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Refugees in Transit: Refugee Women's Perspectives on Space, Transportation, and Mobility During Resettlement in Atlanta

Authors	Greenwood, Leanna
Citation	Greenwood, Leanna. "Refugees in Transit: Refugee Women's Perspectives on Space, Transportation, and Mobility During Resettlement in Atlanta." 2024. Dissertation, Georgia State University. https://doi.org/10.57709/37372305
DOI	https://doi.org/10.57709/37372305
Download date	2026-04-15 23:02:11
Link to Item	https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14694/13942

Refugees in Transit: Refugee Women's Perspectives on Space, Transportation, and
Mobility During Resettlement in Atlanta

by

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Under the Direction of Mathew Gayman, Ph.D.

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2024

ABSTRACT

Atlanta has been a site of refugee resettlement since the 1970s and is hailed by many in the resettlement community as having conditions supportive to newcomers: a history of resettlement service providers, a higher-than-average self-sufficiency rate, and a favorable climate. Resettlement here is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

However, Atlanta is plagued by issues that affect newcomers as they navigate everyday life. Among these issues are Atlanta's history of racial segregation; land use patterns that discourage non-automotive travel; and disconnected mobility resources. Together, Atlanta's spatial, transportation, and mobility landscape makes reaching locations during resettlement difficult for newcomers, especially those who do not have a personal vehicle.

In addition to Atlanta's unique spatial, transportation, and mobility factors, women, mothers, and newcomers have unique mobility needs and face extra barriers to accessing transportation. To name a few, women and mothers need mobility options that support traveling with children and shopping bags. Newcomer women are often spatially isolated from mobility resources and face language barriers when using public transportation. As such, destinations around the city (such as groceries, schools, service offices, and work) may not be accessible via public transit routes for many newcomers.

To better understand how physical space, transportation options, and personal mobility affect the process of resettlement in the Atlanta metro area, I conducted 30 in-depth interviews with women through the help of a staff member at a local resettlement organization. Several overarching themes emerged from the women's stories around resettlement, especially that driving is necessary for successful resettlement. Being able to drive was also found to shape women's self-concept as independent and helpful members of the community.

Several additional themes emerged that give insight into women's resettlement experiences, including (1) women sacrificing work because of mobility challenges; (2) resettlement conditions shaping and reinforcing a gendered division of labor; (3) the lack of childcare impacting women's work and education; and (4) missing out on English education hampers taking advantage of other opportunities. Given the issues women face when resettling in Atlanta, I propose potential policy changes such as greater support for English education, affordable childcare, and driving instruction.

INDEX WORDS: Refugees, Resettlement, Atlanta, Transportation, Mobility, Women

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Mobility During Resettlement in Atlanta

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August 2024

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to the women who shared their stories of resettlement with me and to those who are rebuilding their lives in Atlanta.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank everyone who supported me in completing my degrees at Georgia State over the last 10 years. I was privileged to receive funding during my graduate career, which helped me finish this project. Thank you to the Center for Neighborhoods and Communities and Don Reitzes for the award of the Dissertation Seed Grant in 2023, which helped me fund the interpretation services this project needed. Thank you to the Provost's Dissertation Fellowship program and fellows for your support while I was finishing data collection. Thank you to the GSU Department of Sociology for the funding and training I was privileged to receive. Thank you to my committee members, Matt, Erin, and Deirdre for your words of encouragement and wise advice. And thank you, Shaista, for all the help you gave me.

And on a personal note, thank you to everyone who supported me outside of academic life. Thanks to my family, especially my mom, for always believing in me. Ashley and Kevin: thanks for the dog sitting, board game nights, and falafel. We'll beat Voldemort together one day. And my oldest friends, Katie, Michele, and Jessica: thank you for your decades of friendship, seeds, and teaching me how to point. My besties, Neville and Ritter (RIP): thank you for the laughs and eternal friendship only dogs can provide.

And Jimmy, thank you for your love and support over the last 10 years. I couldn't have done all this without you. Where to next??

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1 INTRODUCTION

“The mobility of refugees...is about much more than convenience and utility—being able to travel to jobs, healthcare, and educational opportunities leads to better quality of life outcomes, a sense of independence and agency, and a more established presence within their new communities.” -Pablo Bose (2014) “Refugees in Vermont: Mobility and Acculturation in a New Immigrant Destination”

Since 1975, more than 3.4 million refugees have entered the United States (US Department of State WRAPS 2020a). Despite a decades-long history of government-supported refugee resettlement in US communities, our understanding of refugees’ resettlement experiences in the US is largely limited to studies on employment outcomes (see US Department of Health and Human Services *Annual Refugee Survey*), rates of dependency on government assistance (US Department of State 2021), and national security concerns (see US Department of State 2021; US Department of Homeland Security 2019). Although these are key factors for understanding refugee resettlement and related policy in the US, little is known about the experiences of refugees during the resettlement process. Largely absent from current knowledge and policy is information regarding refugee experiences related to the spatial distances and spatial relationships between destinations they must navigate during resettlement, transportation options available to traverse those distances, and individual experiences and systemic mobility factors. This lack of knowledge is important because the spatial distances between destinations, transportation access and options, and mobility are known to impact people’s ability to engage in work, take advantage of opportunities for children, and access healthcare (Office of the Deputy

Prime Minister 2003). But these spatial, transportation, and mobility factors may be even more acutely felt by newcomers such as resettled refugee women. Evidence suggests resettled women may be spatially isolated (Bose 2020; Bloem and Loveridge 2017; Bohon, Stamps, and Atilas 2008), have particular transportation needs (Uteng 2009; Truelove 2000; Uteng, Singh, and Lam 2019), and have unequal access to mobility resources (Uteng 2009; Karim 2015).

The spatial relationships between destinations, transportation options and access, and mobility resources play key roles in how people utilize necessary public institutions (see Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2003). More specifically, refugee experiences of the spatial relationships between destinations, transportation options, and mobility resources are vital to understanding how resettled refugees adapt to life in their new country (Bose 2014).

This study sheds light on how refugee women in the Atlanta metro navigate the spatial distances between the destinations they must reach during resettlement and everyday life using the transportation access and mobility resources available to them, with a focus on how the ways they move affect their work, family relationships, and healthcare use. In the exploratory spirit of this project, this dissertation also presents and discusses additional themes that emerged from the women's discussions of what is important to them during resettlement. I accomplish this through in-depth interviews with 30 resettled refugee women using a convenient sampling process with the help of an interpreter.

To briefly illustrate how each of these three concepts is related to the resettlement outcomes of work, family relationships, and healthcare use, take the following examples. Transportation is linked to family relationships when parents cannot participate in children's afterschool activities because the public transit schedule does not allow for it (Bose 2014), or when parents cannot access nonprofit services like car seat installation workshops (Bohon et al.

2008). Transportation options and access are linked to employment when resettling women feel they must stay in a job because their employer provides transportation to and from work (Uteng 2009), or when people have to turn down new employment opportunities because of insufficient public bus routes (Bose 2014). The spatial relationships between destinations are central to healthcare usage, such as when refugee participants had trouble accessing culturally appropriate healthcare when a clinic moved to a faraway, difficult-to-access location (Bose 2014). Mobility is central to engagement in employment and use of healthcare resources (Bose 2014), emotional wellbeing (Farber et al. 2018; Uteng 2009), and independence from government assistance (see Bohon et al. 2008, regarding immigrants' experiences; Uteng 2009). Because movement is so central to human social life, many more examples of these intersections will be highlighted throughout the literature review.

Taken together, difficulty navigating spatial distances, lack of appropriate transportation options, and constrained mobility limits refugees' ability to participate in society in various ways, often contradicting the official resettlement goals of "integration" and "self-sufficiency" (Bose 2014). In the next section, I briefly highlight the main discussions in the literature surrounding these three core concepts as they relate to the lived experiences of resettling refugees. When possible, I also draw upon evidence that ties spatial relationships, transportation, and mobility to work, family relationships, and healthcare.

1.1 Concept Definitions

In regard to the physical reality of getting from one place to another, trips may be thought of as having a *spatial* dimension (for instance, "home is ten miles on the odometer from work"), *transportation* dimension (for instance, "those ten miles are traveled on two buses with a thirty-minute wait between them"), and *mobility* dimension (for instance, "having to spend hours each

day commuting is dehumanizing or detracts from other areas of social life”). Take, for instance, an example where resettled refugee women experienced barriers in accessing culturally appropriate healthcare when a favored clinic moved to a new location (Bose 2014). The spatial dimension of this scenario is that the clinic is not located within the resettled women’s neighborhood, or within an easy-to-traverse distance. The transportation dimension is that transportation must be employed to transport women from their neighborhoods to the clinic, but that few options may exist for people with limited incomes. And the mobility dimension is that women must choose how to get to the clinic (or to choose another clinic, or to forego care altogether) given the spatial, transportation, and social aspects discussed above. Because these dimensions often overlap and draw upon one another, I discuss below how key concepts are defined and used throughout this study.

The following sections discuss the concept definitions for spatial relationships, transportation, and mobility.

1.1.1 Spatial Relationships

When referring to *spatial relationships*, I am talking about the physical presence of necessary destinations of everyday life and the distances between those destinations and home. Thinking about spatial relationships yields questions such as “Are those needed destinations located within close enough physical proximity to one another to be able to reach?” “Are crucial locations located and situated such that everyday travel between them is manageable?” “Do neighborhoods position resettled people within an area that has the locations needed during resettlement?”

Oftentimes in Atlanta, even very short distances may take a long amount of time to travel due many factors, such as road traffic (car accidents and heavy traffic volume during peak travel

times being common culprits) and issues with transportation infrastructure (pedestrian walkways being absent along an otherwise convenient route; infrequent bus or route schedules). For this reason, this study will use the concept of spatial relationships to refer to the many physical dimensions of travel women face when traveling about the city to better understand how place-based spatial factors impact life during resettlement in Atlanta.

1.1.2 Transportation

In this study, *transportation* refers to the various modes of movement available to women. I consider both private transportation (private car, carpooling with an acquaintance, walking) and public transportation (public buses, trains, ridesharing). In addition, the various aspects of transportation that women must consider when navigating the city are important. These include feelings of fear or safety, cost, travel time, child-friendliness, personal relationships needed to access transportation, and the presence or lack of transportation resources connecting convenient locations.

As I discuss below, transportation in Atlanta is at once fascinating, complicated, and unequal. Transportation options and infrastructure (or lack thereof) in an area facilitate or block people's access to places and social opportunities (for instance, Cobb County repeatedly voting against public transportation connectivity or interstates bisecting thriving neighborhoods) (Konrad 2009). Given that spatial relationships require overcoming through transportation during resettlement, these concepts are deeply intertwined.

1.1.3 Mobility

Here, *mobility* refers to movement and that movement's relationship to engagement in social life. It represents the intersection between many of the factors listed above with the human decision to move. Mobility is the sensemaking of and interaction with the environment (Jensen

2009). Mobility intersects with spatial relationships when people make the decisions about the destinations they must reach, for instance: deciding that a closer, lower-paying job is preferable to a higher-paying one farther away (Uteng 2009). Mobility intersects with transportation because the transportation options available to a person help shape the travel—and thus social—possibilities in their lives. A mobility decision might look like walking home along a poorly lit street at night (a possible safety concern) because it is preferable to an expensive rideshare or waiting hours for a bus (a cost or time concern).

Mobility deeply shapes life in Atlanta through the segregated and unequal spatial distances that women must overcome to carry out their daily lives. Mobility is both a cause and effect in how people reach destinations of social opportunities: high mobility means that women can get to the opportunities they want in manageable timeframes. At the same time, having low mobility may be an outcome of spatial segregation, transportation discrimination, and intentional policies of exclusion throughout the city.

1.2 Research Questions

My overarching research question are: what are the space, transportation, and mobility experiences of resettled refugee women and how do they navigate everyday life during resettlement in Atlanta?; what does mobility mean to resettled refugee women?; and what sacrifices do women make in the face of mobility challenges?

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

“Thus, new visions of livable cities and sustainable urbanism return to questions of mobility, transport infrastructure, and connectivity between various public and private space as central to the future of urbanism.” -Mimi Sheller 2008 in The Ethics of Mobilities by Sigurd Bergmann and Tore Sager, Eds.

Illustrated by this quote, space, transportation, and mobility are dependent upon each other and deeply intertwined. Life in cities is defined by mobility, the city is defined and created by human movement (Jensen 2009), and all social life is mobile (Sheller 2018). I draw on the mobility justice perspective (Sheller 2018) to center mobility as a defining feature of social life during resettlement.

This section discusses the literature on policies affecting resettlement in Atlanta, spatial relationships, transportation access and options, and mobility, and finally each factor’s importance for refugee resettlement outcomes of work, family opportunities, and healthcare usage. Although the paucity of research on these topics requires drawing from studies in other metro areas, such as Burlington, Vermont (see Bose 2014), Nashville, Tennessee (see Chaney, Mohamed, and Williams 2018), or even other countries (Uteng 2009), I highlight research specific to Atlanta or Georgia where possible (see Karim 2015; Bohon et al. 2008).

Before delving into spatial relationships, transportation, and mobility discussions more broadly, I turn first to a discussion of policies affecting resettlement in Atlanta. This is important to highlight both the unique spatial, transportation, and mobility policies that people in Atlanta face, but also to give some evidence on the current state of resettlement in Atlanta. Again,

because most prior research does not focus on Atlanta, it is necessary to highlight what is known in other areas to guide this study.

2.1 Policies of Resettlement, Spatial Relationships, Transportation, and Mobility in Atlanta

Atlanta is a unique site for this research because of its reputation as a world transportation hub (home of “the world’s busiest airport” by passenger volume (Atlanta Regional Commission 2021b)), its troubled public transit and planning systems (Konrad 2009), and its status as a refugee resettlement location (CRSA 2019). As a resettlement site, Atlanta provides an ideal location in which to study the topics of spatial relationships, transportation access, and mobility, specifically how women experience the hypermobility of traveling across the world from their homes while being constrained by the policies and planning decisions that came before their arrival.

This section will focus on Atlanta as a resettlement site and the policies affecting resettlement, spatial relationships, transportation, and mobility in Atlanta. These policies are important because they shape issues such as how many people are resettled here; how racism has shaped spatial and social relationships in Atlanta; how well are metro transit systems able to connect places and people; and how do these policies interlock to create unjust mobility systems for newcomers, particularly among marginalized groups. All these issues and policies impact women during resettlement because they must navigate the physical space around them, using the transportation resources available, within the dominant mobility system, which have all been created by the policy decisions discussed below.

2.1.1 Resettlement Policy

To understand refugees' experiences in Atlanta today, it is important to provide context regarding policy and historical background of refugee resettlement nationally and in the state of Georgia.

2.1.1.1 National Resettlement Policy

Even though public discussions don't commonly relate refugees to mobility issues, refugee crises are directly tied to (and often *caused by*) national politics of mobility (such as closing borders, creating borders, deportations, and anti-immigrant rhetoric) (Sheller 2018). Resettlement policies seem to have always been in flux from year to year at the national level (US Department of Homeland Security 2019), which directly impacts the number of people states can plan to resettle and get financial support for. Refugee resettlement has seen huge fluctuations throughout the decades (US Department of State WRAPS 2020a). As a recent example of federal policy fluctuations, the Biden administration in 2021 has signaled a desire to bring refugee resettlement numbers back to over 62,500 (US Department of State 2021), after years of historically low entrant numbers. As an example of the wide fluctuations in total entrants, the US Worldwide Refugee Processing Center data shows a high of 207,116 entrants in 1980 and just 11,814 entrants in 2020 (US Department of State WRAPS 2021). Abrupt changes in policy decisions may make it difficult for states to plan for and execute effective resettlement programs, and there is a disconnect between federal policy and resettlement agencies (Poteet and Nourpanah 2016). This disconnect may affect the experiences of resettling people upon arrival (for instance, a chaotic versus seamless first impression upon reception).

2.1.1.1.1 Refugees from Where?

Nationally, refugee entrant numbers are governed by executive order. A recent example of this is President Biden calling for 100,000 people fleeing Afghanistan to be relocated to the US (Ordoñez 2021). As evidenced by the refugee admissions report covering October 2020-August 2021, each region of the globe (Africa, East Asia, Europe, Latin America/Caribbean, and Near East/South Asia) has a “ceiling” number of entrants that may be admitted per fiscal year (US Department of State WRAPS 2021). The nationalities with the highest number of recent arrivals by world region to the US include Congolese, Burmese, Ukrainian, El Salvadorian, and Afghani. For the same period from October 2020-August 2021, Georgia received the most entrants from Democratic Republic of Congo (123), Burma (34), and Afghanistan (19) (US Department of State WRAPS 2021).

