

COMMUNITY CULTIVATORS:  
COMMUNITY GARDENS AND REFUGEES IN PORTLAND, OREGON

by

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

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Title: Community Cultivators: Community Gardens and Refugees in Portland, Oregon

This thesis explores the relationship between community gardens in Portland, Oregon, and the refugee integration process. Using interviews and observations of a community garden in southeast Portland, the research explores the actors and organizations working with refugees in community gardens all over the city. The most prominent actors in the community garden networks are referred to as Community Cultivators. These individuals are refugees and also strongly tied to organizations and institutions in Portland. It is through these social networks that Community Cultivators are able to build bridges between their refugee communities and Portland-based organizations, fostering integration. This research also explores how integration happens in the community gardens in Portland and why community gardens are able to foster these relationships. The foundational framework used in this research is Alison Ager and Alistar Strang's (2008) Indicators of Integration, which is adapted for the unique process of refugee integration through community gardens engagement.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

As I walk into the community garden, there is no one there. The sky is still overcast, and the only sound is that of the few cars passing by. As I unlock the gate, Awa<sup>1</sup> walks up behind me and greets me with the limited English she knows. Awa is a Congolese refugee who has been living in the United States for over 10 years. She and a group of Congolese women have been working in this community garden for about six weeks in conjunction with a health class she attends that is provided by the county. The garden space itself is managed by a local community garden organization with over 20 plots that are tended to by a diverse population, including refugees and non-refugees. The Congolese group has reserved four plots for themselves, but not far away there is a Laotian couple trellising beans, a Spanish-speaking man pruning his tomatoes, and a senior white woman weeding her bed of unwanted plants. A few greetings are passed back and forth between the gardeners in the limited English language knowledge they share, but otherwise, there is little interaction between the groups, other than a mutual interest in gardening.

As Awa and I begin to inspect the garden plot more women begin to arrive. There are five or six women, all dressed in traditional African outfits, and some with babies tied to their backs. If I did not know we were currently in Portland, Oregon, this scene could be the middle of any garden in Africa. Here in Portland, it is the same small group that work in the garden each week, but the group of women that attend the health classes is

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<sup>1</sup> This name has been changed in order to provide anonymity.

much larger. They are all refugees from central and east Africa. Most of them fled their home country and have spent a decade or more in refugee camps before arriving in Portland. They speak minimal English and don't currently have steady employment. In the garden space, they are speaking Swahili to each other. They laugh and joke while babies jiggle on their backs and they begin to step into the garden plots to harvest.

We all get to work combing through the thick brush that is peppered with tomatoes, squash, corn and peppers. Weeks ago, when we were planting the vegetables, the group organizer was disappointed at the seemingly random way the group decided to plan their vegetables. This group organizer, Ganice<sup>2</sup>, works with the health program and is also an African refugee. She is an asset to her community because she is able to bridge together her fellow refugees and their new host community. Her unique ability to do this intrigued me and later led me to seek out others who possess this same skill.

Ganice calls this random planting method the "African way" to plant vegetables and she would rather see the garden bed be more organized, planted in lines and rows. This is just one example of the clash of cultures many refugees experience every day as they navigate a new environment while still trying to hold on to their cultural identities.

Due to the closely planted vegetables, it is unclear if there were any vegetables at all to harvest at first glance. However, as we begin to wade through the waist-high plants, we fish out overgrown squash, salvage the un-trellised tomatoes, and some leafy greens that I considered a weed but many of the women wanted to cook. We haul away many boxes of large zucchinis and trash bags full of kale to sort outside of the garden space. All the women in the garden are visibly excited. High smiles flash across their faces as they

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<sup>2</sup> This name has been changed to protect her identity.

rummage through foliage and emerge with giant pumpkins. They take time to snap photos of themselves holding their bounty with their friends, with the organization's employees, and volunteers. Ganice explains to me that even though there are only a couple of women working in the garden, they will split up all the produce and deliver it to all the women to attend the health classes. She insists that the garden space is for the entire group, a community space, and not just for one or two people. Their strong connection to their community is evident in this statement.

As we begin to divide the food, it becomes apparent that most of the women are unfamiliar with the squash varieties and other vegetables they have grown in the garden plots. Ganice asks me to explain how to cook it, which I do my best to do, however it becomes quite clear that most of this food is foreign to the refugee women. The women could not select familiar foods or plants because it had all been donated from local organizations. Instead of sifting through what was given to them and discarding things they were not familiar with, they decided to plant all of it. In the face of having grown produce utterly alien to them, I wondered why they are so joyous. As I worked in the gardens alongside the refugees I gradually discovered that they are growing more than just food in the soil, they are growing bonds to each other, bridges to their new community, and social networks that will lead them to have a more successful integration to Portland and the wider United States. This is an example of the experiences I encountered during my research that launched me uncovering how integration is happening in the community gardens. This thesis will explore where the process of integration that is happening in Portland, Oregon through local organizations

## **Purpose of Study and Research Question**

At this point in history, immigration and refugee intake is at the forefront of news and media worldwide. Under the current United States administration, the public has seen drastic action taken to limit immigration and slash refugee intake numbers (Kerwin, 2017). Therefore, it is an especially important time to discuss the limitations to the current refugee resettlement program and explore how integration is happening in various contexts.

According to the UNHCR, there currently are 65.6 forcibly displaced people, 22.5 million of which are labeled as refugees (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2017b). In 2018, the UNHRC projects that almost 1.2 million individual people will be seeking refuge as refugees (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2017a). These numbers are staggering and highlight the need for adequate numbers for refugee intake by host countries and effective resettlement programs that foster integration. However, the United States has taken the opposite position as we consider to further cut refugee intake and wall our borders from asylum seekers.

Due to the failure of the federal government to address the needs of refugees coming to the United States, the work falls on the shoulders of local governments and organizations to facilitate the resettlement and integration process for the (diminishing) number of refugees entering their communities. Though I believe this failure is not malicious, it is unfair. This problem calls for a deep dive into what is happening on the ground with organizations that are working with refugee populations as they resettle and integrate. This includes independent programs and collaborative opportunities for organizations to create change within their communities.

With the aforementioned knowledge and my personal interest in local agriculture, I identified an opportunity to investigate how community gardens and refugee interact. This research will explore *the role community gardens play in influencing the integration process for refugee populations in Portland, OR*. My observation and experience has led me to the hypothesis that community gardens are influential spaces where refugees gather to practice cultural traditions, expose themselves to other host community members, and become connected to a wider network of resources. However, there is a lack of literature that provides a holistic view of how, why, and who in the community gardens are influential in the integration process for refugees. Additionally, I will seek out what organizations are doing independently and together to make this integration process possible and successful.

I ground my research in the framework created by Ager and Strang (2008), which is described in detail later in this thesis, to analyze different organization's programs, collaborations, and experiences with refugees within community garden spaces. My educational background in the Planning, Public Policy and Management department at the University of Oregon has provided me with the tools to effectively assess the organizations within this research in order to provide insightful findings. My experience as a Peace Corps volunteer in Senegal and my education in the International Studies department at the University of Oregon has contributed to my overall interest of the integration process of migrants as I related it to having once lives in a foreign place, speaking a new foreign language, and absorbing a foreign culture.

More specific questions are:

- How are local organizations working to support integration through community

gardens?

- How does collaborative work between organizations influence the programs for refugees?
- What are the relationships between refugee and local organizations that work in community gardens?
- How are essential needs (food, money, social networks, etc.) addressed through participation in community gardens?

### **Thesis Structure**

In the summer of 2017, I conducted research in Portland, Oregon exploring different organizations who worked with community gardens and the refugee populations. I spent the majority of June 2017 through October 2017 interviewing, observing, and reviewing secondary sources to provide an overview of how community gardens are influencing the refugee integration process in Portland. The result of that research can be found in the following thesis.

I begin by providing an overview of the theory where I ground this research. I also, introduce a framework created by Alastair Ager and Alison Strang (2008). I, then, discuss social networks and food as it relates to culture. This theoretical knowledge is essential for understanding the gaps in the integration process that community gardens are directly or indirectly addressing. I provide a background of the United States and Portland's history with both refugees and community gardens. I discuss the methods to my research, in addition to the reflections and limitations I experienced while in the field. I will reveal my findings from my data, including three major elements to integration; how gardens foster social networks; and why this time in history made this research

particularly important. Finally, I will discuss my research question; address the integration process happening in community gardens; why community gardens are unique spaces for integration; and how the Ager and Strang (2008) framework can be altered to represent the process of integration in Portland's community gardens.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **THEORY**

This study presents a discussion of the integration, resettlement, and social networks to frame and better understand the dynamic refugee integration process in the US. It will focus on what is happening within community gardens in Portland, OR regarding refugee integration. For this research, the Ager and Strang's (2008) "Indicators of Integration" is used as an initial framework. This is because it provides a holistic background of the diverse range of domains that lead to a successful integration for refugees. This has also been used in other case studies that seek a comprehensive integration measurement framework (Teig et al., 2009) and has been integrated in the UK Home Office program for refugee resettlement ("Social cohesion and integration: report - GOV.UK," 2012).

The current US resettlement system measures the success of integration using limited criteria, limited to elements such as economic independence and language acquisition (Kennedy, 1981). It ignores the complex relationships, connections and navigation skills a refugee must develop in order to integrate and have a sense of belonging in a new community. It is desirable to use an adjusted framework to understand how incorporating community gardens into the resettlement process may foster successful integration. I argue that community gardens in Portland, Oregon provide a unique space that fosters a more holistic integration process. This study will review and analyze how the Ager and Strang (2008) framework can be used and modified in order to represent the impact of the community gardens, what actors are essential during that

process, and what key characteristics community gardens have that contribute to successful integration.

Within the context of this research, I make a distinction between “integration” and “resettlement”. Resettlement refers to the logistical process of refugees arriving in the United States, being relocated to a new community, and being placed in a new living space (i.e. apartment or house). The resettlement program established in the United States outlines the logistics of incoming refugees (Kennedy, 1981). What I am interested in this research is integration. This would refer to the process that refugees become active citizens in their new host community. Integration goes further than resettlement and includes aspects like, “...assumptions and practice regarding citizenship and rights; processes of social connection within and between groups within the community...” (Alastair Ager & Strang, 2008). I will refer to both resettlement and integration throughout this research, but it is important to keep in mind the differences between the two.

## **Social Networks**

I believe the importance of social networks is an oversight by the US when assessing how integrated a new refugee may be in a community. It is essential to understand the social connection a refugee may have in order to understand fully how integrated they are within their host community. The framework created by Alastair Ager and Alison Strang (Alastair Ager & Strang, 2008; Strang & Ager, 2010) has outlined a more robust framework for the resettlement program in the UK by highlighting integration, and more specifically social networks, as its main focus. Within the context

of the Ager and Strang (2004) framework, the social networks are based on the theory of “social capital”.

Pierre Bourdieu (1986) is a founder of Social Capital Theory. Since his time, the definition of social capital has evolved but his basic research provided the foundation for other scholars to build on his ideas. Bourdieu (1983) defines social capital as being a member of a group, as well as the community friendships and connections that offer resources to individuals. There is a value in these relationships that form the “capital”. This is relevant as I seek forms of social capital connections that will lead to successful integration. Social capital can provide positive or negative outcomes independent of the levels of economic, symbolic or cultural capital. Bourdieu discusses that social capital is “the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term” (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 249). Examples of social capital may be networks of family, friends, colleagues, neighbors, membership to clubs, access to certain groups or institutions.

Building on Bourdieu’s ideas, in Putnam’s book *Bowling Alone* (2001) he introduces the terms “bonding”, “bridging” and “linking” social capital. “Bonding” social capital being the connections made with “like” communities, such as people from the same country, same ethnic background, or same religious group. “Bridging” would be the connections made to the larger community that includes “unlike” communities. Finally, “linking” social capital is the connection to greater institutions or government entities. All social capital, argues Putnam, is essential for building and maintaining democracy (Putnam, 2008). Ager and Strang (2010) adopt Putnam’s terms and apply it to their

integration framework. Successful integration, defined by the integration domains, being the value of the social connection made between actors in the network. The social network created between organizational social capital and individual social capital that influences successful integration for refugees.

Social capital is based on the central idea of social networks. Social network theory looks at the world as a series of nodes (actors) and ties (connections) that link people, institutions, nation-states, etc. together. This growing interdisciplinary field started in the early 20th century with Georg Simmel's concept of "web of group affiliation" and has continued to develop through to 2000s, such as the social network studies on obesity and smoking by Nicholas A. Christakis and James H. Fowler (Christakis & Fowler, 2007, 2008). Social networks base based on "strong" and "weak" ties, measured by strength of the tie. Assumable, "strong" ties would be with close relatives, while "weak" ties are those that can be found in acquaintance relationships. "Strong" or "weak" ties do not describe whether the relationship is a "bonding" or "bridging" social capital because a "weak" tie does not necessarily describe the source exchange, however within the context of this research, those relationships will be explored. A simplified explanation of this relationship is that "...social capital is the concrete help and resources garnered from networks" (Cheung & Phillimore, 2013, p. 5).

Another layer to social connections, besides social capital and social network theory, is looking deeper into how the "nodes" or actors themselves play into the network web. Actor Network Theory (ANT) can help describe some of these actors within the social network that is created and facilitate the understanding of how social capital may be established within these relationships. John Law, a researcher of ANT, explains a key

aspect to the theory: moving it away from a traditional “theory” which try to explain “why” somethings happen. ANT will attempt to explain “how” something happens (Law, 2009).

