

**WAITING AND WELLBEING AMONG SYRIAN REFUGEES DURING PERIODS OF
WAR, DISPLACEMENT, AND RESETTLEMENT**

by

MAY MZAYEK, B.A.

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COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

K. Jill Fleuriet, Ph.D., Chair
Patrick Gallagher, Ph.D.
Nazgol Bagheri, Ph.D.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT SAN ANTONIO
College of Liberal and Fine Arts
Department of Anthropology
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents who left everything in Syria to give me and my sister a chance at a better life. For my father, Fawaz, who has encouraged and supported my dreams. You are my hero. For my mother, Lina, who has done everything to nurture my Syrian-American identity. You are my love. For my sister, Yasmin, who is my inspiration in life. You are my world. This thesis is also dedicated to the people of Syria who continue to be a beacon of hope through the endless war. You are my people.

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“The people of Syria. You can torture us, kill us, and take everything away from us, but we always prevail...” –one of my informants.

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May Mzayek, M.A.
The University of Texas at San Antonio, 2017

Supervising Professor: K. Jill Fleuriet, Ph.D.

The Syrian Refugee Crisis, which began in 2011, is among the worst since WWII and continues to wreak havoc on the lives of millions of Syrian refugees. Through an ethnographic approach, I examine the wellbeing of Syrian refugees within the chronologies of peace, war, displacement, and resettlement to the United States. Specifically, I focus on the concepts of waiting and liminality to understand the wellbeing and identity of Syrian refugees. My research shows that the refugees' definition of wellbeing changes during the different phases of peace, war, displacement, and resettlement; ideas of wellbeing are reinforced within each waiting space; and as refugees, Syrians enter into a liminal stage of de-identification and loss of personhood. Nevertheless, they employ diverse strategies to escape each waiting space in an effort to improve wellbeing.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	iv
Abstract.....	vi
List of Tables	viii
List of Figures.....	ix
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Methods.....	16
Chapter 3: Before the War	28
Chapter 4: War and Displacement	34
Chapter 5: Initial Resettlement Process in Intermediate Countries	44
Chapter 6: Resettlement in Austin, Texas, USA.....	60
Chapter 7: Survey Results: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Depression, and Happiness	76
Conclusion	81
Appendices.....	87
References.....	100
Vita	

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Case Summaries, by gender. Scores are presented as mean; (SD)77

Table 2 Comparison of psychological health scores between Syrian refugee men and women in Austin, Texas. Scores are presented as mean; (SD).....77

Table 3 Comparison of men and women on clinical classifications of psychological scores.....78

Table 4 Comparison of psychological health scores of Syrian refugees, by time spent in the US. Scores are presented as mean; (SD).....79

Table 5 Comparison of psychological health scores of Syrian refugees, by time of resettlement application approval. Scores are presented as mean; (SD)79

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Map of the 2017 distribution of Syrian refugees in the Middle East.....	4
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The objective of the research project is to understand the relationship between waiting and the wellbeing of Syrian refugees who were displaced from their home country because of the civil war that erupted in 2011. In this research, waiting is defined through liminality, which is regarded as an ambivalent time and space, or a period of in-betweenness (Sutton et al. 2011). For this project, waiting specifically refers to different periods Syrian refugees experience any halt to their journey for resettlement, which is between when refugees leave their homes in Syria and attain permanent resettlement and residency in the United States.

I am interested in understanding the socio-emotional experience and situational determinants of happiness, one component shared in most cultural concepts of wellbeing (Mathews and Izquierdo 2009), and its opposite concept, unhappiness, during the refugee resettlement process of the United States. Also, I am concerned with how the refugees' histories of displacement and resettlement can shape the experiences of waiting as well as the understandings of wellbeing through chronologies of movement. The main research question is: **“How does waiting affect the wellbeing of Syrian refugees during the resettlement journey to the United States?”**

This research contributes to literature in anthropology on refugees, time, and wellbeing, and interdisciplinary health research on wellbeing. Anthropological approaches to refugee studies focus on a variety of issues, some of which are displacement, human rights, health, resettlement, policy and identity (Warner 2007; Camino and Krufeld 1994; Krufeld and MacDonald 1998; Morrissey 1983; Harrell-Bond and Voutira 1992; James 1991; Harrell-Bond et al. 1992). However, anthropological lenses have scarcely been applied to the case of Syrian refugees (Inhorn 2014). In addition, anthropological research on Syrian refugees within the

United States is absent. Finally, this research addresses those gaps by exploring the anthropological concepts of wellbeing, waiting, and liminality through the spatio-temporal experiences of Syrian refugees.

Existing research on Syrian refugees, in other disciplines, focuses on the negative reception of the refugees waiting for resettlement in Middle Eastern and European contexts (Koca 2016; Gabiam 2016). Moreover, extant research emphasizes short-term, negative impacts of trauma on the wellbeing of Syrian refugees (Koca 2016; Gabiam 2016). Using participant observation and focal interviews, I broaden the lens to examine the relationship of waiting during the resettlement journey focusing on refugees' wellbeing and resilience. Moreover, I extend the research into the United States to show the continuous effects of waiting on wellbeing. My research takes place in Austin, Texas, United States among resettled Syrian refugees, who reflect on their experiences of waiting and wellbeing during their resettlement journey. I demonstrate that individual histories of displacement and resettlement have an effect on the relationship between waiting and wellbeing. Lastly, rather than an end to the resettlement process, I show that refugees in the United States remain in a liminal state of existence waiting to regain their identity and sense of permanence.

1.1 Syrian Refugees: Contextualizing the Uprising

In early 2011, the Syrian uprising took root in a succession of isolated protests against the Syrian regime (Ibrahim 2017) within the context of the Arab Spring protests in Tunisia and Egypt (Ismail 2011). The uprising began in Daraa, a southern city in Syria, in the early months of 2011 after a number of children were arrested for spraying graffiti on their school wall, calling for the fall of President Bashar Al Assad and his regime (Ismail 2011). The arrest and inhumane treatment of the children by the security officers sparked outrage and protests in the community

(Ismail 2011). The protests spread to other cities in Syria and were met with violence and deadly force from the Syrian regime (Ismail 2011; Ibrahim 2017). Rebel groups formed to counteract the regime's militarized responses, and the uprising transformed into a civil war. As a result, by 2016 death tolls were estimated to be around 400,000 people (Ibrahim 2017). At that time, estimates showed that 4.8 million Syrians were registered as refugees and that 6.5 million were internally displaced within the country, including 4.4 million who were trapped under siege (Ibrahim 2017).

1.2 Waiting and Wellbeing in the Context of Displacement and Resettlement

Since 2011, displaced Syrian refugees have sought refuge in neighboring Arab countries (see Figure 1) and Europe, as well as the United States and Canada. The Syrian Civil War triggered a large wave of forced migration, known as the Syrian Refugee Crisis. The result has been a displacement crisis (Chatty 2016) that led to a dire humanitarian situation (Yazgan et al. 2015). While the war forced a large number of Syrian refugees into neighboring countries, many faced added immobility due to the temporary measures used by those countries to deal with the refugee crisis and to halt the mass migrations (Chatty 2016). In many cases, refugees who wanted to seek refuge in a third country had to wait for years to be resettled into those countries (Koca 2016). Most of this waiting took place in refugee camps, temporary sheltering facilities, temporary housing, and resettlement areas.

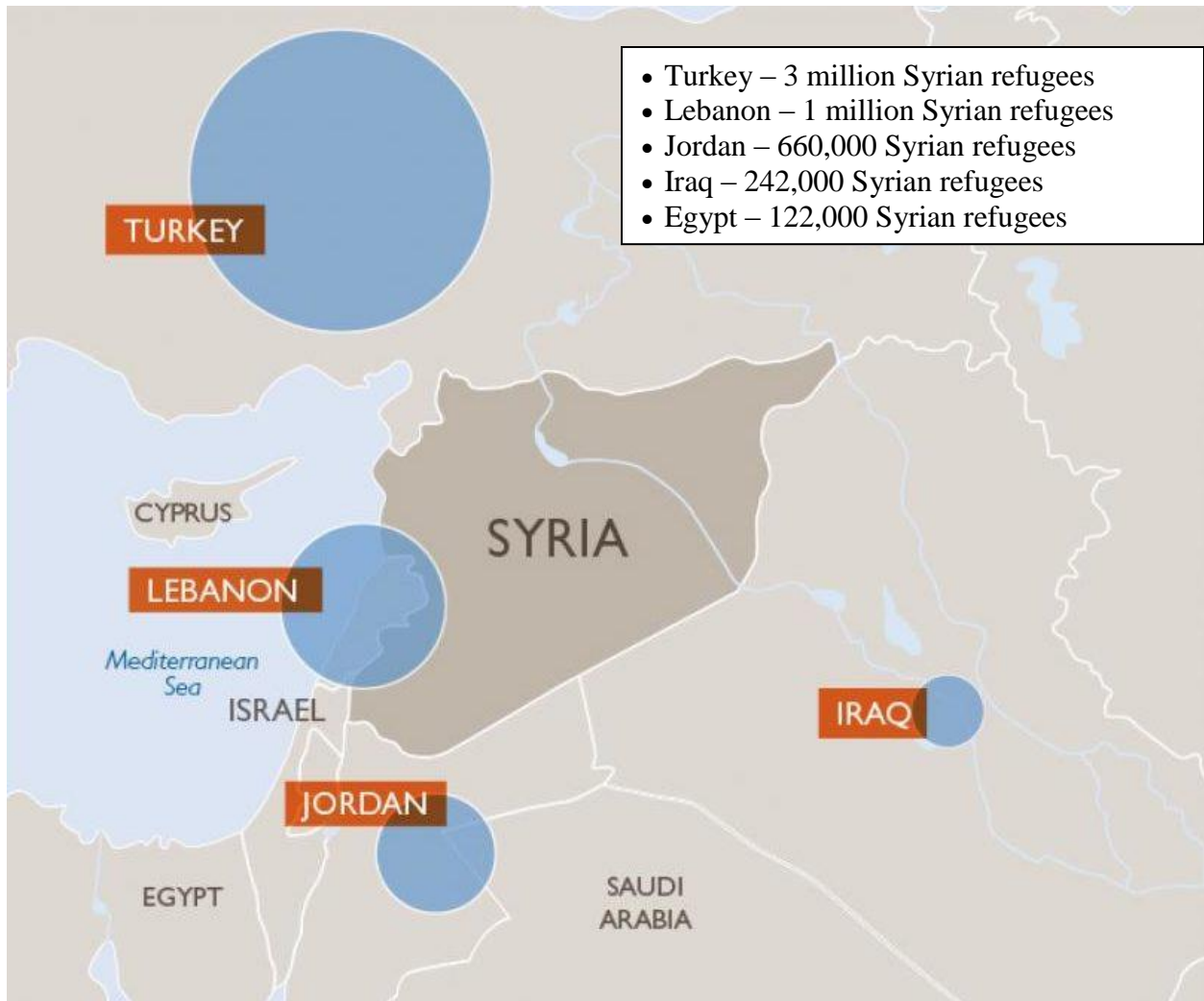


Figure 1. Map of the 2017 distribution of Syrian refugees in the Middle East. Source: Worldvision.org

Waiting is connected to physical clock time, which can be connected to hope and endurance or fear and dread (Sutton et al. 2011). It extends to the promise of event-to-come, a form of anticipation that includes several practices and activities (Bissell 2007) such as working, performing daily activities, and planning. Waiting is a particular focus of time and space, which can influence identity and wellbeing (Lennartsson 2007).

Moreover, waiting can be viewed as a crucial aspect of liminality in terms of an ambivalent space and time, or an “in-between” state (Sutton et al 2011). The existence in a liminal space and time can lead to a kind of “identity weightlessness,” which can negatively

impact wellbeing. Research shows that the inability to maintain ties to a place can have negative effects on a person's wellbeing and identity (Lennartsson 2007). Further, the constant state of transition can contribute to a period characterized by liminality, which can cause insecurity and issues with identity formation (Lennartsson 2007).

The experience of waiting to resettle in the United States involves particular strain for Syrian refugees because of a long and intensive vetting process, taking from eighteen to twenty four months (Altman 2015). The process is led by the US State Department Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration with the collaboration of the International Organization for Migration, the UN Refugee Agency, the Departments of Homeland Security and Health and Human Services, and other voluntary groups (IOM 2016). Refugees undergo some of the strictest measures of security screening—extensive background checks, in-depth interviews, security and health checks— of any types of travelers to the United States (Welsh 2015). Due to the terrorist attacks in the Middle East and Europe, Syrians and other refugees from those regions have come under scrutiny and distrust since their countries were invaded by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Media discourse and governmental policies have increased the risk of discrimination against refugees, especially Middle Eastern or Muslim refugees, which may influence the wellbeing of refugees (Sulaiman-Hill and Thompson 2012). Consequently, Syrian refugees are likely to be viewed as a “threat” linked to terrorism, which can expose them to economic exploitation, xenophobia, and health issues (Koca 2016). Syrian refugees facing exploitation, discrimination (Koca 2016), displacement and uncertain futures can develop emotional, physical, and social problems (Doner et al. 2013). However, they are also likely to develop a capacity for resilience, sustainability, and self-reliance (Gabiam 2016).

Expectations of wellbeing are rooted in structural arrangements and cultural understandings that are embedded in webs of social relationships (Derne 2009). Wellbeing is fundamentally subjective, but its criteria can be shared, i.e., the ‘good life’ (Mathews and Izquierdo 2009). While happiness is a contested term, it is assessed qualitatively and as defined in the subjective expression of satisfaction with life or the good life (Mathews and Izquierdo 2009; Fischer 2014). In addition to happiness and life satisfaction, I evaluate the fluctuating development and understanding of wellbeing from the interviews and interactions with the participants.

The study focuses on how Syrian refugees’ wellbeing is influenced by waiting within the specific temporal and spatial contexts of the resettlement process and through personal histories of displacement. I examine waiting and liminality during the resettlement process in the United States within broader individual histories of displacement in order to understand their effects on wellbeing. The research questions (RQ) for the project are:

RQ 1: What are the day-to-day experiences of waiting and wellbeing during the resettlement process for Syrian refugees in the United States?

RQ 2: How do length and location of waiting shape wellbeing during the resettlement journey?

RQ 3: How do individual histories of displacement shape experiences of waiting and wellbeing during the resettlement journey among Syrian refugees?

To address these research questions, I performed semi-structured interviews, conducted participant observations, and administered mental health assessment instruments among Syrian refugees currently living in Austin, Texas. Interviews focused on eliciting individual histories of displacement following the war and displacement periods, and the resettlement periods as well

as, individual perceptions and experiences of wellbeing, happiness, and unhappiness. Additionally, participant observation with Syrian families in Austin documented their experiences of waiting and coping strategies they use, as they undergo the final resettlement process. Finally, scores on PTSD-Civilian Checklist, PHQ-9, and Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) instruments were used to assess the participants' mental health. The PTSD-Civilian Checklist was used to assess symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder through self-reported measures (Conybear et al. 2012). In addition, PHQ-9 was used to evaluate severity measure of depression and anxiety (Sawaya et al. 2016). Finally, The SHS scale was used to assess subjective happiness (Lyubomirsky and Lepper 1999). These instruments provided a sense of the refugees' psychological health as they resettle in the United States.

1.3 Literature Review

This project draws from and contributes to theoretical discussions in anthropology around the topics of temporality, wellbeing, liminality and the critical analysis of refugee experiences. I explore the relationship between waiting, liminality, and wellbeing in the anthropological literature on refugees. I examine temporality in order to contextualize the concepts of waiting and liminality in research on refugees and forced migration. Finally, I focus on wellbeing as an important concept which frames the spatio-temporal experiences of Syrian refugees during periods of war, displacement, and resettlement.

Anthropology of Refugees

While “refugee” is a contested term, in my work, I use the Geneva Convention’s definition of “refugee”:

...any person who [,]...owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or

political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it (Geneva Convention 1951 in Malkki 1995:501).

Anthropological work with refugee communities is commonly situated in ideas of human rights, citizenship, and diaspora (see Malkki 1995). Anthropologists have been concerned with refugee health, human rights, resettlement, empowerment, and identity for a long time (Warner 2007; Camino and Krufeld 1994; Krufeld and MacDonald 1998; Morrissey 1983). Furthermore, their work contributed significantly to the formation of policy for refugee populations by helping policy-makers identify social meanings specific to refugee groups and their needs (Harrell-Bond and Voutira 1992; James 1991; Harrell-Bond et al. 1992).

Although research on refugees focuses on different aspects of refugees' experiences, there is a considerable number of anthropological works that concentrate on their negative experiences, which associates the 'refugee' figure with images of helplessness, misery, and dependency (Harrell-Bond and Voutira 1992; Dunbar-Ortiz and Harrell-Bond 1987).

Anthropological work on the displacement of Palestinian refugees, for example, focused on their experience of marginalization and poverty in refugee camps (Allan 2013). Dewachi (2015) built on Iraqi refugee ethnographic accounts of displacement by exploring the "social wound," a concept that traces the histories and geographies of violence which are rooted in the uncertainties of daily social experiences of war and displacement.

In most cases, refugee research universalizes "the refugee experience" and equates it to traumatic, tragic, helpless, and demoralized representations of displaced groups (Malkki 1995). Malkki (1996) criticized this idea and explored the effects of different forms of intervention practiced by international humanitarian organizations which are implemented to aid refugees but

can produce a dehistoricized and depoliticized image of refugees. The interventions approached the physical and psychological suffering of refugees through medical and legal discourses which tied images of trauma and victimhood to those populations resulting in hierarchies of vulnerability during the processes of resettlement (Dewachi 2015; Ticktin 2011). Consequently, literature questioning the negative depictions of refugee experiences has surfaced within the last few years (See Malkki 1995, 1996; Rajaram 2002; Suzuki 2016). Anthropological work challenging the negative images of refugees have expanded to include aspects of resilience which can form out of traumatic experiences (Simich and Andermann 2014). I identify resilience as the various ways in which individuals or communities withstand hardships through strengths, resources, and capabilities (Panter-Brick et al. 2017).

While refugee research in the anthropological field has explored the experiences of refugees through different approaches, Inhorn (2014) emphasized the limited anthropological role in the case of Syrian refugees and calls for more anthropological responses to the plight of Syrian and other Middle Eastern refugees. In this study, I will reexamine the perceptions and experiences of wellbeing, and their relationship with waiting, among Syrian refugees in the United States through the different stages of their journey of war, displacement, and resettlement in order to recognize patterns of suffering and resilience.