2.1.1.1.2 Rules on Where to Resettle

Though the actual policy guidelines for where refugees can be resettled are a bit difficult to discern, some informal rules seem to be present and outlined in the literature. Because refugees have so many milestones that they must meet within a tight time frame upon resettlement, it is necessary that they be initially placed near a voluntary resettlement organization. These organizations provide housing assistance, English and citizenship education, and help with bureaucratic processes like establishing residency or getting a driver’s license. They have contracts with the federal government to provide resettlement assistance and are often religiously affiliated. More information on the spatial placement of voluntary resettlement agencies within cities is provided in the Spatial Relationships section (p. 31).

Other place-based factors, such as walkability, affordable housing, and proximity to jobs are criteria that are viewed as helpful to resettlement, though it is unknown if this is an actual

policy (Karim 2015). An informational sheet provided by the US WRAPS to people considering resettlement in the US notes that asylees may choose resettlement in the US—that is, resettlement is not automatically assigned and asylees may submit their preferred countries. In addition, asylees may request to be resettled near relatives already in the US, but that preference is not a guarantee or placement (US Department of State WRAPS 2022).

2.1.1.2 Resettlement in Georgia

The sections below discuss refugee resettlement in Georgia as an urban phenomenon and lends a focus to Clarkston as a resettlement area.

2.1.1.2.1 An Urban Phenomenon

In the State of Georgia, resettlement is a largely urban phenomenon. A WRAPSNET map available online shows the voluntary organizations in each state, with Georgia hosting four: Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, Church World Service, International Rescue Committee, and US Conference of Catholic Bishops (US Department of State WRAPS 2020b). Only Atlanta and Savannah are locations on this map with voluntary organizations, which indicates that initial resettlement may only be taking place in those large cities.

How many people are resettled in the Atlanta metro is a number hard to pin down, but according to former Clarkston mayor Ted Terry, Clarkston has played host to 40,000 refugees in the last 40 years (Long 2017). Refugees are known to have resettled in 12 Georgia counties, with all but one county falling into the Atlanta, Gainesville, or Athens's metro areas (Coalition of Refugee Service Agencies 2019). Between 2014 and 2020, the Coalition of Refugee Service Agencies in Atlanta reported a total of 14,163 people resettled in Georgia (CRSA 2020). As of 2021, Georgia was the 9th-highest resettlement state, according to the Department of State's

annual report to Congress (Department of State Annual Report to Congress 2021), with Georgia being the resettlement site for almost 4 percent of the fiscal year's entrants.

2.1.1.2.2 Clarkston

Refugees are known to be initially placed in the Atlanta suburb city of Clarkston and in Fulton County (Karim 2015). There is at least an informal policy of initially resettling refugees in the Clarkston area. Clarkston is notable for a small cottage industry of refugee-owned and centered businesses, as well as a public image of being welcoming to newcomers. In addition, many resettlement agencies are located in the Clarkston area, ranging from churches to formal voluntary resettlement agencies like the International Rescue Committee. Clarkston features prominently in media portrayals such as *Outcasts United*, a nonfiction book which discusses refugee resettlement in Atlanta and focuses on the Fugees soccer team and affiliated non-profit school for resettled youth. In recent years, Clarkston has also gained some renown as “the most diverse square mile in America” (Shaer 2017), which speaks to Clarkston’s history and ongoing status as a resettlement area. Figure 2.1 gives context of Clarkston’s situation relative to MARTA transit routes, while Figure 2.4 (p. 20) shows the location of resettlement providers on the eastern side of the Atlanta metro.

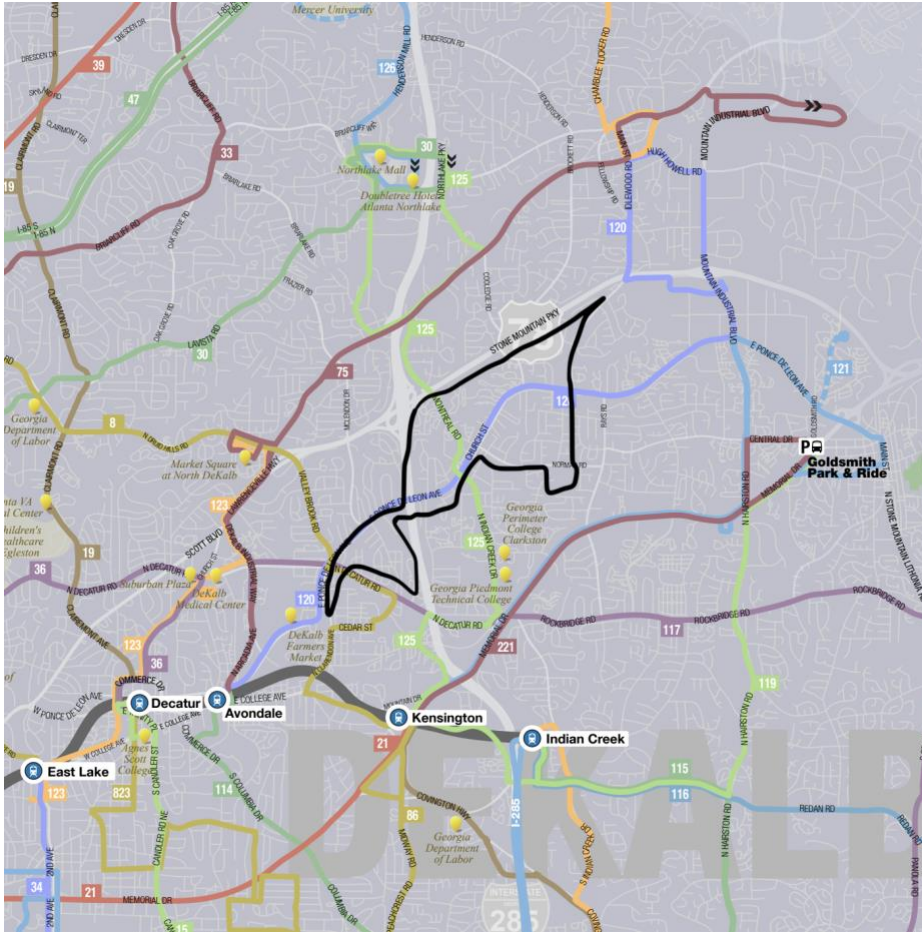


Figure 2.1: Map of MARTA Bus Routes and Train Lines with City of Clarkston Roughly Outlined in Black (MARTA 2017)

2.1.2 Spatial Policies in Atlanta: Race and Political Status

Because this research will take place in Atlanta and focus on refugee women's experiences of resettlement in Atlanta, it is important to home in on some peculiarities of space that may be salient to resettlement here. In this section, I will discuss racist planning policies (including national policies and the racialization of space), the intersection between space and political status for immigrants in Georgia, and the specific spatial relationships between the resettlement neighborhood of Clarkston and the wider Atlanta metro.

2.1.2.1 Racist Planning Policies

It is impossible to discuss mobility in Atlanta without some awareness of how spatial separations have arisen from racist planning policies. Examples include redlining, which kept Blacks from homeownership, suburbanization of poverty, destruction of Black neighborhoods to build Interstates for the hyper-mobile, and gentrification processes pushing neighborhoods to become whiter (City of Clarkston 2015). When refugee women resettle in Atlanta, they inherit the policy-driven spatial divisions I describe here and experience them as people with marginalized racial, gender, or political identities (or all of them). For this project, it is important to acknowledge the role of racism in producing the unequal access to city spaces through policy. This continues today through spatial separation of people in segregated neighborhoods. This matters to refugee newcomers because they must navigate these fraught spaces and systems when they resettle here.

Atlanta's history of racial hatred, when coupled with urban policies of redlining, gentrification, and "public works" that destroyed or bisected Black communities (Gamboa et al. 2021), is still starkly evident today. One only has to be in Atlanta a little while before the deep divisions between neighborhoods like English Avenue and Buckhead emerge—guiding one through which areas have the reputations as the "bad" parts of town and which areas are "good"—code words for the racial histories of those areas. Street names carry the subtext of the City's investment or disinvestment. Perceived racial differences are enacted in spatial distances separating people from one another through racist policies and practice.

2.1.2.2 Two Examples of Racialization of Space in Atlanta Through Policy

The following sections give two examples of the racialization of space in Atlanta through policy: Interstate 20 and MARTA in Cobb County.

2.1.2.2.1 Interstate 20

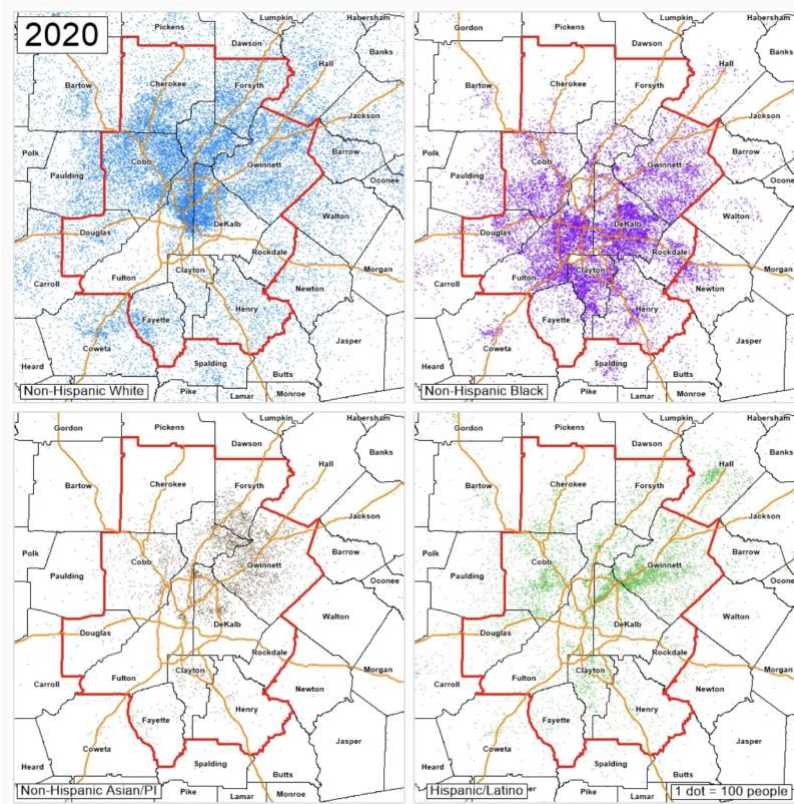


Figure 2.2: Distribution of Racial/Ethnic Groups in the Atlanta Metro in 2020 (Atlanta Regional Commission 2021c)

The “racialization of space” means that, through processes of neglect and enrichment, separation and connection, and enfranchisement and disenfranchisement, hierarchies of empowered and disempowered social groups have emerged along racial and political lines (Sheller 2018). Of course, Atlanta has its own legacy of racialization through space. Atlanta is a deeply segregated city with long historical traditions of keeping people of color out of white spaces (Konrad 2009). This can be done through the national infrastructure policies such as Interstates or through political mobilization around issues favoring automobility as described below.

A great example of racialization of space through federal policy is the construction of I-20, which runs east-west through the heart of Atlanta (see Figure 2.2 above). While I-20 may facilitate all manner of commerce, tourism, and travel regionally, it also disrupts the flow of people in, historically Black neighborhoods within the Atlanta perimeter (Konrad 2009). To this day, moving between neighborhoods south and north of I-20 is often awkward and dangerous—the Interstate was quite literally built between neighbors' homes, especially on the historical, Black, western side of town. So, though this is a transportation infrastructure project, it has had the spatial effect of bisecting thriving Black neighborhoods and physically separating former neighbors from the businesses, institutions, and people that were previously very spatially accessible.

2.1.2.2.2 MARTA in Cobb County

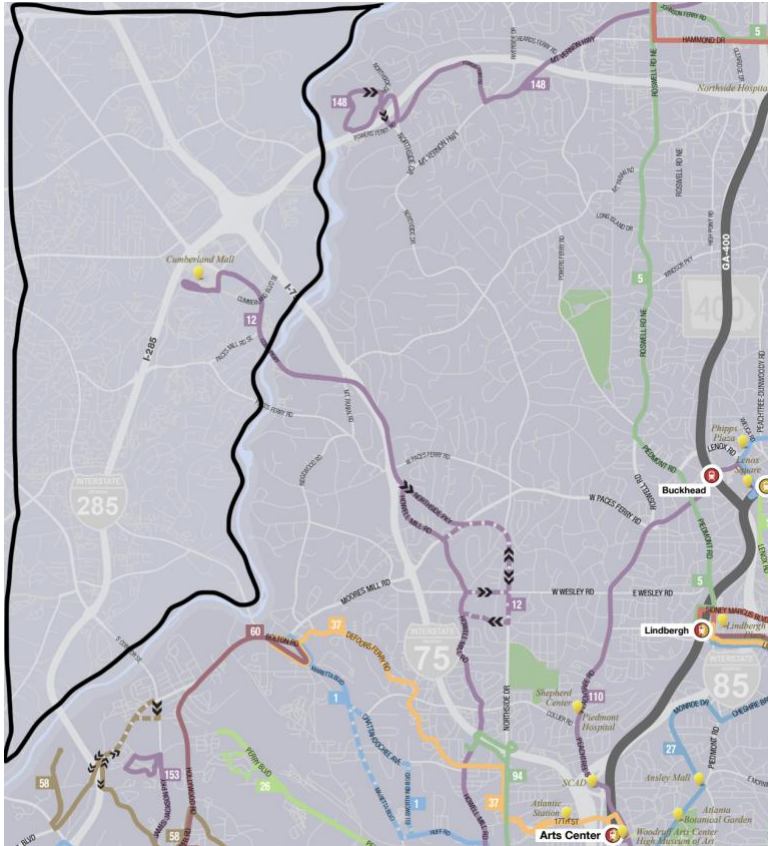


Figure 2.3: Map of MARTA Bus Routes in Proximity to the Cobb County Border, in Black (MARTA 2017)

A more ideological example of racialization of space (through transportation services) is the political mobilization around automobility-favoring policies. For years, residents of Cobb County have consistently voted to prevent MARTA bus routes to penetrate between Fulton and Cobb County lines (Konrad 2009) residents and policymakers alike opting instead for a high-speed, managed toll road that privileges wealthier, whiter, suburban, car-owning travelers.

In both these examples, mobility is disrupted for Black and lower-income Atlanta residents through disruption of access to space, and the reasons for the mobility disruption falls along racial lines, as authors point out (Karner and Duckworth 2019). In the first example, neighbors are separated from each other by concrete and traffic and subjected to noise, pollution,

inconvenience, and danger inherent in automobiles speeding by their homes. In the second, Atlanta residents are blocked from access to the jobs, shopping, housing, and social resources around the Cumberland area (which, coincidentally, is one of Atlanta's Community Improvement Districts) (City of Atlanta, GA 2020).

The examples discussed here show that Atlanta's spatial relationships are affected by racist policy and practice, but also that more research is needed to understand how that history affects newcomers in Atlanta today. The next paragraphs will discuss the intersection of space and political status for new Georgia residents.

2.1.2.3 The Policies of Space and Political Status in Georgia

Immigrants to Georgia face a variety of spatial issues which are specific to their political status as non-citizens, and which may echo some of the issues resettled refugee women experience. The South's car-centricness and its implications for land use, difficulty in obtaining documentation for a driver's license, and Georgia's economic circumstances may all be factors that contribute to non-citizen newcomers' ability to adjust to life in this state.

2.1.2.3.1 Land Use in Georgia

Researchers provide a critical look at the topic of land use and migrant adjustment in Georgia (Bohon et al. 2008). For instance, in Georgia (and the US South generally), needing transportation to get to work, school, or shopping all carry the unspoken assumption that these places are *not close enough together* that walking, cycling, or other low-cost modes of mobility are feasible. Indeed, car ownership is simultaneously a necessity, an aspiration, and, for many, difficult to obtain (Bohon et al. 2008).

2.1.2.3.2 Extra Bureaucratic Barriers

Against that backdrop, there is the additional layer of difficulty in navigating space in Georgia because immigrants face extra barriers due to policies regulating obtaining a driver's license: showing proof of residence through a utility bill or piece of mail may be extra difficult to come by, especially for people whose home countries may not have even issued the personal identification that Georgia requires when getting a license (Bohon et al. 2008), or for those who may have fled their home countries unexpectedly.

2.1.2.3.3 Georgia's Economy

Georgia's economic circumstances also play a role in adjusting to life as a newcomer. Georgia being a home to many low-wage industries (such as poultry farming and construction) plays a role in the refugee adjustment process (Bohon et al. 2008). This is because these jobs tend to be located away from city centers and tend to hire immigrants who take jobs US-born people do not generally want. These circumstances tend to support an array of observable mobility patterns consistent with the "automobility regime" (Sheller 2018): automobile ownership or access as a necessity, staying in jobs that provide transportation out of necessity, fewer work opportunities for women, spatial clustering in ghettoized neighborhoods, death and injury along pedestrian-unsafe roads—all issues which can affect individuals' ability to adapt to life in a new country (Bohon et al. 2008).

