients may apply for Legal Permanent Residency. In order to obtain a T visa, applicants must be victims of a severe form of human trafficking and comply with reasonable requests for cooperation on investigations or prosecutions of human trafficking. This cooperation is not required of applicants under 18. "Severe forms of trafficking" are defined in the TVPA(2000) as:

> (A) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or
>
> (B) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.

In essence, the term "severe forms of human trafficking" applies to victims of commercial sex trafficking under 18 years old (with or without coercion) and those over 18 who were coerced or forced into sex trafficking. The second part of the definition requires the use of force, fraud, or coercion for all other types of human trafficking. Applicants also have to demonstrate that they would suffer extreme hardship or danger if removed from the U.S. and returned to their country of origin. In sum, minors face multiple layers of the burden of proof in order to be eligible for immigration protection (e.g. proof of commercial sex acts, proof of age, proof of forced labor, etc.). Once granted, they are eligible for all refugee benefits, including URM benefits.

Thus, t-visa requires youth involvement in a criminal trafficking case and an immigration case, making it the most time consuming option for immigration relief. Because the four forms of immigration relief outlined above are grouped into the URM program once they are granted (even temporarily), they are eligible for most of the same benefits. Literature on URM in the U.S. does not differentiate between URM with different types of immigration status. It is clear

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that each form of relief is based on different needs and contexts. However, it is the author's observation that it is unknown to what extent different immigration backgrounds and status affect needs since they are all lumped into the URM category in the literature, as if all URM program youth were a homogenous group. Furthermore, although case managers know which form of immigration relief each child has, the extent to which that influences the service referral process is unknown. Given the array of experiences and immigration backgrounds outlined thus far, the next section of the literature review summarizes the needs of URM. It outlines the particular areas of mental health, education, legal assistance, and employment, and demonstrates the need to explore how different needs are related to different services.

URM Needs

Much of what is known about URM health and well-being is due to prevalence studies in mental health research (Ehntholt & Yule, 2006; Fazel et al., 2012; Lustig et al. 2004). Many of those studies have focused on refugee and immigrant adults, and unaccompanied minors have been a small sub-section within that literature. Over the past ten years, the research focus has begun to expand and include URM in a more diverse context. To clarify the state of URM research, the following subsections unpack what is known about URM in the areas of mental health, education, legal, and employment needs. The subsections are organized to introduce the importance of each area of research in the context of URM well-being, and then funnel from the broadest information available to the narrowest and specialized research conducted thus far. Areas in which points of intervention have been identified conclude with the best available intervention research.

Mental health

Mental health is the most widely researched area of unaccompanied refugee minor research. The international community has published several empirical and review articles on unaccompanied minor mental health, typically in the context of refugee child and adolescent mental health. Unaccompanied youth are generally considered one of the most high-risk groups for mental health concerns in review articles (see Ehntholt & Yule, 2006; Fazel et al., 2012; Huemer et al., 2009; Lustig et al., 2004). Lustig et al (2004) found that separation from parents or caregivers is common during the refugee process. This is especially important in light of research findings that emphasize social support and parental well-being as protective factors during flight and resettlement phases of migration. One of the most comprehensive reviews of mental health research on refugee children found that refugee camps may expose children to more trauma and unsafe conditions, as well as detention post-arrival, which contribute to increased rates of psychological distress among URM (Lustig et al, 2004). In a review of practitioner literature on refugee children and adolescents, Ehntholt & Yule (2006) found that rates of PTSD and depression are higher in refugee children than the general child population, but limited research showed that rates are higher for unaccompanied than accompanied refugee children. They were unable to make firm conclusions about intervening with unaccompanied youth because there was less data on services designed for URM, as well as general mental health access by URM.

Although mental health research has consistently found that PTSD is higher among URM youth than both the non-refugee and accompanied refugee population, samples are largely male (Huemer et al., 2009). Trafficking victims are predominantly women, and approximately half are children, although too many cases are unreported so more precise estimates are unknown

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(Okech, Morreau, & Benson, 2012). No specific URM studies have identified a sample including trafficking victims, male or female. Data on female URM is limited for several reasons. Girls migrate less frequently than boys, due to the harsh conditions of migration and the increased risks for sexual assault and violence for girls. Girls constitute an especially vulnerable URM population, of whom little is known. Girls also disappear after arrival in refugee camps because of indentured servitude and forced marriage (Lustig et al., 2004). Huemer and colleagues (2009) added valuable insight with the only literature review focused on the mental health of unaccompanied minors.

In the largest URM mental health study conducted, Bean et al. (2007a) validated the Hopkins Symptom Checklist-37 for refugee adolescents as part of the *URM and the Dutch Mental Healthcare System* study. The study, conducted in the Netherlands, included URM ($n = 920$), Belgian immigrant and refugee accompanied adolescents ($n = 1,294$), and a Dutch student sample as a control ($n = 1,059$). They found that the HSCL-37 is psychometrically sound for a heterogeneous unaccompanied refugee sample and that it can consistently differentiate between URM youth who need mental health care services and those who do not. In addition, they validated a Teacher Report Form and found that it could be a useful screening tool for mental health care within schools (Bean et al., 2007b). Bean et al. (2006) found that almost 60% of URM reported a need for help compared to only 8% of the Dutch adolescents. Of the URM sample, 48.7% reported an unmet mental health need, compared to only 4.5% of the Dutch adolescent sample. However, they also found that only 30% of teachers were able to detect the mental health care needs self-reported by URM (Bean et al., 2006). The scope of Bean's study is extensive; it provides data on cross-cultural measurement invariance of several measures, identifies prevalence of psychological distress among URMs, and highlights discrepancies

between non-professional screening and self-referral for mental health services. The first study to address URM mental health outcomes in Britain found similar results: unaccompanied asylum seeking minors reported more traumatic events and were more likely to display PTSD symptoms (Michelson & Sclare, 2009).

Research has also shown that more than resettlement conditions or types of trauma, the number of stressful life events reported is the strongest predictor of mental health needs, particularly in PTSD treatment settings (Bean et al., 2006; Batista et al., 2007; Derluyn & Broekaert, 2007; Derluyn, Mels & Broekaert, 2009). In a random sample of 34 schools with immigrant language classes, ($n = 1,294$ adolescents, $n = 124$ unaccompanied) researchers found that adolescents who reported more traumatic events on the Stressful Life Events (SLE) scale and the Reactions of Adolescents to Traumatic Stress scale (RATS), scored higher on all mental health subscales. Unaccompanied adolescents typically report experiencing more traumatic events than accompanied minors and score significantly higher on anxiety, depression, and posttraumatic stress than their accompanied counterparts (Derluyn et al., 2009). Derluyn and Broekaert (2007) found that 37-47% of unaccompanied refugee youth have severe to very severe symptoms of anxiety, depression, and posttraumatic stress. Findings underscore the importance of understanding girls' experiences, as they suggest that girls with higher SLE scores were at higher risk. The study also identified placement differences, such that those URM in large-scale residential centers had higher internalizing scores.

High rates of PTSD, depression, and anxiety were found among a sample of 46 unaccompanied refugee minors awaiting placement at an asylum center in Finland (Sourander, 1998). Sourander (1998) provides evidence the post-migration process of detention and/or the legal process of asylum seeking may contribute to the high levels of stress and psychological

distress among traumatized children. One of the only empirical studies of unaccompanied minors focused on the detention and asylum seeking process, this study highlighted the importance of attending to the effects of this phase of migration.

It is particularly alarming that URM are also vulnerable to late-onset PTSD (Smid et al, 2011). Data collected one year (T1) after resettlement and two years (T2) after resettlement in the Netherlands found that 40% of youth met the criteria for PTSD at T1, and an additional 16% met the criteria for PTSD at T2 only. The overall prevalence rate did not change between T1 and T2, however this indicated an alarming rate at which new diagnoses of PTSD were uncovered at T2. Of those who met PTSD criteria at T1, more than half continued to meet the criteria for PTSD at T2. These findings supported previous research that demonstrated that most of the variance in PTSD symptoms two years after resettlement are due to older age, the number of traumatic events experienced, and baseline PTSD, depression, and anxiety scores (Bean, Eurelings-Bontekoe, & Spinhoven, 2007). Researchers speculated this may be due to increasing anxiety about legal status outcomes (for instance, in asylum seeking cases) approaching adulthood. It is reasonable to believe this may be a contributing factor to PTSD among URM in the United States as well, since seeking legal resident status through any of the available channels can be lengthy and outcomes vary greatly, and thus bears consideration as researchers consider URM mental health in the U.S. These legal processes and challenges will be outlined further in the legal needs section of this literature review.

Although most URM mental health studies have focused on documenting prevalence, research is emerging that details coping strategies that have led to resilience and adaptation among URM. Early research on separated Cuban refugee girls showed that the typical psychological mourning of loss was delayed by the girls through the context of forced separation

and the gap they created in their minds between physical and psychological separation (Rodriguez-Nogues, 1983). The context in which Cuban children were separated and resettled in the U.S. was much different than the context in which URM youth were separated and resettled in the current literature. Rodriguez-Nogues (1983) used a retrospective research design which would not address current needs and services. However, it lent support for qualitative methods that allow youth to define and share their unique experiences. More recently, the Sudanese *Lost Boys* have been studied extensively as a highly resilient refugee group of unaccompanied children. Research has shown they consider their ethnic identity and cultural values to be protective factors (Carlson, Cacciatore, & Klimek, 2012; Luster et al., 2009). The *Lost Boys* also survived immense trauma and hardship through the support of their peers and maintaining a sense of purpose, which is rooted in the cultural tradition of nomadic herding conducted by northern Somali boys (Luster et al., 2009; Rousseau et al., 1998).

Taken together, it is clear that URM face considerable mental health challenges due to the ongoing stressors throughout the refugee process. URM have higher rates of psychological distress than normed samples and accompanied refugee children. The migration and post-migration experience contributes to mental health concerns, although limited research has focused on the post-migration experience of URM in the United States. Table 1 displays the nature of URM mental health research to date. The first column provides an in-text citation, the second column identifies the location in which the study was conducted, and the third column provides a brief description of the study's research design, or studies in the case of review articles. The fourth column identifies any guiding theories made explicit in the studies, and the last five columns provide a quick glance at the topics explored in each study. As shown in Table 1, URM mental health research has largely been conducted outside of the U.S. and has been

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epidemiological in nature, without an ecological theoretical perspective. Existing literature does

not examine how different immigration pathways and backgrounds shape mental health referrals

and consequently, intervention appropriateness and efficacy. Post-migration detention has been

noted as a risk factor for children's mental health in mental health reviews (Fazel et al., 2012).

Despite multiple review articles on refugee children and adolescents, only one review article has

been written solely on unaccompanied child mental health, as most (see Lustig et al., 2004;

Entholt & Yule, 2006; Fazel et al., 2012) dedicated just one paragraph to the unique needs of

unaccompanied minors. Mental health reviews concluded that an ecological perspective would

be most helpful, and that future research should incorporate multiple systems of influence

affecting URM mental health. Therefore, there is clearly a methodological gap in identifying

how different types of immigrant backgrounds shape the service needs of youth. The study

reported here sought to identify how program staff considers mental health needs of different

URM youth during service referral to maximize effectiveness. The local agency that provided

URM services delivers their own in-house mental health care, but they are not equipped to deal

with all types of trauma that URM have experienced. Therefore, the literature and the local

context suggested a need to understand how the staff view the local community mental health

providers consider status when providing care. Furthermore, the literature and local context

encouraged a holistic approach to mental health that includes other areas of need relevant to

URM, which will be described starting with education needs.

Table 1

URM Mental Health Literature Summary

Study	Location	Design	Theory	Mental health	Education	Legal	Employment	Other
				Community services included				
Ehntholt & Yule, 2006	U.K.	Review	Trauma, Family systems	✓		✓		
Fazel et al., 2012	U.K., Belgium, Netherlands	Review	Trauma/loss, review divided by ecological level	Recommended mobilizing resources				
Lustig et al., 2004	SE Asia, U.S., Australia, Kenya	Review	Recommend ecological developmental model	Determined resources needed				
Huemer et al., 2009	Europe, U.S.	Review	trauma, coping, resilience	Suggested analysis of care system, concluded older adolescents have difficulty obtaining referrals				Health
Sourander, 1998	Finland	Epidemiological	None	✓				
Bean et al. 2007a	Netherlands, Belgium	Scale validation	Factor structure of HSCL-37	✓				
Bean et al. 2007b	Netherlands, Belgium	Scale validation	Factorial structure/validity of TRF	✓				
Bean et al., 2006	Netherlands, Belgium	Epidemiological	Trauma, Help seeking	✓				
Michelson & Sclare, 2009	U.K.	Epidemiological	Trauma, Barriers-to-treatment model	✓				

Table 1 (cont'd).

Batista, Wiese, Burhorst, 2007	Netherlands	Epidemiological	None	✓		
Derluyn & Broekaert, 2007	Belgium	Epidemiological & Empirical	None	✓		
Derluyn, Mels & Broekaert, 2009	Belgium	Epidemiological	Trauma	✓		
Smid et al., 2011	Netherlands	Longitudinal	Trauma	✓	✓	
Rodriguez-Nogues, 1983	U.S.	Qualitative (phenomenological)	Unclear	✓		Psychological experience of separation
Carlson, Cacciatore, Klimek, 2012	U.S.	Review/case study	Risk and resiliency	✓	As protective factors	
Luster et al., 2009	U.S.	Qualitative (grounded theory)	Resilience	✓		
Rousseau et al., 1998	Canada	Ethnography	Resilience	✓		Migratory experience, self-comparison with others'

Note. Studies listed in the order of appearance in text.

Education

The formal educational pathway is disrupted by the refugee process (Dillinger, 1990). Dillinger describes how many refugee youth have insisted on the importance of education after resettlement. In qualitative studies regarding adaptation among URM, education has been cited as a marker of successful adaptation and a primary motive for migration (Luster et al., 2010; Rana et al., 2011; Cuervo & Ogunyoku, 2012; Lee, 2012). One of the first studies on URM placements identified education as the primary adjustment strategy for Vietnamese URM (Mortland & Egan, 1987). In a study of both Sudanese URM and their foster parents, educational attainment was seen as the main indicator of success by the youth and foster parents. Rana and colleagues (2011) reported in a similar study that among 19 Sudanese URM and 20 foster parents, all of the youth cited education as their primary goal in coming to the U.S. All URM had achieved at least a high school diploma, and most had completed or were enrolled in post-secondary education. Lee's (2012) qualitative exploration of former URM's definition of success uncovered the prominence of education as a marker of success and independence, as well as a commitment to the values of their culture of origin.