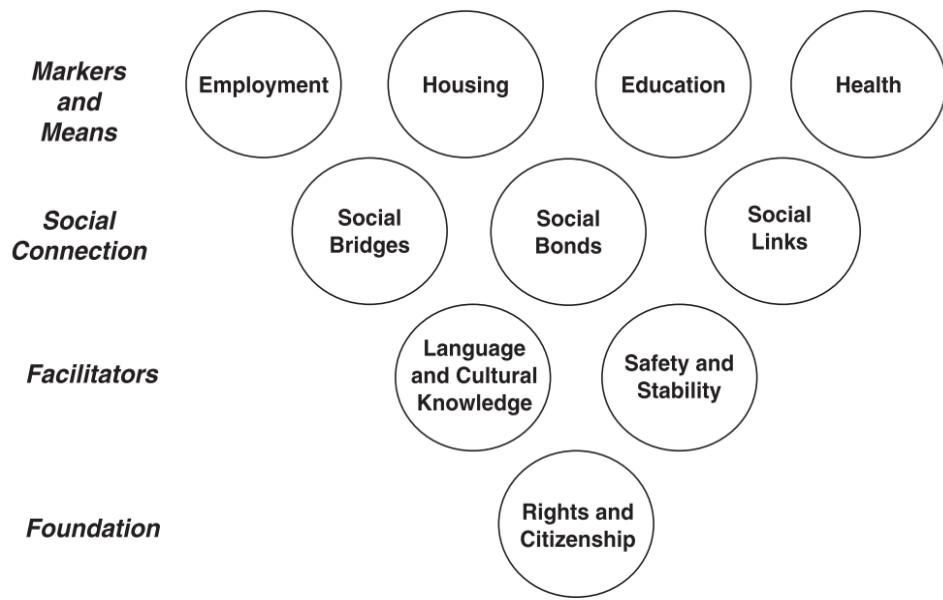
There are elements to ANT that have been defined when using ANT as theory to explain the “how”. John Law (2009) outlines key elements to ANT such as semiotic relationality (how actors in the networks define and shape each other), heterogeneity (both human and nonhuman actors are recognized), instances of process (all actors are actively engaging in their role), power is an effect (it influences the network structure), and to space and scale (how the network extends and interact with distant actors).

Social networks, social capital and ANT will be useful when analyzing how community gardens are influencing the resettlement process for refugees. It will be critical to understand the capital being exchanges within the network web in order to find the means to integration within the community garden. Additionally, this research will focus on the actors themselves, how they change other actors and what the relationship of all actors are in their network (human and nonhuman alike). The change of actors to “agents” (actors with more power) will be a key element when analyzing the integration process and what agents are catalysts to the process (Ghose & Pettygrove, 2014). This agents are particularly interesting to analyze since they are “key brokers” or gatekeepers within a social networked because of their relative affluence, mobility, or social status; they key brokers enjoy great influence within the network (Ghose & Pettygrove, 2014, p. 95). Because of their ability to influence, these agents will be essential to understanding how the community garden plays a role in the integration process of refugees in Portland.

An additional actor within this research will be the garden space itself. I acknowledge that there may be other spaces, both public and private, that may be fostering integration. However within the context of this research, I am interested at what role the community garden plays as a physical location for integration. What characteristics does the garden possess that allow it to bridge the refugee and host community? This question will be considered when analyzing how the Agar and Strang (2008) framework fits the refugee integration process in Portland, OR.

### **Domains of Integration**

The current United States resettlement program is an almost 40-year-old policy which identifies successful resettlement as "self-sufficiency" and "independence" based on economic status and language acquisition (Tyson, 2017). However, this definition fails to acknowledge the complex social interactions, actors, and structures that support successful integration into new communities entering the United States. Integration is central to immigrants and refugees being active citizens in their new host countries and resettlement program in the US does not encompass integration as a focus. As stated previously, a strength of the Ager and Strang (2004) framework is their focus on "social connections", which is lacking from the current US resettlement program reviews. The framework includes domains, such as civic participation and social capital, as key to successful integration for refugees in the United Kingdom.



**Figure 1** This figure is from the Agar and Strang (2008) Indicators of Integration framework created for the Home Office.

The Strang & Ager framework, which has been adopted by the Home Office in the United Kingdom, includes ten identified domains that serve as indicators of integration. The Home Office is the leading government agency in the UK in charge of “immigration and passports, drugs policy, crime, fire, counter-terrorism and police” (“About us - Home Office - GOV.UK,” n.d.). This is a more comprehensive approach when assessing what is essential for incoming refugees to become active citizens of their new host country because it addresses aspects of integration, such as social connections. For the purposes of this research, integration will not only refer to one’s ability to adapt to a host-country’s culture but also how one can preserve their origin-country’s culture alive. Agar and Strang’s (2008) framework helps paint a more holistic picture of what integration entails and therefore was the best framework to use when beginning this research.

Though their framework has only been officially implemented overseas, it has led me to challenge the United States process of resettlement and integration, particularly in terms of building social networks and utilizing spaces to foster integration.

Some of the domains of the Ager and Strang (2008) framework resemble the refugee services provided upon arrival in the United States, such as employment, housing, education, and health care (Kennedy, 1981). However, Ager and Strang (2008) also include aspects of social integration, such as social bridges, social bonds, social links, language and cultural knowledge, safety and stability, and rights and citizenship. This provides a more holistic view of what measuring integration should include, while also encompassing the basic necessities. This paints a picture that is more encompassing of the process of resettling and integrating into a new society in order to be an active citizen in that community. One area that I hoped to explore regarding this framework was to explore who was executing and fulfilling the domains that equal integration. This was something that is lacking within the Agar and Strang (2008) literature and it is an area I will address later in this thesis.

In a report produced in 2004, Ager and Strang outline measurement tools for programs and policies to assess which, if any, of the indicators are met. They stress that the framework has no linear pathway and that each situation may use the framework only as a guideline (A. Ager & Strang, 2004). Thus, allowing more freedom by the user to adapt the framework to unique situations and programs. This universality of the framework will be tested, and the measurement guides will be used in my assessment of community gardens in Portland, Oregon.

## **Food, Agriculture and Culture**

As I researched community gardens, I could not ignore food as a central theme. Refugees entering the United States bring their food culture with them. It can span from the what they eat, where they get it, to how they eat it. All aspects of the food system have a cultural connection. Food is central to one's identity. It is a defining feature of a culture and help to shape identify in communities and individuals (Moffat, Mohammed, & Newbold, 2017). Food, therefore, is particularly relevant when seeking to understand why refugees may be influenced by community gardening during the integration process.

Often, refugees will enter the United States with a closer connection to food than those who are born in the United States. Not just the consumption of food, but also the growing, harvesting and preparation of food. In the introduction of this thesis, I introduced a group of women from central and east Africa who have a deep connection to their food and a dedication to the community garden. However, that is just one example, from one community. Another example is the Hmong community who has been entering the United States since the early 1970s and bring with them the knowledge of subsistence farming. With this knowledge, many Hmong community members continue farming on a small scale once they have resettled to areas like California or the Midwest. Some of these farms are simply used for home consumption while others find economic opportunity through their food production (Minkoff-Zern, Peluso, Sowerwine, & Getz, 2011). The Hmong refugee population is not unique in their agriculture background. The top three refugee populations, which make up 49% of the all the refugees in the United States, are coming from countries with high agriculture employment. The three top populations of refugees are from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Syria and

Burma/Myanmar (“Employment in agriculture (% of total employment) (modeled ILO estimate) | Data,” 2017). All three of these countries have strong ties to an agriculture system. In 2017, approximately 68% of people in the DRC were employed in the agriculture sector. In Syria, 19% were employed in the agriculture sector and in Burma/Myanmar, 24% were employed through agriculture. These numbers may not be shocking but compared to the 2% of the United States population that works in agriculture, it is significant (“Employment in agriculture (% of total employment) (modeled ILO estimate) | Data,” 2017). Therefore, it can be inferred that refugees coming from these countries, and others, have a stronger tie to agriculture and the growing of food. This may result in wanting to continue growing food for subsistence, for economic opportunity, or as a sense of their identity.

In Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo 2014 ethnography *Paradise Transplanted* she spends years researching a large, mostly Hispanic community garden in Los Angeles. She describes the culture characteristics of the garden included a *casita*, or small covered area to sit in near the garden space. One immigrant women in her study explained how the small structure and garden space make her feel like she was back at home in rural Guatemala (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2014). This is particularly important for the refugee population who may be experiencing extreme grief, a sense of loss due, alienated, or disoriented due to displacement and resettlement (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2012). The cultural identity that the garden space represents can have a home-like quality for refugees who arrive to the United States. As they seek familiarity, the garden can recreate some of the physical spaces they remember from their past-lives.

While food is central to the garden, it cannot always contribute all food to a family, which requires a refugee to seek out other avenues for access to their food. Many refugees will initially be offered food-assistance once they arrive in the US, including food boxes or access to food pantries, however these food items do not always take into account culturally appropriate foods. This means that, though there is food being provided, the refugee may not know how to prepare it or be less familiar with it (Moffat et al., 2017). Additionally, many refugees feel that the food provided by food pantries or food found in the grocery store is unhealthy, unclean or contaminated with pesticides. Other studies have expressed that refugee and immigrants view vegetables and fruits they grow themselves to be healthy and fresher than those coming from other sources (Johnson, 2016; Mares, 2012; Ohmer, Meadowcroft, Freed, & Lewis, 2009; Saldivar-Tanaka, 2004). This displays the cultural connection to self-grown foods that refugee communities have and the distrust they have with foods coming from unknown locations. This strong tie to the earth helps us understand the strong bond many refugees have with agriculture and how that contributes to cultural identity.

Finally, the consumption of food plays a major role in cultural identity. In Michelle C. Johnson's 15-year ethnographic study of African immigrants and refugees in Lisbon, Portugal, she states that eating created boundaries and distinctions between food from home (in Africa) and food from their new host country (Portugal). A stronger connection to one's home country was displayed through eating in a more traditional manner, in this case, on the floor, at a communal bowl with a spoon. However, as one integrated into Portuguese life, they may move away from this style of eating and each at a table, on an individual plate, with utensils. She continues by describing the dynamic

identity tug-of-war some of the refugees living in Portugal express through their eating habits (Johnson, 2016). This situation can be representative of many refugee populations that have identified tied to cultural eating practices. Their traditional ways to serving and enjoying a meal may not align with how US-born citizens serve and enjoy a meal. This creates a chasm between the refugee and host-country community, creating yet another barrier for integration.

These are just a few examples in the ways that food help creates and define culture and identity. Identity comes into question when forces uproot and relocate individuals into new spaces. Refugee experience involuntary relocation due to unrest or persecution in their home community and identity can come into question. Food may hold a key to helping preserve cultural identity within these communities and community gardens may provide the space to facilitate the integration process while fostering refugees' cultural identity.

This thesis will explore the domains, social networks, and food to unwrap how and why community gardens influence the integration process for refugees. In the following section I will give a background of the United States and Oregon's refugee resettlement history; and the history of community gardening nationally and in Portland.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **SETTING**

In order to place this research in time and space, it is important to understand the historical backgrounds of the two main elements of this study: refugees and community gardens, primarily in the US. In the following section, I will recount the historical context that has created the foundation for this study. It will account for how the national and state carry many similarities and differences, which will paint a larger picture for how Portland's community gardens are fostering the integration process.

#### **State and Federal History of Resettlement**

The United States has resettled more refugees than any other country in the world. Three million refugees have resettled since the implementation of the Refugee Act of 1980 (Brown & Scribner, 2014; Fiddian-Qasmiyah, Loescher, Long, & Sigona, 2014; McBrien, 2005) and over 65,000 have settled into the state of Oregon. In 2016 alone, 1,780 refugees were resettled in Oregon ("Refugees in Oregon Data," 2016). Though that number only accounts for a small percentage of the overall population, the refugee population has a substantial impact on the support they require and deserve as they come from all corners of the globe. Primary social services are supplied to refugees entering the US include housing, language classes and access to medical care (Zucker, 1983). These are outlined in The Refugee Act of 1980 which serves as the foundational document that outlines the current guidelines for the admittance and resettlement procedures of refugees in the US. The document is focused on "self-sufficiency" as the goal of resettlement, which includes finding employment and earning enough income to no longer need assistance from the state (Kennedy, 1981). However, some researchers would argue that

the United States is not fulfilling its responsibility in this regard and that there is room for improvement to the current resettlement structure (Brown & Scribner, 2014; Tyson, 2017).

This critic comes from the fact that the US only supplies federal support to refugees for between 90 - 180 days of initial resettlement (Brown & Scribner, 2014; “The Reception and Placement Program,” n.d.). It is then left to state governments, local non-governmental agencies, and nonprofit organizations to continue to support refugees as they resettle into their host communities. At the national level, there are nine primary nonprofit organizations that serve to fill the void left by the federal resettlement program: Church World Service (CWS), Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC), Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM), Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), International Rescue Committee (IRC), US Committee for Refugee and Immigrants (USCRI), and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS), United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and World Relief Corporation (WR) (“Voluntary Agencies,” n.d.). These agencies not only help with the resettlement process itself at the local level, but they have a strong influence in the placement of refugees to particular cities (Mott, 2010).