Taken together, the South's car-centric-ness, difficulty in obtaining documentation for a driver's license, and Georgia's economic circumstances may all be factors that contribute to newcomers' ability to adjust to life in this state.

2.1.2.4 Clarkston, Georgia: Resettlement & Spatial Separation

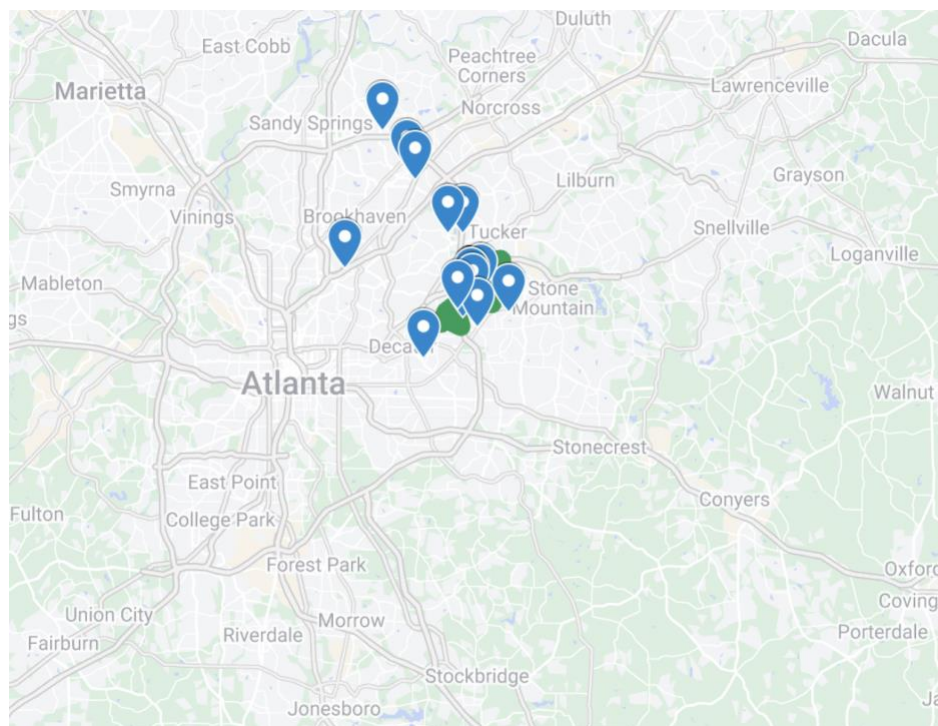


Figure 2.4: Map of the Atlanta Area with the Locations of Refugee Service Organizations (Coalition of Refugee Service Agencies 2022)

Finally, a brief look at the spatial traits of the City of Clarkston, the area most commonly associated with resettlement in metro Atlanta. Clarkston is situated just outside the I-285 Perimeter. Clarkston is also just outside the highly-ranked City of Decatur public school district, which could mean that students are receiving unequal educational opportunities. There are many resettlement agencies that serve Clarkston's resettling people, but some are spatially quite distant from the city boundaries and not easily accessible along public transit routes (see Spatial Relationships section (p. 31) for discussion of this spatial pattern). Downtown Clarkston is quite convenient to I-285, Ponce de Leon Avenue, and Lawrenceville Highway/Scott Boulevard, all of which are important transportation arteries into Atlanta and out to its suburban counterparts—assuming that one has access to an automobile. In nearby City of Tucker, there are more

resettlement agencies (such as International Rescue Committee), which are located near large shopping centers with some pedestrian crossings and sidewalks. Generally, if one were to head east out of Clarkston or north toward Tucker without an automobile, they would be met with disjointed or non-existent sidewalks, pedestrian-unsafe crossings (no crossing lights; crossing timings too short; and crossings spaced too far apart) (Karim 2015), and a mobility environment dominated by automobility (rather than diverse mobility options). Taking this evidence together, people who resettle in Clarkston are being separated from the larger Atlanta community through space, transportation infrastructure, and other social factors (such as school districts and income taxes funding areas outside of Clarkston) (Karim 2015).

In this section, I discussed the history of racialization of space in policy and practice in Atlanta, the intersection of space and political status for newcomers to Georgia, and spatial factors of the resettlement area around Clarkston that may impact newcomers' ability to practice mobility. Having covered an array of spatially-related factors affecting resettlement life in Atlanta, I turn now to a discussion of Atlanta's transportation environment.

2.1.3 Transportation Policies and Planning

This section will discuss some Atlanta-specific transportation characteristics that may affect women during resettlement here. Resettlement in Atlanta provides a special lens through which to view the City's evolving transport future because refugees are a group uniquely dependent upon public transit and nonprofit organizations' private transit services. From a mobility justice perspective (Sheller 2018), refugees bear so much of the immediate burden of climate change and automobility-induced environmental degradation, as well as political instability that it is important to understand how that burden evolves upon resettlement in transit-deprived US neighborhoods. Special emphasis on diversifying and improving transportation

options in the future (and those options' potential to increase groups' mobility) for underserved populations and neighborhoods is timely and necessary because researchers have raised concerns about the role of transport-related social exclusion in widening social inequality (Jeekel 2014).

2.1.3.1 Statewide Transit Policies

At the state level, Georgia statewide and regional transportation policies are evolving, with the Georgia Department of Transportation emphasizing workforce-focused transit and low-emission fleets in rural and small communities (see Georgia Department of Transportation 2024). Meanwhile at the Atlanta-local level, evidence suggests there may be spatial disconnects between resettlement neighborhoods and locations of crucial social services (Karim 2015). Georgia is an ideal place to study transportation for new immigrants because it is a relatively new destination region, because southerners are particularly car-dependent, and there is less government support for equitable transportation projects (Bohon et al. 2008). Because little is known about refugees' experiences of navigating mobility during resettlement in Atlanta, it is unclear how shifting transit policies have impacted—and will continue to impact—people during resettlement here.

Due to many factors (political, social, spatial), Atlanta's transportation milieu is unique and influences the where, when, how, and why of women's mobility during resettlement. In this section, I will discuss: two observations about Atlanta's transportation systems; broad transportation policy and planning circumstances Atlanta currently faces; and offer some anecdotal evidence of how transportation options affect women's social lives during resettlement.

2.1.3.2 *Atlanta's Transportation Systems*

Here are two observations about the Atlanta metro's transportation systems that may impact how refugees navigate transit during resettlement: the metro area has multiple transit authorities and non-automobile trailways whose services and infrastructure may or may not connect to one another; and the transit routes are designed with commuters in mind.

2.1.3.2.1 Uneven Connectivity

Atlanta has multiple transit authorities utilizing bus, rapid bus, and rail: CobbLink serving Cobb County, GRTA serving Gwinnett, MARTA serving primarily City of Atlanta and DeKalb, among others (Atlanta Regional Commission 2021a). In addition, there are many regional trailways serving non-automobile mobility: PATH Foundation, the Atlanta Beltline, the Silver Comet Trail, and other nascent or grassroots efforts to improve mobility diversity, non-automobile transportation infrastructure, and human connection with nature (Connect the Comet and the Chattahoochee Riverlands projects, for instance).

These systems do not always connect to one another, however, which is consistent with a mobility regime that pushes non-automobilities to the margins (Sheller 2018). But connectivity goes beyond physical, infrastructural junctions, often causing issues with accessibility as a transit rider. For instance, one may have to plan their trip in advance to cross county or municipal lines, using internet searches on the websites of the various transit authorities. In the case of MARTA, fares may or may not be mutually transferrable between systems, so one also needs to plan to go to a rail station to buy a fare card, as these are not available for purchase on buses. The prospect of doing advanced online research may be daunting for the casual rider, which illustrates a second point about transportation in Atlanta: the public transit systems that serve the Atlanta

metro are often designed with suburban commuters—rather than central city residents or casual riders—in mind (Konrad 2009).

2.1.3.2.2 Commuter-Centric Design

The Atlanta transportation systems' target clientele is daily commuters, as evidenced by the general narrative that you must “know where to go”—commuters usually have set routes and schedules that fall within regular business operating hours. This may work well for some, but is especially problematic for refugees, who may be more likely than the general population to be shift workers, women, those with physical mobility limitations, anyone with a fluctuating schedule, people who work outside of the typical “9 to 5,” and those who work in industries located outside the urban core (Sheller 2018; Bose 2014; Parks 2004). MARTA buses and trains may move between downtown Atlanta and neighborhoods on the urban periphery, but the buses do not allow transit-dependent people to easily run multiple errands in one trip. MARTA's fare scheme (MARTA 2021b) allows payment of \$2.50 to count toward a transfer between bus and rail, but the transfer must occur within a certain timeframe that may not suit some of the populations mentioned above (particularly those who work very long hours or extra shifts, those whose work ends between 12AM-5AM, or those who have to run multiple errands within a single trip). Evidence suggests that resettlement may subject women to exactly these kinds of non-traditional mobility patterns that necessitate transportation at off-peak hours of the day (Bose 2014), meaning that current public transportation options may not suit their resettlement needs. I turn now to Atlanta's policy and planning circumstances to place this discussion within a wider political context.

2.1.3.3 *Atlanta's Transportation Politics*

To approach Atlanta's policy and planning circumstances, it is helpful to keep projected population growth and the housing types where growth is expected at the top of mind. Atlanta's population is expected to grow by almost three million residents in the next thirty years (Atlanta Regional Commission 2021a). Coupled with shifts in residential patterns toward both gentrifying intown neighborhoods and burgeoning suburbs (Weird and King 2021), this growth will demand changes to transportation infrastructure and attractiveness of non-automobile and mass transit modes (Atlanta Regional Commission 2021a).

Though environmentally focused, socially equitable transportation planning is essential for a livable future (Sheller 2018), political divisions continue to drive automobile-dominated transportation planning. Atlanta suburbanites (particularly in the wealthy north and northwest regions) consistently vote against public transit options connecting the central business district to residential suburbs (Bohon et al. 2008; Konrad 2009). Instead, car-centric infrastructure, such as managed toll fast lanes along the interstates, are favored and implemented. In this case, public transit usage serves as a proxy for race and class, whereby voters can effectively deny riders access to their spaces and all the social opportunities found there. This self-sabotaging stance (Rankin et al. 2015) is often explained by voters not wanting to pay taxes for services they do not use, or, more sinisterly, that voters do not want transit-dependent ("poorer") people to have access to their neighborhoods. Sheller (2018) would explain this phenomenon as an example of a flawed cost-benefit analysis, saying the state is favoring taxpayers (and automobility) rather than the public good. This policy of separation is like what Rankin et al. (2015) call "transportation apartheid" and what Purifoye (2020) might call an example of using transit to maintain unequal spaces.

This example highlights how interconnected and interdependent Atlanta neighborhoods are in that, when suburban voters decide against a more equitable distribution of transportation burden, residents in transit-dependent neighborhoods pay for more than their fair share (Purifoye 2020). All taxpayers (rich and poor) must pay for roads, but wealthier voters effectively deny other forms of infrastructure and service and, thus, non-automobility. In effect, poorer taxpayers subsidize wealthier car ownership by paying for road maintenance, but without enjoying the benefits of either automobility or sufficient public transit (Purifoye 2020). It also shows how crucial transportation and mobility are to every person in the metro Atlanta area's social opportunities (facilitating high-speed car driving while impeding low-speed mass transit, for instance), but especially so for resettled people who tend to be highly reliant on public transportation (Bose 2014). Denying public transportation in metro counties equates to a policy of segregation through tax breaks for the wealthy, which is contrary to the goal of "integration" and may even be distributing the cost of automobility onto the very people who have the least access to it (Bohon et al. 2008).

2.1.3.4 Anecdotal Evidence on Transportation Policy and Women's Resettlement

Finally, I end this section with some anecdotal evidence about how the transportation circumstances described above impact women during resettlement. Anecdotal evidence is necessary because empirical evidence from refugee women in Atlanta is sparse. Preliminary field observations by this author suggest that the MARTA public transportation available in the Clarkston/Tucker area have some shortcomings as they relate to connecting resettled people to crucial services (observations supported by Karim 2015). While volunteering at the International Rescue Committee as an English tutor, I noticed that transportation and tardiness to class went together every week. Every session, groups of women in the class would complain of the bus

arriving late or having to walk a long distance from the bus stop through an awkward parking lot complex. Perhaps not surprisingly, a transportation program director at another service agency told me that, while Atlanta does have something of a public transportation system, most of his clients sought to get a private car as soon as possible. Taken together, Atlanta's inadequate public transportation options and spatial scenarios push newcomers toward private vehicle ownership. This is also consistent with an automobile-dominated mobility system in which owning a car, and its attendant costs, is the only viable option to perform daily life activities (Sheller 2018).

To summarize this part of the discussion, Atlanta is a unique site to study the intersection of transportation and resettlement because: the social and political climate around transportation planning do not support non-automobility and the transportation systems here are unsuited to transportation behaviors needed during resettlement. The next section will bring the spatial and transportation circumstances together to discuss Atlanta's specific mobility characteristics that affect women during resettlement.

2.1.4 Mobility Policy

In addition to spatial relationships and transportation options, mobility studies highlight issues around equity, freedom, access to opportunity, and engagement in social life. Mobility is intertwined with the public transit and private transportation struggles Atlanta has, as well as the spatial relationships that dictate transportation options. Below are some brief sketches of mobility concerns in Atlanta including urbanization and refugee mobility; the "mobilities and moorings" framework as it relates to Atlanta resettlement neighborhoods; and the COVID-19 pandemic's effects on public transportation mobility. These topics help to paint the backdrop against which resettlement mobility takes place for women in Atlanta.

2.1.4.1 *Urbanization as a Mobility Justice Concern*

As has been alluded to in earlier discussions, mobility justice is a hot and emerging topic in the fields of sociology, urban planning, and even refugee resettlement. Among the foremost thinkers on mobility justice is Mimi Sheller, whose 2018 *Mobility Justice* places the concept squarely amidst urbanization and climate-caused refugee calamity around the world. Sheller gives some guidance on how to think about mobility justice ranging from local to planetary scales, which can be useful for the discussion about Atlanta as an international city and resettlement site. I apply Sheller's discussion of urbanization and refugee movement to the Atlanta context.

2.1.4.1.1 Urbanization as an Interconnected System

In her discussion of human mobility, Sheller notes that “humans seldom move alone, but almost always in ways that are dependent on others, connected with others, toward (or away from) others, and sometimes for or on behalf of others” (Sheller 2018: 45). To put that in the perspective of this project, cities and rural areas exist together in a system of connectivity and dislocation (Weir and King 2021); refugees and citizens are defined by their differing access to the human right to move; and neighborhoods that are *well-served* by mobility resources only exist as such because another neighborhood's needs were overlooked (Sheller 2018; Purifoye 2020). The crisis of urbanization is that it centers around the car (and its attendant infrastructure, hazards, and economic industries), its emotive ability (freedom, speed, suburbia, infinite consumption, the “American way of life”), and the destruction it requires (environmental degradation, emissions pollution, political instability in oil-producing regions, and neighborhood dislocations) (Sheller 2018).

2.1.4.1.2 Urbanization & Atlanta

To apply Sheller's critical conceptualization of urbanization to Atlanta, we see evidence to support its attendant problems in the Atlanta area. For one, the suburban counties are growing in terms of population (Peebles, DiRico, and Perry 2021). With that comes the auto-centric transport infrastructure projects we can see around the metro area. For one, the managed toll lanes along I-75 connecting the Cobb and Cherokee county suburbs to the Atlanta urban core--whereby drivers pay to drive faster than non-payers, who must endure extreme traffic. Another is the years-long redevelopment of the I-285 and Georgia 400 interchange (and concurrent traffic snarls and pollution) (Ruch 2018). Development projects that favor walking, cycling, and scooters, such as the Atlanta Beltline, have come under scrutiny for contributing to the growth of unaffordable housing developments on adjacent parcels, under-delivering resources in communities of color (Mariano, Conway, and Ondieki 2017), and driving gentrification in some of the longest-neglected neighborhoods in Atlanta. As far as Atlanta's urban planning trajectory is concerned, it does not appear that mobility justice concerns have taken hold and automobility continues its dominance over Atlantans' mobility horizons. In the absence of comprehensive mobility policy and planning that offers equitable solutions for physically and socially marginalized groups, it is unlikely that urbanization's forward march will be a benefit to all in Atlanta.

2.1.4.2 *Mobilities and Moorings in Atlanta Resettlement*

In the mobility justice framework, climate crisis, urbanization, and refugee migration are areas that illustrate how the entire planet is connected and affected by mobility (Sheller 2018). This interconnectivity is elaborated on elsewhere in this proposal, but Atlanta refugee resettlement fits squarely into the mobility justice perspective. For instance, Atlanta is known for

both the inconvenience its terrible traffic causes and the convenience of having an international airport and Delta airline hub. Daily life in Atlanta is defined by slow commutes, but Atlanta itself provides fluidity, speed, and connection through housing a global airport. Refugee stories are also defined by fluidity (fleeing, creating a new life for oneself, moving around the world) and friction (backlogs, borders, and political barriers) (Sheller 2018). Atlanta's airport connects the eastern US with much of the rest of the world. But if women are resettled in places without sufficient mobility resources, they may be cut off from—rather than connected to—the local and global communities.

