Facilitating Successful Refugee Public Outreach for the 2020 U.S. Census Through Social Digital Media

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Facilitating Successful Refugee Public Outreach for the 2020 U.S. Census Through Social Digital Media
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submitted to the Faculty of the

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by

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Abstract

This booklet dives into the fragmented refugee outreach environment in Arizona, USA. It begins with an introduction and background to the overall topic. It first identifies the main reasons why government outreach towards refugee communities are lower than the national average: a general mistrust in government institutions, and a strong language barrier that creates a lack of awareness and isolation. Throughout the booklet, a strong case study using the 2020 U.S. Census was used as a way to understand the lack of participation. Through multiple independent-partnerships, interviews, and literary reviews, this group produced materials in order to bridge the gap in communication between government and refugee communities. Specifically, a targeted video and outreach program that identified the critical stakeholders in Arizona’s refugee outreach environment. This includes a network map: a document mapping out the various networks and social capitals of refugees and organizations in Arizona, as well as a video: a short two-minute advertisement for the 2020 U.S. Census. These deliverables were done in order to recommend a way to strengthen the bonds and networks between stakeholders, but also in an attempt to increase awareness of the 2020 U.S. Census.
Acknowledgements

Our team would like to express our sincere gratitude to Dr. Katherine Foo & Dr. Sarah Stanlick for not only finding us a new sponsor amidst the COVID-19 Global Pandemic, but also providing us with insightful feedback and guidance throughout the entire project.

We wish to express our utmost thanks to Katie Morris for assisting us in the development of our project. Her allocation of her time connecting us to the different refugee organizations in Arizona has proven to be nothing but valuable.

We want to recognize the valuable contributions that the Arab American Organization and Somali United Council of Arizona has offered us through their astute critiques and assisted us in marketing our video.

Shout out to our friends and family who really helped us direct our project scope in the right direction. Without the help of our friends like Bishoy, who helped find Nabil, we couldn’t have been here.

Last but not least, we would like to acknowledge ourselves for sticking as a team throughout this unusual IQP experience and creating a meaningful project to help refugee communities.
Preamble

The Interactive Qualifying Project at Worcester Polytechnic Institute is a requirement every student must complete in order to graduate. It is a moment of self-reflection and building relationships through teamwork and international participation. This experience gives students an opportunity to explore the world and dive into different cultures, while also making an impact. Our group was excited for this amazing experience, working hard to accomplish a refugee-oriented project in Berlin, until one day, we heard gloomy news—

Our project was canceled due to the Global 2019 Pandemic COVID-19, or better known as the coronavirus pandemic.

Although our project in Berlin was cancelled, our goals were still the same: to help refugees. With the help of our advisors, Prof. Katherine Foo and Prof. Sarah Stanlick, we were able to find a new sponsor; Katie Morris, Project Coordinator of the Arizona Department of Economic Security, who works directly with the Refugee Resettlement Program. With our newfound knowledge in refugee integration from our previous project, we were able to start this project with relevant background information. One thing would prove difficult; however: working digitally and socially distancing ourselves. Our group has always worked together in-person, never assigning roles or hierarchies among ourselves in order to make sure we were putting our collective best work forward. The change in having to work over video calls utilizing programs like Zoom, did prove challenging, but only at first. We would eventually overcome it, after many hour-long daily calls with each other, our advisors, and our sponsors. With that said, we present our new and final project:

Note to the Reader, from the Authors:
Zoom Video Communications, a video conference provider created in 2011, has been instrumental for the creation of our IQP project. Without a means of visual communication and networking, we would have not been able to continue our research during the Global Pandemic of COVID-19.
Introduction & Background

Section I
Introduction

For years, the United States government agencies have tried to address the challenges and needs of American communities. A census of the entire population provides the basis for the federal government’s understanding of community needs. Every ten years, the United States government launches a coordinated effort to encourage individuals residing in the US to fill out a document indicating persons in their household. This is an attempt to count every person in the country in order to allocate federal funding and create demographic projections for areas of population. This funding contributes to crucial road repairs, construction of infrastructure projects, improved healthcare facilities, and better education for children (U.S. Census Bureau 2019).

Unfortunately, refugee communities participate at a lower rate than other demographics and are considered hard-to-count (U.S. Census Bureau 2019). In fact, 1.5 million minorities and 16 million people overall were omitted from the 2010 census count alone (PRB 2019). Factors such as language barriers, lack of Census awareness, and misinformation contribute to this lack of participation (Chapin 2018). Refugee outreach is a chronic problem for government agencies due to a lack of integration programs, as well as broader social conditions. While some refugees integrate smoothly into life in the U.S., for others economic inequality, social exclusion, and racial discrimination—all exacerbated by government policies, such as the Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States executive order—all deepen a sense of alienation and mistrust. Studies have also shown around 45% of refugee and immigrant parents with young children have a low-income status and illustrate that many refugees suffer from chronic health complications due to economic and societal disparities (Park 2014; Morris 2009). With the immediate aftermath of September 11th attacks, the Arab American Institute reported over 200 individual cases of violence towards Arab Americans (AAI 2007). Not only do refugees have a mistrust in the government, but in fact 75% of Americans state that they have a general mistrust in the United States government according to a recent study by the Pew Research Center (Pew Research Center 2019). While people may not trust the government, they do trust people within their community.

