Nurturing Volunteers: A Critical Analysis of Volunteerism in the Nonprofit Social Service Sector

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“What are we doing? What is our mission?
It’s simple; we are working for a better world for all people.
It’s that simple.” —Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man

For months, people stared at me blankly when I referred to the peace that I often experienced while working on my senior thesis. I offered a simple explanation: During the hour-long interviews, I listened to people who genuinely and passionately care about our social world. Thank you to everyone who trusted me with your stories, your insight, and your critiques. Your grounded optimism is contagious. You inspired me to keep working for justice and to breathe along the way. While many of you stated that appreciation should not be materialized, I hope that this thesis demonstrates my immense gratitude for your honesty and your continued labor.

Thank you to HIAS Pennsylvania, an agency and group of people who challenged me from Day One of my internship to dream bigger, feel deeper, and act intentionally. I am forever indebted to your compassion and your transformative work. This thesis is evidence that that you are not alone in the fight for immigration justice. This thesis was intended and shaped for you and it offers some critical suggestions on how we can make collective actions more meaningful and impactful for all involved.

Thank you to those at Haverford and Bryn Mawr Colleges who nurtured my critical sociological eye to analyze an issue without neglecting the heart and the humanity it represents. I would like to particularly thank Professor Nate Wright for offering unending support, guidance, and humor over the past three years. Your unabated trust in me allowed this thesis to grow and evolve more than I thought possible.

Finally, thank you to the friends, family members, peers, and “strangers” who challenged me to examine how I fill social spaces and how those spaces reshape me. I continue to grapple with my own sense of belonging in our tumultuous social world. But, I am grateful to all who reminded me that membership and love can transcend walls, cities, regions, and social divisions.
ABSTRACT

This study examines volunteerism and volunteer management at HIAS Pennsylvania (HIAS PA), a nonprofit organization in Philadelphia that provides legal and social supportive services to immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. In both scholarly literature and HIAS PA’s infrastructure, volunteer management and coordination emerge as a neglected topic, but also a potential source of alternate support and innovation to offset social work’s entropic tendency towards stress, burnout, and turnover. Based on an ethnographic, qualitative research model that prioritized in-depth interviews and was situated by extensive participant observations, this thesis poses questions of group membership, forms of adequate gratitude, approaches to sufficient training, and information sharing. Ultimately, it addresses broader questions of sustainable social work by offering a metaphor of torque to demonstrate that although volunteerism itself cannot dismantle structural obstacles facing social service sectors, volunteers offer a unique capacity to offload and complement an agency’s work while also igniting creative change beyond the confines of their volunteer roles. Yet in order to serve as an effective external arm of the agency, staff and volunteers must collaboratively build and continually nurture connective tissue between their individual groups and the shared issue, such as refugee resettlement.
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INTRODUCTION

“We cannot change the world, but our efforts can affect an individual’s life forever. We are partners in arm.” —HIAS PA Staff Member

I awaited the inevitable encroachment of monotony and ennui while working as a summer intern at HIAS Pennsylvania (HIAS PA), a nonprofit organization serving refugees, immigrants, and asylum-seekers in Philadelphia. The office’s cubicles, phone lines, and unwieldy internal server indicated my entrance into a bureaucracy. After the passage of a few weeks though, I was jolted awake to the reality that I would never relax into boredom at HIAS PA, despite myths of overregulated social service bureaucracies and their tenacious tentacles. Yet, I sensed myself growing attached to HIAS PA throughout my internship with the Refugee Resettlement Team. However, I was not imprisoned in a cubicle, but liberated and inspired by the comforting unpredictability found within the organization.

I could not have predicted the hours I would spend on hold, the innumerable trips I would take on Philadelphia’s public transportation system, or the insurmountable challenge of explaining the American medical system to a newly arrived refugee family. I could not have predicted the ways in which I would rediscover Philadelphia, my home city. I could not have calculated the love or empowerment experienced regularly, nor could I have anticipated the hardships and exhaustion that overwhelmed my heart, mind, and body daily. Coffee could not remediate the dark circles beneath my eyes or those of my colleagues. At summer’s end, I found myself engaged in a new trap: even though the internship was meaningful, transformative, and thrillingly variable, how could I enter the social work sector knowing that fatigue was unavoidable? Boredom no longer seemed like the nemesis. Burnout did.

Part of the answer for my unrelenting drive to work at HIAS PA stems from simple experiences, like when I met young Rada, a 7-year old girl recently arrived from Iraq. In preparation for HIAS PA’s summer English program for refugee youth, I made home visits to answer parents’ lingering questions, receive parent or guardian signatures on various forms, and explain transportation routes to the elementary school where the classes would be held. I visited Rada’s home last. Despite the fact that it was Ramadan, the family presented a beautiful display of fruit and coffee. Rada sat next to me on the sofa. After finishing the bureaucratic tasks, Rada’s mother asked if her daughter had any questions.

“Will there be any books?” she gently inquired.
“Plenty,” I responded.

“Will there be coloring things?” I affirmed with a smile and a nod.

“Will we get to go on any…adventures?”

“Like field trips? Probably not, but we will play outside.” Rada’s face lit up. While she struggled the first few days at the summer program, Rada quickly adapted and brought joy to her teachers and fellow students. Her mother volunteered and her 3-year old brother flitted around the building bubbling with optimism. I saw the family five months later at HIAS PA’s Annual Refugee Thanksgiving. Rada is a happy 3rd grade student almost fluent in English and the rest of her family is doing well. It was these small moments of human connection that kept pulling me back to HIAS PA and feeling that the work mattered in an inexpressible way. When government programs faltered or merely offered scaffolds, and when xenophobic, anti-refugee rhetoric swirled around the country, HIAS PA staff, volunteers, and unknown community members enriched the empty spaces and extended care not mandated by the government’s resettlement program. Nonetheless and despite the beautiful reminders of humanity, I finished my summer simultaneously uncertain and confident about pursuing a social work career. Is social work destined to be an unsustainable and devalued sector or is there an alternative?

My senior thesis in sociology emerged from my anxieties about social work. It was always intended to return to HIAS PA and the topic was collectively chosen between myself and staff members. Together, we decided that my thesis would examine volunteerism and volunteer management at HIAS PA, a neglected topic, but a potential source of alternate support and innovation that could offset HIAS PA and social work’s entropic tendency towards stress, burnout, and turnover. Based on an ethnographic, qualitative research model that prioritized in-depth interviews and was situated by participant observations, this thesis poses questions of group membership, forms of adequate gratitude, approaches to sufficient training, and information sharing. Ultimately, it delves into broader questions of sustainable social work and argues that while volunteerism itself cannot dismantle structural obstacles facing social service sectors, volunteers offer a unique capacity to offload and complement an agency’s work while also organizing creative change beyond the confines of their volunteer roles. Yet in order to serve as an effective external arm of the agency, staff and volunteers must collaboratively build connective tissue between their individual groups and the shared issue of refugee resettlement.

In the Chapter 1, I offer a brief history of HIAS PA’s work situated in an international
and national context. The history section starts in 1882 with the founding of HIAS PA and concludes in December 2016, when I finished my data collection. The history does not examine current politics under the Trump Administration that have radically and intimately affected the work at HIAS PA. I return to current events in the conclusion. Chapter 1 also outlines organizational structure and staff roles and serves as a useful key throughout the thesis.

Chapter 2 contains a literature review and presents the three theoretical frameworks that ground my thesis: volunteer coordination, membership and trust, and gratitude in the care labor sector. Scholars rarely put the three pieces of literature together, yet they complement one another in analyzing volunteerism in social service sectors. The literature review concludes by presenting the “torque model,” which becomes a guiding tool with which to analyze interactions and relationships between staff, volunteers, and ultimately, volunteer coordinators. Inspired by the physics concept of torque, the model succinctly illustrates how distance from a central issue does not imply ineptitude in enacting meaningful and impactful change. Due to their distance from daily obligations, volunteers contribute at a different, but not less important intensity to the work executed at HIAS PA by staff. In effect, distance serves as an asset because those further away from the daily grind of direct service can extract meaning from their volunteer experiences and translate them to non-volunteers, another significant way to galvanize community force.

Before moving to the body of my thesis and its analysis, Chapter 3 details my qualitative methodological approach along with obstacles and dilemmas faced during the research period.

Chapter 4 presents why both staff and volunteers are attracted to HIAS PA, how volunteers fit into HIAS PA’s infrastructure, and what contributes to volunteer retention. While the thesis does not focus on sociodemographic factors or other causes that spark volunteerism, this chapter introduces larger questions and themes that the rest of the thesis will examine.

Chapter 5 analyzes volunteer management by looking at training mechanisms and approaches to communication. It discusses staff and volunteer frustrations towards one another and towards the volunteer program, as well exposes arbitrary delineations between staff and volunteers and the effects that these boundaries have, especially when they are transgressed.

Chapter 6 draws on care labor literature and observes what gratitude looks like within an under-resourced sector. While continuing to analyze how staff perceptions towards volunteers impact relations, the chapter claims that the ideal form of gratitude comes not from expensive gifts or elaborate displays, but from collaborative conversations and meetings between staff and
volunteers, where together, both parties can redefine volunteerism at HIAS PA. Moreover, these
events bolster membership ties and buttress trust relations, thereby making volunteerism more
impactful and effective. The chapter concludes by dissecting HIAS PA’s proposed introduction
of a new volunteer coordinator and I map the coordinator onto the torque model. The chapter
outlines the dangers that a middle-person poses to the overall, positive functioning of volunteer-
staff relations. Though the thesis does not wholly renounce implementation of a volunteer
coordinator, it does warn against realizing the position in its theoretical and current iteration.

Chapter 7 extends beyond the organizational structure and its daily tasks to assess what
volunteers add on a more abstract and community-wide level. What do individuals learn through
their volunteer work about Philadelphia and refugee resettlement? How does their capacity to
translate those experiences impact broader social change?

Always intellectually and personally fascinated with theories of social cohesion and
senses of belonging, I wanted to examine questions of community building and communication
for my senior thesis. Yet, I chose volunteerism as my case study because HIAS PA expressed
pressing need in a program evaluation and I saw value in critically thinking about sustainable
additions to a broken social service sector. I conceded to the reality that I would delve into
organizational sociology and study frameworks on management and training. I doubted that my
thesis would interest anyone beyond HIAS PA’s management team, a disappointing and self-
defeating perspective for a first-time researcher.

The thesis that follows does examine theories about adequate forms of management,
training, and organizational structure. To my surprise though, my data and research touched on
so much more, additional proof of the social service sector’s unpredictable reality. What follows
is primarily a thorough analysis of membership, teamwork, and community mobilization. What I
thought I had left behind at the start of my research period developed into the crux of my thesis,
a poignant reminder that narratives and theories of community engagement permeate unlikely
spaces and urge individuals to thoughtfully examine how they interact with social realities. Being
a volunteer is not the only way to positively impact communities and social life, but it is one
pathway to potentially alleviate the exhaustion bearing down on social workers. Healing social
work’s volatility and entropy does not mandate uniformity and role specialization. Quite
contrarily, this thesis argues that sustainable social work comes from nurturing membership ties
so that, together, groups and communities confront and embrace the unpredictable.
CHAPTER I
History and Background

At HIAS PA’s September Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast, the then Executive Director, Judith Bernstein-Baker, fiercely proclaimed that America was at a crossroads and that “it can be a nation that embraces its true history of immigration or a nation of the 1920s where we shut our doors.” The political landscape facing immigration has undergone seismic shifts since I started my internship with HIAS Pennsylvania (HIAS PA) in May 2016, since I officially began my thesis research in September, and since I finished my data collection in December 2016. In January 2017 and March 2017, the Trump Administration signed multiple executive orders that alarmingly threatened the national refugee resettlement program. Since January, courts have challenged the Executive Orders’ validity and policies have changed. Nonetheless, HIAS PA faces daunting questions about its future in resettlement work and maintaining the mission of “welcoming the stranger.”

This chapter will offer a brief history of HIAS PA, an overview of the formal Reception and Placement (R&P) Program for refugees as experienced in Philadelphia, and an organizational breakdown of roles within HIAS PA’s Refugee Resettlement Team. Despite the murky future of refugee resettlement work in Philadelphia and nationally, this thesis will primarily examine the resettlement program as it functioned between May 2016 and December 2016. This chapter’s historical perspective serves as a touchstone and a reminder that immigration justice has faced incessant threats, that social service sectors undergo continual change, and that, therefore, understanding the political and social landscape better positions contemporary discourse and strategic action.

HISTORY OF HIAS PENNSYLVANIA’S REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM1

In 1882, Louis Levy and members of the Philadelphia Jewish community formed the Association for the Protection of Jewish Immigrants (APJI) to address the increase of Eastern European Jews coming to the Philadelphia region, primarily due to the anti-Semitic pogroms in

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1 HIAS PA also has a robust legal program that offers services such as representation and legal support for asylum-seekers, survivors of crime and sexual violence, immigrants working towards citizenship, and immigrant youth seeking protection under U.S. immigration law. This thesis only examines the Refugee Resettlement program and thereby only examines HIAS PA’s history through the resettlement lens.
the Russian Empire. In 1910, leading Jewish immigration organizations from New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Baltimore met in New York City with the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society to discuss collaborative efforts to offer “more effective promotion of the welfare of newly arriving immigrants and coincidentally, that of the Jewish community at large.”

Like the APJI, the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society was founded in 1881 to address the large influx of Jewish migrants by providing food, shelter, and jobs to new arrivals. Representing the APJI, Louis Levy took a leading role at the 1910 meeting and in 1921, the APJI became a direct affiliate of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), the same year that the federal government passed the Emergency Immigration Act to limit the number of immigrants admitted annually. Today, the Philadelphia branch is widely known as HIAS Pennsylvania (HIAS PA), a standalone acronym and testament to its Jewish legacy. Yet, due to its cooperative agreement with the federal government, HIAS PA is legally bound against proselytization.

In 1979, the federal government created the Office of the U.S. Coordinator of Refugee Affairs and a year later, signed the Refugee Act of 1980, which formally established the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). The ORR still manages the budget for resettlement services, such as HIAS PA. Also in 1979, the federal government approached HIAS Inc. (called HIAS National at HIAS PA) and requested its assistance in resettling Southeast Asian refugees, while continuing to serve Jewish refugees. HIAS PA collaborated with local agencies in Philadelphia through the Jewish Federation to offer case management and job training to new arrivals.

Around 2006, HIAS PA assumed primary management of refugee resettlement social service support. Since the mid-2000s, HIAS Inc. and HIAS PA both expanded their resettlement work “to include assistance to non-Jewish refugees meaning [they] became involved in the aftermath of conflicts from Afghanistan, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Ethiopia, Haiti, Hungary, Iran, Morocco, Poland, Romania, Tunisia, Vietnam, and the successor states to the former Soviet Union.” This list should also include the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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7 Read Besteman’s 2016 work for a thorough historical critique of refugee resettlement in the United States.
8 “Our History,” HIAS Pennsylvania

HIAS Inc.’s current CEO, Mark Hetfield has said multiple times, “We used to help refugees because they were Jewish. Today, we help refugees because we are Jewish” a statement that I would later hear at the HIAS PA Annual Meeting. HIAS Inc. produced a short award-winning video in 2015 about its continued work and mission. “Why [continue to assist refugees]? Maybe it’s because being Jewish means you don’t have to be reminded to never forget. Maybe it’s because we are called in our most sacred texts to “love the stranger.”\footnote{HIAS, HIAS: For the Refugee, Video, 2:16, 19 June 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojavPKYVjzQ.} As Hetfield’s statement and the video suggest, HIAS Inc. has not abandoned its Jewish heritage, but extracted the essence of their values and adapted them to the contemporary refugee “crisis.”

HIAS PA is a faith-based organization that lifts its Jewish legacy to recruit support, but its history is not observable on a daily basis in the office. HIAS PA’s history and its Jewish legacy seemed most prominent during the Annual Meeting and in outward public relations, not when staff or volunteers offered direct client services. When asked if HIAS PA’s Jewish history affected their volunteership, most volunteers said that while it may have sparked original recruitment due to Jewish social networks, they did not actively invoke Judaism when volunteering. In fact, the HIAS PA history offered by staff and volunteers during interviews only covered the past decade. Even then, dates and names were muddled and confused. Part of the historical inconsistency stems from the repeated staff transitions within HIAS PA. Despite the confusions over details (which complicated my research), the larger and value-based narrative remains the same. Buzzwords such as “welcoming the stranger” permeated every interview.

**UNDERSTANDING THE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT “PIPELINE” OVERSEAS**

Since the Geneva Conference of 1951, “the refugee problem” has been labeled a “matter of concern to the international community.”\footnote{The Refugee Convention, 1951. http://www.unhcr.org/4ca34be29.pdf} Obtaining refugee status in the United States
involves a multi-month, non-linear process of continued and cyclical “recurrent vetting.” The average processing time of 18-24 months (once approved by UNHCR) does not capture the decades that individuals may wait before receiving refugee status. This thesis will not detail the overseas work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the following outline risks belittling the more than 21.3 million unique lived experiences of refugees globally.13 Nonetheless, a brief overview will help contextualize resettlement within the United States, the largest receiver of third country resettlement.

A refugee’s journey to obtaining approval for resettlement starts when the individual flees their country of origin to seek asylum in a second “hosting” country. As of 2015, the major refugee-hosting countries included Turkey, Pakistan, Iran, Ethiopia, Jordan, Kenya, and Uganda, many of which are facing their own economic and political instability.14 Refugees arriving in Philadelphia through HIAS PA come from host countries such as Jordan (Syrian Refugees), Malaysia (Burmese Refugees), Nepal (Bhutanese Refugees), and Uganda or Tanzania (Congolese Refugees). Catherine Besteman (2016) poignantly argues, “Although the language of emergency used by the UNHCR defines refugees as a crisis situation rather than the norm, those who have lived in refugee camps for generations know differently.”15 While rural camps and urban dwellings are depicted as temporary landing points for refugees anticipating approval for resettlement, HIAS PA works with clients who spent decades in refugee camps. It is not unusual to have a birth certificate administered by a refugee camp official.

After presenting themselves to UNHCR, applicants work with UNHCR representatives to collect various identifying documents (Middle Eastern populations must collect additional biometric information), undergo interviews to explain the necessity of resettlement, and receive funding by a Resettlement Support Center (RSC). The 30 countries that resettle refugees, including the United States, opened 140,000 spaces in fiscal year 2016. To put that in perspective, less than 1% of the global refugee population is ever accepted for resettlement in a third nation (versus voluntary repatriation and local integration).16 Some individuals do not seek, choose or receive resettlement status as their “durable solution” to displacement. Two other

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13 This statistic of 21.3 million refugees includes both the roughly 16.1 million individuals under the UNHCR mandate and the roughly 5.2 million Palestinian individuals registered by United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), an organization that specifically offers humanitarian aid for Palestine refugees.
15 Besteman, Making Refuge, 29.
available options are voluntary repatriation and local integration into the host nation. Many refugees may prefer either option to resettlement because, although uniquely complex, both options offer continuity in cultural and linguistic practices. For instance, Arabic is a national language in both Syria and Jordan, but not in the United States.

Refugees seeking resettlement in the United States “are subject to the highest level of security checks of any category of traveler to the United States.” The top American intelligence and security agencies, including the FBI, the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), the Department of Homeland Security, and the State Department all screen refugee candidates. Fingerprints are taken. Individuals undergo medical examinations. If diagnosed with a communicable disease, such as tuberculosis, an applicant’s process is paused during treatment. Yet, for other individuals, the medical examination may end the application process altogether.

Once approved for travel, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) makes the travel arrangements. Although IOM purchases the plane tickets, the family is required to pay the travel loan within 42 months of arrival in the United States, a significant investment when often arriving at poverty level. Finally, applicants undergo an extra screening overseen by U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Before traveling to the receiving nation, refugees undergo cultural orientation classes. Staff at HIAS PA explained that the cultural orientation courses failed to set realistic expectations for refugees, thus leading to disappointment upon arrival in the United States. They particularly experienced misinformation with early Syrian arrivals who intentionally traveled with little luggage because they received notice that the resettlement agency would provide clothing, along with all other amenities. HIAS PA does not collect clothing except for coats due to storage limitations.

Before moving to the resettlement process in Philadelphia, the next anecdote hopes to capture the psychologically exhausting and colossal obstacles associated with receiving refugee status and resettlement acceptance. Amin, a current HIAS PA case manager, worked for IOM in Egypt. He recorded information, requested security checks, and what he considers the most draining and emotional part, took persecution stories:

I remember one time it ‘twas very bad like meeting with a client […] especially with the system of UNHCR and IOM. They put in place that you need to finish

like four cases a day doing everything and, when you are in an emergency camp, like the Egyptian-Libyan borders, they would literally force you to leave the office by 5PM. So, all of the stress, would reflect on the way you were interacting with the clients who [pause] I would push the client to give me information and he was simply not remembering and after that, he couldn’t remember anything and he starting tearing [up] so I felt, “Oh I just crossed the borders and boundaries.” So, I asked him to leave to the camp. Take a rest and come back. Of course, I apologized. You see, sometimes yeah, although there is a pressure, still you don’t need to forget that you’re dealing with a human being. Just imagine yourself in his shoes. [...] It was painful. [...] There [abroad], they are the ones who are talking. And you’re just asking the questions. You want some information, exact information ‘cause you know eventually you’re helping them by taking these exact information.

By having to record about four stories a day, Amin’s account underscores the incomprehensible immensity of the global refugee condition. Millions of people attempt to receive refugee and resettlement status daily. Amin’s reflections echo Besteman’s (2016) denouncements of the “international refugee regime” that commodifies persecution stories, deeming some more tragic than others. Persecution stories largely determine whether or not an individual receives refugee status and is approved for resettlement. According to receiving nations, interviews and constant vetting protect “national security issues,” but in doing so, the refugee regime strips control and agency over refugees’ lived experiences and wrongly projects them as helpless, docile individuals awaiting rescue. As Amin’s statement reminds us, “Although there is a pressure, still you don’t need to forget that you’re dealing with a human being.” Every staff member mentioned the importance of empowering clients to make their own decisions throughout the case management process, especially in regards to money usage.

EXAMINING RESETTLEMENT IN PHILADELPHIA

Why is Philadelphia chosen as a destination? The former Director of Refugee Programming and Planning bluntly described the arbitrary nature of the resettlement process. Each month, the nine national Voluntary Agencies (VOLAGS) review approved cases for travel and each VOLAG agrees to accept a certain number of cases and then sends cases to their various affiliates (who either accept or deny the case). VOLAGS (many of which are religiously affiliated, such as HIAS Inc.) are non-governmental organizations that “receive a Reception and Placement Grant from the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
(PRM) for each refugee they are assigned.”¹⁸ During my research period, Philadelphia had two local resettlement organizations: HIAS PA and Nationalities Service Center (NSC), which is an affiliate of the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) VOLAG. Staff member, Mary, described picturing the top VOLAG officials sitting around a dark mahogany table and bidding where refugees would settle. An elusive and intangible understanding exists around how cities are selected. However, while critics of resettlement may disagree, “federal law requires consultation with state and local governments on the resettlement of refugees in a particular community.”¹⁹ Both local and federal levels impact resettlement trends.

If refugee clients have family in a given city, they are more likely to land in the area, especially if a relative applied for an affidavit of relationship within two years of their arrival to bring family members to the United States. This process of confirming relation often hits roadblocks and family members abroad must still undergo interviews to see if they qualify for refugee status. Consequently, some families remain separated for years, if not indefinitely.

Well-developed refugee communities are another considered factor for placement. For instance, Texas has a significant Congolese community and South Philadelphia has a growing Bhutanese community. The former Director of Refugee Programming and Planning explained that some factors have no direct relationship with the client, such as the “availability of affordable housing, employment opportunities, and health and educational facilities.”²⁰ Philadelphia can accommodate more refugees at a given time than a smaller town with fewer available and culturally appropriate social resources.

Throughout this pre-arrival process, HIAS PA prepares for the new clients. The day is marked on the electronic calendar. The housing coordinator sprints around Northeast Philadelphia or South Philadelphia (the main regions for resettlement) to secure housing. A case manager gathers various documents, lines up volunteers to help with the first two days of appointments, schedules an interpreter for the airport pickup (if necessary), schedules clients for their upcoming doctor’s appointment (all new arrivals must visit the doctor within their first 30 days), and contacts another recently arrived refugee family to see if they can prepare a

hot meal for the new case’s first night.

The family finally arrives to Philadelphia and the official Reception and Placement (R&P) Program begins. All cases are closed after 30-90 days unless the individual or family qualifies for the extended Matching Grant employment program or Preferred Communities, a program that follows particularly vulnerable or medically complex cases for up to one year. After one year, all refugee individuals must apply for a green card. Throughout the 90-Day R&P Program, clients attend orientations and meetings. Case managers often spoke to the anxiety they harbor around a family or individual’s “success” in adjusting to Philadelphia and the reality that staff can only offer so much. Ultimately, a resettlement program’s “success” relies upon clients’ persistence and commitment. Moreover, as the next anecdote will illustrate, much more goes into the R&P Program than the federally determined checklist entails.

LALEH’S FIRST DAY

We sat at the Broad Street Diner on the third morning of my internship. I sipped coffee, Lana, a HIAS PA case manager, ate carrot cake. And Laleh, a newly arrived refugee woman to Philadelphia, drank orange juice. After applying for Laleh’s Social Security number in Center City, Philadelphia, we took the subway to the County Assistance Office (CAO) in South Philadelphia to apply for medical insurance and SNAP (formally known as food stamps) benefits. The CAO case manager explained that they would need about an hour to process the paperwork before Laleh could receive her EBT Access Card and discuss the roles and responsibilities that she would share with the CAO. We went to the diner next door, despite Lana’s protests that warned Laleh not to spend her “welcome money” frivolously. Each refugee client receives between $925 and $1,125 for the 90-Day R&P Program. This one-time “welcome money” payment goes towards rent, utilities, and other basic living expenses.

As we sat at the classic, greasy diner table, Lana used the opportunity to outline what the next three months would entail for Laleh: Going to English classes, acquiring job skills, looking for employment, familiarizing herself with the city, and attending various workshops that HIAS PA offers. Laleh beamed with optimism. She wanted to be a businesswoman and continue her career in jewelry. Lana asked how she felt about working in a kitchen and reminded Laleh that she may not find her “dream job” immediately. Laleh eventually conceded and said, “You get

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21 Clients can re-enroll for Preferred Communities for an additional year of ongoing support.
one chance in America and you have to grab it.” Back in the CAO, Lana drilled Laleh on her address and explained how to use her new EBT Card.

As case managers would remind me throughout my internship and research period, the federally mandated R&P Program is too short for the client to achieve self-sufficiency, meaning they reach economic independence. In an interview, Aurora, a staff member who had worked with a post-resettlement agency (after 90-day program finishes) explained:

The reality is, and I say this as someone who does resettlement now, there’s no way that many people actually reach self-sufficiency in three months. Right? […] Whether they come here speaking English or not, three months of support is, it’s not enough. And it’s not as holistic as it should be. And like, there’s so many factors of why that’s true. And so what I’ve found in like post-resettlement work is just, that it’s longer. You can develop relationships. You can be engaged more in the community. Rather than being like a separate social service entity.

Her reflections highlight case managers’ advice to maximize each moment with a refugee client and to consider it as an educational opportunity and a chance to ease the process of social integration. Lana explained that volunteers play a central role in helping clients achieve “self-sufficiency” by recognizing integration as a shared goal and not completing tasks for the clients (e.g. fill out an application), but guiding the client through the process so that, within a few months, they can do it individually. The diner and the busses all become valuable spaces of learning. Refugee resettlement in Philadelphia moves beyond the R&P checklist; it quickly enters the realm of personal and social interactions. The interwoven nature of informal and formal social service support will remain central to this thesis’ analysis of volunteer labor.

LIFE WITHIN HIAS PENNSYLVANIA’S OFFICE

HIAS PA is located in the brick Jewish Federation Building in Center City, Philadelphia. The first time I went to HIAS PA, I waited in the green velour chairs watching the television slideshow of snacks for Pesach (Passover). A photo-history of the Philadelphia Jewish community ran along the wall. Morgan, the then Director for Refugee Programming and Planning, greeted me downstairs and together, we went upstairs to the fourth floor. The gray walls mirrored the beige cubicles, equipped with a computer, a chair, a singular shelf, and stacks of disorderly client files and papers, the stereotypical image of a cubicle farm. Yet, clothing and games spilled out of one cubicle, donated coats peaked out of the closet, hand-made cards
decorated the cubicles, and food sat on a table for sharing. It was midmorning and many staff members were out in the field with clients. I met Cecilia, the Education Coordinator, and Amin, the case manager whom I already mentioned. Russian floated from Lana’s office.

During this first meeting, Morgan and I discussed my upcoming internship and she approved my research project. “Philadelphia is trying to be more welcoming to refugees,” she said. She added that unlike other cities, Philadelphians reacted positively to the refugee crisis in autumn of 2015 by reaching out to HIAS PA and inquiring what they could do to support refugee communities in the United States.

By the time I left an hour later, more staff and interns had returned and buzzed around the office. Throughout my stay with HIAS PA, staff members would talk and laugh openly across cubicles, permeating whatever divides the walls built. Occasionally, staff would eat lunch together in the conference room or months later, at the open table in the “intern corner.” Despite the cubicle layout and the monochrome dreariness, the office is active and personalized.

ROLES WITHIN HIAS PA’S REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT TEAM22

The organizational chart and below descriptions offer a cursory glance at the roles found within the Refugee Team. While oversimplified and ignorant of changing and fluid job descriptions, the summary captures the diverse social services the Refugee Team offers and establishes a foundation for the thesis’ analysis of staff-volunteer relations.

HIAS PA Refugee Team

Director of Refugee Programming and Planning: The program director supervises and trains team members, coordinates with HIAS National, oversees monitoring and data tracking, and collaborates with community members, among several other tasks. During my research period,

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22 Throughout the remainder of this thesis, I will refer to the Refugee Resettlement Team as the Refugee Team, using the terminology found within HIAS PA.
HIAS PA hired a new program director. Morgan, the former director moved out of state for familial reasons. I did not interview the current program director, although I did have extensive conversations with Morgan before she left about how to shape my research.

**Case Manager:** The Refugee Team has three case managers. Case managers are clients’ main points of contact and work to offer comprehensive services and support to clients. I interviewed the three case managers: Amin, Aurora, and Lana. Amin first joined HIAS PA as a Legal Team intern and started on the Refugee Team in November 2014. Aurora began working with HIAS PA in late summer 2016 and had the shortest staff tenure. In contrast, Lana joined HIAS PA as a staff member in 1996 after receiving HIAS PA’s support during her own resettlement process in the early 1990s. She is the longest serving staff member on the Refugee Team.

**Education Coordinator:** Cecilia joined the team in March 2016. She now directly manages the Adult ESL courses offered twice a week to new arrivals. She also coordinates two afterschool programs in Northeast Philadelphia, one for high school students and the other for elementary school students. During the summer, she helped to run two summer ESL programs, one in collaboration with the Philadelphia School District. She will hold a similar program during the summer of 2017. She relies upon volunteers for all of these positions. Moreover, she supports families through the school enrollment process and other education-related tasks. Cecilia also attends collaborative meetings with partner organizations. I interviewed Cecilia.