In a needs assessment conducted with 614 first and second generation immigrant youth, the second biggest concern listed in the open-ended item was school and academics, although many youth shared positive comments and experiences (Calderon et al., 2012). Although this study was not limited to refugee participants, it offers support for the importance of multiple systems of influence in the lives of adolescents. In a study of Latin American parents who had been separated from their children during migration, parents were unable to identify the effects of their separation on academic performance, but school counselors readily identified separation

from caregivers as an important contributor to the increased education gap and dropout rates among separated students (Gindling & Poggio, 2012).

While education has been noted as important to URM youth, research has identified several challenges to successful integration in U.S. school systems. In a mixed-method study incorporating URM interviews, URM focus groups, foster parent focus groups, and individual caseworker interviews, Bates and colleagues (2005) found that educational supports varied widely by district, but that overall, most schools were unprepared to meet URM needs. Furthermore, URM reported peer relationships at school often included harassment, which was more challenging for girls than boys. In similar research, Luster and colleagues (2010) identified low pre-migration levels of education as a barrier to advancing education after resettlement, as some youth arrive with high school-aged peers but without literacy skills or age out of public school opportunities before they can acquire a diploma. Moreover, mental health was cited in multiple studies on educational resilience of URM as an obstacle to achieving education due to depression, anxiety, or somatic symptoms such as headaches (Luster et al., 2010; Rana et al., 2011).

Discrimination and resource constraints are a common challenge for URM youth. Bates and colleagues (2005) recommended easing the transition into schools for URM by providing intensive educational support for youth and raising sensitivity in schools. Rousseau and colleagues (2001) interviewed 18 social practitioners working with unaccompanied minors in Canada. Practitioners reported that education was a critical sector for integration into society for URM youth but noted that pre-migration levels of education mediated the ease of integration. Budget restrictions in schools and discrimination within schools were cited by multiple practitioners as barriers to successful integration.

Educational resilience refers to the ability to thrive in education despite challenges and adversity (Rana et al., 2011). Despite risks at multiple ecological levels, including challenges facing schools and URM students, successful educational achievement has been documented. Rana et al. (2011) conducted one of the first studies to describe educational resilience among URM. They noted that some of the protective factors contributing to this educational resilience are personal attributes, relationships, and community resources. URM youth described personal attributes contributing to their success as motivation and focus on goals despite "American" distractions, their cultural values of hard work and determination, prior educational aptitude and innate resourcefulness, and biculturalism. URM described a process in which they adopted some American strategies for success and maintained some of their Sudanese attitudes. Relationships named by the Sudanese youth as contributing to their success included supportive foster parents, supportive teachers or other school staff, and American and Sudanese peers. Sudanese youth also describe the psychological presence of their biological parents as motivation and encouragement for them to continue despite the challenges of the U.S. school system. The resettlement agency provided supportive foster placements and financial support (including tuition), and thus was considered a community resource that provided opportunities for them to pursue their educational goals.

Bean, Eurelings-Bonekoe,and Spinhoven (2006) proposed school-based intervention as an effective way to address potential problems with youth who may exhibit PTSD symptoms or trauma-related behavioral problems. Schools offer a safe and structured environment which is critical to overcoming trauma, and provide an adequate context for teaching positive coping and problem solving skills. Teachers may be able to detect early developmental concerns and refer students to appropriate mental health services.

The literature on URM within the American education system suggests that there is a mix of challenges and resilience. Table 2 is formatted exactly the same as Table 1; the first column identifies the study with in-text citation formatting, the second provides the location in which the research was conducted, and the third identifies the study's research design. The fourth column lists any guiding theoretical approaches made explicit by the articles' authors, and the last five columns provide a brief overview of the community level services included in the research study. According to Table 2, the literature on URM and education has flourished in the U.S. but has a limited scope of immigration background. Most of the educational research with URM has included UN-designated URM like *The Lost Boys* and indicated that the resettlement agency plays a critical role in mediating the relationship between the URM student and the school context. Using qualitative methods, it is evident that resettlement program staff are privileged links between the educational system and their clients, and may be able to shed light on the unique needs of youth with different URM backgrounds as they enter the educational system. For example, an adolescent who spent his childhood in a refugee camp may have little to no formal education, but an asylum-seeking adolescent might have attended formal schooling until the time he fled his home country. Moreover, Table 2 illustrates resilience is exclusively described as person-focused, which suggests a methodological gap in the integration of ecological developmental approaches supported in other areas of URM research. Literature suggests that URM program staff are important in helping youth achieve successful educational outcomes, but the research thus far treats URM as a homogenous population without unique immigration pathways. The following section on legal assistance further confirms the importance of attending to these differences and the mediating role of program staff.

Table 2

Education, Legal, and Employment Literature Summary

Study	Location	Design	Theory	Mental health	Community services included			
					Education	Legal	Employment	Other
Dillinger, 1990	U.S.	Ethnography	Ecological Systems, Symbolic Interaction, Developmental		✓			
Luster et al., 2010	U.S.	Qualitative	Resilience	✓	✓			Resettlement agency, religious support
Mortland & Egan, 1987	U.S.	Qualitative	Unclear		✓			Resettlement agency
Rana et al., 2011	U.S.	Qualitative	Educational resilience		✓			Resettlement agency
Calderon et al., 2012	U.S.	Needs assessment	None	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Gindling & Poggio, 2012	U.S.	Empirical (mixed-method)	Attachment, Ambiguous loss		✓			Family reunification
Bates et al., 2005	U.S.	Empirical (mixed-method)	Trauma	✓	✓			
Rousseau et al., 2001	Canada	Qualitative	Risk/protective factors for acculturation	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Lee, 2012	U.S.	Qualitative (grounded theory)	Capability approach, Acculturation, Resilience		✓	✓	✓	Culture and identity
Olivas, 1990	U.S.	Law Review	None		✓	✓		Health

Table 2 (cont'd).

Congressional Record Service, 2007	U.S.	Congressional report	URM policies		✓		Safety
Derluyn & Broekaert, 2008	Belgium	Case study	Trauma, acculturation, developmental	✓	✓		
Byrne & Miller, 2012	U.S.	Descriptive report	None		✓		Community Placement
Drevlow & Siman, 2012	U.S.	Secondary data	None		✓		Immigration-specific services
Cuervo & Ogunyoku, 2012	U.S.	Epidemiologial Secondary data	None	✓	✓	✓	Family history, substance use, criminal history
Perreira & Smith, 2007	U.S.	Theoretical (non-empirical)	Cultural-ecological	✓	✓	✓	Social services (not defined)
Gilchrist, 1983	U.S.	Needs assessment	None		✓	✓	

Note. Studies listed in the order they appear in text.

Legal

In 1990, the U.S. government transitioned from releasing unaccompanied child asylum seekers to family, church groups, or community organizations, to detaining them in detention facilities across the Southwest and Western U.S. (Olivas, 1990). Detained children lacked access to education, health, counseling, or legal services. Detention served to deter other children from seeking asylum, and to bait undocumented adult family members to present themselves to immigration authorities. Olivas detailed how this practice was in contrast to the way children were treated anywhere else in the U.S. justice system, where they are viewed as incapable of making any independent legal decision. Furthermore, Olivas argued children need particular legal protection and assistance as they do not easily fit into requirements for asylum or refugee status and are often unable to verbalize the details of their circumstances that meet the requirements for justifying a well-founded fear of persecution claim.

Improvements in legal assistance have been made since the TVPRA of 2008, although the ongoing challenge politically is whether to consider URM a child welfare issue or an immigration security issue (Congressional Research Service, 2007). In 2006, U.S. Border Patrol apprehended 101,952 juveniles. Most were not detained and were voluntarily repatriated to Mexico. Of the 7,746 children detained, advocates accused Border Patrol of mistreating the children and misclassifying them as accompanied (with adult caregivers) or as adults, among other child welfare concerns. Misclassification as adults places them in adult detention centers, endangering child welfare, and misclassification as accompanied precludes them from seeking legal protection from the government. Child welfare advocates state children should all receive legal representation from the government during their civil immigration proceedings, and immigration security advocates argue that is an unreasonable cost for the government to bear.

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Policies continue to be divided and contested between both sides to some degree. International

perspectives mirror similar contrasting views between a legal and psychological perspective on

caring for URMs, which often results in differential treatment and prevents many children from

accessing psychological services (Derluyn & Broekaert, 2008).

Currently, the American legal process begins with removal proceedings, in which DHS

files a notice to appear at the immigration court nearest ORR placement (Byrne & Miller, 2012).

In response to rapidly increasing numbers of children requiring immigration assistance, many

courts have added specialized juvenile immigration dockets so many juveniles are transported at

once. According to Byrne and Miller, the children appeared before the judge, who was

sometimes a volunteer and often not skilled in juvenile immigration law. Usually they asked for

a continuance to find legal representation or for ORR to work on other placement options. Often

children later requested a change of venue to the location they move for ORR or sponsor

placement. ORR and the Vera Institute of Justice have teamed up to "design a program that

subcontracts with nonprofit legal services providers to educate children about the legal process,

screen their cases for potential relief from removal, and recruit and train volunteer attorneys" to

represent them (Byrne & Miller, 2012, p. 22). This program was shown to improve

representation rates for children, and continues to serve approximately 7,000 children per year,

with Know Your Rights orientations, legal screenings, court preparation and assistance, and pro

bono legal representation in 69 facilities and programs for detained children (Byrne & Miller,

2012, p. 23).

Despite legal access being more likely post-TVPRA, the wait time for immigration relief

decisions can still be a long time in communities with few immigration attorneys or resources.

Youth can still age out of eligibility for status while waiting for representation, or because of

extended wait periods. The TVPRA improved immigration legal outcomes by improving successful legal status petitions for 23% more UAC (Drevlow & Siman, 2012). TVPRA improved the efficiency of the child immigration system and made it more accessible for children. For example, the average wait time for obtaining status after entry to foster care has been reduced by half to 9.6 months. Drevlow and Siman further recommended that improvements should be made by providing additional support for legal representation in all areas where UAC are in care (due to limited and scattered immigration resources), improving education within the immigration justice system about SIJS, and developing community-based care for children while they await outcomes of their cases. The average age of UAC and URM entering federal foster care is 16 years (Cuervo & Ogunyoku, 2012). This increases the need for immediate immigration relief proceedings, since most forms of immigration relief available to these youth expire once they reach 18 years. Some forms of relief, such as asylum, can take at least two years to resolve. In most cases, if solutions have not been found by age 18, youth age out of ORR care and are transferred to adult detention, where removal is more likely. Therefore, practitioner recommendations include increasing availability of legal services across the UAC foster care network, developing a continuum of care to increase placement matches, and continuing research with the UAC population to document changes (Cuervo & Ogunyoku, 2012).

Improving and increasing legal resources and access to legal representation is mentioned throughout practitioner-focused literature, and it remains clear that immigration relief is a complex area. It appears that changes in the TVPRA have improved legal access and outcomes for children in immigration proceedings, and efforts to improve representation for unaccompanied minors has increased their access to legal services broadly (Drevlow & Siman,

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2012; Byrne & Miller, 2012). To date, no research has explored how access to different types of legal assistance may vary based on the types of immigration relief sought or obtained. It is likely that different status requirements may justify specialized legal services, and to date, no literature details the effects of different types of legal assistance to youth seeking immigration relief. The current project aimed to better understand whether legal services are specialized and reflected in the referral process in one resettlement area.

Table 2 consists of the education, legal, and employment literature and suggests a huge methodological gap in URM legal system research. Five of the nine table entries that included legal needs can be considered empirical studies. Three of those empirical studies have focused on large secondary data sets and mainly serve to outline the immigration process for unaccompanied, undocumented youth, yet the authors who delve into legal issues facing URM recommend an ecological lens be taken in future research to better understand the experience of URM within the U.S. legal system. The immigration system they face is unlike other systems represented in international research, and complex. The study presented here sought to understand the nuanced challenges URM (in all phases of acquiring URM status) face in the U.S., by expanding the methodology in this area to include a more empirical, ecologically driven research design that explicitly addressed the legal needs of, and services available to youth with different immigration status.

Employment

Refugee adults have the legal right to employment immediately upon arrival. They can apply to change their status to legal permanent resident after one year and apply for citizenship after five, making the employment process smoother and more familiar to employers. Very little information is available from the literature about employment among URM. However,

employment is often cited as a motivation for migration, even among children and adolescents (Luster et al., 2010; Mortland & Egan, 1987; Cuervo & Ogunyoku, 2012). This implies that URM who are placed in foster care systems, which do not prioritize employment for youth, may face difficulty adjusting to priorities of staff and foster parents. Perreira and Smith (2007) highlight the role of integration policies that include economic opportunities for refugee groups in facilitating successful adaptation in the U.S. Employment is often seen as a necessary precursor to the more important goal of sending remittances to family members in their home countries or back to refugee camps. Lee (2012) found that the measures of success for former URM included being able to meet their basic needs, having autonomy and independence, and giving back financially to their communities of origin. All of these require employment of some sort. In research with Sudanese unaccompanied minors, former URM reported that sending money back to their families in Sudan or rebuilding Sudan were two of their three main indicators of success in the U.S. (Luster et al., 2010).

In a study of vocational and employment needs of migrant youth, migrant students were found to be lagging behind peers in educational attainment and ability, but had high aspirations regarding careers and education (Gilchrist, 1983). Educational pursuit was discouraged by an immediate need to pursue employment to support their families and send money back to their home communities. Many immigrant students reported career goals that required post-secondary education but did not take advantage of vocational programs and resources that could have helped them achieve their goals. The study found many students had vaguely defined career goals, and those that did, did not understand the level of education required to meet their goals. Although most migrant students stayed in the area long enough ($M = 3$ years) to participate in vocational or educational programs, they were unaware of the resources or unable to take

advantage of them due to the pressure to become immediately employed. Moreover, in a needs assessment of 614 first and second generation immigrant youth ($M = 15$ years), immigration concerns such as finances and employment were the most frequently reported concerns of students (Calderon, Giffords, & Malekoff, 2012).