Societal groups are often structured around strong leadership from key figures that can be referred to as community pillars (K. Morris personal communication, April 12, 2020). These leaders are well-trusted within their refugee

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1 Section 5 expands the priority list of noncitizens subject to deportation to anyone charged of a criminal offense, who committed acts that constitute a criminal offense, who engaged in fraud or willful misrepresentation, who has abused any program related to public benefits, who is subject to a final order of removal, but has not departed, or who otherwise poses a risk to public safety.
communities, and are often elders, leaders of faith-based groups, as well as other non-governmental organizations that regularly interact with refugee communities. An overall trust in these community pillars is critical for refugee groups to shape the future direction for their communities. Organizing a cooperative partnership between the government and pillars of communities will provide a platform for more government engagement based on a more transparent process of trust.

In the United States, Arizona constitutes a notable example of a state government that actively promotes trust through community and government cooperation. The Arizona state government has continued to help refugees resettle in the United States for years, welcoming over one thousand new refugees each year (Pew Research Center 2019). The Arizona Refugee Resettlement Program (RRP) works with refugees from different countries to assist them with basic needs once they arrive in the United States, including various federally funded programs that offer services such as English language training, medical assistance, and employment services. These services support refugee empowerment and autonomy in their new home. Additionally, the Arizona Refugee Resettlement Program works with community pillars and nonprofit social service agencies to assist refugees. Despite these many programs and services, one of the challenges these agencies face is having accurate demographics that represent refugees in order to retroactively allocate resources.

In order to address this challenge, our project aims to increase the census participation of refugee communities in the United States. Our first objective was to evaluate the challenges and opportunities these communities face by interviewing individuals from the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and ethnic-based community organizations (EBCOs) that directly serve these communities. To further understand their social network structure, our second objective was to create a network map that consists of refugee organizations and government departments in Arizona. The 2020 Census will be the first census to be available in Arabic, one of the most spoken languages among refugees (Pew Research Center 2019), and to further target these communities, our third objective was to create a short video aimed at Arabic speaking communities. By directing our attention to younger generations, as well as tech-savvy individuals, this video will be able to spread through popular social networks used by refugees such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Lastly, we were able to evaluate the effectiveness of the video through intra-refugee social networks. By utilizing refugee’s social network, we hope to create a successful media campaign and network map to increase refugee participation in the 2020 and future U.S. Census.
Background

Reaching out to refugee communities has always challenged government agencies due to underrepresentation and the insular nature of these groups. This lack of representation from refugee groups stems from an overall marginalization from the broader American society. Refugees entering the United States are required to stay supervised and isolated for up to twenty-four months while U.S. agencies perform a myriad of background and security checks (CSUS 2001). Despite these rigorous background checks, many American citizens and politicians have an unfounded fear for refugees, stemming from fears of terrorism—and the statistics for it show. An exceedingly small fraction of the hundreds of thousands of settled refugees in the U.S. have in fact been arrested and detained for terrorism-related charges (Knight 2017).

The issue, however, stems from a political agenda spanning since the Bush administration and the September 11th attacks. Arresting a refugee on the account of ensuring national security has been a practical measure ever since the creation of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) in 1952; however, a clearer look at the INA reveals flaws within this piece of legislation. At its core, the INA states that any refugee who “engages in terrorist activity”, means committing an act “that the actor knows, or reasonably should know, affords material support, including a safe house, transportation, communication, funds, transfer of funds, or other material financial benefit…” (INA 2001). Given these definitions, a Salvadoran man who avoided execution by allowing FMLN rebels to use his kitchen would be deemed inadmissible (Knight 2017). Many refugees are being denied humanitarian protection despite posing no real threat to U.S. national security. This overall near persecution of the humanitarian rights of refugees entering the United States creates these pockets of misappropriated and isolated refugees.

Refugee mistrust in government is not solely an American problem. Studies done by the Universidad Pontificia Comillas, which reviewed five nations, have discovered that ever since the September 11th attacks and the wars that followed has increased western societies’ feelings of mistrust, hostility, and discrimination towards refugees (Rebelo et al. 2018). The study further reviewed that societies’ discrimination, even if done in good faith, have negative impact on refugee well-being. These policies put in place negatively influenced the refugees’ willingness to seek support

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2 The Immigration and Nationality Act has collected many provisions and reorganized the structure of immigration law. The law has been amended many times over the years through different administrations. The Hart-Celler Act of 1965 marked a progressive change in U.S. immigration policies that removed the 1790 restrictions to non-“white persons”.

3 This study by Maria Rebelo, Mercedes Fernández, and Joseba Achotegui, produced a scientific psychological review which went into a case-study of five different Western nations in regard to their handling of refugees.
from services provided by their host society, including social and health services, but also negatively influenced their trust with helping professionals who provide services (Rebelo et al. 2018). Lastly, the study determined that immigration laws and policies have a strong correlation to refugees’ mistrust in government institutions by being “deleterious” on refugee biopsychosocial well-being by affecting their own perception of government services (Rebelo et al. 2018).

“...The agent who arranges your flight will also not trust you. He will ask for full payment in advance and he may not even tell you which country he is going to smuggle you into. You will not be told the route, the identity of your guides, or even the identity of your fellow travelers...”

V. Robinson

This reinforces the systematic mistrust required for refugees to survive. It is not only just a mistrust in general institutions; moreover, a defense mechanism that refugees acquire throughout their resettlement journey. Many of these institutions, but also American citizens, see this deep-rooted mistrust in general as a lack and unwillingness to integrate, rather than a form of self-protection from marginalization. The fear of deportation or non-admission is enough to deter refugee communities from participating in government programs, even if they stand to benefit from these programs, even institutions like the U.S. Census.

The U.S. Census was created with the intention to understand population statistics in the United States of America. The data collected from the census is used to measure American characteristics such as age, sex, race, migration, and a myriad of other demographics. An accurate census count

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Moving average | Individual polls
strategically increases funding to beneficial services and resources for refugee communities for the next ten years. The census results also have a major effect in terms of what municipalities and communities receive federal funding, grants, and other forms of support, as well as how congressional districts are drawn (U.S. Census Bureau 2019). In particular, the U.S. Census provides an opportunity for refugees to be represented within their communities.