The state of Oregon contributes additional assistance beyond the federal government's assistance but these services end after 12 months and are passed to local organizations, such as the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) (“Refugee Self-Sufficiency Services Programs,” 2018). Organizations like IRCO provide ongoing services that assist refugees who may have spent years, or decades, in refugee camps; suffer from a variety of physical and mental illnesses; and who are now required

to navigate a new and complex landscape: The United States. The long line of passing the responsibility of refugee resettlement from one organization to another illustrates that the US views resettlement as a burden. It is unfair to believe that successful resettlement can be accomplished in a period time as short as 90 days and any further assistance is the responsibility of, often underfunded, nonprofits.

An additional shortcoming of The Refugee Act of 1980 is that it does not discuss “integration” as a part of the resettlement process. Though “integration” has a contested definition, it does include aspects of cultural exchange and the building of social networks that “resettlement” does not. The State Department does not refer to “integration” on their website and neither does the state of Oregon. The word “integration” cannot be found anywhere referring to the resettlement process for refugees in Oregon in federal or state websites. I was able to find it in IRCO’s 2016 Annual Report, where it is included in their mission statement: “IRCO’s mission is to promote the integration of refugees, immigrants and the community at large into a self-sufficient, healthy and inclusive multi-ethnic society” (Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization, 2016). This is a severe oversight and under states how important integration is in the resettlement process and highlights the responsibility of local organizations have to assist in the integration process for refugees.

The UNHRC states that “local integration is a complex and gradual process with legal, economic, social and cultural dimensions” (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, n.d.), which is not how US engages with newly arrived refugees through The Refugee Act of 1980. Part of my argument is that resettlement in the US only focuses on the logistics of admitting refugees into the country while integration addresses more

holistic needs of refugees in order to live successfully and harmoniously within American communities. The United States, and more specifically the state of Oregon, need to focus not only on the logistics of resettlement, but also the dynamic process of integration at all levels of the host community, including government, to ensure that all incoming refugees are given the opportunity to live successful lives in their new host country.

### **History of Refugee Resettlement in Portland**

Cities like New York and Los Angeles have a long history of accepting refugees for resettlement since the end of WWII. Cities like Portland, Oregon are considered “non-traditional” resettlement cities because their history is much shorter. It has only been since the 1990s that a steady flow of refugees has begun to enter and resettle in the city, providing both opportunity and challenge to the city in terms of services expected and provided (Morse & Ray, 2004). Since this change, Portland is now one of the top 25 metropolitan cities for refugee resettlement (Tuepker, Boise, Onadeko, & Gipson, 2011). The fast increase in refugee admittance has served as a challenge because Portland does not have a rich history of being a diverse and accepting community (Goodling, Green, & McClintock, 2015). Though the Pacific Northwest has been known for its liberal views and progressive laws, it also has a long association with being vastly homogenous in population and gentrification can be seen on every corner. This makes the acceptance and resettlement refugees, particularly refugees of color, difficult to navigate.

Portland has been pushing the low-income, communities of color out of the city center for decades. The gentrification of downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods has made it no longer accessible to poorer communities and driven them out toward the East Portland and Gresham neighborhoods. East Portland, particularly east of 82nd

Avenue, has thus evolved to include low-income housing, many social services and is also where many refugees are resettled (Goodling et al., 2015; Hardwick & Meacham, 2005). Refugees are resettled into particular areas of a city for a number of reasons, including accessibility to services, and East Portland is no different. IRCO can be found here, which is the main service provider for refugee families in Portland. Also, as more families are resettled into the area, it becomes more attractive for incoming refugees to also be placed closer to those who share ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds (Hardwick & Meacham, 2005).

The increase of services in the East Portland neighborhoods provide access to a larger variety of programs for the diverse refugee populations being settled there. The services may become more niche to various populations desires allowing a sense of cultural preservation to develop while still experiencing the American culture while living in Portland.

### **History of Community Gardening**

Growing plants at home for personal use has been a part of communities and cultures throughout history. Worldwide, there are over 600 million people informally engaging in small agriculture in order to feed themselves or their local community. The American Community Garden Association estimates that there are almost 20,000 community gardens in the United States and Canada (Kortright & Wakefield, 2011). Community gardening connects to the larger community and, therefore, serves as an avenue for community development. The ideas of "gardening" and "farming" have morphed into a variety of subcategories such as agroforestry, home gardens, urban gardens, household or homestead farming, compound farms, and backyard gardens

(Kumar & Nair, 1992). Since the beginning of community development, particularly post World War II, small agricultural endeavors have become popular as a means of providing community development to local US communities.

Many communities worldwide have relied and thrived in a small agriculture environment, such as gardens. In Havana, Cuba, 90% of fresh produce consumed was grown in and around the city. Other large cities, such as Accra in Ghana, Antananarivo in Madagascar, and Dar es Salaam in Tanzania are also producing mass amounts of food in small garden/farm models. The United States once produced almost 44% of its consume produce through "victory gardens" during the World War II (Kortright & Wakefield, 2011). In contrast, there are also many nations that have not been able to survive on local produced foods. In the city of Johannesburg, South Africa, a survey revealed that only 3% of people consume food they grow themselves. (J. Wills, F. Chinemana & M. Rudolph, 2009). This reveals that the future of urban agriculture, such as community gardens, as a main source of food is unclear but hopeful.

Ferris, C. Norman and J. Sempik (2001) state that "community gardens are now recognized to be an international phenomenon" (Ferris, Norman, & Sempik, n.d., p. 560). The research shows that there are a variety of other non-food related benefits of community gardens, including mental and physical well-being, community building through collaboration and learning, and community development (King, 2008; Mendes, Balmer, Kaethler, & Rhoads, 2008; Wills, Chinemana, & Rudolph, 2010). In addition, some researchers believe that the benefits of community gardens go one step further and are able to maximize community self-reliance and social justice. J. Willis, F. Chinemana,

and M. Rudolph (2010) state that community gardening itself can be a catalyst of change within a community.

### **Portland's Urban Agriculture and Community Gardens**

Community gardens and other forms of urban agriculture can be found within Portland's limits due to the rich soils of the area, the strict Urban Growth Boundaries (UGB), and the culture of sustainability that is woven into the city's history (McClintock, Young, Evans, Simpson, & Santos, 2013; Mendes et al., 2008). Since 1975, the city of Portland has been active at creating and extending community garden access to its residents. Since the 1990s consultants such as Portland Food Policy Council have worked with Portland's Planning Department to "raise the profile of food policy and food issues within the community" (Mendes et al., 2008, p. 439).

Currently, the city manages 53 community gardens ("Community Gardens | The City of Portland, Oregon," 2018) and, through a project led by Oregon Solutions, plans to expand that number to 150 ("Portland Community Gardens | Oregon Solutions," n.d.). As stated on the Portland Community Garden - Oregon Solution website, the purpose of the project was:

...to make it easy for anyone in Portland, regardless of race, age, income, or neighborhood to grow their own fresh, healthy food through access to community gardens, plots, and gardening opportunities. The project goal was to reconnect communities to their food source, to nature, to culture and their greater community through gardening ("Community Gardens | The City of Portland, Oregon," 2018).

The described dedication to increasing access clearly expresses the intentionality that Portland has when addressing urban agriculture and food security.

Besides the city, there are at least 39 nonprofits working on urban agriculture projects across the city, including both community and, of great importance, school gardens (McClintock et al., 2013). “There are at least 208 gardens in the region’s elementary, middle, and high schools. There are at least 61 gardens in Portland schools alone, the majority of which (85%) are located at elementary schools” (McClintock et al., 2013, p. 18). Additionally, there have been multiple studies (Balmer et al., 2005; McClintock, Mahmoudi, Simpson, & Santos, 2016) done on the increase of home gardening that continue to support the progressive attitude Portland has toward urban agriculture.

Worldwide there is an increase of refugees and displaced people each year (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2017a), however within the United States, due to new restrictions on refugees, there will be a decline in our overall refugee intake numbers. Unlike the nation as a whole, Portland is still a relatively new city to accept refugees. Therefore, there is room for improvement and innovation to the integration process. This in conjunction with the high demand for local agriculture and the high prevalence of community gardens throughout the city makes Portland an idea space to reveal the overlap between the refugee community and community gardens.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **METHODS**

Prior to beginning my fieldwork in the spring of 2017, I gathered primary and secondary documents related to the US resettlement and urban agriculture globally. This initial search was interdisciplinary, where I sought out prominent literature in fields such as public health, sociology, geography, urban planning, nutrition, and refugee studies. Developing an understanding from a broad range of viewpoints allowed me to narrow my focus on gaps in the literature and gaps in the research. While document-based research was important in framing this study, it was necessary to begin with the entities who are managing the community garden spaces in order to understand their development and intentions for the community gardens and the realities of refugee gardens. In Portland, most community gardens are managed by the city and local nonprofits.

From June 2017 to October 2017, I conducted twenty interviews: ten with employees of organizations that worked with community gardens and ten with refugees who were involved with the community gardens, either as gardeners or as employees of organizations<sup>3</sup>. Six of my interviewees were male and the other 14 were female. All interviewees were between the ages of 20 and 70 years old. Each interview lasted for approximately 30 mins. During the interview I took extensive notes and after each interview I wrote memos to capture my observations about the interview.

Prior to the interview, each person was read an oral consent script, in English, approved by the University of Oregon's IRB (Appendices B, C). Verbal consent was used in order to be sensitive to the variability in literacy rates of the refugees and in order

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<sup>3</sup> In order to protect identities, all participants were provided with pseudonyms.

to maintain complete confidentiality. All participants received consent material they were able to take home with them that included my contact information and contact information for University of Oregon's IRB office. Although no information was collected that could jeopardize the participants' personal safety, the anonymous format of the study was used to respect the privacy of the participants. Therefore, refugee participants received pseudonyms and all non-refugee participants were only identified by the organization they represented. That is how they are referred throughout this study.

During the same period of time, I also conducted participant observation in the public community garden spaces as a community member. I participated in gardening in a community garden in southeast Portland, while also observing the other gardeners' gardening practices, social interactions, what was being grown in the garden plots, and habits in the gardens space. I recorded these observations through robust field notes, but refrained from recording any identifiable data, in order to keep the identities of those garden participants confidential. It was in this particular garden space that I worked mainly with a group of Congolese women. I communicated my interest and intention to work with this group in the community garden as a community member to the organization managing the community garden and to the group's leaders. When working with the gardeners themselves, I referred to myself as a student of the University of Oregon and expressed my interest in their gardening practices and what they enjoyed about it. Over eight weeks, I evolved from observer of the gardeners, to volunteer with the gardeners, to an active participant in the gardening due to a volunteer stepping down and the organization needing someone to help guide the groups gardening activity.

Though I did not do any direct teaching, I was available for questions or guidance in planting, harvesting and cooking of the vegetables they grew.

I gained access to conversations and insights concerning the logistics of the community garden because I became more involved with the Congolese group that was working there. Additionally, working with this group provided me with credibility with the community organizations that I would eventually interview for this research. I also attended community events in both Portland and Eugene, Oregon such as International Refugee Day celebrations and community garden registration events. At all observations and community events I took notes and then returned home to expand my observations using “thick description” (Geertz, 1973). I was influenced by Grounded Theory methods (Glaser, Strauss, & Strutzel, 1968) as I worked with my original research questions and then became more focused as the research evolved. Additionally, my analysis followed Grounded Theory methods: the data collection, taking notes on that data, coding data, and writing memos based on the data. This process created a path to uncover my theory that community gardens provide the space that will lead to a more successful integration for refugees.

### **Reflections and Limitations**

I was able to build trust with each organization through transparency, informational interviews, and being open about how I wanted supported their efforts. I believe the participants I interviewed were open and honest with me about their views of the community garden network, about the success and barriers of their own organization, and their perceptions and experiences with the refugee community.

When I began my research in June 2017, I had hoped to have a larger representation of refugee gardeners, however, due to limitations such as access, language, and availability, only half of my interviews were with refugee community members. This changed the lens that my research will be viewed through and presents future research opportunities to expand what I have found and apply it to other populations engaged with refugees and community gardens. In order to ensure this limitation did not undermine my findings, I used secondary data that had more access to refugee communities in order to build upon what I was able to uncover in my research.

My most successful interactions were with organization employees who also were refugees. This provided me an interesting insight to what these individuals were experiencing from both the refugee population and the institutions wishing to serve. These interviews a central component in my findings.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **Actors Within the Study**

There are multiple actors present within the research. Portland, Oregon served as the background for this research and has its own influence as an actor. As previously stated, Portland is relatively new resettlement site but has a long history with urban agriculture and promotion of greening spaces. In contrast, the city does not have a history of being diverse and historically has pushed many of the refugee and immigrants out of the center of town (McClintock, 2014). These characteristics are important to consider when uncovering how integration is unfolding in non-traditional spaces like community gardens. Because urban agriculture is prominent in Portland, I found that using community gardens as spaces for integration was a response to the shortcomings of the government resettlement system. Portland is using their strengths in community gardens to assist in their growing refugee populations integration.