Anthropology of Wellbeing

Some anthropologists use the term “wellbeing” to explore factors that affect quality of life in terms of happiness (see Mathews and Izquierdo 2009). Others, such as Fischer (2014) claim that there are two types of happiness, “hedonic” happiness of everyday contentment and the broader sense of “life satisfaction,” which is usually mediated by the standards of

“wellbeing” and “the good life.” I identify wellbeing through Mathews and Izquierdo’s (2009) understanding of the concept:

Wellbeing is an optimal state for an individual, community, society, and the world as a whole. It is conceived of, expressed, and experienced in different ways by different individuals and within the cultural contexts of different societies: different societies may have distinctly different culturally shaped vision of well-being. Nonetheless, wellbeing bears a degree of commonality due to our common humanity and interrelatedness over space and time. Wellbeing is experienced by individuals—but it may be considered and compared interpersonally and interculturally, since all individuals live within particular worlds of others, and all societies live in a common world at large (Mathews and Izquierdo 2009:5).

Anthropologists have also studied wellbeing to understand elements that affect health equity (see Panter-Brick et al. 2014). Concerning refugees, research on wellbeing emphasizes the connection of psychosocial health to feelings of instability (El-Shaarawi 2015) and distress, which can result from the disruption of social relationships (Ryan et al. 2008). The work on wellbeing among refugees has demonstrated that waiting for resettlement can produce negative psychological outcomes that impact refugee wellbeing in forms of depression, anxiety, and frustration (Lennartsson 2007).

In another vein, research on wellbeing and resilience has started to surface in refugee literature to show adaptation and coping methods of refugee populations. In one case, Simich et al. (2003) studied the wellbeing and adaptation of a number of refugee groups in Canada to understand mental health and resilience in those communities. They found that the primary determinants of wellbeing and adaptation came from shared cultures and shared experiences of refugees (Simich et al. 2003). Furthermore, Chase and Bhattarai (2013) employed an emic approach to understand the rising suicide rates of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. They found that local religious and cultural wisdom surrounding the Bhutanese’s own understanding of wellbeing

and resilience can be more effective in reducing psychiatric morbidity than prevailing psychological constructs (Chase and Bhattarai 2013).

Of Syrian refugees, Anthropological work on wellbeing is scarce. Literature on wellbeing with Syrian refugees that uses quantitative and qualitative methods has recently surfaced in public health and social science collaborations. For instance, Hassan et al. (2016) performed a study on a report commissioned by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on internally displaced Syrians and Syrian refugees and found that violence and other hardships, accompanied with lack of resources and services, and language barriers can contribute to negative effects on their mental wellbeing, which result in adverse mental outcomes, including PTSD, depression, stress, hopelessness, and anxiety. Also, the authors examined the problems with physical wellbeing which produce symptoms of fatigue, sleeping difficulties, loss of appetite, and other medical conditions (Hassan et al. 2016). Finally, the authors studied the negative effects on psychosocial wellbeing that create social and behavioral disorders resulting in withdrawal, aggression and interpersonal problems, such as divorce, abuse, rejection, and ostracism (Hassan et al. 2016).

However, no social scientists to date have considered how ‘waiting,’ and where waiting takes place, shapes the experience of Syrian refugees and their wellbeing. This research project addresses this gap in knowledge by focusing on the spatial and temporal dimensions of waiting during the resettlement journey of the Syrian refugees because waiting is a critical part of the refugee experience.

Anthropology of Time

Anthropologists approach time through several different lenses. For some, time is the existence of events and their temporal relationships to each other (See Gell 1992; Hodges 2008).

Time can also be considered a symbolic process grounded in everyday social practices that are tied to spatial and temporal dimensions which are lived through the connectivities of objects, persons, and space (see Munn 1992; Hodges 2008). Leach (1968), argued that time is created through formation of intervals in social life (Musharbash 2007). Other anthropologists generalized the creation of time as a process (Musharbash 2007) of forming intervals that can, through experience, create us and impact the way we construct time (Giddens 1984; Musharbash 2007).

Within the social sciences of refugee studies, time has become central to understanding the effects of waiting among refugee populations (see Lennartsson 2007; Vitus 2010; Griffiths 2014). Waiting can imply a spatial and temporal location, particularly among refugees, so that time and space become intimately linked in refugee studies (Griffiths 2014; Conlon 2011; Gill 2009b). Waiting can be experienced as ‘dead time,’ or stillness, that halts progress because it is devoid of linearity (Masquelier 2013). While stillness may be a part of the waiting process, this concept incorporates a display of different practices and activities that are a response to some form of anticipation within that space and time (Bissell 2007). In a sense, waiting can be described as ‘empty intervals between instants’ (Schweizer 2005) that incorporates a myriad of mundane activities—drinking, sleeping, and eating (Bissell 2007). I conceptualize waiting-time as the waiting intervals between war and permanent residency of the Syrian refugees, grounded in social relationships that are broken and, sometimes, reknitted during the resettlement process. Moreover, I use Victor Turner’s (1969) concept of liminality to understand the social experiences of resettlement while waiting. Within this context, waiting is described as a liminal period, a transitory and transformative space, which is full of despair and hope (Sutton et al. 2011).

For refugees, there are periods of waiting that constitute their lives. Waiting can also be a time of anticipation of something better. The conditions of waiting and the future possibilities that could emerge from waiting can both contribute to the wellbeing of refugees during their resettlement process. Since waiting is usually associated with negative connotations (Schweizer 2005), it is a major factor in the wellbeing of refugees. For example, in one study, time and space were examined with Iraqi refugees waiting in exile within Egypt (El-Shaarawi 2015). The indeterminate nature of waiting lead to a decline in refugee wellbeing during resettlement. The results showed that uncertainty and suffering are associated with waiting time and place since many Iraqi refugees felt marginalized in Egypt (El-Shaarawi 2015).

When refugees wait, they often begin to have serious consequences on their wellbeing. Waiting fixes them within specific spaces and times, or between, in their attempts to establish new lives. Additionally, these waiting spaces and waiting times can isolate refugee groups during typically high levels of stress and/or trauma. In one study, Kurdish and Afghan refugees waiting in New Zealand and Australia felt separation, though allowing time to introspect, led to significant stressors on their wellbeing (Sulaiman-Hill and Thompson 2012). Moreover, waiting can cause the loss of status, social position, and professional position, which can lead to stigmatization and problems integrating within the country of resettlement.

Research on Syrian refugee waiting and wellbeing is limited. Work in Turkey suggests that Syrian refugees wait for years before they can resettle in third countries, such as the US, Canada, and Australia (Koca 2016). In the course of this waiting period, Turkey does not hold much responsibility for the basic rights and needs—housing, healthcare, education, and work—of the Syrian refugees (Koca 2016). There is no research on Syrian refugees waiting for resettlement in the United States.

Liminality and Identity

Liminality can be a fundamental component to waiting and identity. Developed by Arnold van Gennep (1960) and used by anthropologists, such as Victor Turner (1969), liminality originally marked a transitional stage in the rites of passage of cultures in small-scale settings (Thomassen 2014:92; Szokolczai 2009). The rites are processes that begin with a ‘separation’ stage, where an individual is separated from her group, which leads to a ‘liminal’ stage, a central phase involving performance or trial, and end in a re-aggregation stage, where the individual is reintegrated back into society as a changed person (Szokolczai 2009). Since then, the concept of liminality has been used extensively in anthropology and sociology in a variety of contexts.

For example, liminality has become a central focus of reference to refugees living in ‘limbo’ (see Malkki 1995b; Turton 2004). According to Harrell-Bond and Voutira (1992), within anthropological terms, refugees are those who have experienced a violent ‘rite’ of separation followed by a transitional, or ‘liminal’, state of being. In Malkki’s (1995b) work on Hutu refugees in Tanzania, she explored the problematic liminal position that refugees occupy by citing Turner’s analysis:

Transitional beings are particularly polluting, since they are neither one thing nor another; or may be both; or neither here nor there; or may be even nowhere...and are at the very least ‘betwixt and between’ all the recognized fixed point in...cultural classification” (Turner 1967, quoted in Malkki 1995b:7).

Liminality is central to understanding exile groups (i.e. refugees and immigrants), who strive to live in the identity markers of their lost homeland and who must reform these markers in a new environment (Siganporia 2016) or who are constantly recreating their identities in different spaces (Eyles and Dam 2012). As liminal individuals, refugees personify a set of wounded memories, a traumatized social self that comes from an oppressive past which can lead

to problems in remembering or claiming identity (Beneduce 2008). Waiting in liminal spaces can be fueled by despair or hope in the anticipation of a new identity (Sutton et al. 2011). While the concept of liminality produces a mainly negative view of refugees (El-Shaarawi 2015), I also use liminality to explore those experiences of refugees within a state of expectation, as Turner (1967) would highlight, to reintegrate into society (El-Shaarawi 2015). While liminality is a stage full of uncertainty, it can hold expectations of reincorporation for persons who take on a new role or identity (El-Shaarawi 2015).

CHAPTER 2: METHODS

My research takes place in Austin, Texas. Access to Syrian refugee families is facilitated by local refugee aid organizations. Resettlement organizations, such as Refugee Services of Texas (RST) and CARITAS of Austin, have taken a leading role in helping Syrian refugees facing resettlement challenges by providing financial support, English classes, and access to healthcare and other services to the Syrian families. The Syrian American Refugee Aid (SARA) group, among many groups, has provided extra assistance to Syrian refugees struggling with resettlement. SARA consists of five Syrian-American families that immigrated to Austin, Texas, several decades ago. They have acclimated to the environment in the United States and are using their experiences and knowledge to help the Syrian refugees with the resettlement process. I worked with SARA members to gain access to the Syrian refugees in Austin. Also, I conducted participant observation within SARA to understand the process of Syrian refugee resettlement in Austin.

While Texas has pulled out of the federal refugee resettlement program, Austin has accepted 315 refugees, nearly half of whom are Syrian, within the last year (Whittaker 2016). Although the residents of Austin have been welcoming to the Syrian refugees, many refugees face increasing anti-refugee and anti-Muslim rhetoric that has corresponded with the election of Donald Trump as the President of the United States (Whittaker 2016). During a preliminary visit to Austin, TX, to establish the connection with SARA and the Syrian refugee community there, it was brought to my attention that refugees are continuously struggling with the resettlement process. I was informed that many are struggling with financial security, access to medical care, jobs, and the culture and language of the United States.

My research consisted of three phases: recruitment, initial field research and data management and analysis.

Phase 1: Recruitment

To recruit volunteers for the study, I used purposive sampling and snowball sampling (Bernard 2011) in order to connect with Syrian refugees. Moreover, I used my Syrian identity and background to connect with my participants. I am also a native Arabic speaker. Two individuals, a couple, from SARA became my primary informants and helped me connect with other Syrian refugees. I lived with them for three months during my field research period. Through networking with SARA organizers, I gained access to Syrian refugees in Austin, a small group that is scattered in the northern area of the city. I visited Austin to meet with my informants in January to explain my research project. I recruited 37 (24 women and 13 men) Syrian individuals for participant observation, 15 (8 women and 7 men) of whom were interviewed, and 27 (18 women and 9 men) of whom participated in the survey questionnaire (Appendix 1; Appendix 2; Appendix 3; Appendix 4). My participants were 18 years of age or older. During the interviews, I provided my participants with formal letters of consent which ensured anonymity. The letters were written in English and Arabic. Also, I explained my objectives in Arabic to ensure their understanding of my intentions.

Phase 2: Initial Field Research

I spent three months in Austin, from March 2017 to May 2017, employing survey questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and participant observation in order to answer my research questions. I lived with my primary informants from SARA to become a part of the resettlement aid effort and to interact with Syrian refugees on a daily basis. During my time, I

communicated with my informants in Arabic. Speaking in their native tongue and sharing a native background gave me an opportunity to form relationships with my informants. In addition, should they have wanted it, I aided my informants in their daily activities. Also, I volunteered with the SARA organization to help the refugees gain access to resources and to understand their experiences with different refugee organizations.

RQ 1: What are the experiences of waiting and wellbeing during the resettlement process for Syrian refugees in the United States?

I accompanied my informants on their daily activities—drove them to appointments, grocery stores, and attended leisure activities—to gain insight on their experiences of waiting and to gauge a better understanding of their wellbeing during the resettlement period. Also, I conducted semi-structured ethnographic interviews with each of my informants to understand their perceptions of wellbeing while they were waiting. These interviews asked questions on waiting and its effects on wellbeing during the resettlement period. I asked them to define wellbeing, happiness, and unhappiness with examples from before and after the resettlement process and to narrate their experiences of waiting and wellbeing during the resettlement process. These semi-structured interviews took 30-60 minutes each. Also at the end of the day, I recorded notes in my field notebook to reflect on my daily observations of and interactions with my informants. Finally, I took two days off during the week to focus on transcribing my interviews.

RQ 2: How do length and location of waiting shape wellbeing during the resettlement journey?

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews included questions pertaining to refugee experiences with waiting-time and location. Before these interviews, I used survey questionnaires (Appendix 1; Appendix 2; Appendix 3) adopted from public health models to obtain information on the

mental aspect of their wellbeing. Specifically, I used the short Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) to measure depression among the refugees. I also used the PTSD Check List-Civilian Version (PCL-C) to measure PTSD symptoms. Finally, I used the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) to measure the levels of happiness among the refugees. The three instruments are widely used in research and clinical settings (Becker et al 2002; Sawaya et al. 2016; Conybear et al. 2012); Lyubomirsky and Lepper 1999). Furthermore, all instruments were validated in Arabic, the native language of the Syrian refugees (Eldabah et al. 2016; Sawaya et al. 2016; Moghnie and Kazarian 2012). The questionnaires were given to the informants at the beginning of the study to understand their wellbeing in terms of mental health and happiness (N=27). Moreover, participant observation with my participants gave me the opportunity to observe the impacts of waiting-time and location on refugee wellbeing during the resettlement period.

RQ 3: How do individual histories of displacement shape experiences of waiting and wellbeing during the resettlement journey among Syrian refugees?

Interviews elicited individual histories of displacement and resettlement with prompts about waiting and wellbeing. I am interested in the historical accounts of displacement experienced by Syrian refugees before arriving to the United States. This gave me an understanding of their wellbeing outside of the United States. In addition to interviewing Syrian refugees, I interviewed two personnel from SARA to gauge their understanding of the resettlement process of Syrian refugees. While aid organizations represent humanitarian interventions, they can also influence the representation of refugees by producing authoritative narratives on refugees through policy discourses that can discount refugee voices (Malkki 1996). These interviews with SARA personnel explored the relationship between the refugees and aid organization to understand the impacts of aid organization policies on Syrian refugees. Moreover, my participation in refugees'

daily lives unveiled more information on their interactions with aid organizations. Furthermore, I got a sense of how their wellbeing is shaped by their daily activities through their interactions with each other and with non-refugee individuals.

Phase 3: Data Management and Analysis:

The data was collected via questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and field notes. The data was saved to my laptop and a portable hard drive protected by a password. For participants' anonymity, I used pseudonyms to protect their identities. Following a grounded theory approach (Bernard 2011), I transcribed my interviews and coded specific passages to explore certain themes and sub-themes in regards to waiting and wellbeing. While coding, I paid specific attention to recurring topics that expand on the experiences of waiting and wellbeing during the resettlement process (RQ1). In addition, I identified and organized the length and location of waiting and how they shape wellbeing during the resettlement process (RQ2). Finally, I highlighted themes and sub-themes linking their individual histories of displacement and resettlement to experiences of waiting and wellbeing (RQ3).

Bivariate and multivariate analyses (Bernard 2011) were used to assess the crude and adjusted associations of sex, time spent in USA, and waiting time for processing the resettlement application with mental health and happiness of the refugees, measured by their scores on PHQ-9 (Depression) (Becker et al. 2002), PCL-C (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) (Blanchard et al. 1996), and SHS (Subjective Happiness Scale) (Lyubomirsky and Lepper 1999). I used SPSS (Bernard 2011) for all quantitative analyses. Finally, I used results from the quantitative analyses to contextualize the qualitative data to better understand the psychological impacts on the wellbeing of Syrian refugees in the United States.

2.1 Population and Setting

My research took place in Austin, Texas, USA from March 2017 until the end of May 2017 (approximately three months). In order to gain access to the Syrian refugee community, I was invited to stay with a Syrian-American couple, Laila and Ammar, who, along with other Syrian-American families, founded the Syrian American Refugee Aid (SARA) organization in 2015 to support Syrian refugees resettling in Austin. Initially, the Syrian refugees were resettled by Refugee Services of Texas (RST) and CARITAS of Austin who receive and manage aid allocated by the state for refugee resettlement. These two organizations provide the Syrian refugees with housing, used furniture, and appliances. In addition, they set up medical appointments for required immunizations; help in enrolling in ESL courses; help in finding employment; and work on legal documents. However, these organizations do not provide the refugees with any spending money, and they are overwhelmed sometimes with the fast rate of incoming Syrian refugees into Austin. Private organizations, such as SARA, were created to overcome the limitations of the resettlement organizations.

I became a fulltime volunteer for SARA, and I also sat in on their monthly board meetings. My duties included: aid in translation, transportation, paperwork, daily activities, doctor visits, and event planning. Members of SARA contacted the Syrian refugee community in Austin and informed them about my role as a volunteer and a researcher, while emphasizing that I would still help them even if they declined to participate in my study. While a few objected, most of the refugees that I contacted consented to joining my research.

The Syrian refugee community in Austin consisted originally of 46 families with five families relocated to different states, which brings the current number to 41 families (personal communication with SARA 2017). These families are mainly from the southern city of Daraa,

the birthplace of the uprising, with a few from Damascus, Homs, Hama, Aleppo, and Idlib—all are major cities in Syria. The families went through the vetting process for resettlement in the United States while they were in the intermediate countries of Turkey (3 families), Lebanon (3 families), Egypt (2 families), Malaysia (1 family), and the majority in Jordan (32 families) (personal communication with SARA 2017). As of the end of March 2017, the duration of the families' stay in the United States ranged from two years to two months. Along with other refugee and immigrant groups, the Syrian refugee families were resettled together in several apartments in the northern part of Austin. Therefore, the Syrian refugees created a tight-knit group among themselves that, on a few occasions, included other non-Syrian Arabs.