Historically, data collection regarding the refugee population has posed a problem for government agencies for a variety of reasons. According to experts in the Arab American Organization, some refugees go as far as using fake names out of fear of possible deportation if their identity or location were to be revealed (AAO 2020). Furthermore, language barriers contribute to the lack of participation among refugees, as well as an overall lack of awareness on the regards of the census. Although the U.S. Census Bureau offers the census and other informational guides in fifty-nine different languages, advertising and outreach materials are only offered in twelve different languages (U.S. Census Bureau). These examples of systemic underrepresentation of refugees marginalize foreign-born nationals. These all contribute to the lack of participation with refugee communities (Knight 2017).

The most effective way to resolve misunderstanding is to tackle miscommunication. In this case, miscommunication manifests itself in the form of language barriers (Adler et. al 2020). A study published by the Georgetown Law Human Rights Institute in 2009, discussed how refugee communities in Washington D.C., Detroit, and San Diego, were provided with limited language training. The inability to communicate can make straightforward tasks such as buying food and using transportation, seem like daunting tasks, and other more troublesome, yet equally vital, tasks such as seeking employment, filing insurance, enrolling in healthcare options, may seem infeasible (Georgetown University Law Center 2009). Language to a society is much like grain is to an ancient agrarian civilization. Much like Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs specifies an individual’s psychological needs, knowing the language allows the individual to reach a level of self-actualization and incorporate themselves into the broader ranks of society⁴.

To the uninformed, the solution to this misunderstanding would be to simply establish more language-accessible outreach platforms. However, the sustainable way of accomplishing this undertaking is through mutual trust. Building trust has demonstrated to be an important step that needs to be taken during any sort of refugee outreach (Rebelo et al. 2018). The Arizona Department of Economic Security does just that, chartering the idea that there exists what are known as “Pillars of the Community”: individuals and establishments that already harbor trust within their respective communities. If community leaders are thought of as individuals with high influence, they then have high

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⁴The book “the Art of Crossing Cultures” by Craig Storti discusses how adapting to new cultures means to relearn one’s old habits (Storti 2011).
amounts of social capital which allows them to be more effective communicators, as well as educators of their communities. The term social capital is used by social scientists to investigate how social networks can affect society and its relations through interactions. According to Pierre Bourdieu, social capital is defined as the “aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition… which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital” (Bourdieu 1986). Studies reveal that refugee social capital helps refugees secure resources as well. The presence of strong community organizations further enhances the influence of refugee social capital. A study by Dina (2007) calculated the effectiveness of refugees using just their social capital to integrate themselves into society, and in contrast compared them to the effectiveness of refugees using social capital and refugee organizational services. The study concluded that social capital and organizations provided high success in labor market integration. In other words, these organizations helped refugee populations secure employment and integrate themselves into the overall community (Dina 2017). For refugees to live in a healthy society, they must be well represented, and the most potent way to harbor compelling representation is through the creation of meaningful socio-governmental connections.

This critical need for social capital is paramount for successful refugee outreach. The intra-societal networks of relationships are needed for a society to function (Dina 2017). If a society has shared, but independent, norms and values, it will also garner reciprocity, cooperation, but most importantly trust. These social connections created by high levels of a community’s social capital allow for bridging of gaps in social and economic inequality (Bourdieu 1986). The reliance on these community leaders is one of the key components that will allow for the spread of information regarding the importance of the census to these different refugee communities. This, in the long term, allows for the bonding of social capital that will hopefully resolve the misunderstanding formed and increase the communication and trust between refugee communities and government/private agencies. In the short term, bonding of social capital will spread the importance of the census within these refugee communities.

Failure for communities to participate in the 2020 Census can lead to underrepresentation and the subsequent lack of deserved resources. Over the next decade, the U.S government lawmakers, business owners, and many others will use this data to see which communities need new roads, schools, healthcare services and education for children, and families older adults. Transportation funding, which depends on the data provided by the census, determines the condition of roads and public transportation systems. In a

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5 The study interviewed a select group of 36 Syrian refugees to conduct the study and followed them throughout their stay in Berlin. The study defined successful integration as the ability to use social capital in order to integrate themselves into the German labor market, the one condition being whether they used one of the three NGOs.
report done by the University of Vermont’s Public Transportation Research Center in 2011, universal mobility and successful transportation equity are essential for refugees and newcomers, who do not have access to a car and depend on critical public transportation options (UVM-TRC 2011). The accuracy of the 2020 Census count also impacts the federal funds that communities receive for schools. These educational programs offer refugees resources such as English training—surmounting the language barrier, as well as offering after-school programs and reduced or free school lunches. The census data is also critical for the Supplemental Nutrition Program, SNAP, which keeps millions of families out of poverty and hunger (Litvinov 2019). Another study published by Stanford discusses how “large-scale social change requires broad cross-sector coordination, yet the social sector remains focused on the isolated intervention of individual organizations” (Kania, et.al 2011). This illustrates that for transformative change in refugee communities, it should be a joint effort from various governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and the refugee communities. One way of accomplishing this is through the participation of the 2020 census.

An accurate census count also benefits funding for the healthcare sector. The U.S government is able to obtain detailed population demographics data that helps to ensure the underrepresented racial and ethnic groups are able to access healthcare. One of the programs that assists refugees with medical conditions is the Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA) program that provides short term medical assistance to newly arriving refugees and providing them services such as medical screening upon arrival (Office of Refugee Resettlement 2019). Therefore, it is crucial for refugees to participate in the census for different health care programs to receive funding.