Table 2 indicates only one empirical study directly addressing URM and employment. Based on the literature supporting employment as an important goal of URM youth, it can be assumed that employment or vocational training would be an equally important component of URM programming services. While URM are awaiting status, they may be legally prohibited from seeking employment, but often foster parents and agency staff encourage a more concerted effort on academic achievements instead. Moreover, the table confirms it is unknown whether different immigration backgrounds are connected with different motivations for migration and therefore may make employment more important for some URM youth. For example, a youth who arrived in the U.S. undocumented and unaccompanied may be primarily seeking employment by leaving a dangerous country where his life was threatened and his family is unable to work. This youth may enter the URM system without comprehending the cultural and legal differences in work for adolescents. In contrast, a URM youth who entered the country with U.N. – designated refugee status may not prioritize employment because his resettlement situation was predetermined, explained more thoroughly, and his immigration status safe.

In summary, the literature on URM needs is clearly underdeveloped. The research on URM mental health, while the most developed, often treats URM as an afterthought to general refugee child research. Mental health research has begun to explore the post-migration mental health needs of URM, and has tentatively noted the importance of other factors, such as a youth's experiences with education, legal, and employment systems. The education research with URM

remains one-dimensional in its operationalization of URM, but has emphasized the role of the URM program staff in the degree of success URM have navigating that system. The three studies detailing the legal experiences and needs of youth with different status are based on secondary data and underscore the importance of forging connections between youth seeking status and qualified legal assistance providers. Finally, literature in all areas has identified that employment and financial independence is both a factor in youth migration and a priority of youth after immigration. Each of these areas of need contributes to the overall well-being and adjustment of URM as they navigate their new lives in the U.S., and the literature detailing differences between status indicates they may be experienced differently within the community.

Rationale for the Current Study

Case managers, and other staff members who work with URM programs, are in a privileged position to be able to identify both URM needs and community resources to meet those needs (Rousseau, Montgomery, & Shemarke, 2001). Furthermore, because they have access to and experience with both parties, they are able to understand what the limitations and benefits of providers are in different sectors. Literature on URM programs and resources is scarce, and mainly organized around documenting prevalence of availability. The areas of mental health, education, legal assistance and employment appear to be of utmost importance. URM research has focused on mental health in the past (Lustig et al., 2004; Ehntholt & Yule, 2006; Huemer et al., 2009), but mixed method and qualitative studies have underscored the relevance of education (Lee, 2012; Luster et al., 2009; Luster et al., 2010), legal assistance (Derluyn & Broekaert, 2008), and employment needs (Calderon, Giffords, & Malekoff, 2012) among this population. Thus far, no research has been conducted to address how and why resettlement

agencies refer to particular community resources in these sectors, and specifically the role of immigration status.

In the U.S. specifically, URM research is incredibly sparse, while the population of URM in ORR's care grows dramatically. For example, undocumented unaccompanied minors may be eligible for URM status under ORR care, through procedures described earlier. While the number of undocumented immigrant adults apprehended at the U.S. border along Mexico has not risen within the past year, the number of unaccompanied children apprehended has increased by a full 99% in the first eight months of fiscal year 2014 (Department of Homeland Security, 2014). DHS officials estimated the number of UAC that would be referred to ORR in fiscal year 2014 to be 60,000, but 52,193 unaccompanied children had been apprehended by June 15 (DHS, 2014; ORR, 2013). Researchers can no longer ignore the heterogeneity of youth classified as Unaccompanied Refugee Minors. This population, once accepted under the care of ORR, includes trafficking victims, undocumented unaccompanied children apprehended at the border (most likely eligible for SIJS), formal asylum seekers, and youth from all over the world designated as refugees by the UNHCR. The URM literature classifies all of the youth in ORR care as URM. Therefore, no distinctions are made when assessing mental health or the educational success of youth. Yet these immigration backgrounds facilitating URM status may have a great impact on the mental health, education, legal, and employment needs of youth. The relevance of these different needs only underscores the need to better understand the intersection of immigration and services before assessing intervention efficacy.
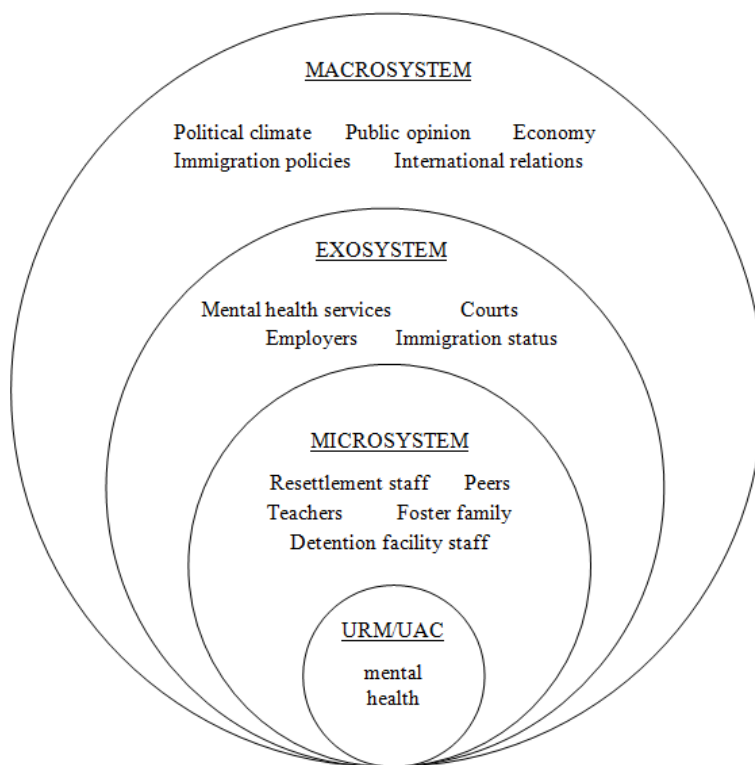
The rapid influx of minors in ORR's care requires new placement and funding considerations. With funding already stretched prior to the recent wave of arrivals, it is likely that a greater burden will be placed on existing community service providers outside of

resettlement agencies to meet the needs of these youth. To date, no empirical research has been conducted to assess the readiness of service providers to meet the needs of a heterogeneous group of URM. With a deficit in ORR's budget of $125 million in fiscal year 2013 (LIRS, 2013) it can be assumed that this influx will require an even closer examination of areas in which resettlement agencies may refer their clients. Understanding the intersection of service providers and resettlement referrals are the key starting point for building this knowledge. The current study has begun building this knowledge while also assessing the quality of services provided from the program staff's perspective.

In order to better grasp the relationship between immigration status and community level services, more research is needed to understand the rationale of referral decisions on the part of the program staff. Existing literature calls for advances in URM interventions in the key areas of mental health, education, employment, and legal assistance. URM research is moving towards intervention without a clear understanding of the implications of the immigration classification system within which URM come to services. Large scale quantitative studies have shed light on URM resettlement, which includes a variety of youth who come into the URM system of services with a variety of backgrounds. The current study sought to fill the gap in the literature that has limited researchers' perception of the URM population, their needs, and the services available to meet their needs. The study was designed to elicit invaluable information to fill this gap. Specifically, it addressed how one resettlement agency considers immigration status and background when referring URM youth to services, and how program staff perceive availability and access for their clients.

An ecological theoretical perspective considers the different levels of analysis necessary to understand the needs and service access experiences of youth (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; 1987).

The program staff are part of the microsystem of a youth's environment, but are also the links to

the larger macrosystem where cultural adaptation meets policies and providers in the areas of

mental health, education, legal assistance, and employment. Figure 1 illustrates how an

ecological-developmental theoretical perspective fills the methodological gap suggested in

Tables 1 and 2. Figure 1 confirms the importance of the inclusion of multiple systems of

influence, as any combination of interactions affects a youth's access to and/or influence of other

systems. For example, a youth seeking asylum may not know he is ineligible for employment

without status, but still must attend school. He may be fleeing traumatic experiences that require

mental health services. His asylum case may be delayed by changing or unfavorable political and

public opinion climates. Resettlement program staff clearly serve a fundamental role in

connecting youth to a web of complex community services.

MACROSYSTEM

Political climate   Public opinion   Economy
Immigration policies   International relations

EXOSYSTEM

Mental health services   Courts
Employers   Immigration status

MICROSYSTEM

Resettlement staff   Peers
Teachers   Foster family
Detention facility staff

URM/UAC

mental
health

Figure 1. Ecological-developmental model illustrating the interdependent systems of influence

for URM/UAC.

Current Study

As the size of this unique population increases at the federal level, local agencies

providing resettlement and foster care services are challenged to meet the changing needs of

these youth. One such agency in Michigan is working to build community capacity by

collaborating with community partners to increase the strength of agency-organization

partnerships. Additionally, they have taken a bold look introspectively to identify mismatches in

the needs of clients, the services to which caseworkers refer clients, and those actually accessed

by clients. This agency is typical of other federal URM resettlement agencies, as they serve a

heterogeneous URM population and have seen the same shifts in their client demographics as the

federal URM program. However, they may be fairly unique in that the geographic scope of

services and foster placement is small and contained, unlike resettlement organizations in larger urban areas, like Chicago.

The goal of the current study was to increase understanding of the obstacles presented by the intersection of unaccompanied minors' immigration status and social service access. This study contributed to efforts to close the gap between resettlement services and community resources through a qualitative exploration of staff perspectives on needs and services. Program staff included case managers, therapists, and an independent living coordinator but excludes supervisors. Each role contributed unique experiences and knowledge both with URM and with services in the community. For example, therapists have an understanding of mental health resources for their clients, independent living coordinators have an understanding of employment resources, and case managers provide information on legal and educational resources. These staff members were uniquely situated within this service delivery system because they have the most information on the needs of the child but also understand the range of services available and limitations of direct service interventions (Rousseau, Montgomery, & Shermarke, 2001).

The study was based on the qualitative outcomes of my previous collaboration with this agency. That collaboration produced information about ideal services to facilitate independent living from a former and current client perspective, as well as from a staff perspective. This study is the next step in understanding the community context by asking the population of staff members in the mid-Michigan area to share their perspective on service referrals and access by their clients. It takes an in-depth look at the role of immigration status and how it affects decision-making by program staff during the referral process. Building on prior collaboration, this study focuses on the areas of education, mental health, employment and legal services; areas which have also been identified as priorities by program staff and URM clients.

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The main research question guiding the study was "How is immigration status related to community service referral and access from a URM program staff perspective?" Within this question were the following sub questions:

1. How do program staff perceive differential service needs among URM, asylee, SIJS, T-visa youth in the areas of mental health, education, legal assistance, and employment?

2. How does program staff perceive type of federal immigration status influencing referral to community-level services in mental health, education, legal assistance, and employment?

3. How does program staff perceive mental health, education, legal assistance, and employment service provision in their community?

4. How does program staff perceive the utilization of their mental health, education, legal assistance, and employment referrals by clients?

Method

Qualitative Methods

The purpose of this study was to better understand how different immigration status influences service referral and access in one community. Patton (2002) called this a process study, in which the focus is on *how* individuals or organizations reach outcomes instead of *what* outcomes are reached. Qualitative methods allow issues to be explored in depth and from the unique perspectives of participants (Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2007). Previous literature has not explored the intersection of community resources and different types of URM status from the perspective of URM program staff, treating the URM population as a homogenous group. Due to the novel and exploratory nature of the research questions posed here, qualitative methods were particularly appropriate for this study (Creswell, 2007). The ability of qualitative methods to address process and not only outcomes is an important asset to this study. Consistent with advances in the methodological practices of the field, qualitative methods provide a more nuanced perspective in a substantive area in which context is key (Martin, Lounsbury, & Davidson, 2004). Attention to context and the specific ecology of a social problem or organization are important tenets of community psychology (Martin, Lounsbury, & Davidson, 2004; Tricket, 1996, Trickett, Kelly, & Vincent, 1985).

Mental health service utilization has been explored recently in international research (Bean et al., 2006; Michelson & Sclare, 2009; Derluyn, Mels, & Broekaert; 2009), but a comprehensive investigation of different types of community resources accessed by different types of unaccompanied minors has not been studied internationally or domestically. Research addressing the experiences and needs of this population in the U.S. is extremely limited and is mostly found in case studies (Hartwell, 2011; Luster et al., 2010).

Researcher Reflexivity

Qualitative methods require a focus on the researcher herself and her role in the research process. This attention to critical self-reflection is one of the main tenets guiding and ensuring high-quality qualitative research (Patton, 2002). Reflexivity includes acknowledging the biases and assumptions of the researcher, but also the ways in which she may exert influence in the field and analysis during all stages of the process (Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2007; Braun & Clarke, 2006). In order to increase transparency and demonstrate trustworthiness, it is important to address my background, values, research experiences, and positionality.

I am from an American family who has never had to flee our home country due to persecution. I therefore cannot share an understanding of that experience with the URM in my community. Through previous collaboration with the resettlement agency, I know at least some of the staff also do not share that history and our discussion of needs and services is likely to be biased by an outsider perspective. Previous literature has indicated that URM youth have extremely high rates of mental health problems (Sourander, 1998; Bean et al., 2006; Michelson & Sclare, 2009; Batista et al. 2007; Lustig et al., 2004), specific educational needs (Rana et al., 2011; Gindling & Poggio, 2012), legal needs (Congressional Research Service, 2007; Wade, 2011), and local collaboration has indicated a need for employment services. My research questions have been informed by both scientific evidence and my interpretation of the local context.

Qualitative inquiry is particularly important to me as I value understanding our unique experiences as human beings. I see privilege in my white, American, middle class background and consider it necessary to be attentive to the experiences and perspectives of others whose lives have been shaped by different circumstances. International refugees and the role of

American military intervention (or lack thereof) are intricately tied to my feeling of responsibility as a world citizen to improve the quality of life and address injustice with others.

I began my relationship with refugee communities as part of a refugee well-being intervention, with which I was closely involved for five years. My role in that project allowed me to build close relationships, professionally and personally, with members of the refugee community from diverse nationalities and ethnicities. It also gave me a unique perspective on the potential for university-community collaboration to build meaningful partnerships. I conducted many qualitative interviews and facilitated many large group discussions over the course of the project, as well as designing a project and analyzing data for a qualitative research apprenticeship with refugee children and adolescents.

Participant Selection and Recruitment

In qualitative research, participants are included because they can provide substantive information about their experiences to answer the research questions (Polkinghorne, 2005). In this study, the target population was URM program staff in a particular context, and generalization beyond this context is beyond the purpose of this study (Singleton & Straits, 2010). The only resettlement agency in the local community was selected as the setting of the study. Because there is only one resettlement agency in the local area, it was desirable and possible to select all nine of the population of program staff for participation (Creswell, 2007).