Other, more obvious, actors in this research are the people within the organizations and the refugee gardeners themselves. These actors are those that create the ties between each other. They are the “nodes” that help shape the social network web created in the community garden (Christakis & Fowler, 2008). The actors that were most prominent in this research were the individuals who not only were refugees, but also were connected to the organizations who managed or owned community gardens. They were sometimes employed by an organization but many times they were simply volunteers and avid gardeners themselves. During my interviews, I found that these individuals were able to talk about both the refugee experience and the organization fluidly, making

comparisons and suggestions with great insight to barriers and opportunities. Their stories varied, and they came from all over the world, but their ability to great the “bridges” needed to connect actors was the same. As I explored the web of social interaction within the gardens, these actors became central to the integration process. I will go into greater detail of their role later in this research.

Each of these individuals is important for the integration process to happen, but another layer to these actors are the organizations they are associated with. The organizations that manage the community gardens provide capital for integration to happen. They are essential in this social network web and they are also highlighted in this research. Below I will paint a detailed portrait of the organization actors included in this study.

### **A Portrait of Organization Actors**

I focused my research on organizations that managed or had connections to community gardens and were also working with refugee communities in some capacity. My initial search was online where I found a number of organizations that fit these criteria. From there I expanded my search to other programs and departments that served refugee communities but did not have direct access to garden spaces. I split these categories of organizations and programs into two: Direct Garden Connection (DGC) and Indirect Garden Connection (IGC). DGC organizations had direct access to community garden plots they owned or managed, and gardening was a primary program. IGC organizations’ served refugee community members through a different avenue, such as mental health services, but has a history of using community gardens through collaboration programs or as a secondary focus.

**Table 1** Direct Garden Connection and Indirect Garden Connection organizations included in this study.

<b>Direct Garden Connection</b>	<b>Indirect Garden Connection</b>
Grow Portland	Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO)
Outgrowing Hunger	Lutheran Community Services Northwest (LCSNW)
Village Gardens	Multnomah County Health Department (MCHD)
Oregon Food Bank (OFB)	
Portland Parks and Recreation	

This group of organizations is a set of actors within this research. They are influential in the ways that the process of integration unfolds through their programming and connection to both garden and refugee. It was important to have representation from both of these groups because each group overlapped in engaging with the refugee populations in Portland and using gardening spaces in their programming. It also tapped into a portion of my research, collaboration, which will be discussed later in this paper. The major difference between the two groups is whether they first engaged with the refugee population that led them to gardening or first they engaged with the gardening population that then led them to the refugee populations. It is where these two groups overlapped that drove my interest in understanding the role community gardens were playing in the integration process of refugees in Portland. Therefore, in order to fully understand the connection, I needed to speak with those who are focused on the community garden aspect and others who are fully engaged with the refugee community.

Within each category there is also variation. Within the DGC organizations, there was a large variation in amount of access they had to community gardens. For example, Village Gardens has two community gardens in the neighborhood where they work. On the other hand, the Portland Parks and Recreation managed 53 community gardens all over the Portland metro area. Additionally, the IGC organizations I spoke to are larger organizations that provide a variety of services, including some resettlement services like access to housing and English languages classes.

There are also common factors, however, that tied many of these organizations together. When researching the organizations websites, mission statements, annual reports and 990 tax forms of these various organizations, at least one of three elements were addressed regardless of direct or indirect connection to gardening; *health, education and food security*. These topics also came up doing almost every interview I had. These are important because they not only are key elements to the community garden experience, but also key issues within the refugee community. Therefore, they frame the key topic that will be unpacked as domains to integration for refugees in community gardens.

### **Refugee Health Issues**

Health is an indicator of integration within the Ager and Strang (2008) framework under “means and makers”, which is defined as not only a “‘maker’ of integration... but [health] also clearly serve[s] as a potential means to support the achievement of integration” (Alastair Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 169). They go on to note that within their own research, “good health was widely seen as an important resource for achieve engagement in a new society” (Alastair Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 172). The overarching

ideas of “health” includes health status, both physical and mental, and access to healthcare facilities.

Upon entering the US, many refugees have higher rates of heart disease, hypertension, obesity and Type II diabetes (Pereira, Larder, & Somerset, 2010; Peterman, Silka, Bermudez, Wilde, & Rogers, 2011). An additional health concern is the lack of physical activity which increases for refugee families as they become accustomed to a new life in the United States. Refugee women feel this change the most as they often are coming from more physically active lifestyles. When they arrive in the US, they experience a more sedentary lifestyle, which has negative health effects, such as unhealthy weight gain (Lawrence, Lyons, & Wallington, 2013; Wieland et al., 2012). Some researchers argue that weight gain in certain areas of the world like sub-Saharan Africa is considered a sign of prosperity which could attribute to some weight that is gained by African refugee women upon arrival into the US (Dharod, Croom, & Sady, 2013). However, the unhealthy weight gain that is recorded within certain refugee population can be attributed to the combination of health issues upon arrival in the US, food insecurity and transition to a western diet which leads to more diet-related health problems.

Health issues may start well before a refugee sets foot on American soil. In refugee camps, many individuals find it hard to get a nutritionally diverse and complete meals, which can lead to malnutrition and will have serious negative effects, especially on refugee children (Fabio, 2014). In a study done by Mary Fabio (2014), she found that children between the ages of 6 months and 5 years old, living in the Kakuma refugee camp in Northern Kenya were suffering from multiple health issues, including being

underweight and stunted growth, which can be attributed to malnourishment. The health issues that develop within the refugee camps or within a refugee's home country are exacerbated once refugees come to the United States.

African refugees are at high risk of stress and anxiety disorders caused by trauma in Africa. They have low immunization status and suffer from parasites not seen in the US. Refugees experience higher rates of some illnesses than the US population as a whole...(Springer, Black, Martz, Deckys, & Soelberg, 2010, p. 171).

There is contradicting research that suggests refugees will enter the US healthier than the general American population, but evidence shows that the longer they live in the US, the more likely they will develop health issues like cardiovascular disease and struggles with obesity (Wieland et al., 2012). Navigating a new environment, compounded with pre-existing and developing health issues are major stressors for refugees as they resettle into the US. Stress will take emotional and physical toll on refugees on a daily basis.

During my experience working with the group of Congolese refugees in southeast Portland, I was told a story by an employee of MCHD of a woman named Panambi. Panambi was confined to a wheelchair and when she arrived in the United States she was stricken with severe depression. Another refugee and employee of MCHD, Umar, described going to Panambi's home to check in on her and she was laying on her couch with a blanket over her face, unable to get up or even speak. He described the crippling depression that can overwhelm many of the refugees coming to Portland. Zia, an

employee from IRCO who a refugee is also, explained her outlook on the mental health needs of incoming refugees:

There's also a really high level of trauma and PTSD so I think the mental health component is really important as well again for some groups more than others.

There is a really high level of PTSD in some cultures and the idea of getting help or the idea of mental health is taboo. So, I think that's something people should take into account. Adjusting to the new life and this new system but also making sure that you're adequately dealing with this residual experience (IRCO, personal interview, September 28, 2017).

This not only reveals the complexity of the health of refugees arriving to the US but initiates a call to action for organizations engaging with refugee populations. Portland has answered this call by providing “integrated behavioral health” services to their refugee communities, which includes mental health support along with the physical health services provided to refugees as they resettle in the Portland area (“Oregon Health Authority : Behavioral Health Integration : Transformation Center : State of Oregon,” n.d.). An employee of the MCHD explained to me that the program strives to drive home the ideas that “...normalizing that your blood pressure is just as important as having depression” (MCHD, August 30, 3017). This would be essential to those arriving in the Portland area with various forms of mental health needs that may have started in their home countries.

### **Community Garden Health Benefits**

Mental and physical wellness can be cultivated in a garden for refugee communities. Many refugees are coming from agrarian societies that are much more

physically active than the United States lifestyle, which can be described as more sedentary (Wieland et al., 2012). In my own observation of the Congolese women in the garden, I observed intense physical activity. Awa and the other Congolese women could clear a garden space in a matter of minutes using tools provided by the garden manager, despite wearing their finest African completes and having a child strapped to their backs. Comments were often made by the non-refugee volunteers around me about how impressed and amazed they were at their work ethic and pace. Ganice explained the feeling of working in the garden as “joyful”: “Yeah when they are gardening again, and they are pulling the weeds and harvesting, it's joyful. It's not like they can't go to WinCo and grab a bag, this is different. It is healthy” (Ganice, personal interview, August 30, 2017). This perspective of the physical labor of gardening, weeding, and harvesting, as “joyful” frames the psychological benefits that are directly related to the physical benefits of gardening.

An employee of MCHD mentioned to me that this group of women are particularly dedicated to the gardening space and that they all seemed to have some gardening knowledge from their home country. It was clear in the hours I spent with this group that they were well acquainted with the process of planting and harvesting. They were not hesitant to get into the dirt, break a sweat, and seemed to enjoy the time spent in the gardening space and with each other.

In a study of resettled African refugees, the research stated that refugees thought it was important to engage in physical activity and were able to do so in a community garden. The same research went on to explain that:

...working in the garden was considered good for the body as it prevented the participants from gaining weight. Participants reported that they have engaged in gardening activities in their home countries, and by taking up these activities upon resettlement they were able to engage in physical activities. (Gichunge & Kidwaro, 2014, p. 272)

Community gardens give opportunities to be physically active while also preparing healthy and nutritious foods for eating or for farmers markets.

Mental health also can be influenced through the relationships made in the gardens. Refugees engaging with community gardens have been able to better integrate into their new communities through creating social networks (de Zeeuw, 2011). Some researchers expressed that refugees felt they were part of the wider community through engagement with their local community garden and this engagement impacted their levels of self-improvement: “Community gardeners were the only participants who reported that gardening gave them a sense of self-worth as they were able to provide for themselves and their families without having to depend on anyone” (Gichunge & Kidwaro, 2014, p. 273). Social networks within the community garden context was a theme that reveals itself many times during my research, particularly in the experiences of the Congolese women I observed in Southeast Portland.

It was a collaboration program using the “integrated health” model and a group-support system, part of the “Pathways to Wellness” program through LCSNW, that brought the women together in the garden space (“Multicultural Counseling Services - LCSNW,” 2017). It was through this program that Panambi was able to connect with other refugees from her home country and began to come to the meetings at the garden

space. She herself could not participate in the gardening but interacting with the other women was critical for her health. When I met Panambi, she was leading a group of women in a traditional African song, clapping and smiling. She was a clear leader of this group and attributed her health success to the social interactions she had with these women. Though gardening was not the direct part of her experience, she was active in the cooking side of the garden space. When we harvested the produce from the garden, Panambi knew many of the non-African vegetables, like summer squash, and gave advice to others who were less familiar on how to cook and prepare them

Adding the gardening element to this group model was the idea of Ganice. She said,

Last year, I did a program for four weeks with the [health] providers themselves coming each week and talking about any subjects around health. It was tough, so I said I need another place where we will be relaxed, and we have more time and we will feel free. (Ganice, personal interview, August 30, 2017)

Ganice's answer to this need was using the community garden as that space to "feel free". The identification of gardening being a component of mental and physical health for the Congolese women is indicative of the diverse benefits it provides and supports its use in the integration process of refugees in Portland. "It brings them back to being healthy. Also, to eat together. It brings women together who've never talked together. When they are taking and doing the planting and pulling the weed, they are together. It is togetherness" (Ganice, personal interview, August 30, 2017). It is in this statement that the wider benefits of the community garden are expressed.

## **Refugee Food Access**

Research found that increased intake of fruits and vegetables are less common in those who are overweight and obese (Dharod et al., 2013). Therefore, refugees can not only increase their physical activity, combating obesity, but also increase fruit and vegetable intake which will have positive effects on their health.

All organizations in this research provide opportunity for its participants to grow any vegetable or fruits that they want. Through my observation, the gardens often received donations of seeds and plant starts from other nonprofits like the OFB. Refugees can also grow vegetables and fruits that are traditional to their home country. This can be exercised through seed-swapping with other gardeners, which is an activity described to me by an employee of Grow Portland. By providing access to traditional and culturally appropriate seeds and foods, research has shown that this can increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables, which will combat diet-related health issues that many refugees face (Gichunge & Kidwaro, 2014, p. 272; Pereira et al., 2010; Wieland et al., 2012). Through engagement with community gardens, refugee populations will have access to more foods they are familiar with which may decrease their consumption of fast food and the likelihood that they consume an unhealthy western diet.

Lack of food access, or food insecurity, is an issue for most refugee families and is intertwined with health via nutrition. “Food insecurity may serve as a key indicator of one aspect of the transition into life in the USA and provide insight into the period following initial resettlement” (Hadley, Zodhiates, & Sellen, 2007, p. 405). Food insecurity is defined as when there is a lack of access of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or that access is uncertain (Kendall, Olson, & Frongillo, 1996). Dharod et al (2013)

found in their study of refugee women that “food insecure participants were almost three times more likely to be overweight or obese compared to food-secure women” (Dharod et al., 2013, p. 49). Most research finds that within these communities and neighborhoods, refugees will experience food insecurity that will increase their health issues (Dharod et al., 2013; Gichunge & Kidwaro, 2014; Hadley et al., 2007; Kendall et al., 1996). As refugee families navigate their surroundings, many will find that within urban centers, their food access is limited resulting in food insecurity.

Another major contributor to food insecurity is the socioeconomic status of the refugees and their family. As stated previously, refugees are provided limited and small amounts of financial support upon arrival in the United States. This often forces refugees to low-income neighborhoods and increases the stress they may feel as they struggle to provide basic needs to their families, such as food.