The Syrian refugees share a culture, a religion, a language, and a nationality. However, their norms, food, and accents vary, since they hail from different cities in Syria. The Syrian refugees who resettled in Austin consist of core family units. They are large families with an average of (5.3) individuals per family and an average 4 children per family (personal communication with SARA 2017).

Coming from the Sunni Muslim faith, all of the Syrian women wore modest clothes with the hijab¹ in public spaces or, sometimes, within the home if non-relative males were present. The women did not wear the hijab in their homes around their male relatives and other women. Being familiar with the traditional nature of these Syrian refugees, I dressed in conservative attire and addressed them in their native tongue, Arabic. For their privacy, I never asked any of the women or men to take pictures, but I agreed to be in their photos when they wanted to photograph me with their family. Mainly, I visited with the women to keep them company or to assist them in their daily activities. On rare occasions, I interacted with the men for an interview

¹ While all of the Syrian refugee women in Austin wore the hijab, not all Muslim women wear it. As a Muslim, I never wore the hijab, which produced some curiosity from some of my subjects, but most of them did not care.

or during large gatherings. Often, I found myself in the company of their children either babysitting or helping them with English translation and pronunciation.

The women did not venture outside of their homes very much. They felt more comfortable in the private spaces of their homes. In some cases, the women gathered together around the pool area of the apartment complex or in parks close to their home. Often times, the men followed the women to these social gatherings but they maintained a separate group in the company of other men away from the women. However, during dinner parties, the Syrian men and women intermingled with each other and with their American guests.

Most of the Syrian refugee men held several jobs or worked full-time jobs that were attained individually or with the help of SARA or their resettlement organization, while most of the women remained in their apartment complexes working on household chores and often visiting other women daily to keep each other company. Nonetheless, the high cost of living in Austin prompted some of the women to find employment in order to help their family.

My presence in the Syrian refugee community in Austin, at first, brought curiosity and interest. Then, once I became a fixture, I had to remind my informants that I was conducting research on them. Some of them did not understand the difference between research and journalistic work. Since the Syrian refugee community was very new to Austin, many journalists and film-makers have contacted, and worked with, the refugees. However, my role as a researcher was different to them since I participated in their daily activities and volunteered with them.

Moreover, my background as a Syrian caused them to ignore or forget my research role in their community. The women and children regarded me as a friend or a family member. Furthermore, they did not view me as an American. Even when they commented on my

American behaviors, they would laugh and say, “You are such a Syrian. And that Aleppo accent, no one can miss that and you cannot escape it. You are not really an American. You are still a Syrian who knows the American ways.” However, most of the women took advantage of my knowledge of the English language and American culture by requesting my help in their daily activities since they were unfamiliar and somewhat intimidated with the new environment.

Likewise, the men viewed me as a Syrian comrade who aided them in translation and other activities. However, in the beginning, the men were perplexed by my presence, feeling uncomfortable around me and not taking me seriously because I was a young, unmarried Syrian Muslim woman who did not particularly fit the traditional cultural image. Since I did not follow their view of the traditional roles of Syrian women², I was, at first, viewed with suspicion by some of the men. Nonetheless, with time, the men became more comfortable around me due to my constant presence within the Syrian community. Overwhelmingly, most of the individuals within the Syrian refugee community treated me like a friend or a family member.

My daily appearance in their community, sometimes, caused jealousy between the Syrian refugee families because everyone wanted to host me when I was around. They were, always, eager to invite me to their homes for coffee, tea, food, or to share a hookah. At times, when I showed up to an apartment complex to help a family, others would spot me and call me over to visit them. Even when they did not see me, they recognized my car, and knew my whereabouts since they were in each other’s companies most of the time. Whenever I visited one of the apartment homes, other Syrians would find their way to me. Usually, they showed up to greet me and to keep the company of my host. However, almost always, they brought mail and other documents with them, which I happily translated for them.

² Not all Syrian women abide by the traditional roles of rural families. Today, most Syrian women attain university and higher-learning education and work in the same fields as Syrian men.

While it remained relatively closed, the Syrian refugee community received a lot of outside support from, and exposure to, the Austin community. During many dinners and gatherings, I found myself in the company of Americans who aided the Syrian refugees and befriended them. During those gatherings, I became the language and culture liaison between both parties. Often during such a gathering, one of the Syrian women would joke, “May! Why aren’t you eating? Do you hate the food? You need more meat on your bones.” To which I would teasingly respond, “How can I eat when I have to constantly translate across the dinner table?” They would all laugh and then ignoring my objection, they would proceed to fill my plate with more food. When you enter the homes of my informants, you begin to grasp the agony of their horrific ordeal, until their welcoming, cheerful, and humorous demeanor pull the smiles and laughs out of you.

2.2 Summary of Findings

The following chapters describe the experiences of Syrian refugees before the war, during war and displacement, initial resettlement process in intermediate countries, and resettlement in Austin, Texas, USA. The Syrian refugees’ sense of wellbeing, only, existed in an idyllic state before the war because this time was remembered as a period of peace. However, narratives on war, displacement, and resettlement developed a multi-dimensional understanding of wellbeing. The Syrian refugees’ definition of wellbeing was reconstructed and transformed in each period. Moreover, waiting in any of these periods exacerbated the negative impacts on wellbeing. And, as they became internally displaced persons and refugees, my informants entered into a liminal phase of de-identification and loss of personhood, which was intensified during different periods of waiting. However, waiting spaces and waiting times, also, provided

opportunities for the construction of resilience methods that aided in their journey to resettlement and partial reclamation of personhood.

Chapter 3 examines the idyllic sense of wellbeing during the peacetime period in Syria with the intention of establishing the Syrian refugees' understanding of wellbeing before periods of war, displacement, and resettlement. In this chapter, I contextualize their pre-refugee experiences in order to understand the changes in their wellbeing through their war and displacement periods and resettlement process. Chapter 4 examines the narratives of the Syrian individuals as they experience war, loss, and flight. In this chapter, I identify the changes in the Syrian individual's wellbeing during the war and displacement periods. Then, I explore the relationship between wellbeing and waiting. Finally, I show the changes in the Syrian's self-perception as they begin to feel like refugees. I present the beginnings of their existence in a liminal phase experienced during different waiting spaces and times. Chapter 5 follows the experiences of the displaced Syrians as they become official refugees after they are registered as formal refugees by the United Nations. Within this period, I examine the changes in the Syrian refugees' definition of wellbeing as they enter the initial resettlement process period. Also, I concentrate on waiting time, waiting place, and liminality to understand their effects on the wellbeing of Syrian refugees and their personhood. Chapter 6 focuses on the experiences of the Syrian refugees as they resettle in Austin, Texas. In this chapter, I follow the changes in their wellbeing as they get resettled in the United States. Moreover, I explore their perception of waiting and wellbeing in an unfamiliar setting—the American environment. I focus on their wellbeing and identity as they enter into another period of waiting and a continuation of liminality, i.e., until they establish themselves in the local setting. Finally in chapter 7, I use quantitative measures to contextualize the qualitative data in order to understand the

psychological issues with wellbeing. In this chapter, I concentrate on the quantitative scores of depression, PTSD, and happiness to assess the effects of sex, time spent in the USA, and resettlement approval time on the wellbeing of Syrian refugees.

CHAPTER 3: BEFORE THE WAR

While discussing the experiences of the Syrian refugees before the war, the Syrians displayed an array of emotions about that time. That period is talked about with a smile, tinged with teary-eyed longing for those days, long lost.

I was happy. We lived a wonderful life. I had my family around me and we felt really happy at that time. I was a nurse. I had a job, a house, my children, my family, my parents, and my friends. Life was very beautiful. We would go out together and they (relatives) would come to the house to visit us all of the time. We were happily settled in our house and between our families and friends.

During Lina's reflections on her wellbeing from before the war, she maintained a melancholic and thoughtful look on her face, which was, occasionally, interrupted by a smile. Lina was a former nurse from Daraa, a city in the southern region of Syria. Daraa was the city where the revolution and the war started then spread throughout Syria in 2011. As I got to know Lina, I began to understand her love and worry for her family and relatives. She had an easy time communicating with her relatives outside of Syria, but she did not get many chances to speak with her family in Syria because they were in a war-zone. Whenever I spoke with her about wellbeing, she mentioned her concern for her family's wellbeing.

Fundamentally, her wellbeing was tied to the wellbeing of her family and relatives. In her case, she described her wellbeing in terms of happiness which was directly connected to her social ties with family and relatives. When asked about physical, mental, and financial aspects of wellbeing, she responded, "Our financial situation was really good. We owned our house. My husband and I had our jobs. We were really happy settled in our house and between our families and friends. Our health was good, too. No one was sick with anything and mentally we felt good because we were around family. Family makes you feel good and safe."

Through my countless interactions with Lina or any of my other informants, the topic of family seemed to always find its way into our conversations. Their memories of a time surrounded by family, relatives, and friends brought the Syrian refugees together as they formed their own, unique, community in Austin, Texas. They shared a mixture of emotions as they reflected on the “happy” days in Syria. Now, they share a hope for returning to the good life they lost during the war.

Throughout my time with the Syrian refugees in Austin, I learned that they were usually uncertain of the meaning of wellbeing. As I found other Arabic words to translate wellbeing and its meaning from before the war, they then immediately described this word in terms of happiness. What made them happy? In general, they were happy because they were satisfied with their lives during the peaceful times in Syria. Happiness is not limited to short-term everyday contentment, but also a broader sense of wellbeing, life satisfaction, or the good life (Fischer 2014). My informants felt happiness in terms of life satisfaction which they equated with their state of wellbeing. Moreover, they thought of happiness because it encompassed memories they are fond of and ones which they hope to return to.

Essentially, during their pre-war experiences, happiness was the largest identifier of their wellbeing during that time in Syria. The number one indicator of happiness was social stability which was reflected in their close relationships with family, relatives, and friends. In some cases, financial stability and physical wellness were mentioned in terms of wellbeing. However, these factors were tied to the wellbeing of their families and relatives. During this period, the main underlying determinant behind their happiness and wellbeing appeared to come from their social relationships.

In terms of social wellness, the main indicator of happiness for my informants is their place among their immediate and extended families, relatives, and sometimes friends. When asked why they were happy, they repeatedly mentioned their proximity to their relatives. The social ties of the Syrians and their relatives are very intimate and strong. And, in terms of personhood, the Syrian refugees included family and relatives in a communal sense of identity—unlike the typical “Western” notion of identity, which emphasizes the individual. Western society has a penchant isolating and defining the individual alone (Smith 2013). However, identity is created as a result of a person’s relationship to others in society (Radcliffe-Brown 1952; Smith 2013). The Syrian refugees situated their identity and wellbeing in their relationships to relatives.

During my interactions with my informants, I noticed that they always spoke about their families and relatives during the peaceful times in Syria. The Syrian refugees’ perception of their pre-war experiences stemmed from memories that focused on happiness and social stability. While mentioning other aspects of wellbeing was rare at this phase, the refugees frequently related them to the wellbeing of their family and relatives. This topic was a large part of our mealtime conversations—a time where the Syrian refugees would gather with their family and with their neighbors to share food and memories of events in a past life shadowed by the loss of relatives and social structure. At other times, I was exposed to their pre-war experiences when I volunteered to help my informants with translation or other daily activities. Also, I was able to connect with, and befriend them as I reflected on my own past experiences during a peaceful time in Syria.

Fatima, became a friend since we were very close in age. When I went to introduce myself to her, I was welcomed into the home by Fatima and her children. While Fatima gave me

the traditional kisses on the cheeks, I noticed the curious glances her children aimed at me as they hid behind her. As I turned to them, I addressed them and made a few jokes in Arabic, which reflected looks of relief and amusement. While the children played, I sat with Fatima and explained my role as a researcher in the Syrian refugee community. She did not seem to care much about my research role because she was more interested in my Syrian background. I focused on telling her about my life. She was from the coastal city of Latakia but she was familiar with Aleppo, the city of my birth. She had many relatives who resided in Aleppo, and she used to visit the city many times.

After an hour, her husband, Fawaz, returned from work and joined us in conversation. When I spoke, he was elated to hear my Aleppian accent since he lived there for so long. As I discussed my research interests, he did not seem to understand why I worked in the anthropological field. He was hesitant to have his story recorded so I explained to him that I can write down his answers without using the recording device. He thought about it and offered me a cigarette, which I declined, and continued to question my research purposes. When he asked me, for the fourth time, if I wanted a cigarette, I said yes and thanked him as I lit it and took a puff. Once I accepted the cigarette his demeanor changed and he told me to get my recorder out so we can begin the interview.

Fawaz took a few puffs of his cigarette as he reflected on his time in Syria before the war. His family was well-known because he had a famous relative who was an entertainer. His fondest memories of Syria include interactions and gatherings with family and friends who lived in his neighborhood. He identified wellbeing as a state of happiness. When I asked him to describe his wellbeing, he looked into my eyes and said:

We were happy. We were happy because we had our friends and family around us. We were comfortable and I had a job working in home decoration. We would go out with our

family and friends all the time. We would only see our home when we needed to sleep [laughs]. And we were so happy, then. We had our friends and relatives in the neighborhood. I had a brother who had a place where we would have parties with our neighbors. In those days, we were happy.

Fawaz laughed and joked about his time with his family and friends in Syria. He served his mandatory military service and then married his wife. He spoke about falling in love with her and joked about their relationship since they were first cousins. Then, he talked about the gatherings they used to attend with their friends and family, where the party would start late in the night and end sometime the next morning. When he thinks of his wellbeing, his memories point to happiness in his social relationships and stability.

Similarly, Farah viewed her wellbeing during the peaceful times in Syria as a state of happiness maintained by social stability. Farah was soft spoken and shy. At first, she did not seem to enjoy being asked so many questions about her past. However, her attitude changed when I spoke about my own experiences in Syria so long ago. From her bright expression, I knew that this was a period that brought her joy. As soon as she felt comfortable, I asked her about her perception of wellbeing during that time. She hesitated, then spoke:

Everything was good. Everything was beautiful and we were very happy. Our financial situation and our health were good. We were happy because we secured our future and the future of our children. I lived in a house and my husband used to work in carpentry. We lived in his parents' house, with my in-laws. We had all of our relatives near us and we used to get together all of the time. On the weekends, we would go to the park and take the children with us.

Her happiness came from her social security surrounding her family and relatives. The familial ties were the source of happiness and financial security. The memories from long ago were a source of comfort to her. Although as she spoke more about those memories, her face took a pained expression that she tried to hide by asking me to talk more about my past experiences in Syria. When I explained my longing for my home and my relatives, she looked at

me and apologized for the pain that she believed I must be feeling for being so far from my relatives. After realizing that my parents lived in a different state in the United States, she was shocked and worried about my wellbeing. I understood the importance of social ties to the Syrian refugees because they repeatedly considered it as the main element of their wellbeing during pre-war times in Syria.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the meaning of wellbeing for my informants as they reflected on their pre-war lives. As they thought about the past, they defined their wellbeing in terms of happiness during that time. The state of happiness was strongly connected to their social ties to family, community, and place. While many factors affected their wellbeing, then, the main driver behind their wellbeing was social wellness. An individual's sense of self and wellbeing is linked to others through social relations and experiences (Fischer 2014). Though it would be interesting to learn their perception of wellbeing when they were in Syria, it is important to understand how they define it now as they look to the past because it reveals the importance of social stability for this population as it faces one of the largest waves of displacement. Finally, it is necessary to assess how this perception changed through the various stages of displacement, relocation, and resettlement.

CHAPTER 4: WAR AND DISPLACEMENT

With tears in their eyes, they looked away remembering a time riddled with darkness, fear, death, and the unknown.

I sat across from Yara and complimented her on her home. Her apartment smelled like coffee and food since she was preparing dinner. She was very sweet and caring towards me. She wanted to be interviewed because she felt that people needed to hear about the experiences of the Syrian refugees. Every few moments, she would stop the interview to ask if I needed any more details to her story. I told her to answer me however she liked, but that I will pry for details, especially during the war period and resettlement process. She looked at me and said, “I am not sure you want to hear about any of the horrible details of war, but I will tell you anyway.”

Yara talked about her experiences in Daraa during the war from 2011 to 2013. Her story of the fighting and the siege were unique, yet similar to the accounts of my other informants. Likewise, her expression held a sad look as she described her experiences during the war and displacement periods. At some moments she became quiet and thoughtful as she reflected on a particularly painful experience. In other instances, she spoke with passion about the dire conditions surrounding the war and displacements periods. Mainly, her narrative focused on her family and relatives.

During the war in Syria, Yara, always, worried about the safety of her children, especially since many neighbors and friends were kidnapped and thrown in jail. Yara and her children were afraid of the fighting so they stayed indoors most of the time. They waited until the early morning or late evening to go anywhere. While they waited, her husband went in and out of Daraa to get gasoline for work. During that time, Yara and her children became anxious and

upset about their father's absence since he was harassed on his trips many times. Whenever he left town, they worried about his safety, unsure of his whereabouts and his wellbeing.

One of those days, he was taken by some perpetrators and beaten with the butt of their guns, which caused excessive bleeding from his head. After that incident, he remained at home so that his injuries can heal. Yara became afraid and wanted to leave, but her husband was hesitant and wanted to wait for the commotion to die down. The family had some money saved so they were able to survive for a while, however, their fears were intensified as the war got closer to their home. Yara said:

During Ramadan the warplanes came and the shelling became unbearable. I was especially afraid because I was eight months pregnant. I told my husband that I wanted to leave but he was hesitant. For days, all that we heard was shelling. We had other family members with us and the money was almost out. I was afraid that someone would get hurt or worse, die from the fighting. It became too unbearable for all of us. We could not wait anymore so we left.

After the family fled their home, they relocated to the city of Sweida (East of Daraa) so they could figure out a plan. During their time there, Yara gave birth to her baby, but she did not want to stay in Sweida since they were mistreated there by the local population. In some instances, the locals blamed Yara and her family for any problems that occurred in their town. Yara said, "They (the locals) would tell us to leave because we were the reason for the war. They wanted nothing to do with us." Residents of Daraa were not welcomed as fellow Syrians, but as intruders who may bring the war to Sweida. The poor treatment by her fellow Syrians made her confused about her sense of belonging. Moreover, it was too expensive for them because they were running out of money. During this time, Yara began to question her place and identity in a country that was no longer safe for her and her family. Most of her relatives and friends were no longer in Syria. Her social connections to her home vanished with the onslaught of war. Her described sense of self became that of a Syrian refugee always searching for a permanent home.