All eligible participants were included in the study ($N = 9$). Inclusion criteria included (a) being at least 18 years of age, (b) being currently employed by the agency, and (c) currently providing agency program services to at least one URM youth. Exclusion criteria included not being 18 years of age and/or not currently providing services to URM youth. While the number of participants was lower than is often recommended for most qualitative methods, the focus was

on capturing the experiences and decision-making processes of the entire population. It was not necessarily expected that each staff member would have experience managing services for youth with all four types of immigration status, therefore unique information was expected from all members of the population (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Creswell, 2007).

Semi-structured interviews

Open-ended responses allow researchers to understand the world as it is seen by participants (Patton, 2002). Well-designed questions will elicit accurate and thorough responses that provide the researcher with insight into the experiences and thought processes of respondents (Patton, 2002; Bernard, 2011). My research question in this study sought to understand the perceptions among URM program staff of the intersection of immigration status, needs, accessibility of services within their communities. The research question grew out of previous collaboration with the agency and program management's desire to better understand the context in which they provide services. Semi-structured interviews provided a systematic framework for understanding the topic from the perspective of the participants. They have goals for drawing out specific information, but allow the interviewer to adapt and provide some flexibility in probing questions (Singleton & Straits, 2010; Patton, 2002). Semi-structured interviews provide systematic data collection by following an interview guide made up of discussion topics and specific questions to be asked, which may or may not follow in a chronological order, depending on the flow of conversation (Bernard, 2011; Patton, 2002).

The quality of qualitative research depends in large part on the skills of the researcher (Patton, 2002). Due to my eco-identity (Kelly, 1971), a sense of rapport was been established with most participants (Patton, 2002). I consulted texts in developing truly open-ended, singular, clear and concise questions (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, Patton recommends the use of

presupposition questions, which consider the rapport built with participants and the shared contexts in which rapport has taken place. This strategy for eliciting information involves phrasing questions such that the interviewee assumes shared knowledge with the interviewer. I developed and used an interview guide with potential probes and follow up questions in the (Appendix D) to draw more detailed information from participants (Singleton & Straits, 2010; Patton, 2002).

Procedure

Interview procedure

Interviews were scheduled at the availability of the participant. The interviewee chose the location, either on-site at the agency in a private conference room, or off-site at a nearby location. Five interviews took place off-site and four took place at the agency. Each participant provided informed consent (see Appendix B) and gave permission to record the interview. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 96 minutes, with most interviews lasting over an hour. Each participant was provided with my contact information, and was informed I would be following up with a copy of their transcript to check for errors or suggest changes, a part of the process known as member checking (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Each participant was compensated for their time with a $10 gift card.

As soon as possible after interviews, I began interview transcription using InqScribe software. I then reviewed each transcript for errors. After the transcript was complete, I sent it to the interviewee and solicited edits. Only one interviewee responded, and approved it in its current form. Considering the transcripts were all between 17 and 30 pages, it is not particularly surprising to me that staff members were unable to respond, given their busy schedules.

Interview guide

Semi-structured interviews included open-ended questions about the perceptions and experiences of staff. A table of theory was developed in order to conceptualize and connect the flow of leading theoretical concepts, research questions, and interview questions (see Appendix C). An interview guide (Bernard, 2011; Patton, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 2011) developed from the table of theory provided structure for the interview and ensured all important aspects of the research question were included (see Appendix D). The interview guide was designed to introduce the research uniformly across participants, cover the main questions, and build in transitions between sections. Potential probing questions were included in the guide, and determined during the course of the interview based on participants' responses (Patton, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Creswell, 2007).

The interview consisted of separate sections for each research question, divided into the four types of services deemed necessary and important to the success of URM clients in the literature, and previous collaboration (Batista et al. 2007; Bean et al., 2006; Congressional Research Service, 2007; Gindling & Poggio, 2012; Lustig et al., 2004; Michelson & Sclare, 2009; Rana et al., 2011; Sourander, 1998; Wade, 2011). The four main context areas covered in the interview were education, mental health, legal, and employment services. Participants were asked to reflect on their experiences and share their opinions regarding service delivery by comparing and contrasting the experiences of youth of different status within the service delivery system (see Appendix D for basic script and interview protocol).

Data protection

All consent forms were protected in a secure location. I was the only one who listened to the audio recorded interviews. Participants were assigned pseudonyms and all audio files were identified by a number and a pseudonym. Interview notes and memos were typed up, and de-identified. One master spreadsheet contains a list of pseudonyms and real names, and is password protected as well. All interview transcripts were typed, password protected, de-identified, and stored on the secure drive. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses. However, because findings may be shared with the agency, it is possible that their (de-identified) responses may become known to their coworkers.

Ethical considerations

In the event that findings are shared with the agency, participants will be guaranteed the option to view and edit any reports that include direct quotations. However, additional steps had to be taken to protect the participants, due to the unique nature of the topic and the potential for identifying members of the small population. The American Evaluation Association has outlined guiding principles for conducting evaluation research that reflect some of the principles of community-based research (American Evaluation Association, 2004). One of the core guiding principles includes respect for people, and specifically notes that conclusions that have the potential to harm stakeholders should be minimized, so long as it does not compromise the overall findings. Researchers have the responsibility to anticipate and avoid harm that could befall participants simply from participating in the research.

Thus, some findings are excluded from this report, to protect the confidentiality of participants as laid out by the seminal Belmont Report (1979) and social scientists (Bernard,

2011; Singleton & Straits, 2010). No quotes are shared that may be linked to a particular staff member by 'insiders' or 'outsiders' of the agency (Campbell et al., 2015). Lastly, any themes that may possibly be identified as referring to a specific staff member are excluded from this report.

Thematic Analysis

"Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data," (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6). Thematic analysis is widely considered the most flexible of qualitative analytic approaches, and therefore different qualitative researchers hold different opinions about how it is properly conducted. Thematic analysis can be considered a deductive or inductive process. Deductive analysis is more appropriate when the analysis is grounded in theory and codes are developed from theoretical expectations (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, inductive analysis is most appropriate for this study, as it is data-driven and coding is based solely in the content of the interview. It is unknown how staff members will perceive differences in immigration status affecting services, and also unknown how these perceptions will operate in this particular ecological setting.

Memoing is an important part of any kind of qualitative analysis, and can be theoretical, observational, analytical, or methodological in nature (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Memoing was done after each interview as a reflection process, after transcription as an early form of analysis, and throughout the rest of the analysis process in order to integrate analytical developments (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Sensitizing concepts were used in the analysis in place of hypotheses to describe the process of grounding analysis in minimal expectations regarding the relationship of immigration status and service referral and access. Sensitizing concepts was originally coined by Blumer

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(1954) as a term that indicates "…directions along which to look" as a researcher is performing inductive analyses without specific requirements necessary to satisfy empirical questions or theories (p 7). They can be tools used to formulate the beginning ideas for analysis, and have been used in cases in which "there are minimal a priori expectations to develop explanations" for social phenomena (Bowen, 2006, p 14). In this study, the sensitizing concepts included differences in service needs depending on status, challenges in accessing services for youth without formal URM status yet, and potential conflict between service priorities of staff and youth.

The Ecological Model was used as a heuristic, instead of an analytic framework. To use it as part of a framework would have necessitated an analytic induction method for analysis, in which I would be attempting to prove particular theoretical explanations and hypotheses about interactions within the ecological model (Patton, 2002). Instead, the model was used to demonstrate the extent of the complexity of any given youth's experiences and to highlight the interpretive role that resettlement staff play in the experiences of youth.

In order for research quality to be judged by scholarly peers, it was necessary for the analytic process to be described fully (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Dedoose software was used to analyze the data following Braun & Clarke's approach to thematic analysis, with Lincoln & Guba's (1985) evaluative criteria for trustworthiness. Appendix F links the steps laid out by Braun and Clarke, a brief description of each step, and how each step in the course of this study was completed. First, I familiarized myself with the transcripts, and used excerpts from the transcripts to generate initial codes. Then I collated codes into potential themes and reviewed the data within themes to refine and reorganize as necessary. This involved rereading the excerpts within each code to ensure the codes were adequately descriptive. Then, I refined and

reorganized so that themes included codes that were similar but mutually exclusive. The last step

was to define and name the themes and any subthemes. An example of the process is found in

Table 3 below. For ease of reading, the table only includes one coding thread, to the exclusion of

other codes that were applied to this excerpt.

Table 3

Example Coding Process

Excerpt	Code	Subtheme	Theme
If they have foster parents, sometimes it's easier – sometimes it's harder. Easier insofar as they have a person who theoretically can take them to appointments, or can follow up, or can you know, bring forms in for us. If they don't, then the onus of responsibility is then on the client, who – they forget, they're teenagers. Or you know if they don't have a car or if they don't have a driver's license, sometimes we're having to coordinate transportation to get those things.	Youth can have transportation challenges getting to providers	Youth need assistance connecting to resources	General challenges connecting to providers in the community

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the validity and reliability of qualitative research. Qualitative

research requires interpretation by the researcher, and therefore specific standards for ensuring

the conclusions drawn by researchers can be considered valid (Creswell, 2007). I used Lincoln

and Guba's (1985) criteria for evaluating trustworthiness, as it is widely accepted in the area of

qualitative research and is comprehensive in scope. Their criteria include credibility,

transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility refers to the level of confidence in

the 'truth' of the findings. Transferability refers to the applicability of findings to other contexts,

dependability refers to the repeatability of findings, and confirmability refers to the degree of

neutrality and lack of bias in the findings. Each criterion includes specific measures researchers should attend to in order to meet the standard for trustworthiness. An acceptable level of trustworthiness has been met for this study (see Appendix G), by attending to almost all of the standards for each criterion.

This study did not meet the standard for the components of triangulation and member checking, however. Triangulation was not possible with the study design, because it was conducted at only one site using one method. Participants participated in member checking only to the extent of reviewing the transcripts. Although not facilitated yet, there will likely be an opportunity for them to review analysis as my collaboration with the agency continues. However, it is not likely that there will be agreement about the conclusions. The different roles of staff in working with the youth placed them at unique points of observation and interpretation, such that they often came to somewhat different conclusions about the needs, services, and issues of youth with different status. My interpretation is based on an analysis across participants in all roles, and would therefore likely not be verified by the group as a whole. This provided a rich description in response to answer the research questions, but makes its usefulness in establishing credibility a point of debate in qualitative literature (Campbell et al., 2015; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

Findings

Only findings that addressed the intersection of different levels of status and services are presented here. It is common in community-based research to learn many additional perspectives on new issues that the researcher had not considered when designing a study. During the course of interviews, staff shared additional concerns and agency practices outside the scope of these research questions. Due to the sheer amount of data that can be collected, Wolcott (2005) advocated excluding irrelevant information in fieldwork. To preserve transparency, researchers should indicate the type of content excluded. In these interviews, staff shared their own challenges and solutions when working with their adolescent clients. Because this study was focused on their role linking youth with external, or community services, such information is not presented here.

Research Question 1: Differential mental health, legal and employment needs

Some providers were able to identify differences in mental health needs by status. It should be noted that the need itself was not qualitatively different; rather the degree of need experienced by youth varied based on legal and employment needs. Thus, this study did not capture differences in the *types* of mental health services that youth with different status needed, as the first research question was designed to assess. It did capture differences in the *amount* of services needed. Generally, youth all had traumatic backgrounds that contributed to pre-migration mental health concerns, but youth currently proceeding through the immigration petition process without permanent resident status yet (i.e., SIJS and t-visa cases) were perceived as having more post-migration mental health concerns. That is, therapists observed youth developed anxiety and similar mental health concerns due to the context of uncertainty they were in with their legal status. One of the therapists described the anxiety seen in youth:

Well one thing for sure is that they all have anxiety around their status, that is for sure.
And I don't blame them. It's very scary because they have it in their head that if they're
not, they don't receive a status, like for instance at the [group home for youth not placed
in refugee foster care]*, if they don't receive their status by their 18th birthday then they*
can no longer stay there.

Moreover, therapists were aware that youth were experiencing anxiety, and sometimes depression that was temporally limited, and had developed during their migration journey and/or during the legal immigration process. One therapist commented that because the context is so important to the behaviors and attitudes he observes, he tries to never diagnose youth with any mental health disorder because of the long term consequences of disorder labeling. Similar to previous literature, youth developed anxiety and sometimes late-onset depression waiting to hear about their residency status in lengthy cases, because it affected their safety and security in the community (Smid et al., 2011). Thus, some staff linked greater mental health service needs to non-URM youth, or those with ongoing legal cases.

Legal needs varied greatly by status

One of the predominant themes throughout the interviews was the inadequacy of assigning youth one status category. Individual youth can qualify for multiple forms of relief, and can have "blurred status," in which their experiences are such that they may pursue multiple forms of immigration relief at once. In these cases, youth typically end up receiving whichever form of relief is approved the fastest. This often made it hard for staff to answer the first research question about differential needs. For example, a caseworker responded to the question of different needs by status:

Well, I don't know that you can necessarily relate that to status either because someone who is a victim of trafficking could also be eligible for SIJ and get that because it's a quicker avenue to getting a green card.

Caseworkers did agree about ranking the degree of legal need by status. They viewed t-visa cases as needing the greatest legal assistance, SIJ cases needing the second greatest assistance, and URM needing the least. No one was familiar with the asylee needs, so they generally placed them at the end with URM. Explaining the differences in legal need, one caseworker said, starting with t-visa:

Yeah. So they have to work harder to find the details and justify their actions. And I feel they have to go to court every 6 months.

Interviewer: *Ok, is that more often than other kids?*

I think it goes for a longer period. Because it takes longer for a t-visa case to be approved. For SIJ kids, once they get SIJ status, they don't need to go to court anymore. …If they get the letter saying they can get SIJ status, then that's when their immigration court ends. So they don't need to go to that anymore. They might still be working on the application for a green card, interview for a green card, biometrics, fingerprinting, all that will still be there. But I feel like the t-visa is, the legal team has to work to get the details and their story built to justify the t-visa…. URM, I don't think they really need legal services because they come with their, they pretty much come with an employment card. And then they have to be here for a year with that card to apply for a green card. And once they get those services to apply for a green card, that's it.