Access is the main component of food security, however even when there is access, cultural perception of supermarkets and grocery stores can influence what kind of foods are purchased and where foods are acquired for refugee families. A common comment made by interviewees during this research was the perception that the food at the grocery store was not healthy. Ramesh remarked during his interview that he and refugees from his community want “to eat the fresh things. Fresh things are healthy. If we go buy something from the market, nobody wants to eat that because it's un-fresh” (Ramesh, personal interview, June 17, 2017).

Food security is not a domain of Agar and Strang’s (2010) framework. It is not mentioned at all in their multiple articles outlining the framework which is a major shortcoming of this model. They acknowledge that the framework cannot be a one-size-

fits-all and has the ability to be fluid, however the lack of acknowledgement of food security being a major component in the integration process is an oversight. Community gardening, however, directly address food security for all those who garden in them.

### **Community Garden Food Access**

Having access to food at all times is a basic human right and as refugees navigate their new environment, community gardens can assure they have easy access to nutritious and culturally appropriate foods every day (Hadley et al., 2007). As community gardens becomes more popular, it will increase the accessibility of food not only to refugee populations but all people living in urban areas. Community gardens provides an alternative to supermarkets and provide an additional option for those who do not have regular access to fresh produce (Jarosz, 2008). By taking up space that is otherwise unused in urban centers, community gardens are exposing urban populations, including refugees, to fresh, nutritional produce, which will have positive effects on their health and well-being.

Food security increases for those who engage with community gardens through the regular exposure to healthy foods. Community gardens also provides easier access to traditional and more familiar food which can lead to healthier food choices (Gichunge & Kidwaro, 2014). Increase fruit, vegetables and leafy greens have been found as indicators for food security within refugee households: “. . . the odds of being food insecure were 70-80% lower when participants reported eating leafy greens at least once a day” (Dharod et al., 2013, p. 49). Working in a community garden will give participants consistent exposure to produce like leafy greens, which may lead to a more food secure

life. This serves as a place where community members can participate in the growing of their own food, ensuring they are getting healthy, nutrient dense produce.

### **Refugee Education Issues**

Like health, education is a “means and makers” indicator of integration, according the Ager and Strang (2010) framework. They state that “education clearly provides skills and competences in support of subsequent employment enabling people to become more constructive and active members of society” (Strang & Ager, 2010). However, the education indicator is heavily reliant on the education of children in the US and doesn’t discuss the continuing education of adults as they integrate. Ager and Strang (2010) discuss vocational training within the context of the “employment” indicator and also identify it as an essential element of integration. However, it is reliant on leading to employment. Additionally, they separate out English language education and wrap it up with “cultural knowledge”. Though this structure may be useful in certain integration contexts, the forms of education that refugees have coming into the United States is vast and does not always come in the form of formal education, language education or translate to employment. Therefore, I propose that within the context of this research community gardens expand education as an indicator of integration to include language acquisition, skills training and opportunities for formal education.

Statistically, refugees are often considered highly educated compared to other groups of immigrants who may settle in the United States (Strang & Ager, 2010). However, as with any other population, there is a spectrum of educational background. Of the refugees I spoke with during the research process, some has no formal education, while others had degrees from universities abroad. Education comes in many forms and

will not be confined to the formal education within this research. Other skills such as agriculture, business skills or vocational training can be very useful for refugees as they enter the US. Additionally, limiting education as an indicator of integration to only young people or children devalues the importance of continual education for refugee adults.

For young refugees or children, there is evidence that English language education and acquisition is more accessible through formal school avenues or resettlement agencies such as IRCO than it is for adult or elderly refugees in the United States (McBrien, 2005). Without adequate English language skills, navigating the US can be incredibly difficult and isolating, as discussed earlier concerning access to health services. Therefore, this would be essential education to include in the integration process for refugees but may be a larger barrier for older refugees who have a harder time picking up the English language to an adequate proficiency.

### **Community Garden Education**

*“A garden is a grand teacher. It teaches patience and careful watchfulness; it teaches industry and thrift; above all it teaches entire trust” - Gertrude Jekyll*

The community garden can serve as an effective educational space for young and old alike. The connection between formal education and gardening is evident in Portland-based nonprofits and organizations because of the prevalence of garden-based education programs in the area. Within the confines of this research, three of the five DGC organizations had programs that led garden-based education in schools. Though the other two did not have direct in-school garden education programs, they did host garden-based education for a wider audience of community members. As for the IGC organizations, all three have educational components within their refugee services, including but not

limited to vocational training, formal education access, and English language classes. Their connection to the garden education specifically was often in collaboration with a DGC and contributed to the theme of collaboration that will be discussed later in this paper.

What set organizations apart within their education component was the type of education being offered. Within the DCG organizations, there are two type of education approaches with refugees, low-engagement and high engagement. The low engagement organizations (Grow Portland, Village Gardens and Portland Parks and Recreation) don't provide specific educational programming for refugees in the garden spaces, but will answer to requests for information, tools, resources, etc. Similarly, they often provide translated materials and one-day gardening workshops with interpreters that are accessible to the refugee communities. On the other side of the spectrum, high engagement organizations (Outgrowing Hunger and OFB) have established or increased their engagement with refugees to include more intensive, long-term, broad-range educational opportunities.

In the Summer 2017, with the help of an Emerson Hunger Fellow, OFB launched a Garden Ambassador program. This high-engagement, 100-hour long program included recruiting leaders within the refugee community to be trained in garden education and class facilitation skills. The intent is that these Garden Ambassadors will go out and lead trainings within their own communities based on curriculum OFB helped shape. This program included a stipend for the time spent working on the program, translated materials to use and an ongoing mentorship with a local volunteer. During an interview with an OFB employee, they explained that,

I think the big key things to this whole process is education. Because there are a lot of different organizations and people engaging in gardening and with these populations. But I think the big difference here is there's not a lot of education to it... What I think is great about this model as that the Ambassadors are given the knowledge and they can expand it out to their communities. So, it's about quality and not quantity because we can build a really quality program that is going to be digestible for community members to get this knowledge and I can have this amazing ripple effect. (OFB, personal interview, February 1, 2018)

Outgrowing Hunger is another organization that would be considered high engagement. Over the course of its seven-year existence, it has shifted its sights from simply serving low-income areas to focusing on the Southeast Asian refugee community. Now they manage ten different community gardens all over southeast Portland.

Outgrowing Hunger provides facilitation-style training, letting the refugee gardeners themselves decide what they would like to learn and then facilitating the training on that topic. This type of training has led Outgrowing Hunger to launch Karen Farms, an economic-driven fresh local produce delivery service through Outgrowing Hunger community gardens in Portland.

A key element to training and education within community gardens is the social networks it fosters. This is also demonstrated through the previous integration themes I've discussed, like "health" and "food security". Social networks, and more specifically, social capital are the baskets that tie these themes together.

### *The Garden's Social Network*

Within the organizations I interviewed for my research, all of my interviewees mentioned the building social networks, and more specifically social capital, as a part of the community gardening process. If it was not a direct goal of the organization, it was an indirect outcome of the program that they acknowledged. It was not simply that the nonprofit was creating “bridges” for refugees to connect other communities unlike their own, but they are also providing a space for “bonding” with refugees’ native community and “linking” refugee populations to resources and institutions. Through my interviews, it became clear the organizations I spoke with are providing physical spaces (the community gardens themselves) to observe how social capital is being developed and how that is influencing integration into Portland, Oregon.

It is evident in its name that “community” gardens are meant to create and cater to communities, whether they are refugees or non-refugees. Whether the community is based on geography or demographic, community gardens often bring together not only those who are alike, but also those who are different. In the excerpt below, an employee of Grow Portland, recounts an interview she had completed with a refugee gardener.

... [the refugee gardener] was saying that she does this exchange with all the other [refugee gardeners] and they have their own network now that she would not have if they had not come to the garden... so it has become this ‘other place’ Even if you live spread out or not close to each other, you can come to the garden and have your social time. (Grow Portland, personal interview, August 23, 3017)

This illustrates the importance of the garden spaces to the refugee community to whom she was speaking. The organizations I interviewed for this research not only served the refugee population, but also had non-refugee garden participants. None of the nonprofits turned away interested gardeners. This allowed “bridging” social capital to emerge as refugee and non-refugee may garden side by side. Additionally, there was at least one nonprofit that was seeking to engage multiple communities in events in order to expand cross-cultural understanding through food. It is the intention of these efforts that bring social capital to the forefront and enhance successful integration.

It is the “bonding” side of social capital that happens more organically in the garden space. As refugee communities come together, they are able to build a network of people from their region of the world or at least speak their own language. Though many of my interviewees also discussed organizing groups of refugees to participate in gardening and other integration programming, which indicates how important nonprofits feel the “bonding” social capital is for their stakeholders. It is essential in the integration process because many refugees are randomly placed in areas of the country without any connections or resources (Strang & Ager, 2010). When the limited federal support of 90 days runs out, it is a refugee’s cultural community can then help support them through the resettlement and integration process.

In a conversation I had with Fuli, an older refugee woman who is an active gardener, she explained to me that if she were not here in the garden space, she would be at home not doing anything. This revealed the importance the community garden played

in her life. It gave her something to do each day. It gave her a purpose while also promoting her physical health.

Though community gardening alone is not connecting a gardener to larger intuitions. All of the organizations I interviewed stated that they had other programs or connections to larger entities that assist refugees with other resettlement domains, such as education (formal or farming), employment, and healthcare. The organizations are often presented with questions and concerns by refugees about problems outside of the garden space and therefore they have sought out ways to “link” the refugee populations to other institutions in Portland. These linkages are essential as refugees continue to learn to navigate Portland for various services and resources.

It is not only the refugee populations who are benefiting from social capital in the garden spaces, but it’s the organizations themselves. It was clear during the interviews that they are also seeking “bonding”, “bridging” and “links”, but in slightly different ways. The “bonding” and “bridging” social capital comes from community garden organizations in the form of collaboration. As organizations build “bonding” social capital, they seek out support and collaborative opportunities from similar organizations. In the case of the community garden organizations I spoke to, many of them collaborated on projects, used each other’s garden spaces for educational programs or sought each other out for advice. However, there was also a sense of competition between certain organizations. I heard this sense of competition during some of my interviews. Although, each of the interviewees expressed how important collaboration to their own success, they seemed to contradict that sentiment when referring to similar nonprofit organizations. Some interviewees used words like “competitors” to describe the other

organizations they are doing collaborative work with. Others talked about the differences in working styles or referenced the limited funding available for similar projects. This sense of competition may stem from the competition of grant money for similar organizations, the competition for participants, or differing methods/ideologies. This reveals the complicated nature of collaboration work.

### **Remaining Domains**

The three previously mentioned domains are those that became visible my observations, interviews and secondary sources. However, as I used Ager and Strang's (2008) as a foundational document to this research, I found evidence of some of the other domains as well. The "Social Connection" domains of "social bridges", "social bonds" and "social links" were described at length in the "Theory" section of this thesis. Social networks are at the core of this research, and therefore, domains that are very present within the community gardening context. The remaining domains of "Employment", "Housing", "Language and Cultural Knowledge", "Safety and Stability" and "Rights and Citizenship" were present or partially present within the gardening context, but not as overt as the "Education" and "Health" domains. Therefore, I do not dive deeply into the analysis of these domains. I believe they are important to the integration process on the whole, but I do not believe the community garden is providing all indicators of integration for these domains alone. In the "Discussion" section of this thesis, I will provide an adaptation of the framework to look at how integration is happening within the community garden and provide new domains that help explain the process.

## **Collaborations in Social Networks**

“Collaboration with partners, that is probably is key thing that is going to get us through highs and lows” (Village Gardens, personal interview, June 27, 2018).

Many of the organizations I spoke with are nonprofits and, as stated previously, nonprofits serve to fill gaps left in the public sector. They serve as the experts or “the research and development arm” of the local government (Alexander & Nank, 2009, p. 365), but their collaborative efforts don’t stop there. In general, nonprofits seek our collaborative opportunities with governmental agencies, other nonprofits, and private businesses to increase access to resources, seek expertise, or to maximize funding opportunities (Sowa, 2008). The collaborative nature of the organizations I spoke with during this research will reinforce the social network build within the Portland community. The connections made through collaborative connections are social capital relationships, where resources are exchanges. In Portland, the organizations that participated in this research emphasized the collaborative social capital as *accessing resources and increasing cultural expertise.*

Resources for the organizations involved in this research can vary from labor the form of volunteers; to materials in the form of seeds; to space in the form of land. However, the sharing of resources through collaborative efforts is a common practice by both IDC and DGC organizations. It is obvious that the IDC organizations need a collaborative opportunity to gain access to garden spaces. This is common for all three of the IDC organizations I spoke with, and most of their garden space collaborators were organizations on who I identified as DGC. However, the collaborative relationship is not one-sided. There is a two-way street, as I observed, where the DGC organizations saw a

resource within the IGC organizations, such as increased outreach, which may have persuaded them to seek the collaborative relationship. For example, the Portland Parks and Recreation has access to land all over the Portland metro area. As it was explained to me, they identified a collaborative opportunity with LCSNW to access a refugee population they had not yet engaged with. This initial collaboration snowballed into reaching multiple refugee populations in Portland, ultimately increasing their outreach and access to those groups. For LCSNW, who does not have direct access to garden spaces, the resource they obtain is land for gardening and increasing the opportunity and services for their refugee stakeholders.