They waited in Sweida for a month until Yara's uncle transferred them some money for relocation. After relocating to another place for a few months, the family decided to go to Jordan since they had many relatives there already.

The journey to Jordan was one of the most dangerous experiences this family went through. Alongside five other families, they paid smugglers to traffic them across the border. Once on their journey, the families realized that all of the main roads they tried to take towards Jordan were closed. The only other option left for them was a road through the desert. This road was known to be very difficult for travelers and especially dangerous during the war. The families walked for hours, then hid in a truck to be driven towards the border. This journey which was supposed to take no more than three hours, took 10 days. Yara described the journey:

There was a day where we slept in a sheep barn with no roof. I worried for my newborn because she was only three months old and it was freezing cold in November. As we waited to be moved to another place I contemplated our decision to move. The next night we slept on the roof of another house and it was so cold. Then after that we stayed in a house for a week with no water, no electricity, and nothing to sustain life. But we had to wait there for the smuggler to transfer us across the desert. The children had some bread, dried meat, and milk but they were starving. Then, they started to fall sick, one after the other. I could not take it anymore, I wanted to go back home.

During this time, the children of all five families fell sick. To their luck, Yara and the other women brought medicine with them in case of emergencies. They divided themselves into groups that tended to the children, fed them, applied cold rags to their foreheads, and gave them shots of medicine. The women learned how to identify the maladies and were able to provide proper care for the children. Most of these women, who had no prior medical training, became the medical providers for the children and anyone who became ill. The women displayed resilient strategies (Panter-Brick et al. 2017) as they collectively worked together to overcome medical problems.

After that ordeal, the families were moved in the livestock trucks of some Bedouins who crammed the families on top of each other for 10 hours. The journey was long and arduous. The truck drivers sped through the desert and took many sharp turns which almost threw individuals out of the truck. The families were terrified of falling out and getting left behind in the desert. Yara thought that maybe they were being tricked by the smugglers since they were robbed by some smugglers in the past and had little money left. Eventually, they came near the Jordanian border where they had to walk the rest of the way. Yara explained:

Right before we reached the border, we found ourselves amidst a battle between two armies. You should have seen... There was shooting all around us! We were all screaming and yelling for our children and forgot about the men. We were terrified and hopeless. We tried to hide, but we ran towards the border where we were met by the Jordanian army. Once we reached the border the Jordanian army made us wait so they can verify our status. We waited for two hours... and in those two hours I wondered if we had to sleep in the desert again or if animals would attack us... Or if we would die in the fighting. I was scared at that time. But I knew that we would get through it. We are Syrians and we can get through anything. After that we were approached by Jordanian soldiers who welcomed us into Jordan.

She paused the interview with a smile, then got up to check on the food. I thought about my other informants who experienced, distinctive, yet similar endeavors as they reflected on a time full of terror and turmoil. Their recollection of the war and displacement periods, sometimes, became mixed into one long period of suffering.

Therefore, these two periods—war and displacement—were joined in one chapter when my informants described their wellbeing after the conflict erupted. During the war and displacement periods, my informants experienced many hardships that would result in negative effects on their wellbeing. In addition to their social wellness and state of happiness, my informants incorporated psychological (e.g. fear, stress, bereavement), physical (e.g. injury, illness, hunger), and financial factors into their original definition of wellbeing. Their negative state of wellbeing was heightened by periods of waiting. Moreover, as they transitioned from

Syrians to Syrian refugees, my informants entered into a period of liminality full of uncertain outcomes and an ambiguous sense of personhood. Notably, however, as they faced many dangers and several waiting periods, the Syrian refugees produced resilient techniques to deal with their difficulties. Resilience is defined through the ways individuals or groups overcome adversity through individual and collective strengths and skills (Panter-Brick et al. 2017). As the Syrian refugees struggled within this time period, their persistence aided them in the continuation of their forced journey.

Within the waiting periods of war and displacement, my informants were overwhelmed with feelings of unhappiness due to the deterioration of social structure and stability. In this context, it is important to understand that while waiting usually suggests a space and time of anticipation for an event to occur (Bissell 2007), this study shows that waiting can also be periods used to avoid certain events—shelling, kidnapping, and fighting. As they lost their homes and relatives to the war, their wellbeing suffered, tremendously. When they described their wellbeing during these periods, they expressed it in terms of unhappiness, and they attributed this feeling to the loss of their homes, families, and friends. Most of the Syrian refugees knew someone who was kidnapped, displaced, or killed by the uprising and the war.

Moreover, psychological issues surfaced due to feelings of extreme stress, grief, fear, and bereavement that resulted from the terrors of war and displacement. Most of my informants experienced psychological problems, such as extreme stress and anxiety. As they retold these past experiences, their persona always changed to reflect fear, sadness, or mourning in their expressions and voices. The psychological factor was a large part of their definition of wellbeing. Feelings of anxiety, depression, and stress increased as they confronted that aspect of their

wellbeing in periods of waiting. The Syrian refugees mentioned fear, sadness, and uncertainty as their state of wellbeing, which some had to endure while waiting for months, or even years.

Moreover, many of my informants experienced adverse physical effects which lead to a decline in their health and wellbeing. Some of them suffered from hunger and malnourishment due to food shortages in communities that were under siege. Furthermore, their health declined as they became ill and could not access proper healthcare. Also, some of the Syrian refugees suffered from injuries sustained from criminal acts (kidnappings and beatings), or war (shelling). Some of these physical issues worsened as they entered periods of waiting that prevented them from accessing medical care or escaping war.

In addition, the financial aspect of their wellbeing declined as they lost their jobs, homes, and sources of income. Some informants borrowed money from their relatives. However, as their social structures dissolved (i.e. death, injury, or kidnapping of a relative), they lost most, or all, of their financial resources. Importantly, the loss of financial security contributed to the decline in the other aspects of their wellbeing. Essentially, the dissolution of financial support increased problems with the psychological and physical aspects of their wellbeing. For example, some of the families were not able to afford proper medical care or supplies. And, they did not have the funds to buy nutritious food or clean water. Lastly, they could not afford to leave their homes because they did not have the financial means to pay for safe passage by car, bus, and plane or, in some cases, smuggling. In this case, many waited in order to figure out the costs of fleeing the country. Also, some waited to regain employment which, if successful aided in their escape ordeals, but if unsuccessful, added to their demise.

Involuntarily, this became the time they passed into a refugee identity, and ultimately, entered into a liminal phase of de-identification and loss of personhood that reverberated

strongly during different periods of waiting. Typically, refugees face losing their countries, social architecture, and sense of personhood (Smith 2013). Along with the destruction in their communities and the search for a permanent resettlement, the Syrian refugees felt a loss in their identity³. Losing their state of happiness and the deterioration of different aspects of their wellbeing altered their sense of identity.

The loss of stability in their lives and the increasing amount of waiting placed my informants in a liminal period which muddled their sense of personhood. For example, many did not feel a part of society anymore due to the loss of their relatives and the destruction of their homes and cities. In addition, some Syrian refugees searched for their place in other Syrian cities and towns, but they could not reclaim their original identities. Due to their changing environments, refugees enter a geographic, political and socio-historical space of redefinition, where the sense of personhood becomes displaced (Smith 2013).

These feelings were heightened during waiting, which became a time and space defined by the uncertain conditions of war and displacement. Waiting was perceived as a period of no progress in the Syrian refugees' journey to resettlement. Within the space of waiting, their liminal identities were reinforced by the ambiguous circumstances of war and flight. The existence in a liminal state after the loss of most physical and social connections to their previous lives without knowing what will come next only accelerated the decline in their wellbeing.

Not all waiting occurred during the life in refugee camps, or while waiting during the slow resettlement process. Many refugees waited for the war to subside; they waited in fear of shelling and attacks; they waited before fleeing their homes; and they waited on their way to a safer location inside their country. And most waited because they did not want to leave their

³ In general, the Syrian people perceived their identity as part of their social relations. In most cases, when asked about their personal identity, my informants almost always included their family and relatives as an extension of their identity.

homes and lose their sense of personhood. However, as these waiting periods extended more and more, my informants experienced increasing negative impacts on their wellbeing and a loss of their identity. Therefore, the Syrian refugees left their broken homes to find safety and resettlement and to regain their sense of identity.

While the wellbeing of the Syrian refugees suffered, the waiting spaces and times, also, created resilience, which produced coping and survival strategies that were used to protect their families and to escape their dangerous environments. For example, in dire situations all of my informants were able to protect their families (tend to the wounded or sick), move them to safer locations, tend to each other (financial or emotional support), and to continue their journey towards resettlement. Even though the negative effects overshadowed the positive, the waiting periods, eventually, aided in the refugees' efforts to escape suspended spaces and move away from war and displacement. All of my informants suffered and all of them persisted in their journeys to resettlement. In one case, Lina's family endured many horrors during the war but found themselves stuck in a number of situations, waiting to escape the war.

When Lina spoke about her experiences from before the war, she spoke with assuredness connected to happier times in her life. However, when she spoke about her life during the war and displacement periods, she developed an unhappy look on her face. Whenever she talked about a bad memory, her expression changed to reflect uncertainty and, sometimes, fear. I informed her that she did not need to give me details if she felt uncomfortable, but she insisted on describing some of the gruesome details because she felt that as a former nurse, she needed to give me information that would support my research endeavor.

Lina and her family did not leave Syria because they wanted to stay home near their relatives. They waited before leaving their home because they did not think matters would

become so dangerous. However, the situation in their area deteriorated as the Syrian army laid siege to the city. Lina and her family were afraid because the army began to arrest many young men in their neighborhood. When her husband tried to flee, they shot him in both legs and arrested him.

Hoping for her husband's release, Lina waited for 14 months until he was released and returned home. During his arrest, his legs were not given proper medical attention and the jail conditions were extremely unsanitary. These circumstances led to the development of gangrene in one of his legs, which had to be amputated at the knee. His release was secured once the family was able to afford his bail, which crippled the family financially. After the husband's return, they waited in their home to plan their next moves.

Lina and her husband went to Damascus to retrieve a temporary prosthetic leg so he can walk without assistance. They returned to their city and waited for the prosthesis to become available in Damascus. But soon the war reached Damascus and it became too difficult to travel there. In the same time, their neighbor's house was shelled twice and destroyed. Most of their relatives were no longer in Syria so their sense of identity became unknown as they struggled to find a permanent home to reclaim their identity. Lina said, "I just wanted to be myself again. I wanted to be at home and see my relatives. I did not know who I was and where I wanted to go..." Unwilling to risk their lives any further, Lina and her family headed to Jordan where they hoped for safety and a permanent prosthetic leg.

Conclusion

This chapter introduced new dimensions to the Syrian refugees' definition of wellbeing. As my informants recalled their past experiences, they added physical, psychological, and financial factors as their perception of wellbeing during the war and displacement periods. In

addition to happiness and social wellness, these new factors became the main focus of refugee wellbeing. Due to the nature of war and displacement, the wellbeing of the Syrian refugees suffered, tremendously. Moreover, during these times, my informants entered into several periods of waiting which placed them in a liminal phase of de-identification and loss of personhood. Liminal waiting is a transient and transformative space that is defined by despair and hope (Sutton et al. 2011). These waiting spaces became the main periods that, negatively, influenced the wellbeing of the Syrian refugees. However, as the refugees experienced higher risk, the waiting spaces allowed for the development of resilience methods which aided in escaping dangerous spaces and moving towards resettlement.

CHAPTER 5: INITIAL RESETTLEMENT PROCESS IN INTERMEDIATE COUNTRIES

After escaping the war and moving through the intermediate countries, they felt incomplete as they struggled to find permanence through the ongoing commotion in their lives.

After checking on the food, Yara returned to our interview to discuss her experiences in Jordan and the resettlement process. However, before I can ask Yara about her experiences she paused our interview to answer a video call from her relatives in Jordan. When she answered the phone, I noted the excitement and happiness in her voice. She turned the video screen to me and introduced me to a large group of people who asked about *my* wellbeing. I gladly took the phone and engaged in small conversation with them as Yara explained to them that I was studying Syrian refugees. They joked and asked me to come study the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan. Yara grabbed the phone back and told them that she would call them back later because I was her guest and she did not want our interview to be interrupted. The goodbyes in that video call lasted another 10 minutes as each family member asked for a prayer or some form of assistance. I watched Yara's expression turn somber as she sent them prayers and well wishes. Yara ended the video call, turned to me, then she forced a smile and began talking about her experiences in Jordan.

After being welcomed by the Jordanian soldiers, Yara and her family crossed the Jordanian border into the Zaatari refugee camp. They were received by her husband's cousin and brother who helped them sign up with the United Nations as documented refugees. They stayed at the camp for one night and left the next day to reunite with other relatives. The family arrived to Ajloun, a town in northwestern Jordan, where they were set up in a house by relatives. Yara

and her family lived in that area for two years (2013-2015), where they spent the last year going through the resettlement process to the United States.

Yara recalled the house being nice and spacious with a courtyard. However their wellbeing suffered due to their refugee status. Her husband worked in illegal jobs to provide for the family. He worked 16-hour days on a 300 Jordanian dinar (around \$430.00) monthly salary, which was spent on rent, food, school, transportation, clothes, and bills. Yara recalls:

My husband wanted to leave. He had to work because we needed the money. It was very difficult for us. The situation was bad and many of the Jordanian people treated us unfairly. They looked down at us and said that we were taking everything since we received some donations. We did not feel like ourselves and felt like outsiders all of the time. And the rent was so expensive. It cost half of my husband's monthly pay to afford rent. We had to worry about food and other expenses. My children's education was bad because they (Jordanians) did not place them in the correct grade. When I complained to the school, they said that they were not concerned with my children's education and that I should be grateful they were in school. My children were very unhappy. And, I was so depressed, I cried a lot. But I knew that we had to wait until a good opportunity came about.

After being in Jordan for one year, the family became eligible to begin the process of resettlement to the United States in November of 2014. They had to go through five interviews with the international resettlement organization, then medical check-ups and immunizations, and when approved, they were enrolled in a brief course on American culture and law. Yara described instances of waiting during her first year in Jordan in terms of waiting to relocate to different places, waiting for her children to get approved for schooling, waiting for access to medical services, and waiting to begin the process of permanent resettlement. She describes the negative effect of that waiting time on their wellbeing:

As we waited through the resettlement process, we felt anxious and afraid that the jury would reject us. We hoped to be accepted because if we were rejected, we planned to go back to Syria. We could not wait any longer in Jordan. We got our final acceptance in November of 2015. Oh you should have seen the confusion at that time... They told us that our departure date was in 10 days! During that time we had to travel back and forth on a two-hour drive between our city and Amman for, almost, every day. My husband

continued to work so we can afford to travel to our appointments with the resettlement agency and to finish paying rent. Also, we felt very nervous and afraid of America but we wanted to get out of here (Jordan). I wanted to be done with waiting since that is all we did during our time in Jordan.

Before her approval, she wanted to escape the waiting so badly that whenever the phone rang, she ran to answer it, hoping it would be a foreign number because that indicated a call from the embassy and, possibly, a decision. The last 10 days between receiving their approval and their departure were full of mixed emotions such as, happiness, hope, anxiety, shock, unhappiness, uncertainty, and fear. Yara worried about the trip since she was afraid of the American environment, which was far from her relatives and completely foreign to her and her family. However, she mentioned the importance of her family's safety and the possibility of reclaiming her identity as the main drivers behind her hope for resettlement in the United States.

It was evident that the most significant time and place of waiting that affected the wellbeing of the Syrian refugees was during the resettlement period in the intermediate countries. During this period, my informants underwent more difficulties as they began their resettlement process to the United States in the intermediate countries (mainly, Jordan and Turkey). When they entered into the initial resettlement process period, the different aspects of their wellbeing continued to suffer, because they were caught in a lengthy period of waiting for resettlement. In addition, the Syrian refugees added identity as another defining factor in their wellbeing. While waiting and identity were introduced in the previous chapter, they became the dominating dimensions affecting wellbeing in this phase due to the length and place of waiting and the ever-changing identity of the Syrian refugees on the move.

Time became the main concern of waiting during the initial resettlement phase because this was considered to be the longest waiting period, riddled with small waiting periods. When they spoke about waiting, their main concerns were connected to the length of time they had to

wait until they obtained resettlement acceptance. Moreover, as they interacted with locals in their host communities and as they moved from one waiting space to another, their sense of personhood, consistently, changed solidifying their existence in a liminal phase. Ultimately, waiting in liminality exacerbated the negative effects on their wellbeing and muddled their sense of personhood.

As Syrian refugees, they felt unhappy with their environment since most of their relatives were missing, injured, dead, and/or displaced in other countries. While some were able to reunite with a few relatives or friends, they still felt uncertainty and distrust because they were outside of their known, secure social setting. In Turkey, the government initially tried to deal with the refugee crisis without much international assistance which led to problems with the human rights of Syrian refugees. In addition, Syrian refugees were barred from obtaining work permits until recently, which caused many to live in poverty and work illegally. Some were forced into prostitution as a source of family income, and some children were forced to work rather than attend school. Also, many faced added challenges where they could not get access to basic human services since they did not speak the Turkish language. (Miller 2016)

Unlike Turkey, Jordan welcomed international aid in their response to Syrian refugees (Miller 2016). Originally, Jordan recognized that many refugees had family living in Jordan who can house them. However with time, Jordan added restrictions on the refugees' access to basic services and housing due to financial concerns, local political pressure, and problems with the international response. These restrictions left many Syrian refugees without access to basic human services such as housing, schools, water and sanitation, and medical services. (Miller 2016)

My informants did not see much distinction between Turkey and Jordan. Instead, my participants lumped Turkey and Jordan as similar waiting spaces. In both countries, they felt unwelcome and expressed feelings of unhappiness due to their social identity as refugees. Most locals in intermediate countries held anti-Syrian attitudes towards the refugees due to overpopulation, problems with infrastructure, impacts on the labor market, and social instability (Al-Qdah and Lacroix 2017). In addition, Syrian refugee status affected their financial state because they were not allowed to work legally in the host countries. As Syrian refugees, the Turkish law makes it difficult for them to obtain legal working status. Some turned to illegal markets to survive, which is depicted as ‘stealing’ jobs or exploiting the system by the host communities (Koca 2016). In Jordan, my informants faced similar issues as they worked illegally to provide for their families. In many cases, the whole family had to work to survive since they were paid low wages in both countries. The low wages and the poor, albeit expensive, housing conditions made the Syrian refugees feel exploited by the locals. In addition, my informants found it difficult to afford medical care and schooling for their families. Finally, their illegal jobs and refugee status placed them in danger of deportation.