Arizona is one of the states that has funded programs that directly benefit refugees according to the Office of Refugee Resettlement. Arizona’s Department of Economic Security has refugee assistance programs focused on the economic and educational needs of refugees. Its programs such as the Arizona Refugee Resettlement Program (RRP) support refugees with transition and resettlement in the United States. Arizona’s employment and educational services also assists refugees by providing one-on-one support for refugees seeking employment, gaining job skills and connecting with resources for professional development creating independence. For example, the Refugee School Impact (RSI) Program addresses educational needs of refugees in Arizona Public schools by helping them adjust culturally and overcome the English language barrier (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2019). All these programs serve to assist the refugee communities by addressing the issues of economic inequality, poor education, and healthcare systems in order to successfully integrate the refugees.

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6 Studies have also shown around 45% of immigrant parents with young children have a low-income status and illustrate that many refugees suffer from chronic health complications due to economic and societal disparities (Park 2014 | Morris 2009).
The Arizona Department of Economic Security has taken action to increase accurate refugee population data for the 2020 Census. The Refugee Resettlement Engagement Proposal is a plan that aims to increase census outreach to refugees in Arizona. The goal is to remove the barriers and obstacles of refugee participation through educating communities on the purpose of the U.S. Census, increase U.S. Census logo recognition, and to increase access to the 2020 Census. This goal can be addressed in a number of ways, including events, networking, and educational outreach (K. Morris, personal communication, April 15, 2020). The Census Field Day is an event organized by the Arizona Refugee Resettlement Program that allows for parents to learn about the census and provides help with completing the census while their children are entertained with games. Initiatives like these allow for refugees to learn more about the census. These forms of direct engagement by organizations partnering with pillars of the community, as well as the community, help garner levels of autonomous trust between refugees and the governmental services and platforms.

In the 2020 Census, videos are being used to promote census content that explains the use and safety of the census. These videos are being created to reach a broad audience or particularly hard-to-count groups. Social media can be a key tool to further promote the video and reach a wider spread (U.S. Census Bureau 2019). In the United States, many people are using social media to receive news and information, which can be useful to communicate information to hard-count-groups. Videos and social media are powerful tools that can help in achieving mass outreach since they can deliver information in ways that do not rely as heavily on language. Refugees and migrants speak a wide variety of languages, and videos are easily translatable, and also can include subtitles. This is one way that we worked to minimize the language barrier and provide accurate representation and information.

Video content has the power to reach a wider audience, regardless of language. Additionally, videos can tell a story and provide information while keeping the audience engaged. Research has shown videos naturally capture peoples’ attention because eyes are attracted to movement (Howard, 2010). Furthermore, video is one of the most effective media as it strikes a more emotional connection and therefore creates a more memorable experience. Studies by Insivia, a visual media marketing agency, have illustrated that viewers retain nearly ninety-five percent of a video’s message, as opposed to, reading solely text will only retain ten percent of the information (Insivia 2013). Video usage for the census will allow the spread of accurate information while keeping the content engaging.

Humanity lives in an age where information can be spread easily due to mass and social media. This allows for anyone to create and engage in any form of media. In the United States alone, seventy-nine percent of the population has some form of a social media presence (Statista, 2018). For this project, there will be a utilization of video marketing and mass media to take advantage of this phenomena to help spread
valuable census information to these hard to reach communities. The creation of a video would not only help correct some of the common misconceptions about the census, but also explain the potential impacts it may have on the targeted audience. Through the help of partnerships with organizations already working with pillars of the community and the community itself, the video will ultimately result in an increase in participation of the 2020 Census overall in the refugee communities (Cai 2019).
Methodology & Results

Section II
Identifying Our New Project

On March 25th, 2020, we were given the information for our first ever Zoom meeting. In this meeting, we met our sponsor, Katie Morris, who is the Project Coordinator for the Arizona Department of Economic Security. Morris primarily works with helping refugees integrate themselves into the broader Arizona society, also works substantially with the Refugee Resettlement Program, whose key goal was expanding refugee outreach and U.S. participation. During the meeting, Morris explained the challenges with working alongside refugee groups. She had come to us for assistance in creating some way to increase refugee outreach with the U.S. Census and for networking information of refugee communities. Our first task was to identify the core goal of our project. We participated in a quick power session, known as a design sprint to lay the actual framework, in which we considered the prompt “How might we design effective marketing, outreach, and engagement with the Census process for refugees living in the greater Phoenix area amid the COVID-19 lockdown?” What followed was an intensive brainstorming session focused on ideas to increase refugees’ participation in the 2020 Census. What we ended up all agreeing on, is that video and social media, would be the best way to increase outreach in the current climate of COVID-19. In tandem with choosing video as a core means of communication, we were also told about a U.S. government sponsored challenge to help with digital outreach to hard-to-count communities. Alongside the video, we also decided to create a network map; a tool that we could use to help improve the communication between different refugee agencies in Arizona. After establishing our two main deliverables, we Determined we needed to conduct preliminary research to identify the challenges and opportunities to meet our goal.
Objective One:

*Identifying Challenges & Opportunities of Refugee Participation in the 2020 Census*

In order to address the challenges of refugee participation in the 2020 Census, we needed to do preliminary research that focused on refugee communities within Arizona. Through meetings with our sponsor, we discovered that the refugee situation in Arizona is a complex network that is somewhat fragmented. There exist isolated refugee pockets that need to be reached out to. We then needed to identify the problems that arise due to this isolation. We accomplished this by asking ourselves three critical questions:

1. What challenges keep refugee groups from participating in the 2020 Census?
2. What opportunities does participation in the 2020 Census offer refugees?
3. What is the best way to best approach at-risk communities without objectification?