The Clarkston area offers a particularly stark contrast demonstrating the “mobilities and moorings” dichotomy put forth by Urry 2007: though the small city is squeezed in the corner between two interstates (I-285 and I-85), the public transportation options there remain slim (see MARTA 2021b for full system map and Figure 2.1 (p. 13)). So, while those with excessive amounts of mobility can zoom through the area on their ways to inter-state destinations, the residents of Clarkston have awkward access to interstate on- and off-ramps, while gaining all the attendant pollution and having few transit options to leave. This is all in keeping with the finding that “the effects of road traffic also disproportionately impact...socially excluded areas through pedestrian accidents, air pollution, noise and the effect on local communities of busy roads cutting through residential areas” (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2003).

2.1.4.3 Mobility Policy in the COVID Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic may have heightened mobility troubles for resettled women in Atlanta. Many MARTA bus lines were suspended, routes altered, or bus frequency was reduced (MARTA 2021a) due to short staffing during the pandemic. In addition is the added burden of protecting one's personal health during a poorly managed public health crisis, which does not

end at the doors of a bus or train. Though the research on the effects of COVID transportation shutdowns upon resettled women is new and the pandemic is ongoing, it is likely that the people who are the most transit-dependent are those most vulnerable to exposure to COVID in public because of frequent contact with others in public transit. As resettled women tend to be hired into certain industries, and those jobs tend to not be suitable for at-home work, this population is likely to be among those hit hardest by the pandemic's impact to public transportation.

2.2 Spatial Relationships

This section will first discuss the issues of spatial dispersal and clustering of refugee newcomers, then move on to knowledge about the spatial characteristics of resettlement areas. Next is a discussion of secondary migration and how it is linked to initial resettlement neighborhoods. I then discuss the theory of feminist urbanism as it relates to this topic, and finally propose expectations to my spatial-related interview questions considering the literature and guiding theory.

2.2.1 Spatial Clustering & Dispersal

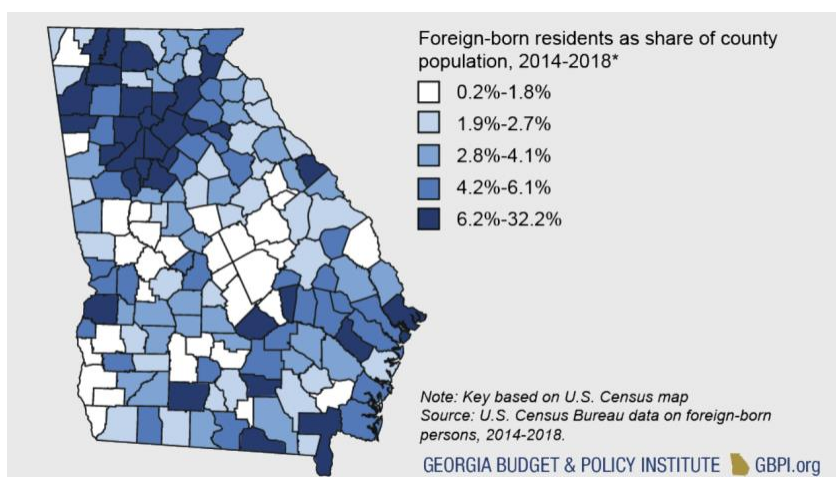


Figure 2.5: Spatial Concentration of Foreign-Born Residents in the State of Georgia, 2018

(Georgia Budget and Policy Institute 2020)

This section discusses the concepts of *spatial clustering* and *dispersal*, which refer to how closely together or far apart people are housed—from one another and from important locations—during initial resettlement by a resettlement agency. I discuss spatial clustering in resettlement neighborhoods, spatial dispersal from job centers and services, and government spatial strategies for resettlement.

2.2.1.1 Spatial Clustering in Resettlement Neighborhoods

Refugees are initially clustered together spatially to give them proximity to both social services and social support (Bloem 2017), but at the cost of choosing locations that are the best to help refugees adjust to their new lives (Bose 2020). For the purposes here, “clustering” refers to people being placed in initial resettlement areas in close physical proximity to one another, such as the same apartment housing complexes, or within a compact geographic corridor. The characteristics of neighborhoods where refugees tend to be clustered together are discussed in more detail below, but these areas tend to be far from central business districts and job centers.

2.2.1.2 Spatial Dispersal from Job Centers & Services

While resettling people tend to be housed within a compact geographic cluster initially, they are also “dispersed” far from areas where potential employment resides. Living on the outskirts of a central business district affects geographic availability of services for refugees in addition to limiting work opportunities. Less geographic access to desired locations means fewer job opportunities, poorer health, and healthcare access, missed opportunities for education, language, and children’s socialization and learning (Bose 2014). Dispersing resettling people far from central business districts prevents integration into the host society and this separation is intended to prevent job competition with US nationals by pushing refugees into work for which they may be ill-suited, ill-prepared, and which are unlikely to be desirable to US-born job

seekers (Kibreab 2007). In qualitative data analyses (Uteng 2009), immigrant and refugee women directly connected the spatial relationships between home and work: being too far away (in distance and travel time) meant that women could not accept better-paying jobs even though they had the skills and language required.

2.2.1.3 Government Spatial Strategies for Resettlement

In terms of spatial organization, the goals of localities and the best interests of resettling people are pitted against each other in the literature. Namely, the policy of dispersing resettling people across wide spatial areas to distribute the “burden”¹ upon localities may contradict the stated goal of quick “self-sufficiency” because people need geographic access to services, opportunities, and social support to become “self-sufficient” (Poteet and Nourpanah 2016).

Spatially dispersing refugees throughout an area is contrary to resettlement goals for a few reasons. For one, dispersal can disjoint refugees’ access to one another, and thus limit their access to social capital (Poteet and Nourpanah 2016). As alluded to above, disconnecting women from nearby jobs can keep them in a cycle of lost opportunity (Uteng 2009). Also, spending disproportionate amounts of money and time on long travel trips means that women have a hard time saving for costly driver’s licenses (in Uteng 2009, an example from Norway), which further excludes them from improving their mobility. Dispersal makes it more difficult to distribute the necessary social services refugees must draw upon during resettlement, thus costing localities

¹The problematic use of “burden” is documented and critiqued in the literature, and its use is ironic given that: immigrants and refugees tend to have low levels of registering for unemployment assistance in Norway (Uteng 2009); despite paying much more in college tuition than in-state residents and contributing billions to the state’s annual economy (CRSA 2020); and having extremely high rates (84.2%) of becoming financially self-sufficient within 180 days of arrival (CRSA 2020)—among many other reasons.

more in the long run (Poteet and Nourpanah 2016) and contributing to continued exclusion from social opportunities by increasing travel times and decreasing access to services (Truelove 2000).

2.2.2 Characteristics of Resettlement Areas

The spatial organization of the physical environment is a key factor in shaping access to work, family, and healthcare (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2003). Similarly, the spatial aspects of refugee resettlement neighborhoods are known to play a role in the resettlement process because spatial dispersion from key locations means less access to services, such as employment, opportunities for children, and healthcare (Edward and Hines-Martin 2014; Truelove 2000; Bose 2014; Bose 2020).

2.2.2.1 Spatial Dislocation in Low-Income Areas During Resettlement

Evidence shows that refugees are initially resettled in communities with specific spatial and social characteristics: namely, these areas tend to be relatively low-income and spatially dislocated from both central business districts (Bose 2020; Karim 2015; Buscher 2011; Atlanta Regional Commission 2017) and from the kinds of employers that tend to hire resettling people.

2.2.2.1.1 Low-Income Areas

As initially resettled refugees as a group tend to have low incomes, the places they are resettled must be able to accommodate people with low incomes. This often takes the form of landlords that accept government residential assistance (Chaney et al. 2018; Bose 2020). These kinds of low-income neighborhoods for initial placement may not be able to keep up with the community resources needed during resettlement (Buscher 2011; Bose 2020), such as workforce training or transportation services (Bose 2020). To further exacerbate the difficulty in finding safe, sustainable, and affordable housing for newcomers, the Clarkston area is gentrifying and it

is listed as a concern in Clarkston's Comprehensive Plan (Kim and Bozarth 2021; City of Clarkston 2022).

2.2.2.1.2 Spatial Dislocation from Jobs

Spatial and economic dislocation often go hand-in-hand, a tenet of spatial mismatch theory (Kain 1992). A relevant example of this is that Clarkston is touted by its city website as having favorable conditions for resettlement (such as access to interstates, public transportation, and varied available housing stock), but the website interestingly does not mention its local job opportunities (City of Clarkston 2018). Employers in the central business district of Atlanta don't tend to be the ones who hire refugees (Karim 2015).

When viewed together, resettled people are initially placed in areas that may be particularly dislocated from job opportunities. Because resettlement demands low-cost housing, those initial resettlement neighborhoods are unlikely to be bustling centers of commerce or job opportunities. Because of the types of industries that tend to hire people who are new to the US, those jobs tend to be located in low-density industrial areas far outside city centers. This evidence suggests that current resettlement policy and practices may not support resettled people's geographic access to work opportunities.

2.2.3 Theoretical Integration: Feminist Urbanism

This section discusses the feminist urbanism theory usefulness as it relates to this project's exploration of spatial relationships in the city. I cover an overview of feminist urbanism, applying feminist urbanism to women's resettlement, centering women's needs and desires, and give some caveats to essentializing women's and refugee experiences.

2.2.3.1 Overview of Feminist Urbanism

Feminist urbanist theorists interpret urban spatial politics (such as zoning rules and regulations, land use practices, and gentrification) as problematic and conducive to inequality for women and underserved minorities (Spain 2014; Hayden 1981; Markusen 1981). Feminist urbanism provides a useful lens through which to view women's resettlement in Atlanta in terms of spatial exclusion from work, family, and healthcare. This perspective highlights women being spatially and socially isolated in domestic work and in suburban zones. Feminist urbanism draws on the idea that because women perform domestic work largely in single-family homes, their work is individualistic. This contrasts with the cooperative and collective traits of men's work, and the difference may serve to isolate women from community with others. In addition, the unpaid nature of domestic work and the seclusion of women in faraway suburbs (places, by definition, which are disconnected from the central business district) mean that women are dislocated from opportunity (Markusen 1981; Spain 2014).

2.2.3.2 Applying Feminist Urbanism to Women's Resettlement

The issues of social and spatial dislocation highlighted by feminist urbanism can be seen in the refugee resettlement context, where (at least in Canada's history, for example), resettlement services were originally tied to the male breadwinner of a family (Truelove 2000), which shows an assumption of women's dependence upon men in policy and practice. Women tend to be spatially isolated in suburbs and dislocated from sites of work for pay (Johnson 2014; Sheller 2018; Uteng 2009), but as was discussed above regarding the resettlement context, resettlement neighborhoods tend to be spatially isolated due to economic and political forces as well. Additionally, refugee women tend more often than men to be reliant upon public transit (Truelove 2000), may be less likely to have achieved English proficiency than men (Williams

2006), and may be less likely to feel safe using the available transit modes (ranging from not feeling safe while walking or riding to being out of communication with family) (Bose 2014; Karim 2015). This combination of factors makes feminist urbanism’s emphasis on spatial dislocation a fitting theory with which to analyze the gender-based social impacts of the spatial relationships refugee women must navigate.

2.2.3.3 Centering Women’s Needs and Desires

In response to women’s social and occupational dislocation, feminist urbanists seek to highlight women’s spatial and transportation desires and needs in their urban environment—an issue that this project seeks to understand for resettled refugee women, who may be even more spatially isolated than the average US woman due to resettlement placement in certain neighborhoods. Earlier research found that US women want mixed land usage, public transportation, and safety, but that the reality of the physical landscape more closely mirrors men’s desire: homogeneous land use in conventional suburbs (Shlay and DiGregorio 1985). Especially given that Atlanta is notorious for its sprawl, restricted public transportation, and zoning laws that prohibit mixed-use and discourage density (Karim 2015), it is very possible that the spatial inequalities that disproportionately affect refugee women are present—if not heightened—in this city.

2.2.3.4 Caveats on Essentializing Women’s & Refugee Experiences

Though the initial foundation of feminist urbanism rested on a dichotomy between “men’s” and “women’s” work that may be less applicable today in some sectors, the evidence does continue to point to women bearing a disproportionate burden of work for pay, household management, and care for family members (see Haarlammert 2019 for a literature review on resettled women’s “double day”). This may be especially true for resettled refugee women, who

are documented to make sacrifices in terms of work, family, or health due to their competing responsibilities (Uteng 2009; Farber et al. 2018).

Because resettlement policy so wholly focuses on achieving financial “self-sufficiency” as quickly as possible (Haarlammert 2019), it may be an error to think of resettled women as following the same gender-segregated working patterns that feminist urbanism emerged from in the US. That is, resettled women are expected to obtain employment for pay. However, it does remain to be seen if the types of work that resettled people in Atlanta obtain does tend to be gender-segregated, and if the industries that employ resettled women here are spatially isolated or isolating compared with men’s employment. This project may shed some light on these questions, but they are important avenues for future research, nonetheless.

2.2.3.4.1 Women as Spatially Entrapped?

Gilbert (1998) complicates the idea of “spatial entrapment” that women face, which posits that because of these social and spatial forces mentioned above, women are “trapped” and unable to access resources outside of what can be reached in their proximity. By highlighting how women draw upon their nearby networks for support, Gilbert (1998) shows how Black and white women use contacts in their churches and neighborhoods to develop their networks “in place.” This applies to resettled refugee women because refugee experiences are extremely diverse, and it is risky to make blanket statements about the experiences of such a wide-ranging group (Williams 2006; Vigil and Abidi 2018).

Gilbert’s work provides nuance to the feminist urbanist tenet that women are dislocated from social resources. While that may be true, women are also resourceful, proactive, and capable of drawing on resources that may be overlooked and disregarded by patriarchal observers.

2.2.3.4.2 Women as Proactive and Independent

Williams (2006) emphasizes that refugees are not “stuck” and seek to be social actors in their own right. Gilbert (1998) shows how women make the best of their spatial situations by developing human relationships within their communities, especially within their neighborhoods and churches. For this project, feminist urbanism is valuable for its emphasis on documenting what women want and desire in their communities and as it relates to access to work, family opportunities, and healthcare due to spatial, transportation, and mobility situations (see Sheller 2018). I do not think that the dichotomy between “men’s” and “women’s” work is as stark for refugees in Atlanta as feminist urbanism might hypothesize, at least in some sectors such as chicken packaging where refugees are known to work. I also reject any framing that assumes women are asocial, non-actors, particularly for refugee women who strive to be independent and proactive in resettlement (Vigil and Abidi 2018; Williams 2006).

2.3 Transportation

This section will discuss the known literature on transportation access and options as they relate to resettled refugees. I begin with the transportation concepts of *accessibility* and *inaccessibility*; *transport poverty*; *transport advantage* and *disadvantage*; and *transport quality of life*. I discuss transportation desires expressed by refugee women in the literature, and barriers to their transportation access. I then integrate the theoretical framework of transport and social exclusion. This section ends with a review of my transportation-related research questions and provides hypotheses for what I expect to find during this research.

2.3.1 Transportation Concepts

Because transportation concepts are applied differently depending on the field of study, here I discuss the concepts I apply in this project. What is especially important about these

concepts for this research is the intersection of the built environment with human social life: for instance, *accessibility* goes beyond just the ability to get somewhere and reveals the human social elements involved in movement. Also important to note, many of these concepts are used in the context of quantitative studies that do not necessarily measure people's subjective experiences of movement and space. Scholars have noted the utility of qualitative methods to better understand the lived experiences of community members and contribute to transportation and mobility studies (Bose 2014; Jeekel 2019).

2.3.1.1 *Accessibility and Inaccessibility*

Accessibility and *inaccessibility* are important to discussions of space, transportation, and mobility for the populations in focus here (women, people of color, immigrants and refugees, and families). But these terms are defined differently by scholars depending on their research focus. The authors mentioned here variably focus on accessibility as a trait of humans, places, infrastructure—or all or none of these. Farber et al. (2018) calls accessibility the ability to reach destinations. Notice that this definition is so general as to be up for interpretation: is a place in/accessible, or do people have or fail to have access? Similarly, can a resource be called accessible if a person can get to it but at great personal cost? Accessibility can also describe a transport project's relative distribution of access to social opportunities for various groups in a population (van Wee and Geurs 2011). This definition focuses on infrastructure as a driver for social opportunities. A place may be said to be inaccessible if transportation costs to get there are restrictively high, or if transportation options are unavailable during the needed times of day (Farber et al. 2018). This usage implies that some other restricting factors (time, or cost) impinge upon humans' ability to take advantage of the resource.