As the Syrian refugees struggled financially, their physical and mental wellbeing suffered, as well. Many carried over injury or illnesses from the war and displacement times. Several also conveyed psychological difficulties, such as depression, anxiety, and sleeplessness, which emerged during those preceding periods. Most parents described such problems in their children, too, especially those who had to work to help the family and who, in some cases, were barred from continuing their education. For the children who had access to schools, they were placed in the wrong grades or not given much educational attention due to their refugee status or because host schools became overcrowded and had limited resources to accommodate the

refugee students. Most refugees did not have access to proper medical care, which caused deterioration in their health and the development of new medical complications. For those who were offered medical attention, they faced long waiting times before receiving any help.

During the waiting of the initial resettlement process period, many of the refugees experienced a worsening of their wellbeing, which included impacts on their identity. Their sense of refugee identity was reinforced as they experienced unwelcome sentiments from the local populations. As Syrian refugees, they became targets of xenophobic incidents that kept many of them in fear or distrust of the local population. In some cases, their lives were in danger as their families were threatened to be sent back to the border. In other instances, the refugees dealt with verbal attacks, theft, and barred access to educational, medical, and aid facilities. The everyday hardships and the negative sentiments they endured caused them to, continuously, move to different places in attempts to improve their wellbeing.

These negative effects were exacerbated by the fact that the resettlement process for the United States was viewed as the lengthiest period of waiting for the refugees. Most of my informants described the process as long and arduous, lasting between one to two years. In their experiences, most of my informants mentioned feelings of uncertainty and fear as they waited after each interview hoping for progress on their resettlement case. While most of my informants waited for a lengthy period of time, only a few families obtained approval in a few months due to the sensitive situations that placed them in danger such as a sudden death in the family or major health problems. However, even those who received quick approvals were in the intermediate countries for years until their cases were reviewed for resettlement. Moreover, the refugees had no choice in the resettlement destination—once they were registered by the international

organizations, different countries picked the families that fit their regulations to go through the resettlement process.

Therefore, the long waiting period of the resettlement process secured feelings of uncertainty as the Syrian refugees, continuously, searched for a permanent home and lost their freedom of choice in resettlement. Many of the Syrian refugees moved to different places in attempts to improve their living conditions. Conversely, their movement through different waiting spaces created new complications that caused them to modify their identity, which reinforced their uncertain positionality in society. The ambiguous identities of the Syrian refugees allowed them to fall prey to exploitation. Therefore, the refugees sustained feelings of “in-between-ness,” where they were not a part of Syrian society anymore and yet they could not blend in with their new environments. These experiences reinforced their existence within a liminal phase of uncertainty, which muddled their sense of identity and exacerbated problems in their wellbeing. Failure to maintain connections to a place, which may place a person in a stage of liminality, can cause problems in the wellbeing and identity of a person (Lennartsson 2007).

My informants believed that attaining resettlement would end liminality and waiting, which would improve their wellbeing and return their pre-war identity. Most refugees viewed their situation as a temporary state of waiting that was rewarded with resettlement. However, a few believed that they would remain waiting for an escape from the initial resettlement phase for the rest of their lives. They feared rejection from the final resettlement countries as they watched fellow refugees fail and repeat the process of resettlement and waiting.

All of the Syrian refugees interviewed mentioned problems in their wellbeing, but a few believed that they were able to overcome most of their issues due to cultural commonalities with, and social ties in the intermediate countries. Waiting in a liminal space and time also provided

them some time to develop resilience, which was pivotal to survival. For example, most of the men—and even some women and children—were able to attain jobs despite their illegal status. In other instances, some of my informants formed strong relationships with hosts who aided them in times of need. Others reunited with relatives who assisted in their livelihood and wellbeing. Most of the Syrian refugees persevered in the long waiting period even though they experienced negative impacts on their wellbeing as they waited for permanent resettlement. The majority expressed gratitude and happiness for their escape from the waiting period of the resettlement process. Also for some, the proximity of the intermediate place to the home country and the long waiting caused hope for eventual return to the homeland.

In one case, Yasmin and Nawar, a married couple, wanted me to interview them because their experiences in their intermediate country of waiting, Jordan, were negative to all aspects of their wellbeing. I arrived to their home one morning. Yasmin gave me the traditional women's welcome (kisses on the cheeks) while Nawar waved at me from a distance. They commented on and joked about my heavy Allepian accent. I smiled and informed them that I was born and raised in Aleppo, but that I lived in the United States for 16 years.

They smiled back and said, "Oh, we know who you are. The Syrian researcher who is helping our community in Austin. We are very pleased to welcome you." However I noticed Yasmin's tear-stricken face and her Nawar's mournful look. Right away, I became emotional as I remembered my depressed mood caused by news of the chemical attacks on Khan Sheikhoun⁴. It was only a day ago where the pictures and videos of the suffocating and dying Syrian children aired all over the world. I sighed and told the couple that I could come back for an interview on another day. They insisted I stay.

⁴ On April 4th 2017 the town of Khan Sheikhoun suffered from a sarin nerve gas attack that killed about 100 people (Atlas 2017).

Yasmin asked me to sit down and brought me some tea with fresh mint leaves that smelled wonderful. Nawar sat across from me, curiosity covering his face. In the background, the television aired the news of Khan Sheikhoun on an Arabic news channel. I held back my tears and explained my work. Nawar looked at his wife and said that they would only do the interview together since he could not remember all of the details. Yasmin agreed and told me that they went through the same experiences together. Feeling empty and tired, I agreed and waited for his wife to join us with some snacks.

They walked to the border of Jordan in February of 2014. Desperate to flee after Nawar was kidnapped for a few months, he and his wife decided to move the family to Jordan. They entered Zaatari refugee camp believing they would stay for a few days and then return to their city, Daraa. However, they were not able to go back home. Yasmin said:

We stayed at Zaatari for four months waiting to figure out our plans! It was horrible and so unclean. You can barely get water and the desert was so hot. We were very unhappy. At that time, there was a disease that was spreading in the liver of the occupants. Two of my children got sick. They served us food in large groups, like how soldiers eat. There were beetles, flies, and other bugs in the groats. And, they never gave us enough food. They gave us rations every two weeks which was not enough for the whole family. In the morning, we would get bread, but it was not enough. We felt like waiting would only worsen our condition so we had to get out.

After four months in the refugee camp, the family decided to get smuggled out to the city of Jerash north of Amman. Without work or a home, the family needed a Jordanian person to sponsor them in order to receive food rations and aid. They found a family of Jordanians who gave the Syrian refugees a space to live in their basement. Also, the Jordanian family agreed to sponsor the Syrian refugee family so that they can access some aid. Yasmin said:

We lived in the basement with two small rooms. It was so small that when you stood up straight, you hit your head on the ceiling. We lived there for about three years waiting to figure out our next move. After a few months, the old man who hosted us took us to Zaatari to sponsor us since my husband did not make enough money from work. I remember a police officer who approached us and warned the old man that if we caused

any problems, the old man would get fined 5,000 dinar (around \$7,000 US). So, the old man forbade us from leaving the basement. The owners of the house mistreated us. They threatened to take us back to Zaatari or the border. My daughters felt like prisoners. We were crammed in such a small space. Our rent was very expensive even though we lived in such horrible conditions. We were exhausted and depressed. In one room, I cooked and in the other we slept. The bathroom was outside, so I accompanied my daughters to the bathroom at night because they were scared. The ceiling constantly dripped water on us. I laid my head down on my wet pillow and tried to sleep, waiting for our situation to change.

After a few months, the Jordanian host family put Yasmin's daughters to work for them in order to make some money off the refugee family. Also, Yasmin felt alienated from the locals because she was not allowed to drive a car and her children were turned away from schools. She said:

My children were not allowed to study at the schools. The school principal kicked me out a number of times when I begged her to take my children. She did not want refugees at her school. Some of the locals insulted us and called us Syrian beggars. The local children, sometimes, attacked my kids. They all took advantage of us because we were Syrian refugees. I felt so bad because I did not know who I was anymore. I just wanted to survive.

The family survived under these conditions for about three years. They felt desperate for their situation to change; they could not wait anymore. The husband and wife contemplated leaving their basement home and returning to the refugee camp or Syria. One day, the resettlement agency came to their doorstep. Nawar recalled happily:

They knocked on our door one day in February of 2016. They asked me if we would like to go to America, and I said yes. At that point, I would go to Mars without oxygen [Laughs]. Just get us out of here! When we described our situation to the resettlement agency, we got our case expedited. We may have been the fastest family to get through the resettlement process. It took three months to get approved to resettle in America. We felt so happy and relieved when we received the good news. We did not have to wait in the horrible conditions anymore.

They reflected on their time in Jordan as a long waiting period full of uncertainty. They were happy to resettle in the United States. However, the problems in Syria kept them from becoming completely satisfied with their lives. As we finished the interview, Yasmin got up to

prepare lunch while Nawar talked to me about his personal feelings of the Syrian revolution. As he became emotional and passionate about the events in Syria, I wondered how much the news of Khan Sheikhoun affected my informants' interview. Their story was full of negative experiences, where in some cases they would pause during the interview and check the television and get very emotional with their responses. Also, I wondered what effect my sad mood had on their responses to my questions.

After getting home, I broke down on the bed, saddened by the news on Syria and my informants' sad expressions. My time with the Syrian refugees became difficult as their daunting memories and negative emotions were constantly shared with me. Moreover, the political climate of the United States, fueled by xenophobic rhetoric aimed at Syrian refugees and Syrian nationals sometimes became too much for me to handle. However, I found comfort and solace in Ammar's family, now my other family, who opened their home and hearts to me, and who suffered so much more than I can imagine.

I drove to Ammar's apartment complex to meet his family and to interview him. I knocked on the door and a young girl's voice asked, in Arabic, "Who is it?" I responded back and said my name and asked for her mother. I heard the locks unlatch and a beautiful young girl under the age of 10 opened the door and smiled at me. Her mother, Noura, opened the door and greeted me with the traditional kisses on the cheeks. She was ecstatic to hear my Aleppian accent since it was her city also. Noura ushered me in and brought some coffee and snacks. Her young son, also under 10 years of age, sat away and watched me as I interacted with his sister. Eventually, he sat next to me and began to ask me questions about my life in Aleppo.

I indulged them for a while until Ammar arrived home from work. He walked in and seemed surprised to see me. He was in his early 20's and his family was from Aleppo. As I

shook his hand and thanked him for agreeing to interview with me, he got excited about my accent and said, “Finally! Someone from Aleppo. There are so many Syrians from Daraa here and almost no one from Aleppo. It is good to finally meet you. We heard that you were working with SARA and doing research...or something like that.” I laughed and said, “Yes, something like that.” Ammar asked me if I wanted to smoke hookah with him. After I agreed, he rushed to prepare the hookah and promised to begin the interview once we settled down. As we shared the hookah, he opened up to me about his experiences during the resettlement process.

Ammar and his family fled to Turkey after the war arrived to their city of Aleppo. In 2013, they escaped the horrors of war. They were in Turkey for three and a half years, with the last two years going through the resettlement process to the United States. Similar to the previous cases, Ammar and his family, continuously, moved from one place to another while they were in Turkey. He felt that his time in Turkey was full of waiting, but that the waiting periods provided him with some memorable adventures. His reflection on that time is mixed with good and bad memories. He said:

I lost my father when the war came to our city (Aleppo). Then my family decided to relocate to Turkey. I did not want to stay in Turkey. I wanted to go back and take care of my late father’s pharmacy. However, I could not go back after my friend, who was looking after our pharmacy was killed by shelling [Remorseful expression]. I decided to explore what Turkey had to offer. It is a beautiful country. We had to deal with discrimination against us, but I believe that there are good and bad people everywhere. It was hard at first because we felt different and targeted because of our nationality. Sometimes I did not know if I should introduce myself as Syrian or Syrian refugee.

As a recent college graduate, Ammar felt that his time in Turkey was full of adventures. In order to deal with the negative reception of Syrian refugees, he focused on staying optimistic since he felt lucky that he escaped the war with most of his family members. He and his younger siblings were able to find illegal work to support their mother, youngest siblings, and other

relatives. Also, he enrolled in Turkish language classes and learned some of the language through listening to Turkish songs. He recalled:

We were looking for a better life. My mother was sick so we received some help from an aid organization that eventually directed us to sign up with the United Nations as refugees. But after the first interview, it took so long for them to update us on anything, we planned to get trafficked out of Turkey. As we made those plans, we were called for another interview. There was a six month period of waiting between each interview and we had to do more than five! Do you know how long that is? I did not want to wait anymore and we did not believe that we would get approved because everything was taking so long.

Ammar wanted to escape the long waiting period of the resettlement process. With many of their relatives near them his family was able to mend some of the social breaks, but they continued to feel lost since they did not have a permanent home and security in Turkey. He wanted to escape the uncertainty of waiting so he planned to go to Holland, where his uncle lived and where he can reclaim a sense of his identity through a permanent home near his relatives. He said:

We felt lost because we did not know who we were in this country (Turkey). As we saw other families lose their cases in the United Nations, we decided to sneak into Bulgaria through the forest in northern Turkey. A few hours into our trip in the forest it started to rain heavily for so long. Our smuggler lost the trail and we walked around aimlessly trying to find our way out to the Bulgarian border. This adventure turned into a nightmare as the hours turned into days...It was so cold and I had my younger siblings on my shoulders crying and starving because we did not have much food left. My aunt had her baby who was so cold, his lips turned blue. We felt lost and helpless. Some of the people with us started to give up on walking because we kept circling to the same spot. In order to give them some hope, I climbed a tree and pretended to find the way. After four days, I found light coming from a direction so we followed it with hope in our hearts. When we broke through the forest, we were overwhelmed with joy and relief. We were so grateful to escape, that we did not realize that we ended up back in Turkey on the same trail we started on...But by then, we did not care. We just wanted to go back to safety and figure out another way out of Turkey.

Ammar wanted to escape the waiting of the resettlement process so badly that he tried to find a boat to smuggle him and his younger brother to Greece across the Aegean Sea. That plan failed when the smuggler was caught by authorities. He was searching for another way across the

sea when he received a call from his mother urging him to come back to Istanbul because they were accepted for resettlement in the United States. As Ammar swallowed the news of his acceptance, he felt that the United States would provide better opportunities for his family

Ammar recalled that they felt happy as they completed the medical check-ups, immunization requirements, and the culture course on American regulations and customs. As their departure date neared, they felt anxious and nervous about their travel status as the elected president of the United States, Donald Trump, began to express fear and suspicion of Syrian refugees. Ammar felt relieved when they landed in the United States in December of 2016—just a few weeks before the travel ban that was directed at Syrian refugees was issued. When he thought of the resettlement process, he joked about the many failed adventures that were undertaken to avoid waiting. While most of my informants perceived waiting in a negative way, one viewed the long waiting in a positive light.

Wisal was soft-spoken and hesitant around me when I arrived to her house to help her with some paperwork. I was not able to interview her right away since I felt that she needed to get to know me more in order to trust me. I spent days translating for her and aiding her in daily activities, slowly getting to know her as she felt more comfortable around me. Similar to the other Syrian women, she provided me with coffee and snacks as we chatted about our past experiences in Syria. She found my “American-ness” fascinating and maybe a little disturbing. Wisal asked me how I was able to travel and live far away from my parents. Moreover, she was curious about my decision not to wear a hijab. I explained to her that my parents were more concerned with my education than a hijab. She laughed and loosened up a little. She agreed and commended me on such good parents. I thanked her and assured her that she was a great mother, too. After that, she asked me to pull out the recorder so we can begin the interview.

Wisal presented an interesting case since she was grateful for the long waiting period of the resettlement process. She spent four years in Jordan with the last two years going through the United States resettlement process. She and her family suffered during that period, but she viewed waiting as an opportunity to go back to her home in Syria. She said:

We were uncomfortable and unhappy in Jordan because we lived in a place with terrible conditions. My husband worked illegal jobs that did not provide us with any financial comfort. Also, the rent was too high for a deteriorating home. By the time we started the resettlement process, I felt mentally drained and miserable. In the two years of the process, we did about six interviews, attended our medical appointments, and finished with the culture course. Before our acceptance, I was glad for the long waiting process of resettlement because it gave me hope of returning to my land. The longer we waited, the more time there was for the war to be resolved where we could go back home. After every interview, I was grateful for the longevity of this process since I was still close to my parents and my relatives. Approval to the United States was another form of hope, but it was not the hope I was looking for...

Conclusion

In this chapter, my informants added identity to their definition of wellbeing as they formally signed up for refugee status in the intermediate countries. Identifying as Syrian refugees, my informants faced hostility and distrust from their host communities, which amplified the problems in their wellbeing. Moreover, their wellbeing suffered during the initial resettlement process since it was the most prominent period of waiting. In sum, the refugee's negative perception of waiting focused on the spatio-temporal suspensions that impacted wellbeing and identity during the initial resettlement process. As Syrian refugees, they continued to change and redefine their sense of personhood in a liminal space of waiting. Liminality is an important concept to understand exile groups because they struggle with the identity markers of their lost homeland while they restructure their identity in new environments (Siganporia 2016). However within the new environments, their refugee status created friction with the local populations, who developed negative sentiments towards the refugees. Nevertheless, most of the

Syrian refugees in this sample persevered through the long and arduous resettlement process in the hopes of escaping the waiting period and finding permanent resettlement to improve their wellbeing and reclaim their identities.

CHAPTER 6: RESETTLEMENT IN AUSTIN, TEXAS, USA

They wondered how they got here...It was a different world, far away from the familiar, and where they became part of the banned.

Oh, how I miss Syria...Everything was familiar there. We had our relatives around us and we knew ourselves. Now, we feel lost. Sometimes I don't know who I am anymore. I am waiting to reclaim some part of my old self. The culture is so different in America and the English language is so difficult! How will I become an American when I still feel like a refugee missing a piece of myself, a piece of my home (Syria)? Tell me, how will I become an American when I can't learn the customs and language of this country?