We employed three different tactics to assist us with the completion of objective one. The first tactic was through observational studies. Observational studies are a way to obtain knowledge from a third person perspective, allowing the researcher to limit biases from the information obtained. Next, we also were to conduct several interviews with refugee organizations and agencies, granting us more expert-focused, but also community-oriented, information. We were able to use information from this interview to identify the importance of including demographics and culture into census outreach. Interviews are also significantly more personal, which acquiesce in higher response rates compared to online surveys. Lastly, our third tactic was to conduct a literature review to bolster our understanding of the Arizona refugee situation.
Objective One | Findings
Identifying Challenges & Opportunities of Refugee Participation in the 2020 Census

Our interview results with the Arab American Organizations and the Somali American United Council pointed towards two key factors that we identified as challenges that prevent refugee participation in the 2020 Census. The first challenge we identified from the interviews is the mistrust of the government and the fear of potential deportation and incarceration.

“The [Census] requests the name of each household. Why do they need to know their name? Many people who fill out the form use a fake name.”

President & CEO of Arab American Organization

With an interview conducted with Ashraf Elgamal, President & CEO of the Arab American Organization, who addressed many of the concerns refugees have with government institutions, including the Census. Many of the concerns he stated have the overarching theme of a mistrust in the government.

Additionally, we discovered and feel that is important to recognize before our creation of any deliverable, is a specific six step refugee vetting process that fuels a refugee-mistrust of the government (CVT 2019).

1. Less than 1% of global refugees are referred for refugee resettlement. Most refugees must first register with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, in which the UNHCR conducts an in-depth background check. Those deemed most vulnerable are referred to the United States.

2. Resettlement Support Center (RSC) conducts a pre screening of all refugees applying for resettlement.


4. U.S. Agencies then conduct in-person interviews to collect fingerprints.

5. The U.S. Government including partnering U.S. Agencies meticulously go through personal security screenings including biometric investigations, FBI biometric checks, and an additional review through the Security Advisory Opinion process.

6. Lastly, applicants are required to attend cultural orientation classes to prepare them for the adjustment of life in the United States. They are assigned a resettlement agency who oversees their stay.
Our literature review brought us to the conclusion that there appears an apparent governmental interference (be it intentional or not) that has played a large factor in building mistrust among refugees towards government institutions. This is generally caused by a myriad of different factors within the overall theme of mistrust. For instance, refugees who seek out information from informal sources, will not only just spread rumors (increasing the spread of wrongful messaging), but also increasing a community’s overall mistrust in government establishments. Coupled with that lower a refugee’s community compliance are due frequent policy shifts, government limits on information dissemination, and inconsistent policy implementation, the more uncertainty exists, and the lower the participation is. This graphic here shows that the many factors of government policy can create uncertainty, which in refugee communities creates refugees and misinformation. These factors all lead to a general mistrust, which then relates to low participation.

Graphic showing the uncertainty pipeline for general refugee mistrust in government organizations. Governmental refugee-vetting process as described above leads to rumors, which in turn leads to misinformation, which finally leads to overall unfounded mistrust.
The second challenge recognized is the language barrier. The Vice-President of the Somali American United Council discussed how language barriers can prevent refugee communities from participating in many different government programs. Later, they relate it to how this affects an overall Census awareness and the lack of participation. According to our research, 6% of refugees have learned English as a first language, and only 47% of refugees who enter the country have a familiarization to the English language (be it as a second language, or understanding enough to get by). 20% of refugees have identified personally as to have zero English comprehension. This creation of linguistic isolation in refugee communities has separated refugees from the broader American society, including institutions such as the U.S. Census.

![Bar-graph by the Center of American Progress emphasizing refugee English language learning within the United States (CAP 2018)](image)

Improvements in English language skills among recent arrivals to the United States
By refugees admitted from 2011 through 2015

Bar-graph by the Center of American Progress emphasizing refugee English language learning within the United States (CAP 2018)

However, what is important to note, according to Larsen, is that English language skills increase with time in the United States. 30% of refugees who have arrived in the last 10 years report that their children do not speak their native language anymore but do speak English fluently.

We had also attended the Phoenix Quarterly Meeting\(^7\) to obtain information regarding the potential benefits of refugee-Census participation in order to appropriately convey benefits through community and refugee outreach. Another important aspect is framing the benefits of the U.S. Census in a way that speaks to tangible benefits for refugees. These can be examples towards critical services such as funding for public education, healthcare, transportation, SNAP, and other essential community resources and institutions. For instance, according to the U.S. Census Bureau Video Workshop Seminar, several messaging-researchers stated that “funding your community” always tests more strongly than “political representation” as a motivating factor for refugees to fill out the U.S. Census. Reframing government messages and institutions as direct benefits for communities can help overcome areas of mistrust. Other examples constitute the metaphor of “disappearing”, or in other words leaving valuable benefits for you and your community as the Census impacts the next ten years. In addressing the language barrier, videos as a means of messaging convey information easily to refugees as they can be directed to communities in their mother tongue.

\(^7\) The Phoenix Quarterly Meeting, conducted on a quarterly basis, is a meeting for all the different refugee organizations and institutions relating to refugees in Arizona to discuss current events and set future goals.
**Objective Two:**

*Evaluate the Social Capital of Refugee Communities to Increase Census Participation*

To address objective two, we needed to understand the social network for refugee communities in Arizona. As in objective one, we created a series of questions for us to better understand these intra-societal networks developed by refugee groups:

1. What is the most effective way to gain participation in the 2020 Census?
2. How do refugee networks communicate internally and with other stakeholders in the refugee resettlement arena?
3. What are the best tools in assessing preferences of communication among different social networks?