**Health Coordinator:** The Health Coordinator, Ibrahim, is responsible for scheduling and alerting clients and volunteers of upcoming appointments. HIAS PA accompanies clients to Penn Center for Primary Care (PCPC) and Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia’s Refugee Health Program. During my stay with HIAS PA, Ibrahim also attended meetings with the Philadelphia Refugee Health Collaborative, a Philadelphia-based coalition composed of resettlement agencies and refugee health clinics.²³ I was unable to interview Ibrahim due to scheduling difficulties.

**Housing Coordinator:** Mary, the current housing coordinator, finds houses and apartments before clients arrive in Philadelphia. This role involves navigating Northeast and South

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Philadelphia and meeting landlords. Once clients arrive, she teaches them how to pay rent and assists in changing utility bills from HIAS PA’s name to the clients’ names. I interviewed Mary.

**Matching Grant Employment Coordinator:** Ebe recently shifted to the employment position after having been the housing coordinator. Like Marina, Ebe also received HIAS PA support during his family’s resettlement process in Philadelphia. Ebe works with clients and local businesses to locate available job positions and prepare clients to enter the American workforce. Under Matching Grant, ORR “awards $2 for every $1 raised by the agency up to a maximum of $2,200 in federal funds per enrolled client.”24 Cash, in-kind donations, and volunteer services all can be monetized and count towards the Matching Grant Program. The goal of Matching Grant is to assist clients reach self-sufficiency without using cash assistance. I interviewed Ebe.

**Preferred Communities and Refugee AmeriCorps:** The AmeriCorps member, Celeste, assists clients who face the most complex health conditions and therefore, stay on HIAS PA’s services longer than the 90 days. Most recently, she also works more on volunteer management and training. I was unable to interview Celeste due to time constraints.

**Interns:** The Refugee Team has partnership with local universities that offer for-credit field placements. The Refugee Team relies upon the additional hands. Yearlong interns take on refugee cases and often lead their own projects to improve or enhance specific programming. I served as an intern not-for-credit. This thesis will not examine internships. Although an interesting middle ground between volunteer work and full-time staff labor, internships pose their own obstacles and HIAS PA interns hold responsibilities unique to their position. Interns are a distinct group. They cannot be compared to volunteers, even though on surface level they seem like similar positions due to their unpaid status.

**DISCUSSION**

Collaborative efforts between various refugee-serving agencies and organizations are blossoming, but the general world of refugee resettlement and continuing services remain vague

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and abstract to individuals who do not engage regularly with refugee and immigrant communities. Moreover, as the previous chapter explains, while the R&P Program mandates specific tasks, each refugee experience presents new challenges and obstacles. The emergence of multilevel and structural changes in Philadelphia underscore that cultural integration is not a one-way process reliant upon refugees to “assimilate” to Philadelphia (Besteman 2016). Instead, positive integration requires a bilateral conversation between the receiving city and new arrivals. Philadelphia must change also. The 1910 Reform article on HIAS National’s first collaborative meeting still rings true today. The article reported that the groups aimed for “more effective promotion of the welfare of newly arriving immigrants and coincidentally, that of the Jewish community at large.” Arguably even today, when our refugee and immigrant communities achieve, so does the community at large.25

Volunteers play a central role in strengthening the refugee resettlement experience by supplementing and enriching work executed by HIAS PA staff and by translating the inner workings of HIAS PA and refugee resettlement to the “outside.” Eventually, sharing these stories and increasing nuanced exposure of refugee resettlement helps to reshape public discourse and to render available resources more accessible for all people. The remainder of this thesis will delve into volunteers’ capacities to activate meaningful change internally and externally.

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CHAPTER 2

A Literature Review: Trust, Care Labor, and Loving Thy Volunteers

Sibylle Studer and Georg von Schnurbein’s (2013) analysis of over 300 studies related to volunteerism exposes a dearth of academic and sociological work on volunteer coordination. Their analysis highlights that current literature prioritizes analysis of motives and volunteer characteristics. Few studies focus on organizational contexts within which volunteers work. However, Studer and von Schnurbein argue that a “focus on the organizational settings affecting volunteers sheds light on the meso-level between the micro-level of motives, sociodemographic characteristics, and personality traits, as well as the macro-level of societal values, government policies, and social capital affecting volunteering.”

Addressing Studer and von Schnurbein’s call for more scholarly work on volunteer coordination, this literature review and thesis present volunteers as active and fluid agents that thrive in a “third” or “meso” space, floating between and blending their personal lives, social realities, and organizational demands with tact. Understanding how volunteers interact with and within institutions illuminates the mechanics behind volunteer coordination, and more notably, unearths questions related to empathy, trust, social engagement, and social change.

This chapter will build a theoretical framework for my analysis of volunteerism within social services and the broader social world. I will outline the current literature regarding volunteer coordination within a formal institution, membership theory with an emphasis on trust, and unpaid and care labor and their dilemmas surrounding gratitude. Current literature often overlooks the intrinsic interconnectedness of these three topics. By putting them in conversation with one another, I will reveal the importance of extending beyond discipline-specific lenses and embracing knowledge and skills found in the various social sciences and branches of sociology. As this study of volunteerism reveals, improved bridging and merging between different sectors results in a strengthened functioning of society and ultimately, more holistic social change.

Before proceeding, I will define “volunteer” and “volunteerism” as used in this thesis. No

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27 Ibid.
consensus exists on definitions, thereby muddying comparative studies.\textsuperscript{28} Musick and Wilson (2008) overview key definitions, specifically highlighting the differences between volunteer actions within informal, casual settings (e.g. dog sitting for a neighbor) and formal volunteer positions (e.g. administrative assistant at a refugee resettlement agency). Reflecting my sample population, volunteerism refers to “organized voluntary activity focused on problem solving and helping others” (Jenkins et al. 2003).\textsuperscript{29} Ultimately, “Volunteer labor will always be necessary to help government agencies achieve their goals.”\textsuperscript{30} Musick and Wilson dub volunteerism as “bureaucratized help,” a parallel sentiment to Robert Wuthnow’s (1995) “institutionalization of care.”\textsuperscript{31} They embed emotions and compassion within volunteerism, while also tying volunteerism with social activism. Volunteering evokes images of selfless individuals actively choosing to give more than they receive. It should not be “tainted” by capitalistic incentives or motives. This literature review will complicate “volunteerism” by analyzing how it simultaneously mirrors unpaid and underpaid care labor and how it diverges from traditional conceptions of care labor. For now, volunteerism as used in this thesis refers to intentional engagement with a formal organization to produce helpful assistance on an interpersonal level.

A SHORT SOCIAL PROFILE OF VOLUNTEERS

Neither the literature review nor thesis will extensively analyze sociodemographic factors that affect entry into or retention within volunteerism. Instead, I will offer a brief summary of previous studies that examine how education, income, gender, age, and race impact volunteers.

Education on Volunteering

The quantifiable amount and type of education positively affects volunteer engagement (Brady et al. 1995; Cohn et al. 1993; Downton and Wehr 1997; Eisenberg 1992; Herzog and Morgan 1993; Musick and Wilson 1999; Nie et al. 1996; Rosenthal et al. 1998). Musick and Wilson suggest that, “more schooling encourages more cosmopolitan attitudes, fosters empathy

\textsuperscript{28} Marc A. Musick and John Wilson, \textit{Volunteers: A Social Profile} (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), 34.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 26.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 4.
with the less fortunate, and builds self-confidence. “

When controlled for gender, education had the same effect on men and women. Increased educational credentials affect Whites’ probability of volunteering, but not other racial and ethnic groups. Graduating from college increases the likelihood to volunteer but decreases the probability that a religious organization will house the position. However, religious affiliation and membership is widely recognized as a strong contributor to volunteerism, primarily due to social networks and social support that inspire and impose giving norms (Borgonovi 2008; Clain and Zech 1999; Hodgkinson et al. 1990; Park and Smith 2000; Putnam 2000; Wilson and Musick 1997; Wuthnow 1991).

**Income on Volunteering**

Educational attainment impacts occupation opportunities and income, and consequently, volunteering choices and capacity. Income is positively related to volunteering and knowing about various volunteer opportunities and forms of civic engagement. Yet, Musick and Wilson (2008) frankly state, “Poorly educated people are more likely to say that they do not volunteer because they do not know how, whereas highly educated people are more likely to say they lack the time.” Moreover, Musick and Wilson argue that individuals in managerial positions or those who work in a positive environment are more likely to volunteer because they internalize positive feelings about work, as opposed to individuals who work in exploitative or unhappy work environments. An individual’s occupation shapes volunteer positions: Those working in public sectors are more likely to volunteer because they construct a different conception of civic engagement than those working in private sectors.

**Gender on Volunteering**

Volunteering in the 19th century paved a way for women to enter the public sector while not challenging hegemonic patriarchal narratives that defined femininity and womanhood (Musick and Wilson 2008). Volunteer positions for women still prioritized maternalism and care

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33 Musick and Wilson, *Volunteers: A Social Profile*, 123.
34 Ibid., 128.
36 Ibid., 139.
37 I did not examine any studies that analyzed gender and volunteering without using the gender binary of women to men and encourage future scholars to expand how gender is defined within volunteerism.
taking. In 1973, the National Organization of Women condemned volunteering as an expansion of gendered perceptions of “women’s work.”\(^{38}\) Today, volunteerism in America still remains gendered more subtly and exposes itself through the volunteer opportunities individuals select. Women disproportionately fill care-related positions, while men volunteer in more vocal and politically oriented positions. However, there is a mixed consensus on whether or not women volunteer more than men, if men volunteer more than women or if no difference emerges once gender is controlled for other social factors (Hayghe 1994; Sundeen 1990). Musick and Wilson suggest that, the “small gender difference is partially attributable to cultural factors, differences in social practices, and the demands of other roles.”\(^{39}\)

Age on Volunteering

Volunteer activity peaks between 40 and 59 years of age, which Musick and Wilson credit to social pressures for parents to civically engage and volunteer.\(^{40}\) Musick and Wilson warn against conflating aging and retirement with volunteerism, and contrary to popular beliefs, “older people do not have higher volunteer rates than people who are still working, but they contribute more hours.”\(^{41}\) In regards to youth, schools and education programs often require or encourage volunteerism, which perpetuates expectations for young people to work without pay and which further devalues care labor (Musick and Wilson 2008; Wuthnow 1995). Again, we see a connection between education and volunteerism in relation to age.

Race on Volunteering

Finally, “racial and ethnic minority groups in the United States volunteer less than Whites, the one exception being that African Americans are more likely to volunteer in connection with their churches than are Whites.”\(^{42}\) However, ambiguity permeates scholarly literature on whether or not racial differences affect the volunteer labor force composition (Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Sundeen 1992; Williams and Ortega 1986). The non-consensus of what qualifies as “volunteering” risks disregarding familial support and aid that serves as lifeblood to

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\(^{38}\) Ibid., 175.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., 195.

\(^{40}\) Ibid., 122.

\(^{41}\) Ibid., 253.

\(^{42}\) Ibid., 214.
marginalized communities otherwise underserved by public, governmental programs.

Discussion on Social Factors

Overall, social and geographic positioning does impact, but does not solely determine volunteer opportunities and how individuals civically engage. The above information offers a short summary of how social factors interact with one another. Volunteer organizations should critically examine their volunteer cohort and what social groups are and are not represented. For the remainder of this thesis, I will specifically examine organizational factors that affect volunteer programming and retention.

VOLUNTEER COORDINATION AND VOLUNTEER SPACE

Beyond personal motives and characteristics, scholars have called for more academic studies on volunteer coordination within an organizational infrastructure, with a particular exploration of socialization methods, relationship maintenance, and disciplinary techniques (Lewis 2005; McNamee and Peterson 2014; Studer and von Schnurbein 2013). According to Laurie Lewis, “The means by which volunteers navigate these complex relationships [with management] warrants more attention.” Motives and characteristics only become useful when matched and supported by an institutional structure that can effectively channel volunteers.

Volunteers are active agents and offer a critical voice in organizational conversations (Garner and Garner 2011; McNamee and Peterson 2014). McDonald and Warburton (2003) illustrate volunteers as agents of change both externally in their social spheres and within the organizations. They offer pushback and challenge norms that result in shifting organizational structures. Open lines of communication between staff and volunteers are mutually beneficial. However, as this thesis will explain, bilateral conversation between staff and volunteers suffers from institutional obstacles and personal apprehensions. “Volunteer management capacity is structurally limited by organizational features.” Staff has other obligations that result in reinforcement and reproduction of an organizational infrastructure that overlooks volunteers. If an organization fails to evolve and align its settings to volunteer needs, then volunteers cannot fit into the organizational infrastructure, thereby remaining perennially marginalized.

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Studer and von Schnurbein illustrate volunteers as a pivot point between “organizational settings” and “society at large.” McNamee and Peterson theorize volunteerism as a “third space/place” separate from home life and work life that is relegated beneath the former two (Ashcraft and Kedrowicz 2002). Like Studer and von Schnurbein, the “third space” remains a “nebulous space […] apart from the volunteer organization yet entwined with one’s other activities and identities.” Unlike home or work, volunteers’ third space is amorphous, ambiguous, and due to the ill-defined boundaries, ripe for confrontations between management and volunteers. The aforementioned scholars offer a unique perspective on the third space, but most empirical research that studies how volunteers traverse and blend their first, second, and third spaces remain sparse or too abstract.

McNamee and Peterson do not illustrate the third space, contributing to their theory’s vagueness. The above figures depict my interpretation of how the third space functions based upon McNamee and Peterson’s work. Figure 1 presents home and work life, both of which, in theory, function separately. Figure 2 demonstrates how an amorphous “third space” loosely bridges home and work life. While a helpful illustration, questions linger over mechanics and how much the other spaces are comprised by the third space. If merely an overlap, what does the third space uniquely add, if anything?

In the next section, I will further examine volunteer membership within organizations and why a sense of belonging benefits volunteer labor. This section roughly outlined a successful volunteer program’s emphasis on collaborative, open communication and the deficiency of scholarly literature on volunteer coordination. However, despite the obscurity, scholars

42 Ibid., 406.
43 Ibid., 217.
empathically emphasize the ongoing value of volunteerism within and beyond organizations. Robert Putnam (2000) considers volunteers as valuable sources of social capital because they “bridge” social networks and “bond” within them. For Putnam, “social capital makes us smarter, healthier, safer, richer, and better able to govern a just and stable democracy.”

If managers better support volunteers and shape them to organizational needs while also recognizing and embracing the volunteers’ third space, volunteers can fortify the bridging social capital required to “transcend our social and political and professional identities to connect with people unlike ourselves.” By better understanding volunteer coordination, we can better grasp what is needed to enact social change within specific spaces and on a larger social scale. One step involves maximizing the third space in which volunteers inhabit. As David Harvey (2009) explains, social “spaces” birth the potential for social processes that will redefine the space. Volunteers do not merely float in a third space, but reform how that third space manifests itself. Just like volunteers and managers reshape institutions, they can reform the third space.

MEMBERSHIP AND TRUST

Until relatively recently, primarily experimental psychologists and political scientists grappled with topics of “trust,” and produced “theoretically unintegrated and incomplete [research] from the standpoint of a sociology of trust” (Lewis and Weigert 1985). Bernard Barber (1983), Anthony Giddens (1990), Lewis and Weigert, and Niklas Luhmann (1979) serve as notable exceptions and insist that trust is “an irreducible and multidimensional social reality” that emerges from collective units. Trust relies upon interpersonal relations and dynamics, thereby rendering claims such as “trust yourself” misleading. Giddens argues that intimate and personal trust relations must be “worked at;” trust does not exist a priori, but emerges through self-disclosure and vulnerability with another individual.

Weigert and Lewis outline three types of trust: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. All three types of trust are present in a healthy trust relationship, albeit at different intensities dependent upon the relationship and situation. “Trust in everyday life is a mix of feeling and

49 Ibid., 411.
50 David Harvey, Social Justice and the City (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 10.
52 Ibid.
rational thinking and so to exclude one or the other from the analysis of trust leads only to misconceptions that conflate trust with faith or prediction." Cognitive and emotional trust provide the foundation for behavioral, which is the resulting action expressing or defying trust relations. Contemporary societies have shifted from predominately emotional trust relations with known individuals to a prioritization of cognitive trust in order to account for increased interactions with strangers and faceless, abstract systems (Giddens 1990; Weigert and Lewis 1985). Yet, as Luhmann and Lewis and Weigert emphasize, further bisecting emotional and cognitive trust neglects how they overlap and allow psychologists to claim emotional trust and political scientists to examine cognitive and systemic trust. Sociologists must bridge the two and examine how trust manifests itself in social relations and affects social processes.

According to Luhmann, to act on trust “is to behave as though the future were certain.” For Giddens, trust is a coping mechanism to navigate a “lack of full knowledge.” Lewis and Weigert insist that trust emerges from learned experiences. Trust offers roadmaps to confront the risk, doubt, and complexities coupling future uncertainties, rather than succumbing to paralysis. “When faced by the totally unknown, we can gamble but we cannot trust.” Even in a modern society that celebrates expertise and expert systems, knowledge and facts continually shift. As this thesis will discuss, training and volunteer coordination help build trusting relations because staff can transmit their acquired knowledge and the known realities of refugee resettlement, information that will help volunteers confidently make the problem-solving “leap” while in the field. While the future remains unknown, it is not impossible to harness and direct. Neither volunteers nor staff has to “gamble” success if they can “trust in trust.”

Ultimately, trust “reduces the need to monitor others’ behavior, formalize procedures, and create completely specified contracts” (Williams 2001). Cultivating positive interactions at “access points” between laypersons and experts, such as meetings between case managers and clients, fortifies a trust relation that sustains abstract systems and carries a reminder that it is

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53 Ibid., 972.
56 Luhmann, Trust and Power, 10.
57 Lewis and Weigert, “Trust as a Social Reality,” 970.
58 Giddens, The Consequences of Modernity, 43.
flesh-and-blood people who are its operators.” Trust aids efficiency and re-embeds social
customary experiences of modern society. Giddens fails to examine the dissonance
experienced by abstract systems when they displace expertise to laypersons, such as when staff
trains volunteers to complete tasks typically given to staff. He focuses more on laypersons’
depth to an abstract system’s expertise. However, his analysis of facework and access points
reinforces how interpersonal cognitive and emotional trust mutually benefit abstract systems’
longevity and laypersons’ ability to cope with the unknown.

Michele Williams (2001) studies how trust affects group membership. Emotional trust is
“more stable over time, across situations, and with respect to small trust violations,” than
cognitive trust relations. Emotional trust not only deepens trust relationships, but can positively
affect the workplace environment and sense of togetherness amongst group members. Like
Luhmann and Lewis and Weigert, Williams discusses how emotional trust reinforces
cooperation. Emotional trust can disrupt the cognitive trust that scaffolds and overpowers
bureaucracies and therefore, create a more inviting space for volunteers to enter. Moreover,
trust in some and distrust in others fortifies in-group and out-group boundaries. For this thesis,
staff and volunteers preserve in-group boundaries, but the groups should overlap. An individual
can represent a group and consequently, either bolster or shatter intergroup trust.

Assuming a basis of interwoven cognitive and emotional trust, membership to a group
does not require homogeneity (Borgonovi 2008), in contrast to Michael Anderson (1971) who
argues that homogeneity positively correlates with trust levels. In fact, identity pluralism is
helpful in establishing in-group and out-group boundaries and sharpening the uniqueness of a
specific group. Pulling on rational choice theory, divisions, marked boundaries, and competition
for group membership can positively impact motivation and commitment to a specific group
perceived as distinct and special (Borgonovi 2008; Finke and Stark 1989; Iannaccone 1998;
Warner 1993). Thus, trust emerges as an important bridge between social networks. It allows
groups to remain distinctively separate, but still interact and complement one another.

Membership to a group affects individual identification. Wuthnow helpfully delineates
between the “self” and the “role.” Wuthnow explains that a self “is a basic definition of who we

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60 Giddens, The Consequences of Modernity, 85.
61 Williams, “In Whom We Trust,” 379.
62 Studer and Schnurbein, “Organizational Factors Affecting Volunteers: A Literature Review on Volunteer
Coordination,” 421.
are. [...] The traits that define their beings, and perhaps some overarching sense of their biographies, characters, spirits, or souls.\textsuperscript{63} Selves are a composite of multiple “roles,” the “cluster[s] of distinct and related activities defined by a set of specialized norms and expectations.”\textsuperscript{64} Unlike selves, roles are “bounded.” As Wuthnow concisely says, “I can take a vacation from my roles; I cannot take a vacation from myself.”\textsuperscript{65} However, some roles acquire an all-consuming nature so that the role transitions into a self, such as the “mother” role or the “social worker” who works overtime and perpetually carries secondary emotional trauma.

“Roles” allow volunteers to step out of their positions and return to other roles. Due to roles’ temporality and fluidity, we yet again see the need to examine the “third space” and what happens when volunteers leave organizations and what they bring to their different spaces or roles. I will retain this distinction throughout the thesis, arguing that volunteers view their connection with HIAS PA as a “role,” while staff sees it position more as a “self.”

Scholars debate whether volunteers serve as substitutes to staff or as complements and supplements to an organization’s work (Brudney 1990; Lewis and Weigert 1985; Studer and von Schnurbein 2013). In regards to substitution, staff fears of replacement generate hesitation and resistance towards volunteers.\textsuperscript{66} Critics argue that increasing “flexible,” unpaid labor, such as volunteerism, threatens already underpaid employees, while also perpetuating instability and devaluation of social service sector positions (Baines 2004; Beher et al. 2000; Hustinx 2007).\textsuperscript{67} I will discuss care labor in the next section.

In contrast, scholars such as Brudney (1990) and Handy and Mook (2008) present data that volunteers function as supplements and complements, rather than substitutes to paid staff, another cue to embrace identity pluralism within organizations. Staff and volunteer homogeneity would grease the wheel for role substitution. Yet, as previously discussed, explicated and shared missions along with an organization maximizing volunteer feedback enhance membership by creating links between the diverse groups (Garner and Garner 2011).

Volunteer labor will “always be necessary to help government agencies achieve their


\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{66} Feminda Handy and Laurie Mook, “The Interchangeability of Paid Staff and Volunteers in Nonprofit Organizations,” 	extit{Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly} 37, no. 1 (March 2008): 77.

goals. Therefore, other scholars have put forth volunteer models of “interdependence,” “coproduction,” and “semiautonomous volunteers” (Handy et al. 2008; Lewis and Weigert 1985; Studer et al. 2013). These models more accurately capture the reality that “volunteers constitute a unique resource, which requires the organizations to make strategic decisions in specifying how to relate to this resource, how to develop it, and how to best distribute the accrued benefits back to the volunteers, organization, and society at large.” Substitution theory glosses over the need for organizations to nurture volunteers. Viewing volunteers as supplements and complements encourages organizations to enter a “partnership between paid staff and volunteers,” and this partnership ultimately expands the possibilities of volunteers, paid staff, and “society at large.” Volunteers do not need to mimic staff or have their volunteer position transition from a “role” into a “self” to be valuable assets to organizations. Contrarily, differences and external roles enhance organizational volunteer positions and aid in organizational sustainability.

**VOLUNTEER, UNPAID, AND CARE LABOR**

In reference to care and volunteer labor, Wilson and Musick (1999) argue that, “much of the productive work performed in the United States goes unrecognized and uncounted by conventional measures of regular employment.” Wuthnow (1991) argues that, “volunteering is one of the ways Americans show care and compassion.” Yet, emotions are devalued in a public market force that prioritizes rational production and that excludes emotions in private, often feminized arenas (Zelizer 2005). The previous section illustrated how emotional trust enhances group membership. Emotions, such as compassion, are central to effective volunteer positions. This section will examine parallels and disparities between volunteer labor, unpaid labor, and underpaid care labor. I will highlight scholarly debates on adequate gratitude for care labor and volunteers, recognizing that many individuals volunteer without anticipating material benefits.

Nancy Folbre’s definition of the care sector is broad enough to encompass volunteer work. Folbre defines the care sector consists as “economic activities in the home, market, community, and state that fit loosely under the rubric of human services and have particularly

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70 Handy and Mook, “The Interchangeability of Paid Staff and Volunteers in Nonprofit Organizations,” 76.
strong personal and emotional dimensions,” such as childcare and education and “are often on a face-to-face or first-name basis.”73 Volunteerism fits neatly into her definition, especially when relating it to Musick and Wilson (1999) who explain that “as people engage in volunteer work, they learn to play roles in institutions — how to care and who to care for.”74 In social work sectors, volunteers’ capacity to offer more care and emotional labor in time-crunch institutionalized organizations increases service quality, such as in the social service agency studied in this thesis (Folbre 2006). Yet, time-intensive emotional labor is not monetarily compensated like quantifiable production and suffers from devaluation. Undeniably, those in the professional care sector are chronically underpaid and supported.

Viviana Zelizer’s (2005) analysis of the “hostile world” framework illustrates the separation of intimacy and economic markets. While a critic of the theory’s proposition, she concisely summarizes it by explaining that, “Intimacy only thrives, accordingly, if people erect effective barriers around it. Thus emerges a view of the separate spheres as dangerously hostile worlds, properly segregated domains whose sanitary management requires well-maintained boundaries.”75 Folbre agrees that, “there are good economic as well as philosophical reasons why not everything should be for sale.”76 The hostile worlds framework extends Emile Durkheim’s seminal study on social life that bifurcates the “profane” from the “sacred,” the mundane daily life from the holy and otherworldly. Volunteerism, according to Wuthnow (1991), falls in the sacred category due to care and emotions’ inherent basis in “human nature,” a perspective that overlooks the social construction of emotions (Hochschild 1979). Per the hostile world theory, money and greed must not contaminate volunteerism, just like the care sector, which relegates emotionally based work to the private spheres and perpetuates underpayment and minimized benefits. Attaching material incentives denigrates the ethical basis of volunteerism that cherishes compassion and other emotions.77

Yet, volunteer work still qualifies as labor and volunteers are still productive workers. Thinking otherwise undermines the economic and social benefits that volunteers create and offer to society at large. In fact, “The value of volunteer time in the United States in 2000 was

74 Wilson and Musick, “Attachment to Volunteering,” 250.
77 Musick and Wilson, Volunteers: A Social Profile, 15.
approximately $239 billion—equivalent to 9 million full-time employees.”78 Highlighting volunteers’ productive value reduces the overemphasis on volunteerism as morally grounded and purely altruistic.79 However, Donna Baines (2004) explains that Canadian social service organizations “have expanded their reliance on the altruism of social service workers through explicit expectations that workers perform unpaid, volunteer work within their own or other social service organizations to fill the ‘caring gap’ created by standardized and thinly staff paid caring service work.”80 Instead of dismantling structural pay inequality in care sectors, portraying volunteers as altruistic and relying upon their unpaid labor propagate financial obstacles facing social service agencies. Volunteers are also positioned to destabilize hostile world theories. In fact, Glenn (2000) argues that, “A society that values care and caring relationships would not only be nicer and kinder, but also more egalitarian and just.”81

Volunteers offer economic and emotional value. They straddle the sacred and the profane. Their “third space” is not isolated and disconnected from other sectors, but rather a blending milieu.

Scholars also warn against imprudent conflation of volunteerism with underpaid care labor. First, volunteerism primarily occurs in the public sector, while care work mostly occurs in the private sector, such as at-home elder care. Second, Musick and Wilson (2008) explain that the substantial difference resides in motivation: “[Volunteerism] is not simply ‘unpaid labor,’ but unpaid labor that is appropriately motivated […] Thus, although there is agreement that people can benefit from their volunteer work, they must not volunteer for the purpose of gaining those benefits.”82 Third, women of color and immigrants disproportionately represent the paid and underpaid care labor sector (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; Folbre 2006). A lack of consensus regarding volunteer demographics pervades scholarly literature. Consequently, overemphasizing the similarities between the paid workforce and unpaid volunteer work dangerously risks erasing the narratives of working women in the care sector as well as misapplying “altruism” to the paid/underpaid workforce and therefore, further devaluing paid care labor.

I present volunteerism in conversation with care labor because care labor literature

78 Francesca Borgonovi, “Divided We Stand, United We Fall: Religious Pluralism, Giving, and Volunteering,” American Sociological Review 73, no. 1 (February 2008): 105.
82 Musick and Wilson, Volunteers: A Social Profile, 16.
provides frameworks to analyze appropriate gratitude when facing financial constraints and external expectations that material benefits should not affirm emotions and care, if recognized at all. Viewing volunteerism as care labor poses questions in regards to proper gratitude when paychecks do not qualify. Scholars suggest that volunteer satisfaction manifests itself through volunteers feeling empowered, valued, integrated into a group, and semi-autonomous (Gagne 2003; Garner and Garner 2011; Huynh 2012). Garner and Garner argue that constructing pathways for collaboration and feedback between volunteers and staff members enhances volunteer sentiments of satisfaction. Musick and Wilson (1999) and Putnam (2000) both present social capital and social connections as positively related to continued civic engagement and feelings of well-being. Gratitude does not have to ground itself in material objects or money. Gratitude stems from social relationships and acknowledgement of work. Moreover, Zelizer (2005) explains that quality of gratitude matters more than quantity. For instance, what is the difference between a cash payment and a check? The latter form is more legitimized and formalized, which acknowledges and elevates the value of the performed work. Organizations must think about quality gratitude for volunteers. Even though volunteers work for free, if organizations do not actively recognize and celebrate volunteer work, they silence volunteers and further perpetuate silence around care labor. Love cannot be bought, but it can be valued.

Gratitude combats volunteer and staff attrition (Musick and Wilson 1999) and wards against burnout for both volunteers and paid employees. Activists who, previously motivated, now feel defeated and therefore, retreat from the activist sphere characterize activist burnout. Gorski (2015) explains that activist burnout “affects not only the well-being of individual activists, but also the sustainability of social justice movements.” Facilitating dialogue around emotional toil eases activist-related stress, as well as promotes social relationships. Neglecting the emotional weight of volunteerism or social work and shrouding care labor with myths of altruism and “human nature” perpetuate guilt of “not doing enough” and trap volunteers and social workers in a linear path towards burnout. Establishing effective gratitude practices within social service sectors can derail emotional exhaustion.

The title of this thesis “nurturing volunteers” concisely captures the twofold

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understanding of unpaid care labor. First, organizations must recognize and validate volunteers’ production of compassion and care. Second, organizations must support and “nurture” volunteers through ongoing training, collaborative conversations, and sharing spaces. Volunteers offer empathy and compassion in spaces and in ways that staff cannot due to structural limitations. As Wuthnow thoughtfully says, “Part of the sociological case for compassion, therefore, is built into the fact that we already understand through our metaphoric depictions of it, that compassion is a value that speaks not to us as individuals, but to our sense of living together in society.”

Care labor is more than privatized, feminized, devalued production; it is the linchpin holding our society together and deserves more nuanced scholarly research and political action.