Yasmin looked helpless as she described the cultural difficulties in the United States. She sat across from me during a lunch gathering at Zeina's apartment, where I found myself dealing with a steady stream of questions coming from several Syrian refugee women regarding the cultural hardships of the United States. As I explained some of the cultural norms to them, many of the women looked confused and distraught because they felt that they can never become a part of American society. After some more explanations, Zeina threw her hands up in defeat and got up to finish lunch, insisting that she did not need any assistance in response to the other women's requests and demands to help in the kitchen. Zeina's daughters brought out coffee and snacks for us and joined our discussion. After a while, another group of Syrian women showed up to the apartment joking about their late arrival.

They joined our conversation, but eventually the women switched the topic to their memories during a peaceful Syria, where their relatives were alive and well and their lives were full of 'happiness.' As I smelled the delicious aroma of Syrian food—hints of cumin, coriander, Aleppo pepper, garlic, onions, pomegranate molasses, lemon, and lamb—I realized I did not take as much notice of my surroundings because of the constant attention I received from the women. The apartment, which housed a family of six, was very small with a tiny kitchen, one bathroom, and two bedrooms. There was some furniture, but the women found space to sit on chairs that

seemed to appear out of nowhere. Some of the household items were purchased in used condition, and others were donated from aid organization. A few were new and were displayed around the apartment. And then there were the handful precious items that were brought with them from Syria: jewelry, pictures, clothes, small decorative items, and religious insignia. I looked at these items and smiled, remembering my relatives and my old home in Syria.

I forgot that most Syrians arrive to gatherings, meetings, and parties according to Syrian time—always late⁵. I smiled at the thought—feeling really hungry—as the women started to ask me about my old experiences in Syria. They were interested in the wellbeing of my relatives, who, similar to their relatives, were scattered all over the world. When I informed them that I still had some family in Syria and others abroad, they empathized and muttered hushed prayers for me.

I told the women that my sister lives in Europe and my parents live in another state, while I live in Texas pursuing my education. They were shocked because they felt that my sister and I were too far away from my parents. “But how do you feel being so far away from them? Your poor mother! She must miss you all the time. I am sure your father worries about you a lot. Why are you so far away from them?” asked Noura. I explained to them that while my parents missed us and worried about us, they encouraged us to pursue our dreams, even if those dreams took us far away from them. Yasmin nodded at me and said, “That is strange, but you have lived here for a long time. And I think that is good for you. However, my children will always be near me until they get married. But even then, my family will be close at all times.” The other women nodded in agreement to her statement.

⁵ While this is not universal for all Syrian individuals, it is a known cultural mannerism in the Syrian culture, where most of my informants would say, “Syrians are always late.” The host usually expects the guest to arrive a little late. Moreover, in many situations the appointment itself is defined in lax terms (e.g., between 4 and 5, or “I will come after 7”)

A few minutes later, we were called to dinner. I was very excited to eat Syrian food since I have been craving my own mother's cooking for a long time. We sat down to eat and the women talked and complimented the food, while psalms from the Holy Quran played in the background. At different instances, one of the women would make a funny joke that would bring us to tears from laughter. Covertly, some of my tears came from my memories of living in Syria, surrounded by family and relatives. A mixture of emotions took hold on me, but I focused my thoughts on the women and their conversation.

After we finished eating, Yasmin prepared a hookah while Noura lit up a cigarette. The conversation reverted back to their experiences in the United States. Most of the women have lived in the United States for less than a year, with Noura only having been here for three months. The women worried about their access to the social and medical services in the United States. They complained about the long waiting times they experienced at the medical offices and other service organizations. Also, the women felt unhappy due to the amount of time spent waiting for processing and approval of legal paperwork such as: identification cards, social security benefits, disability benefits, apartment applications, and job applications. In addition, they complained about the difficulty of the English language, which they had no knowledge of. Then, their concerns turned to American law and culture, which was difficult to understand. In one example, the women questioned me, "Why can't we smoke indoors? We live here, so why do we have to walk outside to smoke? We received warnings from the management so we turned off the smoke detectors in order to smoke in peace." I was shocked by this revelation and maintained that they needed to turn the smoke detectors back on for their protection. They laughed and reassured me that they turn them on after they finish smoking. Yasmin added, "Even if I wanted to move somewhere else where I can smoke more freely, I would probably be

put on a wait list...” I shrugged and continued, “Smoking has been banned from many places in America though.” She stared at me and continued,

Even if I did not smoke, it would be such a headache to find a new apartment. Do you know how long it takes to find a new apartment? We just applied for a government subsidized apartment complex that houses migrants and refugees, but they told us that we have to wait for six months before they would even review our application. Six months! There are high chances that we wait for months and then get rejected for subsidized housing. And even if they approved us, we would still have to wait another few months before the apartment became vacant. So what is the point of applying?

Yasmin laughed and handed me the hookah. I took it and smoked a few puffs with them.

The conversation turned to their problems with the traffic laws. So many of the men and women dealt with traffic tickets, towed cars, and traffic signs, mainly because they did not understand the English language. The women complained about the costliness of traffic tickets and towed cars. Yasmin said, “How can I pay my traffic ticket when I can’t even afford rent? They towed my car once because I was parked in a no-parking zone but I did not know since I cannot read English. But then they towed it another time when I was parked in the apartment parking lane, in *my* complex. I did not know the sign said visitor parking!” She laughed at that mistake but her demeanor turned serious when I asked her about her comment on the rent. “The rent is so high here. Back in Syria we lived in huge houses and we were able to afford living. Now, my family of eight lives in a tiny two-bedroom apartment which costs around \$1,100. My husband’s job does not pay him enough to afford rent, utilities, and all of the other expenses you need to survive...” She was interrupted by Noura who said, “Now, Yasmin, don’t put all of that on May. We are here to enjoy each other’s company. I want to have a good time. She’s probably tired of hearing about our problems. Give me the hookah! You are hogging it.” They both laughed but reverted back to talking about the cultural problems they experience in Austin every day. A few moments later, I excused myself, bid the women farewell and kissed them on the cheeks. As I

walked towards the door, each woman stopped me to ask some quick questions about traffic tickets, rent/bill costs, mail, and other urgent matters.

A few days later, I accompanied Wisal to the doctor because she had a back injury and she needed someone to translate. When I got to her place, I noticed the neglected condition of the apartment complex, which had over-flowing garbage bins, a run-down play area, and stray dogs rummaging through the trash. She received me with a cheerful greeting and ushered me into the living room. Wisal offered to make coffee, which I declined since we were running a little late to her doctor's appointment. When she looked offended, I explained to her that we cannot be late for the appointment or we would have to reschedule. Realization came to her face and she said,

Oh, I forgot that you have to be prompt here. It's different from Syria where everyone shows up late. You are right, the last appointment with my son was rescheduled because we were late. But, that was not my fault! I had to take the bus and it was so difficult to navigate. I did not think it would be so slow, either. I get nervous and afraid when I take the bus by myself. Sometimes people stare at me and it makes me feel uncomfortable because I think they are afraid of me! I don't have a car so it's very hard to get to places. I have to be at all of my sons' school and doctor appointments, grocery shop, upkeep the house, cook, and find the time to learn English. How can I do all of that? It's too much!

She sighed then looked at me and ushered me out of the door. We got into my car and I asked her about her back problems. Wisal said, "I was crossing the street with my youngest son when the light turned green for us to cross, but when I crossed, a large car (truck) hit me and my son." I was in shock and asked, "You mean the car hit you while you were walking across the street? What did the driver do?" She shook her head and said, "Yes, he hit me and my son. The hit broke my son's arm and threw me to the ground, which is why my back hurts. And the driver? He walked out and asked some questions in English. I did not understand what he was saying and I started to panic. The driver looked around, got back in his car, and then drove off." She believed that the driver fled the scene because he realized she could not speak English nor report him. I sympathized with her and told her that the doctors will make her feel better once

they looked at her back. She looked at me and said, “Probably. But how am I supposed to feel safe here? I do not like to walk on the streets anymore. My youngest son is traumatized and he is terrified of cars and streets now.” Unable to ease her mind anymore, I focused on driving her to the doctor.

While my informants made it to the United States for resettlement, they continued to struggle during the resettlement process in Austin, Texas. Though most of the serious problems in the social, physical, psychological, and financial factors of their wellbeing, generally improved, the refugees continued to face serious issues on these fronts. Moreover, their definition of wellbeing now included culture as a defining factor that arose when they arrived to the United States. In addition, the Syrian refugees entered into another phase of waiting during the resettlement period in Austin, Texas, as they waited to receive governmental benefits and green cards. While their perception of waiting was not so negative in the United States, they resumed to feel impacts on their identity as they continued to navigate through the liminal phase of uncertainty. However, the negative experiences that the Syrian refugees encountered in the United States only strengthened the resilience skills they acquired in the previous phases in their journey and helped them for providing for their families.

After the loss of their social structure in Syria, my informants began to rebuild their social relationships as they navigated through the new cultural environment. The emphasis of the American culture⁶ on the individual is a foreign concept to my informants, who believed in a group or a communal sense of identity. In order to maintain the communal agenda, the Syrian refugees in Austin created a tight social network that, for the most part, excluded other groups.

⁶ American culture is not standardized. However, my informants view American culture as generalized norms that advocate for individuality and independence, which contradicts the Syrian cultural norms: communal and tribal orientations.

While Syrians, in general, are very proud of their local background⁷, my informants recreated their social structures to include anyone who was Syrian, no matter which region in Syria they came from. In some cases, they created close relationships with other non-Syrian Arabs who shared their language and faith. In addition, they maintained connections with their relatives in Syria or abroad through the internet. I noticed that my informants constantly contacted their relatives to socialize with them and to check on them. During chats with their relatives, my informants always included me in the conversation. In a way, it seemed that I provided a sense of reassurance for them since they saw how well I have acclimated to American society. They would say to their relatives, “See, she is Halabi (from Aleppo)! She is one of us but she can speak English and she has picked up so much from the American ways. She helps us out a lot because we are new here. And some day, she may go and help you.” The connection to relatives helped the Syrian refugees hold on to parts of their old social structures and some of their Syrian identity. However, all of my informants felt unhappy being so distant from their relatives. The ban on Syrian nationals or refugees was particularly hard on them because it abolished any hopes for reunions in the near future.

While my informants struggled with their new social surroundings, they added culture as another factor that influenced their wellbeing. My informants did not understand the English language, and they could not grasp the cultures and norms of the United States. They sustained many Syrian customs in order to preserve their culture and to gain a sense of comfort in a foreign environment. For example, the Syrian refugees built their social relationships through Islam, which gave them motivation to congregate at their local mosque to meet with others who share their faith and culture. Also, all of my informants cooked and ate Syrian food prepared at the

⁷ Syrians discern each other based on their hometowns or cities in Syria. The Syrian refugees in Austin originated in different Syrian cities, which constituted as their main identifier of difference within their community.

home. While they shopped at the local grocery stores of Austin, the Syrian refugees purchased their meat exclusively from *halal*⁸ distributors. They continued to watch Arabic television shows and to listen and dance to Arabic music. The women maintained their modest clothing, often finding it difficult to locate conservative-styled clothes that resembled their sense of fashion from the Middle East.

However, in some cases, my informants felt that some elements of their culture were changing in response to their new environment. For example, while the home was a private space dominated by the Syrian women, some of the women ventured into the public sphere more often than usual as they found jobs to aid their family. Therefore, Syrian women who never drove a vehicle before found themselves learning how to drive for the first time. In addition, the Syrian families welcomed many of the Austin locals into their community because they aided them in their resettlement and acclimation. My informants believed that acquiring American friends would help them learn the language and culture of the United States. Ultimately, they befriended them because they felt grateful towards the Austin community for accepting and aiding them.

Due to the linguistic and cultural barriers, the Syrian refugees found themselves struggling to maintain their financial means as they faced the realities of Austin's expensive standard of living. Those barriers limited their abilities to communicate and work with others. Most felt insecure of their financial state. Many of the skilled refugees found themselves working in entry-level jobs that did not utilize the skills they acquired in Syria. They worked as unskilled workers because their previous credentials and work experience did not transfer to the United States. Many of the men explained to me that they took "any job" in order to maintain their financial security. In some cases, some of the men earned enough experience and support working in Middle Eastern restaurants and food trucks that they planned on opening up their own

⁸ Meat prepared in accordance with Muslim law.

food stores. Some of the women, too, worked in service industry jobs. A few of the women, with the help of the Syrian American Refugee Aid (SARA) organization, created their own Syrian food catering business, which received many customers from the local Austin community.

In other instances, the young adults who had achieved Syrian college and graduate credentials could not transfer their credits to the United States which placed them in difficult situations—working to help their families, trying to sign up for ESL courses, and struggling to plan their finances and future for college. Consequently, some of the young adults concentrated on working to help their families, leaving the English courses and college prospects for another time. In one case, one of my informants said, “I don’t even know who I am anymore. I was about to become a pharmacist in Syria. I finished my graduate studies and actually began to work in a pharmacy, but that was all destroyed. I have to do it all over again here, but I don’t have time. All I have time for is work. When will I learn English and become a pharmacist? I just don’t know anymore...”

Moreover, the resettlement organizations, Refugee Services of Texas (RST) and CARITAS of Austin, were not always prepared or equipped to support the Syrian refugees. In one case, Fatima talked about her experience with her resettlement organization,

We landed in America and I was eight months pregnant. The whole trip to America was exhausting and I thought that I would give birth in the airport because I was under so much physical and psychological pressure. When our case manager brought us into our apartment, we were shocked because there was barely any furniture or any food. I told the case manager that I needed to go to the hospital because I felt like I was going to give birth, but she ignored my pleas because she claimed that I still had a month to go, which is when they scheduled my hospital visit. After she left, I fell to the floor and cried because I felt so helpless. My husband went out to look for a grocery store to bring back some food and struggled in this simple task because he had no knowledge of anything here. We barely ate for days and I felt so much pain from the baby. Finally, a member from SARA found me and rushed me to the hospital where I gave birth.

These resettlement organizations support the Syrian refugees with rent in the first few months and they provide all of the legal documents they need such as: social security number, food stamps, medical insurance, and other governmental documents. Nevertheless, in many cases they were not adequately prepared for the influx of Syrian refugees. For example, most of my informants, which had six to eight individuals in their families, were placed in cramped, two-bedroom apartments that were in deteriorating conditions. In other cases, my informants felt neglected by their case workers. In another example, the case workers failed to remind them that the health insurance, which covers the children for a long period of time, expires for the adults after eight months, if not renewed. This caused most of my informants to lose their health insurance and have no knowledge of how to reclaim their coverage.

Also, RST and CARITAS cover rent for the Syrian refugees for the first three months of resettlement. After that, the refugees are expected to maintain the rent themselves, which is an unrealistically short period of time to learn a new language, obtain the required permits and documents, and find a job in a new country. In addition, most of the refugees waited for a lengthy amount of time for their paperwork, such as food stamps, apartment applications, work permits, or social security, to be approved by the government so they can afford groceries, find housing, work legally, and qualify for assistance. Moreover, they complained about the amount of waiting they experienced at medical offices and other service facilities. In some cases, they joked, “I am sure there is something else I need to apply and wait for before I am allowed access to it.” Due to this lack of preparedness and resources of the resettlement organizations, small non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as SARA, were created to help the Syrian refugees as they resettled in Austin. SARA became a lifeline for some of these refugees, who

struggled to make ends meet each month. It also provided other services such as: ESL tutoring, transportation, job skills, healthcare, and housing.

In addition to financial support, these organizations set up medical check-ups and immunizations to provide care for the refugees' health. In general, the physical and psychological health of the refugees' wellbeing had improved since leaving the intermediate countries. However, in some cases, my informants faced new problems with their physical and psychological health due to their limited knowledge of the American healthcare system. While the adults had medical insurance for six months, they did not know how to renew their insurance after its expiration. Many of my informants complained about problems with their dental health. Subsequently, for the few who received dental work, they felt shocked and betrayed by the high costs of the dental procedures.

Moreover, several of my informants mentioned depression, stress, and anxiety as recurring issues in their mental health. Some of these problems originated before their resettlement in the United States, while others surfaced in Austin. Most of the refugees felt unhappy because they were unfamiliar with their surroundings. Many felt anxiety or stress resulting from their daily experiences in a foreign culture. Some of my informants felt hopeless in their attempts at learning the language. The pressures of continuous labor, housework, medical appointments, legal work, and their children's schooling placed the refugees in a state of constant worry, which led to their neglect of learning the language. In some cases, the children faced problems acclimating to their surroundings because they were placed in the wrong grades; they were not given proper care to deal with their psychological problems; and they became targets of bullying and racist encounters. Most of the Syrian refugees felt anxious or afraid of becoming the targets of xenophobic attacks because a few of them already endured negative experiences in the

United States. Specifically, the women did not like to venture outside of their home because they believed their conservative appearance would make them targets for Islamophobic attacks. In one instance, Fatima experienced racial attacks when she was out in public with her husband and children. She said,

I used to wear the burka which covered me from head to toe, but now I resorted to wearing the hijab, where you can see my face because a few people harassed me. One time when we were on the bus, a man started yelling Islamophobic rants at me. I was very scared but my husband was with me and the bus driver with a few other Americans kicked him off the bus. They were really nice to me, though. But then I had another bad encounter when I tried to shop at a store where the owner kept telling me that they did not have my size and that I needed to get out of her store. I was deeply upset. Now I spend all of my time at home. I feel like it's a prison, but what can I do?

Due to the uneasy political climate under the Trump administration, which banned the resettlement of any future Syrian refugees and the entry of any Syrian nationals, and Texas Governor Greg Abbott's opposition to the support and resettlement of Syrian refugees in Texas, many of my informants felt apprehensive about talks involving American politics or the president of the United States. In some instances, they would question the policies proposed by President Trump, stating, "I don't understand why he is against us. His words make others fear us and make us feel alienated from and afraid of the public. We came here to escape war. We are a peaceful people. We want to be a lawful citizens of this country. We are so grateful for this country. We want to contribute to the United States because it is the land that gave us the opportunity to live."

The political rhetoric that follows the Syrian refugees in the United States reinforced their disarrayed sense of identity. In this setting, Syrian refugees remained in a liminal state, waiting to reclaim their sense of personhood. While they were permanently resettled in America, many informants still felt like refugees. In one case, Farah recalled her uncertain condition as a refugee

when Trump's travel ban blocked her and her family from entering the United States. She explained,

Our arrival date fell on the week Trump passed the ban on Syrian refugees. We were so terrified because we thought that our future and safety were gone. We waited for so long to be accepted, only to be banned from flying into America because we were portrayed as a threat to this country. It was so ironic since we were the ones in danger, not anyone else. We knew that if we didn't get into America, the Jordanian government would deport us to the Syrian border where we could get hurt or killed. We know of a family that was rejected and sent back to the border and no one knows their whereabouts now. When the American people used their voice to lift the ban on us, we felt so grateful and relieved to be here. I still worry about how people perceive me here because I am a refugee and people are afraid of us these days.