To fully answer these questions, we conducted eight short interviews with different active-refugee organizations in Arizona. As aforementioned, interviews have a personal connection, which we believe yields us better response rates than surveys. Interviews also present us with the opportunities to rephrase certain questions if the interviewee misunderstood them, addressing concerns with language barriers. Furthermore, it allowed us to obtain more detail on certain questions if needed. Through considering the points above, we concluded that short interviews would be the best course of action. The questions in the interview not only allowed us to understand the communication within refugee organizations, but also the communication between the different refugee organizations in themselves. We also gathered information regarding the different means of communication used by refugee communities (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, phone calls) and the different modes (i.e. videos, infographics, letters).

Different dimensions of social capital were then analyzed through a network map to better understand the relationships within these networks. These dimensions include cultural norms, communication preferences, and trust that can prevent these individuals from participating in the 2020 Census. We then conducted interviews with stakeholders from the Census Bureau, alongside with individuals from the Somali American United Council of Arizona and the Arab American Organization, in order to obtain information regarding the various components of social capital and networking. Additionally, we further explored the issues of trust and the communication between government and the refugee communities. Later, we used both the social network analysis (SNA) (Fredericks K, 2013) and another design sprint with the purpose of understanding the networks and connections between different organizations and refugee groups in the Arizona community. This tool was effective in providing insight into relationships and sizes of these groups, while also
identifying specific information on these tight-knit groups. The output of this analysis gave us insight on the connectedness and trust of the Arizona refugee groups. To perform this network analysis, we needed to identify the individuals involved (the Census Bureau, the Arizona Refugee Resettlement Program, and the refugee communities in themselves). Next, we needed to understand those who give and those who seek resources in order to better understand what resources we had to work with. Organizations that assisted specific refugee groups such as Burmese Christians known as Karens, allowed us to better target different demographics with relevant information. These stakeholder groups allowed us to finally attend focused meetings in order to collect more relevant data.
Objective Two | Findings

Evaluate the Social Capital of Refugee Communities to Increase Census Participation

We analyzed the eight interviews conducted and compiled the responses in different ways to help us visualize the social network structure between the refugee communities in Arizona.

The pie chart above illustrates the different modes of communication utilized by the different organizations. Emails seem to be the most prevalent method used by these various refugee organizations while SMS/text-messaging is the least preferred method. This phenomenon was clarified by an expert from the *Asian Pacific Communities in Action*, who explained to us how the preferred method is not only based on its ability to spread, but also on the economic costs. Emails are easy to send to the masses with little to no economic costs, while mass texts usually require a third-party member that charges for its service.

Additionally, we also discovered that the response rate from the refugee communities has a negative correlation with the size of the refugee communities. The multiple interviews illustrated that organizations such as the *Arizona Karen Church* and the *Azidi North American Federation*, which both work with less than 2000 refugees have a fast response rate, usually within a day. On the other hand, organizations that work with a population size of around 60,000 refugees have a response rate of around one to two weeks, and organizations that work with population sizes that exceed around 300,000 refugees do not have a regular means of communication. This is due to the lack of a timely response rate, especially during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

The data extrapolated from the short interviews signifies that there is a fundamental problem in the area of communication between the refugee communities and their partner organization. This issue we noticed during the analysis of our data led us approach our raw data with a KeyLine analysis\(^8\). This helped us create a social network map; one of

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\(^8\) A KeyLine analysis is a visual JavaScript toolkit for network visualization by Cambridge Intelligence. It allows for a much more visualization of
our deliverables that identified different social groups and demographics to improve the outreach and communication

![Pie-Chart](image)

Pie-Chart we created showing the distribution of refugee-community agencies in Arizona that we had interviewed/had communication with.

between the Arizona Refugee Resettlement Program (RRP) and the respected refugee communities. The network map is a document that is a conglomerate of different relevant information of all stakeholders and contact information available. This bridging of communication allows for a more direct ligne de contact⁹, and will be used for future communication. Along the network map, we also compiled and analyzed the interviews created graphics to better illustrate network connectivity data through time-based analysis, combination of nodes and linkages, geospatial and social network analysis, and an automatic graph layout.

refugee communicative statistics.

This resulting mapping of networks allows us to extrapolate social capital into visual mapping. Not only does this allow us to better understand the vast networks of refugee related organizations, but also allow both refugees and organizations to get in touch with the best suited organizations for them. Despite discovering that trying to map out social capital is something entirely subjective (as social capital has no defined limits), our network map was able to delineate and interpret the different obscure linkages.

Through the interviews conducted, we were also able to determine the roles and missions of the organizations. These organizations directly work with their respective communities to offer employment, health services, economic assistance, and other essential services. Additionally, there are organizations, such as the Azidi North American Federation, that bring different communities together through social gatherings. In one of our interviews with an individual, from the Azidi North American Federation, mentions that they hold various religious parties and gatherings to help families from their communities connect. However, due to COVID-19, they have pushed forward with online services and adapting to the ever-changing world. These organizations are adaptive to their environment.

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⁹ Ligne de Contact, (French), a social-chemistry terminology corresponding to the apparent intersection of two contiguous interfaces, such as the intersection of two social spheres forming a Venn diagram.
Objective Three:

Production of a Short Video Illustrating the Importance of the 2020 Census for an Intended Audience

In order to better convey the tangible benefits of the U.S. Census to refugee communities as aforementioned, we decided our best strategy was to produce a short video. The purpose of the video is twofold, accounting for two critical parts: “to amplify trusted voices in refugee communities so that the messages resonate at a deep level, and to fill content voids that can be exploited with disinformation intended to suppress 2020 Census response rates (2020 Census). The video should explain why the census matters succinctly; roughly two minutes, that uses entertainment, emotion, creativity, and/or humor to motivate people to respond. It should also be designed for a platform such as YouTube or Vimeo.