Accessibility has multiple dimensions, ranging from land-use, temporal, transportation, and individual (Jeekel 2019). For instance, accessibility of a place can be rated along these factors: is a service agency located such that other service agencies are conveniently close by, or are sprawling industrial complexes nearby (land-use)? How long does it take to get from one's home to the grocery store using available transportation modes (temporal)? Can a person take a bus or transfer to another transit mode and arrive there (transportation)? And are spaces accessible for people who, for instance, take more than the allotted time to get across its nearby crosswalk (individual)?

But from an urban sociological perspective, I argue that even more factors come into play beyond if people can physically access a space, place, or transit resource. Accessibility of a place includes social and emotional dimensions like feelings of fear, safety, welcoming, and belonging. Accessibility should also include whether people have the resources to use services, such as the knowledge of policies and rules or language interpretation services. These human and lived experiences of accessibility are wildly complex and varied—and not well studied for newly-arrived people. Though Jeekel (2019) did not have a focus on refugees or women, the author does advocate for real-life transport experience data collection, which is precisely what this project aims to achieve.

Accessibility is such an important concept for policy planners to assess and understand for resettled women in Atlanta. This is because, oftentimes, policymakers may not fully appreciate the reasons why resources in the community aren't used by the populations it seeks to serve (Jeekel 2014). Merely having the presence of a transportation resource in a community does not make it accessible (Karim 2015)—which may be especially true in resettlement neighborhoods where differing cultural views of travel may be present. Without a deeper

understanding of women's experiences in transit, planners are likely to overlook issues of safety, affordability, and scheduling that are crucial to the everyday lives of people using buses and rail (Karim 2015). Accessibility is also so crucial for this group of women because they may have few other resources available to them to meet their transportation needs (Bose 2014; Truelove 2000). Anecdotally, resettlement service agencies may be making up the difference between public transportation resources and newcomers' ability to access them by running their own private minibus routes and offering transportation courses to familiarize people with how to ride MARTA. It is in the public interest to make transportation services accessible to all—if not for ethical or humanistic reasons then at least for community economic reasons.

2.3.1.2 *Transport Poverty*

Transport poverty (see Sheller 2018; Jeekel 2019, but coined by Gordon Stokes, citation unknown) is a concept that addresses the amount of time, money, and space that transportation occupies in people's lives. Transport poverty occurs when a "household is forced to consume more travel costs than it can afford, especially costs of motor car ownership and usage" (Jeekel 2019). I argue that transport poverty can also occur when the cost of utilizing public transportation takes up a disproportionate amount of the household budget or an exorbitant amount of time. To use Atlanta's MARTA as an example, if one ride on the bus or rail is \$2.50, and four people take roundtrips five days a week, that quickly adds up to \$200 a month—without the convenience of being able to go anywhere at any time, which a private car might offer at a similar price. Transport poverty might also take the form of long travel times, which may translate to monetary cost as well. If, for instance, a woman spends hours commuting home, after factoring in childcare costs, she may be better off monetarily foregoing the job and staying home

with the children herself instead (Uteng 2009 offers an example of how women weigh the costs and benefits of travel time and wages).

Given the types of low wage work that refugees tend to obtain upon resettlement, it is possible that they may be vulnerable to transport poverty. This is important for social and resettlement outcomes because the relative cost of transportation may impact families' ability to pay for healthcare costs or allow children to participate in social and educational enrichment activities. It can even impact women's emotional lives, such as when women who are unable to afford a private car are denied the personal space and sense of safety they desire (Uteng et al. 2019).

2.3.1.3 *Transport Advantage and Disadvantage*

Transportation advantage and disadvantage are concepts that do more than describe simply if mobility resources are available to help people move around. Transportation disadvantages constrain people's participation in "normal" activities of daily life, such as work or language classes (Farber et al. 2018). Transport disadvantage has two characteristics: a lack of alternatives and the stress caused by having to purchase transportation alternatives (Jeekel 2019). Poor and Black residents of New Orleans being unable to leave during hurricane Katrina is an example of lack of alternatives; having to pay for two cars in a sprawled-out urban area is an example of financial stress (Jeekel 2019). Within the context of car-centric policies and practices and sprawl (Konrad 2009), it's easy to see how those without personal cars are subject to transport disadvantage and those with a car can most easily navigate the physical environment. Transport disadvantage can also come to those who are very old, very young, have health issues, do not have driver's licenses, or are otherwise in a socially marginalized position—especially when a variety of transportation options are not available in their area.

There is a distinction on transportation disadvantage that is also important to this research: that of *voluntary* or *involuntary disadvantage* (Jeekel 2019). Those with the privilege to choose to live in less expensive, faraway suburbs may be voluntarily disadvantaging themselves: exchanging long commutes and high transport costs for cheaper housing, lower cost of living, and perception of higher safety. However, those experiencing involuntary transport disadvantage may be those most vulnerable to missing out on social opportunities because they lack other resources to overcome the disadvantage. Given that transport disadvantage may be magnified for refugees (Farber et al. 2018), it's important to uncover how resettled people perceive their own situation—disadvantaged or advantaged, voluntarily or involuntarily so. Given the evidence that resettled people want to be mobile and proactive about their life options (Vigil and Abidi 2018; Davenport 2017; Farber et al. 2018), it seems unlikely that people would voluntarily choose to make their transport lives more difficult.

2.3.1.4 *Transport Quality of Life*

Transport quality of life (see Bose 2014) is a concept that considers the impact transportation decisions, time, and cost have upon people's daily lives. This concept helps give a more complete picture of the sacrifices people make in their lives to navigate the spatial world. For instance, an urban resident who pays high housing costs might offset some of that expense by choosing to locate near a bus or rail station and thus not pay for a private car. Transport quality of life can also be used to describe the patterns of transportation costs people in a city or region pay—the cost of car ownership to someone in rural Georgia might be irrelevant to someone living in New York City, for instance. Transport quality of life takes into account the proportion of people's lives spent in or obtaining transportation from place to place.

This study will give qualitative context to the transport quality of life that resettled women in Atlanta experience. Again, the prevailing notion is that so long as good evidence on why transport policy should be changed doesn't exist, no changes need to be made.

In asking women about their transportation preferences, experiences, and lost or gained opportunities, I seek to develop a gauge of women's transport quality of life, as they see it, during resettlement. This way, I do not a standard definition of transport quality of life upon their lives, but seeking their conceptions of how transportation shapes their own quality of life.

2.3.2 Transportation for Refugee Women

It is important to understand transportation needs and desires for refugee women because this group may be most dependent upon public transportation but be excluded from planning decisions that affect them the most (Karim 2015; Farber et al. 2018). This section will discuss women's dependence on public transit, barriers to transportation use, unsuitable transportation options in resettlement neighborhoods, and women's and refugees' disconnection from the transportation planning process.

2.3.2.1 Women's Dependence on Public Transit

Women tend to be more dependent upon public transportation options than men (Truelove 2000; Uteng 2009). In addition, women bear a greater burden of multiple responsibilities as workers, caretakers, and household managers (Bellmann, Ypma, and Polack 2020), and patriarchy shapes the privilege men have to the most convenient, comfortable, and fastest transportation options (Uteng et al. 2019). Evidence suggests that refugee women may be even more restricted in their transportation options due to heightened initial dependence upon public transit (Farber et al. 2018). Even the presence of a transportation service in a community does not mean it is accessible: services may not be culturally or linguistically appropriate, be in

an inaccessible location, or be available to certain members of the community due to eligibility issues (Truelove 2000)—all issues that are exacerbated by resettled refugee ridership who may be unfamiliar with English or written instructions (Farber et al. 2018).

2.3.2.2 *Barriers to Transportation Use*

Transportation barriers for resettled people in the US are “magnified” because of language, cultural climate, income, and lack of resources among this group of people (Farber et al. 2018). These authors note many types of barriers to transportation use—physical, social, and emotional—that add up to newcomers being unable to explore their new environments through using transportation (Farber et al. 2018). These barriers have real consequences for the newcomer adjusting to life in the US: in a study of immigrants in Georgia, the lack of public transportation and infrastructure limited peoples’ ability to access jobs, education, and government services—all key factors in adjusting to life in the US (Bohon et al. 2008).

2.3.2.2.1 *Physical Barriers*

Physical barriers that can impede people’s use of transportation resources could include lack of connectivity between infrastructure elements. An example of this from Atlanta may look like sidewalks along Buford Highway not connecting to shopping centers or bus stops. Not having connective infrastructure, such as sidewalks that connect bus stops to destinations, was also an issue for respondents who faced difficulties accessing a culturally appropriate women’s clinic when it relocated half a mile from the closest bus stop without a connecting sidewalk (Bose 2014). This kind of disconnection is limiting for the average walker but especially so for someone in a wheelchair, with a physical mobility issue, or with children or shopping bags in hand. Lack of presence of transport resources in a community, locations of stops, weather

challenges, and physical difficulty with walking were also reported respondents as contributing to not using transportation resources (Farber et al. 2018).

2.3.2.2.2 Emotional Barriers

Multiple studies examine the role that gender has in perceptions of what makes transportation desirable or (in)accessible (Johnson 2014; Bose 2014; Truelove 2000). Fear is cited by multiple studies as being a driver of transportation behaviors for refugee and immigrant women (Karim 2015; Rishbeth and Finney 2005; Yu 2016; Uteng et al. 2019). For women, safety in transportation is a much more salient issue than for men moving about the environment—so much so that safety concerns constrain women’s movement behaviors (Uteng et al. 2019). Fear for safety also has roots in the reality of the built environment, where streets may be poorly lit, sidewalks do not connect to each other, and walking pathways are not visible from home or businesses’ windows (Karim 2015). Fear of being late to work are factors that refugee women in Atlanta navigate when making their transportation decisions as well (Karim 2015). Discrimination is also a persistent worry for resettled travelers (Farber et al. 2018).

2.3.2.2.3 Language Barriers

Language is also a potential barrier to accessing transportation resources and can manifest in different ways. For instance, not being literate in the language of a city’s public transit map can be discouraging for a new rider to feel able to navigate the system. Language can be a barrier to newcomers who want to learn how to drive when classes are only offered in English. Yu (2016) found that lack of fluency in English was a deterrent for immigrants living in New York to getting their driver’s license. (Farber et al. 2018; Karim 2015; Kim 2009; Yu 2016). What is especially troubling for refugee women becoming mobile is that the language

barrier keeps women from becoming mobile, but that in order to get to language resources like ESL classes, women must have already figured out their mobility in getting to class.

2.3.2.3 Unsuitable Transportation Options in Resettlement Neighborhoods

In addition to the physical and emotional barriers listed above, the public transit that does exist in resettlement neighborhoods often does not suit the needs of refugee clientele, which serves as a third type of barrier to use. Transit routes and frequency often do not meet the transportation needs of refugee riders, who tend to work far from their home neighborhoods where bus routes either do not travel or they travel at inconvenient times (Bose 2014). In addition, bus routes in their study areas did not travel to distant immigrant neighborhoods and didn't run on late schedules that late shift and swing shift workers needed (Bohon et al. 2008).

2.3.2.4 Women & Refugees Disconnected from Transportation Planning

Women are often disconnected from the planning processes that shape transportation options and infrastructure, which may be especially true for refugee women. Language barriers make participating in transit-planning activities more difficult for refugees to take part in, meaning that planning decisions may be being made on their behalf without their input (Karim 2015). For instance, walking, taking the bus, and bicycling are often marketed as healthful, sustainable transportation solutions (Bose 2014). However, refugees have noted that those options were not choices, but rather used out of necessity (Bose 2014). Blanket approaches to sustainable transportation neglect that, for many refugees, having a car is more than convenience or luxury: it's equated with a better way of life (Bose 2014). In addition, the fact that few studies so far have documented the specific transportation needs women have during resettlement illustrates that women's concerns have not yet been sufficiently addressed by research.

2.3.3 Theoretical Integration: Transport and Social Exclusion Framework

This section discusses the transport and social exclusion framework and its relevance to this project's discussion of transportation. It includes an overview of the transport and social exclusion framework, applying transport and social exclusion framework to resettlement, and some caveats on using the framework in this research.

2.3.3.1 Overview of Transport and Social Exclusion Framework

In examining transportation's role in a theoretical context, the transportation and social exclusion framework enumerates the multiple ways that transportation shapes social life. This framework states that transportation disadvantage and socioeconomic status jointly constrain people's ability to participate in society in numerous ways, such as getting to work, education, and healthcare (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2003).

The government of the United Kingdom published a publicly-accessible report on the transport and social exclusion framework (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2003), which details many of the ways that problems with transportation can result in or reinforce exclusion from social institutions, such as work, healthcare, shopping, cultural activities, and education. Chief principles in the discussion are accessibility of locations and services; emphasis on how transport may reinforce social exclusion for already-marginalized communities; and the role of policy, planning, and automobility in causing transport-related social exclusion (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2003).

The transport and social exclusion framework acknowledges the reciprocal relationship between low individual mobility and exclusion from social opportunities. When social and economic disadvantages (such as language barriers, low income, and discrimination) combine

with transport disadvantages (such as lack of nearby transit locations, lack of public and private transportation options), transportation inaccessibility is the result (Farber et al. 2018).

2.3.3.2 Applying Transport and Social Exclusion Framework to Resettlement

The framework helps to reveal the integral role transportation plays in so many “normal” life activities (Farber et al. 2018), and consequently, how detrimental it can be to different areas of social life when one struggles with having transportation needs met. When immigrants—and refugees in particular—cannot get to necessary destinations, they are excluded from social and life activities, which ultimately jeopardizes their resettlement outcomes in terms of health, opportunities for children, and work (Farber et al. 2018). This is a fitting theoretical frame to use for this project for many reasons, including how it challenges notions of equality in the US and problematizes resettlement outcomes and “self-sufficiency.” Each of these is discussed below.

2.3.3.2.1 Challenging “Equality of Opportunity”

The transport and social exclusion framework helps to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions about equality in life chances, or what some might think of as the idea that everyone has equal opportunity to succeed in life. This philosophy optimistically states that opportunity is limitless in the US, and often immigrants and refugees are propped up as examples of how anyone can “make it” in this country. But the flipside is the assumption that those who “fail” to thrive in the US have done something wrong in life or exhibit some moral failure. By illuminating how socioeconomic disadvantages intersect with disadvantages in transportation access, this framework helps give context to transportation experiences as consequences of government, planning, and political failures, rather than personal or moral failings to “work hard.”

2.3.3.2.2 Problematizing Resettlement Outcomes

The exclusion from social institutions that results from transportation problems undermines government resettlement objectives of combating poverty, narrowing health inequalities, and raising educational attainment (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2003; Bose 2014). The framework also shows how the resettlement outcome of “self-sufficiency” is a myth for two reasons: refugees must work against so many more barriers than the US-born population toward becoming financially independent; and the US-born population is not “self-sufficient” from the government, in many ways. For instance, if gaining employment (and ostensibly financial independence from the government) is contingent upon getting to some *place*, then it is contingent upon a freedom of movement that may be *especially* difficult for newcomers to achieve because of the combination of transportation disadvantage and socioeconomic disadvantage that refugees often experience during resettlement. Another perspective is that car-owning people (those who have “achieved” personal automobility) are dependent upon favorable government policies and practices that are invisible without a deep analysis. Some of those policies and practices that favor automobility are explained elsewhere in this paper: homogeneous land-use that separates residences from places of employment (Uteng 2009), outsized burden of transportation costs on the poor (Sheller 2018), and barriers placed on newcomers getting driver’s licenses (Bohon et al. 2008).

2.3.3.3 Caveats on Using the Framework in this Research

Though the transport and social exclusion framework is useful for highlighting the role transportation plays in people’s ability to carry out “normal” life activities, it should be applied in conjunction with other perspectives, and with a few caveats.

For one, the transport and social exclusion framework focuses on problematizing people's transportation access, which is important, but does not seek to understand the ingenious ways people circumvent the transportation barriers in their lives. I expect to find that the women in my study will find new and creative ways to achieve their transportation ends despite the challenges they are faced with. Perhaps women find work close to their homes through their informal network connections (Gilbert 1998), bypassing the need for a daily commute, for instance. Or perhaps there are other transportation workarounds that the literature has not yet documented well.

Another caveat in using this framework is the anecdotal evidence that does suggest that non-profit agencies and voluntary resettlement organizations in Atlanta may have a firm grasp of the transportation issues resettled people face and be the best positioned to implement short-term stopgap measures. For instance, the Center for Pan-Asian Community Services (CPACS) does run a minibus shuttle service from its office on Buford Highway, into Clarkston, and through the Chamblee and Tucker areas. Riders pay a nominal fee for the service, but it runs between MARTA stops that do not exist to connect Clarkston to the Buford Highway corridor where many immigrant-owned agencies and businesses reside. The minibus route is limited in where it will take passengers and when it runs, but community members did take advantage of it when I observed its route. In applying the transport and social exclusion framework for this project, I acknowledge that there are grassroots efforts to supply some of the transportation needs of the resettlement community, though this is no substitute for comprehensive transportation planning policy.