The idea behind resource collaboration within the public sector can be best explained through resource dependency theory. It states that no organization can be totally self-sufficient. An important element of this theory is ensuring that the negotiation for resources to be equitable (Sowa, 2008). Therefore, the identification of valuable resources between two organizations can ensure there is a successful and sustainable collaborative relationship. If there is an inequity between resources, then the collaboration is inefficient. Therefore, it is important to be caution that one organization is not over extending itself. An employee at the Portland Parks and Recreation emphasized that they "...understand that [they]'re not going to go after new partnerships or relationships unless [they] feel like [they] can do a good job of it. (City of Portland, personal interview, August 22, 2017). In another interview, an employee of Grow Portland also explained why their organization may be selective when building a collaborative relationship:

[Grow Portland] is really open to partnerships but can be wisely cautious about it in order to not overextend yourself and knowing who you are working with.

[Another local nonprofit] has been a great partner and there are different working style and there are always some hiccups and bumps to learn about and when busy times of year are. But they've been easy communication, easy to exchange educational resources. (Grow Portland, personal interview, August 23, 2017)

It is evident that though collaborations there have been significant benefits within the organizations I spoke with. However, there were also reasons to not take on collaborations. There were, additionally, examples of collaborations that fell apart. Most of these examples were due to funding.

Funding was a main reason to create a collaborative relationship, regardless of other resources or cultural expertise. An employee of Village Gardens explained that their collaborator for their neighborhood orchard no longer had the resources to put toward that project, which required them to end the collaborative relationship. They stated that most of their partnerships are to share grants and financial opportunities, however sometimes that funding falls through and they have to find other ways to engage on a project or end it all together. Funding, therefore, can dictate the extent to which these organizations can see through projects or programs and if they are forced to end these services, their stakeholders are the ones who suffer. An employee at LCSNW expressed their reason for seeking out a collaborative opportunity, when they said,

Especially with nonprofit and government agencies being underfunded and make sense if we can do this and they can do something then we should do it together.

Particularly when it comes to funding for certain programs like I can pay for bus

tickets if you can pay for interpretation and that totally makes sense. That helps us both out. (LCSNW, personal interview, October 5, 2017)

The second common collaborative purpose was to increase cultural expertise. Both IGC and DGC have varying interactions and connections with the cultural communities that refugees are part of. Therefore, it is important that collaborative relationships are established in order to engage with refugee populations that is culturally appropriate. Increasing an organization's cultural expertise comes in many forms such as, seeking out translators/translated materials, connecting to resettlement agencies for increase outreach, and working with community health workers. This reason for a collaborative relationship can best be explained by strategic management theory. Strategic management theory emphasizes how organizations work with other in their environment to increase performance, competitiveness, and how it is perceived in its environment (Sowa, 2008).

For the case of IGC and DGC organizations, collaborative relationships that increase their cultural expertise to refugee communities increase their populations they work with (competitiveness) and how those communities trust their organization (perception). Trust with an organization by the refugee community is important when refugees may be coming from past trauma. Many of the IGC and DGC organizations have built up trust within specific refugee communities by having a connection to those populations., which increases their ability to share cultural connection. This connection usually came in the form of an employee or volunteer who was also a refugee. This person helped build trust within their community with the organization they worked with. In multiple interviews, organizations referenced Outgrowing Hunger as an organization

that had built up trust with the Southeast Asian refugee community. This was closely related to an individual, Ramesh, who volunteered with Outgrowing Hunger and is a refugee from Nepal. Outgrowing Hunger, therefore, is considered a key collaborator for cultural connection and a trusted organization within that refugee community their capital lies in their cultural expertise. As an employee of OFB expanded on the importance of those collaborations:

Just all of these different places trying to find different avenues where other organizations are already engaging with refugee communities, which is really key to any work we do because we need more collaboration with those different doors and different communities and it's a piece that we really want to keep. (OFB, personal interview, February 1, 2018)

It is evident through this research that the organizations I spoke with understood that collaborative efforts are essential to the success of their programming, particularly for resources, cultural connections and funding opportunities. However, when an organization is spread too thin or funding falls through, the collaborative opportunity disintegrated. Another challenge within the collaborative relationships in Portland was too many collaborators at one. During my fieldwork in the garden space in Southeast Portland, it was often unclear who the collaborators were and what roles they were responsible for. On more than one occasion, there was confusions on who was in charge of the day-to-day tasks at the women's group in the garden. I also watched collaborative opportunities fall through in the form of volunteers not showing up to assist or miscommunication on who was going to decide what the daily task was. At one point, so many collaborative relationships had fallen through, no one knew who was supposed to

be leading the women's group in the garden resulting in the garden leadership being placed on me. I had to politely decline the responsibility, avoiding any conflict of interest during this research, but believe this illustrates the challenges that collaborative relationships present and complexities of social capital. Unless clear roles and responsibilities are laid out, there is the opportunity for chaos.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **DICUSSION**

In the previous section, I reviewed the findings I uncovered during my research on community gardens and refugees in Portland. I reveal the key themes and dominant social connections. In the following section, I will unwrap the significance of these findings to explore how and why community gardens are influencing the integration process for refugees in Portland. I will begin the conversations with an emphasis on the historical time that this research was taking place; followed by identifying the qualities of a community garden that frame it as a space for integration; I will label certain actors in that space and discuss how their actions influence the integration process; and finally I will offer an adaptation of Ager and Strang (2008) framework to represent what is happening in community gardens that facilitate successful integration, as it is defined by Ager and Strang (2008).

#### **Community Gardens as the Utopic Third Place**

One of my lines of inquiry when conducting this research was to uncover *why* community gardens as spaces that are successful at fostering integration for refugees in Portland, OR. As stated previously, gardens provide a space for cultural preservation by feeling like “home” (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2014). Community gardens in Portland have created a “third place” for refugees. The concept of “third place” was first coined by Ray Oldenburg (2001) in his book *Celebrating the Third Place*. It is distinguishing that the “first place” is one’s home. The “second place” can be school or places of work. “Third place” is another place people spend significant time, which can be a community garden space (Oldenburg, 2001). This adds to the conversation of social networks that are

fostered in the community garden space. I introduced Georg Simmel's work when providing an overview of social networks and connections. Simmel identified that "... migrant(s) leaves behind their own social ties and often struggles to connect to their new community. This challenge both the migrant and their new neighbors" (Dolley and Matthews 2018). There is evidence that "third places" can relieve loneliness in urban environments, making them critical for the refugee community who are often resettled in large urban cities (Dolley & Matthews, 2018). Thus, community gardens provide a "third place" which is integral for integration because it fosters the social network that is required for a refugee to integrate in a holistic sense, beyond what the resettlement program provides.

Additionally, community gardens are a place for empowerment for refugees who are entering the United States. Empowerment being defined as a dynamic process of change starting from the bottom and working up describes the process of change in the form of integration that happens within the community garden context (Calvès, 2009). Community gardens provide the empowerment that refugees do not have when resettling into the United States. The change they are able to create in their own lives may range from influencing the food they are consuming to gaining access to institutions from the connections and social web created in the gardening space. However, regardless of magnitude, community gardens provide the empowerment to make change happen which further supports community gardens as influential integrations spaces.

I believe community gardens go a step further than just relieving loneliness as a "third place". The community garden's ability to increase empowerment in refugee's lives makes it more than a "third place" . Community gardens are able to foster the

integration process because they are a physical utopic space. “Utopia is the expression of the desire for a better way of being or of living...” (Levitas, 2013, p. xiii). In current utopian literature, there has been a moment to embrace the physical utopias around us (Cooper, 2013). As I conducted this research I observed that community gardens are providing a utopic space for refugees to seek a “better way of being” in Portland because of their key qualities of allowing for greater control for change and providing hope for a changed future.

Refugees lose power when they are relocated into the United States. They are put into a system that tells them where to live, what to eat, and forces them to navigate a new and strange culture. Within the community garden, I observed a sense of ownership of space and empowerment to have control over an aspect of their new life: their food. The women I worked closely with in the southeast garden space in Portland, came to the garden multiple times a week to weed, water and harvest. Their dedication to the space was indicative of the importance of the garden in their daily lives. As harvest day came, I was able to watch their excitement as we pulled squash, beans and tomatoes out of the beds and dispersed them among the group. As each woman requested a photo to be taken of her with some of the harvest, their pride over the vegetables they have grown indicated that they felt ownership of the garden and its bounty.

The produce these women grew may be an example of a small change in their lives but indicates larger possibilities in the future. The garden utopia provides more control over change, by providing more control over the food refugees grow, consume and sell. In each of the organizations I spoke with allowed all gardeners to grow whatever

produce they prefer. This control provides refugees with the ability to grow food they are familiar with or have culture connections to.

For this research, the Ager and Strang (2008) framework did not encompass this concept that I found to be present within the garden. There is a more specific connection to gaining citizenship, leading to full access to rights within a host country that they place under the indicator “Citizenship and Rights”. The authors state that “In such terms full citizenship is an essential prerequisite for integration, and full participation in civic life” (Alastair Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 17). I did not find that the garden was specifically leading to nationalization of refugees coming to the United States. However, within their description, they include full participation in “civic engagement” which gave me an opportunity to shift that indicator to encompass the empowerment a refugee may feel during their participation in the garden to have more agency in other parts of their life, including more civic engagement. I am calling this new indicator “Civic Action and Agency”. This indicator assists in the preservation of cultural identity and eases the integration process into the United States.

Additionally, if refugees are interested, community gardens may introduce foods that are new and interesting to try, facilitating a cross cultural exchange opportunities. Finally, there may be economic opportunity that arises from the garden space. In multiple interviews, employees of organizations that engage with refugees in community gardens described the system of informal trading that happens within the respective refugee communities. If someone in the garden is successful at growing a certain culturally desired crop, they may sell or trade it with other community members for other goods.

This informal system may not be a huge economic driver but provides more control on a refugee's ability to gain access of desired items.

There are instances, however, of more formal economic opportunities arising from the community garden. As previously mentioned, the Karen Farms business was derived out of Outgrowing Hunger's garden spaces. Other refugee farmers have been able to create significant economic advances through gardening plots at Village Gardens. Rosata, a refugee woman from the Congo that I met briefly during my research process, has been engaged with gardening in the United States since her arrival into the neighborhood in 2010. She went from one plot, to two plots, to a donated quarter-acre of land on Sauvie Island to farm (Stine, 2017). Rosata and her family were able to take control of their future through garden and change their economic situation. Rosata may be the exception for community gardens, but because of the utopian qualities of a community garden, the opportunity is there.

“Employment” is the original indicator that Ager and Strang (2008) state “a factor influencing many relevant issues, including promoting economic independence...” (Alastair Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 170). Employment opportunities derived from the community garden was not as common, however the situations do exist. Therefore, there is still a place for what I call “Economics Advances” within the garden. Though employment may be possible, there are more opportunities to be economic with spending by using the food grown in the garden or exchange food with other community members. “For example, when a person as a garden they may produce many tomatoes, he will not have spent as much money. He will have the tomatoes. If he grows lots of vegetables, he won’t spend as much money on vegetables” (Jabbar, personal interview, August 9, 2017).

A changed future a foundational element of utopian environments as well. “... [Utopias] lays stress on sensation, the ineffable, and feelings such as optimism, hope and enchantment; and it relied on bridging concepts that link present practice to a different and transformed future...” (Cooper, 2013, p. 34). Similarly, as I critically look at how the integration process unfolds in the United States, I seek to outline a “transformed future” where integration into communities can be accomplished in a more holistic and culturally-sensitive way. Community gardens are a space where this hope for a better future can be accomplished. I found that during my conversations and observations in my interviews, the optimism for a changed future was when refugee spoke about their children.

Ganice described here reason for relocating to Portland after she arrived in the United States:

I came here, for my children. The best schools are here in Portland. I have 4 children and there are the best schools here in Portland. I didn’t care about what is around me, I was focused on the children, so they could have a good education.  
(Ganice, personal interview, August 30, 2017)

Ganice was not the only one who prioritized their children when discussing their priorities after resettlement. Jabbar’s son joined him in the garden during one of my visits. He worked alongside his father collecting vegetables and preparing to bring them to the local farmers market. Jabbar was especially concerned about the future for his children. During our conversation, Jabbar emphasized how important integration is and that he was there to create a life for his children. He referred to himself and a “lost generation” and he wanted to ensure that his children were integrated so they could be

productive members for their new society. The garden plays a pivotal role for these refugee families when looking for a changed future. It is facilitating the integration process through health, education and food access. Additionally, there are opportunities to build social capital and to expand one's network that may tie a refugee to another domain of integration such as employment or civic engagement. Community gardens are utopian in nature because of their ability to foster the opportunities for a changed future for refugees and their children.

Davine Cooper describes a role in her book, *Everyday Utopias: The Conceptual Life of Promising Spaces* (2013) of key actors. She states that there are always mediators within utopias. They can be fictional or nonfictional, but they are “those who bridge the world of utopia and the world ‘outside’” (Cooper, 2013, p. 39). These mediators are found within the garden utopias of Portland. They are the connection points between the gardens and the “outside world”, the system of resettlement and institutions that can facilitate some elements of the integration process.