**RECONSIDERING THE THIRD SPACE: TORQUE MODEL**

McNamee and Peterson (2014) reoriented scholarly discourse regarding volunteer coordination by emphasizing the “third space,” the nebulous action space within which “volunteer membership is enacted” and where organizational roles are discussed. They encourage scholars to reexamine the third space’s potential to envelop and bridge a volunteer’s multiple organizational and external roles with institutional structures. To blend McNamee and Peterson and Harvey (2009) these “third spaces” capture volunteers’ flexibility and create transformative social processes. However, I will present the “third space” as more solid and mechanical by utilizing the physics concept of torque and thereby, exposing the concrete and purposeful relations between staff, volunteers, clientele, and “society at large.” The torque metaphor visualizes Wuthnow’s bounded roles—contained positions separate from other spheres—and how they relate to other roles. Moreover, the torque model elevates volunteers from the relegated third space position, puts them in relation to paid staff, and reveals how multiple social groups work together to move and create meaningful and effective change. It activates a previously passive space.

The physics concept of “torque” measures the needed force to rotate around a point or “fulcrum.” The turning force, or torque, is the product of the “lever arm” (the distance between the fulcrum and the point at which force is being applied) multiplied by the force applied. These two variables inversely affect one another: when applied force increases, the lever arm decreases.

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85 Wuthnow, Acts of Compassion, 304.
86 McNamee and Peterson, “Reconciling Third Space/Place,” 219.
and vice versa. This oversimplification of torque assists in understanding the transformative role that volunteers can offer an organization and larger discourse around a specific interest.

![Figure 1](image)

**Figure 1**

The above figure illustrates three tiers based on paid staff and volunteers’ varying connections to a central, shared focus point or “node.” Using the thesis’ case study of a refugee-serving social service agency, the central node of interest is refugee resettlement and its related discourse. Staff must apply more force to “rotate” or to create meaningful impacts due to their close proximity to the central node. “Applied force” materializes itself in running orientations, setting up homes, opening bank accounts, assisting clients with public benefits, going to medical appointments, and serving as a critical contact during the first three months of a refugee client’s time in the United States (all of which I will further explain throughout this thesis).

In contrast, due to their distance from the central node, volunteers need not apply as much force to move around the issue of refugee resettlement, thus why a singular afternoon spent volunteering often feels meaningful on a personal level and can address timely and important organizational needs on a larger scale. The amount of information volunteers receive reflects and influences how much force they have and whether or not they can enact meaningful change. Nonetheless, since volunteers have a larger axis of rotation, it takes them longer than staff to fully rotate around the central node. Volunteer impacts may not be immediately seen.

Volunteers’ simultaneous connection to the issue and distance from it allow volunteers to turn outwards more easily, to connect with their social networks, to share stories, and ultimately, to acquire more force so that collectively, a range of community members can metaphorically move closer to the issues surrounding refugee resettlement in Philadelphia. The distance
volunteers have from the daily grind permits them to engage in transformative conversations that can reshape negative rhetoric and enact broader social change around refugee resettlement. The torque model both cements individual roles, while also depicting movement and its mechanisms. Like the aforementioned scholars, volunteers are active agents. The torque model does not illustrate the multiple other “lever arms” emerging from each volunteer or staff member, partially due to the innumerable amount that a group of individuals could generate.

Depictions of volunteers as supplements and complements acknowledge the uniqueness that volunteers offer to a specific organization. McNamee and Peterson recognize the fluidity of volunteers, flowing in and out of institutional and informal roles. The torque model combines both perspectives, by focusing on the individual force and resources volunteers offer to organizational aims, while also emphasizing their externalized capacity to produce movement. It illustrates volunteers’ interdependent, semi-autonomous relationship with institutions. It is a useful image to retain throughout the thesis while examining volunteer impacts on a micro, meso, and macro level.

**DISCUSSION**

This literature review consolidates central arguments regarding volunteer coordination, trust and membership, and gratitude in underpaid care sectors. Despite the seemingly disparate foundations, the three areas convey a similar theme: Effective volunteer coordination, group membership, and care work require recognition of emotions and interdependent relationships. Contrary to Weber’s ideal type of bureaucracy, which maximizes individualized specialization of roles, these three frameworks highlight the necessity of collaboration to achieve a common goal. Moreover, the three theories embrace identity pluralism and the strengths that pluralism offers to organizational aims. Pluralism contradicts theories that depict volunteers as substitutes and instead, demonstrates how volunteers supplement and complement staff roles.

However, many scholars do not finesse how the “third space” actually manifests itself and what the nebulous space contains. Consequently, I offer the torque model to concretely illustrate volunteers’ simultaneous connection with an organization or specific topic and their links with “society at large.” The torque model bolsters the conviction that volunteers are active agents that reshape institutions and external social networks, all while heightening the quality of an organization’s care work. Glenn states that, “Care is seen as creating a relationship between
those who give and receive care […] The relationship is one of interdependence." While her remarks refer to staff-client or volunteer-client relations, I argue that we must extend this perspective to staff-volunteer relations also. For Glenn, collaborative relationships can radicalize systematic inequality because the parties cooperate, support, and understand one another.

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87 Glenn, "Creating a Caring Society," 87.
CHAPTER 3
Data and Methods

Despite having grown up in the Greater Philadelphia area, I knew nothing about refugee resettlement in Philadelphia before starting my 2016 summer internship with HIAS Pennsylvania (HIAS PA). Studying abroad in France during the 2015 fall academic semester and watching the media overflow with accounts of the “European refugee crisis” pushed me to reflect on how my home city handles the increasing number of globally displaced persons. I was startled by my need for knowledge, a sentiment shared by multiple study participants. Upon returning from France, I searched for volunteer and internship opportunities that would permit me to simultaneously engage with refugee resettlement and conduct senior thesis research. After a cursory Internet search of resettlement agencies in Philadelphia, I selected HIAS PA for a summer internship because I was attracted to its general programming and particularly its garden initiative program, which I later discovered was defunct.

When my summer internship began, I intended on researching how HIAS PA staff teaches refugee clients about public transportation routes and if public transportation can become a space for transformative community building. By mid-summer, research fell by the wayside due to the constant physical, mental, and emotional demands of my position as a case aide. It was through my personal exhaustion and seeing my drained coworkers that I began to question social work’s sustainability in a sector with increasing demands, decreasing funds, and limited resources. While public transportation remains fascinating and a critical yet often neglected issue of sociological inquiry, the educational curriculum of public transportation was not a pressing concern for the agency. What to do about an overworked staff was an issue.

Three research proposals later and after conversations with staff about organizational needs deserving of research, I decided to conduct an analysis of HIAS PA’s volunteer network to pose questions about alternative sources of case management beyond the traditional client-to-social worker relationship. I officially began collecting data in September 2016 and finished in December 2016. I chose a qualitative ethnographic approach to offer a holistic picture of the agency’s culture surrounding volunteer work. My research relied upon in-depth interviews and participant observation served as an enriching complement with which to situate the interviews.
CASE STUDY SELECTION AND GENERALIZABILITY

As previously explained, I selected HIAS PA for a summer internship and as an object of research study due to available opportunities, ease of access, and personal interest. I interned and volunteered exclusively with HIAS PA’s Refugee Team. Even though HIAS PA’s Legal Team also offers volunteer positions, I focused solely on the Refugee Team’s volunteers because I knew the team’s work on a deeper level thanks to my 10-week summer internship. Therefore, a comparison with the Legal Team would have been unduly imbalanced. Similarly, I flirted with the idea of examining Nationalities Service Center’s (NSC) volunteer networks and comparing how approaches to volunteer work varied between the resettlement agencies. Yet again, since I had an intensive and long-term affiliation with HIAS PA, the comparison would not have been just and would have expressed unintentional bias towards HIAS PA. Consequently, this thesis faces obstacles of external generalizability—whether or not my conclusions apply to other organizations in different settings. HIAS PA faces situations unique to itself and to its history.

Moreover, HIAS PA is located in Philadelphia, which shapes experiences of resettlement differently than other cities and regions. Here is a small, illustrative anecdote:

In July 2016, I drove to Northeast Philadelphia with a case manager, a fellow intern, and two newly arrived clients. When clients arrive at the office for the first time, they take winter coats from an overfilled closet of gently used and donated jackets, even if it is the middle of the summer. As I sweated in the back with my winter-clad seat partners helping them configure their new cell phone, the case manager spoke to the clients about their volition to “out-migrate” to live with relatives in a rural southern town. In simple terms, the case manager described some of the differences between Philadelphia and the rural town. “Schools in Philadelphia? Not so good. Transportation in Philadelphia? Pretty good. Housing in the rural town? Cheaper than in Philadelphia.” The comparisons continued, but the example illuminates how each city will pose its own restrictions and opportunities. Due to time and financial constraints, I could not conduct a comparative research project. However, certain characteristics and trends regarding volunteer work and social work should be applicable to other organizational settings. As stated in Chapter 2, sustainable trust and membership relations require similar features regardless of geography.
PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Over the span of four months (September 2016 to December 2016), I volunteered weekly with HIAS PA’s Refugee Team, assisting with tasks that I learned during the summer, such as appointment accompaniment, filing documents, conducting financial orientations, and placing phone calls. My volunteership with HIAS PA allowed me to observe staff-volunteer interactions, along with staying up to date on agency-wide transitions. Beyond daily observations, I attended a few agency-led events, specifically the September Volunteer Orientation required for all prospective volunteers, the Annual Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast in September, the Annual HIAS PA Meeting in October, Refugee Thanksgiving in November, and a handful of team and all staff meetings throughout the fall. These public events allowed me to examine how HIAS PA externally represented their work, mission, and how staff engaged with volunteers in large gatherings. I spent approximately 90 hours in the field between September and December 2016.

The staff and in-office volunteers were made aware of my research and its involved participant observation through all-staff emails at the beginning of my internship and through in-person conversations once I started formal research in September 2016. Despite the leadership changes, I did not receive any pushback from staff. In fact, I often received unsolicited gratitude for examining a neglected aspect of the team’s work. Throughout the day, I would take jottings that would be elaborated into field notes at the day’s end, culminating in 90 pages of field notes.

While my volunteership helped me to better understand in-office volunteer positions and how staff perceives and talks about volunteers, I did not observe any volunteers in the field with clients. This decision was partially intentional because I was more interested in structural obstacles to a volunteer’s experience and sense of belonging with HIAS PA rather than volunteer-client dynamics. This decision also helped me navigate ethical dilemmas of observing volunteer-client interactions. I was concerned about communication barriers and more importantly, power dynamics created by my status as a young, college researcher that might have negatively affected clients with feelings of obligation, manipulation, and general unease.
IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

The crux of my research relied upon 14 in-depth interviews, eight with volunteers and six with staff members.\textsuperscript{88} I aimed to reach about 30 individuals, a lofty goal for a short time window. The Refugee Team only had nine full time staff members and they were easy to identify and contact, although I was unable to interview the other three staff members due to time constraints. I contacted staff either in person or through email.

In contrast, HIAS PA lacked a systematic database to organize volunteers when I started my research, which rendered recruitment difficult to ensure fair representation of the volunteer network. I contacted some volunteers by speaking with them at the Volunteer Orientation and the Appreciation Breakfast. I emailed volunteers that I had met through my internship. I spoke with the agency’s Development Director to brainstorm ways in which I could recruit volunteers. She sent an opt-out email to “active” volunteers, but I only heard back from two.

The sample was not randomized and I questioned whether or not it was a representative sample of volunteers at HIAS PA. As stated in Chapter 2, while sociodemographic factors impact volunteerism, these factors alone do not determine volunteerism and fixating solely on diversifying them would not have necessarily resulted in a representative sample of volunteers at HIAS PA. Other factors, such as retention, sense of membership, and personal commitment, influence HIAS PA’s volunteer population composition. Accordingly, I ended up interviewing volunteers who had a current commitment to the agency and therefore, could speak to the volunteer experience. They were not necessarily “long-timers,” although some were. In fact, most of the volunteers had been involved with HIAS PA for under a year, which suggests that a volunteership’s length does not necessarily correspond with its depth and how connected the volunteer feels to HIAS PA, a phenomenon I will examine throughout the thesis.

I gathered basic demographic details on each participant to examine trends based on age, racial identity, gender identity, employment status, educational attainment, and religious affiliation (Table 1 and Table 2), recognizing that personal factors often shape motives and forms of civic engagement. I was particularly interested in examining if or how religious affiliation affected staff and volunteer experiences with HIAS PA, a historically Jewish organization. While some Jewish volunteers acknowledged that they heard about HIAS PA through their synagogues, Judaism did not directly affect how they offered services.

\textsuperscript{88} I did not interview interns because of their distinct group identity and due to time and financial limitations.
Each interview lasted between 30 minutes and 90 minutes (the outliers being a little over 20 minutes and a little over two hours), culminating in about 17 hours of interview time and 219 single-spaced transcribed pages. Most of the interviews were held in coffee shops and cafes throughout the Greater Philadelphia Area, with the exception of one interview held in a volunteer’s home and one staff interview conducted in the office. All interviews were held after work hours or on the weekend to avoid conflict with work demands. I did not compensate participants with money, but I hoped that the chance to speak and reflect would be rewarding.

With the participant’s consent, I audio recorded the interview and later transcribed it. While I offered each participant the chance to read their transcriptions and remove any information they found personally damaging, only one staff member accepted this offer and did

\footnote{All staff and volunteer names have been changed to pseudonyms in order to protect participant identity.}
not remove any content. I started each interview, whether with staff or volunteer, asking the participants to describe how they first engaged with HIAS PA and why they chose refugee work in particular. As the interview progressed, we talked about obstacles to and frustrations about volunteerism. Towards the end of each interview, we discussed acquired knowledge and skill sets and what aspects of Philadelphia have been exposed through work with HIAS PA.

I concluded each interview by asking the participant what they specifically would like to share about their work with HIAS PA. I found this question particularly eye-opening because, when answered, it was normally the most passionate moment of the interview. It was when participants shared ideas that they have been workshopping, but may have not had a chance or space to articulate. It was when I heard the deepest regrets and also an abundance of love and support for HIAS PA. Although I had an interview guide (Appendix 1 and Appendix 2) and would touch on each question, the individuality of each participant and consequently the interview, meant that the interviews’ contents cannot be directly compared, since some participants put more emphasis on certain issues than others. Nonetheless, certain themes and trends appeared consistently across interviews. The richness of each interview offers valuable data and an insight into those who engage with refugee resettlement.

DATA ANALYSIS

I open coded each transcription manually without using software. I read through the complete transcriptions countless times, recording emergent themes in the margins and underlining buzzwords that captured central ideas. After having marked each transcription, I compared my themes across transcriptions and focused on specific trends represented uniformly. Through this version of open and focused coding, I controlled the categorization and labeling processes. Manually open coding allowed me to deepen my familiarization with the data. I could identify tonal shifts and humor, changes that some coding software would ignore without my prompting. Overall, my thesis examines perceptions and emotions, concepts that do not always translate literally but that open coding can capture. Open coding kept the transcripts in conversation with one another and allowed me to preserve each interview’s original integrity.

In addition to written transcriptions, I kept extensive field notes, as previously stated. While I did not code or analyze the field notes due to time constraints and my efforts to streamline themes into a coherent narrative, the fieldwork and participant observation experience
firmly grounded and situated the in-depth interviews. Being present in the office undoubtedly enriched my data collection and research process, as well as built invaluable research-participant trust. Participant observation offered fundamental insight into group dynamics and the field notes contain a wealth of data for further analysis.

RESEARCH OBSTACLES AND ETHICAL DILEMMAS

Through my 10-week internship with HIAS PA prior to data collection, I learned the nuances of refugee resettlement, but I also developed close and trusting relationships with the staff. I was treated as a friend and reliable coworker. While this intimacy encouraged openness during our interviews, I remained aware of unconscious bias favoring staff opinions. On the flip end, my experience as a volunteer and intern also helped nurture a trusting and empathetic relationship with volunteers because I understood certain acronyms, expressions, and the overall work at HIAS PA, thereby alleviating potential frustration in having to over-simplify concepts and allowing volunteers to speak candidly. Despite these qualms, my goal as a researcher is to fairly represent volunteer and staff opinions, perspectives that I often found overlapping, despite both groups feeling that they could not fully relate to one another.

I finished collecting data on December 17, 2016. A few days later, HIAS PA offered me a position as their Community Engagement Specialist—a new position devoted to bolstering and expanding volunteer networks, donation systems, and community partnerships. I worried that my employed status would induce feelings of betrayal from volunteers. Contrary to my fears, when I told volunteers about my employed status, I received hugs, congratulations, and excitement. As an undergraduate college researcher, I decided that accepting a job with an agency devoted to a mission about which I am passionate is tantamount to producing a detailed sociology paper. Despite accepting the position, I remain reflective, especially since, as the paper will explain, I have critiques of the new position, grounded in staff and volunteer interviews and my own personal observations and reflections. While I cannot claim complete objectivity, many sociologists would agree that a goal of objectivity shrouds the emotions and motives that drive research to be meaningful and contemporary. Subjectivity can strengthen research, as long as it does not silence social life or statistical veracity.

My initial research proposal involved interviewing refugee clients themselves. Due to doubts and apprehensions about language accessibility and coercion, I changed my target
populations. Since clients are the recipients of volunteer and staff services and are often silenced in academic literature, the lack of client voices remains the largest disappointment of my methodology. Nonetheless, I found that each interview often included a handful of client stories, filled with laughter, frustration, and compassion. Of course, there is a critical difference between secondary narration and first-person storytelling. If someone were to continue this research topic, I hope that they could access the needed resources to highlight client voices and perspectives.

Before and during my formal research period, HIAS PA underwent major transitions with the departure of the lead case manager in July, the departure of the Refugee Team’s Program Director in October, and the retirement of the long time executive director. Three staff members changed positions, but remained within the Refugee Team. The transitions within the agency coupled with a record-breaking number of arrivals in September 2016 and the 2016 Presidential Election results have left seismic shifts for how the Refugee Team approaches its work and, most specifically for this research, its volunteer networks.

Throughout my research, I kept returning to the quote by Heraclitus, the Greek philosopher: “Change is the only constant.” I was tempted multiple times to restart my research seeing the multitude of changes that have occurred since September 2016. Volunteer reflections may appear anachronistic by this project’s completion due to external and internal structural changes, but the research will still present lasting and timely questions about the sustainability of social work, the role volunteers have within social service agencies, and how individual experiences with volunteer work can reorient public discourse and opinion around refugee resettlement and the global refugee crisis.

TERMINOLOGY

Throughout this thesis, I interchangeably use the term “refugee client,” “client,” “refugee individual,” and “refugee family.” I use the single word “refugee” only when overviewsing the history and background on forced displacement and refugee resettlement in Philadelphia. I hesitated to apply “refugee” more broadly in efforts to avoid “groupism,” defined as “the tendency to reify such groups as if they were internally homogenous, externally bounded groups, unitary collective actors with common purposes” (Brubaker 2004).90 The label “refugee” is a political status placed upon individuals that washes over varied lived experiences and in-group

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dynamics. Some clients with whom I worked rejected the term refugee. Others embraced it as a signifier that they tirelessly persisted through and resisted against structural barriers that denied them refugee status and resettlement rights for years. For many, being a “refugee” was not a master status. Each refugee client embodies more than an immigration standing.

The term “client” also poses issues for it often connotes inferiority, passivity, and dependency (Tropp 1974). Yet, in this thesis, I activate the term “client” and insist that staff, volunteers, and clients each knowingly and uniquely contribute to the resettlement process. Throughout the thesis however and hypocritically, I often defer to the singular word “client” to streamline the text. Nevertheless, by viewing “refugee” as an adjective and combining it with various nouns, I encourage readers to rethink the impacts of labeling and categorization and to not overlook the diversity of individual identities.

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CHAPTER 4
WELCOME TO HIAS PENNSYLVANIA

I sat in the drab conference room with the two other summer interns and case manager Amin for “Case Management 101” on the first day of my internship with HIAS PA. A poster hung on the wall with cartoon images of a fire and a baby with the word “safety” running across the top. A few toys sat disheveled in the corner. “It is a privilege working with refugees. I love this job,” Amin exclaimed. Months later, during our interviews, staff and volunteers expressed a similar affinity to their work. Aurora explained that after having supported refugee communities in New York State, she craved to continue this work in Philadelphia. “I don’t know. I think it just sort of became like my path. Like the thing that I wanted to do is what was giving me a lot of energy.” Jasmine, a volunteer with the Adult ESL program, “feels a little more whole” since starting her volunteership and said that, “HIAS sucked [her] in from Day One.” Each participant arrived at HIAS PA for individual reasons. However, to use Jasmine’s words, they all “stuck.”

This chapter examines how HIAS PA benefits from volunteer labor, how HIAS PA defines good volunteerism, and why individuals connect with HIAS PA. It closes by introducing HIAS PA’s “contagion factor.” What attracts individuals to the agency, but more importantly, why do they stay and how does staff encourage volunteer retention? This chapter introduces topics central to this thesis and frames their importance within HIAS PA’s infrastructure. It helpfully grounds analysis found in later chapters and should be used as a general guide throughout the thesis to navigate organization-specific language and norms.

WHY DOES HIAS PA NEED VOLUNTEERS?

Mohammad (Volunteer): I don’t think it just stops at volunteers. It’s also staff. They need to hire more staff. But, I also cannot blame them because it’s a nonprofit. They receive money from government donation. So they have to adjust.

Mohammad’s comment prompted me to wonder what volunteers uniquely offered to HIAS PA and why volunteerism emerged as a viable addition to the agency. Mohammad’s notion of “adjustment” inserts a larger trend seen in volunteer work. If work demands remain constant or increase, how can HIAS PA adjust their approaches to service delivery and continue to offer

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92 Participant experts refer to HIAS PA as “HIAS” for ease, but it should not confused with HIAS National.
Volunteers Increase Service Quality

Staff and volunteers jointly considered the magnitude of need in refugee communities compounded with limited available resources and HIAS PA’s small staff size central as to why HIAS PA needed volunteers. Many participants laughed or joked about the perennial nonprofit obstacle of limited financial resources and capacities. Volunteers supplement limited resources and staff’s capacity to offer quality care.

Helen (Volunteer): There’s so much to do. There’s so much to do.

Ebe (Staff): Actually we do rely on them a lot. Like even Cecilia, I don’t think she could run that afterschool program without help of those volunteers.

Jasmine (Volunteer): ‘Cause they need them. They’re financially, I mean, they can’t sustain all these people [...] The United States isn’t really, doesn’t seem to be at least, taking a nice strong hold and helping people out and being a support system that they need even though they’re allowing refugees to come, it doesn’t seem like it’s a burden they’re willing to carry. So, HIAS has kind of taken that on without a support system that they need as well.

Irene (Volunteer): They’re underfunded and overworked, just like all non-profits. [...] I think they don’t have enough staff. I don’t think that’s their first priority. But they don’t have enough staff to do everything that needs to be done.

Later in our conversation, Irene suggested that the “top priority” of HIAS PA staff was serving the clients, not increasing staff payroll. Her remarks capture staff perspectives. Despite restricted capacities, meeting client demands is staff’s paramount objective. For volunteer Jasmine, HIAS PA will continue to address systematic gaps even when their own resources and capacities falter.

Nonprofit social services do not function on a supply-demand paradigm: increased demand does not correspond with an increased supply of resources (Folbre 2006). Quality often is the first component of social service work to suffer when demand rises. Volunteer labor emerges as a pathway to qualitatively enrich the 90-Day Reception and Placement (R&P) period
by quantitatively increasing opportunities for valuable one-on-one, attentive, and interpersonal care. Therefore, volunteers complement and augment work already performed by staff.

In addition to offering care and attention, volunteers increase service quality by utilizing their unique skillsets and knowledge. HIAS PA volunteers do not typically work in refugee resettlement social service sectors professionally. Therefore, the individualized educational and experiential backgrounds of each volunteer contribute to the presentation of volunteers as active agents capable of affecting institutional change (McDonald and Warburton 2003). For instance, Irene entered the afterschool program with years of teaching experience. Mohammad is fluent in Arabic. Jasmine is certified in Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Anita is a self-defined social “connector” and maximizes her Jewish networks. She also has unparalleled organization skills. Dennis has doctors in West Philadelphia, so was able to navigate the public transportation system with ease and confidence. Volunteers still require program-specific training and mentorship ties, but it is important to recognize that volunteers do not come as blank slates and their repository of experience and related feedback can catalyze innovation and change, as well as ignite frustration and friction when volunteer missions, goals, and perspectives do not match those of HIAS PA. I will discuss frustrations in the next chapter. For this section, I want to underscore the reservoir of quality care and knowledge that volunteers contribute to HIAS PA thereby positively reinforcing a deflated and under-resourced sector.

**Increased Volunteer Labor Offloads Staff Demands**

This next series of quotes present how volunteers assume tasks that otherwise seem burdensome and time-consuming to staff. In addition to increasing quality care, volunteers effectively offload work from staff. They are “taking away” in addition to “filling in.”

Mohammad (Volunteer): I don’t think they can function without volunteers. The resettlement office, the department, they have five? I’m talking about the staff. Seven? Seven or eight, so. And it’s hard because sometimes you will work night shift to do airport pickup […] let’s say you are working in the office for school enrollment, appointment, health appointments, but all this work cannot be done by seven. I think it’s impossible. I think if there is no volunteer, the refugees, have lots of things that should be done in one day, two days, it will take a week.

Amin (Staff): If instead of me going to Northeast or to escort a client which would take one hour to go there and one hour to come back, just to go and sign the clients in and just wait with them. […] We’re wasting time. So volunteers will make it more productive, like you know? […] This will make you focus on other
things like either going with a newly arrived refugee or working on your case notes or physical file paperwork. [...] They are saving us a lot of time.

Aurora (Staff): I know the most overwhelming thing for me is being in the field. I like, really love it, sometimes, but it’s so time consuming when I’m going 40 minutes to pick up a client and then taking them back here and then going here and sitting and waiting forever and doing these tasks. Yeah it can be like overwhelming ‘cause that ends up being my whole day and I just, you know, don’t have enough time to like do the other things that are required of me in my job and like to think bigger always and write my case notes [chuckle]

Whereas Aurora and Amin saw volunteer accompaniment as “time saving,” Mohammad added that volunteers who accompany clients to appointments accelerate the case management process, which is crucial when a client may only partner with HIAS PA for 90 days. Aurora would prefer working directly with the clients in the field, but these roles require time and often include sitting passively, versus actively filing bureaucratic forms and addressing both time-sensitive and long-term projects. Paradoxically, while both Aurora and Amin perceive lengthy appointments as time-consuming nuisances and distractions from other important work, these same appointments are presented in orientations and through staff-volunteer interactions as valuable and worthwhile moments for conversation, reciprocal education, and community building. At first glance, the above excerpts seem analogous to volunteer coordination models that present volunteers as substitutes to staff. In contrast, a larger pool of volunteers able to assume specific tasks and enhance their quality of execution validates volunteers’ ability to complement and supplement HIAS PA staff, not serve as substitutes to their roles.

Volunteers Blending Quantity and Quality

Overall, volunteerism fortifies social service resources by increasing the “workforce,” a question of quantity. Volunteerism at HIAS PA also nuances the quality of the offered services by allowing for more interpersonal attention. Cecilia’s comment poignantly addresses this topic:

I think one thing is that we can never do enough. We can never do enough for our clients. And, the things that our clients need come from human resources. So, I think, in order to just provide high quality services to our clients at that very level, volunteers are needed. I mean it’s a perfect example with the afterschool program. Last spring there was one day where it was just me and Irene with like 20 children. You can’t. I mean, these are kids who [tapping table for emphasis], the reason they’re in the program is not because they can do their homework alone it’s because they need help to do their homework. So, you can’t provide that
support effectively and manage people when you have kids asking you here and there for help. [...] So, one thing is, could we actually provide some of these services, a lot of these services without volunteers? Yeah. But the quality would be really low. And in my view, that’s more frustrating than dealing with like the work of having volunteers [chuckle]. (Italicized for emphasis)

This excerpt reiterates Mohammad and Jasmine’s comments in the previous sections: HIAS PA can and will continue to offer services, but increased volunteer labor elevates the program’s quality. Cecilia compares HIAS PA to an education program in South Philadelphia to illustrate how volunteers improve quality. The South Philadelphia program enrolls dozens of students but only has one or two teachers. She sighed, “So you know what, you can do it, but it is not high quality.” While “quantity” and “quality” often oppose one another, the above excerpt argues that at HIAS PA, they reinforce one another: Through increased volunteer labor, HIAS PA can achieve more tasks within a smaller time window and at a higher caliber, a sentiment that resonates with care labor literature. Nevertheless, Cecilia finished her remarks by restating the challenges of volunteer management.

Lana, the longest serving staff member on the Refugee Team, also concretely illustrated the benefits of volunteer labor expansion by linking quality and quantity. She explained that the volunteer program at HIAS PA gained momentum when HIAS PA began resettling Burmese refugees in 2008. Previously, HIAS PA partnered with Jewish Family Services, who offered case management and social service support while HIAS PA managed resettlement formalities. She said, “Basically, it was Jewish refugees from the former USSR and we have couple [of] volunteers, but [refugee clients] didn’t need much because all of them had a family. But, when we started to receive like Burmese, these families created need, like needs.” Volunteer work became a viable option when HIAS PA enlarged its clientele beyond its traditional population and received more clients annually. Instead of the classic supply-demand model, the augmented and altered client demand did not correspond with an increased supply of resources, but a need to change the supply pool. HIAS PA needed committed, resourceful, and compassionate volunteers who could assume tasks traditionally given to staff members and saturate them with care.

Volunteers as Connectors to Other Resources and Communities

The torque model depicts a volunteer’s link with the agency as well as the volunteer’s ties with external social networks and their related resources. This section examines the
knowledge and experiences that volunteers bring to their social networks, thereby extending volunteer work beyond the confines of the office and generating attention about HIAS PA.

Helen (Volunteer): In addition to the crushing poverty that we have in Philly, we also have incredible resources and to be able to link up people and communities with resources, with these people coming here with the story of so many of our families, of my ancestors coming here as immigrants and having very little and working and finding the support they needed. It’s one of the things that’s amazing about our country. So, for me, it part of our collective story to help people when they come here. [...] And I think it makes communities stronger. I think it makes people feel good and they [HIAS PA] have so many different needs and so little resources for these families. (Italicized for emphasis)

Cecilia (Staff): Just in terms of mobilizing the community, I think our volunteers are definitely our voices in our community um and like I said a lot of them are the ones that end up bringing other volunteers to HIAS and are just getting people to care um, sharing their experiences with other people. So I think for that reason it’s important for us to have them with us. (Italicized for emphasis)

Irene (Volunteer): I think that they want to involve the community. That they believe in community and outreach. The more people you get involved, the more different types of people you get involved, the bigger the community, the better it’s gonna all work. And I think there’s a lot of people in the world that, there’s so many boomers right now who are retired that are just gonna be amazing volunteers. You know? Lots of different backgrounds in their work and they’re looking for meaningful things to do. (Italicized for emphasis)

Mary (Staff): We don’t have enough staff to help the number of people that we’re helping and because we need the world to know about us and not just like our little, our people. And, I don’t know, I feel like it’s [pause] like if you, it’s easier to brag about something if you’ve volunteered rather than if you’ve worked there. Like, people will listen to you more or something? (Italicized for emphasis)

Each of these participants invoked ideas of “community,” “mobilization,” and “awareness.” As Helen’s comments reflect, community engagement extends beyond the agency’s bureaucratic tasks; it addresses personal and collective needs. She started volunteering to engage with the global refugee crisis, refugee resettlement in Philadelphia, and to connect her own heritage and story with the needs of today.