Also, these notions persisted as my informants entered a period of waiting for the green card. After living in the United States for one year, the refugees underwent the application for the green card, which takes about a few months to attain. During that time, most of the refugees accepted and welcomed the waiting period before receiving their approval. However, a few of my informants worried about getting rejected for a green card due to their refugee status and Syrian background.

Most of the Syrian refugees felt that receiving the green card and buying their own house would make them a part of the American society. Moreover, their collective experiences and similar background became a form of healing for their community. Shared cultures and experiences of refugees were the primary determining factors of wellbeing and adaptation (Simich et al. 2003). My informants hoped that they would be acclimated to their environment and can focus on learning English and pursuing their dreams. However, some of my informants did not foresee this path in their future. This minority hoped to receive the green card in order to travel back and forth between the United States and their intermediate countries where they can visit relatives in hope to preserve the connection to their home and relatives.

Most of my informants showed resilience as they persisted in their efforts to acclimate to the American environment. In some cases, the Syrian refugees who had no vehicles or knowledge of the public transportation system in Austin found many ways to attend ESL courses. For example, many of my informants befriended other Arabs already established in Austin who provided them with transportation and communication. Also, many of the refugees who did not know how to use a laptop spent days learning the technology in order to get access to online classes. They joined English classes that were taught via live online lessons such as Skype. Most of them opened their homes to their American neighbors in order to interact with them and learn their customs and language. With little knowledge of English, the Syrian refugees communicated with their American counterparts through body language, internet translators, and their children. Most of my informants relied heavily on their children's growing knowledge of the English language.

While the majority relied on interpreters or their children to act as translators, there were a few cases where the adults made serious attempts to learn English. I was particularly impressed by one of my informant's dedication and creativeness in learning the new language. I went to Fat-hieh's apartment for a dinner gathering. As the guests began to arrive, I offered to help her in the kitchen. She turned me down a few times, but I persisted and finally convinced her to let me aid her in the kitchen. I entered the kitchen and was surprised to find everything was covered with sheets of paper with English and Arabic writings describing specific actions, phrases, and words. Fat-hieh noticed my reaction and with a little blush she said, "Oh don't look at that. It's a mess! My writing in English is terrible." I turned back to her, laughed, and said, "This is amazing! Your writing is superb! Now I know how you are learning English so quickly." She explained to me that she writes the English words she learned in her ESL classes, then she writes

their definition in Arabic under the word, and finally she adds the sound of the English word in Arabic letters in order to get the proper pronunciation. While I was helping Fat-hieh in the kitchen, I kept looking up at the notes and smiling as she was rehearsing different words in English. Her approach made sense to me because this woman turned a space she spends a lot of her time in into a place of learning.

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the present experiences of Syrian refugees as they resettled in Austin, Texas, United States. While their wellbeing improved in general, they continued to struggle with the social, physical, psychological, and financial aspects of their wellbeing due to their unfamiliarity with the new environment. Their lack of knowledge of the English language and the American culture produced many issues that affected their wellbeing negatively. Moreover, they suffered due to the shortcomings of some resettlement organizations which were underprepared for the influx of Syrian refugees. As a result, they added “culture” as another factor affecting their perception of wellbeing. Moreover, all of the Syrian refugees entered into a new phase of waiting during this period. In lieu of the present political climate, some of my informants experienced xenophobic and islamophobic incidents that reinforced their liminal status. In order to improve their wellbeing and sense of identity, my informants hoped to find a permanent place to settle. However, they continuously moved from one apartment to another as they searched for affordable housing. Individuals facing constant movement and temporary accommodation can develop problems with identity formation (Lennartsson 2007). Nevertheless, even as they struggled with their identity, many of the Syrian refugees exhibited resilience skills that aided in their struggle with the new environment. Yet, the Syrian refugees continue to suffer

on different aspects of their wellbeing as they work to ensure a better future for their children while holding on to their past.

CHAPTER 7: SURVEY RESULTS: POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER, DEPRESSION, AND HAPPINESS

In addition to interviews and participation observation, I conducted a short survey with three questionnaires: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Checklist-Civilian Version (PCL-C) (Blanchard et al. 1996), Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) (Becker et al. 2002), and Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) (Lyubomirsky and Lepper 1999) to gain an objective assessment of their psychological health and wellbeing. Twenty seven participants (18 women; 9 men) completed the instruments. Fifteen of the participants whom I interviewed also participated in the surveys. I recruited the remaining 12 through snowball sampling of friends and family members of interviewees.

Statistical analysis:

Age, waiting times and scores of the three instruments (PHQ-9, PCL-C, and SHS) were summarized and reported as mean and standard deviation (SD) for both men and women. To examine the clinical implications of the scores of each instrument, the scores were categorized according to the instructions provided for each instrument. A PHQ-9 score of (0-14) was classified as no/mild depression, while a score of (≥ 15) was classified as moderate/severe depression. For PCL-C, a score of (0-1) was classified as asymptomatic, while a scores of (2-3) was classified as symptomatic post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). For SHS, the scores of < 5.6 and ≥ 5.6 indicted perceived unhappiness and happiness, respectively.

Comparisons by sex, time spent in the US (≤ 9 months vs. > 9 months), and waiting time for resettlement application approval (≤ 1 year vs. > 1 year) were performed using Mann-Whitney or Chi-Square tests as appropriate.

Results:

Table 1 shows the distributions of age and waiting times for Syrian men and women refugees in Austin, TX. Women are slightly older than men in this sample and spent half a year longer in intermediate countries than men, on average.

Table 1. Case Summaries, by gender. Scores are presented as mean; (SD)

Sex	Age	Months Spent in USA	Years spent in intermediate countries	Years until obtaining resettlement
Male (n=9)	30.3 (9.08)	7.9 (6.15)	3.3 (0.91)	1.3 (0.65)
Female (n=18)	32.9 (12.20)	9.1 (4.97)	3.8 (0.81)	1.3 (0.61)
Total (n=27)	32.1 (11.15)	8.7 (5.30)	3.6 (0.86)	1.3 (0.61)

Table 2 shows the comparisons of the scores of PHQ9, PCL-C, and SHS instruments between Syrian refugee men and women. Women scored significantly ($p=0.044$, and $p=0.012$ for PHQ-9 and PCL-C, respectively) higher on PHQ-9 (depression) and PCL-C (PTSD) instruments. Also, women scored lower than men on SHS scale (Subjective Happiness), but the difference was borderline significant ($p=0.062$).

Table 2. Comparison of psychological health scores between Syrian refugee men and women in Austin, Texas. Scores are presented as mean; (SD)

Sex	Men (n=9)	Women (n=18)	<i>P</i>
Total PHQ-9 score	5.1 (6.45)	11.2 (7.53)	0.044
Total PCL-C score	11.9 (7.86)	21.3 (9.10)	0.012
Total SHS score	4.6 (1.43)	3.6 (1.15)	0.062

When men and women were compared on clinical classification of the scores (Table 3), the difference was not statistically significant in terms of depression severity ($p=0.136$). However, women suffered more PTSD symptoms ($p=0.014$) and were less happy than men ($p=0.009$). Table 3 shows the results of the categorical analysis of the scores.

Table 3. Comparison of men and women on clinical classifications of psychological scores.

PHQ-9 (Depression)	None-Mild	Moderate-Severe	<i>P</i> (chi-square)
Men	8	1	0.136
Women	11	7	
PCL-C (PTSD)	Asymptomatic	Symptomatic	<i>P</i> (chi-square)
Men	7	2	0.014
Women	5	13	
SHS (Happiness)	Unhappy (<5.62)	Happy (≥5.62)	<i>P</i> (chi-square)
Men	6	3	0.009
Women	18	0	

Next, I examined whether the length of time spent in the US (≤ 9 months vs. >9 months) and the waiting time for resettlement application approval (≤ 1 year vs. >1 year) were associated with psychological health of the Syrian refugees. Individuals who spent >9 months in the US have scored significantly higher on depression and PTSD scales ($p=0.012$, and $p=0.003$ for PHQ-9 and PCL-C, respectively). Individuals who had a shorter waiting time for resettlement application approval scored significantly higher on depression and PTSD scales ($p=0.028$, and $p=0.032$ for PHQ-9 and PCL-C, respectively). No difference in subjective happiness score was observed in both analyses (Tables 4 and 5).

Table 4. Comparison of psychological health scores of Syrian refugees, by time spent in the US. Scores are presented as mean; (SD)

Time in USA	≤9 months (n=19)	>9 months (n=8)	<i>P</i>
Total PHQ-9 score	6.5 (6.16)	15.4 (7.50)	0.012
Total PCL-C score	15.0 (9.20)	25.8 (5.59)	0.003
Total SHS score	4.0 (1.33)	4.0 (1.37)	0.810

Table 5. Comparison of psychological health scores of Syrian refugees, by time of resettlement application approval. Scores are presented as mean; (SD)

Time to resettlement	≤1 Year	>1 Year	<i>P</i>
Total PHQ-9 score	12.0 (7.33)	6.5 (7.18)	0.028
Total PCL-C score	21.8 (8.59)	14.7 (9.60)	0.032
Total SHS score	3.8 (1.40)	4.1 (1.27)	0.590

Conclusion

The findings show that women experienced higher levels of depression, PTSD, and perceived unhappiness. These results reinforce the qualitative data which showed that new cultural pressures and xenophobic attacks were more prevalent among women than men. For example, women were more likely to experience discomfort towards new cultural markers that did not exist for them in their home country. Also, due to their conservative appearance, women experienced more xenophobic attacks than the men. While the qualitative results for both men and women showed problems with wellbeing in the United States, women were more vocal than the men about their negative experiences concerning physical and mental health issues.

Moreover, in order to understand the change in psychological health status of the Syrian refugees after permanent resettlement, I examined the relationship of the time spent in the USA with scores on PHQ-9, PCL-C, and SHS tests. The results show that individuals who spent more than nine months in the United States suffer more depression and PTSD symptoms than those who have been in USA for nine months or less. However, subjective happiness levels show little-to-no changes in either case. This finding reinforces the argument that refugees continue to suffer from stress and depression, perhaps due to increasing challenges that they face as they struggle to resettle and rebuild their lives in the new environment. This result agrees with the qualitative analysis indicating the importance of the socio-cultural factors on the wellbeing of the Syrian refugees.

Finally, in order to understand further effects of time, I examined the relation between the time spent waiting for the processing of the resettlement application and the three markers of psychological health. Results show that individuals who spent less than a year waiting through the resettlement process had higher rates of depression ($p=0.028$) and more PTSD symptoms ($p=0.032$) than those who waited for longer than a year. This apparently counterintuitive result may reflect the fact that refugees who were in great danger, or suffered a serious accident, such as the death of a family member, and, therefore, had more apparent psychological or physical threats, were given priority and received resettlement approvals in shorter times.

CONCLUSION

Sometimes I wonder if we are in the wrong place or if we just do not belong anywhere... The experiences of war, flight, and displacement shadow us during the day and keep us up at night. Did we go through all of the waiting and the interviews just to be placed in a country that is so foreign to us? But, we are trying to assimilate because we want to have good lives for our children. Also, we are grateful to our American hosts who make us feel welcome. Still, it is difficult here. The culture, the people, and the language are very different for us. While the adults will continue to struggle here, I hope the children will assimilate so they can have a good life. Syrians... You can put us anywhere and we can survive! However, sometimes I want to take a break from surviving and get my old life back. I miss my home country, but I am lucky to be here where I hope to become an American one day.

Syrian refugees experience several periods of waiting during war, displacement and resettlement. My research aimed to explore the relationship between waiting and wellbeing. I found that periods of waiting contribute to feelings of identity loss but also strategies to build resilience in self and family. Additionally, I found that waiting is only one component, albeit an important one, that affects the wellbeing of Syrian refugees. Initially, I anticipated that Syrian refugees would focus on happiness and unhappiness as the key axis for wellbeing (Mathews and Izquierdo 2009). However, it soon became apparent that wellbeing encompassed much more for Syrian refugees during the journey out of their home country and through the resettlement in the United States. Their concept of wellbeing evolved to include other dimensions, such as identity loss, uncertainty, financial problems, and physical and mental health issues. These could not be generalized to unhappiness. Indeed, happiness is merely one component in the cultural understanding of wellbeing (Mathews and Izquierdo 2009), and social, physical, and psychological dimensions of wellbeing (El-Shaarawi 2015; Ryan et al. 2008; Lennartsson 2007; and Panter-Brick et al. 2014) are equally important considerations. Moreover, among Syrian refugees, threats to wellbeing were countered with deliberate measures to survive and thrive.

Overall, Syrian refugee spatio-temporal experiences of waiting emphasized the multidimensional and dynamic development of wellbeing.

Waiting can incorporate conventional clock time, stillness, periods of anticipation or dread, or a period filled with routine activities (Sutton et al. 2011; Masquelier 2013; and Bissell 2007). In the case of refugees, waiting can take on the additional experience of liminality, an ambivalent time and space, or a period of in-betweenness (Sutton et al. 2011; Malkki 1995b; Turton 2004; Beneduce 2008; Eyles and Dam 2012; El-Shaarawi 2015; Sigantoria 2016).

Through experiences as landless individuals, my informants described their waiting periods as ‘in-between’ spaces that caused identity loss and change. This liminal sense of identity during waiting and uncertainty for the future corresponds to other work in anthropology emphasizing the role of liminality in the wellbeing of refugees (Malkki 1995b; Turton 2004; Harrell-Bond and Voutira 1992).

The Syrian refugees with whom I worked also emphasized that the liminal period of waiting was a time when they developed new and resilient skillsets. In the anthropological literature on displacement, some studies have integrated resilience as an adaptation that can emerge from the shared traumatic experiences of communities or groups to withstand and overcome hardships (Simich et al. 2003; Simich and Andermann 2014; Panter-Brick et al. 2017). Similarly, my work illustrates how the development of resilience (e.g. escaping war, finding safety, providing for the family, and achieving resettlement) emerges during waiting periods of the resettlement journey. In particular, my informants were able to endure instances of suffering due to their shared culture and experiences. Strategic attempts to survive and thrive can be thwarted, however. The cultural mismatch between the American sense of individuality and privacy and the communal and shared ethos of the Middle Eastern culture repeatedly created

challenges for my informants. For example, the Syrian refugees who remained solely dependent on their cultural groups suffered within the United States while those who have integrated some of the local individualistic values have overcome hardships by participating in host communities.

Waiting and the context of resettlement also impacted wellbeing. In order to assess the specific problems occurring in their new environment, I used quantitative measures to measure psychological health and wellbeing. I focused on factors such as sex, time spent in the USA, and time spent waiting for resettlement acceptance to determine whether they had any effects on PHQ-9 (depression), PCL-C (post-traumatic stress disorder), and SHS (subjective happiness) scores. Women experienced higher rates of depression, PTSD, and unhappiness compared to men. These results reinforced the qualitative data which displayed higher incidences of cultural pressures and unwelcome sentiments directed at Syrian refugee women. Nonetheless, both women and men echoed problems in their wellbeing within the United States. Further, my quantitative results showed that Syrian refugees who lived in the USA for longer than nine months suffered more from depression and PTSD symptoms than those who lived in the USA for nine months or less. Similarly, this analysis agreed with my qualitative data which displayed the daily challenges that affect the wellbeing of Syrian refugees as they continue to struggle with resettlement and integration. Finally, my quantitative results demonstrated the additional effects of time on the psychological wellbeing of my informants which found that individuals who waited less than a year for resettlement approval had higher levels of depression and PTSD symptoms than those who waited for more than a year. Equally, this finding supports the qualitative data which showed that some families received resettlement approval in shorter times due to greater risks to their health and wellbeing.

My research utilized mixed methods and an interdisciplinary approach to highlight experiences of Syrian refugees as they struggle to settle and rebuild their lives in the United States. Anthropology provided me with the ethnographic tools to produce deep knowledge from the point of view of the displaced. Moreover, applying quantitative measures—from psychology and public health—supplied additional tools to measure the mental health aspect of the wellbeing of the Syrian refugees in the United States. There are few research limitations to note.

An important limitation of my study is its focus on Syrian refugees. Future studies among refugees from other ethnicities and different parts of the world will provide more insight on factors affecting the wellbeing of refugees, including long waiting time until resettlement. Also, my work included only a small sample of Syrian refugees in Austin, Texas. Similar studies in other U.S. cities that hosted Syrian refugees could provide more information about the experiences of Syrian refugees during the resettlement journey and allow for comparisons of their wellbeing across different levels of state assistance and acceptance by the local communities. It remains to be known how much impact resettlement organizations have on the wellbeing of new refugees and what effects the political climate has on Syrian and other refugee groups' wellbeing. Persistent racism can cause additional stress and have independent effects on health (Brondolo et al. 2011). How is Syrian refugee wellbeing influenced by increasing instances of public islamophobia and xenophobia (Southern Poverty Law Center 2016) in the United States?

Another important future analysis centers on refugee identity, wellbeing, and gendered space. During my research, it was clear that women and men had very different relationships with their new American spaces, including housing, the immediate neighborhood, and the refugee community. How and when Syrian refugees had access to social support, English

language exposure, and social services appeared to be related to gender roles. Stress in the home also appeared to be experienced differently between men and women. While my thesis touched on some of these concepts, I did not have sufficient time to approach them with the sensitivity they deserve, especially given American assumptions about gender inequality and Islam. Clearly, however, gender is an important identity marker and influence in wellbeing.

In sum, limiting the definition of wellbeing to the concept of happiness is inadequate, especially among Syrian refugees, as is limiting the definition to one point in time. Happiness is an important but single dimension in the Syrian refugees' definition of wellbeing. Spatio-temporal experiences of waiting, i.e., in what form, in what place and for what duration, during displacement and resettlement reshape Syrian refugees' understanding of wellbeing. Expanding the concept of wellbeing to include identity, socio-cultural, physical and mental health, and financial elements agreed more closely with my informants' understanding of wellbeing. Initially, they, too, thought of wellbeing as a state of happiness rooted in strong familial and communal ties. As they began to be exposed to the atrocities of war and forced displacement, they added physical, psychological, and financial dimensions to their perception of wellbeing. Eventually, as the distance from their homes and families stretched far, loss of identity and personhood appeared as a strong and consistent theme in their definition of wellbeing. Finally, as they navigated through the environment of the United States, they added culture as a factor in their wellbeing.