### **Community Cultivators**

The access point into these communities was a key element that emerged from my interviews as essential in order to begin the social capital building process. In this paper, I will refer to these individuals as “Community Cultivators”. It is important that I distinguish a difference between other community leaders and mediators from Community Cultivators because they have a particular role in the integration process and are using community gardens as their spaces to facilitate their integration. Other versions of Community Cultivators use other environments; therefore, their labels may be

different. An example of my interaction with Community Cultivators can be seen in the narrative of Awa at the beginning of this paper.

There are several observations I made of the Community Cultivators I spoke to and observed. One observation is that there is not a gender dominance of Community Cultivators. I spoke with both men and women who I would label as Community Cultivators and they both had compelling and interesting backgrounds and insights to the integration process. I also noticed that most Community Cultivators I interviewed were over the age of 30 and most had children. Although I do not explore the reasons behind the lack of youth Community Cultivators or why Community Cultivators have children, these are observations I made during my research process and should be considered.

In addition to utopian mediators, other fields of study refer to these individuals as influencers, brokers, consultants, gatekeepers, middle-men, or connectors. All referring to people who are bridging sub-cultures within our community. However, in this context, they are specific to community garden spaces and refugee populations. Similarly, these individuals are essential for connecting and providing access between institutions, populations, cultures, and languages. Their increased agency and power change then from actors in this network, to agents. In marketing, they are often referred to as “influencers” and they are used as leaders in a community to drive brands to the larger market (Byrne, Kearney, & MacEvilly, 2017). Christopher B Steiner (1994) refers to these individuals as middle men when he wrote about the African art trade: “The role of the middleman comes into existence so as to bridge a gap in communication” (Steiner, 1994). In social work and healthcare literature, they are referred to as “cultural brokers” (Lindsay, Tétrault, Desmaris, King, & Piérart, 2014; Lo, 2010). They are critical to creating access

points for immigrant communities to the healthcare and social services systems in the US and Canada.

Community Cultivators are often those who are already present in the gardening space. They are active within their own community as leaders but rise to the need of a leader in the community garden context. Sometimes this meant that they were active community gardeners and sometimes they are connected to the community garden through an organization. During the process of my own research, I interviewed four Community Cultivators and observed approximately six others. Their unique presence became clear to me while talking to Ganice: a Community Cultivator, a refugee from Africa and a health worker. She stated:

We want to help each other but we can't expect it to be like it was in Africa. It is just to be a little change in our lives, so we can fit into this culture. And now I am just the bridge because I have been here longer than most of the women and I came here with more of an education than many of the women. (Ganice, personal interview, August 30, 2017)

This helped me realize that she is a link between her refugee population in the United States and the barriers that are in place that make it difficult to become integrated. Her role in as an agent in this social network was through weak ties but had strong bonding elements with her community. For Ganice, this is partially because she has been in the US for almost two decades. Additionally, she came in with a high level of education. However, this is not the case for all Community Cultivators. Ramesh told me that when new families come to Portland, he is the one that can connect them to a garden space. He said that even a local resettlement agency has his personal phone

number so that he can be contacted directly. Though Ramesh is not formally compensated for his work as a Community Cultivator he has integrated himself into the resettlement system in Portland in order to be a bridge, similarly to the way Ganice described herself.

Other forms of Community Cultivators in other contexts can be seen all over the nation. In a 2016 5-year study by the Colorado Refugee Services Program of integration of refugees entering the Denver area “cultural brokers” are called “cultural connectors” (Taintor & Lichtenstein, 2016). In this example the researchers employed Community Connectors to help conduct their research. A key quality of a Community Connectors in that study was that they were also a refugee but have been in Colorado for several years. They helped provide translation and insight to the needs of various refugee communities. “The premise of the Community Connector model is that refugee communities are opaque to outsiders, but tightly knit from an insider’s perspective” (Taintor & Lichtenstein, 2016, p. 12). Similarly, the Community Cultivator is the access point for organizations working in tandem with community gardens and refugees. Community Cultivators are leaders and influencers within their own community, and also cultivating relationships and opportunities with Portland-based institutions and organizations.

Even within Oregon, other forms of Community Cultivators are present. Oregon’s healthcare and mental healthcare system use a similar community connectors model to increase access to refugee communities. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, Portland, Oregon received many survivors and used “Community Connectors” to help build “bridges between the county and diverse communities” (Tillman, 2006, p. 22). “[The Community Connectors] either have relationships with community leaders or are

themselves leaders in their community. Additionally, they have the skills and trust needed to serve as communicators in the event of an emergency or emerging disease” (Tillman, 2006, p. 24). The city of Portland was reliant on “Community Connectors” to increase their outreach about healthcare and provide feedback about their community’s healthcare needs. In a similar way, Community Cultivators are working with community garden organizations and programs to increase access to their communities, increase integration opportunities, and provide feedback to the organizations they are connected to.

Community Cultivators are agents in the ANT theoretical framework because they assist in explaining how the community garden influences the refugee integration process. They help define and shape the other actors in the network (human or nonhuman) because of their leadership within the refugee community and their trust within their host-country community. Their position has provided them with power to make changes that their communities want. They also are able to extend past the community garden network. They have built the relationship through their social capital to engage with the larger Portland community (linking), creating more opportunity for a successful integration process. Their outside networks will not be explored at length in this research but may be an opportunity for future investigation.

There are some challenges when relying on Community Cultivators as the sole “bridges” to their communities to the “unlinked” community: native-born Americans. Through my observations, I noticed that Ganice was unable to show up to the garden space on more than one occasion due to illness or over booking herself. When she was there she often spoke of how tired she was. It was clear she was asked to do a lot and also people expected a lot out of her as a Community Cultivator. Ramesh worked a full-time

job in addition to serving as a Community Cultivator, leaving him little personal time. These are similar challenges faced by other refugee leaders. In the 2005 study in Denver, some of the challenges the researchers expressed in their follow up report was keeping track of the Community Connectors was difficult as some of them did not use email or cell phones. Additionally, many of the Community Connectors had other jobs outside of the research responsibilities, as well. For Community Cultivators and Community Connectors, “work and school commitments, lack of transportation, and family responsibilities” were all reasons why they may become disengaged in a project (Taintor & Lichtenstein, 2016, p. 14). Whether they are formally employed to work as a Community Cultivator or are serving as an informal Community Cultivator for a local gardens space, they are essential to incoming refugees are asked to navigate the landscape of their new host country. Community Cultivators use their personal experience and assist in, often complicated, process of integrating that can include accessing services and acquiring basic needs, while using the community garden as the backdrop.

For many of the reasons stated above, I consider Community Cultivators to be under appreciated. Though, I recognize, it may not be in the means of every organization to financially compensate their Community Cultivators for their work, it is obvious that their work is valuable and should be returned in some sort of compensation. I only encountered one program that was financially compensating their Community Cultivators while they took part in a facilitation training program.

Community Cultivators are creating the social ties to connect refugee populations to outside social capital through linking social capital. There is evidence in this research for the ability to foster integrations domains, like education and health, but also connect

to less tangible domains like the previously mentioned domain of civic action and agency. Ganice describes her ability to empower others to take agency in their lives in the United States:

I try to empower women, so they can do something. They don't have to go back to school, but they can still do something. At least you can create something. You can be a leader of something, and you can be a teacher. You don't have to go to school to be the teach and teach women to garden. You know?... It makes me feel good. To see just women who are enjoying themselves. They are happy because of something that we organized for them. It makes me continue to go the extra mile". (Ganice, personal interview, August 30, 2017)

The organizations in Portland I interviewed recognized the importance of the Community Cultivators and highlighted their key characteristics that set them apart. "He was a gardener and a natural leader"(personal interview, June 27, 2017) one employee of Village Gardens expressed when talking about, Jabbar, a Community Cultivator that works for their organization. An employee of MCHD talked about Ganice, "... we look for someone who is well connected so we can serve that community better. She embodies that" (MCHD, personal interview, August 30, 2017). Each organization I spoke to have their own unique way of engaging with Community Cultivators. Some identified them while others were trying to develop Community Cultivators through education and facilitation training. The OFB had created programming to help develop Community Cultivators, which they referred to as Garden Ambassadors. One employee of OFB explained their motivation for the program:

[We are] trying to move away from any handouts at all and trying to see what if we train people from their own community to teach their own community. What we don't need is a white, English speaking volunteer teaching a Vietnamese community. We want a Vietnamese person teaching their own community. But to get there, we need to design a program that we can work with those communities and directly supporting them and figuring out what a culturally appropriate curriculum would look like for each of these communities (OFB, personal interview, August 30, 2017).

The motivation of organizations to start to tap into the cultural nuances that Community Cultivators have is evident in the previous statement but is a unique take on the engagement of Community Cultivators.

The organizations I spoke to acknowledged of essential Community Cultivators were and indicated that they could not connect to particular communities unless they had Community Cultivators integrated into their organization. An employee from Village Garden spoke of Jabbar, stating:

So, within his interpretation, we've got nothing. We don't have the resources or the cultural competency to do it all. Do that is definitely a piece that was a little alarming... If we lost [Jabbar] to another job somewhere, we wouldn't be able to run [the gardening program] (Village Gardens, personal interview, June 27, 2017).

Therefore, Community Cultivators have immense responsibilities to both the nonprofits and their cultural community. They are found in both DGC and IGC

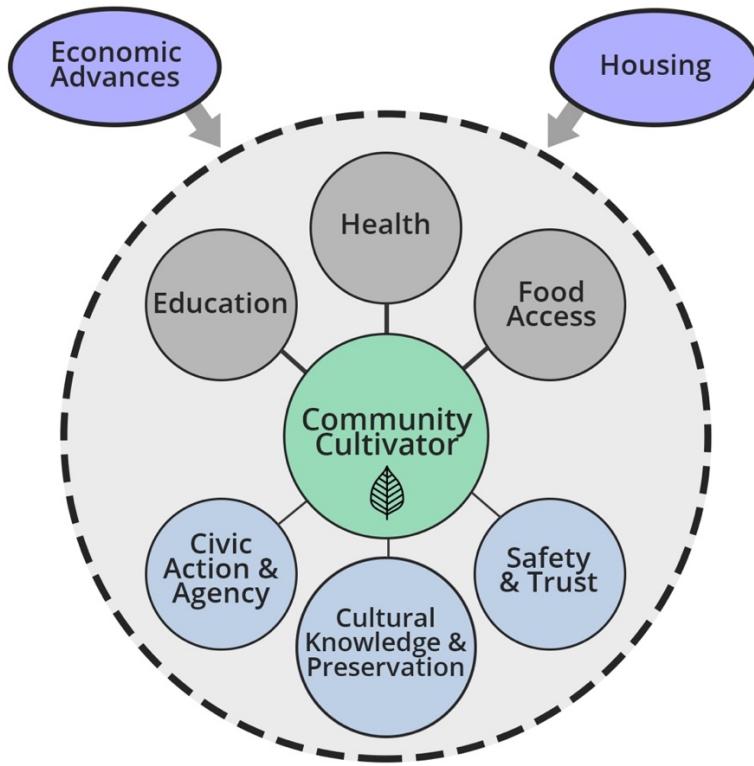
organizations. Besides the OFB program that is purposely developing the individuals to be leaders within the community garden, most DGC organizations had Community Cultivators volunteering or working within their garden spaces. IGC often has another form of refugee community leader working within their organizations but utilized their social network through collaboration to find Community Cultivators for their garden programs.

### **Adapting the Framework**

I have discussed some of the key elements that have informed how I can alter the framework to better present what community gardens are doing to assist in the integration process of refugees in Portland. This main objective of this research is to restructure the Ager and Strang (2008) framework so that it best represented the community gardens role in integration for refugees. However, there is a large distinction between the Ager and Strang (2008) framework, and the new framework I provide in the following section. Ager and Strang (2008) were clear that their domains can be used as a tool. They provided indicators of integrations that could be used to assess both programs and policies around resettling refugees. Within this research, creating a utilitarian framework was not possible. The differences in organizations (DGC vs IGC) made creating a framework that would fit all of them impossible. Therefore, the framework I provide will illustrate how integration is happening in this unique space, in this particular city and at this specific time in history. Similar to ANT, my aims for the framework are to explain “how” not “why”. The framework should be used as an example but not a guide.

In the figure below, I have altered the Ager and Strang (2008) framework and am calling it the *Portland Community Garden Integration (PCGI)* framework (see the below

figure). PCGI best describes how the Portland community gardens are influencing the refugee populations through the integration process.



**Figure 2.** Portland Community Garden Integration framework, adapted from Agar and Strang (2008) Indicators of Integration.

A major difference with the PCGI framework is with the placement of a person, the Community Cultivator, into the framework itself. This is an important addition because Community Cultivator provided the access to the refugee community. It is clear that without these individuals as actors in this network, successful integration is impossible. They are essential for bridging the cultural communities of refugees and United States-born citizens. They serve as brokers, gatekeepers and leaders in both communities: the refugee community and the local Portland community. Therefore, they are the central point in the PCGI framework and other indicators are connected to them.

In this research, three key domains of the community gardens became present: health, education and food security. These domains are connected to the Community Cultivator because they facilitate the process, but these domains are defined through the organization through their verbalized purpose for the garden programs.