As Mary, Cecilia, and Irene argued, volunteers straddle a unique nexus between HIAS PA’s inner workings and the “outside” world. Volunteerism within HIAS PA establishes an osmosis effect between the “outside” and the “inside.” Resources flow in and knowledge flows out. Volunteers return home and bridge their social circles with their volunteer work. Their
stories and experiences of volunteering have the potential to mobilize their community. For Cecilia, volunteers recruit volunteers. Irene validates this claim because her friend, a board member and volunteer with HIAS PA, recruited Irene to start volunteering.

During my internship, Morgan, the then Director of Refugee Programming and Planning often said that HIAS PA aspired to “change hearts and minds.” Cecilia’s comment echoed this thought: “[Volunteers are] just getting people to care.” Drawing upon narratives of volunteers as altruistic and well-intentioned, Mary added that volunteers have a larger bragging right because they allocate their time to volunteer work, rather than receiving a paycheck (she later contradicts herself by saying that staff has a larger “stake” in the work). While this external facing work does not immediately affect case management, in both the short-term and long-term, volunteer work has the potential to positively radicalize case management and the broader community and political attitudes towards refugee resettlement. Irene articulated this sentiment: “The more people you get involved, the more different types of people you get involved, the bigger the community, the better it’s gonna all work.” If volunteers can translate their experiences to the “outside,” they can help transform community dialogue around immigration and thereby garner more “force” to make Philadelphia more welcoming and supportive, which ultimately, would make HIAS PA’s case management work more streamlined and efficient. I will further examine volunteers’ roles as agents of social change in Chapter 7.

WHAT MAKES A “GOOD VOLUNTEER?”

HIAS PA attracts volunteers without much active recruitment. This section overviews traits and characteristics that a “good volunteer” embodies, as defined by staff. These conceptions shape staff and volunteer perceptions and expectations, which therefore, affect how people treat and value volunteers. These same perceptions and false expectations often bolster fantasized myths about ideal volunteerism and understate the unique resources that volunteers extend to HIAS PA, such as those stated above.

Trait One: Commitment and Reliability

Staff ranked commitment and reliability as central character traits for volunteers. Both commitment and reliability establish trust relations between staff and volunteers. For instance, if Cecilia can guarantee that her volunteers will arrive on time for the Adult ESL Program, she can
effectively offload work and spend her morning working on other administrative tasks and programming. Mary deemed the most-committed and prepared volunteers as the “miracle workers.” She elevated them to another echelon, even though she later rebutted by saying that she does not have “favorite volunteers.”

Both Ebe and Amin paired commitment with “good intention,” conceptualized as altruistic volunteerism:

Ebe (Staff): Because he’s long-term, he knows what he’s doing. […] And he’s a great guy and he has the heart. […] He’s not like other volunteers which [are] looking for opportunity […] I don’t actually know what his real reasons are, but […] I’m amazed and surprised by those volunteers.

Amin (Staff): Yeah the commitment. The commitment and the good intention are the most important things. […] Of course, speaking other languages.

Ebe’s observations particularly demonstrate how a long-term and committed volunteer positively impacts staff’s perceptions towards a volunteer. The volunteer whom Ebe spoke about moved out of state towards the end of my research period, a disappointment to Ebe who relied upon the volunteer to offer résumé workshops. While Ebe and Amin cherished volunteers who displayed “altruism,” scholarly literature on unpaid and underpaid care labor warns against inserting and overemphasizing moral principles and altruism into discourses on volunteer and care work because it dangerously erases the productive labor that volunteers actively contribute. Other characteristics, such as commitment and reliability deserve equal recognition.

Trait Two: Trained and Capable, but Not Domineering

Volunteers require basic training, even if the tasks seem self-explanatory, such as accompanying a client to a doctor’s appointment. Formal training often only touches the surface due to time constraints. Experiential learning is emphasized. Staff, particularly Cecilia, said that while formal training and past experiences can greatly aid HIAS PA’s ability to quickly absorb a volunteer into its programming, staff prefers volunteers who first and foremost demonstrate the confidence to problem-solve without reaching out to staff. Staff can only mold a volunteer so much to HIAS PA’s work. Amin said that if a volunteer incessantly contacts him or other staff members, the volunteer fails to effectively offload work from staff and counteractively, adds more work. Unfortunately, staff confronts a Catch-22: They recognize the need of training, but do not have the capacity to offer continued support or to answer questions.
Volunteers do not need to arrive to the agency fully formed, but according to staff, they must demonstrate the willingness to learn, to evolve, and to reflect HIAS PA’s norms.

Mohammad: You will engage easily, communicate easily. If you know me in person before I come to HIAS, I am the hardest person to communicate easily. I feel shy. Very shy. So it took me, it took me a while, this is my personality. So it’s hard, I don’t speak a lot. I don’t communicate a lot. But, with HIAS? I learned how to communicate easier, faster, don’t put barrier between you and people. No one is gonna bite you. Just go, communicate, have fun, do your work.

Mohammad highlighted how he has grown and learned through his volunteer position, an incentive that nurtures volunteer retention at HIAS PA. Cecilia spoke about an American Friend volunteer who offered ongoing informal social and English support to a refugee family. He did not have an education background, but Cecilia said that she was impressed by his ability to adapt his teaching styles to the family’s needs. Mary added that, “flexibility and patience [make a good volunteer]. Which it turns out you actually can learn.” For Mary, volunteers are “trained” when they release the need for perfection. Anita explained that over the years, she has learned how to “let go” and to become more flexible. Staff appreciated and needed qualified volunteers, but they also remained suspicious and apprehensive that diverse characters and knowledge sets will clash. Staff can potentially navigate or avoid conflict by ensuring that volunteers map onto agency missions. The next chapter will more thoroughly analyze HIAS PA’s approaches to training.

Trait Three: Understanding HIAS PA’s Mission

While the two previous traits focus more on internal qualities that volunteers must bring to and cultivate within the agency, the third trait demonstrates how staff contributes to the molding of volunteers by articulating expectations, goals, and mission statements. A shared mission between staff and volunteers ensures effective work and contributes to a positive workplace environment (Wilson and Musick 2008). Ava, the Development Director, and Mary explained that volunteer orientations play a role in exciting volunteers, encouraging others to opt-out of the program, and transmitting specific HIAS PA narratives that matter to the agency and how it approaches its work. These goals often had more weight than formal task-focused training. Lana and Aurora offered some insight into the value of shared missions:

Lana (Staff): A good volunteer needs to understand our goal: to teach them to be independent, self-sufficient. “Don’t give up.” If you young person, just teach them that they can study, not just work in a packing company. […] “It’s lot of
pressure. It’s very difficult. And people tired. But you can do this.” [...] You know? “To see the goal, you can, you have a way to reach this goal.” And this is what I need from volunteer. You know, “It’s difficult, let’s do it together. Now, you [slamming desk] do it yourself.” Push them. To push them. To push them.

Aurora (Staff): They didn’t come into this situation feeling like they were going to fix people. They [a new volunteer family] came in being like, “We like were sort of taking a risk by doing this. We don’t know if this is the right thing for us, but we want to try it.” It’s like a whole family actually, which I was really nervous about. But it turned out to be really great because they [...] don’t have the mindset that we’re helping these people, they feel like a really mutually beneficial relationship, just getting to know um people that are so vastly different from them. [...] They’re independent and they really only ask questions when they like feel stuck or they just like don’t understand something and they need a different perspective. And they’re willing to ask for it in a very like open, non-judgmental way. So, it’s great. [chuckle] They’re really great. (Italicized for emphasis)

Both Aurora and Lana’s statements show that HIAS PA relies upon volunteers to not only complete tasks, but complete them according to HIAS PA norms. They emphasize the need of volunteers sharing agency missions and goals, a theme seen in volunteer coordination literature. However, Aurora and Lana overlook staff’s roles in shaping volunteers to HIAS PA’s mission, goals, and protocols. Instead of depicting volunteers as interdependent and semi-autonomous, Aurora and Lana aspire for volunteers to be “self-sufficient” and “independent.”

ATTRACTION TO HIAS PENNSYLVANIA

Staff and volunteer tenures with HIAS PA varied intensely. One staff member, Lana, had worked with HIAS PA for 20 years and one volunteer, Dennis, had volunteered for only eight months. I loosely use the term “only.” Undoubtedly, eight months is a shorter time commitment than 20 years. However, Dennis had acquired deep trust and respect at HIAS PA. Time involved with HIAS PA does not directly correspond to usefulness or esteem within the agency. Instead, a strong sense of membership and trust communicates more than quantitative longevity, a phenomenon that grounds this thesis. So, what initially sparked individuals to connect with HIAS PA? As explained in Chapter 2, most scholarly literature on volunteerism focuses on personal motives and factors that influence entry into volunteer work. In this section, I outline some sociodemographic factors and also highlight other pathways through which staff and volunteers connected with HIAS PA. The interviews revealed harmonious similarities and explanations that crossed the pay divide.
Charismatic Leader

Judith Bernstein-Baker served as HIAS PA Executive Director for 18 years before retiring in October 2016. She advocated fiercely for immigration justice in Philadelphia and is well regarded in Jewish social circles. Education Coordinator, Cecilia described Judi as a dreamer who envisioned expansion and deepened collaboration with unlikely and predictable organizations. Two volunteers directly linked their volunteership to Judi. Helen, an Appointment Accompaniment volunteer explained:

I find Judi really inspiring, [...] Even though in my volunteering I have zero interaction with Judi, I really like being part of organizations that have really inspiring leadership and are so dedicated to being mission drive. The culture of the organization makes such a big difference to me, even though in most of my work that I do volunteering I am mostly with clients and not with the staff.

Judi’s charisma undoubtedly touched HIAS PA, but divergent from Max Weber’s theories of charismatic leaders who are perceived as individuals capable of revolutionary travails and achievements. Weberian charismatic leaders corral emotional and psychological bonds, but their social movements dissipate when the leaders leave or die. In contrast, while Judi’s charisma invited people into HIAS PA’s infrastructure and her warmth assured volunteers of their value, HIAS PA will endure after her retirement. While discussing Judi’s departure, Irene said, “I’m sure that the new director will be wonderful, but [...] I would do anything for Judi. If she called me at midnight and said, a child needs a new toothbrush, I’d go do it. Simply because she asked.” She laughed and said that Judi would probably buy a toothbrush for the child herself. Neither Irene nor Helen interacted directly or often with Judi. They only crossed paths at events. However, as Helen’s excerpt demonstrates, just knowing that Judi spearheaded the organization intensified her sense of membership to HIAS PA and its mission.

Active Recruitment Techniques and Individual Exploration

Judi also first introduced Dennis to HIAS PA, but not through the social and emotional connections that Helen and Irene experienced. Instead, specific programming and active recruitment opened a hidden pathway to volunteerism. In February 2016, Dennis attended a film screening of Ellis, a short film about immigration and Ellis Island. After the screening, a few leaders in immigration law, including Judi, spoke on a panel. Judi brought material on HIAS PA. Dennis reflected upon the experience during our interview: “I was reading through that and I
thought, ‘You know, this is something that I would like to do.’ This is about the time that there were [...] a lot of bad feelings coming out about refugees in the United States and I just thought that that was a bunch of craziness [...] that I felt strongly about and decided that that’s what I wanted to do.” Fired up by current events, Dennis wanted make a social contribution, but until he attended the event and met Judi, he did not know how to engage. In fact, every volunteer wanted to get involved with immigration justice, but did not have an institutionalized role until they heard about HIAS PA. As discussed in the literature review, sociodemographic factors impact which volunteer positions attract which volunteers and groups. Social networks and other resources catalyze specific entry points. For instance, Dennis lived nearby the café where he attended the film screening, illustrating the directive strength of geographic location and economic resources in learning about volunteer opportunities.

Volunteerism is self-selective and socially shaped. Dennis only heard about HIAS PA because he purposely attended an event about immigration. Jasmine specifically searched for volunteer positions related to transcultural work. Irene had taught English as a Second Language (ESL) in Missouri and now that she is retired, wanted to reenter the educational sector but in an informal way. The examples continue, but they all share a similar thread: Volunteers first connected with HIAS PA because they had an individualized and motivating spark to engage with immigration justice in Philadelphia. The accessible entry point and resulting interpersonal connections rendered HIAS PA more appealing and intimate and volunteering more feasible.

Reputation of HIAS PA or Arbitrary Decisions

Why staff and volunteers chose HIAS PA over another local organization often proved a coincidental and arbitrary decision process. People simply chose HIAS PA. Mary, the housing coordinator, joined HIAS PA for a yearlong post-undergraduate fellowship. She explained that the fellowship program had a partnership with about two-dozen agencies. She wanted to particularly work with immigrants and refugees. HIAS PA was the only agency that filled that goal. It thereby became her first pick.

Amin joined HIAS PA as a Legal Team intern during the summer of 2014. His law school adviser recommended HIAS PA or Nationalities Service Center (NSC) for an internship:

Amin: “She connected me to one of the previous interns, legal interns, who interned at HIAS. And that intern connected me to Philippe and I interviewed. Dana: Did you ever consider working at NSC?
Amin: No. I mean maybe at the beginning. I didn’t know the difference? So, um, yes? This is the way it happened. The professor gave me the number of the legal intern who interned at HIAS and after I started with HIAS, of course, like it’s very good [chuckle]

NSC is another leading resettlement agency located in Center City, Philadelphia. The NSC staff assisted about 550 refugee clients to resettle during the 2015-2016 fiscal year, compared to HIAS PA’s 220 clients. As explained in Chapter 1 and Chapter 3, the agencies function differently, partially a reflection of the varying resources, approaches to resettlement, and the client load each agency handles. Cecilia volunteered with NSC while working on her Master of Science in Education in TESOL. As the end of her masters program approached, HIAS PA opened applications for the education coordinator position. Cecilia applied and was accepted. Comprably for Aurora, she initially applied as a volunteer to HIAS PA and also considered NSC. However, a case management position at HIAS PA opened soon thereafter. She applied and was accepted. Even though both women had connections with NSC, they landed with HIAS PA because the opportunity arose.

While coincidence is undoubtedly a factor, the difference between randomly picking from a display of visible prizes and selecting an object from a bag unaware of how many items it contains emerges as a player. As I have previously said, refugee resettlement work in Philadelphia is largely invisible to those who do not engage with it. When I asked volunteers if they considered working with other organizations, a few participants did not know that other options existed. One volunteer, Devorah, said, “I don’t think I knew [that there were other programs]. I think this is the one that popped up on the Internet. I think another one did. It just didn’t look as interesting.” Most participants first heard about HIAS PA via Internet searches.

As a leading immigration advocacy and social service organization in Philadelphia, HIAS PA has accrued more resources and receives more media coverage relative to their smaller and lesser-known counterparts. HIAS PA’s increased exposure, and thereby its online presence, enhances HIAS PA’s citywide reputation as a credible organization. In short, HIAS PA is one of the first search results prospective volunteers find and often, the search stops there. Amin added, “We have a good reputation in the community and the good cause we’re doing, like non-profit helping vulnerable people.” Again, the coincidental factor of finding HIAS PA is not purely by chance, but impacted by what information is accessible.

93 “Demographics and Arrival Statistics.”
For many volunteers, HIAS PA was their first introduction to refugee work in Philadelphia. They later learned about other resettlement and post-resettlement agencies through their volunteering, through individual research or not at all. Dennis said, “It was always HIAS and that was only because that was the information I had and, after speaking with some people […] I guess it’s the longevity of HIAS that turned me on.” Even if HIAS PA appeared like his only “choice,” that did not impede him from growing attached to the organization; he found additional reasons to appreciate the organization that did not originally impact his recruitment.

Religious Affiliation

HIAS PA grew from the American Jewish community in Philadelphia and retains strong connections. When I began my research, I was particularly interested in whether or not HIAS PA’s Jewish legacy attracted certain volunteers. In short, the answer is generally no. None of the participants linked their volunteering with HIAS PA to Judaism. Yet, while theology did not lead volunteers to HIAS PA, social networks based in synagogues did open pathways and offer ongoing support to volunteers. Out of the 14 people interviewed, five practiced Judaism (four volunteers and one staff member). When asked if HIAS PA’s Jewish history affected her volunteering, Anita curtly and concisely said, “I think it’s nice. I don’t think it matters. I think it’s important that they’re helping. And I’m proud of HIAS. That they were started as a Jewish charity and that they’re doing this.” Similarly, Irene did not perceive HIAS PA’s Jewish history as relevant to her volunteering. “No. If they were Lutheran or Presbyterian, at this point, I will never leave them because I’m so in love with them. […] And now that I’ve gotten my foot in the door, I might know there are probably a gazillion other places to go and help volunteer, but I believe in their mission and what they’re doing and it doesn’t matter what their faith would be.”

Beyond the doctrinal belief systems, religious communities provide a wealth of social networks and resources. The Jewish community affirmed the volunteer work of Jewish participants, such as Anita and Irene. Their Jewish social networks enabled their volunteering to be possible and more productive, even if not discussed in our interviews. Anita originally connected with HIAS PA through a previous congregant. Irene also connected with HIAS PA through a fellow congregant. Anita’s synagogue offered storage space for in-kind donations and her synagogue’s Sisterhood financially and socially supported her volunteer work.

Both Anita and Irene individually invoked the Talmudic teaching of Tikkun Olam “repair
the world” and tzedakah, the Judaic charity principle. While Jewish community members debate the misappropriation of “Tikkun Olam,” the teachings of compassion and giving do affect how Anita and Irene view volunteerism more broadly. HIAS PA’s Jewish history did not drive their initial connection, nor did they actively draw upon Jewish teachings while volunteering, yet the volunteers’ personal Jewish identity did influence why they sought to volunteer altogether. Personal characteristics do not solely determine whether or not an individual volunteers, but they should not be ignored or overlooked either (Musick and Wilson 2008).

Specific Moment in Life

Volunteer work in America is often erroneously viewed as a leisure activity, which as expounded in Chapter 2, disguises volunteers’ productive labor. (Musick and Wilson 2008). As quantitative analyses demonstrate, most volunteers are middle-aged, not retirees, thus calling into question conceptions of how individuals and different age groups fill their spare time. Nevertheless, this section examines how available time and age sparked many volunteers’ initial entree into volunteerism with HIAS PA.

Jasmine, a young nurse, said, “I used to do a lot [of volunteering] and then, just when you’re in school and working full time, you don’t really have that luxury.” Dennis said that he had been “thrashing around” to find a volunteer position that would build structure in his retirement. Irene started volunteering almost immediately after retiring and Helen, a middle-aged woman, started volunteering with HIAS PA to reacquaint herself with immigration work during a transition period in life. Mohammad and Amin both interned with HIAS PA to obtain academic credit. Upon completion, Amin applied for a job position at HIAS PA, but Mohammad continued to volunteer while finishing his degree. Regardless of age, engaging with HIAS PA appeared as a feasible and fruitful way to spend time, while also allowing volunteers to grow personally and offer critical skills to the refugee resettlement social service sector. Helen thoughtfully added that, “It’s important for people to volunteer in their lives, if they can, if they have the resources and the ability to make space for giving.” As Chapter 2 suggested, examining how sociodemographic factors (such as age and social class status) interact, reveals their directive, but not determinative, force in shaping volunteer engagement.
**Political Climate**

Finally, the political climate around refugee resettlement pushed individuals to volunteer with HIAS PA. The drive to engage with politics did not predominate the staff interviews as much as they did in volunteer interviews. The staff responses, although they brushed politics and xenophobia, focused on continuing previous work rather than starting something new.

Helen, an Appointment Accompaniment volunteer, previously worked in immigration law. Her family’s trip to Greece a few summers ago was especially marked by the influx of migrant boats. She felt the palpable reality around forced displacement and recognized the “striking need.” She said, “It really felt like I had to do something to participate in this.” Devorah explained that the Boston Marathon Bombing in 2013 initially sparked her interest in refugee work. “The least we can do is help [refugees] learn about our culture, learn about the holidays, learn what’s acceptable, you know, make it easier for them.”

Dennis fiercely expressed his disgust around rising xenophobia and Islamophobia. As previously mentioned, he responded to the “bunch of craziness” by attending the Ellis screening and later volunteering. At the end of each interview, I asked participants if and how their work with HIAS PA has affected their outlook on the broader refugee crisis. Dennis said:

> “I always knew that the world was small and we needed to help each other […] I’ve taken a bigger interest in immigration and refugees in Europe and understanding that the United States has a lot of complicity. If we weren’t all driving automobiles and having a culture that’s based on the automobile, we wouldn’t have to worry about oil. […] We really are involved and should be responsible whether we are or not.”

His response reveals two themes seen in every interview: A balance between personal need or fulfillment and a broader drive for social justice. 13 of the 14 interviews were held with individuals who had extended experience with HIAS PA. Their “feelings” about the work and awareness of politics and systematic discrimination are biased in favor of immigration justice. While some participants said that refugee resettlement is not a political object, other participants insisted that their work is inherently political. To engage with refugee resettlement in the United States, a relatively marginal topic until the January Executive Orders, was an individual choice and the personalization factor exposed itself through linguistic choices and how participants spoke about resettlement work and the broader political climate.

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94 I planned on interviewing participants before they started volunteering and after a few months. I interviewed one man (the 14th participant). Due to time limitations, I did not gather more longitudinal data or reconnect with the man.
I will return to this topic in Chapter 7 since the political climate adds to how individuals view their contribution to HIAS PA. The political climate around refugee resettlement qualifies as an “insufficient, but non-redundant condition” that spurred many individuals to research volunteer openings. A macro-level interest does not equate with a productive, meaningful volunteer experience. Individuals must have grit, creativity, and commitment. However, the political climate was a unique factor that sparked many volunteers to contact HIAS PA.

**VOLUNTEER ROLES AND WHY THEY ARE DESIRED**

The above diagram captures volunteer positions available during the research period. Since January 2017, HIAS PA has created new positions and suspended others due to changing needs. For instance, the housing set-up position was created to address the large number of clients arriving within short windows of one another and to assist the housing coordinator. However, due to the current uncertainties around resettlement work and its legal obstructions, clients are arriving at a much slower rate than anticipated for the 2016-2017 fiscal year. The housing setup position lacks urgency. Moreover, when the new Director of Refugee Programming and Planning joined HIAS PA, she started recruiting more administrative volunteers to assist with paperwork organization and to prepare for when HIAS National monitors its affiliate agencies. The changes demonstrate HIAS PA’s ability to evolve depending on current necessities, thereby shaking images of bureaucracies as static and immobile. During each staff interview, the staff member offered a different answer about the “most important volunteer position.” While some insisted on Appointment Accompaniment, others said that
American Friends offered the most value or that Afterschool always benefit from more support, a result of lacking conversation and consensus around volunteerism and its usefulness at HIAS PA.

The following section briefly outlines each position represented in this thesis. I did not speak to any housing set-up volunteers, although Mary’s insight as housing coordinator offers some understanding of what that position would entail as a volunteer.

**Appointment Accompaniment**

This namesake position involves accompanying clients to various appointments, primarily medical. Dennis and Helen held this position and Mohammad would also accompany clients from time to time. This position has two main goals: Assist clients in navigating Philadelphia and advocate for fair treatment once at the appointment. It often involves meeting clients at their home in either Northeast or South Philadelphia and using public transportation to arrive at the clinics, such as those in West Philadelphia (Penn Center for Primary Care and Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia). As Helen explained, “every day is different” and the time commitment can extend from three hours to all day (although on average it is about four hours). Rarely will volunteers interact with the same client multiple times.

The advocacy component takes multiple forms and volunteers only brought it up when prompted. Volunteers did not self-identify as “advocates.” Instead, they perceived themselves more as liaisons and support for families and individuals at places such as the dentist office. During my internship and research period, the then Director of Refugee Programming and Planning began documenting cases of Penn Dental not offering language interpretation. According to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, federally funded programs cannot discriminate against individuals based on national origin, and therefore, language ability. If an institution, like Penn Dental, receives reimbursement from federal health insurance programs, it is required to offer interpretation, ideally in-person and at least by phone. Yet, infractions still arose and Dennis described a Penn Dental receptionist who denied fair language access. He worked with the client to push against the roadblocks and ensure that the appointment was kept.

Dennis (Volunteer): I mean, sometimes the registration people can get quite uppity because [clients] cannot produce the information quickly or they don’t speak English da da da. […] And I just tell them, “Well look, We’re here, how are we gonna get around this?” And I’ll place some phone calls to find out

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information. Sometimes, the [client] that does speak English is not with me. So, I will call that person to get an answer or something like this. But, it gets a little frustrating with these registration people.

Later, he also spoke curtly about phlebotomists at CHOP. He said:

The worst place is actually at CHOP, yeah. When you go there, you register them. That’s not so bad. But then you get back to the phlebotomist and they get all unglued because they recognize me so they know that […] I’ve got refugees, well then they want to know how many’s coming and they’re understaffed and da da da da. I don’t want to hear this. […] I just don’t think it’s very professional that they should be going through this litany. I mean, […] I say I’ve got two. “Well, how many more?” “I don’t know. I’ve got two.” And it’s just, you know, it’s two, it’s two more. […] That gets a little frustrating. They’re the worst.

Appointment Accompaniment volunteers serve as representative “arms of the agency,” not only for clients, but also for receptionists. As Dennis shows, his affiliation with HIAS PA instantly evoked certain reactions from outsiders of HIAS PA. I will continue to develop volunteers’ fluid position as a nexus between the “inside” and the “outside” in Chapter 6.

American Friend

Compared with Appointment Accompaniment’s transient volunteer-client relationship, the American Friend position pairs a volunteer with a refugee family and cultivates a supportive bond that extends beyond the 90-Day R&P period. Volunteers coveted this position since it builds ongoing personal connections and is therefore perceived as the most interesting. Devorah served as an American Friend three times and Irene had a temporary stint. American Friends should commit to at least 8-10 hours per month. An American Friend relationship is entirely dependent on whether or not the refugee household wants an American Friend. As Ava insisted during the September Volunteer Orientation, “the refugee is the expert of their own life.” Therefore, HIAS PA prioritized refugee families that need and want added support. A single parent household or families with a complex medical case may receive preferential treatment.

Typical activities for an American Friend include providing English support, helping clients read mail, going to the grocery store, assisting clients to schedule appointments, and exploring neighborhood services, such as Whitman Library in South Philadelphia. At the

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96 A note on CHOP: The CHOP refugee clinic received rave reviews from staff and volunteers. They highlighted the work of one doctor who often overextended herself to ensure proper and thorough medical care. Dennis’s excerpt details frustrating moments with receptionists, which was not uncommon at other service providers.
September Volunteer Orientation, Ava said that “being more American isn’t the goal [for clients]. Being able to interact is.” An American Friend’s goal is not for clients to assimilate via cultural destruction, but for clients to feel more comfortable and empowered in their new surroundings. There is no defined “end point.” As Devorah explained, she stopped working with families when they no longer returned phone calls or met her at their chosen time. It was a natural and gradual breakup. The American Friend position is arguably the most challenging because the American Friend has to balance boundaries between becoming a pseudo-case manager and remaining a community member with individual obligations and a personal life.

**Adult English as a Second Language (ESL) Program**

HIAS PA coordinated both an Adult ESL Program and an Afterschool Program. Jasmine was a volunteer teacher with the Adult ESL program. The program was originally created because HIAS PA discovered that clients did not start English classes until officially enrolled in a job search program, which is federally mandated to offer ESL support, but it can take upwards of three weeks from arrival for a client to actually begin classes. Now, clients can start English classes within the first week of arrival. The English levels varied and the size of the class was in constant flux. Some clients tested into other English programs with partnership organizations. Cecilia only accepted lead teacher volunteers who have TESOL or education background. While Cecilia may teach a class when a volunteer cannot attend, there are many weeks when volunteers independently run the class.

**Afterschool Program**

The Afterschool Program is another highly sought after position because volunteers get to work with refugee youth. Irene works with the afterschool program at the elementary school. Devorah and Mohammad also volunteered at the program, but less regularly during my research period. While Irene had decades of teaching experience, Cecilia insisted that an education background is not required. HIAS PA receives the Refugee School Impact Grant (RSIG), which is a federal grant intended to assist refugee students through supplementary language, academic, and cultural support. HIAS PA holds a session at both an elementary school and a high school in Northeast Philadelphia. Both programs are held in the Northeast due to the region’s deficit of social service programs for refugees. South Philadelphia has a longer history of immigration and
the available social services are more accessible due to its population density. Nevertheless, both regions still lack adequate resources, especially for English language learners.

**In-Kind Donation**

In-kind donation management is not a formal volunteer position. The refugee team primarily receives donation inquiries via email for various items, such as kitchenware and bed linens. During the research period, Lana handled furniture and Mary coordinated household items. Anita and her close friend and fellow volunteer received the household items at their synagogue, sorted them, and brought acceptable goods to a storage unit in Philadelphia until a house was ready for setup. Even though not a formal position, Anita’s volunteer labor was vital to HIAS PA’s work. Remembering that each refugee client has at minimum $925 for 90 Days, Anita emphasized that by maximizing donated goods, like a bed, the family can allocate its money to other needs, such as food or new clothing.

**CONTAGION: WHAT KEEPS STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS AT HIAS PA?**

When applying for post-undergraduate fellowships, Mary searched for programs that would use her Spanish language skills. Instead, she “fell in love with HIAS [PA] that [she] didn’t mind not using Spanish.” Mary added that eventually, she desired a job that drew upon her Spanish. Nevertheless, even one year after working with HIAS PA, her enchantment with the agency had not wavered. In *Acts of Compassion*, Robert Wuthnow (1991) compares “roles” and the “self.” He claims that when individuals enter a role, they create boundaries and limits. Volunteers can choose when to engage with HIAS PA, at what intensity, and when to stop volunteering for the day or permanently. Wuthnow contrasts roles to the “self,” which incorporates indisputable identities. People, like Mary, self-select HIAS PA. Yet, what aspects of the work transform the volunteer “role” to become more than checkbox tasks, but a meaningful experience? This thesis will continue to examine questions of contagion and membership.

**Volunteer and Staff Camaraderie**

Social connections both attract volunteers and help to retain them. Positive social rapport hooks volunteers and staff. For Anita, the memory of her friendship with a now deceased volunteer sustained her ties with HIAS PA:
Anita (Volunteer): She was tough and I used to argue with her on things and I’d always say, “You know, let’s try it and if it doesn’t work.” So, that was the hook and here I am, I think like, six years later. Ruth passed away. Her family gave me her file, which still makes me wanna cry. Not that there’s anything really in there I can use, but I can’t get rid of it. She just touched everyone.

These social networks also include those with other volunteers and those with the clients.

Devorah (Volunteer): I really like the tutoring a lot. I like the camaraderie of also meeting the other tutors and their backgrounds and […] that’s kind of neat. I like that. And um I like working with children.

Mohammad (Volunteer): I felt a relation with the clients I work with and I want to have the same experience with the client that are coming, not just for the Middle Eastern clients or Arabic speaking—every client. You know? So, you hear a new story, meet their kids. […] When you help people that need help and you see their smile, you feel good. So that’s a good thing, so yeah.

Finally, volunteer and staff’s sense of membership and connection to HIAS PA motivated their work, even though, as Mary explained, “HIAS has a tendency to take over your life.”