The data on legal needs reflects the findings of earlier studies on legal advocacy; that the process takes a long time and that legal representation is important (Drevlow & Siman, 2012;

Cuervo & Ogunyoku, 2012). Due to a strong relationship between the agency and the local university's immigration law clinic, legal representation is limited to services provided by that clinic. Although all staff considered this sufficient, frustration in waiting for case updates and progress was a paramount concern. Even staff without close contact regarding youths' cases (e.g., independent living staff or therapists) had heard concern voiced from youth that they were unsure what the status of their case was and what was happening. Independent living staff reported that learning to read and the ability to access certain reading materials was often directly related to a desire to follow immigration policy within the U.S., and international issues within their home countries.

This close relationship and simultaneous frustration regarding case updates suggested that the case managers may leave all legal matters to the law clinic, and are themselves unsure about the status of a client's case. This created an interesting paradox, because the staff all saw legal concerns as being important to the youth, and variations in the legal needs by status, but were generally unable to identify exactly what the needed services were. One possible explanation for this gap in staff knowledge is that they likely take a 'hands off' approach when it comes to legal matters. This could be due to legal confidentiality, but also suggests a communication gap between the law clinic, caseworkers, and youth about basic updates like upcoming hearings and required steps in a case.

All of the staff desired legal transparency and clarity on behalf of the youth. Staff across roles in the agency noticed this was important to youth. Caseworkers were more aware of what is involved with each type of status, but were not the only ones who interacted with concerned youth. Mental health staff especially saw this as intimately linked to some of the anxiety and depression they saw in the youth:

I think one of the biggest needs for them is transparency and clarity. Understanding what

the process is, where they stand with that, adequate communication between them and

their legal providers. That just doesn't happen. I mean, there are so many times I will

have a kid come in session after session after session, stressed out because either they

have status and they don't know what they have to continue to do, to maybe get their

green card. Or they don't have status yet and they're worried about, "Am I gonna get

status? Am I gonna get deported? What's gonna happen to me right now?" And they don't

have the answers to those questions because for whatever reason, there's not an

appropriate level of communication between their lawyer, or the team of people that are

providing that legal service to them, and them.

Requirements for employment differentially affect youth with SIJS, who prioritize employment

The other context area in which differences were noted by status was employment. Perreira and Smith (2007) discussed the importance of economic opportunities for refugee groups in facilitating successful adaptation in the U.S. Employment is also a necessary precursor to the more important goal of sending remittances to family members. This study found that employment policies and procedures disproportionately affected youth with SIJS. One caseworker relayed:

They can work, they can do… all the things that require an ID. SIJ kids usually don't

come with any ID and they can't get any ID until something is approved and they get an

official document from USCIS. Like an employment card or a green card.

Youth in the process of pursuing SIJS do not have any of the employment authorization belonging to youth who already have URM status. Staff reported that youth get extremely

discouraged and sometimes threaten to leave the area (and therefore the agency's services) if they know of a place they can attain employment without all of the necessary documentation.

The second emergent theme in employment differences was that these youth were much more likely to prioritize employment (above education) because of the need to send remittances to their home countries, typically in Central America. To staff, this was seen as the biggest issue youth were facing. Previous literature has shown that even among children and adolescents, employment is often cited as a motivation for migration (Luster et al., 2010; Mortland & Egan, 1987; Cuervo & Ogunyoku, 2012). This trend led to the increased likelihood that these youth accept illegal or "under the table" jobs. According to a caseworker:

Most of them are frustrated if they don't have work authorization yet, they can't [work]. Some have taken under-the-table jobs to get the money they want. Many of them want to send money home so it becomes pretty big. They will work as much as they possibly can and they will send almost everything home, and keep very little for themselves.

Some staff empathized with youth, which potentially put them in an uncomfortable position. According to another staff member:

It's hard to explain why it's not ok. It's hard to explain why it's not always seen as a positive. And sometimes for those kids where that's the only thing they can make some extra money, it's hard for us to want to explain it and discourage it…. Which puts us in a really interesting position, I think. 'Cause we don't want to encourage anybody to do something that's not legal.

Overall, staff acknowledged that there was a discrepancy between the degree to which they and the youth prioritized employment. Previous research with former URM found that measures of self-reported success included being able to meet their basic needs, having autonomy and

independence, and giving back financially to their communities of origin (Lee, 2012). The current study supports the importance of financial resources to URM and youth pursuing related statuses.

In summary, this research question yielded differences in need by status in the context areas of mental health, legal, and employment (see Table 4). In the area of mental health, staff observed that the status process itself can cause anxiety and depression, and create mental health concerns that are temporally and contextually limited. In the area of legal needs, staff clarified that youth can qualify for multiple forms of relief, which made it difficult to respond to many of the interview questions. However, youth pursuing a t-visa required the most legal assistance, youth pursuing SIJS required the second most assistance, and URM and asylum seekers required the least. It was important to all staff that youth receive more clarity about the legal process, particularly SIJS. In the area of employment, requirements for employment differentially affect youth with SIJS. Paired with employment being a priority for youth seeking SIJS, this often led to them seeking illegal alternatives.

Table 4

Inductively Developed Themes for Differences in Need by Context Area

Context area	Theme	Brief description
Mental health	Status process itself can cause anxiety, depression	Youth often develop transient, contextual mental health issues because of the immigration process.
Legal	Individual youth can qualify for multiple forms of relief, have "blurred status"	Youth may have experienced multiple forms of hardship such that the status they receive does not mean they necessarily have different experiences.
	Legal needs different by status – mostly in amount of need. Ranked most to least: T-visa, SIJS, URM & asylee	T-visa process requires more documentation than other status processes, because they simultaneously participate in a criminal and immigration case.
		SIJS requires ongoing court hearings to prove that he has been abandoned or abused and has no safe place to return to in his home country.
		URM need only to apply for a green card. They do not have to follow up in court regularly.
		Most staff did not know of any youth with asylee status, and no one could name any specific needs they had beyond regular case management.
	Youth need more transparency and clarity in their legal process	All youth need more explanations and assistance at each step to understand their cases. Even youth with 'safe' URM status are concerned.
		SIJ legal process is somewhat clear to caseworkers, but not to youth or other staff. This code applied when staff talked about what is involved in SIJ legal needs specifically.
Employment	Requirements for employment differentially affect youth with SIJS	SIJ youth take longer to get employment authorization because they don't have ID and other paperwork.
	Employment is the main priority/goal, causing some youth to seek illegal alternatives.	Many staff reported that employment is the main goal of their clients, particularly those from Central America (SIJS), as they feel immense pressure to send money to their families. Depending on role, many staff see this need dominating youth focus and causing anxiety
		Alternatives to legal employment include both illegal alternatives (working under the table) and non-paid alternatives like volunteering and work around the neighborhood.

Research Question 2: Status is not generally a referral consideration

Generally, status was not a consideration when staff thought about external referrals throughout the community. They provided three main explanations for why this was irrelevant when they were considering referrals. First, therapists and independent living staff mainly reported never considering status when thinking about which services to refer youth. Youth without employment status were an exception. Independent living staff looked to connect them with more volunteer opportunities than paid employment. Second, status was only a consideration when staff were unsure how providers would respond to the youth's immigrant status more broadly, and generally avoided making referrals to community services with which they were unfamiliar.

Third, only caseworkers reported status as a consideration, and only in the context of healthcare providers, which was not a context area of focus in this study. Recently, the agency had to shift billing practices, as youth with SIJS were no longer eligible for Medicaid or other health insurance. Therefore, youth could only see a limited number of providers locally who would agree to be reimbursed by the Office of Refugee Resettlement later, or free clinics that the youth disliked. While not a focus of the research questions, this was currently the largest referral issue caseworkers were dealing with and they were very upset that these youth could no longer receive badly needed healthcare without a cumbersome reimbursement process from the Office of Refugee Resettlement. Additionally, SIJS meant that youth were ineligible for all Department of Human Services offerings for five years, including childcare and food stamps. Although staff did not mention status driving considerations in any of the four main areas of this study, they unexpectedly reported status as an important consideration in healthcare access. Furthermore, findings suggest that while the challenges of not having full resident status are somewhat known

to the staff, they apply a migration version of "colorblind" ideology, such that they assume that community service providers do not consider status when interacting with their clients and are thus ignorant to the implications of not having full resident status.

Research Question 3: Staff perception of external community services mainly unrelated to status

The third research question explored the views staff held regarding external services provided from community providers outside of the agency. The only context area in which staff considered services and status to be related were mental health services. Because their clients were not American and were experiencing types of trauma with which many American therapists may be unfamiliar, therapists were unsure about the quality of care they could expect from outside providers. Mainly therapists shared a concern for the quality of services available in the community to address the trauma and background of the youth. One therapist described this concern:

> *Yeah, if they're not familiar with the kids' stories or if this is - if the story is something new like, if you've been dealing with nothing but American kids forever and all of a sudden you have someone who's telling you about the horrors of coming from Guatemala through Mexico to Nevada, just to get arrested - you might not be equipped to handle that story….So yeah, I think there's some worry about their ability to understand what it's like, well maybe not what it's like but understand the needs of our kids with status. Or at least be able to abstract it. Or to listen enough and gather enough information to be able to do something with it.*

None of the staff interviewed for this study generally tried to explain to community providers what the differences in status mean. When probed about whether

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that would improve service delivery, most of them felt it would not matter. One

caseworker said simply, *"And people just do not get it, no matter what you do."*

Although such conversations have the potential to transform a number of opportunities

for youth, the staff seem to feel ill-equipped to successfully facilitate those conversations

in the course of their daily work.

Surprisingly, staff did not seem to perceive service provision by community

providers to be affected by status in educational, legal, or even employment contexts. In

fact, the independent living program coordinator is so confident in the quality of services

from the community that he reported having positive relationships with volunteer and

employee placements in many sectors around the mid-Michigan area. This included

banking, food services, universities, retailers, and others. One caseworker shared that a

former client had been fired from her under-the-table job when her employer learned she

was still in immigration proceedings, but this was an isolated case and not a pattern to be

considered a theme. This overlaps with the earlier finding that staff generally do not

discuss status differences with service providers in the community. It is possible that staff

are unaware of differences in service provision that exist, because they are not actively

pursuing conversations to ensure their clients are receiving the best quality of services

regardless of status.

This is not to say that staff were unable to identify challenges that youth faced when

interacting with providers. Rather, general challenges (e.g., communication barriers, employee

skills development, grade placement in schools) were shared by staff, but were equally relevant

to youth with all types of status. These types of challenges are common as immigrant and

refugee youth (Derluyn & Broekaert, 2008; Gilchrist, 1983; Luster et al., 2010) and their new systems learn to adapt to each other.

In summary, while there were no considerations of status as staff made referrals to community providers in the main context areas of this study, they reported that they do consider status when referring youth with SIJS to health providers. This has become a significant challenge for youth with SIJS, who had recently become ineligible for insurance. In the third research question, the only area in which staff perceived concern for how community services perceived status was mental health. Therapists were particularly concerned that community mental health providers would be unprepared to treat the types of trauma youth have experienced.

Research Question 4: Staff perceive status as indirectly linked to utilization of services

The last research question addressed the extent to which youth took advantage of the referrals (formal and informal) that staff made to services and resources in the community. This included services as formal as psychiatric referrals, and as informal as encouraging them to pursue new educational or employment options. It specifically addressed the degree to which staff perceived youth interest in said resources, and the accessibility of these resources for youth with various statuses. Staff had widely different perspectives on the ease and frequency with which youth engaged with services provided in the community, to which they had been referred. Caseworkers were best positioned to be able to identify context areas in which youth struggled to access services, because of their position as the gatekeeper, modeled in the ecological theoretical model. However, they were often biased in how they differentially viewed youth's pursuit of services. Specifically, I detail below the ways in which staff were more critical of youth when the priorities of youth differed from the priorities caseworkers had for them, based on their idea

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of what is "age appropriate" in America. Emergent themes in response to this research question did not fit clearly into single context areas. Therefore, the themes are presented below as independent or overlapping of particular context areas.

Staff imposed American values of "childhood" and age-appropriate priorities.

Most staff mentioned wanting the youth to have developmentally appropriate priorities, resources, and services. When probed, developmentally appropriate choices were described by staff as those that would be appropriate for American teenagers to pursue. A large body of research has demonstrated that the notion that "age appropriate" development is culturally specific (see textbooks McGreal, 2013; Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2013 for reviews on developmental differences across cultures). Although staff worked with youth to meet their goals and find services that would meet their needs, they strongly encouraged the youth to pursue the goals that they saw as appropriate, and discouraged them from pursuing goals that they saw as developmentally inappropriate. This most often was discussed within the contexts of education and employment. The federal URM program requires that youth be involved in education or employed. The education requirement can be fulfilled through traditional K-12 enrollment, higher education, vocational training, or alternative settings. Employment can only be officially sanctioned once the youth receives employment authorization.

This creates conflict for youth who migrated in their late teens with the intention to immediately seek employment. Previous research has shown that employment is a main factor in migration, even for young people (Luster et al., 2010; Mortland & Egan, 1987; Cuervo & Ogunyoku, 2012). Staff made associations between youth who have SIJS or t-visa status (usually from Central America) and the desire to prioritize work. As one staff member explained, "...a lot of times for the youth in certain areas, they're more prone to wanting to work more than we see

in education, because they have family who are in desperate need of funds." That theme carried over as they shared how they view the priorities of youth. For example, one caseworker described a teen who was attending school while he waited for employment authorization:

> *I think it kind of helped him be a kid so he wouldn't - if he - 'cause he came here to work. And he had to help out his family back home. That's what the point was of him coming. But for him not being able to work, he could focus on other things. Even if he didn't want to, it made him more age appropriate, like go to school and play, that's what you're supposed to do, you don't have to work right now.*

The above excerpt eloquently describes the assumptions supporting staff's view of "age-appropriate" activities. The interviews were not an appropriate space for challenging these assumptions. Instead, I challenged their ideas of child development, such that there was space to normalize the priorities of both parties.

Challenging the assumptions of staff around developmental expectations and what might be considered "age appropriate" was most often in the form of a probing question, "Why do you think that is?" The perception of what was developmentally appropriate had two components. One, staff felt youth should prioritize education because that is culturally normative in the U.S. for teenagers. Two, probing during the interview revealed that they were both frustrated with the priorities youth had, but generally accepting of the "typical teenage" attitude that a short-sighted future orientation represented. These probes typically revealed that staff would separate the cultural priorities from cognitive development. For example, one caseworker described:

> *I feel that some of our Latin American populations aren't always the most motivated youth to complete high school. They really need an extra push to get through it. And -*
> Interviewer: Where do you think that comes from?