This section of the literature review has covered important transportation concepts that guide my understanding of transportation for this project and shown why refugee women's

transportation access is vulnerable and subject to multiple barriers. I also covered the transport and social exclusion framework and explained why it is helpful to understanding transportation access and social outcomes for refugees.

The next section will show how I approach the concept of mobility for this project. I give an overview of mobility's importance, detail core mobility concepts, explain why women's and refugees' mobility is particularly at risk, and outline the concept of relational mobilities as it relates to gender, race, and political status. After that is a discussion of the mobility justice framework and why it is particularly useful to buttress our understanding of refugee women's mobility in Atlanta.

2.4 Mobility

This project sits squarely within the “new” mobilities literature (Sheller and Urry 2006; Sheller 2018), which posits that movement is fundamental to all social life and exposes much political conflict as stemming from disagreement over the movement of people. This project's link with the new mobilities is especially relevant as it relates to the cross-border migrations of people (the refugee experience), the uneven access to transportation across marginalized identities (gender and political status), uneven access to spaces (neglected suburban peripheral cities around Atlanta), and the lived experiences of movement.

While many working definitions of *mobility* exist in the literature, two principles common in the literature are that of the *potential* to overcome obstacles to movement and the *relationships* between destinations and the mobile person. These two principles are shown by the following quotes from two authors: “mobility studies should take into account trips that could not be taken because of constraining factors,” which alludes to the potential (or lack thereof) to travel (Uteng 2009); and “it is the sense-making and experiencing of the environment that makes

mobility” (Jensen 2009). Though access and mobility often conflated (even within the academic literature), *access* and *mobility* are distinguished in that mobility is “relational, contextual, and humanistic”; overcoming friction and distance to decide about when, where, and how to move (Yu 2016).

From these scholars’ definitions, we can piece together that mobility studies build upon and add to the spatial and transportation discussions outlined above. Mobility takes into account all of the above factors, ranging from the systemic to the individual, spatial distances overcome by travel to the options, accessibility, obstacles, and appropriateness of transport modes. But mobility lends its own flavor to the discussion by also examining the individual, human decision-making, sacrifices, opportunities, and consequences and meanings of mobile life. Moving even beyond the systemic and individual-level factors that shape mobility, regional and national mobility systems of inequality are also tied to global trends in resource extraction, climate crises, and militaristic capitalism—all of which directly relate to the global refugee crisis that necessitates third-country resettlement in the first place (Sheller 2018).

Mobility experiences for women, people of color, and refugees are largely missing from the literature and this project seeks to supply them. Given that mobility has been tied to so many life outcomes (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2003), many authors agree that policymakers and planners should more thoroughly consider the mobility obstacles to work, family time, and healthcare encountered during transition to life in a new country (Bose 2014; Farber et al. 2018; see Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2003).

In this section, I discuss the mobility concepts of *mobile* and *immobile*. I then relate these concepts to the literature and evidence surrounding urban refugee resettlement. I further address the known literature on women and mobility and refugees and mobility. I then apply the theory

of mobility justice to refugees' urban mobility and give an illustrative example from the literature. I close the mobility section by reviewing the mobility-related research questions and hypothesizing on what I expect to find during data collection and analysis.

2.4.1 Mobility Concepts

“Mobility enables individuals to get acquainted to the world and to meet friends,” and mobility is tied to people’s sense of well-being: those who have high mobility may report having higher well-being than those who are chronically without mobility options (Jeekel 2019). As it relates to urban life, it is not just the places we experience that shape our identities, but cities are constituted of movements as much as by the physical structures that make it (Jensen 2009). If we take these scholars’ connections to heart, it becomes clear that mobility may be particularly fraught for newly resettled people’s well-being, sense of self, and meaning making within the urban environment. But the stakes are also quite high for the city given that people’s ability to move and experience the scenery is integral to constructing human understanding of what the city even “is” (Jensen 2009; Rishbeth and Finney 2005).

2.4.1.1 Mobile & Immobile

Mobile and *immobile* are two concepts that, in general usages, indicate that someone can/cannot/may/may not move. So rather than focusing on the methods used to move (distinguishing it from transportation), mobile and immobile describe human ability and desire toward movement. This dichotomy also must consider the contrast between ability and desire: one may have access to a private jet but prefer to stay siloed in their neighborhood. Relatedly, someone without a private car living in a city that demands personal mobility may use ingenious methods to get to their destinations.

The concepts of mobile and immobile may, however, be a bit narrow for the theory of “critical mobility thinking” (Jensen 2009). This theory posits that the act of movement and spaces of mobility (such as bus and rail cars) constitute sites of cultural production, interaction, and pleasure (Jensen 2009). Jensen also calls into question that these dichotomous concepts can ever be mutually exclusive, as the “new mobilities paradigm” (Sheller and Urry 2006) puts forth that even imagination or digital interaction are types of movement—human life can’t ever not be mobile. For instance, when a person comes to a new place, they may constantly compare this place to that place, home to the outside world, and make sense of each place based on their judgment of the comparison (Jensen 2009).

2.4.1.2 Network Capital

Because of their unique relations to *network capital*, refugees constitute a special population to study mobility in. This concept encompasses all the potential tools needed to be mobile, such as legal documentation (passports, driver’s licenses, or visas) and money, physical traits (owning shoes or having good health), the presence of vehicles and infrastructure, social capital such as family relations, bank accounts, and time to communicate with others (Sheller 2018). Across all these aspects, resettled people may have varying degrees of access and security. Importantly, people with low levels of network capital are those least likely to be able to adapt and handle disturbances to their transportation routines.

2.4.2 Women & Mobility

This section will discuss viewpoints on women’s physical and transportation mobility, the concept of relational mobilities and how women make meaning out of their mobility.

2.4.2.1 *Women's Physical Mobility*

Women's mobility connects to historical instances of restricting women's bodies through their ability to move (Sheller 2018). Physical embodiments of these restrictions include foot binding and restrictive clothing such as corsets and high heels (Sheller 2018). But the restriction on women's movement is also part of gender socialization. Girls and women learn to do less-risky activities and to be confined to a smaller physical space than boys and men, and that their accomplishment of their gender happens through appropriately exercising or restricting movement (Sheller 2018). Women's "good" mobility is confined to those activities that involve caregiving or caring for home life, while men's hypermobility of travel for work— "escaping" the home—is glorified (Sheller 2018).

2.4.2.2 *Women's Transportation Mobility*

Given that women tend to be more dependent upon public transit and less likely to own a car than men, women's ability to navigate the city may be especially fraught in contemporary car-centric culture. It is also documented that women's mobility (characterized by shift work, closer to home, off-peak travel times, segmented in service industries) tends to be in contrast with that of white men (standardized schedules, peak time commutes, farther away from home) (Sheller 2018). That public transportation routes and schedules more closely mirror the travel patterns of men indicates a mobility system that privileges men and obstructs women's mobility. Authors differ in their perspectives on women's mobility in the West, with Sheller (2018) cautioning against the imaginary that women's mobility in the "West" contrasts women's mobility in the Middle East, while Uteng (2009) says that restrictions on women's mobility is a common theme that links non-Western cultures together.

2.4.2.3 *Refugee Women's Mobility*

Resettled refugee women constitute a unique population to study mobility for because their entire lives have been uprooted—whether from countries of birth, countries of residence, or from refugee camps—and possibly all three. In one sense, they are among an incredibly mobile group of people who came to that mobility because of factors completely outside their control. Not all mobility is “positive,” as is the case in people leaving home due to neighborhood gentrification or under threat of violence (Sheller 2018). If *home* connotes a place to stay put, then those who flee their homes may be among the world’s most mobile populations (albeit unwillingly). To leave one’s home country for the unknown, especially knowing that the journey to safety and a new home may take decades, is a unique form of mobility.

2.4.2.3.1 Immobilizing Factors

On the other hand, for many of the reasons discussed throughout this paper, refugee women may fight against many immobilizing factors during the resettlement process. These factors may include being kept (by force or by law) within the confines of a refugee camp for decades, having restrictions placed on movement upon resettlement (such as being discouraged from moving within a few months of resettlement), being barred from returning to their countries of origin due to ongoing threats of violence, and the multitude of place-based, spatial, and transportation factors that make movement difficult in their resettlement communities (discussed above). Urry (2007) calls this strange paradox the “mobilities and moorings” paradigm: *fleeing* home is central to refugee experience, as is *resettlement*, or “putting down roots:” these are contradictory but mutually reinforcing actions.

These patterns of mobility difficulties are especially present for people in the US South (Bohon et al. 2008), women (Truelove 2000), and refugees who tend to be transit dependent

(Bose 2014; Farber et al. 2018). Refugee women are likely to be resettled in neighborhoods that do not have many public transportation options connecting to sites of work (Karim 2015) and may experience additional barriers to their movement, such as fear for safety (Karim 2015; Uteng 2009), prohibitive cost or time constraints (Uteng 2009; Bose 2014), discrimination, and fear of being disconnected from family members during long commutes (Karim 2015). One example that highlights refugee women's experiences of movement about their city comes from Bose (2014): when a culturally appropriate women's prenatal health clinic moved farther away from a public bus stop and was not connected with a sidewalk, Bose's respondents experienced mobility barriers to care.

2.4.2.4 *Relational Mobilities: Gender, Race, and Political Status*

Mobilities exist in relation to one another (Uteng 2009). Mobilities are performed by differently abled and embodied people within fluid cultural and historical settings (Uteng 2009). Scholars go so far as to say that one group's freedom of movement is dependent upon subjugation of another's freedom of movement (Sheller 2018). We can see examples of relational mobilities in how movement is glorified or disparaged along gender, race, and political status, among other social characteristics.

2.4.2.4.1 Gender

In terms of gender mobility, fixity is associated with feminine (*staying at home*), while the ability to move (*going to work*) is associated with masculine (Uteng 2009; Sheller 2018). A classic example of this relational dichotomy is the heteronormative, white couple where the woman stays home to care for children and domestic tasks (unpaid), while the man leaves home for work in the paid economy. Historically, men's ability to maintain a family and work for money outside the home depended on the unpaid childcare and restricted mobility of his wife.

2.4.2.4.2 Race

Transportation services can also play a role in the racing of mobilities, such as the historical imagining of new street cars as part of “white” mobility, while buses constituted “Black” (read: inferior) mobility (Sheller 2018). Other examples include segregated rail cars or city buses wherein Black travelers receive inferior and humiliating service to privilege white comfort.

2.4.2.4.3 Gender & Race

An example from Sheller (2018) that incorporates gender and race is that of the rugged individualist (a glorification of the mobile white man who sets out on his own into the wild)—whose prototype exists in relation to women and children (at home); racist images of indigenous peoples (inappropriately mobile and self-reliant); and inappropriately mobile “drifters” or homeless people.

2.4.2.4.4 Political Status

We can also see examples of relational mobilities around political status. Sheller (2018) even states that mobilities form the foundation of statehood and citizenship in that restrictions on mobility define who can or cannot cross a border, or whose mobility is privileged on the global scale. The application of the “refugee” label wasn’t seen as politically necessary until it became clear that non-white, non-Christians would constitute most people fleeing their homes into the future (Poteet and Nourpanah 2016). People fleeing violence at the US’s southern border are considered unlawful or “illegal” immigrants (rather than “refugees,” who under US law until the “Remain in Mexico” policy, must be processed within the US). This happens while US passport holders can travel to many countries even without an advanced visa. Not having a car or driver’s license is a huge mobility barrier for Latinx people in Georgia, but the process of getting a

driver's license is especially difficult for non-US citizens—all while people who grew up in the US don't even have to refresh their driving safety skills (Bohon et al. 2008).

2.4.2.5 *The Emotional Meaning of Mobility*

Beyond the ability to simply get to a destination is what meaning the rider makes of the journey (Jensen 2009). This ties into the emotional experience of movement—what does the journey signify for their lives, and what does the ability to move mean to them? For instance, escorting a child to an afterschool activity has a practical function (child gets to participate in enrichment) but also an emotive function: the parent fulfills a feeling of parental responsibility, gets to participate in social relationships with other parents or school staff, and fulfills the hope of a better, safer life for the family (Jeekel 2014; Uteng 2009; Bose 2014; Bohon et al. 2008). Another example of this comes from research wherein Iraqi people shared that the choice to flee their country was more of a process than a single event; they “lived with the choice” to leave, which came with a host of mental health challenges in adjustment (Davenport 2017).

Women's transportation situations during resettlement were linked to emotional states of loneliness and sadness (Farber et al. 2018). These authors hypothesize that the inaccessibility of transportation leads to lower participation in social activities, which contributes to worse resettlement outcomes along employment, political integration, and well-being (Farber et al. 2018). When transportation services were unsuitable or inaccessible for the newcomers, this led to less ability for people to explore their new environment and less feeling of being “settled” (Farber et al. 2018). For resettled Congolese women, transportation woes in getting to English classes contributed to feelings of precarious survival (Wachter et al. 2016).

In the face of limited mobility, some factors noted in the literature may be related to lowered feelings of exclusion and alienation, such as colocation of ethnic peers (Uteng 2009).

Immigrants traveling in private cars was connected to feelings of control and freedom for the rider, and these feelings were found to be important to transportation travel behavior (Kim 2009). This topic has not been dealt with much in the literature, but the studies cited here are an excellent foundation upon which to build this study.

2.4.3 Theoretical Integration: Mobility Justice

I have already referenced the mobility justice framework throughout this literature review because it is so fitting to the topic of women's mobility experiences during resettlement, and spans across the themes of place, spatial relationships, and transportation issues. Sheller (2018) discusses the mobility justice framework to analyze current and historical uneven mobility and to advocate restorative mobility planning; to connect uneven mobility systems from the local to planetary; and to theorize on how automobility drives the globe's most pressing political issue—climate change.

2.4.3.1 Mobility Justice Framework

Sheller (2018) highlights the refugee “crisis” as a critical component of the modern mobility crisis humanity faces (the other two components being urbanization and global climate crisis). To illustrate: now more than ever, people are fleeing their homes due to disastrous climate effects and political instability caused by unequal access to mobility energy (such as oil fields, natural gas, coal deposits). Increasing urbanization around the world entails increasing inequality in access to transportation and energy consumption. And unsustainable energy consumption patterns contribute to climate crises and political instability (Sheller 2018). Together, these interlocking trends reveal that refugees' stories are deeply intertwined with local and global mobility patterns—and that, given the persistence and growth of automobility around the world, refugee crises are likely to persist into the future.

Taking a global approach, Sheller (2018) even more firmly centers refugees in the discussion of mobility justice because of the deep interconnections between automobility, political upheaval and injustice, climate change, and urbanization. Sheller (2018) notes that refugees are often not placed in the discussion of automobility (the dominant system of personal vehicle usage and ownership, global oil extraction, fueling infrastructure, vehicle maintenance, and roads, highways, and tolls) but that they are often the most vulnerable to the political and climatic turmoil caused by automobility around the world—for instance, that many US military incursions globally hinge upon securing access to mobility energy, worsening political situations to the point of humanitarian collapse. Or, that climate refugees (who currently have no political standing), who are often from less-offending greenhouse gas emitting countries, often bear the losses of home and life due to worsening climate conditions caused by the worst greenhouse gas emitting countries, such as the US. Though Sheller's (2018) call for a comprehensive approach to mobility justice (tackling, for instance, colonial histories and micro-meso-macro-planetary linkages) is outside of the scope of this project, I do seek to contribute to the mobility justice literature by illustrating how women are challenged by and resilient against the unjust mobility landscape Atlanta presents to them during resettlement.

2.4.3.2 Mobility Justice in Atlanta Resettlement

In this section, I will apply mobility justice to what is happening in Atlanta's mobility landscape. Following Sheller's (2018) framework, I connect Atlanta's specific mobility scenarios across the planetary, macro, meso, and individual scales.

2.4.3.2.1 Planetary Level

On a planetary scale, mobility resource extraction occurs disproportionately from economically and ethnically marginalized communities to wealthy, emissions-producing

countries. Examples include oil pipelines running through Alaska native and First Nations lands; and politically disadvantaged but energy resource-rich countries on the global stage such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and throughout the African continent (Sheller 2018). Consequently, the flow of people from disadvantaged and war-torn countries has reached crisis levels around the Mediterranean Sea, the Middle East, Central America, Northern Africa, and South and Southeast Asia. Refugee resettlement fits into this flow of people when governments recognize certain migrants as political refugees or asylees, which affords them some rights to move through or inhabit border spaces. For Atlanta specifically, the suburban city of Clarkston is a federally designated resettlement area where refugees are sent according to federal admissions numbers. As of Fall 2021, Clarkston received the news that 1,100 refugees fleeing the political turmoil in Afghanistan would be resettled in Clarkston (WSBTV.com 2021)—an example of the direct planetary-local linkage in mobility of people and energy resources.