Mohammad (Volunteer): It feels easy to communicate with the HIAS staff and with the volunteer. I don’t think there is a barrier. Everyone is [welcoming], has smile, happy. I mean, willing to talk. Like in Lutheran, I did not feel that connection I felt […] at HIAS. At HIAS, yeah, everyone is relatively happy. […] If you come to HIAS, it’s contagious. They are friendly.97

Amin (Staff): A volunteer […] will be part of the family, ‘cause you know? You felt this. Everyone feels this. That we are not in a working setting. We are family. Each volunteer would tell you this and this applies also to our interns, most of them, not all of them. Most of them would love to come back the next year to volunteer to intern with us. So this is the welcoming you know um thing we have.

HIAS PA grounds its mission in the Jewish belief of “welcoming the stranger.” Whenever a new staff or intern joined the team, the Executive Director sent an announcement email encouraging HIAS PA to give the new team member a “big HIAS PA welcome.” Amin’s statement echoes these narratives of welcome and family. He added, “I would always personally remember HIAS, right? Even if I left this country. […] IOM although that financially was better and I was more civil, still I love HIAS, right?” The contagion factor stems from the vision of a welcoming and supporting agency and staff. After the December Holiday Party, Aurora, Mary, and Cecilia

97 Mohammad was referring to Lutheran Family and Children’s Services, which had a resettlement program until Spring 2016. They closed their program to reallocate resources and attention to other issues that touched their work.
walked onto the 4th Floor laughing. “This work would be so much harder if I hated you all. Thank God for the team.” The volunteers and staff whom I interviewed felt supported by the agency, even if they simultaneously felt overworked, a sentiment harmonious with scholars specializing in the role of trust, shared workloads, and membership.

Respect, Gratitude, Appreciation, and Compensation

Volunteers expressed self-assuredness in knowing that HIAS PA “valued” their volunteer labor. Consequently, they continued to feel invested in the agency.

Mohammad (Volunteer): There is not like even the, Judi, at the top, you feel like […] she don’t make you feel that she’s the manager and you’re the, you know? Of course, […] we respect her. We know her position, so yeah. But, she never make you feel like, “Oh she don’t like me.” Also, the HIAS staff in general. So, that’s also make you learn fast. […] They don’t want to lose you, especially when you do a lot for them and you know, I speak Arabic […] So, and I know the work now. So they are nice to me. They are nice in general.

Irene (Volunteer): Their volunteers are very important and they’re an essential part of the organization and I, I’ve met Judi several times and she’s, since she met me the first time, she remembered my name. It was just very impressive. Every time. I’m just a volunteer she sees maybe once and a while and she would see me and she would say, “Oh this is Irene. Oh she’s one of, oh she’s one of our best volunteers and she loves kids.” And it’s like, that is huge.

Anita (Volunteer): And then, you know, and there was a whole table, I was sitting with a whole of volunteers and I knew there were others in the room and my husband got upset because he’s very protective of me. He said, “She didn’t thank the volunteers.” I said, “She just forgot. This is a big day for her.” And sure enough, as I left, Judi gave me a big hug and said, “My volunteer extraordinaire.” And that meant a lot to me. But, you know?

Amin (Staff): We don’t have this hierarchy of the volunteers will feel especially the one who work in the office would feel that they are part of the, they are as important as the director or anybody else.

All four excerpts address the organizational structure, which appears as a “horizontal” rather than a “vertical” organization that impose top-down power. Volunteers expressed a sense of teamwork. While they still recognized authority behind given roles, such as the Executive Director, volunteers saw themselves as able to positively contribute to the team, thereby creating an equalizing effect in power distribution. Yet, perceptions idealize the organizational structure,
especially Amin’s remarks, for later in his interview, he sharply criticized volunteers. Volunteer labor is essential to HIAS PA and was valued as such, yet neither staff nor volunteer perceptions fully dismantled the vertical hierarchy that actions and unstated perceptions perpetuate. Staff and volunteers still prioritized staff work and client needs over volunteer labor and demands.

Later in this thesis, I return to the obstacles surrounding fair gratitude within bureaucratic non-profits. For now, the above excerpts from Mohammad, Irene, and Anita demonstrate how words of appreciation, especially from the higher ups within HIAS PA, aid volunteers in viewing their roles as indispensable and nourish a sense of membership. Verbal recognition garners a sense of accomplishment that feeds more volunteer work. While volunteers insisted that they do not want or need certificates or gifts, the verbal notes of appreciation combined with genuine social connections make a meaningful impact and draw volunteers closer into the agency.

DISCUSSION

Wilson and Musick (1997) argue that, “Tutoring in a literacy program has both real and symbolic value—the student learns to read and the tutor ‘acts out’ her identity as a caring and compassionate person. It is leisure as work; it is work as leisure. It expresses simultaneously the value of useful leisure and meaningful work.”98 Volunteerism at HIAS PA builds a reciprocal relationship between volunteers and staff. Both volunteers and staff benefit from volunteer labor. Volunteerism at HIAS PA is not just an enjoyable pastime. Extracting intentions and identifying motives enter dangerous, ambiguous territory in sociological analyses. However, this chapter introduces the diverse characters that join HIAS PA’s volunteer and staff network and highlights reasons and perceptions as to why people stay and what they offer to the agency. Volunteer positions offer individuals a chance to engage with refugee resettlement work and “act out” their caring identities, while also offering knowledge, time, and creativity. Feeling like a valuable contributor in the fight for immigration justice aided volunteer retention and membership.

As will remain a central argument to this paper, volunteers at HIAS PA perform both an “insider” and “outsider” role. They simultaneously face inwards and outwards. Looking at why they chose their volunteer position and why they stayed contribute to understanding how volunteers balance this external and internal position. While some staff participants felt a sense

of entitlement and protectiveness over their position and refugee clients, volunteers also grew attached to HIAS PA. Arguably, staff’s frustration around volunteers and the volunteer program stemmed from their uncertainty and discomfort about how to handle volunteers’ insider-outsider positionality. Staff wanted to support and welcome volunteers, but also wanted to retain boundaries and distinctions. Unlike staff members that remain perpetually enmeshed in endless tasks, volunteers can leave their roles more regularly and share their experiences with social networks, recruit new volunteers, and continue to grow individually. In Chapter 7, I will return to the transformative impact of sharing stories and experiences to non-staff and non-volunteers.

The remainder of this thesis will dissect questions posed throughout this chapter related to membership, trust, and gratitude. Specifically, the next chapter will delve into how training and communication manifest themselves at HIAS PA, what boundaries are erected, and how negative volunteer-staff interactions taint staff perceptions of volunteerism and volunteers.
CHAPTER 5
Crossed Signals: Embracing and Managing Volunteers

A singular HIAS National poster hung on one of the 4th Floor white pillars. The Statue of Liberty stood behind an imagined family reunification. Bold calls to action jump from the subdued red, white, and blue coloration. “Join the Jewish response to the Global Refugee Crisis.” At the bottom, it read, “Learn. Advocate. Volunteer. Give.”

Like the poster suggests, engaging with HIAS PA can also present itself in four distinct ways: Learning about resettlement, advocating for immigration justice, volunteering with a local agency, and giving in-kind or monetary donations. While all four intertwine, this thesis specifically highlights the third form of engagement: volunteerism. Yet throughout my research period, HIAS PA had more volunteers than their infrastructure could handle. A summer intern researched volunteer databases, but HIAS PA had not purchased one yet. Volunteer management still relied upon Google Spreadsheets. Volunteer training was equally as informal. Although basic structure existed for training and supporting volunteers, volunteer management did not have ongoing formal regulation and thereby, contributed to staff and volunteer frustration over miscommunication and inconsistent expectations and demands. According to the Development Director at HIAS PA, Ava, the ideal volunteer is a person who expresses interest, attends an
initial orientation, leaves with excitement, but finishes by only signing up for the mailing list. They do not actively volunteer with HIAS PA, both an ironic paradox for an agency that presents a need for volunteers and also a reflection of HIAS PA’s weak volunteer infrastructure. Volunteers were great in theory and needed in practice, but posed multiple obstacles that preexisting structures could not tackle.

This chapter analyzes volunteer training and communication at HIAS PA, particularly highlighting the problems that plague the volunteer program and result in frustrations that reproduce more frustration, instead of identifying and changing its source. Difficulties with the volunteer program also affect staff perceptions of volunteers. This chapter reexamines questions regarding the value of volunteer labor within HIAS PA’s infrastructure. Distilled volunteer and staff critiques combined with my own analysis suggests that if training and communication emphasize interdependence and trust relations, HIAS PA would witness more streamline execution of tasks and a sturdier sense of volunteer membership.

**MANAGEMENT AND TRAINING**

Before volunteering, each prospective volunteer must attend an initial orientation to connect with HIAS PA, to receive an overview of refugee resettlement and difficulties clients often confront, and to learn about the expectations of each volunteer positions. Volunteer orientations do not “train” volunteers in the intricacies of specific roles. They do not provide resources for continued learning. HIAS PA does not offer classroom-style training. They emphasize experiential learning, a result of necessity potentially more than intentionality.

Nevertheless, no amount of reading would have adequately prepared volunteers for their volunteering with HIAS PA. Volunteers said that they needed fieldwork experiences. Ava emphasized at the September Volunteer Orientation, that “just talking at [the clients] will not really help. [You] help in practice.” Multilevel orientation for clients involves practicum, conversation, and adjusting “curriculum” to each client, a jab at portrayals of bureaucracies as inflexible. Volunteers contribute to clients’ integration processes because they supplement and complement the work of staff by filling social spaces with care, knowledge, and practice.

HIAS PA’s primary training method involved “shadowing” a volunteer, a staff member or an intern. I shadowed Lana only once before individually traveling to the County Assistance Office (CAO) with a refugee client. Aurora shadowed Amin a few times at the start of her
employment with HIAS PA. Dennis shadowed Helen to learn about appointment accompaniment. Helen only joined HIAS PA a month before Dennis, again suggesting that time with HIAS PA does not correspond with the quality or depth of transferrable knowledge and more abstractly, with a volunteer-staff trust relation that reinforces volunteer membership.

Throughout my internship and research period, I often observed volunteers and interns train new volunteers. While informal, this dominant form of training enhances volunteer fellowship through creating a culture of group accountability and dependency. For instance, in September, Farha joined the Refugee Team as a new intern. Like Mohammad, Farha continued volunteering after her internship period finished. In September, I taught her how to navigate electronic documents and how to use the office phones. In early November, a new administrative volunteer joined the team and Farha taught her how to organize the files and to use the spreadsheets for the upcoming Refugee Thanksgiving Event. An hour later, the new volunteer was making phone calls and occasionally asking Farha questions. Staff was not present during these training moments.

Training also involved sharing “pro tips” only acquired through experiential learning. Dennis gave an example of how Helen taught him about doctor appointments with children:

Dennis (Volunteer): She took me to Children’s, told me about bringing cheese because she took a kid there once and the kid fainted so they had to go to the emergency room and it blew the whole day.
Dana: So, do you bring food with you now?
Dennis: I do. I do. I bring the string cheese. I often have, I often times have breakfast bars, but I don’t like to give those out because they might have nuts in them. And who knows what you got here, so I don’t, I might give it to the adults, but I would never give those to a child. But like, I give the cheese out. Sometimes the kid’ll be fussy. It’s been a while and so that keeps them busy for a while.

Stories are a key training tool. Sharing stories adds to the collective knowledge of volunteers. Helen or staff could have given Dennis a list of expectations and suggestions on how to make an appointment run effectively and smoothly. Instead, Helen offered a personal story to explain why food matters. Dennis retained the lesson and added his analysis that string cheese entertains children while waiting. The same stories humanize refugee resettlement and can be used externally to translate realities of refugee resettlement to non-volunteers and non-staff members. As I will discuss later, personal and anecdotal stories serve as powerful tools to invite non-staff and non-volunteers into dialogue about immigration, an often-divisive topic in America.
Shortcomings of Experiential Training and Learning

While volunteerism necessitates experiential learning, it can also lead to feelings of insecurity, uncertainty, and as Dennis said, a sense of “flying by the seat of one’s pants.”

Mohammad (Volunteer): It ‘twas like shadowing, but it’s not like training. It’s like, “Okay follow Dana, see her doing the stuff.” […] Let’s say okay I shadowed for welfare, social security and food stamp, but then sometimes Owen told me to go to do school enrollment […] But no one tell me how to do school enrollment. I felt like someone should support me, tell me. It wasn’t that bad. But, I did not feel comfortable. I am always terrified, not scared—terrified when you give me new things that I don’t know. If it’s to me? Okay, I can mess [up], it’s okay, it’s mine I can deal with the consequences. But, it’s other people, so you cannot mess [up].

Helen (Volunteer): If people are young interns and they haven’t had a lot of work experience, advocacy experience, there are things that people who have been doing this work take for granted. It’s just obvious that you keep asking follow-up questions and make sure you have all the details. That’s the one thing. Making sure interns know that it’s like in their hands […] People can be trained with sort of just being assertive.

Irene (Volunteer): [Talking about American Friends] They need to train us to really. I’m not a social worker. I’m an educator and a musician. So, there were a lot of social work avenues going on and I kept bugging. I’m sure everybody at HIAS every time they see my emails are like, “Oh no. Another email from her.” [laughter] Because I was in uncharted territories. […] I’m willing to go back and try again, but it needs to be restructured very differently.

Both Helen and Irene position staff as agents of knowledge. Consequently, they hold staff accountable for transferring needed information, knowledge which as Helen explained, is often “taken for granted” by staff members because they spend each day thinking critically about resettlement work, unlike volunteers who inhabit other social spaces and dedicate only a portion of their time to HIAS PA. Aurora said that detailed and formal training could foster an environment where volunteers feel empowered to ask questions, as long as volunteers do not impede upon staff’s other tasks by asking too many questions. Yet, developing trust relationships involves investing the time to 1) transmit relevant information and 2) empower volunteers to boldly “fly by the seat of one’s pants” and problem-solve. Established trust relations do not imply that each participating party faultlessly handles obstacles. Instead, they encourage involved parties to confidently approach the unknown, liberated from paralysis and apprehension by security in one another’s loyalty and support (Lewis and Weigert 1985).
Appeals for Ongoing Training

For Helen and Irene, more intensive training would result in more effective and assertive volunteers; knowledge is empowering. Mohammad’s lack of information stunted his confidence and hindered his ability to offload work from staff. He wanted more guidance, not because he lacked ability, but because he feared messing up. He recognized the value of his volunteering because staff effectively communicated their demands and Mohammad felt connected to HIAS PA’s mission, which counterintuitively increased the pressure he experienced to execute the tasks almost perfectly. Mohammad’s internal angst seems to contradict the previous analysis linking trust relations to empowerment and ease. Here, his anxiety suggests that another phenomenon is at play: Mohammad’s deep connection with and understanding of HIAS PA’s work illustrates his transition from a volunteer “role” to a “self” (Wuthnow 1991); he internalizes work expectations and norms like staff more than like a volunteer.99

Nevertheless, Mohammad’s comments pointed to the value of ongoing training, similar to the multilevel orientation that HIAS PA offers to clients. The volunteer orientation cannot be the start and end of formalized training, especially since the Refugee Team does not participate in the orientation. Amin’s perspectives illuminate his own misunderstandings of volunteer orientations and misconceptions of volunteer preparedness:

I think giving them training, which is in-group training, is super helpful, but I’ve never been in that training, so I don’t know. […] So, in my opinion it’s better to [have] you know, another training and extension to the first group training, which is a personal one with each individual. […] It’s gonna be totally different training. And this is what I use with the interns and volunteers. Especially the volunteers in the office. I would spend the first two, three days with them explaining everything so in this case, I know that they will be super helpful if […] you’re invested in them, they will be good help. But this is not the case with again volunteers who don’t work in the office. This is another issue.

Amin associated training with volunteer trust and productiveness, a similar sentiment expressed by Mohammad. He emphasized the need for individualized training, if scheduled to complement his own availability. Amin presented a linear, finite orientation model: invest in training at the beginning and then, volunteers “will be good help.” Finally, he divided the volunteer network between those who work in the office and those who work in the field. As the lead case manager,

99 I will not analyze this shift from volunteer role to volunteer or staff self, but encourage future researchers to examine whether or not there is a tipping point of information acquisition, what type of information volunteers receive, and ownership over a role that pushes a volunteer to identify more with staff than other volunteers.
he interacted more with volunteers and interns in the office, which builds different staff-to-volunteer relationships due to ongoing proximity and likelihood of holding informal and cordial conversations. Arguably though, the external volunteers, such as Dennis and Helen, should receive more intensive and extensive training because they cannot walk to Amin’s cubicle when questions arise. They must problem-solve independently.

Ongoing trainings enhance knowledge sets and strengthen volunteer capacity. Cecilia is the only staff member who offers group-trainings and continued trainings specific to the afterschool program. She explained:

I had [a training] specifically for the start of the afterschool program. And that was also to meet Nia [part-time teacher] and to practice some of the language activities you would be doing. To kind of talk to them about the structure, talked to them about. I did this kind of like true-and-false activity [on] Afghan culture and this was also in an effort to like show really strong, big cultural differences and so to kind of set their expectations. So that started the conversation. I now realize that did not finish the conversation. It’s very, it’s on-going. We had that and so I’m kind of also thinking about how you know, I’d like to do another one in January before we start up our spring session. And so, how can I do it, to make it meaningful for our returning volunteers and add new information and then you know be accessible to new volunteers, too.

Irene started as a volunteer with the afterschool program before Cecilia was hired. She therefore offered a unique comparative perspective:

When I first started the program as a volunteer, there was a different line-up of people from HIAS and a different teacher. Cecilia wasn’t in the picture yet. And, there was no volunteer training. There was no effort made to initiate us in any way [smile]. [...] So, that was a little disconcerting because I think we lost a few volunteers who came two or three times and they just were discouraged. So, that did change when Cecilia came on [...] and I think it’s really helped a lot.

Irene then spoke directly about the various, ongoing training techniques.

[Cecilia’s] very transparent. She had meetings with the volunteers. She had meetings with the parents of our students. She had meetings with school personnel, with the principal, with the ESOL director, classroom teachers, with the math coordinator. This has been through several weeks, but she’s put everything together and she has such a lovely way of connecting people for the cause, you know, of what’s in the best interest of the students. We didn’t even understand how much ESOL they had during the day or did they have it? [...] Cecilia really created an open book that’s been ah-mazing. It’s been amazing. Because these volunteers, especially the, I’d have to say the older ones of us, who tend to stick this out for a long time, really want to know the information.
Irene’s reflections presented the ideal type of training as continual and multilevel. She deflated Cecilia’s concerns that ongoing training would not interest longtime volunteers. For example, when the elementary afterschool students struggled with math homework and left volunteers feeling inept and disheartened, Cecilia scheduled a collaborative meeting between the school’s math teacher and the volunteers to discuss realistic expectations and techniques to better assist the students. Instead of conducting trainings based on a checklist, Cecilia molded the trainings to reflect current volunteer and student needs.

Granted, Cecilia can more seamlessly cultivate a sense of membership and ongoing education amongst afterschool volunteers because the program requires a set schedule, place, and continued relations with students. Moreover, Irene mentioned how Cecilia’s hands-on support and upbeat personality had transformed program content and volunteers’ sense of membership. Cecilia’s continued presence ensured that she remained critically aware of volunteer needs and issues. In contrast, Helen and Dennis, appointment accompaniment volunteers, would only occasionally cross paths at the doctor’s office and they received no specialized training on medical resources in Philadelphia, public transportation or language access. Volunteers need only express comfort in using public transportation to qualify as a volunteer. Yet, training allows for ongoing maintenance of the volunteer program and Irene’s reflections show how staff attention to volunteers can positively impact programming and volunteer retention. Staff and volunteers must think creatively about alternative training methods for volunteers who do not have a position with a regulated space and time.

**Source of Training: Volunteers or Staff?**

A few staff members, particularly Mary, dreamt of developing “miracle volunteers” who could train other volunteers. As previously discussed, shadowing other volunteers or interns already serves as a dominant training technique. Cecilia already institutionalized this role by working with two volunteers who offered English teaching support to other volunteers. Lana also wanted to have volunteer “committees” that train and support one another:

Lana: I’d love to have, it’s like committees. This committee in charge of setups [slamming desk with emphasis]. And this committee in charge of pick-up. And this committee in charge of medical appointment. And this committee in charge of school. And they have a group of people and they have a manager of group who can coordinate.

Dana: What would be the benefit of having it volunteer-led versus HIAS run?
Lana: ‘Cause we don’t have time! ‘Cause we have like two case managers for 200 people. [...] We don’t have efficient continuing services.

The idea of “miracle volunteers” or volunteer “committees” exemplified staff’s goal of decentralizing volunteer work more and more from case managers. Aurora advocated for training specialized volunteers who the staff can contact when they have a need. While logical and harmonious with volunteer observations that HIAS PA staff experienced a time crunch, severing ties between staff and volunteers would have adverse effects on membership to the agency and awareness of internal agency. Staff must preserve their hold on volunteers through ongoing management and training. Aurora added that, “Training is really important in having time to learn and grow and understand before you’re on your own and creating a culture where asking questions isn’t a burden.” Staff wanted capable volunteers, but did not have the capacity or time to offer this training. Again, the best volunteer is one who comes to the training, remains engaged with program updates and current events, but does not actively volunteer. They learn and stay aware of politics, yet take action externally without taking the time and energy of staff.

MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

Communication at HIAS PA stood as a central source of frustration between volunteers and staff. It was also the vehicle for effective work. This section analyzes the role of and mechanisms behind information sharing between staff and volunteers. Similar to adequate training, sufficient and transparent communication establishes enduring bonds between staff and volunteers. Scholars have empirically demonstrated that increased communication between management and volunteers can reduce uncertainty and enhance a positive work environment (Kramer et al. 2013). However, questions of confidentiality befog communication and warp perceptions of volunteers. Analyzing information sharing assists in understanding conflicts and conflict resolution between staff and volunteers. A later anecdote will illustrate how unregulated communication and ambiguous expectations of information sharing can result in explosive and damaging volunteer-staff relations.

Volunteers and staff primarily communicated via email, texting, and phone calls. Mary preferred email because she could send template emails instead of having to personalize each one. Cecilia sent weekly emails to her volunteers with program updates, interesting articles, and other relevant information. The communication methods worked. However, volunteers still had
misgivings about responsiveness and directness. Dennis, Helen, and Mohammad had staff phone numbers, an anomaly suggesting that these three volunteers developed a strong trust relationship with staff (although Cecilia tended to share her number with all volunteers). Helen explained that, “There’s always back and forth over texting” and that she always brought her phone charger because she communicated extensively with the health coordinator during the appointment.

I use the term “client information” when discussing concrete facts and details that impact how a volunteer or staff member may interact with a client or the agency, such as phone numbers or personality types. In Chapter 7, I discuss how volunteers and staff extract information and stories to translate their experiences to non-staff and non-volunteers. Staff and volunteers use this “generalized” information to transmit agency narratives. “Generalized information” includes “take-away” stories and lessons not identifiable to a single client or case.

Information Sharing: Client Information

One of the more interesting and contentious interview topics was what information volunteers received before meeting a client. When refugee clients first meet with HIAS PA staff, they sign a cooperative agreement that outlines client and staff responsibilities. Part of the agreement discusses volunteer engagement and initiates conversation between staff and clients about the role volunteers will play during the 90-day Reception and Placement (R&P) Program. Volunteers must sign confidentiality agreements before volunteering. The amount and depth of client information given to a volunteer depends on the refugee client and the nature of the volunteer’s relationship with the refugee client (e.g. longevity of relationship). For instance, an Appointment Accompaniment volunteer will receive fewer personal details than a new American Friend. Both staff and volunteers agree to this hierarchy of information given and received:

Helen (Volunteer): [Pause] I think that if I were working with the same families for more than one week at a time, I think there would be a lot more I’d want to know. But, because I’m doing these discrete one-day [pause] and most of the time I’m actually assisting them I don’t have an interpreter, I don’t know what I don’t know [laughter] But, I think if there was a longer term, if I was actually doing any kind of needs assessment on people. If I was trying to figure out about them and figure out what were next steps, […] I don’t know when HIAS signs them up at what level [in school]. But again, that’s like because I do this like discrete little window on Wednesdays. I don’t have to get into those questions.

Mary (Staff): I mean, it’s really case-by-case and what the client wants us to share with the volunteer. So, like, if a client has a medical appointment where the nature
of the appointment itself reveals something about their condition, like if they have an appointment at the Lax Center for HIV-related stuff or if they have an oncology appointment, then we ask them, “Are you comfortable with a volunteer taking you?” And, if we do an American Friends pairing, then we would always check with the family first like. “Is there anything that you specifically don’t want the volunteer to know, that you specifically do want the volunteer to know? Anything that you want us to tell them so you don’t have to tell them?” […] We had a client who had um a daughter who she couldn’t find. So, just letting the volunteer know, “Just please don’t bring that up.”

Dana: How do you feel about the independence given to volunteers and feeling like they can go into a house and know what to do? Being told that you are on your own and self-sufficient?

Devorah (Volunteer): It’s great if you’re given enough information. Like, you know, are there dietary restrictions? What’s considered respectful and not to the family? How to dress sometimes? ‘Cause you don’t want them uncomfortable.

Dennis, Helen, and Mohammad assist with appointment accompaniment. They receive the clients’ names, addresses, and a phone number. Staff may share country of origin or family composition. For Dennis, the most relevant client information included names, phone number, languages spoken, and ages. “You’re in City Hall, you’re on Penn’s campus. You can’t just, you can’t walk up to every foreigner and say what is your name. And you have [finger snap] to have something that [snap] triggers that you know you got the right name. […] It would be embarrassing to walk up to somebody and ask them.” As the above excerpts demonstrate, volunteers with discrete client relations do not expect detailed client stories. However, a minimal amount of client information allows the volunteers to navigate their work thoughtfully and correctly. Adequate information can be liberating, as Devorah and Dennis particularly highlighted. Aurora explained how a lack of adequate information causes confusion.

We’ll send people and they’ll just be expected to go to someone’s home and are not given clear instructions. Even things like, a lot of the homes that our clients live in, don’t have doorbells. So you need to call them. You don’t tell [the volunteer] they don’t speak any English? In theory, we should have prepped them to know to like meet this person at this time, but that’s never a perfect system.

If a volunteer lacks client information at the beginning, the ensuing confusion has a tendency to result in panicked or anxious volunteers calling staff, thus frustrating staff who then perceive the volunteers as incompetent or unable to problem-solve in the moment. Returning to Aurora’s comment on a previous section, HIAS PA can cultivate an environment and training system that empowers volunteers to ask questions as long as staff-volunteer boundaries are respected.
Adequate Information as a Foundation for Self-Growth

Interviews exposed that volunteers learned buzzwords, key phrases, and resources during their time with HIAS PA. Consequently, they become more capable volunteers. Dennis captured how adequate information serves as a foundation for individual knowledge building.

Dennis (Volunteer): It’s important to know as much about the family as possible so that you can recognize them at the initial visit. [...] For me, it’s important to have the address because I’ve gotta find out where to pick them up. Because 90% of my people I’m picking up and I’m taking them home. I need that. Then, I can deal with the buses and all that stuff. [...] I mean sometimes they have phones sometimes they don’t. If they have phones, they may not speak English. [...] One trouble I ran into a while ago was, at one time, I think HIAS, when the medical escort came, provided the tokens and the money to do the trip. I had a gentleman who was here for a while and then his wife came. I started out, I have to say hello and who I was, do you have your I-94, do you have your insurance cards, do you have tokens, do you have two dollars, da da da da da [smacking table for emphasis] and we spent 20 minutes haggling over this. [...] I said, “Well you know, we need the insurance, we need the I-94,” well maybe not the I-94 because I’ve been around with them for a while. But insurance and tokens and money.

Adequate client information and knowledge on resettlement work permitted Dennis to confidently handle the situation’s hiccups. While staff and volunteers agreed that names, address, phone number, and ages are helpful, Dennis’s reflections explicate as to why. A client’s address helps the volunteer establish a meeting place. It also allowed Dennis to identify the most direct public transportation route and ensure that it matched what the client typically used. It allowed him to render the experience more holistic, just like the volunteer information session encouraged. While a phone number is ideal, Dennis illuminated the continued obstacles: Most clients do not speak enough English to problem-solve a time delay or a missed bus.

Furthermore, Dennis’ slew of questions highlight his acquired knowledge of mandatory items for a doctor’s appointment. “Do you have your I-94, do you have your insurance cards, do you have your tokens, do you have your two dollars.” The I-94 Form (Arrival-Departure Record Card) is the official U.S. Customs and Border Protection document proving a refugee client’s legal status in the United States. It is often accompanied with the Travel Document (a paper form used in lieu of a passport). Together, they offer photo identification and proof of residence status and, along with health insurance cards, are required at all doctor’s appointments. A round trip on public transportation requires two tokens and two dollars to purchase a “transfer” between transit lines. By ensuring that a refugee client had enough money to travel before departure,
Dennis avoided later confrontations and obstacles, although he explained that he has paid transportation fees for clients a few times.

While HIAS PA staff may prepare volunteers with explanations about transfers, tokens, and I-94 Forms, experientially acquired knowledge cultivates surefootedness. As this section argues, HIAS PA should and can prepare the volunteers with a certain amount of client and generalized information, but experiential learning solidifies its importance and concretizes the lessons. The two coexist with one another rather than compete. Finally, the preparation process also structured interdependent ties and trust bonds between staff and volunteers, which encourage volunteers to act independently while remembering their rooted base with staff. The next section will further examine boundaries of when to contact staff.

**When to Contact HIAS PA Staff**

Questions and obstacles inevitably arise, for both staff and volunteers. As a volunteer, I often called staff for time-sensitive information and staff often contacted me to send paperwork. The interdependent relationship permitted effective and efficient work. Volunteers must develop a barometer of when to contact staff and when to handle a situation independently.

Mary (Staff): I still have volunteers that I worked with who contact me now and some, like I appreciate that they contact me but sometimes their expectations for my response time aren’t really in line with my new job. And [pause] once I started doing orientations and trainings, I would talk with them about what are things that you can look up versus what are things that you can call me about? Only like in a nicely phrased way. Or what are the things that you can ask each other about? I wish I had been able to do the job for a little bit longer because I wanted to like connect all the volunteers and have them be supporting each other.

Dennis (Volunteer): [Ibrahim] gives me the information a day or so in advance and then, unless I have trouble, I will just text him at the end and tell him that I’ve drop them at home or I’ve whatever. If there’s a problem then I might text him or call him in the interim, but generally the only communication I have with him then is just that I’ve deposited them and that everything was fine.

Mohammad (Volunteer): If I struggle, I just call them. […] Or if I go to a client house and he’s not there, I call, “What should I do? Should I wait? Should I go back to HIAS? What’s the way?” So yeah, sometimes they tell me, Wait. Don’t go. We’ll call you or try to reach you.” So yeah, sometimes it’s just, “come back.” So I think that, what do you call it, credible communication by phone, it’s the only way to know what’s the true struggle, what’s the next step. […] But sometimes, I don’t call. If there is a problem, I solve it by myself. […] Sometimes
you can solve the problem and sometimes if you can’t, you just have to delay it or postpone it to another appointment. And it’s happened with me several times.