Not entirely sure.

Interviewer: Do you think they have, just different priorities, or - ?

That could be it. I think there's a lot more pressure for our kids from Central America to send money to family. So a lot of them are very eager to work, and I think would prefer to do that over I think their education. And immediate employment is more gratifying right now than putting in the work for your high school diploma to get a good job later, and that's a hard thing for them to understand at 18, 19 years old.

Another staff member said:

So at the end of the day, they're still very much a teenager or a young adult and so I think that plays a role too, you know, they're a little bit defiant, they're a little bit, you know, figuring out the world on their own and don't need somebody to tell them how it works.

Not all staff used language that framed the issue of education or employment pursuit as developmental. URM youth have very high rates of traumatic experiences both before and during migration (Fazel et al., 2012; Humer et al., 2009; Derluyn, Mels, & Broekaert, 2009). Indeed, many youth who arrive without refugee status have endured traumatic migrations, which they understood to be potentially fatal (Jones & Podkul, 2012). Given the commitment to succeed as an immigrant that the journey requires, and the resilience inherent in all URM, some staff perspectives were rather perplexing. For example, when asked about their perception of how clients are making decisions on how to follow up with referrals, one caseworker said:

Case by case. They, either they care or they don't care. I see a lot of our young men not really following through….Because they think they know everything and they don't really need the help. But then you have some of those youth who are more sincere and serious about bettering their life from what they came from.

This reflection by a caseworker was not the only example of victim-blaming comments that suggested youth simply "don't care" enough about their success to follow through on recommendations by caseworkers. This attitude can be especially detrimental to engagement with staff that provide critical links to resources. Previous research in schools has shown a history of victim-blaming attitudes regarding why Latino immigrant students have poor academic outcomes and graduation rates, and an intentional disengagement from Latino students when they perceive such attitudes (Katz, 1999). Moreover, this suggested a larger need for training social workers in particular anti-oppressive practices for work with immigrant and refugee clients (Martinez-Brawley & Zorita, 2011). Comments about what is appropriate to expect from URM youth, both developmentally and culturally, may be suggestive of the attention paid by staff to the desires of youth to connect with employment resources in particular. Staff may be unknowingly transmitting a message to youth that their priorities are wrong, without attending to the larger sociocultural factors influencing priorities and "age appropriate" expectations.

Supported youth more likely to pursue education.

In slight contrast to the finding that youth are sometimes discouraged from pursuing employment when that is most important to them, this study also found that youth who have a strong network of support are more likely to pursue education and educational resources. In other words, youth who have more support from a variety of sources are more likely to take multiple perspectives into consideration when deciding to pursue services. This indirectly related to status, since youth with URM status already are most likely to be in contexts with established support systems, because they typically are resettled directly into a foster care placement. Supportive co-ethnic friend networks seemed to be most closely associated with seeking

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employment, according to staff. However, broader sources of support were associated with youth pursuing education. One staff member summed it up by saying:

> *…even with higher education, you know, if it seems like their friends are doing it, or it seems like that's kind of the expectation, they'll kind of go through it. I mean, I do think that they listen to, to case staffing, you know, advice and stuff. 'Cause you know, I think sometimes that's where the ideas come from and so sometimes it's like, "Well my case manager suggested I do this, so..." …If they have a good foster home relationship or host parent relationship, that definitely plays a role. We've seen youth come in and say, "Well I know I was gonna work a lot of hours but I talked about it with my host parent and we decided it's better for me to finish up school and work more later."*

Staff shared another example of a youth who moved during the school year and no longer had transportation to the high school. In a last-minute attempt to find a solution that would help the teen remain stable in his schooling, a staff member reached out to the school to see if they could help. Within a day, the teachers at the school had created a transportation schedule in which they volunteered for days of transport, including a backup schedule should any of them be unavailable. That staff member reflected on other ways in which she has seen cross-sector support from teachers:

> *I think the youth who can get that connection to a teacher, to somebody at their school, it does make a big difference. I see some of 'em where they're pulling out a teacher's name when we're filling out an employment application for a reference and so when I ask them, they say, "Oh, they always tell me to do this, and I asked my teacher..." and so there's a few really awesome teachers out there who go beyond the school and are really good mentors and support systems for these youth. And I think that connection makes a big*

difference for the youth in wanting to go to school and you know, it's kind of like a vote of

faith in them and so I think it kind of increases their motivation as well.

The connections between finding supportive networks for engaging with the education system, and the internal motivation youth have for pursuing education were unexplored in this study. It may be that youth who arrive with employment priorities are already too disengaged from the education system to make meaningful connections there. Previous research with former URM found that teachers, school counselors, and foster parents were critical to youth's educational success, among URM who prioritized education (Rana et al., 2011).

Gaps in understanding service utilization by clients.

An important theoretical component of this study is the ecological focus. Based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1986; 1997) it was expected that staff in a resettlement program for unaccompanied minors would necessarily be very involved in connecting youth with community-based services, because they are in a key connecting role. Staff have privileged knowledge of the American social service system and the needs and backgrounds of youth. In particular, the literature suggested there would be links between service systems and different types of resident status granted to minors. However, it became clear during data analysis that staff were particularly ill equipped to integrate their different types of knowledge when considering how their clients are navigating the world around them and those links were not always clearly stated. This provided further support for the recommendation by Martinez-Brawley and Zorita (2011) for training social workers working with immigrants in specific anti-oppressive theoretical and practice orientations.

The last research question addressed how well staff believe youth are able to (and actively) accessing services to which they refer. Interestingly, most staff believed that youth are

not having systemic challenges and that most access challenges are due to individual

circumstances. Indeed, the code applied the most frequently across perspectives was "depends on

the kid;" the response heard most frequently before probing, to all four research questions

(needs, influence of status on referral, and community services). It is important to note that

during analysis some themes emerged across staff perspectives that indicated there is a general

consensus around challenges immigrant minors face. That was not the focus of this study, and

findings of general challenges do not uniquely contribute to existing literature on immigrant

challenges.

Negative Case Analysis

Although a formal negative case analysis was not conducted in this study, there was a

minority perspective that should be noted. A small minority was very vocal in their systemic

perspective. Most participants provided individualized, internal explanations for youth access

outcomes, but this minority provided extremely thoughtful reflection on the roles of agency staff,

responsibilities of the youth, and responsibilities of the community to provide the resources and

services that youth need to be meet their education, employment, legal, and mental health needs.

For example, this perspective included an acknowledgement that youth who have been

disillusioned with the legal system because of lengthy cases or because of unmet expectations

from the immigration system, are less likely to take the staffs' advice in all areas. This means

that youth who experience what has been noted in empirical research as an exceptionally broken

immigration system (Cuervo & Ogunyoku, 2012; Byrne & Miller, 2012) are less likely to access

education, employment, and mental health services.

This perspective hardly represents a theme in an analytical sense, but it speaks to the

importance of staff being mindful of the ways youth feel disempowered *by* participating in

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American systems, and the ways they may be able to intervene to support engagement by being more critical of the systemic barriers. The current tendency found in this analysis to default to individual deficit explanations suggests that the services youth receive, designed to accelerate their integration into society, may be inadequate.

Because this opposing perspective emerged after analysis, the author can only speculate about what may explain this unique viewpoint. Staff with the individual deficit explanations had both longstanding experience with refugee foster care and were new to the field. This minority perspective, therefore, is likely not related to "fresh" eyes in the field. Considering education, the minority perspective included staff who had relatively recently completed education, but that also did not differ from those who maintained an individual deficit explanation. Both genders were represented in both perspectives, although the minority perspective was white. Therefore, this difference that emerged in an informal negative case analysis is likely attributed to some personal characteristics developed outside of features identifiable by the author. Elaborating on those characteristics and experiences that allowed for a more systemic explanation may be useful in promoting that viewpoint among other agency staff.

Summary

This study aimed to identify how staff in a resettlement program for unaccompanied minors view the intersection of status (URM, SIJS, t-visa, and asylum seekers) and service access in the context areas of mental health, education, employment, and legal services. Most staff did not have experience or knowledge of asylum seekers within the agency's program. The findings overwhelmingly suggest that status is not an important consideration to staff members working with URM, SIJS, and t-visa youth. Furthemore, staff often found it difficult to separate

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the youth by status because of "blurred status" in which youth qualified and were often pursuing multiple forms of immigration relief.

Youth with different status had slightly different priorities, influencing their need for more education or employment services, according to staff. Youth made it clear what they were interested in, and staff associated SIJS and t-visa with more employment needs and URM with more education needs. Staff all agreed that youth seeking t-visa status had the most legal needs in terms of quantity and actual services needed, and that URM had the least legal need.

Mental health was a unique area in that staff recognized all youth experienced trauma before or during migration and sometimes needed additional services beyond what the agency's mental health providers could offer. In those cases, need was not associated with status but therapists did express concern that they did not know if providers in the community were able to meet the needs of their clients. Specifically, they were concerned that community providers would not be equipped to handle the stories and types of trauma that SIJS and t-visa youth experienced. There was a general concern among all staff that the mental health services in the community were of high quality for their clients.

Perhaps most illuminating in this area of research was the finding that staff felt youth had to be 'convinced' to engage with services in areas that were age-appropriate. Further probing led to the insight that staff often imposed their American ideal of whether prioritizing education or employment was age-appropriate, and thus encouraged or discouraged youth in those areas. This perspective has the potential to send messages to youth that discredit and devalue their cultural background. Most staff did not view the lack of service utilization a systemic issue, and many responses were individually focused and tended to 'blame the victim' for not being engaged with a system that does not value their position within it (Ryan, 1976).

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Discussion

This study aimed to explore the connection between immigration status and service access from the perspective of staff at a resettlement agency. Specifically, the connection between the different immigration statuses of youth in the federal Unaccompanied Refugee Minor (URM) program (youth with t-visas, youth with SIJS, asylum seekers, and youth with traditional refugee status) and services in the context areas of mental health, education, employment, and legal assistance. I interviewed all program staff who worked directly with youth in their URM program, including caseworkers, therapists, and independent living staff. The study was divided into four subquestions:

1. How do program staff perceive differential service needs among URM, asylee, SIJS, T-visa youth in the areas of mental health, education, legal assistance, and employment?
2. How does program staff perceive type of federal immigration status influencing referral to community-level services in mental health, education, legal assistance, and employment?
3. How does program staff perceive mental health, education, legal assistance, and employment service provision in their community?
4. How does program staff perceive the utilization of their mental health, education, legal assistance, and employment referrals by clients?

Previous literature has shown that mental health concerns are more prevalent among unaccompanied refugee youth than accompanied refugee youth and refugee adults; who have more mental health problems than the general population (Entholt & Yule, 2006). Moreover, research has shown that youth develop additional mental health concerns during the post-migration detention and immigration process (Lustig et al., 2004). Qualitative research with

URM youth has suggested that strong supportive adults and an internal drive to succeed affects educational success (Luster et al., 2011; Rana et al., 2010). My own previous collaboration with the local URM agency with which this study was conducted suggested that employment access would be variable for youth based on status, although an important factor to immigrant youth as suggested by previous research (Luster et al., 2010; Mortland & Egan, 1987; Cuervo & Ogunyoku, 2012). Finally, recent research has begun to explore the importance of legal assistance for unaccompanied youth seeking residence (Cuervo & Ogunyoku, 2012; Byrne & Miller, 2012).

In many ways, this study reflects service delivery systems for American youth in the way they have traditionally been delivered. Community psychologists have searched for ways to combat victim blaming, deficit-oriented service delivery in human social services for decades (Mitchell et al., 1985). These traditional models still remain predominant, grounded in a deficit-oriented medical model, with the belief that staff as professionals are most qualified to both identify clients' needs and decide what services meet those needs (Foster-Fishman et al., 1999). This is unfortunately true even as researchers demonstrate empirical support for strengths-based, ecological interventions that highlight the nuanced effects of context on child and family well-being. The service delivery system for refuge and immigrant youth is beginning to become the subject of such research (Hopkins & Hill, 2006), and emerging research suggests that it has a long way to go in breaking from the traditional service delivery mold.

Moreover, the current context of youth immigration and unaccompanied child refugees is such that the current service delivery system is, in a sense, playing catch-up with itself. Unaccompanied child immigration is happening at an increasing and unprecdented rate, particularly into the United States (Cuervo & Ogunyoku, 2012; Byrne & Miller, 2012). As global

migration networks evolve, public attention is shifted to the responsibilities, obligations, and care systems in place for these youth once they arrive in a destination or asylum country. The Office of Refugee Resettlement was only charged with caring for these unaccompanied children in 2002, and the legal system's evolution in addressing their claims for immigration relief is constantly evolving (Cuervo & Ogunyoku, 2012). The refugee foster care system in place today was not designed to meet the needs of the current population entering its care, evidenced by the development of Special Immigrant Juvenile Status and shifts in qualifications for children seeking asylum within the past ten years. Individual research question findings outlined below suggest that staff within these service delivery systems have yet to develop a schema for interpreting the difference in lived experiences of youth with different immigration statuses. Therefore, while a comprehensive literature review of youth seeking immigration relief suggests differences in needs and experiences accessing services, staff have been trained in a program created for youth with designated refugee status. Refugee status itself arguably confers a less marginalized place in American society than that of undocumented immigrants. The findings below also suggest that despite a lack of attention to status differences, this study adds valuable insight to the role of the service delivery system itself in meeting the needs of youth adjusting to new communities. Study findings suggest that beyond youth facing status-related challenges, the resettlement systems designed to ameliorate those challenges may be contributing to those challenges.

Differences in need by status

The staff interviewed found it difficult to identify differences in need by status, due to the "blurred status" of youth who received or were in the process of receiving a particular status but whose experiences qualified them for multiple statuses. In these cases, staff reported that youth

received the status that was approved the fastest, so experiences of youth often were not clearly differentiated by status. For example, youth who had SIJS were sometimes also victims of trafficking and thus their experiences could not be limited to that of youth with SIJS.

The most prominent finding from this study regarding differences in legal needs was that staff easily ranked youth by status in terms of their degree of legal need. Staff agreed that youth seeking t-visa relief needed the most legal assistance, since they have an immigration and a criminal case and they tend to go on for longer than other immigration cases. Youth with SIJS needed the second most assistance, because of a lack of understanding about the process and its ongoing, uncertain nature. URM needed the least assistance because they entered the program with resident status, and staff were unsure about the needs of asylum seekers. Due to the convoluted immigration system, all staff noted that youth needed more clarity and transparency throughout the process, regardless of status.