### **Health.**

As stated previously, health in the context of this research refers to the mental and physical health benefits experiences by refugees in the community garden. The community garden provides health benefits through collaborative programs, like the “Pathways to Wellness” program, or providing a sense of calm while working in the garden. Health was also indicated in multiple organizations mission statements, making it a focal point for the community garden programs and the refugee resettlement program. Due to the fact that the Community Cultivator is the catalyst of integration in the community gardens, they are directly connected to the health benefit (as denoted in the connection of three lines on the above figure). There are instances where Community Cultivators also are Community Health Workers or work for a specific health organization in Portland, which would increase this strength of this connection. However, that would be specific to certain IGC and DGC organizations. The above framework is an arrogated interpretation of that relationship.

### **Education.**

Education in the PCGI framework encompasses formal education, skills training, and language acquisition. As stated previously, education in the Ager and Strang framework (2008) had been limited to youths and children in a formal education setting. I acknowledge the importance of formal education and how it may contribute to the

integration process but PCGI broadens the concept of education to compass a wider scope that will relate to many adult refugees. I engaged mostly with adult refugees in the garden spaces and it is a shortcoming of the Ager and Strang (2008) framework to exclude them by limiting education to only classroom, Western-style education. Through this research I observed that education can take many forms and building skills and informal education happening in the garden spaces is critical for the integration process. Increasing the education in a refugee will increase the ability for a refugee to play a more active role in their new society.

Education is also strongly connected to the Community Cultivator. This is because they often facilitate the education experience through facilitating garden skills training, as I observed in OFB's Garden Ambassador Program. They also, many times, have higher levels of English language acquisition, which I watched them share with their fellow refugee community members by teaching them phrases or correcting mistakes.

### **Food Access.**

Food is a central theme in the community garden and although, single plots may not provide all the vegetables that one refugee family needs, it does increase the amount of fruits and vegetables that they will consume. Additionally, it is a more economical way for refugees to foods that they may be more familiar with. These attributes of the community garden combat food insecurities within refugee communities and are an essential quality of the community gardens. This is why Food Access is a key element to the PCGI framework. It is strongly connected to the Community Cultivator because they are the leaders within the community garden community and have more influence on the foods that community garden may plant or provide their gardeners as donations.

The PCGI highlights that the three aforementioned domains are essential for the integration process and are present within the organization's mission statements, but also includes two other actors that contribute to a successful integration: Civic Action and Agency; Cultural Knowledge and Preservation; and Safety and Trust. These three elements have a stronger connection to the Community Cultivator because they rely solely on the Community Cultivator verses the organization.

### **Civic Action and Agency.**

The reason that the Community Cultivator is a leader in their communities is due to the fact that they are able to transcend culture, make connections and put plans into motion. These key actors help inspire all communities they work with and provide a sense of agency or civic action with their refugee communities. Additionally, they provide the outlet and bridge for their community to seek outside civic action to improve their daily lives. There is a less tangible quality to this indicator, however there is a stronger connection to the Community Cultivator as a key actor in this process (denoted by 4 lines in the PCGI figure). They are empowering those around them to take charge not only in the garden, but also in their lives that will lead to a more holistic integration process.

### **Cultural Knowledge and Preservation.**

Like civic action and agency, cultural knowledge and preservation and less tangible domains of integration. However, it has a closer connection to the Community Cultivator due to their in-depth knowledge of their home community and their new host country community. They can help facilitate the conversations between these two communities, serving as the bridge. This is best displayed within the gardening context

through traditional food preservation. As explained previously, the Congolese group of women in the Southeast community garden had planted many plants they were not familiar with. Though they were excited to harvest many of these new plants, there is more value if they are more familiar with the produce. If the Community Cultivator can assist with the attainment and planting of these particular crops, it will contribute to cultural preservation and cultural identity. Therefore, it is strongly connected to the Community Cultivator's role in the garden.

### **Safety and Trust.**

Safety and trust is a key actor that the Community Cultivator facilitates in the garden space. As Community Cultivator, they are leaders and have built trust within their community. Trust is extended then to their network of connects to local organizations that participate in the community gardens. This provides a sense of safety for refugee gardeners. The garden is a space where refugees can feel safe because their Community Cultivator has earned their trust as a leader. Likewise, the organizations who engage in the community gardens have trust with the Community Cultivator to guide and assist them when working with refugee communities. Once again, the Community Cultivator is a bridge using trust and safety to tie their communities together.

The before mentioned six elements and the Community Cultivator lie within the community garden, denoted by a blue circle with a dashed circumference. This circle represents the community garden itself and its utopian qualities. It is the unique environment of a community garden that allows the community garden to encompass the six key elements I uncovered as integration domains in the community garden.

Outside of the blue circle, lies two other actors are economic advances and housing. These are more exterior to the community garden, but within this research, I found some connection to the greater community garden network.

### **Economic Advancement.**

Not all community gardens provided direct access to advancing to employment or earning a livable wage. There are some examples of some refugee gardeners who were able to sell their produce, but most produce was for personal consumption. It was clear that this could offset their finances, but it was a varying degree. Therefore, this indicator is outside of the garden, but connected to the network. As Jabbar explained previously, offsetting food costs was an avenue for alleviating economic stress. He said that some of the gardeners at Village Gardens “don’t buy any vegetables. So, the money that they would normally spend on food, they now spend on other things... The economic piece is a gain” (Jabbar, personal interview, August 9, 2017). He expanded that he helps his fellow gardeners understand that using their garden space for multiple crops means they can save money all year long. However, this was the exception, not the rule for most gardeners.

### **Housing.**

Housing was only brought up once during my research process. I believe this is due to housing being provided by resettlement agencies, local government and federal government agencies during the resettlement process of refugees. Housing, however, is a basic need, and therefore I felt it was important to include in the network. Location of refugee housing plays a huge role in the participation in community gardening and access to community gardens to specific resettlement sites was a more common conversation I

had with organizational employees. In one observation of a community event, I listened to a group of board members discuss the possibility to build housing for their refugee communities that would have community garden access on site. Though this research did not explore the unfolding of this plan, it was informative knowing that housing and the concern of proximity is a concern for community garden organizations. Therefore, housing is connected to the PCGI framework, but it's exterior of the direct garden.

The grey circle's circumference is outlined with a dashed line. This is to indicate that these actors are fluid. They may move back and forth within the framework to best fit the particular organization. The PCGI framework is an aggregation of how community garden organizations and programs working with refugees is assisting in the integration process. This framework is bound in time and place: 2017 in Portland, Oregon. In future iterations of this research, the actors may move around, in and out of the circle. However, for the purpose of this study the PCGI framework serves as a guide on how Community Cultivators are at the center of the social network for community garden that engage with refugee populations.

The PCGI framework is a compilation of the data I took across all organizations. If used to address any one organization, the framework has the ability to shift to represent exactly what is happening. However, with this framework, one can gain a holistic idea of how organizations engaging with refugees and community gardens are influencing the integration process. Therefore, the actor organizations are outside of the model. They may use the model to see how their process is similar or different to the process I observed throughout the other organizations in Portland, Oregon.

Finally, the PCGI framework aligns with Actor Network Theory, in that it is a window into what is happening within the Portland-based community garden network that works with refugees today. It reveals how these relationships are made and what is currently working for these organizations. Though I have presented some of the reasons why these connections might be working or not-working, it is important to note that it may not translate to all organizations, in all spaces, at other points in time.

## **CHAPTER VII**

### **CONCLUSION**

While using the Agar and Strang (2008) framework as my guide, I was able to create an adapted framework that illustrated how integration is happening within community garden contexts in Portland, Oregon. I found that Community Cultivators are the key to the integration process of refugees in Portland, Oregon who are working in community garden spaces. In this thesis, I explain their importance that these individuals play in the integration process. They hold the key to the integration process through their ability to build bridges and provide access to domains of integration as stated in the PCGI framework. In the below sections, I will add my recommendations for how this research can be used by organizations and what future research may be possible given my findings.

### **Recommendations**

During my research, I was happy to see that the organizations I spoke with are doing good work. Whether they are IGC or DGC organization, they have identified the benefits of community gardens for refugee communities and have fostered relationships with these communities through collaboration and through seeking Community Cultivators. I emphasize that these two approaches, used in tandem, is the best approach to supporting integration within the Portland community. The framework describes in the previous section can be used as a snapshot of what is being observed in the current time, however, should not be used as a guide.

Collaborative relationships provide opportunity to expand “cultural expertise” and “increase resources” these two elements can play a critical role in the success of the

organization over the long-term. However, these collaborative relationships must be outlined clearly in order to be effective. A recommendation would be outline clear relationships between organizations in order to be most effective at supporting community garden spaces, which will then lead to a more successful integration process. This may extend to reaching outside of the Portland network to find collaborative opportunities. There are other programs nationwide that are focusing on refugee agricultural skills through farming or gardening.

**Table 2.** List of programs working with refugees in agriculture settings across the United States.

Name	Location
New Entry - Farmer Training - Tufts University	Massachusetts
AALV - New Farms for New Americans	Vermont
Refugee Empowerment Agricultural Program	Ohio
Global Gardens	Idaho
New Roots Community Garden	California
Global Garden Refugee Training	Illinois
Cultivating Community	Maine

Another recommendation would be to foster and support the development of more Community Cultivators. An example of this is through the OFB's Garden Ambassador program. However, Community Cultivator development and support can be done informally as well. Supporting these individuals financially and through skills training can lead to a ripple effect where they can then go support their community members in the garden spaces. This will increase the outreach of the organization and increase successful integration through Portland's community garden organizations and programs.

My final recommendation is to identify and compensate the Community Cultivators working in the various community gardens. Their presence is integral to the

integration process within the gardening process. Without those individuals, the connections to the refugee communities would be impossible and therefore they should receive compensation from the various organizations involved in supporting the community gardens and those who garden in them.

### **Future Research**

There are many opportunities for future research on this topic. One main area of interest for future research would be to expand the interview to include more refugee gardeners. This would allow the researcher to explore a more holistic view of the integration process from both the organizational and refugee perspective. The barrier of access to refugee populations within this research limited my findings to only include the intentions of organizations and my observations of refugees in the community garden spaces. Including a translator into this research would increase the scope of work and provide a more prominent voice for the refugee community.

Another area for research would be to dive further into the funding sources of community garden organizations in Portland. This may reveal limitations to work based on grantee requests. This may reveal more information about programming, outreach, and long-term goals. Most 990 tax forms for nonprofit organizations are available online and can provide an interesting insight to where funding is being derived from. I did take this into consideration when looking at the background of the organizations I interviewed. I found that not all 990s are updated to the most recent tax year and concluded that it did not directly influence my PCGI framework. Therefore, I chose not to include those comparisons in this research.

Finding other spaces that are fostering the process of integration may be enlightening to the refugee populations in Portland, Oregon and other places in the United States. As I explored community gardens, I became aware that there may be other spaces within cities where integration is unfolding. Finding and exploring these spaces would provide more insight to how organizations can support and foster the refugee community's integration process.

Finally, I did seek out the collaborative relationships within the organizations I interviewed, however, it would be interesting to see other types of collaborative relationships. There is room for future research to look into "less traditional" collaborative relationships between the participant organizations in this research and other service providers. During an interview with an employee from Village Gardens, they said, "... I am really interested in bridging organizations whose work is really different than ours and we serve the same communities and people can benefit from each other's work..." (Village Gardens, personal interview, June 27, 2017). Cross-sectoral collaboration can result in more holistic, wrap around services for populations like refugees. This information would be illuminating to the unique nature of collaborative relationships and an opportunity to compare these collaborations effectiveness.

In conclusion, this research has resulted in the creation of the PCGI framework that describes how integration for refugees is being fostered within the community gardens in Portland. It was inspired by the work done by Agar and Strang (2008) but differs in its specificity to community gardens in Portland, Oregon. At the most central point, Community Cultivators are facilitating that process through a social web of links, bonds, bridges, and ties. Without this individual, integration would be impossible within

the context of community gardens. Community Cultivators are leaders and influencers within their own community, and also cultivating relationships and opportunities with Portland-based institutions and organizations. The garden space has transformed to a utopian space for refugee populations where empowerment for change in the present and future can be imagined and put into action. Within that utopian space, there are domains of integration that are resulting from the links that are formed. Some main domains are “education”, “health” and “food access” that are connected to the local organizations purpose for the gardens and carried out by Community Cultivators. Other domains that depend solely on the Community Cultivator are “safety and trust”, “civic action and agency” and “cultural knowledge and preservations”. These domains have similarities to the Ager and Strang (2008) framework, but have been adjusted to fit the community garden, more specifically.

Social networks are the methods in which the integration system works, whether it be the “bonds” and “bridges” between the Community Cultivator and their like and unlike communities; or the strong ties of refugee families and the weak ties of the great population. Social capital can move between these actors in the form of resource sharing and cultural expertise. They are exchanged between the organizations; between Community Cultivator and the organizations; and between the Community Cultivator and their refugee community. The value of successful integration is what drives the connections together and strengthens the bonds, bridges and links between them.

The organizations involved within this study hold the resources that are required to continue to support and build up the Community Cultivators in Portland, Oregon. They can enhance the integration process by identifying and compensating the Community

Cultivator within their organization. This collaborative opportunity will serve as a catalyst for continuing a holistic integration process as both the Community Cultivator and organization work together.

The purpose of this research was to find out how community garden organizations were influencing the refugee integration. What I found is a more micro social network forming with individual actors who are catalysts in the integration process. I began this research seeking out the organizations who were managing the community gardens themselves, but soon found that Community Cultivators are the gatekeepers, the agents, and the leaders who are passionately facilitating integration within the community garden in Portland, Oregon.

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