Mohammad continued by offering an example of when HIAS PA staff did not order a ride through Logisticare, a national program offering transportation to non-emergency medical appointments. Mohammad met a client with limited physical mobility expecting to accompany the client to his doctor’s appointment via Logisticare, but Logisticare did not arrive. The client lived near the doctor’s office and Mohammad offered to assist the client in his wheelchair. “It’s fun when you push people [chuckle] so when I went there, he said that he [was] not going, ‘It’s raining, I’m gonna get sick. You know, if it’s a Logisticare, I can go. But you gonna push me and it’s raining.’” Mohammad called the doctor’s office and postponed the appointment. “Sometimes you deal with the client, you have to solve it by yourself. So I did not call Amin. I did not call anyone. Just said, ‘Okay it’s your choice. But the next appointment will be the following month, so you’ll have to wait one month.’” He said, ‘It’s okay.’” In this example, HIAS PA stumbled on its end and did not communicate it with Mohammad. Regardless, Mohammad had established his own gauge of when to call staff and when to problem-solve in the moment and alone. Both Mohammad and Dennis affirm Mary’s desire that volunteers can differentiate between when to solve an issue alone, when to look something up online, and when to call staff.

**Limits to Information Sharing and Transparency with Volunteers**

How much is “enough” information to complete the goal and what are the limits to transparency? I asked staff if they felt it necessary to share character details about clients that impacted interpersonal relations. Particularly, I asked whether or not staff should alert volunteers about difficult clients.

Aurora (Staff): Yeah. I think we need to give them a full picture. Like, besides basic like, this is where they’re from, this is the family structure. These are some things maybe to be aware of. Yeah. Like this client might be difficult or a little hard to work with. Yeah I think they should know what they’re stepping into. Like, we would do with anyone. Like “Hey can you go like pick up my friend from this place, like this is who they are and like they may be pissed about this thing.” You know what I mean? Um. I think that’s important ‘cause it’s gonna help them like work with the client better.

Amin (Staff): [pause] I think yes. But, it would be helpful for them because always when you look at the challenging cases, it’s always you look to the root of that challenge. What happened to them in their country of origin? So, maybe they
have mental and psychological issues that need to be addressed. So, that volunteer needs to know this. [...] Some of the clients, some of them, they are a minority, is really hard to deal with not just because what happened to them. No, because they are hard to deal with. Their personality, right?

These humanizing comments effectively warn against homogenously categorizing all refugees and acknowledge that each refugee client presents singular needs and issues. Amin’s reflections address longitudinal relationships, like American Friend partnerships, rather than Aurora’s comments, which are more applicable to short-term Appointment Accompaniment relationships. Cecilia and Irene added that information about a child’s upbringing helps them tweak trauma-informed educational support. Staff agreed that a holistic understanding of a client benefits service delivery. However, staff did not uniformly practice this transfer of all-inclusive client information, especially with volunteers who had discrete one-day relations with a client.

During my research period, I attended a team meeting where contention emerged over whether or not volunteers should have access to case notes: the most bureaucratic, but also most extensive database of client information. As an intern, I was told, “If it is not case noted, the activity never happened.” Some staff rejected the idea of allowing volunteers to have case note access, while others were not as definitive.

Aurora (Staff): Yes, I don’t think volunteers should have access to case notes because I think that our clients are like trusting us and sometimes they’re trusting us with really sensitive information or things that I don’t think volunteers should have access to, because it’s like easy for [volunteers] to just to be like, “This is the plan. This is a refugee. They’re like in this box.” They’re like human beings and this is their information and they’re like trusting us as HIAS to do that [...] I just think that sort of betrays a lot of confidentiality and I also think it gets a little bit messier when too many people are privy to too many things. [...] I don’t think volunteers should have access to case notes. Um. And then, in the same breath, there are things that volunteers do that we have to have a note about. So like what is a good way for them to be able to document those things without interfering in the other work that’s being done?

Ebe (Staff): I say [pause] I say no because I don’t know. But my experience, unless that person is going to keep escorting that same client. Like when I used to be a case aide, I used to sit in, just to observe, but then it’s too much information. I couldn’t take it. That and also clients, since I was there too, clients expect me to remember everything. But it’s their appointment. Like the conversation they had with the doctor, like when we’re outside. When we’re home, “What did the doctor say?” [...] And also, there was one time, [...] I was in charge of PCPC clinic and at the end, the doctor just gave me an after-visit summary and I saw something interesting and since the client never talked me or the doctor, I went back to the
doctor and said, “Hey I saw this, what’s the deal?” You know? And then I found out that she don’t want us to know, but it’s on the paper and we’re required to keep the paper.

Earlier in his interview, Ebe pushed for preparing scenarios and tests for volunteers instead of giving client information. He thought that generalized information could adequately prepare a volunteer to ask clients the relevant questions and complete the needed tasks. Neither Aurora nor Ebe thought case notes would save time for or positively enhance volunteer experiences. The comments reflect staff’s desire to preserve client confidentiality and to empower a volunteer, while simultaneously illustrating the obstacles posed by volunteers’ limited access to client information. It delineates an arbitrary division between what client information qualifies as sensitive enough to shield from volunteers. While arbitrary, these distinctions create staff and volunteer groups with meaningful differences. Yet, complete overlap of volunteer and staff roles is not required in order to foster open communication and trust. In fact, as this thesis argues, the differences between staff and volunteers surfaces as strengths, rather than weaknesses.

Before becoming the housing coordinator, Mary served as a volunteer coordination (among other roles) and often struggled to both satiate volunteers’ hunger for honesty and honor her own hesitation to overburden volunteers with the dark realities of resettlement work. Unlike Ebe and Aurora’s concerns of violating client confidentiality, Mary highlighted public relations management and questions surround her transparency with volunteers.

Mary (Staff): Because it feels so much more meaningful to work with clients […] it’s really amazing to feel like you’re doing a job that matters. I felt like my job mattered when I was working with the volunteers too, mainly because the volunteers were helping refugees. But when people would get annoyed if I didn’t email them back or call them back in time, it’s just like, “Meh” [chuckle] It just felt superficial. Communicating with volunteers. It felt like I couldn’t be real with them. I had to be like this fake, positive person and I couldn’t just kind of like sit down eye-to-eye with them and be like, “Okay this is where we’re at” like the way that I kind of feel like I can with clients where I try to be like [pause] completely honest. […] With volunteers, it’s like, you need the pretty story.

Mary shared a story of meeting with a client and reviewing how the client could pay the upcoming rent. She did not shroud the client’s poverty. She confronted it with the client and together, they established plans. Mary felt unable to discuss the crude realities with volunteers. The hierarchy of refugee clients above volunteers resurfaced. However, her comments overlooked that volunteers want the “truth.” Irene explained:
Irene (Volunteer): I think it’s important to tell stories. I believe that there’s a volunteer who came in, who did not understand what refugee meant. She did not understand the trauma that these kids, that they’ve lived. She understood that they may have lived in another country for a couple of months and you know life wasn’t great, but she did not understand the severity of what some of these kids have been through and their families. So, I think HIAS doesn’t want to get too heavy, but I do think telling—they can change the names or whatever—but I think they need to tell a real story. Show a picture of a child and say this is what happened to this one family. Make it very real. “And here’s what, now when this child goes to school, this is why this child is struggling. No English. One parent. Post-war trauma. Trust issues. Had no school before.” You know, I think that would be pretty powerful. And I think, I’m including myself even though I thought I knew what a refugee was when I went in to this, understanding what these kids have been through has been a learning curve for me.

Irene’s comments stressed the value of “generalized information” and simultaneously alleviated Ebe and Mary’s concerns about honesty and confidentiality. She did not need the child’s name to develop her understanding of trauma, refugee resettlement, and education inequality. She wanted HIAS PA staff to be honest and transparent about obstacles that refugee youth confront in the United States. Irene craved what Mary thought she could not offer as a volunteer coordinator. Mary balanced the line between sugarcoating reality to attract and retain volunteers and growing frustrated when volunteers did not understand the severity of resettlement work in Philadelphia. Again, adequate information sharing presents itself as liberating for volunteers and offered them the tools and knowledge to more effectively volunteer with HIAS PA. However, vague guidelines surrounded how much client information is satisfactory and poorly defined guidelines outline what volunteers should do when faced with uncertainty.

**Bilateral Information Sharing**

Thus far, this chapter has presented staff as gatekeepers to and managers of valuable information. Yet, staff also positioned volunteers as agents of knowledge who can bring information back to the agency. While serving as an “arm of the agency,” volunteers acquired information useful to HIAS PA. However, transmission of information remains unilateral. HIAS PA lacked an infrastructure for feedback, assuming that information even effectively passed from staff to volunteers. Anita mentioned the silo effect: She often felt like she worked within her own bubble and that staff did not fully communicate with volunteers or amongst themselves.

Mohammad retold a time when he was as a source of information for clients and for staff:
Mohammad (Volunteer): All the clients, you know the process, when they come, they go through [Adult] English until they refer them to job. So, most of the refugee, they going to JEVS, they say, “Mohammad. We don’t learn anything. […] We was learning English at HIAS.” So I spoke to Cecilia about it and I told her and she said, “Come with me to Amin.” He said, “We can’t do nothing.” He said someone has to talk to them because all the clients, the refugees, say, “We go there, we sit at a computer—where’s the job? Like, where’s the job skills that they teach us.” Like, one of the clients told me, he [JEVS employee] said to them, “Just sit at the computer. Do anything. You have to be in the program or they will cut the food stamp or whatever.” So, I don’t think they are doing their job good. They’re wasting the government’s money. And the refugees, who’s gonna pay the price? You know what I mean? Because they are not learning. They just go there and sit. And, I said maybe they exaggerated ‘cause I know sometimes the Middle Eastern, they want to complain, but several people and they really struggle. They’re not offering anything. They’re just offering you room with a computer.

No infrastructure currently supports bilateral information sharing between volunteers and staff beyond direct communication. Nevertheless, the above anecdote reveals the strength and depth of volunteer knowledge. Volunteers who work in the field and cultivate personal ties with refugee clients continue to offer their own skills and knowledge to HIAS PA and enrich its direct service. While serving as an “arm of the agency” presents vague roles and boundaries, it also offers volunteers and staff a unique opportunity to deepen their awareness of refugee client needs and Philadelphia on a whole. I will return to this dynamic in the next chapter (Chapter 6).

STAFF-VOLUNTEER BOUNDARIES

This chapter argued for an increase of information sharing between volunteers and staff, along with the obstacles that sharing entails. Volunteers and staff bemoaned the time crunch and volunteers recognized the demands placed upon staff. Unluckily, adequate information sharing and volunteer training requires staff time. Nevertheless, volunteers still seek a way to permeate the bureaucratic divide and connect with staff, rightfully believing that interpersonal connections will improve their volunteer work (Williams 2001; Wilson and Musick 1999). When discussing ideal changes to the volunteer program, Irene sighed, “Just to keep things really transparent and not assume that anybody knows something.” As an example, she discussed her unawareness of HIAS PA’s multiple staff roles. “I’m like ‘Oh my gosh. Instead of making 25 phone calls to find something out, I could have called him and found out in two minutes.” Irene finished by acknowledging staff’s time crunch, while also honoring her own volunteer needs. “So, I think a
A lot of transparency, a lot of communication, even though we’re not staff. We don’t want to take up the staff’s time, but I do think it would be important for everybody to understand what everybody does.” If HIAS PA’s volunteer program relies upon effective training and communication, what boundaries does staff erect between themselves and volunteers? Irene recognized these status differentiations, yet what happens when volunteers transgress staff-volunteer boundaries via miscommunication and over-communication?

Aurora (Staff): We’ll have volunteers that, you know, will call us and leave us voicemails and always check in. When we don’t answer their calls within 24/48 hours, they get really upset and feel neglected. And I get that as someone who’s been a volunteer. And like, “I’m trying to help this agency, why aren’t they like responding to me.” So, I think, part of it is a lack of understanding on the volunteer’s part about like seeing our perspective and vice versa as well. Because really for like a volunteer. It takes a lot of time for them to become in a volunteer sense, self-sufficient in like supporting the work that we do.

Cecilia (Staff): I think for volunteers to respect the commitment to what they’re doing and respecting it almost as if it were a job in that they, they have the same level of communication with me that they would with a boss, you know, with a job that they were getting paid to do. So, I think that’s where, you know, that piece of like letting me know if they’re not coming. Arriving on time. Taking an extra couple of minutes to stay and help clean up. Like those kinds of things. I would say just treating it, treating it seriously like that is helpful. You know?

Both excerpts present staff as sources of authority and knowledge, that want volunteers to acquire a sense of ownership over the role. Volunteers should reach a level of “self-sufficiency,” where they intuitively know how to handle a situation instead of relying upon staff every moment, but also never fully abandon their subordinate position as volunteer and encroach upon staff territory. Volunteers should feel empowered to act alone, but also alert staff about absences and other issues. A notable divide persists between staff and volunteers and thereby exemplifies the logic of an interdependent volunteer model, which functions so that volunteers feel connected and supported enough by staff to act boldly while alone.

I held six interviews with staff. I asked five of them about onerous volunteer encounters. I heard the same anecdote four times with varying levels of details and emotions. I hesitated whether or not to present the story, knowing that the events continue to affect HIAS PA and that staff wanted to forget the incident. Nonetheless, when a story emerges this many times within a small sample, it would be dishonest to not extract at least the “generalized information,” especially since I heard continued conversations, jokes, and exasperations related to this
volunteer throughout my research period and even into my time as a paid employee. The lessons and stories related to the volunteer remain institutionalized within HIAS PA and, according to the four staff members, have tarnished perceptions towards volunteers.

Boundary Transgression: An Extreme Anecdote

As previously stated, HIAS PA requires attendance at the volunteer orientation for American Friends, the volunteer position that pairs community members with a refugee family. HIAS PA has a formal pairing program. At a collaborative event between HIAS PA and a local synagogue in September 2016, a past American Friend connected with a newly arrived refugee client. The volunteer and refugee client ignited a friendship and they exchanged contact information. The volunteer assumed the role as a pseudo-American Friend, all without HIAS PA’s support or knowledge. A case manager explained that the volunteer “may be like super helpful to the client. I need to give her some credit. She bought my client an iPhone 7.” He added rather bitterly, “Unfortunately, we got caught in the middle and she’s just not helpful [to HIAS PA’s work].” The problem was not based in her relationship with the client, but the negative ways she impacted HIAS PA staff through misguided communication.

A few weekends after the event, a case manager received a frazzled call from the volunteer explaining that the client was locked out of his home. The client spoke English fluently and had previously explained to HIAS PA that he felt comfortable directly contacting the landlord with questions or concerns. The case manager called the client and handled the situation. “I deal with my client. I empower my client. I don’t care about that distraction from volunteers and, although I solved that problem, she got annoyed because she felt that I just excluded her or something.” The volunteer continued to send aggressive emails. The same case manager recalled: “So, she sends me a message telling me, ‘Oh, being a good case worker is to be good in terms of communication with not just the client, but with the volunteer as well.’ And she’s super pushy, so I just replied, ‘You also need to know being a good volunteer as well is part of it not to tell me what to do.’”

Another staff member recalled that the volunteer contacted her and the Executive Director saying, “You know, I’ve called [staff member] twice and I’ve left voicemails and I’m [an] American Friend volunteer and no one’s gotten back to me. This is really unprofessional and unacceptable.” One staff member exasperatingly spoke about the far-reaching effects of this
volunteer’s actions that implicated not only the case manager, but the entire Refugee Team and even the Executive Director, who scheduled a time to speak one-on-one with the volunteer. The same staff member explained that this refugee client was well known within his community. Therefore, the volunteer’s impacts extended beyond the single client to a handful of others and aggravated feelings of self-doubt and unworthiness. Staff explained that tense interactions festered and they unfortunately awaited the end of the client’s case so that they could formally break ties with the informal American Friend.

The anecdote misses a crucial perspective: that of the volunteer. It only captures staff voices. While the volunteer’s reflections would further nuance our understanding of staff-volunteer conflict, I want this section to particularly capture staff perceptions, since ultimately, they shape the regulations and expectations for volunteers and therefore, decide whether or not a volunteer is categorized as useful, ineffective or damaging. When asked if this experience affected staff perceptions towards volunteers, one staff member emphatically explained:

Yeah! I think it has. I think it makes us way more apprehensive. To have people get involved with our clients because we don’t know what consequences that can have. It’s like when you have a volunteer literally calling a case worker telling him that he’s terrible at his job and sending mass emails to people telling everyone that HIAS is awful and like doesn’t do anything for our clients and yeah. And this is one person who’s exceptionally insane, but yeah. It like just leaves a bad taste in your mouth.

Another staff member traced the volunteer’s actions to her lack of awareness about refugee resettlement and about client expectations. Ongoing training and effective communication reemerges as a critical player in nurturing trust relations, but also as a double-edged sword if someone violates staff-volunteer boundaries.

I asked staff how often incidents of boundary transgression occurred. For some, this example was an anomaly. Others said explosive interactions happened four to six times per month. Staff expressed openness to hearing volunteer reflections and to having volunteers shape programming. Yet, they also expressed apprehension about receiving too many critiques. Aurora said that staff needed to balance between “having volunteer voices heard, but not yelling,” a tough balance to find when few occasions arose for volunteers and staff to share space.

Thus we return to “what makes a good volunteer.” While the pseudo-American Friend demonstrated commitment to the client and “good intentions,” she did not demonstrate a willingness to learn or a commitment to the agency’s work ethic. She did not fit the volunteer
mold. While she viewed HIAS PA as a source of authority and knowledge, she questioned the staff when they did not consult her about client decisions or promptly respond to her. She was too much as an “active agent,” to use McDonald and Warburton’s (2003) framework. All staff interviews concluded on a similar note: Loyalty resided in refugee clients first, not volunteers and unwanted volunteer distractions from staff’s focus on clients will not be tolerated. I continue to hear bitter laughter about this volunteer and witnessed apprehension about navigating interactions with her. The story was institutionalized and reshaped staff-volunteer relations. It drove staff to cry out for a volunteer coordinator, a middle-person between staff and volunteers.

DISCUSSION

The next two chapters will examine ideas of volunteer membership and the impacts of volunteerism on refugee resettlement discourse and related social action in Philadelphia. This chapter examined boundaries between fruitful and damaging communication and why formal training mattered, but often was inadequate. Instead, alternative-training methods must be developed that encourage ongoing learning and that collaboratively redefine volunteer labor. Both staff and volunteers should participate in these conversations to ensure that new volunteer infrastructure develops bilateral information sharing and to create mutually understood expectations of staff and volunteer roles. HIAS PA staff appreciated volunteers in rhetoric, but had not developed a system to actively and continually support volunteers in a symbiotic way. Consequently, multiple, contradictory staff perceptions and actions towards volunteers festered, even without the new volunteer coordinator position that I will examine in the next chapter.

Due to frustrations with volunteers, especially highlighted by the anecdote regarding boundary transgressions, HIAS PA staff retreated from continued volunteer interaction. Their loyalty and commitment resided in directly supporting refugee clients. Yet, to offer this direct client service requires harnessing and cultivating volunteers’ skills and energy instead of marginalizing them and expecting volunteers to achieve de facto self-sufficiently. Recall that increased volunteer labor is linked to improved quality of direct service. Like clients, volunteer self-sufficiency requires staff involvement, transmission of relevant client and generalized information, and it pushes staff to relinquish some control and encourage volunteers to “fly by the seat of their pants.” The self-sufficiency model for both volunteers and clients wrongly erases the centrality of interdependence and semi-autonomy. As Aurora explained, “Part of self-
sufficiency [is] not having it all figured out, but it’s knowing who to go to ask the questions, and to even know the questions that you need to ask.” Staff directs refugee clients towards community resources and towards English programs. For volunteers, self-sufficiency means feeling capable and knowledgeable enough to handle a situation alone, but also assured that HIAS PA staff remains a lifeline when Logisticare does not arrive or when a Social Security card is lost. For clients and volunteers, an interdependent model diminishes false narratives of solitude and enhances images and realities of community support.
CHAPTER 6
Fostering Membership and Expressing Gratitude

My thesis emerged from a concerning paradox: Those driven and inspired to enter the social work sector burnout quickly, taking with them stabilizing experience and knowledge. Once I began to interview volunteers and staff, the paradox acquired another fold: Staff craved additional trained support, but as discussed in previous chapters, hesitated to open themselves to critique or to give volunteers too much liberty and insider-status. Consequently, volunteers move in and out of the insider circle depending on membership status, but perpetually remain on the fringes, unable to assume the labor and trust that would alter the entropic pattern of case managers entering and then leaving. This chapter examines broader questions of membership to HIAS PA’s collective, perceptions of volunteer labor, and meaningful appreciation in a non-profit, bureaucratic sector. While I remain unable to neatly answer the disconcerting paradoxes of unsustainable social work, I present another contradiction that may help in navigating the former. Ultimately, when discussing volunteer integration and membership to HIAS PA, unique and transformative strength resides in the fringes that staff cannot access due to their proximity to clients and the bureaucratic red tape. Volunteers enhance social services in ways unbeknown to staff due to minimal collaborative conversations and meetings between the two groups. Staff and volunteers must collectively acknowledge their varying strengths in order to utilize them and staff should avoiding shirking volunteer management and displacing it to a singular individual, specifically the new Community Engagement Specialist.

INCORPORATING VOLUNTEERS INTO HIAS PA’S INFRASTRUCTURE

The previous chapter examined boundary transgressions due to miscommunication and misunderstandings. This section looks into social connections and social interactions that create the “HIAS Family” that Amin mentioned about in his interview. It assesses how trained and committed volunteers fit into the larger HIAS PA infrastructure.

Arms of the Agency and External Representation
The below graphic removes the linearity of the hierarchy found in Chapter 4 and instead, illustrates how distance from HIAS PA’s staff and office is dependent upon the volunteer position. Volunteers experience less structure and supervision the further they are from office
Volunteering involves externally representing HIAS PA. Anita explained that she represented Judaism and HIAS PA wherever she traveled “for all the people who might have just met their first Jewish person.” Volunteers who work outside of the office are charge with two duties: complete banal and time-consuming tasks and uphold the reputation of HIAS PA. The externality mandates that staff-volunteer relations are imbued with trust. As Luhmann (1979) and Lewis and Weigert (1985) argue, building cognitive and emotional trust does not guarantee perfect execution of a specific task, but instead, reduces anxiety when confronting an unknown. Trust relations reinvigorate volunteers and soothe staff nerves by assuring staff that volunteers can complete an assigned task appropriately and effectively without supervision.

Mary spoke about the distancing factor between staff and volunteers and related it to her own transition from a fellowship to a formal staff position.

Mary (Staff): I feel like from the outside, people did not see a difference at all, even if I explained it to them. […] They just see me as HIAS. And, this happens with clients all the time. That clients just see volunteers as “HIAS.” It’s like one of our main things that we have to get through. Where they think that anything HIAS is just HIAS. It’s all HIAS. […] But, with the staff I just feel like a lot more included. I mean, I felt included already last year, but I feel like, now I’m really a part of the family and like I get to stay there and it’s a good feeling.
According to Mary, the stratification and differentiation between volunteers and staff is apparent to those within the agency, but not to those unaffiliated with HIAS PA. For instance, Dennis mentioned how the CHOP receptionists recognized him upon arrival and associated him with a refugee resettlement agency. Before he had a chance to say, “I’m from HIAS PA,” mannerisms shifted and treatment turned sour, revealing the significance of understanding how volunteers function as “arms of the agency.”

When meeting clients, Dennis also attached himself to HIAS PA to simplify hierarchies and to ease the appointment accompaniment task.

Dennis (Volunteer) I tell them my name and that I’m from HIAS and that I’m gonna escort them to the doctor or something like that. And they, at least they understand the term doctor. They’d been notified by HIAS that I’m coming. Now, sometimes, they may not be ready. [chuckle] But, they supposedly were told when I’m coming.

Dennis’ remarks point to the muddled relationship he has with HIAS PA: It is simultaneously an agency with which he identifies, but he remains outside enough to reallocate tasks back to the staff and critique them as a separate entity (rather than staff who critiques one another). For instance, HIAS PA staff must contact refugee clients about an upcoming appointment. This is not Dennis’ responsibility. At that moment, HIAS PA became “they,” while previously in his reflections, HIAS PA was a “me.” Later, Dennis recalled a conversation with a newly arrived family. “They were most anxious to start school. They were asking me all types of questions. I said, ‘What? That’s just not my thing.’ But I said, ‘HIAS will be in touch with you within a few days and they will help you with the enrollment and then you should ask these questions.’ And so, that was the end of that conversation [chuckle].” Again, Dennis represented HIAS PA for the refugee family and the receptionist. Yet, as a volunteer, Dennis lacked information that only staff manages and distanced himself from this position of knowledge.

Aurora echoed Dennis’ deference to staff:

Aurora (Staff): For like 99% of our clients, they trust us so much. […] We could tell them, “Do this or that” and they would. Because we are their first point of contact. They like feel safe with us. So, if someone says they’re with HIAS, they’re also going to probably feel safe with that person and trust that person. So it’s like an interesting boundary thing. Where it’s like good they need that umbrella like to be able to work with people like this [pause] I think it’s important for volunteers to know, like the client has a question and maybe they should know and be able to like, “I can’t answer this for you, but you know, call Aurora, call Amin, call Lana […] This is a person that helps HIAS that’s gonna help you.”
Both Aurora and Mary agree that volunteers should encourage clients to contact staff with questions and concerns. Even with American Friends, there is a fine balance between volunteers serving as supportive community members and becoming pseudo-case managers. Interestingly though, neither staff member said that volunteers should pose their questions to staff. Clients again trump volunteers in the attention hierarchy.

Volunteers rarely used the “we” pronoun when referring to their relationship with HIAS PA. “We” referred to volunteer-volunteer relationships, volunteer-client relationships, or family and friend relationships. Irene, an afterschool volunteer, was the only volunteer who actively used “we” when discussing her connections with volunteers, students, and Cecilia, the education coordinator. I am not offering a quantitative analysis of the frequency with which participants used “we,” “me,” and “they.” However, in contrast to staff members who used “we” constantly in reference to HIAS PA, the volunteer usages of the pronoun point to a distancing factor. Volunteers feel connected to HIAS PA, but not all consumed. The volunteers could step out of their HIAS PA “role” (Wuthnow 1991). Jasmine reflected upon staff and said, “The more I’m here, the more I see that [staff members] are completely invested. Like your lives are invested in this program.” There is no extraction of staff identity. Staff members are HIAS PA’s organs. Volunteers are arms that can speed up work and serve as appendages to the organs, yet require connection to the body to effectively function.

Autonomy of Volunteers

Understanding that volunteers straddle the “inside” and “outside,” how much autonomy does staff grant volunteers to alter programming? The opinions varied. Ebe and Cecilia seemed receptive to volunteer ideas, yet to use Cecilia’s words, it can lead to a scenario of “too many cooks in the kitchen.” In contrast, another staff member took a harder line, such as in the retelling of a volunteer confrontation: “Being a good volunteer is […] not to tell me what to do.” To examine the question of autonomy, I asked staff and volunteers how they taught SEPTA public transportation routes to refugee clients and whether or not volunteers could deviate from the designated route.\textsuperscript{100} During my internship, case managers insisted that for a given refugee family or individual, the entire Refugee Team should use the same public transportation route in efforts to decrease confusion and encourage refugee clients in learning SEPTA.

\textsuperscript{100} SEPTA is an acronym for Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority and is Greater Philadelphia’s public transportation operator.
Helen and Dennis smiled and laughed when asked how they explain SEPTA. They described pointing to signs, looking at maps, and relying upon body language. Both drew upon keywords such as “transfers” and “tokens” to reinforce the learning process that HIAS PA started. Dennis radiated joy when describing the kindness of many SEPTA employees and then sighed, unsure how the public transportation system could become more accessible to non-English speakers. He advocated for using the bus because he felt that the underground routes often led to confusion and disorientation. In contrast, Ebe preferred the subway and el because there are no detours; trains follow a track and a refugee client can “just come back.”

He explained that on trains, “You don’t need to know the names. You can just count.” When I asked Ebe how he felt about volunteers changing public transportation routes, he started by asserting that clients controlled routes, although HIAS PA influenced them and has accumulated enough knowledge of the various routes to assume a position of intellectual authority.

Ebe (Staff): I think they should just stick at what’s easiest.
Dana: Easiest according to whom?
Ebe: Client. And they’ll learn the other route, they will learn. […] I could tell you like at least six different ways to, you know, get to the office. So, sometimes, I thought that like some [routes are] good or like the most convenient and fast. But sometimes, it is not for clients depending on their perspective or ability to learn. […] I think HIAS know every route kind of now. Like because there’s no secret place. Like we don’t put people everywhere. [Only] Southeast or Northeast. Like Southeast, everybody have taken [bus] 47.

Interestingly, when further prodded whether or not volunteers can influence and change routes, Ebe did not reject the idea. In fact, he seemed open to it.

Ebe: But, actually it would be good to open like ‘cause like, as we’re human, sometimes we kind of like, what we used to do or what we have been doing over and over, we thought that’s the only way. […] Since I always take [Bus Route] 79 to Broad Street, even though I’m somewhere by like Mifflin Street, I always thought about taking 79, walking like four, five blocks up, [rather] than going down to one block on Oregon, take G or 7?
Dana: I am curious because I heard this summer that when clients would arrive, we have to be sure to use this route so that we don’t confuse the clients?
Ebe: Yes. But, if the volunteer brought up the best option, we even need to stick with that. Yeah.

Volunteers must know how to offer knowledge back to HIAS PA while remaining cognizant of HIAS PA protocol. While volunteers are expected to fill in the traveling time, such as Dennis

101 “EL” is a shortened version of “Elevated Line,” another transit line on tracks that travels above and below ground.
and Helen do by teaching key phrases and public transportation comportments, they are not expected to change routes or general procedures. If volunteers have ideas, staff might be amenable to them, granted that an infrastructure existed to channel those ideas into productive and meaningful change.

Cecilia spoke about volunteers’ capacities to change afterschool programming:

Cecilia (Staff): I would absolutely be willing to do that [give volunteers programming control]. [chuckle] One of the other volunteers, he does really well with math and she [another volunteer] wants him to do like a little mini-lesson with the kids on like word problems. Which I think is potentially like a good idea. If we structure it the right way. She also was the one who really encouraged doing more Halloween activities, which was good for me to hear because the kids ended up loving it and she brought some materials and things so yeah I, I appreciate it. Nia and I both say, when people are like giving you ideas and suggestions, they care. [pause] Which holds them accountable.

Ultimately, volunteers experienced semi-autonomy: they were empowered to impact programming, if they remained an arm of the agency and mostly reproduced preexisting standards and expectations. While debilitating in some ways, semi-autonomy contributes to a volunteer’s sense of membership and commitment to HIAS PA. People critique because they care, explained Irene. As Cecilia said though, the true struggle presented was properly structuring the care, the critiques, and the energy, all of which involved time and staff capacity.