As the Syrian Civil War continues to displace Syrian civilians and the world remains largely indifferent to helping in achieving a permanent solution, this problem is likely to continue for a long while. Despite the significant improvements in their lives and wellbeing, the

Syrian refugees remain in a liminal state as they struggle with their identities in a new world, and face an uncertain future in an increasingly hostile public discourse and political environment.

APPENDIX 1

The Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) (English)

The Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9)

Patient Name _____ Date of Visit _____

Over the past 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems?	Not At all	Several Days	More Than Half the Days	Nearly Every Day
1. Little interest or pleasure in doing things	0	1	2	3
2. Feeling down, depressed or hopeless	0	1	2	3
3. Trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or sleeping too much	0	1	2	3
4. Feeling tired or having little energy	0	1	2	3
5. Poor appetite or overeating	0	1	2	3
6. Feeling bad about yourself - or that you're a failure or have let yourself or your family down	0	1	2	3
7. Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television	0	1	2	3
8. Moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed. Or, the opposite - being so fidgety or restless that you have been moving around a lot more than usual	0	1	2	3
9. Thoughts that you would be better off dead or of hurting yourself in some way	0	1	2	3

Column Totals _____ + _____ + _____

Add Totals Together _____

10. If you checked off any problems, how difficult have those problems made it for you to
Do your work, take care of things at home, or get along with other people?

Not difficult at all Somewhat difficult Very difficult Extremely difficult

The Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) (Arabic)

استبيان عن صحة المرضى - 9 (PHQ-9)

خلال الأسبوعين الماضيين، كم مرة عانيت من أي من المشاكل التالية؟ (ضع علامة "✓" للإشارة لجوابك)			
ولا مرة	عدة أيام	نصف الأيام	أكثر من تقريباً كل يوم
0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3

_____ + _____ + _____ + _____ = Total Score: _____ (FOR OFFICE CODING)

إذا أشرت إلى إي من المشاكل أعلاه، فإلى أية درجة صغيت عليك هذه المشاكل القيام بعملك، الاعتناء بالأمور المنزلية، أو الانسجام مع أشخاص آخرين؟

ليست هناك أي صعوبة هناك بعض الصعوبات هناك صعوبات شديدة هناك صعوبات بالغة التعقيد

لقد طور هذا الاستبيان كل من الدكتور روبرت سبيتسر، الدكتورة جالوت ويليامز، الدكتور كيرت كورنيك وزملائهم، وتم ذلك بفضل منحة من مؤسسة Pfizer Inc. ليست هناك أية حاجة للحصول على تصريح من أجل الاستقصاء أو الترجمة أو العرض أو التوزيع.

APPENDIX 2

PTSD Checklist-Civilian (English)

PTSD CheckList – Civilian Version (PCL-C)

Client's Name: _____

Instruction to patient: Below is a list of problems and complaints that veterans sometimes have in response to stressful life experiences. Please read each one carefully, put an "X" in the box to indicate how much you have been bothered by that problem *in the last month*.

No.	Response	Not at all (1)	A little bit (2)	Moderately (3)	Quite a bit (4)	Extremely (5)
1.	Repeated, disturbing <i>memories, thoughts, or images</i> of a stressful experience from the past?					
2.	Repeated, disturbing <i>dreams</i> of a stressful experience from the past?					
3.	Suddenly <i>acting or feeling</i> as if a stressful experience <i>were happening</i> again (as if you were reliving it)?					
4.	Feeling <i>very upset</i> when <i>something reminded</i> you of a stressful experience from the past?					
5.	Having <i>physical reactions</i> (e.g., heart pounding, trouble breathing, or sweating) when <i>something reminded</i> you of a stressful experience from the past?					
6.	Avoid <i>thinking about or talking about</i> a stressful experience from the past or avoid <i>having feelings</i> related to it?					
7.	Avoid <i>activities or situations</i> because they <i>remind</i> you of a stressful experience from the past?					
8.	Trouble <i>remembering important parts</i> of a stressful experience from the past?					
9.	Loss of <i>interest in things that you used to enjoy</i> ?					
10.	Feeling <i>distant or cut off</i> from other people?					
11.	Feeling <i>emotionally numb</i> or being unable to have loving feelings for those close to you?					
12.	Feeling as if your <i>future</i> will somehow be <i>cut short</i> ?					
13.	Trouble <i>falling or staying asleep</i> ?					
14.	Feeling <i>irritable</i> or having <i>angry outbursts</i> ?					
15.	Having <i>difficulty concentrating</i> ?					
16.	Being " <i>super alert</i> " or watchful on guard?					
17.	Feeling <i>jumpy</i> or easily startled?					

PCL-M for DSM-IV (11/1/94) Weathers, Litz, Huska, & Keane National Center for PTSD - Behavioral Science Division

This is a Government document in the public domain.

PTSD Checklist-Civilian (Arabic)

ان ترك النيار والنزوح الى بلد آخر هي حادثة مؤلمة ولكن شدة تأثيرها تختلف باختلاف الشخص، فهناك تفاوت في شدة تأثيرها على الأشخاص الذين تعرضوا لهذه الحادثة. سوف أطرح عليك بعض الأسئلة يقصد قياس شدة الصدمة التي تعرضت لها او تعاني منها جراء حادثة النزوح او نتيجة الحرب او الاحداث التي تدور في بلدك.

أرجو الاجابه على السؤال إذا تعرضت للحالة خلال الشهر الماضي

1- تتكرر أمامي الذكريات او الافكار او الصور المؤلمة المتعلقة بهذه التجربة المريرة.

- لا
 نادرا
 معظم الوقت
 دائما

2- أعاني من تكرار الأحلام المرعبة المتعلقة بهذه التجربة المريرة.

- لا
 نادرا
 معظم الوقت
 دائما

3- أجدل او أنفعل فجأة وكأن التجربة المريرة تحدث مرة اخرى .. وكأنني اعيش التجربة من جديد

- لا
 نادرا
 معظم الوقت
 دائما

4- اشعر بالارتعاج لأي شيء يذكرني بالحادثة المريرة.

- لا
 نادرا
 معظم الوقت
 دائما

Continued

5- اعاني من ردادت فعل جسديه مثل تسارع دقات القلب او ضيق في التنفس او التعرق الزائد او الدوران عندما يذكري شيء بهذه التجربة

- لا
 نادرا
 معظم الوقت
 دائما

6- اتجنب التفكير او الحديث عن هذه التجربة المريرة او اتجنب الاحاسيس والمشاعر المتعلقة بها

- لا
 نادرا
 معظم الوقت
 دائما

7- اتحاشى بعض الانشطة او المواقف لأنها تذكرني بهذه التجربة المؤلمة.

- لا
 نادرا
 معظم الوقت
 دائما

8- اعاني من مشكله تذكر تفاصيل مهمة من هذه التجربة المؤلمة.

- لا
 نادرا
 معظم الوقت
 دائما

9- فقدت الاهتمام بأشياء كانت ممتعة لي في السابق.

- لا
 نادرا
 معظم الوقت
 دائما

10- أشعر بالانزواء والعزلة عن الآخرين.

- لا
 نادرا
 معظم الوقت
 دائما

Continued

11- أشعر يتجمد عواطفى وعدم القدرة على حمل مشاعر المحبة للمقربين الي.

- لا
 نادرا
 معظم الوقت
 دائما

12- اشعر وكأن مستقبلي سوف ينتهي.

- لا
 نادرا
 معظم الوقت
 دائما

13- أعاني من قلة النوم او الاستمرار فيه.

- لا
 نادرا
 معظم الوقت
 دائما

14- أشعر يأتي عصبي وتجتاحني نوبات غضب شديده غير مبرره.

- لا
 نادرا
 معظم الوقت
 دائما

15- اجد صعوبة في التركيز.

- لا
 نادرا
 معظم الوقت
 دائما

16- أصبحت أكثر يقظة وحذر ومراقبه دائمة بهدف حماية نفسي.

- لا
 نادرا
 معظم الوقت
 دائما

17- أشعر يأتي أصبحت أرثجف وأجفل بسهولة.

- لا
 نادرا
 معظم الوقت
 دائما

APPENDIX 3

Subjective Happiness Scale (English)

For each of the following statements and/or questions, please circle the point on the scale that you feel is most appropriate in describing you.

1. In general, I consider myself:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not a very happy person						a very happy person

2. Compared with most of my peers, I consider myself:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
less happy						more happy

3. Some people are generally very happy. They enjoy life regardless of what is going on, getting the most out of everything. To what extent does this characterization describe you?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all						a great deal

4. Some people are generally not very happy. Although they are not depressed, they never seem as happy as they might be. To what extent does this characterization describe you?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all						a great deal

Subjective Happiness Scale (Arabic)

Appendix

السعادة الشخصية

في كل من الأسئلة التالية، ضع دائرة حول الرقم الأنسب الذي يصفك بشكل مناسب:

1- في شكل عام، أنا

7	6	5	4	3	2	1
شخص						شخص
غير						في قمة
سعيد						السعادة

2- مقارنة بأقراني ورفاقي، أنا

7	6	5	4	3	2	1
أقل						أكثر
سعادة منهم						سعادة منهم

3- بشكل عام، يشعر بعض الأشخاص بسعادة عارمة. فهم يتمتعون بالحياة برغم ما يجري حولهم، فيعيشون الحياة إلى أقصى درجة. إلى أي درجة تنطبق عليك هذه الصفة:

7	6	5	4	3	2	1
بشكل						لا تنطبق
كبير						علي أبدا

4- بشكل عام، لا يشعر بعض الأشخاص بالسعادة. هم ليسوا مصابين بالاكتئاب، لكن لا يبدو سعديين بقدر كاف . إلى أي درجة تنطبق عليك هذه الصفة:

7	6	5	4	3	2	1
لدرجة كبيرة						لا أشبههم
						أبدا

APPENDIX 4

Information Sheet (English)

Syrian Refugee Questionnaire

ID Number: _____

Date: _____

Instructions:

- Read the questions carefully before answering
- Choose *one* answer that most describes your situation
- Put an (X) inside the square consistent with the answer you choose

1- How old are you? _____ (years)

2- What is your gender?

- a. Male
- b. Female

3- How many persons live in your house (including you?)

- a. 1
- b. 2 – 4
- c. 5 or more

4- What is your education level?

- a. None (cannot read and/or write)
- b. Finished elementary school
- c. Finished middle school
- d. Finished high school
- e. University degree or higher

5- What is your employment status?


- a. Employed
 - a. Full-time
 - b. Part-time
- b. Unemployed

The following questions are about resettlement

6- What city in Syria are you originally from? _____

Continued

7- If you left Syria before coming to the US, in what country did you stay? (Check all that apply)

- a. I did not leave Syria  (Go to question #9)
- b. Lebanon For how long? ___ (years), ___ (months)
- c. Jordan For how long? ___ (years), ___ (months)
- d. Turkey For how long? ___ (years), ___ (months)
- e. Iraq For how long? ___ (years), ___ (months)
- f. Other (Specify) _____ For how long? (years), ___ (months)

8- How did you leave Syria?

- a. Mainly by foot
- b. Mainly by car
- c. Mainly by bus
- d. Mainly by plane
- e. Other (Specify) _____

9- What type of housing accommodation did you have before coming to the US? (Check all that apply)

- a. Lived in a refugee camp For how long? ___ (years), ___ (months)
- b. Shared an apartment/house with other families For how long? ___ (years), ___ (months)
- c. In an apartment For how long? ___ (years), ___ (months)
- d. In a separate house For how long? ___ (years), ___ (months)
- e. Other (Specify) _____ For how long? ___ (years), ___ (months)

10- How long was the time between your displacement in Syria and entry into the United States?
___ (years), ___ (months)

11- How long was the asylum-seeking process to the United States? ___ (years), ___ (months)

12- Where were you settled first when you came to the United States?

- a. I came directly to Austin
- b. Other (name the city) _____

13- How long have you been in the United States? ___ (years), ___ (months)

Thank you!

Information Sheet (Arabic)

استبيان المهاجرين السوريين في الولايات المتحدة

الرقم التسلسلي ----- التاريخ -----

التعليمات:

- الرجاء اقرأ الأسئلة بعناية قبل الإجابة
- الرجاء اختيار إجابة واحدة التي تنطبق أكثر ما تكون على وضعك
- إذا كان السؤال يطلب اختيار كل الإجابات الصحيحة، الرجاء اختر كل الإجابات التي تنطبق على وضعك
- ضع إشارة (X) في المربع الموافق للإجابة الصحيحة

1- كم هو عمرك؟ ----- سنة و ----- أشهر

2- هل أنت؟

- ذكر
- انثى

3- كم عدد الأشخاص الذين يعيشون حالياً معك في نفس البيت (بما فيهم أنت)؟

- 1 -
- 2 - 4
- 5 أو أكثر

4- ما هو مستوى تحصيلك العلمي؟

- لم أنه المدرسة الابتدائية
 - أنهيت المدرسة الابتدائية
 - أنهيت المدرسة الإعدادية
 - أنهيت المدرسة الثانوية
 - لدي شهادة جامعية
- ما هي شهادتك؟ (مثلاً، هندسة، رياضيات، إلخ) -----

5- هل لديك عمل حالياً؟

- نعم، أعمل بدوام جزئي
- نعم، أعمل بدوام كامل
- لا، أنا عاطل عن العمل

الأسئلة التالية تتعلق بهجرتك من سوريا وعملية استقرارك بأمريكا

6- في أية مدينة من سوريا كنت تسكن قبل قدومك إلى أمريكا؟

Continued

7- إلى أي بلد لجأت بعد خروجك من سوريا وقبل مجيئك إلى أمريكا؟ (إذا كان هناك أكثر من جواب واحد صحيح، رجاء اختر كل الأجوبة المناسبة)

- لم أخرج من سوريا (قدمت مباشرة إلى أمريكا) (إذا اخترت هذا الجواب، إذهب مباشرة إلى السؤال رقم 9)
- إلى لبنان كم أمضيت هناك؟ ----- سنة و ----- أشهر
- إلى الأردن كم أمضيت هناك؟ ----- سنة و ----- أشهر
- إلى تركيا كم أمضيت هناك؟ ----- سنة و ----- أشهر
- إلى العراق كم أمضيت هناك؟ ----- سنة و ----- أشهر
- إلى بلد آخر رجاء اكتب اسم البلد ----- كم أمضيت هناك؟ ----- سنة و ----- أشهر

8- ماهي وسيلة النقل الرئيسية التي غادرت سوريا بواسطتها؟

- سيراً على الأقدام
- بالسيارة
- بالباص
- بالطائرة
- بوسيلة أخرى ما اسم الوسيلة؟ -----

9- أين سكنت قبل مجيئك إلى أمريكا؟ (إذا كان هناك أكثر من جواب واحد صحيح، رجاء اختر كل الأجوبة المناسبة)

- في مخيم للاجئين كم أمضيت هناك؟ ----- سنة و ----- أشهر
- في بيت مشترك مع عائلات أخرى كم أمضيت هناك؟ ----- سنة و ----- أشهر
- في بيت في بناية كم أمضيت هناك؟ ----- سنة و ----- أشهر
- في مسكن مستقل كم أمضيت هناك؟ ----- سنة و ----- أشهر
- في مأوى آخر (متلاً، غرفة واحدة) كم أمضيت هناك؟ ----- سنة و ----- أشهر
- ما هو نوع المأوى؟ -----
- 10- كم مضى من الوقت بين خروجك من بيتك ودخولك لأمريكا؟ ----- سنة و ----- أشهر
- 11- كم مضى من الوقت بين تقديمك طلب اللجوء إلى أمريكا وحصولك على الموافقة؟ ----- سنة و ----- أشهر

12- ماهي أول مدينة سكنت فيها عند دخولك إلى أمريكا؟

- جئت مباشرة إلى أوسنن
- مدينة أخرى ما اسم المدينة؟ ----- اسم الولاية -----

13- كم مضى عليك في أمريكا؟ ----- سنة و ----- أشهر

شكراً لك على مشاركتك في هذه الدراسة

APPENDIX 5



Approval		
Document No.:	Date:	Page:
HRP-522	22 February 2017	Page 1 of 1

May Mzayek
 COLFA - Anthropology
 (504) 210-6554
vpu987@my.utsa.edu

Dear Principal Investigator:

On February 22, 2017 the IRB approved the following from February 22, 2017 to February 21, 2018 inclusive.

Type of review:	Initial Review
Title:	Refugees in Waiting: A Study of the Wellbeing of Syrian Refugees in Austin, Texas
Principal investigator:	May Mzayek
IRB number:	17-128
Faculty Sponsor:	K. Jill Fleuriet, Ph.D.
Documents reviewed:	Initial Review Application; Research Personnel; Protocol; Surveys (3); Information Sheet; Interview Guides; Recruitment Script; Site Letter of Support.

No later than one month prior to expiration, you are to submit a continuing review to request continuing approval or closure. If the IRB does not grant continuing review, approval of this protocol ends after **February 21, 2018**.

Copies of any approved consent documents, consent scripts, or assent documents are attached.

In conducting this study, you are required to follow the requirements in “INVESTIGATOR GUIDANCE: Investigator Obligations (HRP-800).”

Sincerely,

Digitally signed by
 Marcia Isaacs, M.S., CIP
 Date: 2017.02.22
 13:52:19 -06'00'

Marcia Isaacs, M.S., C.I.P.
 IRB Member
 Designee of the Chair
 Senior Research Compliance Coordinator
 UTSA Office of Research Integrity - IRB Office
 GSR Rm.2.128C/D
irb@utsa.edu
 210-458-6473

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VITA

May Mzayek is from Aleppo, Syria. She moved to the United States in 2000 when she was 10 years old. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in anthropology from the University of Memphis in 2012 and her Master of Arts degree in anthropology from the University of Texas at San Antonio in 2017. Her research interests focus on the anthropological concepts of waiting, liminality, identity, and wellbeing within the context of displacement, migration, and refugee studies. She is interested in pursuing a career in the fields of human rights, policy, and advocacy for marginalized communities. In the future, she hopes to pursue a Ph.D. in anthropology focused on forced migration and displacement.