2.4.3.2.2 Macro Level

The macro level is concerned with the societal level of analysis. On the macro level, Atlanta is a global mobility hub, with the Hartsfield-Jackson airport serving daily international flights to and from around the world. Atlanta exists at the intersection of multiple interstates, taking passengers in any direction and connecting them to smaller state-run highways. Atlanta also has a history of being the eastern US's railroad terminal. Atlanta's status as resettlement destination may be related to its position as host of high volumes of international air traffic from the world's continents. Atlanta has the infrastructure in place, making it simpler to transport newcomers to their final destination neighborhood without requiring more domestic flights or long bus trips. Clarkston is situated near Atlanta's interstates of I-20, I-285, and I-85, which has both benefits and drawbacks related to pollution and travel convenience.

2.4.3.2.3 Meso Level

The meso level of analysis is concerned with organizations, in this case neighborhoods. On the meso level, Atlanta neighborhoods vary widely in terms of their exposure to pollution, noise, danger, and inconvenience related to transportation infrastructure and mobility resource consumption. Enclave neighborhoods, especially in the northern City of Atlanta area, are quiet, pristine, and carry a lower burden of road noise and excess pollution risk. This contrasts greatly with neighborhoods to the south of I-20, where pollution, noise, and danger result from unjustly planned infrastructure. As a resettlement area, Clarkston is nestled between multiple interstates but may not provide as many mobility benefits for those who are public transit-dependent (which resettled people tend to be upon immediate arrival).

2.4.3.2.4 Individual Level

On the individual level, people interact with an automobility regime that is constantly vying for dominance against pedestrian-friendly development and trailways connecting parks, business and retail centers, and neighborhoods. Given the automobile's dominance, much of people's incomes are spent on car or transit-related expenses (high gas consumption and vehicle maintenance for car owners; high tax burden on city residents to fund transportation projects and road maintenance) (Jeekel 2019). Individual mobility decisions must take into account what energy-consuming options are available and appropriate in the absence of connective sidewalks, dense mixed-use zoning, and alternative mobility or commute-friendly employer policies (Sheller 2018).

This section covered mobility concepts; women's mobility, relational mobilities, the meaning of mobility, and the mobility justice framework. The last section of this literature review discusses the concept of lost opportunities due to mobility struggles, particularly

difficulty obtaining and maintaining employment, taking advantages of opportunities for family and children, and utilizing healthcare.

2.5 Lost Opportunities for Work, Family Life, and Healthcare

Above I have discussed how many authors have examined the fact that spatial relationships, transportation access, and uneven mobility impact peoples' ability to access crucial locations in their lives. Going deeper, not having access to those locations may consequently lead to people losing opportunities in their employment, opportunities for family, and health. Sheller (2018) echoes this sentiment: "Interlocking systems of uneven mobility distort human relations with each other and with the world." This section delves more specifically into the reasons for and consequences of (im)mobility in the realms of work, family, and healthcare usage.

The impacts of spatial relationships, transportation access, and mobility during resettlement are my main outcomes for this project. Among the main impacts that I have found in the literature are limited mobility and resettlement outcomes, lost opportunities for work, lost opportunities for children and families; and difficulties accessing healthcare resources. Each of these are discussed below.

2.5.1 Limited Mobility and Resettlement Outcomes

Having covered the key concepts relating to space, transportation, and mobility and detailing theoretical approaches I used to guide this project, it is important to state why women's experiences of navigating the city in resettlement matter to the political process of formal resettlement. Refugee resettlement is a political process, subject to political whims, and whose outcomes are measured (here, by US Government agencies). In the context of mobility during resettlement, the stated goals of self-sufficiency and social integration may be at risk due to all the ways women and their children miss out on opportunities due to mobility challenges. This

section briefly outlines the goals of self-sufficiency and social integration, and then details why women's opportunities for their employment, children's enrichment, and healthcare use are in jeopardy when they are faced with significant mobility hurdles in resettlement.

2.5.1.1 Self-Sufficiency

Mobility obstacles affect refugee adults' ability to interact with society when difficulties in acquiring transportation hamper the process of becoming "self-sufficient," one of the main goals of refugee resettlement (Wachter et al. 2016). "Barriers to movement may constitute obstacles to acculturation, integration, self-empowerment, and community building" (Bose 2014). In fact, Bose notes that reliance on others for transportation may be counterproductive for the process of resettlement, reducing the likelihood of becoming "self-sufficient" in that refugees must still rely on public transportation, the carpooling and work schedules of others, and employers who can overlook chronic tardiness. The tight schedule of achieving self-sufficiency has serious implications for women's physical, mental, and emotional well-being (Wachter et al. 2016).

2.5.1.2 Social Integration

Limitations on mobility affect social integration (Bose 2014; Chaney et al. 2018), which is especially crucial for resettled refugees who have nascent ties to their new communities. Mobility is also important to host communities because failure to integrate newcomers is tied to the negative outcomes of deportation, lack of civic engagement and voting behavior, and failure to secure employment—all of which are used by government actors to gauge the success of resettlement outcomes (Poteet and Nourpanah 2016).

2.5.2 Lost Opportunities for Employment

Transportation is the most important barrier to employment that refugees in that study faced (Bose 2014). Spatial accessibility of neighborhoods is an indicator of unemployment for native-born Black and some immigrant women groups (Parks 2004). Authors explain that lack of transportation access and mobility make it more difficult for refugee workers to take advantage of work opportunities (Uteng 2009). Limited access to transportation is so crucial in shaping resettlement outcomes because it not only impedes participation in getting to work but can prevent finding employment in the first place (Farber et al. 2018; Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2003). Not having a car lends itself to other problems such as not getting to work or taking advantage of opportunities for advancement, which impact other paths toward adaptation to life in the US (Bohon et al. 2008). This happens in a few ways for people lacking private transportation.

For one, even when employers provide a shuttle service for employees in far-flung neighborhoods, those employees feel relegated to staying with that employer or risk the consequence of not having any employment or transportation (Bohon et al. 2008; Uteng 2009). Relatedly, respondents felt limited to only the industries that tended to hire immigrant workers because those are the ones willing to provide a shuttle to employees' neighborhoods (Bohon et al. 2008).

Another way that mobility is hampered by not owning a car is that even when engaging in carpooling, respondents felt relegated to the locations their carpool driver was willing to go (Bohon et al. 2008). In all these examples, transportation can both facilitate adjustment to life in the US (such as through maintaining employment) and limit adjustment (not being able to take advantage of better employment opportunities where new social bonds can be forged).

2.5.3 *Lost Opportunities for Children*

Reliance on skimpy public transit has an impact on refugee families that reaches beyond convenience or even feelings of safety for the rider: it affects parents' fear for children's safety and social opportunities they can provide to children. In 2020, 200 minors (under the age of 18) were resettled in Georgia—40% of the *total* number of resettling people (Coalition of Refugee Service Agencies 2020). Thus, a close examination of opportunities children may be missing out on or gaining during resettlement is important because of how large this proportion is in the state in addition to individual childhood development outcomes.

Women in the literature have noted that being “stuck” on slow-moving transit without being able to contact their families means their children are often left unsupervised; dependence on such transit also left women with no other option than to leave their children in unsafe conditions (Karim 2015). There is also an emotional impact of this dependence, such as fear of what might be happening to children for so many hours each day without parents' supervision (Bohon et al. 2008, regarding immigrants' experiences with transportation in Georgia) and fear of what would happen to children if something were to happen to themselves (Wachter et al. 2016). When having to rely on transit, it is difficult for parents to escort children to bus stops while having to wait for a different bus themselves at another location (Bose 2014).

The effects of transportation obstacles for families came in the form of children being less likely to be enrolled in programs like Head Start (Bose 2014). Other lost opportunities for children arise from parents not being able to participate in their kids' school activities such as school performances or sporting events (Bose 2014). Children lose play time, time with family, and time socializing with other children due to travel constraints (Bose 2014). In all these ways, limitations on transportation options and dependence upon public transit often results in resettled

parents sacrificing time with children, children's safety, and social opportunities for children to navigate the city.

2.5.4 Healthcare Access for Refugee Women

Refugees as a group tend to have worse health status than other immigrant groups, higher health needs, and less preventive health knowledge (Bowen 2001; Mayhew et al. 2015). Within two to three years after resettlement, refugees often start to experience the same chronic health conditions that native-born U.S. residents do: high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and diabetes (Edward and Hines-Martin 2014). This is compounded by the difficulties refugees may face in utilizing preventive care (Bowen 2001), particularly language barriers. Refugees often do not access the healthcare system unless a health problem becomes intolerable, and even if they do access healthcare, they may go to a less competent provider just because they speak the same language (Morris et al. 2009). Compounding these challenges is the fact that refugees are an extremely diverse group, with variations in language and culture existing not just between ethnic groups but also within people who share the same nationality, refugee experience, and language (Morris et al. 2009; Bowen 2001; Kingori et al. 2016).

“Unreliable public transit results in inadequate access to healthcare” (Rankin et al. 2015: 67). Access to healthcare affects morbidity and mortality. Unreliable public transit prevents access to doctor's offices for treatment to prevent and treat health concerns. If a patient cannot access the places of proper healthcare, it is unlikely they will receive the care itself. In an example of how spatial relationships, transportation, and mobility intersect for resettled women's healthcare, the relocation of a culturally preferred women's health clinic to faraway location (spatial) made bus routes (transportation more difficult to navigate (mobility) and resulted in obstacles in obtaining a necessary service (a resettlement outcome) (Bose 2014).

2.6 Literature Review Summary

This literature review covered a number of concepts relating to space, transportation, and mobility as they relate to Atlanta, refugee resettlement, and women. These key concepts include spatial clustering and dispersal; transportation accessibility and inaccessibility, transport poverty, transport advantage and disadvantage, transport quality of life; and mobile and immobile. All of these concepts are helpful to orient us to the spatial, transportation, and mobility characteristics of Atlanta that resettled refugee women face when arriving here.

In terms of policy, I discussed the history of refugee resettlement nationally and in Georgia, as well as the spatial, transportation, and mobility policies that affect refugee resettlement in the US and Georgia specifically. This section ended with a brief policy discussion linking resettled women's mobility experiences to lost opportunities for work, children, and healthcare which may jeopardize the official policy goals of refugee resettlement: self-sufficiency and social integration.

The theoretical approaches I outlined for space (feminist urbanism), transportation (transport and social exclusion), and mobility (mobility justice) are helpful for framing refugee women's mobility experiences in Atlanta. I used these frameworks and the literature review to guide my selection of research questions, interview questions, and how I hypothesized the answers to the questions would emerge from my data.

3 METHOD

This project seeks to understand how spatial relationships, transportation, and mobility in Atlanta impact refugee women's experiences of work, family, and healthcare. Using in-depth, semi-structured interviews, I employ a multi-tiered coding approach to construct a story of mobility in resettlement.

In this section, I describe the principles of grounded theory that I use to guide my research, then detail my strategies for data collection: sampling and convenient sampling, recruitment, the demographic questions, and conducting the interviews. I then discuss my data analysis techniques and special considerations when conducting research with refugees.

3.1 A Qualitative Approach

This study took a qualitative approach to understanding women's experiences of space, transportation, and mobility during resettlement. The approach that I employed in this study is appropriate for nuanced understanding of women's experiences by creating what Charmaz (2006) refers to as painting a scene, rather than taking a photograph of it. I acknowledge that this is a mutual construction of knowledge (Charmaz 2006), in the sense that both researcher and participants brought their whole human experiences to bear in our interactions together. I came to the research with my own interests and shortcomings, which have shaped the knowledge produced through my literature review and devising the questions I asked. Similarly, the participants in this study have their own situated knowledge that they brought to the interviews, topics they did not want to share with a stranger, and their unique use of language. All of these factors—and many more—shaped the data collection and analysis process.

3.1.1.1 *Inspired by Principles of Grounded Theory*

This project employed grounded theory principles, though is not a grounded theory study in the strictest sense². Grounded theory is useful in exploratory studies for getting at the “how” and “why” of a social phenomenon (LaRossa 2005), which in this case are *how* do resettled women move throughout the city for work, opportunities for children, and healthcare, and *why* do they make the mobility decisions they do? The influence of grounded theory methods is most apparent in the coding scheme I developed while (re)reading and analyzing my data (see the “coding techniques” section for more in-depth explanation of the techniques I used).

In addition to the influence in my coding procedures, grounded theory offered some specific benefits to working with an under-represented population who has not been centered in theory thus far. Two excellent examples in the literature (see Davenport 2017 and Haarlamert 2019) used grounded theory approaches to develop theories of refugee resettlement in the US: the theories of “making the choice” and “doing the work” show the process of resettlement given participants’ own words and emphases. Below I give three ways in which the grounded theory approach has inspired this project, namely through linking under-studied phenomena, theory development paving the way for needed future research, and telling a coherent overarching story.

Grounded theory allows for theory development on the phenomenon being studied by linking key concepts (such as transportation’s relationship to health; mobility as a factor in choosing what jobs to take; the spatial decision-making that goes into securing opportunities for children) (Scott and Garner 2013; LaRossa 2005; Charmaz 2006). Grounded theory is also useful when attempting to tell a central, overarching story that emerges from the experiences of a

² Namely, for two reasons: I have conducted an extensive literature review before data collection, and I have established my key topics of space, transportation, and mobility more thoroughly than “sensitizing concepts” (Charmaz 2006).

diverse sample of respondents (LaRossa 2005). This is a particularly useful approach for exploratory research such as this because it allowed me to grapple with contradictions in the data while pulling an intelligible story (LaRossa 2005) of resettlement from many diverse experiences. Finally, theory development provides the foundation for future research, particularly highlighting avenues for research on underrepresented populations. Although this project does not fit neatly into the methods of grounded theory, I utilized grounded theory's principles as they were appropriate in the data analysis process.

3.2 Sample

Given the focus on my research, the target population of participants for this study was women (people who identify as women) who resettled in the Atlanta metro area during the past 15 years, who are at least 18 years old, have custody of children, and are able to conduct an interview in English³. This section will discuss the sample criteria and the use of convenient sampling I employ.

3.2.1 Sample Criteria

The following sections detail the rationale for the sample restrictions named above: gender, resettlement in Atlanta and timeframe of resettlement, age, parental status, and English proficiency and Dari interpretation. A summary of sampling criteria is available in Table 3.1.

³ Once I was able to secure the service of a Dari language interpreter, the English language requirement was removed.

Table 3.1: Sample Criteria and Rationale

Criteria	Rationale
Identify as women	Women have particular mobility concerns research has not adequately addressed
Resettled in Atlanta	Interest in place-based peculiarities of resettlement in Atlanta
Resettlement in last 15 years	Limit recall bias (error); take more recent policy and technology changes into account
At least 18 years old	Responsible for one's own resettlement experience; consent and privacy concerns
Parent	Experience resettling in Atlanta as a parent; experience navigating children's opportunities
Proficient in English*	Lack of funding for interpreter; later gained an interpreter and this criteria was removed

3.2.1.1 Gender

As highlighted in the literature review, I was interested in the experiences of people who *identified as women* because of the various reasons why women's mobility is especially limited (Gilbert 1998; Sheller 2008; Uteng et al. 2019; Sheller 2018) and may be even more so for refugee women (Uteng 2009; Bose 2014). Women's voices, desires, and experiences have not been centered in the literature, and women may be particularly disenfranchised from decision-making about transportation access in their neighborhoods and communities (Sheller 2018; Uteng et al. 2019). This is important for policy-making decisions and the well-being of refugee women.