A related finding was that youth who were going through the immigration process without certain status did appear to have more mental health needs, according to staff. Therefore, they associated increased mental health needs for youth with or seeking SIJS and t-visas. Particularly, they noted that youth seemed to exhibit more anxiety when they were experiencing stress related to their status, which is supported by previous research (Bean, Eurelings-Bontekoe & Spinhoven, 2007).

The last main finding regarding differences in need by status was in the area of employment. Youth with SIJS were particularly disenfranchised by a lack of available employment because of a lack of documentation for employment authorization. Employment was perceived to be a priority for youth with this status, so this was particularly discouraging to them and staff reported that youth often sought alternatives like undocumented employment.

Status influencing community referrals, and quality of available community services

In most context areas, staff reported that status of their clients was not a factor in making referrals to community (outside of the agency) referrals, and that they had no concerns about the quality of services in the community for their clients of different status. The main exception was in the area of mental health. Therapists were the main staff members concerned that when they faced issues with which they were unqualified to assist (e.g., any psychiatric treatment, traumatic brain injuries, etc.), they had to refer to external community providers and were unsure if those professionals would have the experience and skills to handle the types of trauma and backgrounds that their clients shared. This did not differ by status, but was the only area in which staff expressed any concern about the way the youth would be treated for not having full citizenship. This was very concerning, since a few months prior to these interviews, the city faced a city council resolution on becoming a "welcoming city" for undocumented Central American migrant youth, which was met with large protests and at least one arrest (VanHulle, 2014). There appears to be a significant gap in the way staff consider the community's awareness and treatment of their clients. This gap resembles the colorblind ideology as defined by Neville and colleagues (2000): "color-blind racial attitudes refers to the belief that race should not and does not matter." In this study, staff seemed reluctant to address differences among youth based on immigration status, but more importantly, reluctant to acknowledge ways in which outsiders may perceive these differences in status.

Utilization of community-level referrals by URM

The last research question explored the staff's perception of the degree of ease and access youth have to community providers in the areas of mental health, education, employment, and legal assistance. Two staff members in two different roles were able to identify the importance of

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providing extra assistance to help youth access providers in the community, but the most common discourse surrounding this issue was one of individual deficit and victim blaming. Staff most frequently reported that youth did not have challenges in the community, which suggests the colorblind ideology proposed earlier. When probed, staff framed unsuccessful community connections as an individual youth's unwillingness to succeed, or lack of caring about success. Furthermore, success itself was described by the participants as the "age appropriate" pursuit of academic achievement, regardless of the employment motivations of youth. Previous research with immigrant and refugee youth suggests that cultural values like work and financial family support are protective factors against negative outcomes (Carlson, Cacciatore, & Klimek, 2012; Luster et al., 2009). Therefore, it is particularly problematic that some staff disregarded the economic pursuits of youth as inappropriate and discouraged them from focusing on culturally relevant goals.

Study Limitations

This study was exploratory and sampled an entire population of eligible participants. Nonetheless, it is still limited in that the study was restricted to one URM program in one geographic area. This eliminated the trustworthiness standard of triangulation, which requires multiple sites or multiple types of perspectives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This organization was unique in its refugee minor programming simply due to the prevalence of programs, but it was uniquely situated in the community, due to capacity building efforts. These efforts increased the likelihood that findings from this study will be utilized by a variety of stakeholders. However, findings were limited because the agency selected is the only one in the area, and therefore needs to meet all of the needs of all of the URM in the mid-Michigan area. Priorities may impede the implementation of findings in any area.

Another weakness of this study was that it did not include the perspective of youth. This was a deliberate choice in order to develop a preliminary view of the context of client/caseworker interactions. It would have been less appropriate to begin with the youth, who may not understand the roles of the staff and their full universe of service options in the community. It may have been very challenging for them to conceptualize whether or not they are receiving maximum benefit from referrals without knowing the range of referral possibilities.

The lack of a full member check process also limited the extent to which these findings can be interpreted. Ideally, the participants would be able to provide feedback on my analysis and collaboratively work through any disagreements. This is planned for the future, but has not occurred yet. Additionally, it is not expected that the member checking process will result in consensus over the conclusions of the study, which is not necessarily required (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The conclusions of the study are somewhat unflattering to the participants, in that some themes contain victim blaming sentiments, and participants overall were unable to identify ways in which they were unable to meet the needs of their clients, even with the support of other community resources.

Full member checking would also add depth to the context of the participants in this study. To minimize demand on the participants' time, the interview protocol was created to ease directly into how participants perceive clients' needs, and did not solicit detailed information about them personally. The staff members who spoke most freely and openly about their perceptions of clients needs and challenges accessing referral services were those that had a strong rapport with the author (who conducted interviews) and had prior experience working with the author on research within the agency. Towards the end of the interview, one interviewee discussed the ways in which he tries to frame discussions around refugee and immigrant youth in

his social circles outside of work, but no other participants discussed any overlap between their work with refugee and immigrant youth and their pursuit of justice for these youth outside of work. It is currently unknown to what extent these participants have reflected on their roles within the system of oppression that the youth encounter daily and whether they are involved with any immigrant justice or advocacy outside of work. Child welfare workers in private agencies have an average turnover rate of 40 percent (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2003). Thus, one potential explanation is that staff may separate their professional and personal interests in order to minimize burnout and stress.

Van Voorhis and Hostetter (2006) found that social worker empowerment and commitment to client empowerment both increased after social workers received a master's degree in social work, and that higher internal locus of control was associated with both aspects of empowerment. While education level was not explicitly addressed with the participants in this study, the author is aware that approximately half of the participants interviewed have an advanced degree. Attribution of empowerment to an internal locus of control is inherently in conflict with a systemic perspective that shifts blame from characteristics of youth seeking services to the structure of the service system. These findings suggest that social work education in itself is insufficient for creating an environment that respectfully advocates for youth in the contexts in which they live.

Finally, one contextual shift happened during the author's time collaborating with the agency that may have influenced staff's willingness to be critical. When the relationship first started, the program manager was very supportive and encouraging of research within the program, and very interested in what could be learned from systematically exploring issues facing their clients. About a year after the first project was completed, this program manager

moved up in the agency and a new program manager, previously a caseworker, moved into that role. The new program manager is much less supportive of research within the program and much more reluctant to engage in discussions about how research could be used. However, as the findings outline, this shift has not affected staff uniformly and there remains disagreements about client experiences within the community. Aside from this intra-agency context, no defining demographic characteristics serve to uniquely contextualize this group of participants, with the exception of having worked in their positions for approximately five years or less. Respondents were of mixed racial identities, mixed age groups, and were male and female. Although there were reports from multiple staff about internal conflict related to their approaches to supporting youth in their work, there is no clear indication of contextual factors that explain a strong victim blaming tendency among the majority of the staff, but a more systemic perspective among the minority.

Implications of this study

The ecological theoretical perspective that framed this study was, for the most part, not present in the way staff conceptualized their work with unaccompanied youth. Youth face restrictions in almost all levels of Bronfenbrenner's (1986) model, yet staff placed a large portion of responsibility for success and integration on individual youth attributes. The goal of this project was not to educate staff on the application of ecological thinking in their work, however it bolsters the need for community based researchers to apply ecological thinking in their research designs and methods, so as not to miss what is already missing from community based work. This design only included one level of analysis, but further studies should consider the ways in which levels of analysis at each ecological level would improve the knowledge gained and actions proposed in research with unaccompanied minors. Furthermore, the field of study

with unaccompanied minors would benefit from taking a more ecological perspective in their work with youth, so as to better understand the challenges youth face throughout the immigration process beyond their interpersonal interactions.

Community psychology as a discipline was founded on the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration (Maton et al., 2006). Maton also describes the extent to which the field has been slow to develop these interdisciplinary relationships, partly due to academic structures and relative isolation within disciplines. However, the ecological perspective was also an important founding principle of the field, and the current study illustrates the need for interdisciplinary collaboration, in order to understand the context of ecological relationships between actors. In this study, it would have been more difficult to build rapport with participants and understand the terminology they use, if I had not entered with an understanding of the social work field. Moreover, it will be nearly impossible to effect changes within the systems and structures that work in these youths' lives without integrating an interdisciplinary effort.

Hopkins and Hill (2006) assessed the needs and experiences of unaccompanied asylum seeking children in Scotland. They interviewed children and service providers and found similar results regarding the need to ensure providers have sufficient training in policies, services, and equitable and respectful treatment of youth. Their recommendations included an international collaboration with other countries working with unaccompanied minors to understand strategies and best practices being implemented globally. The context of unaccompanied minor assistance varies widely (several of the main conclusions of Hopkins and Hill are not applicable to children in the U.S.), but organizations seeking to improve the lives of children traveling internationally should begin to form better relationships with each other to improve their own practices.

Tseng and Seideman (2007) proposed a systems framework for intervention in youths' social settings that integrated different points of intervention including social processes (interactions), resources, and the organization or allocation of resources. It is clear from this study that the social processes that occur in the setting of this agency between the staff and URM youth are directed by the staff and affect the resources that youth can access. Although improved training for staff regarding anti-oppressive theoretical frameworks (Martinez-Brawley & Zorita, 2011) may be useful in improving the daily interactions between staff and youth, it does not change the organization of resources within which they must operate. In other words, it is limited by not incorporating other systemic challenges that affect the services youth can access. The field of community psychology was also founded on the inextricability of research and action (Maton et al., 2006) and thus we as community based researchers should consider the ways in which this systems framework can help address the limitations of improved training. Specifically, action research should address the ways in which resource organization and specific resources affect the social processes that take place in the settings of these youths' lives. Of particular interest is the potential for interactive effects between resource organization and social processes. Moreover, the evidence from this study suggests there is misalignment between the social processes that already occur in these settings, another area Tseng and Seideman encouraged exploration. Beginning to address the systems aspect inherent in the immigration process and finding ways to improve the process for youth at all levels of the ecological framework would be a very informative start to intervention with URM and community services.

Lastly, the voice of youth is missing from this study. Their voice did help frame the research questions and the context areas of focus, but the degree that their experiences with community services and their needs are aligned is unknown without their input. Although there

are many challenges in working with unaccompanied minors in research (Hopkins, 2008), their perspective is invaluable as service systems are designed and redesigned to meet their needs and improve their quality of life. Raising critical consciousness in immigrant youth provides a fascinating opportunity for youth to be able to engage with systems thinking and work towards improving the systems within which they live, work, play, and learn.

Summary

Overall, staff shared good intentions and concern for the well-being of the youth. Some victim blaming attitudes were apparent, but one quote sums up the desire to see youth become the successful adults they desire to be:

> *...when it comes to the kids that we have in care, regardless of status, we're all part of a team that's trying to promote that kid from where they are to where they want to be. Or where we hope they will get to, you know that magic place where they're adults, employed with good jobs, and families, and they're happy and loved.*

APPENDICES

[Introduction of myself]: My name is Katie, you probably remember me from the project I did last year about needs of your clients. You may remember I'm a doctoral student at Michigan State, but before I came here for school I worked in New Mexico with both refugee families, and in social services as a case manager. I have a lot of respect for the work you do here and I understand you all care deeply about your work and the clients you serve.

[Introduction of the project]: I've stuck around working on the OASIS project since last spring, but am here to talk to you today about a new research study starting soon. Based on what you told me last year and what we learned during the collaborative data analysis, it was clear that there were concerns about services within the community for URM youth and how accessible they are. It seems like there are a number of factors involved in the process of URM youth accessing services in our community. Some of these issues were discussed last spring with both staff and youth. I talked to program management about these issues and we came up with some important research questions that we think will help us understand these different factors that both youth and staff have described. Mainly, we want to know how different types of immigration status affect service referral and access. When I say immigration status, I mean asylees, URM in the traditional sense, SIJS, and victims of trafficking. What we learn from staff will then inform the types of things we ask youth about their experiences with service access.

[Recruitment]: All of you are involved with youth from many different backgrounds, so as refugee foster care staff, you have very unique perspectives on navigating different services with different kids. You've all experienced similar challenges, but probably different challenges too. I know you all have full workloads so it's a lot to ask for you to take time out to sit with me and share your experiences. I'm hoping all of the refugee foster care staff will be able to participate, and I'm very flexible about scheduling a time when we can talk. It doesn't have to be here in the building, it can be out somewhere else if you'd like. I expect each interview will be about 45 minutes.

[Conclusion]: All of your responses will be confidential. I hope you'll all consider participating because we want the most informed picture of service delivery that we can get. I know you all have valuable insights, and I hope to hear them all. I'll leave you with my information so you can contact me with questions or to set up a time to chat, but I'll also follow up with you to talk more. Thanks for listening to my spiel, you guys are the best! I have really enjoyed working with you so far and I'm really looking forward to learning more from you!

Dear Refugee Foster Care Staff Member,

Please carefully review the following items of the informed consent prior to giving your consent to participate in the study.

Purpose of Study: The purpose of this study is to understand how different types of URM immigration status (URM, asylee, T-visa, SIJS) affect resource access and provision in your community, specifically educational, mental health, employment, and legal resources.

Location: The study is being conducted at locations convenient to participants throughout their community.

Procedures: Should you decide to participate, you will be asked to share your perspective regarding the needs of your clients, the services available to them, and how they are utilized. Completion of this interview should take approximately 30 minutes. I would like to record this interview with your permission and/or take notes so that I can use it for reference while proceeding with this study. If you do grant permission, you have the right to revoke recording permission and/or end the interview at any time.

Eligibility: You must be at least 18 years of age and currently working at Lutheran Social Services of Michigan as a staff member for URM youth to participate in this study.

Risks: There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this study. Please respond as honestly as possible. Remember, that you are free to skip any questions. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

Benefits: Your participation will help us understand how immigration status influences service access in your community. It may also help clarify how service providers are coordinating information and resources. Sharing your perspective may help you reflect on partnerships important to your clients or your work. You will be provided a gift card as compensation for your time. You will receive the gift card regardless of whether you answer all of the questions.

Confidentiality: This interview is confidential. Your responses will not be connected to your name or any other identifying information. You will be given a chance to review the transcript after the interview has been transcribed. Only the researcher will have access to your responses, and all data will be stored in a secure location in the psychology building at Michigan State University. The results of the study will be shared with the researcher's thesis committee and may be published in de-identified format. Results will also be presented to your agency for their benefit, however you will be able to review and edit any results that include quotations to protect confidentiality. No identifying information will be shared.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw: Your participation is voluntary, and you may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time from the study. If you decide not to participate there will not be any negative consequences.