**PERCEPTION OF VOLUNTEERS AND TIME**

Staff recognized that volunteers increase capacity and work quality. Nonetheless, volunteers frustrated staff when they were too hesitant and inundated staff with questions or when volunteers were too bold and deviated from guidelines. Mary expressed annoyance with volunteers because “[they] create more work for us” and the “whole goal of a good volunteer is that they actually make there be less work for the staff.” Whether or not the goal of volunteerism is to diminish staff work, what else does volunteer labor produce that remains imperceptible? This section examines staff impressions of volunteer work through the lens of how volunteers spend time with clients. While staff builds a foundation for volunteers, volunteers meaningfully and creatively buttress and enrich it with care and personal resources, as briefly introduced in Chapter 4. Yet, much of what volunteers accomplish while in the field remains unknown to staff due to a weak bilateral communication infrastructure.
As previously explained, volunteers take time to train and to support, but by offering their
time, volunteers later free time for staff. In a sector of limited financial resources, literal human
resources and abstract resources, like time, acquire new import. On my first trip to the County
Assistance Office (CAO), Lana drilled into me the need to teach English in those waiting spaces.
Throughout the summer, I carried a notebook within which refugee clients and I drew images of
buses, animals, and milk bottles. One day, as I sat in the CAO with a newly arrived Congolese
family, I drew a two-floored building with French windows, a walkway, and a large door—the
stereotypical cartoon image of an American home. Below it, I wrote “house.” Time ticked by.
We waited. He drew a monkey, a snake, and then another image that I did not recognize. A
mushroom? A hat? Then, I realized that he had drawn his model of a home. “House,” we
repeated. The father taught me the Swahili equivalent and our informal English class continued.
Volunteers shared similar stories of the waiting spaces. Irene recounted when a student
returned from the Philadelphia Orchestra glowing with joy. Through arm movements and simple
phrases, they discussed orchestra etiquette and music composition. Helen described walking to
CHOP Lab with a newly arrived family from Syria. On their way, they passed the University of
Pennsylvania Museums. The father asked questions like, “What’s that building” and “Where can
I teach my kids about this culture.” She explained that people receiving public benefits could
visit museums at significantly reduced prices. She printed out information and shared it with him
the following week. “But when you spend time and you are able to communicate with people,
there’s so much that’s so universal, you know? Like this mom of this son who had the [health]
disorder? She was so educated about his medications and such a good advocate for him and it
just felt like so many moms I know with kids with special needs.” Each volunteer had a
multitude of stories. Volunteers recognized that in principle, they “just” rode the bus or talked
about school uniform vouchers. But, they primarily focused on what those exchanges allotted
for: genuine connection, information exchange, and symbiotic learning.

Again emerges the question of how people fill seemingly empty spaces with compassion,
resilience, laughter, support, and grit. As mentioned in Chapter 4, volunteers enhance service
quality by being fully attentive and present in ways that an overwrought staff cannot always be.
Volunteers take time to cultivate, but through their discrete windows of volunteerism, they offer
time and fill it collaboratively with refugee families and individuals. Yet, staff does not hear
these stories unless they talk with volunteers or attend events with volunteers. As Aurora said,
volunteers are “wonderful and awful all at the same time” because they “do the things that we don’t have the capacity or time to do,” but “they also become a whole other part of your job.”

Clients are prioritized over volunteers and volunteers would not oppose this claim. Many of staff stories about clients echo those of volunteers. Maybe the divisions between staff and volunteers are not as stark as labels suggest. Regardless, the continued perceptions of volunteers as “wonderful and awful,” as time-savers and time-consumers, perpetuated staff’s ambivalence towards volunteers. Since they do not see the compassion, laughter, and support, volunteers remain organizational objects that require work and time. Even if staff cognitively acknowledges volunteer contributions, the emotional trust component falters. A viable system of gratitude and togetherness would not only benefit volunteers’ sense of membership to HIAS PA, but it would also improve and nuance staff’s perceptions of volunteerism at HIAS PA and expose the subtle albeit significant ways in which volunteers supplement HIAS PA’s work.

APPRECIATION, RECOGNITION AND THE THANKLESS TASKS

Transparency, streamline communication, ongoing contact with staff, and adequate and continual training all influence a volunteer’s sense of membership within HIAS PA and to its mission. For instance, the afterschool’s structured programming most visibly and positively affects togetherness. Yet, beyond email correspondences and transient conversations, what do staff-volunteer interactions foster and do they affect the deeper questions of belonging and appreciation? To examine these questions of membership and recognition, staff and volunteers discussed intentional gatherings, specifically the September Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast.

In early September 2016, HIAS PA held its second Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast. A bright blue morning greeted a handful of volunteers, board members, some Legal Team staff members, the then Director of Refugee Programming and Planning, and Cecilia. The event started around 8:50AM. A catered breakfast framed the room where English classes would unfold the next day. Succulents decorated each table. I spoke quietly with Dennis and met Helen and Anita for the first time. While Legal Team staff members attended, unfortunately, no Refugee Team staff members came until the very end, just to sneak some food. The event fell during the week when 23 clients arrived out of September’s total of 51 new clients, a record number of arrivals for the “September surge.”

For volunteers, these meetings reinforced the value of volunteerism partially because
staff spent their most valuable resource on volunteers: time. However, volunteers and staff quickly segregated themselves at the breakfast. Volunteers sat amongst themselves and staff mostly sat together. Board members flitted between the groups. Legal Team members introduced themselves and then slipped into affable conversations with one another. A longtime employee who started as a volunteer said, “Volunteers make the agency.” Cecilia, the Refugee Team representative said, “Programming would not work without you.” Ava and board members equally praised the passion and commitment of volunteers. A few volunteers shared their stories and experiences and the event concluded.

The volunteers who attended the breakfast said that they cared more about connecting with staff and volunteers and having a chance to hear and share stories than receiving verbal recognition or material signs of gratitude. In our interview, Helen expressed dismay in not seeing Refugee Team members and not volunteering that morning. “And then when we were there and staff said, ‘Notice that none of the refugee staff are here,’ I was like ‘Oh they don’t have any volunteers this morning!’ I cannot skip another [Wednesday] for the annual meeting.” She attended the breakfast for a “dose of inspiration and connection” with the HIAS PA staff, but ended up feeling guilty for not doing more volunteer work. Each volunteer interviewed wanted more moments to bond with other volunteers and more group meetings with staff. They want chances to collaborate and to deepen their knowledge about resettlement work in Philadelphia. They wanted to feel part of the immigration justice movement.

Anita did not speak highly of this year’s event. “HIAS is always very appreciative,” she said. “The first [breakfast] was very nice because it was the first time they did it. We really got to meet and talk. I found [this] one not to be very productive. […] This one, not only it was their busiest month and most of the staff couldn’t be there, a lot of volunteers weren’t there.” The appreciation component stems from togetherness. That is why Helen attended: She wanted that “dose of connection.” Jasmine explained that she often felt like a “lone wolf” and wanted to see other people “who really want to volunteer.” Irene said, “I don’t think there’s one volunteer that really wants to be thanked, just acknowledged.” Granted, Anita, Irene, and Devorah all valued when staff actively thanked them for their work and the three of them intentionally attended events that would permit staff interaction. Consequently, when few staff attended the appreciation breakfast, they felt disappointed.

When Dennis and I spoke about volunteer-staff meetings, he segued to asking about other
volunteer and staff positions at HIAS PA. I answered questions for about ten minutes, struggling to refocus attention back on him and his reflections. Even though Dennis is a valued volunteer, he lacked awareness about other volunteer positions, partially because few opportunities existed for him to meet other volunteers. Every volunteer sought opportunities to gather with one another to “review things that they’ve run into or share things that they think other volunteers could use,” explained Dennis. Irene said that, “get-togethers are good. It broadens your horizon and what other volunteers do besides the education program.” Volunteer-staff gatherings or volunteer-only gatherings contribute to volunteers’ ongoing orientations. Events that concentrate volunteers together permit information sharing and allow staff to give program updates.

Dennis quickly rebutted that the gatherings should not and could not occur too many times and Devorah added that she appreciated that HIAS PA does not hold too many events and instead, encourages volunteers to actively volunteer and not just revel in their “good intentions.” Moreover, adding to the previous section, volunteer-staff gatherings create space for volunteers and staff to collectively redefine volunteer roles and expectations, which would result in a more dynamic volunteer program and higher rates of volunteer retention (Garner and Garner 2011).

Aurora spoke about the value of these gatherings for volunteers from a staff perspective. She picked up on the ideas of togetherness aiding a sense of membership:

Aurora (Staff): I think it’s important for volunteers to be able to talk with each other too. For a way of like self-care or for like motivation or to like share in these like shared experiences and feel a little bit of camaraderie and connection to the agency, to the staff, to, ‘cause you want to feel like, if I’m gonna volunteer somewhere, I like want to feel like I’m a part of what’s going on. I don’t want to feel like I’m separate, even though my role’s really different.

When asked if staff would benefit, Aurora affirmed that these gatherings would build staff trust in volunteers and said that, “Just building relationship is huge. And I think and it’s nice to know these people and be like, ‘Okay I can call and depend on you,’” a remark that resonates with Luhmann’s (1979) study on the function of cognitive and emotional trust. Likewise, literature on avoiding activist burnout underscores the value of group gatherings because they reassert the collective drive for a specific goal and minimize the sense of isolation or solitude (Gorski 2015). Counterintuitively, attending the Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast might have given the Refugee Team the “dose of inspiration” that they needed during their busiest week.

In short, material goods or monetary compensation did not qualify as adequate
appreciation, although Mohammad wished that he could receive a reimbursement for travel expenses. According to Aurora, no one enters the social work sector as staff or volunteer for the paycheck. Instead, gratitude involves “creating the time and the space to just let the people know you’re valuable,” she said. For volunteers and staff, adequate gratitude included three main components. First, volunteers wanted to meet other volunteers and staff to affirm camaraderie and community. Second, they wanted to share information and stories. They wanted to learn. Third, and not directly stated, for both staff and volunteers, meeting one another instills trust, which as previously demonstrated bolsters a volunteer’s capacity to effectively execute their tasks. Irene lightheartedly said that she does not need a certificate. “Just feed me,” she joked. Volunteers experienced guilt for not doing more, which has led staff to perceive some volunteers as frustrating and “needy” because they regularly reach out with ideas on how to do more. These meetings offer a chance to recognize that volunteers do absorb guilt and emotional toil. While volunteers can step out of their “roles,” they extract and carry stories, both an asset and a cautionary tale of volunteerism. Expressing gratitude acknowledges the emotional and physical effects of volunteering at HIAS PA. Although most volunteers conveyed the joy that they reap from their volunteer position, it is not all “rosy.”

**Distinct Appreciation for Staff**

The same phenomena held for staff: Recognition and gratitude should not stop at the paycheck. Aurora cynically noted, “How do you tell someone they’re appreciated when you’re not paying them. But also! How do you tell staff that they’re appreciated because like yes, you’re paying them, but also like, people! That is not gratification for the work that you’re doing. That’s like your paycheck.” Aurora wanted feedback, positive and critical. She wanted staff to structure lunchtime so that she does not feel a pressure to eat alone at her desk. She wanted staff to hold each other accountable to leave the office at 5PM. In short, she too wanted more staff togetherness. During my research period, staff held more conversations about limits. A trained psychologist on HIAS PA’s Board offered biweekly group therapy sessions, which allowed staff members to collaboratively address issues posed by secondary trauma, exhaustion, and stress.

Mary smirked while explaining her sense of entitlement to burnout. She said, “As a staff, we’re angry at the world, which makes sense because [we’re] helping refugees and immigrants and we work in this political climate.” She added that, “Volunteers are coming in to us as
outsiders, and we’re like, ‘Well, you’re not devoting your life to this, you’re not working in this, so what right do you have to be upset about it or care about it?’” She added, “It’s hard not to get a little elitist, which is terrible, but at the same time…” Membership to HIAS PA exhibits itself differently depending on staff or volunteer status, and secondarily based on volunteer position and individual personality. Pulling on Wuthnow, if “staff” becomes the “self” while “volunteer” remains a “role,” it is comprehensible that staff fiercely protects infringement upon their positions and wards off damaging criticisms. Mary mentioned the political climate that threatens immigrant communities and social service agencies like HIAS PA. The threats are personal and direct. While membership for volunteers reinforces their commitment to HIAS PA’s mission and aids their ability to effectively volunteer, membership for staff entails friendship and affirmation of their intentional choice to work in the challenging and under-resourced immigration sector.

**SOLUTIONS AND A NEW POSITION**

By December 2016, HIAS PA had obtained adequate funding to begin recruitment for a Community Engagement Specialist (CES), a new staff position intended to manage volunteers, handle in-kind donations, and develop educational and advocacy-based outreach. Staff anxiously awaited this position, hoping that the CES could funnel volunteers into roles, and more notably, filter out distracting questions and comments. The CES would serve as a buffer between staff and volunteers. Volunteers acknowledged the logic of the position, but also hesitated to embrace it, fearful that the new divide would weaken communication, responsiveness, and ties to the team. Helen explained that her work ran more smoothly since she started directly communicating with Ibrahim, the health coordinator, instead of first talking with Mary and then Ibrahim.

The CES was intended to focus on the Refugee Team and then gradually work with the entire agency. Staff expressed concern about the CES also working with the Legal Team.

Mary (Staff): I looks like that they’ll be working with […] the entire agency which is good but it does make me a little worried that they won’t be in touch with refugee resettlement and our clients [pause] I feel like it really helped me to be able to do my job that I knew every single one of our clients and I was at team meeting every week and I knew what the different families were dealing with so I wasn’t just kind of blindly matching volunteers with families or like when I sent someone on a medical escort like I knew what problems might come up if the person was gonna be like, “Oh I don’t have tokens.”

No Refugee Team staff members, except for the Director of Refugee Programming and
Planning, partook in the job search and few of them knew what the job actually entailed. Staff did not want to recruit new volunteers or start new volunteer positions until they had the CES.

As my thesis argues, volunteers offer the capacity to enhance quality services for refugee clients. However, staff interviews dangerously viewed the CES position as a “fix-it-all” to their concerns and volunteer frustrations.

Dana: Why would [the CES] make communication with a volunteer easier?
Amin (Staff): ‘Cause that person will screen out many questions that they can answer themselves. Will screen out many weird questions or people pushing for stuff that is unrealistic. [...] So, when you have a person, who like a staff member who his or her job is just to arrange with volunteers. So this is their job, like the whole time they spend is like to recruit volunteers and to train them and to answer their question. [...] But, this should be you know, go first to that person, um, who will screen out many weird things.

Aurora captured general staff opinions that, “Besides probably being really overwhelming, right now [the CES] seems like there’s mostly benefits.” Based on staff interviews, initial stress was the CES’ only perceivable downside.

In addition to distributing volunteer management elsewhere, Mary wanted a CES in order to give more attention and care to the volunteers. She saw the CES as a solution to volunteers not feeling appreciated. However, most staff perceived the CES as simultaneously a shield and a link between volunteers and staff, as someone who could undertake the frustrating tasks that staff could not or did not want to handle. Cecilia captured this troubling dilemma:

Cecilia (Staff): I think volunteer management is [pause] a larger part of everyone’s job than they initially realize and so it’s a very big part of my job and I think I initially minimized that. Really, really key and crucial to our programming going well. I would say that hmm [pause] there’s an art to being able to take the energy that volunteers have. You know, the individual who comes in and says, “I want to work with refugees.” There’s a lot that needs to happen to harness that energy and make productive use of it. So again, to say that I think I totally am in support of having this position in place because [...] it’s needed and it’s important. It’s important for retaining people, for making it a meaningful experience, for making it productive for us. It’s not just this kind of thing where you come on board and just jump right in. There’s a lot of work that needs to be done, I think, in terms of educating and finding where people fit and making sure that they enjoy it and all of that. So, I guess, in general, it’s a lot more work and time and effort than I think a lot of us perceive.

Adding to the Torque Model

The torque model as presented in Chapter 2 did not include a volunteer coordinator; only
staff and volunteers were positioned in relation to one another and to the central node of interest. In the below graphic, the volunteer coordinator drifts in an ambiguous position between volunteers and paid staff.

![Diagram](image.png)

**Figure 3**

As staff and volunteer interviews expressed, the CES (or volunteer coordinator in the above model) functions as a liaison between paid staff and volunteers. Based on staff interviews, the CES ideally functions as a tension rod between the two parties: transmitting needed information while guarding an appropriate distance between paid staff and volunteers. However, since the torque model emphasizes dynamism, the CES is sensitive to unanticipated movement made by paid staff or volunteers. For instance, if staff and volunteers share different expectations of one another and of tasks, they would quickly diverge, leaving the CES strained between both parties (although the CES should ideally retain the tension rod model). On the flip side, if membership increases to a level where staff and volunteers directly communicate, feel a grounded sense of trust in one another, and rotate at the same frequency around the central node of interest, the tension rod snaps and the CES is squished. The position is rendered ineffective.

Dangers can emerge when tasks and skills are specialized within a singular position. In Weberian fashion, tasks are executed more efficiently, but specialization contributes to a silo effect, resulting in less collaboration. Volunteer Anita already felt this “silo effect.” Volunteers worried that with the arrival of a CES, communication would diminish or that they would lose ties with staff members. In contrast, staff wanted the CES to focus only on the Refugee Team’s volunteers in order to maximize the support going to volunteers. Ironically though, the CES’ acute awareness of the team, its clients, and its work would thus lessen staff’s direct obligation to volunteers because the CES would serve as a spokesperson for both staff and volunteers.
Cecilia warned staff to not serve ties with volunteers and bequeath all volunteer obligations to the CES. The problems facing volunteer coordination cannot solely be fixed with a volunteer coordinator. In order for volunteers to function semi-autonomously, they must remain attached to the agency’s central node. Yet the CES does not directly connect with the central node and does not work with clients, thereby splitting and detouring volunteer attention away from the central node. The rest of staff does offer direct services. Therefore, all staff must contribute in reshaping and reproducing volunteer expectations, roles, and agency missions. While the CES can handle logistics and field questions, staff must practice a commitment to the entire HIAS PA family, which includes clients, staff, and volunteers. Having staff focus on the central node rather than the “tension rod” is critical in easing staff-volunteer conflicts, nurturing membership, and maximizing the usefulness of volunteers to HIAS PA.

DISCUSSION

This chapter examined membership within HIAS PA along emotional and trust lines. Gratitude need not take the form of thank you cards, gift cards or elaborate meals. Adequate gratitude for both staff and volunteers comes from moments of shared learning, open conversation, and togetherness. A sustainable volunteer-staff relationship stems from nurturing a collective interdependence and maximizing the potential of various roles. For volunteers, membership validates their work and reinforces their ties with HIAS PA. Yet, a primary frustration with volunteers emerged from the time they require to train and support. Scheduling and facilitating collaborative meetings between volunteers and staff are also labor intensive and while staff recognizes the value of gatherings, they feel constrained by other obligations.

The Community Engagement Specialist (CES) thus appeared as a necessary and positive addition to the Refugee Team. The CES can devote attention to ongoing volunteer support and resulting gratitude. Yet, this chapter exposed deep concerns about the position, primarily because it centralizes volunteer-related labor in a singular person. According to staff, the CES’ ability to filter out “awful” volunteers would leave staff with “wonderful,” capable volunteers, thereby making volunteerism at HIAS PA more efficient and effective. Nevertheless, offering gratitude and nurturing membership require active engagement from all staff. If the CES is championed as a fix-it-all to volunteerism’s problems, staff might renounce the urgency to support volunteers and dismiss their inherent responsibility in reshaping agency expectations and roles.
As the torque model illustrates, the CES indirectly connects to the central node, through secondary accounts as told by volunteers and staff. In contrast, staff and volunteers directly relate to the central node through direct client services. As a result, the shared mission of serving refugees presents itself as robust connective tissue between volunteers and staff. By emphasizing what goals staff and volunteers share, HIAS PA would enhance volunteer membership, as well as diminish the CES’ burden of managing volunteers alone. The next chapter will continue to explore the effects of membership by moving beyond organizational confines and examining how volunteers’ unique social positions combined with their accrued knowledge about social issues in Philadelphia catalyze and humanize conversations about refugee resettlement and immigration justice.
CHAPTER 7

Beyond Bureaucracies: Volunteerism on a Macro-Level

This final chapter steps back and examines the larger question of what volunteerism adds beyond direct client services. Through volunteering, individuals acquired a collection of personal stories (only a sample to which I was privy) that spoke of human connection, even when language and cultural barriers presented obstacles. Many volunteers credited their volunteer engagement to their increased awareness of social inequalities and social resources in Philadelphia. They attended more events focused on immigration. They shared their stories with those in their social networks, many who support refugee resettlement, and some who do not. Ultimately, while staff remained bound to case notes and the Reception and Placement (R&P) Program, volunteers regularly left their volunteer roles with new knowledge and deepened empathy, which allowed them to share stories with family and friends and like Mary said, ensure that “the world knows about [HIAS PA].”

Throughout this thesis, I have presented multiple volunteer-to-staff anecdotes, using the torque model to navigate the complex relations between the two parties. In the previous chapter, I adjusted the model to account for the Community Engagement Specialist (CES), or volunteer coordinator. As suggested earlier in this thesis, volunteers’ distance from the central node permits them to leave their agency “roles,” to turn outwards, and to translate their volunteer experiences and stories to their social networks. Staff has more difficulty in extracting themselves from their job. Throughout this chapter, I will refer back to the concept of torque to examine the macro-level impacts of volunteerism and how volunteerism with HIAS PA personally broadens individuals’ perspectives on refugee resettlement, refugee experiences in Philadelphia, and Philadelphia as a city. The distance volunteers have from the daily grind permits them to engage in transformative conversations that can reshape negative rhetoric and enact broader social change around refugee resettlement.

INCREASED AWARENESS OF PHILADELPHIA AND REFUGEES

Each interview asked staff and volunteers what they learned about Philadelphia through their work that particularly surprised them. This section highlights both the learned dark realities and the surprising gems. Overall, it demonstrates a deepened awareness of the refugee experience in Philadelphia.
Dark Realities of Philadelphia Revealed

Philadelphia’s high poverty level emerged as the top response of what people learned about Philadelphia that surprised them. A 2016 Pew Charitable Trust Report on Philadelphia, the city faced a poverty rate of 26%, which is the “highest [rate] among the nation’s 10 largest cities.” Devorah said, “I had no idea the extent of [the] impoverishment. It’s mindboggling.” Helen explained that “seeing the poverty in Philly and seeing it up close” was the most eye-opening aspect of her volunteer work. Her personal connections with refugee families and individuals sensitized her to poverty in Philadelphia:

Helen (Volunteer): I had one Syrian dad ask me. And he spoke very good English. And he said, “Is Philadelphia famous for its poor people.” And he said, “I didn’t know that America was going to be like this. [...] Is Philadelphia famous for this or is this how every city in this country? Is this how America really looks because I had such a different impression of what it was going to look like when you’re looking around and umm.” And you know, it’s hard to answer that and say yeah this is what America looks like. This is what our inner cities look like and a lot of rural areas look like. And I think it was pretty hard for him to swallow like “This? This is where I am trying to restart?” You know.

Recall that Musick and Wilson (2008) present statistics suggesting that income and educational attainment positively impact one’s likelihood of volunteering. Six of the eight volunteers interviewed had a Bachelor’s degree or higher. I hesitate to make sweeping judgments, but want to acknowledge that the volunteers’ perceptions and surprise of Philadelphia’s poverty rates reflect their own economic stability and limited first-hand experiences with poverty.

Mary continually encountered housing discrimination, racism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia as the housing coordinator. She said, “It’s been insane. I spent the whole day in the field last week and every single landlord that I spoke with had comments and concerns about people based on race or religion.” During my research period, conversation arose over a landlord who demanded that a refugee family pay for lead inspection, even though the landlord is responsible by law if there are children under the age of six residing in the home. Aurora contributed a general and inadequate city-wide understanding of refugee communities to the city’s racialized residential segregation since refugee families are “typically resettled on the outskirts of the city and aren’t in certain areas. [...] It’s hard, for some people it’s really hard to see them as part of our city,” despite the burgeoning and flourishing refugee communities.

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Related to residential segregation, Aurora presented public transportation access as the most surprising and unexpected barrier for refugee clients.

Aurora (Staff): Living in a smaller city, I never used a lot of public transportation and I didn’t start really using it until I started at this job. And we use it like super extensively. […] Getting to work. Getting to all of these different places. I felt that so much during the SEPTA strike. […] But then thinking about that in the context of our clients and what accessibility looks like and what neighborhoods don’t have any accessibility and how that’s like related to like rising class and poverty, you know? […] And like, they are so dependent on public transportation and that was a very eye-opening thing for me. Always having the luxury of having a car or having someone that I can call that would drive me or having enough money that I could like take a cab or Uber or something if I had to.

In fact, the 2007 American Community Survey found that 3.2% of American-born persons used public transportation when commuting to work, in comparison with 18.0% of recently arrived persons who have lived in America for less than one year.103 Public transportation and residential segregation cyclically perpetuate one another.

Surprising Gems of Philadelphia

Throughout their interviews, volunteers and staff referenced educational inequalities, job discrimination, limited financial and social resources, and the barriers faced by pre-literate adults and non-English speakers. It is impossible to overstate the challenges newly arrived refugee families and individuals confront as they adjust to Philadelphia. Yet, this section highlights the surprising and hidden gems revealed to staff and volunteers through their work with HIAS PA.

Devorah and Dennis mentioned their increased exposure to the multiple immigrant communities throughout the city. Volunteering nuanced their understanding of Philadelphia’s dynamic social life. Dennis said, “It’s interesting to see the little communities of Southeast Asians and communities of Africans. It’s interesting to see this and how they relate. […] The signage is in Nepali or is in Burmese and I just never noticed […] These communities are out there and they’re really nice and warm people. That’s the amazing thing.” Mary said, “There so many communities that I had no idea were here. […] Some of them are so strong in how they support each other and they can support each other way more than HIAS can.” Dennis’ volunteerism invited him to see budding relationships between refugee families. “The next thing

Dennis’s increased awareness of refugee and immigrant communities throughout Philadelphia encouraged him to attend events that celebrate them. In July 2016, he attended World Refugee Day at Philadelphia’s City Hall, a collaborative event between immigrant and refugee-serving organizations and Philadelphia’s Office of Immigrant Affairs. He added:

Dennis (Volunteer): The other thing that’s intriguing just as much is the festivals that are done at Penn’s Landing all summer. Like there was an Arabic festival. There was a Hispanic festival. There was an African festival. There was a Caribbean Festival. You go and they have music and dance and all the native foods. That was very interesting. Just to see these people. Everybody seemed to be having a great time.

Dana: Were these festivals something you became aware of through volunteering?

Dennis: Yeah. This is not the first year for these things. I live not far from here and so it just never appealed to me until I started getting involved with HIAS.

Dennis attended these festivals with his friends. While chuckling, he said, “We never went before, but you know, what else are you gonna do on a Sunday?” Increased awareness of refugee communities and refugee resettlement in Philadelphia spurred Dennis to engage in other spaces beyond his volunteer position. More than that, he invited non-volunteer friends.

Deepening Perceptions of the Refugee Experience

Cecilia hoped that volunteers would learn and grow personally through their volunteer position. Volunteers do. Volunteering or working with HIAS PA deepens an individual’s understanding of a refugee’s experience in Philadelphia. Granted, no singular refugee narrative exists and to suggest otherwise would warp the mosaic of lived experiences and the struggles that each refugee individual faces. However, remaining cognizant that most volunteers had no baseline knowledge about refugee resettlement in Philadelphia until they started volunteering with HIAS PA demonstrates how experiential learning intensifies and personalizes the larger, abstract issue of immigration in Philadelphia. Volunteers consume media more critically and critique those who present dramatized or incorrect information. Helen’s reflections demonstrate the power of blending “client information” with personal experiences. 104

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104 Recall that I differentiate between client information and generalized information, with the former pertaining to concrete facts about refugee individuals (e.g. phone numbers, address, persecution story) and the latter consisting of extracted lessons and meanings not directly related to a singular individual.
Dana: Has your work with HIAS changed anything when you read stories or when you hear things? It’s like, “Actually that’s not true. Or it’s not the way I understand this to be true.”

Helen (Volunteer): Well, I think there’s this misconception about the kind of support that refugees get when they move here. I mean they get so little. So often the kids don’t eat breakfast before they come to their appointments even though they’ve been told to eat before they come because they’re gonna have blood drawn and they don’t want to pass out and they won’t have eaten anything because they just don’t have any resources. And, I think that’s one of the big things that’s so overwhelming about it and hard to convey and so impressive and amazing that people after 3 months are released from HIAS because [HIAS PA is] moving on to support more people and their stipend is out and they need to be paying the government back for their airplane ticket. And it’s like, that such an overwhelming question to me that I don’t even know the answer.

While Helen offered a more emotional illustration of Philadelphia’s “crushing poverty” and the lunacy of R&P’s three-month limit, Anita fiercely rejected claims that the United States was “inundated with hundreds of thousands” of refugees. She credited her volunteering to her heightened awareness when listening to the news.

Anita (Volunteer): I didn’t know anything about it. It’s helpful when you listen to the news and you listen to someone say, “They’re gonna let you know 6 million refugees into the United States and we’re gonna be inundated with hundred of thousands.” And I’m going, “Do people know that we only take in 80,000 a year as a country and it went up to like 100 to 110,000?” Give me a break here. And I didn’t know what it really meant to be a refugee or how long it was and stuff.

Jasmine admitted that she “didn’t know that there were refugees in Philly” before starting to volunteer with HIAS PA. She added that it “makes [her] look at people in the service industry a little differently” and that volunteering has “put [her] more in touch and gives [her] a different reality.” She retold a conversation that she had with a Congolese refugee woman whose work involved standing on her feet, despite a back injury. Jasmine concluded by saying, “It’s also nice to see people as individuals, instead of just like categories.” When numbers and depersonalized images dominate media coverage of the global refugee crisis, these personal touches and continued contact with the “central node” matter in changing discourse and changing “hearts and minds,” as Morgan, the former Director of Refugee Programming and Planning would say.

RECIPROCATED LEARNING AND NURTURED EMPATHY

In discussing the “ideal” volunteer, Aurora mentioned a new family volunteering as American Friends. She appreciated the family because “they didn’t come into this situation
feeling like they were going to fix people. [...] They feel like a really mutually beneficial relationship, just getting to know people that are so vastly different from them.” Volunteers are entrusted with cultivating learning spaces. Moreover, they also take away meaningful and personal lessons about broader issues and topics. Volunteers and staff are both teachers and students. Ebe explained that he continued to work with HIAS PA because it challenged him to learn and grow. Irene said she is always “on a huge learning curve.”

Irene (Volunteer): I’ve worked with a lot of immigrant families, not refugee families. But, you know there’s room for everybody. I don’t understand the fear. I guess that’s what I’m still not understanding from those that I hear on one of our political candidate’s side. What is their fear of people that they see as, that they view as different? And I think everybody has a right to have an opportunity to make a better life for themselves. [...] I know that I’ve been a lot more sensitive about comments that people make about ethnic groups or immigration, “those people.” I think I’ve gotten braver about, I don’t mean to make anyone angry, but I think I’ve gotten a little bit braver about speaking out about that.

Jasmine offered a parallel story about how transcultural lessons deepened her understanding of refugee experiences in America and abroad. The exposure made her “more open” to different cultural beliefs and practices.

Dana: What are some things they’ve taught you?
Jasmine (Volunteer): It’s nice when they just kind of talk about what home is like for them. I think it was Merveille. They were telling us about the baby-naming ceremonies and how they go around and all the elders will hold the baby and like, name the baby. It’s kind of hard getting like full stories [chuckle] just cause the English isn’t that great. But um. I think I’m more sensitive to other people. [...] I just had a patient the other day who was saying that she couldn’t understand some of the doctors because they weren’t American and I was not going there with her. And she was like, “Well, how do you understand them?” And I said, “I listen with my ears.” [laughter] “I don’t know what to tell you.” But I think things like that just make me [pause] more open than I may have been before.