As according to the United States Video Challenge, the video was designed to target a “hard-to-reach” community, such as refugee groups. Our focus was to concentrate and reach out towards Arabic-speaking communities in the United States of America, because the Arabic-speaking population of Arizona (as well as the United States in its entirety) is incredibly large. According to the 2010 Census, there are approximately 29,474 Arabic-speaking individuals in Arizona alone; however, according to the Arab American Institute, there are roughly 95,427 Arabic-speakers in Arizona. This discrepancy alone, shows the need for accurate counting within Arabic-speaking communities. The 2020 Census would also be the first-ever census in American history to be offered entirely in Arabic, and by advertising this fact, we would be able to further improve the access of the 2020 Census. Therefore, the video we produced as our final deliverable is entirely in Arabic, with the core direction to target Arabic-speaking communities.

Another important consideration for the creation of the film was the artistic and narrative arc, as well as the need to deliver a story that was responsible and respectful of the

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10 These communities are generally groups that trend not to participate in the United States census. Generally, the primary language of the people that reside in these communities is not English. They are mainly composed of immigrants, minority groups (racial, ethnic, religious, and sexual), and groups that have a general mistrust towards the government.
subject. In order to strike the proper artistic direction of the film to establish a balance driven video that incorporates heavy story-telling elements, mixed with humorous and emotional-driven content, while keeping a clear and concise direction. It is critical that the video still speaks to the tangible benefits of the 2020 Census without it focusing too far on the “story”-element of the entire film. Our plan was to produce a video that will be primarily focused on the story of an Arab migrant’s story coming to the United States. The story entailed certain elements of struggle, triumph, and community, as overarching themes; however, was able to circle around to finally discuss the importance of the census, the importance of the 2020 census, and why everyone should take it.

Finding a willing video subject was accomplished through personal networking. The interviewee, Nabil Abdelmalek, is a former refugee from Egypt who was connected with a team member. His membership in a Coptic orthodox church organization with a mutual connection allowed for a natural recruitment opportunity. The interviewee was willing to participate in a recorded interview conducting in Arabic, which furthered the mission of cultural appropriateness. Due to the nature of personal privacy, we have established a code of interviewing ethics by supplying the interviewee, as well as all supplementary partners, with an Informed Consent Agreement. In addition, we had numerous conversations as a team about cultural humility, representation, and social justice storytelling in order to create a video that was meaningful and beneficial to the community without being exploitative.

Data protection privacy
In order to protect the data obtained from the responses obtained during interviews, we will keep the individual(s) personal information and data confidential such as their address and full name by default. Additionally, the rights of the interviewee will be explained to them beforehand. The data acquired will solely be used in our final deliverable for research purposes only.

Furthermore, there were several elements directed in order to create a compelling and well-designed video. First, the video needed to have a potential for impact. Overall, we made sure the video inspired viewers to respond to the census. Secondly, we focused on its ability to reach these hard to reach populations. If the video was able to effectively communicate its message to the specific audience to reach the community, then it would have been considered a success. We tested for the efficacy of our video by analyzing its overall influence on a sample demographic by iterating via feedback from targeted viewers. Next, we focused on the technical quality of the video. The video needed to have clear audio and aesthetically pleasing visual content.

Due to the recent global pandemic; COVID-19, filming and obtaining quality and representative footage was a challenge that we had to address. Due to government mandates, filming on-location was not an option. Fortunately, we were able to receive assistance with the interviewee in which his
daughter filmed the interview, based on our questions, and provided us the footage that would be used in the video. Before receiving the footage, we all attended a video-production seminar that helped us understand the tools used for video creation and editing. Since we received the footage premade by Mr. Abdelmalek’s daughter, we had limited creative direction with the filmography. Despite not having an official storyboard, we edited the footage along a specific narrative arc and began the production of the short video. After several weeks of working with the video, alongside our network map, we eventually reached a point where the video was in a penultimate state for review.
Objective Three | Findings

Production of a Short Video Illustrating the Importance of the 2020 Census for an Intended Audience

In order to ensure a high-quality, ethical video, we reached out to our sponsor, as well as the Somali American United Council and the Arab American Organization for direct feedback. There were several components we had to address. After receiving the videos taken by Mr. Abdelmalek’s daughter, the audio quality of the videos taken during the interview were not to standard. This was something we as a group knew we could not solve properly without asking to refilm the video. And with interest in time, we decided to continue with the allotted footage and utilizing artificial intelligence to remove substandard audio discrepancies such as background noise. Another issue was that there was a sheer lack of relevant B-roll footage. This was expected due to both the specificity of the subject matter and our own location. We addressed this by asking our sponsor, Katie Morris, to take videos in her hometown to create an “Arizona-connection” to further strengthen its connections to the broader Arizona refugee community. This was done in hopes that any individual watching would be able to recognize certain landmarks from their newfound home. Another point addressed was a warning for certain elements that might cause a fragmentation of our collective audience. During a meeting with the President of the Arab American Organization, we learned that Arab identifying people are a diverse group. He suggested we stray from specific personal and cultural norms that can incite political and religious tensions. Even things such as someone’s name can show a political and religious affiliation, so we needed to be careful and do research into it. Another piece of feedback was the inclusion of subtitles. Our team cannot speak Arabic and editing a video entirely in Arabic was already an expected challenge. In order to create English subtitles, we reached out to a member of the Somali American United Council, to create both Arabic and English transcriptions, which would then be later used as subtitles in the video. After several passes of feedback, the video was then complete.