Who to contact with questions: You have the right to ask questions about this study and to have those questions answered by the study investigator before, during or after the research. If you have any questions about the study, please contact Katie Clements in the Psychology Department at (505) 440-7818 or email vadnais3@msu.edu. You may also contact the MSU IRB at (517) 355-2180 or email irb@msu.edu.

Debriefing: Before, during and at the conclusion of the interview you will be able to ask any questions about the research study or the research process.

Acceptance and Signature: Your signature below indicates that you have decided to participate voluntarily in this study and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

(*Please check all that apply)*
[   ] I give permission for this interview to be recorded

[   ] I give permission for the interviewer to take notes during this interview

_____
Signature of Participant   Date
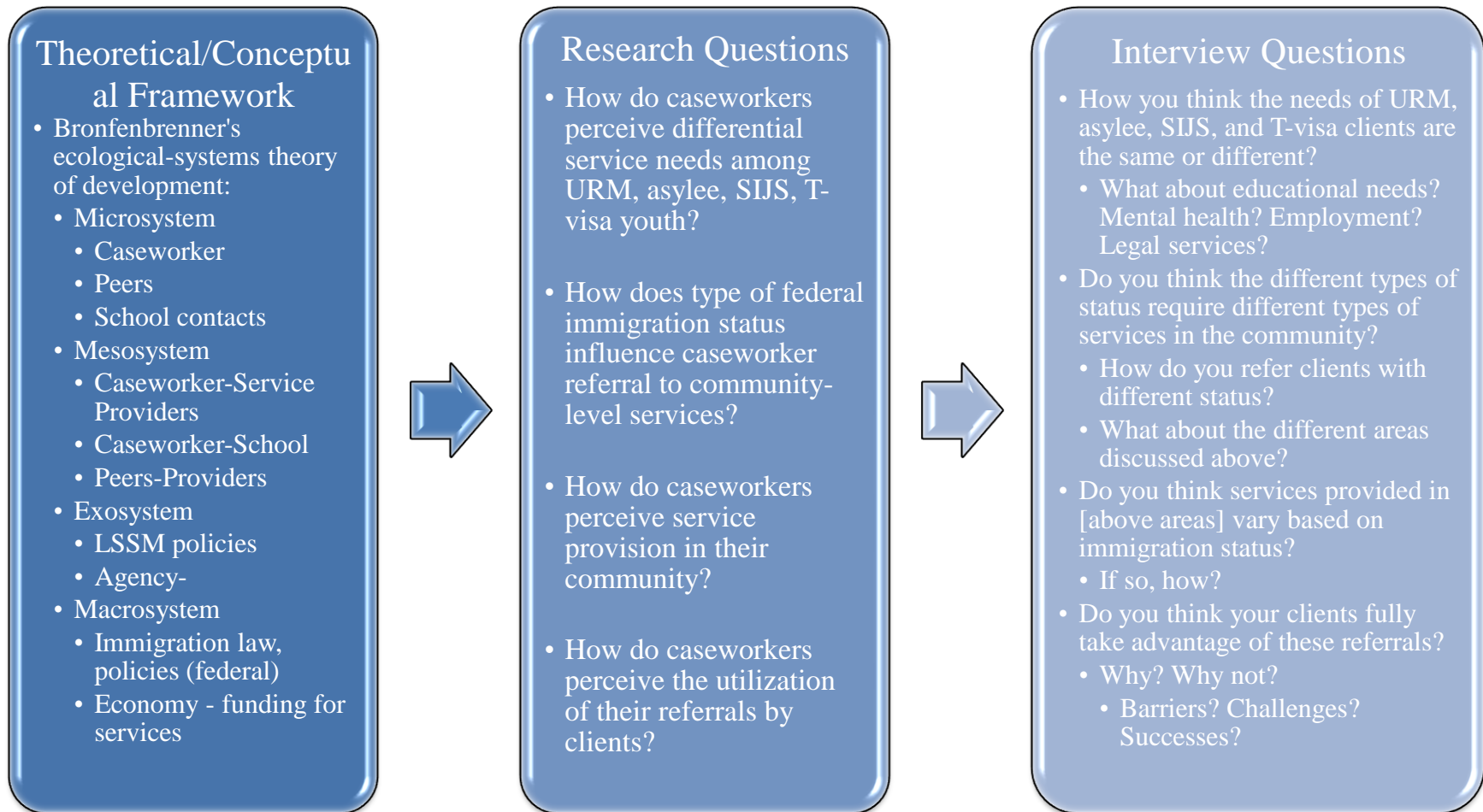

_____
Participant Name (Please Print)

_____
Signature of Researcher   Date

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

- Bronfenbrenner's ecological-systems theory of development:
  - Microsystem
    - Caseworker
    - Peers
    - School contacts
  - Mesosystem
    - Caseworker-Service Providers
    - Caseworker-School
    - Peers-Providers
  - Exosystem
    - LSSM policies
    - Agency-
  - Macrosystem
    - Immigration law, policies (federal)
    - Economy - funding for services

Research Questions

- How do caseworkers perceive differential service needs among URM, asylee, SIJS, T-visa youth?

- How does type of federal immigration status influence caseworker referral to community-level services?

- How do caseworkers perceive service provision in their community?

- How do caseworkers perceive the utilization of their referrals by clients?

Interview Questions

- How you think the needs of URM, asylee, SIJS, and T-visa clients are the same or different?
  - What about educational needs? Mental health? Employment? Legal services?
- Do you think the different types of status require different types of services in the community?
  - How do you refer clients with different status?
  - What about the different areas discussed above?
- Do you think services provided in [above areas] vary based on immigration status?
  - If so, how?
- Do you think your clients fully take advantage of these referrals?
  - Why? Why not?
    - Barriers? Challenges? Successes?

Figure 2. Table of theory delineating the theoretical and conceptual components of the research questions and interview questions

Table 5

Relationship between Research Questions and Interview Questions

Questions to Answer – what we want to know		Questions to Ask – how we can find out
General	Specific	To the participants:
Needs	What are the differences in needs among URM, SIJS, T-visa, asylees?	1. How do you think the needs of URM, SIJS, T-visa, and asylee youth are the same? 2. How are they different? 3. What are their educational needs? - Are these status-specific needs? Can you talk more about that? 4. Mental health needs? - What about for the different types of status? 5. Legal needs? - How does this differ across different status? 6. Employment needs? - How are these similar or different for different status?
Services	To what kinds of services do you refer clients?	1. To what degree do you think youth with different status need different types of services from the community? 2. What considerations do you make when deciding how to refer clients with these statuses? 3. How do these considerations differ among educational, mental health, legal, and employment services? 4. How do you think services vary based on status, if at all? 5. Do you think the services available can sufficiently meet the unique needs of youth with these different types of status?

Table 5 (cont'd).

Access	What are the reasons these services are not always utilized effectively?	1. What has been your experience with how other service providers understand the differences in status? 2. After you refer clients to different services in these areas, how easy do you think it is for them to become involved in services? 3. What are some of the challenges they face? What are some challenges service providers face? 4. What is your perception of how they make decisions on how to pursue services in these areas or to continue pursuing them? 5. What do you think is the biggest reason services in these areas are not always effective?

PARTICIPANT PSEUDONYM:_____

Hi—

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me today. I'm interested in understanding more about the relationship between federal immigration status and local community services for your clients.

This interview will be very open. I have a few main questions, but if some don't apply to you and your clients we can skip them and you can spend more time telling me what you think is important. The interview should take about 30-45 minutes. As a token of my appreciation and value for your time, you will be given a gift card. The gift card is not dependent on the content of your answers, and you will receive it regardless of whether you answer any or all of the questions.

Your responses are confidential and anonymous and will be grouped with other people. Your participation is voluntary and you are free to end the interview or skip any questions.

Here is a sheet documenting your consent to participate today. I will go over the main points with you so you understand exactly how your information will be used.

(**GO OVER INFORMED CONSENT, GIVE PARTICIPANT GIFT CARD.**)

I would like to record this interview so that I can make sure that I am understanding and writing down your responses correctly. I will not record this interview without your permission. If you allow me to record the interview, you may change your mind at any time.

Do you have any questions? **YES/NO**

Are you ready to start? **YES/NO**

Section A: NEEDS

First, let's talk about what the needs are for clients with different immigration status.

Interview Questions	Notes
1. How do you think the needs of URM, SIJS, T-visa, and asylee youth are the same?	
2. How are they different?	
3. What are their educational needs?	
4. What mental health needs do they have?	
5. What kinds of legal needs do they have?	
6. What about their employment needs?	

Section B: SERVICES

Now that we've laid out what some of the needs are, let's talk about the services to meet those needs in our community. Part of your job includes referring clients to other services outside of this agency that will meet their needs.

Interview Questions	Notes
1. To what degree do you think youth with different status need different types of services from the community?	
2. What considerations do you make when deciding how to refer clients with these statuses?	
3. How do these considerations differ among educational, mental health, legal, and employment services?	
4. How do you think services from the community vary based on status, if at all?	

Section C: ACCESS

Ok. Thank you for sharing so much of your experiences! Referral is only half the battle. After you refer clients, there is still a process of accessing those services that all three parties (you, the client, the other service provider) navigate. Let's talk about what that's like.

Interview Questions	Notes
1. What has been your experience with how other service providers understand the differences in status?	
2. After you refer clients to services in these areas we've been talking about, how easy do you think it is for them to become involved with those services?	
3. What are some of the challenges they face? What are some challenges providers face?	
4. What is your perception of how clients make decisions on how to pursue services in these areas, or continue pursuing them?	
5. What do you think is the biggest reason services in these areas are not always effective?	

CLOSING

Thank you for sharing so much of your experiences with me. The work you do is so important to these youth, and it's really great to get to hear about it. Is there anything else I should have asked to understand this topic better?

Is there anything else you want to add?

Then we'll end here. I'll be sending you a copy of the transcript of our interview so you can review it. You have my contact information on my card. How should I contact you?

Thanks again!

Table 6

Inductively Developed Themes

Quotation	Key terms/lower order codes	Thematic category
"The youth without status have a hard time focusing on school and they often have to miss class for legal hearings and appointments."	Focusing on school, legal and education conflict, unresolved immigration status	Education challenges, Impact of unresolved status
"We have one of the few URM programs but there aren't a lot of therapists in the area who understand the kinds of trauma trafficking victims have faced."	Limited local therapists, therapist lack understanding, trafficking victims (T-visa), trauma, resources by immigration status	Mental health challenges, Differential resources by status

Application of Braun & Clarke's Method of Thematic Analysis

Table 7

Phases of Thematic Analysis

Phase	Description of the process	Application in current study
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and rereading the data, noting down initial ideas.	• Transcribed data, • Reread interviews, • Created MEMOs of initial ideas. Attached MEMOs to transcript in dedoose, and separately in Word files
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.	• In dedoose, coded inductively each interview • Started with a mixture of broad and specific codes • Edited coding structure as I went
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.	• Grouped codes that 'hang together' • Termed those themes • Grouped themes under relevant research questions
4. Reviewing themes	Checking in the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic "map" of the analysis.	• Reviewed entire set of data in each code (Level 1) • Re-coded as necessary into more descriptive and accurate codes • Re-themed new codes into themes that better described the data set (Level 2) • Did not generate thematic "map" as actual visual map in Braun & Clarke because I do not like it (confusing)
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.	• Created a table for each research question that included themes and sub-themes, and description • Generated brief descriptions (attached to codes and themes in dedoose) that described the theme and sub-themes as group • Renamed theme if necessary to describe contents
6. Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.	• Selected compelling excerpts • Organized results by research question • Drafted results section of findings • Produced scholarly thesis report of analysis

Application of Lincoln & Guba's Trustworthiness Criteria

Table 8

Criteria for Trustworthiness

Criteria	Sub-criteria	Ways I addressed this criterion in the URM study:

Credibility - the level of confidence in the 'truth' of the findings	• Prolonged Engagement
	• Persistent Observation
	• Triangulation
	• Peer debriefing
	• Negative case analysis
	• Referential adequacy
	• Member-checking
		• Prolonged engagement – I spent 2 years in the setting to understand the culture and context of the agency before conducting this study. The research questions were developed based on ongoing conversations with various people in the agency and specific program, and I interviewed everyone across different aspects of service provision.
		  o I blended in enough for some people that they were able to tell me things that were politically unsavory within the agency or controversial.
		  o Interview conversations and approach indicated a level of context appreciation that interviewees related to
		  o Co-construction of meaning was not made with participants. The interview transcripts were sent out to everyone afterwards, but only one participant responded. They are in demanding jobs and I do not expect them to want to participate to that degree
		• Persistent observation – (harder to define and identify in practice). Purpose is providing complementary depth to engagement's scope. Through multiple conversations with people in different programmatic areas, I was able to learn about different contextual factors that influence their perception of the phenomena.
		• Triangulation - this was not possible in this study due to targeted inclusion of only one site and one method (interviews)
		• Peer debriefing – talked through challenging analytical moments with colleague, debriefed analysis with committee member (Dr. Campbell)
		• Negative case analysis - data does contain examples of contradictory themes; patterns that don't hold across all participants. Transcripts were assigned characteristics based on role, gender, and whether or not a relationship existed with the interviewer before the study to gauge whether there was consistency in negative cases (not focus of this paper).
		• Referential adequacy – not included in this study
		• Member checking – At time of writing, participants had checked and edited transcripts but not findings.

Table 8 (cont'd).

Transferability - showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts	• Thick description	Thick description related to different ecological levels (Bronfenbrenner) show how the findings can be applicable across contexts
Dependability – showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated	Sub-criteria: • Inquiry audit	People across roles were consistent in the type of information they provided and the perspectives that appear to be influencing access for youth. This suggests that the findings would consistent and could be repeated with the inclusion of similar role perspectives.
Confirmability – a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest	Sub-criteria: • Confirmability audit • Audit trail • Triangulation • Reflexivity	• Confirmability audit – see audit trail • Audit trail – maintained audit trail documenting coding and analysis decisions throughout study. The audit trail begins prior to the first interview and runs throughout each stage of the process. • Reflexivity – detailed reflexivity conducted before and throughout research process (outlined in this paper)

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