Like Irene, Jasmine felt newly emboldened to speak against xenophobic comments. The combination of client interactions, generalized information, and personal experiences nuances how volunteers and staff absorb information and interpret their work externally. Volunteerism is not only about better understanding abstract policies, but also about deeply connecting with others and nourishing empathy and compassion. Volunteerism is a self-journey as much as a form of social engagement.
Establishing and Embracing Human Connection

Labeling volunteers as “morally altruistic” falsely elevates volunteers above those receiving services and shrouds the evidence of unequal power distribution, thus exposing why presenting volunteerism as pure altruism rather than labor is dangerously misleading. However, HIAS PA volunteers do establish lasting relationships with refugee clients. Even temporal interactions still prove meaningful because refugee clients teach volunteers. Both parties can share a mutually beneficial human connection. Arguably, shedding light on refugee clients’ humanity can refocus anti-refugee and humanitarian rhetoric that wrongly categorizes refugees as terrorists or helpless individuals who need “rescue.” The following excerpts capture moments of human connection that deeply impacted the volunteers and demonstrate how increased senses of membership and friendship inspired them to maintain ties with volunteers and refugee clients.

Helen (Volunteer): But there is such an amazing connection with the kids. Like there are so many kids I just fall in love with. You know? They want to hold a hand when they go up […] the escalator. I mean, I always find the escalator really interesting in how people respond to it. There are people who just refuse to take the escalator. Kids who are excited about the escalator. Kids who are scared of the escalator. […] It’s just very basic human connection without the language.

Irene (Volunteer): But, no absolutely, awareness level and reading about it […] Even though I would like to think that I’m always empathetic, I’m way more empathetic about it than I’ve ever been so.

Dana: What did you like about it?
Mohammad: You meet a lot of people. You hear a lot. Sometimes you see in the news what’s going on, but you didn’t know it. Sometimes you think, “No it’s all the media.” Sometimes they have bias, they have preference, political preference stuff, so I didn’t believe this. But, when you them in person and you hear their stories, so it was, you see it’s more of a life. So yeah. I liked it. And you know, I made friends. As you know, I connect with [refugee clients] outside the agency. They invite you to their house. I struggled with HIAS because they told me several times don’t give your number to the clients. But, I still did it. Yeah. So yeah. So yeah that’s the reason and you know it’s always good. You feel [you] accomplished something, especially when you help people that need help, you know? Like trying to survive. Starting their new lives. So yeah, it’s good.

In the previous chapter, I quoted Mary who talked about the elitist division of care: Staff is entitled to care more about refugee resettlement than volunteers. Aurora mentioned that she and staff absorb secondary trauma. I often overheard staff sharing funny client stories during breaks. Staff profoundly cares about the refugee clients that come through HIAS PA. Yet, volunteers
create their own bonds with refugee clients. While many volunteers entered HIAS PA with little to no knowledge about refugee resettlement locally or globally, they quickly entered the field to volunteer. Along the way, they read articles, talked with other volunteers or staff, re-experienced Philadelphia, and made meaningful and humbling human connections.

**HOLDING CONVERSATIONS TO BRIDGE**

So far, this chapter has described that through their work with HIAS PA, volunteers and staff acquired new knowledge about Philadelphia as well as experienced personal growth by cultivating more tolerance and empathy for others. This final section examines how volunteers and staff translated their experiences with refugee resettlement to people who did not directly work within the sector or who opposed refugee resettlement in America.

**Connecting Between Social Networks**

Returning to the torque metaphor, staff remained nestled within refugee resettlement discourse and work. They are close to clients and close to the issue. Mary said that she did not often read additional articles or follow related news because “it’s too much in [her] life already.” Cecilia frustratingly admitted that she read fewer scholarly articles on TESOL due to time constraints. Those close to refugee resettlement have difficulty extracting themselves from it.

In contrast, volunteers float through multiple social circles, which allow them to share their experiences with those who do not otherwise have an avenue to directly connect with refugee resettlement in Philadelphia. For instance, Anita heavily relied upon her synagogue to connect with in-kind donors and sorting volunteers. Anita saw the potential within her volunteer position to turn outwards and translate her volunteer work to others or to recruit new volunteers and those who want to engage with refugee resettlement support.

Anita (Volunteer): I want the women who I play mahjong with to read it [Enrique’s Journey] because nobody wants to leave home. People leave home because it’s worse than North Philly. They have no choice. I mean, when Tommy Hilfiger pays the lady in the factory $30 a week to probably work 50 hours and she can’t feed her children, yeah she puts her life on the line and tries [to immigrate]. I just found out the lady who helps me clean sometimes was almost drowning in the Rio. I’d just really like to sit down and talk with her now. She’s a citizen and her son’s in the army. She’s a wonderful person! But to have to do that and she had to leave one of her children behind? It’s horrible! The women in Lower Merion I play mahjong with? I’m gonna take them and shake them. You know? They’re kind and they donate to charity. But they don’t understand.
Dana: How do you think volunteers fit into supporting communities?
Mary (Staff): I mean some of the volunteers are coming from the communities, which is a really cool thing to see. Sometimes our former clients want to volunteer or do volunteer as interpreters […] But, we have a few that I’ve, that I’ve met in the last few months where they just became involved with HIAS in the last few months and they are volunteering with our families like sort of unofficially as American Friends with Syrian families in the Northeast. Um. And that’s been really cool to see. They’ve been so, such great support. Just in speaking Arabic and that they’ve lived here.

While Cecilia never recruited volunteers, Irene and Devorah admitted to actively sharing their volunteering stories with friends in order to encourage their friends to volunteer with HIAS PA. As previously mentioned, Irene joined HIAS PA because a friend shared her stories of volunteering with the afterschool program, thereby validating Putnam (2000) and his argument that “social connections encourage giving” because “involvement in social networks is a stronger predictor of volunteering and philanthropy than altruistic attitudes.”105 He says that “volunteering fosters volunteering,” and Irene and Devorah seem to suggest that “volunteers foster volunteers.”

Positive Reactions and Negative Pushback

I asked participants if and how they talk with friends, family, and others about their work with HIAS PA. The majority of participants enjoyed sharing their experiences and received positive feedback. Mohammad’s family encouraged him to continue volunteering and to maintain ties with refugee clients. His family often asked if they could offer financial support to HIAS PA. “[Being] Middle Eastern, we lived through the conflict too, so we know what’s going on. We know the pain, the Syrian war, too. And so yeah, they feel happy [and say] ‘How can we help?’” Irene shared her experiences because “it’s just like when [she] was a fulltime teacher.” “I talked about these kids because they’re just like one of the favorite things in my whole life.” Mary explained that most people respond with, “Oh wow! That’s so wonderful” and then they express new and individual inspiration to create lasting impacts.

Few people admitted that they intentionally held conversations with people who expressed anti-refugee sentiments, even if they knew people who harbored those perspectives. Aurora and Helen avoided discussing refugee resettlement with people who carry antagonistic views. Aurora said it was a “self-preservationist” technique to avoid attacks challenging her career path. Fewer participants received negative pushback in discussing their volunteering or

105 Putnam, Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community, 121.
employed position, which could be a reflection of volunteers floating through multiple social circles, but all of which more or less fuel “liberal” and pro-refugee views. Anita acknowledged that she worked and lived within circles where “everybody’s there because we think it’s wonderful and we should do it.” However, she also mused upon the complications of unifying communities behind pro-refugee attitudes and pro-immigration reform:

Anita (Volunteer): I think people could say, “What is it they’re doing for us?” […] I’ve even had this discussion because they’re so extreme and we’re all supposed to try to get together. What do I say to someone, how do you justify, you know, to someone who doesn’t just think this is the right thing to do and it’s nice. Where do you draw the line? […] I mean, our own country’s suffering. And I wonder if people that are in the business of refugees don’t need to answer some of those questions better because I can see the guy who’s not sold on it, but is a nice person, sort of going, “Well, the guy down the street can’t feed his kids. Why are we taking in more people?” You know? I think it is hard and I’d like to see a philosophical or some answers to that. I mean, anybody where I go, it’s given. Everybody’s there because we think it’s wonderful and we should do it. But I think you have to look at the big picture with the crisis.

Anita’s conversations underscored how conversations can be positive, empowering experiences, and also divisive and confrontational spaces. In order to affect public discourse and opinion, conversations must unfold beyond self-promoting social circles and enter the uncomfortable territory of debate. Yet, Anita emphasized the obstacles in overcoming personal biases and finding the solid, middle ground needed to advance an issue.

Making Refugee Resettlement Real and Personal

Dennis said that he rarely had conversations amongst friends, but they were aware that he volunteers with HIAS PA. Nevertheless, as previously explained, he now attends cultural festivals with his friends. His volunteer position impacted those within his social networks, even if he did not regularly discuss it. Similarly Jasmine said that her conversations did not directly confront anti-refugee opinions and instead emphasized what she does as a volunteer.

Jasmine (Volunteer): “Sometimes I like make it a point to say, “Oh no. You know. I’m off on Thursdays. I don’t work on Thursdays.” Like you know I hang out with the refugees and just kind of teaching them English and key life skills in the United States and people are like, “Oh? Really what’s that?” And then I just kind of like say […] how HIAS helps so much people to get acclimated and help with like the rent for the first month. […] When it’s a conversation, it’s intrigue. For other people, you can tell they’re not really that inclined to talk about it so I don’t really kind of try to investigate whether it’s just ignorance or hatred or
whatever it is. I just kind of leave the conversation at that point. But like letting them know that this exists. That people around them want to help.

Cecilia’s reflection on conversations particularly struck me by the way in which she humanized the abstractness of refugee resettlement. She did not confront the issue by openly debating politics or evoking polarized opinions. She starts with introducing herself and her upbringing. She started with ties that bond people together, rather than divide.

Cecilia (Staff): And I’m very proud to talk about it. I’m very happy to talk about it. You know, you get different responses from people, especially with the political climate right now, but I think something that’s really exciting. Something that I really love about the work is that [...] the idea of refugee resettlement is very abstract. And I mean not that many people have contact with it right? So, you know, fair enough. [...] So I’m very happy, I feel very privileged and very honored to be able to say, like “Hey you know me. I’m Cecilia. Like I’m from Reading, PA, like I grew up on a farm, but like I also do this. I do this.” And so I think maybe it makes it a little more real for people. [...] Whether people believe, whether people are like excited about it or are just like totally like anti-refugee, you can come into it and say like there’s an actual, there’re actually jobs that like support this. “Oh really?” So. That’s kind of how I feel about it.

Here is where the torque metaphor falters: It only draws a line between the staff or volunteer and the issue of refugee resettlement. It does not visualize the outward ties or how each staff or volunteer becomes a turning point themself, able to galvanize support or connect with family and friends on a new level. Mary insisted that her job was political. Devorah argued that refugee resettlement is about people, not politics. Regardless, for decades, but particularly since September 2015, the global refugee crisis has magnetized criticisms and social justice action. Teaching and learning how to hold transformative and human conversations may be the first step in recharging the discourse around refugee resettlement and forced displacement.

DISCUSSION

Irene (Volunteer): And [her rabbi] looked at me and she said, “Not everybody can be Mother Theresa.” But she said, “If you think about a pond. A big pond and if everybody has a flat rock to skip on the pond.” She said, “Just think about what that still pond looks like when you throw just one rock and how the ripples go out and they get bigger and they get bigger and they get bigger.” She said, “If everybody would do their part, you don’t have to sacrifice so much, you don’t have to give up your own life, you don’t have to give your own family, but if everybody here on this planet would do something. Then think about there would be ripples on that pond forever and ever and ever.” They would never stop.
This chapter extended beyond bureaucratic barriers, case notes, and the daily tasks facing case managers and volunteers. It delved into the impacts of volunteerism on a societal and personal level. Some volunteers and staff blended emotions, knowledge, and humor to ignite conversations with friends, family, community members, and those who move in and out of their social spaces. Others hesitated, fearing negative reactions. By translating their personal experiences and acquired knowledge of Philadelphia and refugee resettlement, volunteers and staff humanize an abstract concept often distorted by misguided and misinformed statements.

Throughout my interviews, volunteers and staff would occasionally bemoan the impossible “solution” to the global refugee crisis and Philadelphia’s teeming social inequalities. They expressed overwhelm. Volunteers and staff cannot and do not expect to “solve” the inequalities. The torque metaphor does not offer a final “solution.” Instead, torque visualizes movement. What does it take to mobilize movement around refugee resettlement? The previous chapters and this one offer several suggestions. A few notable ideas include volunteerism, rethinking intensive and ongoing case management, transforming uncommon spaces into educational opportunities, and translating personal experiences to those who do not have a touch on the issue. HIAS PA can only manage a limited number of active volunteers. Consequently, how volunteers and staff explain their work externally ultimately carries notable weight in building more force for change. Social activism resides within the personal and blossoms from quiet conversations, an important counterbalance to loud protests and demonstrations.

As Irene’s poetic reflection demonstrates, volunteers and staff engage with refugee resettlement to offer their skills, resources, and love in order to move social justice forward and to ease some stress experienced by refugee families and individuals. Volunteers and staff receive empathy, perspective, and knowledge in return. Each action can leave an impact, some intended and some unintended. As Helen said, “I’m participating in a way that really does make communities stronger […] It feels important to me.” Progress is afoot. Ebe and Mohammad perceived Philadelphia as a welcoming city. Amin referred to the outpouring of volunteer and donor support in response to the November 13, 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris, France. Philadelphia is ripe for continued confrontations and also for positive transformations.
CONCLUSION

During our interview, I asked Devorah, a former American Friend volunteer, what information she hankered to have to positively affect her relationship with refugee clients. I asked what knowledge gaps she would like filled in regards to background information on resettlement work. She said none. Instead, she emphasized the need to work in the here-and-now and not always fixate on the global or regional context and their changing politics. She wanted resources that could immediately improve someone’s quality of life. “What are the roles, what is the government giving them, how can we make this transition easier for them because that’s exactly what […] we’re supposed to do, right? Ease them into a more personal transition. We’re like a gap.” Where I saw a vacuum of social service and financial resources in Philadelphia related to refugee resettlement, Devorah saw herself. She was the gap. She inhabited and embodied the empty social support spaces.

Yet, there is more to the story. Volunteers do not wade in the voids, merely filling them with their bodies. Staff at HIAS PA did not want Dennis or Helen, the appointment accompaniment volunteers, to sit on the bus quietly and self-absorbed. Staff wanted volunteers to meaningfully supplement and activate those spaces with human connection, education, and compassion. Volunteers transform spaces, such as trains, homes, and doctor’s offices, into social and compassionate spaces where staff cannot always work. If volunteers are viewed as filling empty voids, we overlook and dismiss their capacity to not only extend a representative arm of HIAS PA, but also to extend a hand of welcome to Philadelphia’s newest community members. Ultimately, this thesis does not just analyze organizational issues facing volunteer management. It examines membership in pluralistic societies and how to build trusting, caring communities.

IMPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH AND GENERALIZABILITY

Throughout the thesis, I have introduced and applied the “torque model,” which illustrates how membership and trust serve as regenerative connective tissue between diverse groups and a common point of interest. Instead of renouncing unique resources in order to conform and adapt to an overarching issue or a group mentality, the torque model celebrates the ways in which different social positionalities and resources galvanize force to create movement. It is precisely the singularity of each group that activates torque, assuming that membership ties
are strong enough to effectively channel that force towards a shared goal. Staff and volunteers will indefinitely inhabit positions of varying distances from the central node of interest. Staff works full time and acquires a specialized knowledge set. While volunteers may commit to a regular schedule, they do not approach the same time commitment or all-consuming membership that full-time employment entails. Nevertheless, as the torque model depicts, volunteers’ distance from the central node of interest means that they need not apply as much force to create a meaningful impact. Volunteers’ capacity to leave their “roles” encourages them to connect their experiences with friends, family members, colleagues, and neighbors. When volunteers share stories related to their volunteer work, they build awareness about HIAS PA’s mission and energize their social networks to innovatively engage with refugee resettlement. Activating torque does not require erasure of the individualized resources and skillsets that staff and volunteers offer to HIAS PA and the broader issue of refugee resettlement. Activating torque requires effectively routing staff and volunteer resources towards the shared mission so that frequencies can map onto one another and so that staff and volunteers can orbit in harmony.

Yet, the torque model only works effectively when the central node of interest becomes an “access point” for all staff and volunteers to share and to reshape. The torque model promotes an interdependent relationship between volunteers, staff, and the central node of interest. Volunteers are not substitutes for staff, but fruitful and meaningful complements and supplements in a resource-stripped social service sector. Volunteers offer compassionate and empathetic care labor; they are nurturing additions to the Refugee Team. Nevertheless, to maximize what volunteers can offer to the Refugee Team and beyond, all staff must actively and intentionally engage with volunteer training and ongoing support. Staff must nurture volunteers.

Staff and volunteers must enter conversations that collectively redefine volunteerism and volunteer labor at HIAS PA. While staff may hesitate because collaboration inherently entails vulnerability and opening oneself up for critique, the effects are multiple and symbiotic. Collaborative conversations permit staff and volunteers to structure a system for bilateral information sharing and more deeply, cultivate emotional and cognitive trust in one another, a trust that would empower volunteers to boldly serve as external arms of the agency. A trust that would soothe staff’s concerns and frustration of both inept volunteers and domineering personality types. Trust does not mandate divulging personal hardships; trust grounds the needed confidence and assertiveness to navigate the unknown.
In addition, staff and volunteer interviews around issues of adequate gratitude did not insinuate that volunteers wanted paid compensation or more elaborate volunteer appreciation breakfasts. They wanted verbal recognition from staff, but they also wanted staff to hear from volunteers. Volunteers wanted a time and place to learn alongside and from staff. To prepare collaborative spaces requires time and labor, a luxury in the nonprofit social service sector. However, this thesis demonstrates the rich value that comes from deliberative conversations, ongoing training, and a feeling of mutual respect and understanding.

I do not want to over-exaggerate the applicability of immaterial gratitude as a tool for ameliorating the unpaid and underpaid care sector, thus why many scholars caution against comparing volunteers to care laborers (Musick and Wilson 2008). Gratitude does not fix pay inequality, nor does it directly affect policies that structurally subordinate care laborers in the economic market. Yet, pushing policy makers to listen to care laborers and enact policy changes with care laborers’ input does echo the above discourse on volunteer-staff relations. Productive change requires bilateral information sharing.

As I am suggesting, the torque model extends beyond volunteer-staff relations and can be generalized and applied to other organizations and group dynamics with a stratified hierarchy based on involvement and connectedness to a central issue, such as a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or a grassroots movement for environmental conservation. While different in cause, the principle remains the same: both the PTA and the environmental movement will have a core group of devoted attendees and organizers. The PTA model also captures the differentiation between parents and teachers. The questions are similar to the ones posed by the volunteer-staff model: How can the PTA and the environmental movement build external support for internal and broader social change? What events does the environmental movement hold in order to make the issue of conservation accessible for non-organizers? Again, to be successful and effective, neither the PTA nor the environmental movement requires a homogenous group of individuals. Quite contrarily, the distance factor and the repository of resources that each outpost cultivates make change possible. The opinion and perspective diversity guards against groupthink. The primary struggle is retaining and buttressing the connective “lever arm” between each group and the central node of interest.

The model is still in its nascent iteration and I encourage future researchers to tweak the model, strengthen it, and apply it in different scenarios. The model, while a helpful framework,
does not detail the mechanics behind applying force, what happens when the volunteers and staff completely diverge or when they meld into one. Most notably and problematically in my case study of refugee resettlement, the model does not include refugee clients, a signifier of my research limitations. I encourage future researchers to capture the voices and perspectives of refugee clients. What could staff and volunteers do better to make resettlement work more effective according to refugee clients?

My research confronted other limitations. I only analyzed one agency and I did so during a period of immense change. I did not extensively observe volunteer-staff interactions, although in-depth interviews exposed critical perceptions of one another and revealed how misconceptions reproduce themselves. Nonetheless, future research should include more field observations and try to capture more voices beyond the 14 that I heard. In addition, despite my efforts to remain objective throughout the analysis process, I am enmeshed in HIAS PA’s work and my own experiences as the Community Engagement Specialist shine through my analysis and criticisms. However, volunteer and staff criticisms resonated with my own which suggests that while my arguments grew from subjective frustrations, they are not unfounded or unduly critical.

The largest limitation I faced was time, an ironic complement to obstacles met by HIAS PA staff. In trying to make my thesis coherent and accessible, while also working against a firm deadline, I had to exclude much of the data that I collected, such as personal anecdotes that did not directly add to my argument, but shed a light on the humor, sorrow, and humanity that volunteering and working at HIAS PA involved.

My thesis answers academic calls for research on volunteerism that extends beyond personal motives and sociodemographic factors. I did not expect to find volunteerism such a fascinating and critical optic through which to analyze community building and social change. Due to intentional choices and time constraints, I chose for this thesis to concentrate on trust, care, gratitude, and empathy building. I encourage future researchers to pull upon social movement literature as well as sociology of religion literature, both of which examine how membership ignites or stalls social change.

**CURRENT POLITICS AND RESETTLEMENT WORK**

My research period overlapped with the 2016 United States presidential election. Since January 2017, refugee resettlement work claimed media and social attention due to the new
federal policies limiting funding and annual admissions of refugees. By the printing of this thesis, both executive orders had been put on hold by a federal court. Nonetheless, HIAS PA approaches the unknown future around resettlement work with trepidation.

With heightened public attention, refugee profile stories have emerged, stories that resonated with many of those that I was privileged to hear as an intern. Yet, what policies silence and what dramatic protests overlook, even in their authentic desire to push against draconian procedures, is the genuine human connection that these resettlement agencies see every single day, the genuine human connections that kept me at HIAS PA those many months ago.

During the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia, I went to a local bank with two refugee clients and assisted them as they opened their first American account. Manu was from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Law Eh was from Burma. Manu and Law Eh arrived at HIAS PA around the same time and took English classes together. In late June, Manu and I went together to pick up her children from their first day of school. We sat peacefully on a bench listening to the chickadees while waiting for dismissal. Also in June, Law Eh and I went to the Department of Motor Vehicles to apply for and receive his state ID, a humbling and joyous experience: receiving a state ID meant that Law Eh no longer needed to carry the paper form that served as both proof of refugee status and as his photo identification. The Pennsylvania State ID, the same card that I carried around as an American citizen, was all he needed as identification.

By our trip to the bank, both Manu and Law Eh had been in the United States for about two months. While approaching a crosswalk, the light turned yellow and then red, yet Manu and Law Eh sped across the intersection with Manu laughing and pushing Law Eh along the way. We all chuckled when we reached the other side and continued to giggle while passing Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton impersonators. I retold this story to staff members when I returned to the office. “It’s a sign that you are starting to feel comfortable in America when you run across the street instead of anxiously waiting,” Cecilia, the education coordinator, remarked. Weeks earlier, Manu would have immediately stopped the minute the light turned yellow.

The truth is that volunteers and staff can only do so much to directly assist clients during their integration process. Part of dismantling the conception of the international refugee regime requires recognition of the resilience, strength, and self-knowledge that individuals with refugee status embody and reproduce. Manu and Law Eh are not helpless individuals that needed saving or rescue. Nor are they terrorists seeking revenge or to induce pain. They are parents. They are
people that add so much to this country economically and socially. The idea of excluding people like Manu and Law Eh nauseates me and renders me speechless. Volunteers, staff, and Philadelphia on a whole must use their resources to stand against discrimination.

REALIZING THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SPECIALIST POSITION

I must discuss my changed role and position with HIAS PA since I started my research in September 2016. As stated in Chapter 3, I now work as HIAS PA’s new Community Engagement Specialist, a position that I heavily critiqued throughout the thesis. I joined the team on January 3rd, only three weeks before the first executive order would hit and result in over 220 volunteers contacted HIAS PA about what they could do to counter the negative effects of the new policies. To put that in context, HIAS PA helped to resettle 220 clients during the 2015-2016 fiscal year, which means that we could have paired one new volunteer per client, including the infants. HIAS PA did not have the infrastructure before January to funnel all of the volunteers and I struggled to direct each volunteer after the executive orders were signed, especially since I received little to no training and the position was brand new. Consequently, we emphasized the importance and necessity of advocacy work. Again, the torque model exposed its usefulness. The central issue of resettlement work remained the same. HIAS PA connected to and strengthened ties with volunteers and advocates by offering an advocacy toolkit complete with calling scripts and event ideas, but the work was externalized and unfolded in personal circles, at schools, and at places of worship.

I acknowledge the value of the Community Engagement Specialist position. We have implemented more volunteers and expanded what engagement looks like in only three months. During the whirlwind of January and February, an extra pair of hands meant that Ava, the Development Director, and Refugee Team staff members could focus on other pressing concerns and rethink resettlement work at HIAS PA. Ava explained that volunteers have transitioned from being “necessary evils” to becoming productive and helpful players on the team because I have time to field the phone calls and emails and to filter out the non-committed folks. I have time to offer orientations and ongoing support in ways that staff could not and cannot.

Since the executive orders, the Community Engagement Specialist quickly grew to be agency-wide, the realization of staff concerns that the Refugee Team would receive diminished attention and that the Community Engagement Specialist would be out of touch with Refugee
Team staff and clients. I entered the unknown territory of pro bono attorney work and mental health professionalism. My heart has remained within the Refugee Team, but my position within the Team feels different than it did when I served as an intern and a volunteer. I worry that through association with volunteers, the Community Engagement Specialist position is also viewed as a “necessary evil” and perennially inferior in face of direct client work. My job is to make everyone else’s job easier, but since I arrived, we have not had a chance to sit down as an entire team to outline my position, my tasks, and what goals we have together (partially a result of working part time between January and April). Consequently, I am stuck perpetuating misperceptions and misconceptions of volunteer capacities as well as remaining distanced from staff work. Yet, I am still wary about how the Community Engagement Specialist functions and relates to the Refugee Team.

I worry that I have presented staff as coldhearted towards volunteers and aggravated that their work requires interfacing superficially with volunteers. Staff unconditionally acknowledges the importance of nurturing volunteers, yet feels confined and constrained by time-sensitive tasks. HIAS PA has supported me and encouraged me in ways that I will remain forever thankful. I stayed with HIAS PA because of the staff. They are my friends, my mentors, and my source of inspiration. My argument in this thesis still remains steeped in the question of social work sustainability and does not intend to target staff members. What alternative approaches exist, if any, to make social work less arduous, exhausting, and prone to burnout? Staff establishes hierarchies and priorities to navigate the onslaught of work. Yet, volunteers offer an avenue of change not only because they supplement and complement the work as executed by staff, but because they go home and advocate for broader policy change. Sustainable social work does not come from creating another institutionalized position, such as the Community Engagement Specialist. It comes from rethinking and reimagining what volunteerism and volunteer-staff relations can look like and how a symbiotic support system can burgeon and nourish a dispirited sector. The Community Engagement Specialist cannot do that work alone.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

I started this thesis grappling with questions of social work sustainability and whether or not it is a viable career for others or for myself. After a year of deep engagement, I conclude this thesis still unsure about my future in social work, a testament to the impossibility of “finishing”
research and how most conclusions serve as introductions for subsequent projects. Nevertheless, I think about the hours I spent listening to volunteers and staff members reflect upon their own nervousness and their own inspiration. Irene, an afterschool volunteer, ended her interview with a poignant and calming reminder: “No one person is the expert. It really does take the whole group of us to piece this all together and do the best that we can.” Confining social work and care labor solely to the professionals excludes the micro-ways that social justice reform manifests itself. It dismisses the small and quiet, albeit transformative impacts that we can make on a regular basis. Returning to Devorah’s comment, if we all serve as gaps, how do we fill them?

Lastly, another grounding remark: HIAS PA has been thriving since 1882, actively opposing racism, xenophobia, and anti-Semitism. Politics and policies changed over the past century, but HIAS PA stood strong and prevailed, despite the threats. Tests to immigration justice have never worn-out, they have just changed their central node of interest. Resettlement agencies currently face Herculean obstacles and HIAS PA is hurting. Yet, seeing the outpouring of support, concern, innovation, and motivation from community members has assured me that HIAS PA is not alone in fighting bigotry. No one person is the expert of social change. Volunteers are ready and able and it is up to everyone to apply our force together.
APPENDIX 1

“Nurturing Volunteers” Interview Guide: Staff

1. How long have you worked at HIAS PA?
2. Why did you originally start working here and how did you connect with the agency?
3. What roles do you have within the agency?
4. Did you have previous experience working with refugees before arriving at HIAS? If so, what did you learn from that experience and why did you want to continue?
5. If not, what was the original spark for working with refugees?
6. Why did you seek an official job position instead of volunteering?
7. Could you describe your day so far? What made it similar? What made it different?
8. Have you developed any relationships with clients?
9. Do you talk about your job with friends or family? What do they say?
10. What have you learned about Philadelphia through the process?
11. What have you learned about social services through the process? Do you see yourself continuing with casework?
12. Why do you think volunteerism exists at HIAS? How is volunteer work perceived?
13. How do volunteers assist you with your position?
14. Have you developed any personal ties with volunteers?
15. What are some of the greatest obstacles for volunteerism with HIAS?
16. Do you assist with volunteer training? If so, what do you normally try to explain?
17. What information about clients do you think is important to share with volunteers? And what can be withheld?
18. How do responsibilities differ between volunteers and staff?
19. Have you had to work with difficult volunteers? How did you navigate it?
20. Do you alert volunteers if they are going to be working with a difficult case?
21. How do you communicate with volunteers? Could it be improved?
22. Did you attend the Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast? Thoughts?
23. What changes would you make to improve volunteerism at HIAS to be more supportive for you or the clients?
24. Before we close, is there anything else you want to say about your experiences, with regard to the volunteers at HIAS or anything else?
25. Are there any questions that we did not ask that you think we should have?
APPENDIX 2

“Nurturing Volunteers” Interview Guide: Volunteer

1. How long have you been a volunteer with HIAS PA?
2. Why did you originally start volunteering?
3. How did you connect with the agency or hear about it?
4. If applicable, do you think religion continues to influence your volunteerism?
5. Did you consider volunteering with another resettlement agency in Philadelphia?
6. What roles do you have within the agency?
7. Had you ever volunteered with refugees before working with HIAS?
8. If so, what did you learn from that experience and why did you want to continue?
9. If not, what was the original spark for volunteering with refugees?
10. Do you currently volunteer with any other organizations?
11. Could you tell me about the last time you volunteered with clients?
12. What made that day different from other days?
13. What made that day similar from other days?
14. How long do you typically volunteer with HIAS and how frequently?
15. When working with clients, what are your techniques to approaching language barriers?
16. Have you developed any relationships with clients?
17. Do you talk about your volunteerism with friends or family? What do they say?
18. What has surprised you most about this volunteerism?
19. What have you learned about Philadelphia through the process?
20. What have you learned about social services through the process?
21. Why do you think volunteerism exists at HIAS?
22. What changes would you make to improve volunteerism at HIAS to be more supportive for you or the clients?
23. What have you personally gained, if anything, by participating in the program?
24. Before we close, is there anything else you want to say about your experiences, with regard to the volunteering at HIAS or anything else?
25. Finally, would you mind me asking what your current employment status is?
26. Are there any questions that we did not ask that you think we should have?
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