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11 In film and television production, B-roll is supplemental or alternative footage intercut with the main shot. The term A-roll referring to the main footage has fallen out of use.
We then marketed the video with a goal of maximizing its viral potential. First, we needed to figure out optimal video marketing techniques. This included finding which medium, audience, and distribution forms and channels the video will be shared on. One critical note worth mentioning here is that due to the video being targeted towards Arabic-speaking refugee communities, the overarching range of audience types will be smaller than producing a video that targets refugees as an entire group. To help combat this, we ended up partnering with both the Arab American Organization and the Somali American United Council in order to broaden our audience, as well as increase our marketability and outreach due to their already existing networks of Arabic-speaking refugee communities. Not only were we able to increase marketability with our partner-organizations, we were also able to spread the video through the different contacts we reached during our various short interviews done prior. We hope that our video will end up increasing the overall participation of Arizona refugees in the upcoming 2020 Census.
Recommendations

Section IV
Recommendation One

In order for the government to effectively communicate with refugee communities, we recommend going through subsidiary organizations that already have existing connections with refugee communities. Not only is this logistically easier, but it also allows for the addressing of areas that create uncertainty and low participation: mistrust and linguistic isolation caused by language barriers. Working with this, but also in tandem with community pillars will help improve the logistics of increasing participation within refugee communities.

Recommendation Two

We recommend using interviews instead of questionnaires when gathering information from organizations. By conducting interviews, rather than questionnaires, we were able to better increase our relationships and trust with refugee organizations, which led to several partnerships. One concern we had with questionnaires was the potential lack of responses due to the missing human component and a pre-existing relationship, which these refugee organizations and communities value heavily.

Recommendation Three

We also recommend using videos as a means of refugee outreach. Reaching out to refugee groups is done more successfully through videos which target audiences that are generally regarded as “hard-to-count”. By producing a video that is able to reach these communities directly, along with our previous recommendation to go through subsidiary organizations with existing relationships in refugee communities, you can strengthen the governmental messaging and increase the size of the audience.
Evaluation & Conclusion

Section III
Conclusion

By compiling all the results and data gathered throughout our Interdisciplinary Qualifying Project, we have come up with four conclusions that we believe summarize Arizona’s Refugee Resettlement Environment.

Mistrust is a Core Problem with Arizona Refugee Resettlement

In conclusion, the Arizona Refugee Resettlement environment consists of refugees structured in a complex network of isolated pockets. Our overall findings suggest that the number one cause of these issues is an overall mistrust in government. Refugees entering the country are promptly entered through a laborious and overtly private six-step vetting process. The greater this gap between government and refugee communities, the lower the compliance is towards policies enacted. This illustrates the importance of government to refugee community trust building through a healthy outreach done by third parties directly involved in the community. The power of digital media can elevate this trust building to minimize the effects of the mistrust.

Linguistic Isolation is the Consequence of Language Barriers

A lack of communication causes a domino effect that directly affects the refugee’s awareness in different governmental institutions. The lack of awareness, in tandem with mistrust in the government, creates this cycle of uncertainty which continuously fuels more and more mistrust and an overall feeling of ambivalence towards government institutions. The best way to bridge this gap between government and refugee caused by mistrust, uncertainty, and linguistic isolation, we must utilize the services already present with refugee organizations.
Successful Outreach is Done by the Community Pillars and Community Refugee Organizations

These organizations, created by and/or for refugee communities, allow for the bridging of information in a way that is much more trustful. Throughout our research, we encountered that community leaders, titled as pillars of their community, were already fully entrusted by their local communities. These leaders can easily facilitate the spread of positive and truthful information into refugee communities. It is this essential connection that bridges the rift between refugees and their respective host governments.

Tackling the disconnect can be done by targeting people already structured within these communities. Information such as the benefits and the importance of the U.S. Census can be spread efficiently within refugee communities in Arizona, but most likely, around the United States of America. Throughout our interviews with various refugee organizations, agencies, and former refugees themselves, we were able to better put together a picture describing the Arizona refugee resettlement environment. Not only was the network map invaluable to our success at understanding the situation but was also utilized to direct refugees and any other individuals to organizations that would best answer their concerns.

Digital Media Outreach through Videos is Successful

Our research then suggested that we use digital media to produce a video in order to convey accurate information on the U.S. Census to refugee communities; communities that as aforementioned have much lower participation in the Census. We chose video because it can quickly engage an audience and minimize the impact of the language barrier. For our video, we determined that the best way to increase the audience size was to approach the video in Arabic, which addresses the large number of Arabic-speaking refugees in Arizona, but also the fact that the 2020 U.S. Census would be the first Census in U.S. history to be offered in Arabic (U.S. Census Bureau 2019). Our direction with the video was done to help refugee communities be aware of the U.S. Census, and clear up any misinformation that may have previously existed. Its existence and creation will help increase the overall participation of the upcoming 2020 U.S. Census.
Final Thoughts

During the seven weeks of working remotely with our sponsor, we were able to gain knowledge on the refugee resettlement process, as well as how to properly outreach to refugee communities. Through conducting several interviews with different refugee organizations, we were able to understand their roles in helping refugee communities, as well as learning more about these communities themselves. We were inspired by how these organizations support refugees through a trust-based relationship. In these seven weeks, we cultivated relationships and partnerships with organizations to better serve and increase outreach in the refugee communities in Arizona. This project made us aware of the importance of the U.S. census and its impact on our communities. We hope that our video deliverable will not only benefit Arabic communities, but also the United States as a whole. We are grateful to have had the opportunity to work with the Arizona Refugee Resettlement Program and hope that our project will help them in their future work.
References

Section V
References


(PBR) Understanding Who Was Missed in the 2010 Census. (2019, April 10). Retrieved from https://www.prb.org/understanding-who-was-missed-in