3.2.1.2 Resettled in Atlanta

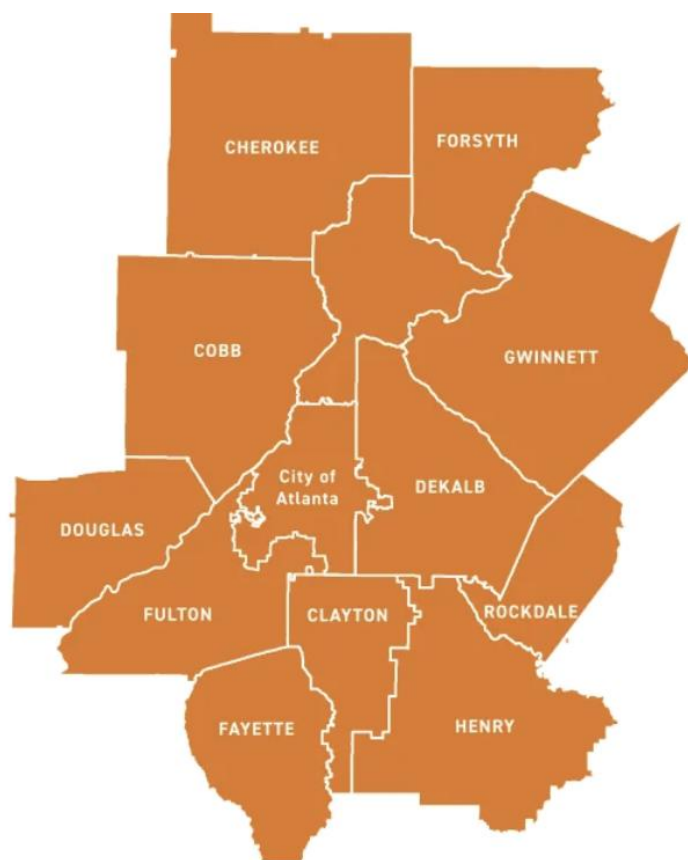


Figure 3.1: The 11 Counties of the Atlanta Metro (Atlanta Regional Commission 2021a)

Participants must have *resettled in Atlanta* because I was interested in the place-based particularities of mobility in this metro area. I defined “the Atlanta metro” as anywhere in the 11-county region that makes up the Atlanta metro region according to the Atlanta Regional Commission (Atlanta Regional Commission 2021a), though I suspected that most participants will have initially resettled in a few counties, namely DeKalb, Fulton, and Gwinnett (CRSA 2019; CRSA 2020). Women who initially resettled within the ARC’s 11-county region were eligible for this study, though my recruitment strategies focused on the Clarkston (DeKalb County) area.

This study is concerned with the on-the-ground realities of mobility and resettlement in Atlanta. Thus, while some geographic features may be common to other resettlement sites, this study is specifically part of Atlanta’s story as a resettlement site and not necessarily

generalizable to other places or time periods. For instance, place-based peculiarities of Atlanta resettlement neighborhoods that I was interested in included the presence of transit systems but lack of connectedness between them, spatial patterns of land use zoning, or racial and ethnic segregation of people into distinct areas around the city. However, there are important lessons learned from this study that can be applied to women resettling elsewhere in the US.

3.2.1.3 Time of Resettlement

I limited the sample to women who have resettled during the past fifteen years for two reasons: to limit recall bias (error) and to describe the more-recent mobility situation in Atlanta. As has been mentioned above, transportation policies are in flux from local to global levels, and Atlanta's regional transit planning is constantly in motion. In addition, new transportation technologies have emerged in recent years (such as micromobility resources like scooters and bikeshares and explosion of ridesharing technology) that I add to the view of the transportation options available.

Although one might argue that fifteen years is too long to limit recall bias (or error), it was also important to balance the need to ensure participants attained English fluency. Given that language acquisition takes a very long time and is a difficult process, by opening the resettlement timeframe to 15 years, I attempted to be less restrictive and more realistic about the language requirement's impact on the sample of eligible participants.

3.2.1.4 Age

Participants must be *eighteen years of age or older* to participate. I was interested in the experiences of adult participants who were responsible for their own resettlement experience. This does not mean that participants are not part of a family “case” from the resettlement, just that they are legally viewed as adults and responsible for their own work, family, and healthcare utilization.

3.2.1.5 Parental Status

Because I was interested in how the experience of mobility during resettlement had implications for children’s opportunities, participants needed to have the experience of being custodial parent to at least one child. The 2020 CRSA report notes that thirty-four percent of refugees resettled in Georgia in 2020 are women, with another forty percent being under 18 years of age. Refugee women may be more likely to have a larger burden of responsibility for children than men (Uteng et al. 2019; Baird et al. 2017; Davenport 2017; Sheller 2018; Wachter et al. 2016). As such, they are the most appropriate individuals to speak about how they lose or take opportunities for themselves and for their children due to the mobility scenarios they face.

3.2.1.6 English Proficiency and Dari Interpretation

Finally, the initial study criteria required that participants be able to complete the interview in English. Ideally, participants would be able to choose which language they would like to conduct their interview in and have a competent, certified interpreter capture their meaning, but the lack of funding I had for this research initially prevented me from hiring an interpreter. I conducted 10 interviews in English.

However, in Fall of 2022 I was able to secure funding through the Provost’s Dissertation Fellowship, which allowed me to pay for an interpreter. This allowed me to lift the English

proficiency requirement and instead conduct interviews with the help of Dari language translation. Bringing the interpreter onto the project introduced some new challenges, such as ensuring the interpreter was properly trained on privacy and confidentiality; training the interpreter in the purpose of the research; ensuring the interpreter has the proper research credentials (CITI training); and understanding the importance and definition of “accurate” interpretation for a qualitative research project (Wieland et al. 2012; Baird et al. 2017; Williamson et al. 2011; Kapborg and Berterö 2002). I conducted 20 interviews with the assistance of the Dari language interpreter, bringing my total interviews to 30.

3.2.2 Convenient Sampling

Using convenient sampling, I recruited participants initially through contacts at a local organization who knew women who were interested in participating. The organization’s staff were helpful in identifying possible clients who could be eligible for the study. Staff members gave interested women my contact information so they could contact me at their leisure. During this contact, I verified that the potential participant met the criteria of my sample, and I provided a general description of the study and its purpose. We then decided on a time for the interview to take place. All interviews were conducted over video call or on the phone.

3.3 Recruitment

The following sections cover my recruitment methods ranging from contact with an organization to the interpreter and the flyer.

3.3.1 Contact with Organization and Interpreter

In March of 2019, I contacted a nonprofit organization serving refugee women resettled in the Atlanta area. The director of this organization discussed my research with me and emphasized the importance of sharing my research results back to the community when I am

done with my analysis. She granted me permission to recruit participants from among her organization's clientele, later introducing me to one of her staff members who eventually became the interpreter I employed for this project. This person became central in helping me with recruitment as well, as she connected me with both English-speaking and Dari-speaking participants.

3.3.2 *Flyer*

My second recruitment tactic was to create a flyer, which other researchers have found effective in recruiting among a population of resettled people (Davenport 2017). I posted the flyers at the community organization and in community spaces in the Clarkston area. The flyers are in English and can be found in Appendix B. I also shared a few flyers with resettlement organizations who distributed them as a PDF. Flyers state the general purpose of the study; eligibility criteria; contact information; and explain that participants receive a gift card (a \$50 value) for being in the study. I used a Google phone number to avoid posting my personal cell phone number in public. I created a QR code that linked to a GSU-provided study page, where I listed the contact information and purpose of the study.

3.4 Conducting the Interviews Online and via Phone

Given that transportation options and mobility were limited for participants (as well as for myself), and that women may have to accommodate the schedules of their children while participating in an interview, I conducted the interviews via phone and internet video call. Although in-person interviews are ideal for gaining the most information from participants' tone of voice, body language, and facial expressions, I aimed to accommodate women's lives and comfort levels throughout the interview process. This research exists within an unprecedented global pandemic and as such strives to meet participants "where they are."

3.4.1.1 Advantages and Disadvantages of Video and Phone Calls

Conducting interviews online offered some conveniences that wouldn't be available otherwise. Crucially, it removed the need for the participant or for me to travel to a physical location, which is very fitting given the research topic. In addition, GSU provides video conferencing software (WebEx) that allowed me to record the interview without the use of extra equipment. Video calls allowed me to retain the participants' facial expressions for those who chose to keep their cameras on.

Others had difficulty accessing the WebEx link I provided to the interpreter, which posed an accessibility issue for the study. We conducted those interviews via the interpreter's phone while she was on a WebEx call with me. We did sometimes encounter technology issues that interfered with the interviews, such as laptop batteries running low, broken laptop cameras, recording issues, and sound issues.

3.5 Demographic Questions

To collect some basic demographic and life information, I began the interview with some structured questions (see questions in Appendix D). These questions include home country, year that they left their home country, amount of time in the Atlanta area, age, number of family members in the household, number of family and friends who live nearby, number of children, occupation, car ownership, length of car ownership (if applicable), residential neighborhood/county/city, and main mode(s) of transportation. These data helped me gain an understanding of the individual's life circumstances that pertain to my main themes of spatial relationships, transportation, and mobility, as well as the resettlement realms of work, family, and healthcare access. Results of these questions are available in Tables 4.1 and 4.2.

In total, I conducted 30 interviews with women from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Ten women used English as the language of the interview, and the remaining twenty interviews were conducted with the help of the Dari language interpreter.

3.5.1 Cultural Competence in Conducting In-depth Interviews

Researchers give guidance on the concept of cultural competence as a necessary skill for a researcher to have when conducting interviews with people of diverse cultural backgrounds (Suh, Kagan, and Strumpf 2009). They define cultural competence as a process by which a researcher demonstrates awareness, knowledge, skills, encounters, and desires when studying people of a specific culture (Suh et al. 2009). Below I discuss two of the concepts (cultural themes and knowledge) described by Suh and colleagues (2009) which were relevant to how I conducted my interviews.

3.5.1.1.1 Cultural Themes

Though culture is not a target variable that I am using as a point of analysis in this project, cultural themes and undercurrents emerged from my interactions with respondents. Authors give examples of cultural themes, such as collectivism (manifesting as unwillingness to divulge personal motivations or giving culturally “desirable” answers), which researchers must be aware of and sensitive to when conducting interviews (Suh et al. 2009). Though collectivism is common in many of the world’s cultures, this example highlights a potential methodological challenge that I had to approach with openness and acceptance (Suh et al. 2009).

3.5.1.1.2 Cultural Knowledge

Also important for this research is the concept of *cultural knowledge*—that is, the researcher must do the work to understand some basic history and background of the research participants (Suh et al. 2009). In this case, refugee women do not constitute a single culture per

se (as in, not all refugees share a common language, history, or socially constructed meanings), but they do constitute a unique political status group that have experienced hardships unthinkable to many: dislocation from home, family and culture; violence, war, torture, sexual trauma; long periods of time in political limbo in refugee camps; resettlement in the United States and its attendant challenges; or some combination of these. This being the case, I as a privileged researcher have a basic duty to approach participants having learned about the specific causes of refugee crises in their home countries.

All of the respondents in the Dari language group were from Afghanistan, while women in the English language group were from multiple places: Iraq, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Afghanistan. In order to do this work of gaining cultural knowledge, I needed to have some understanding of the cultural backgrounds my participants came from. Once I had some preliminary information on participants' countries of origin, I spent time gaining knowledge of the cultural backgrounds and situations that led people to flee those countries.

3.5.1.2 Gift Card

Once the interviews were complete, I thanked the participants for their time and gave them the \$50 Amazon gift card as a token of my appreciation. The gift cards were all purchased on Amazon and sent directly to the participant's email addresses. The interpreter and I stayed on the line to confirm they received their email, or the interpreter would follow up with each participant later to ensure receipt.

3.6 Interview Questions

This section will outline the interview questions I devised to answer the research questions, what are the space, transportation, and mobility experiences of resettled refugee women and how do they navigate everyday life during resettlement in Atlanta?; what does mobility mean to

resettled refugee women?; and what sacrifices do women make in the face of mobility challenges?

3.6.1 Spatial Relationships Interview Questions & Expectations

Returning to the research questions relating to spatial relationships, I expect to find some evidence of the following relationships based on the guidance provided by feminist urbanism thinkers and the supporting literature. See a summary of these questions in Table 2.1.

Table 3.2: Spatial Relationships Interview Questions and Expectations

Question	Expectations
1. How long are the travel times to destinations from your home? From each other?	I expect to find that respondents in this study would have long travel times to get from home to work, and that work locations are not situated in close spatial proximity to homes.
2. What are the destinations you must reach around the city? Where are they?	Women have many places to reach (childcare, home, work, health, shopping) in addition to resettlement agencies, which may not be close to women's homes.
3. Does your neighborhood have the needed destinations in close enough proximity that you can get there in a reasonable amount of time? If not, what is lacking and how long does that travel take?	Women will desire walkability, neighborhoods suitable for children and extended families, and spaces that facilitate women's empowerment and control in their lives. Neighborhoods are likely to lack affordable housing and culturally-appropriate healthcare.

<p>4. Have you had to make sacrifices (work, family, healthcare) due to long travel distances or inconvenience in moving around? If so, in what way?</p>	<p>Women are likely to have made sacrifices due to difficulty in mobility. Sacrifices will include their own safety and well-being, choice of housing, and career options.</p>
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1. How long are the travel times to destinations from your home? From each other?

Feminist urbanism theory explains that women's homes are likely to be spatially segregated, especially from locations of work. I expect to find that respondents in this study (who, as refugees, must work to secure employment during the resettlement period) would have long travel times to get from home to work, and that work locations are not situated in close spatial proximity to homes.

2. What are the destinations you must reach around the city? Where are they?

Women must reach multiple locations throughout their daily lives, ranging from managing household shopping and cleaning, caring for children's education, care, and enrichment, locations of work for pay, and locations of care for one's own health and well-being (Uteng et al. 2009). In addition to these, resettling women must reach sites of resettlement service agencies, which may not be centrally situated in convenient locations to women's homes in resettlement neighborhoods (Truelove 2000).

3. Does your neighborhood have the needed destinations in close enough proximity that you can get there in a reasonable amount of time? If not, what is lacking and how long does that travel take? Feminist urbanist theory points to women desiring services, density, and mixed use in their neighborhoods, but refugee women's desires are not well-documented. Earlier research notes that resettled people desire neighborhoods that have housing suitable for children and extended families, places that are walking distance to markets, and housing that is

affordable—but this piece does not note gender differences in those desires (Broadway 1987). I expect that women in this study may echo some of those desires, but that a more overarching desire women have is to be self-sufficient and in control of their lives (Williams 2006; Vigil and Abidi 2018; Davenport 2017), which would suggest they will want those destinations/services that facilitate empowerment or agency in their neighborhoods. However, it is likely that resettlement neighborhoods are lacking some of these services/resources in their communities because of the limitations posed by the economic realities of resettlement (Truelove 2000), ranging from safe and affordable housing to providers located in close proximity, to culturally-appropriate healthcare and opportunities for children’s enrichment.

4. Have you had to make sacrifices (work, family, healthcare) due to long travel distances or inconvenience in moving around? If so, in what way? Due to the multiple competing needs women face and the sacrifices an average woman faces in moving about the city (Jeekel 2014; Gilbert 1998; Uteng et al. 2019), I expect refugee women to have made these and other sacrifices in their lives. It is documented in the literature that women and immigrants make sacrifices because of limitations along spatial lines: women chose not to take a better-paying job because the distance to get to the job would have cancelled out the increase in wages (Uteng 2009); Latinx immigrants to Georgia made the choice not to leave their ghettoized neighborhoods because that’s where their transportation networks (via carpool) existed (Bohon et al. 2008). I expect that women make sacrifices of their own personal health and well-being in order to advance the needs of their children and families (Farber et al. 2018), as women make choices about what jobs to take in light of both location and having to manage care for children (Gilbert 1998).

3.6.2 Transportation Interview Questions & Expectations

See a summary of transportation interview questions and expectations in Table 2.2.

Table 3.3: Transportation Interview Questions and Expectations

Question	Expectation
1. What are the transportation options available to you?	I expect some resettlement agencies and employers may offer transportation options. Women's transportation behaviors may become more like the native-born population (especially driving alone) the longer they are here. Transportation difficulties lead to difficulties in maintaining employment.
2. Are these transportation options suitable for your needs? Why or why not?	Women's needs unlikely to be met by the available options, especially in caring for family members. Transportation options are unlikely to be meeting women's social needs. Public transit routes, cost, inaccessibility, safety, and time are all relevant concerns.
3. Does your neighborhood have your desired transportation options that you can access? If not, what is lacking and what would you like to have in your community?	Women have unmet needs in their neighborhoods. Public transit routes, cost, inaccessibility, safety, and time are all relevant concerns. Transportation options do not meet the needs of resettlement life (picking up and dropping off children, shopping with bags and strollers, and getting to work on time).
4. Have you had to make sacrifices (work, family, healthcare) due to difficulty gaining transportation? If so, in what way?	Women sacrifice work, participating in children's activities, and their own healthcare.

1. What are the transportation options available to you? As little empirical work exists on this topic specific to Atlanta, much of my evidence to answer this question is anecdotal. I expect to find that employer-sponsored transportation options are one way of getting refugee

employees to and from work, as I have some evidence from the community that this takes place. In addition, I have some evidence that community service providers (such as CPACS, mentioned above) also provide mini-bus routes for a small fee. I also have some evidence that some women travel via MARTA bus during initial resettlement, as some bus routes do connect the Clarkston residential area to providers like International Rescue Committee.

Based on the empirical work cited here, I would expect that women's transportation behaviors more closely mimic those of US-born population the longer their residence in the US goes on or as economic circumstances shift (Heatwole 2020; Kim 2009). So, for instance, while single-use individual travel by private car may be out of reach for women during initial resettlement, the need for and ability to buy a car may increase in the years following arrival (Farber et al. 2018). The transport and social exclusion framework indicates that, if women have more difficulty in finding suitable transportation, difficulties in obtaining and sustaining employment may ensue (Uteng 2009).

2. Are these transportation options suitable for your needs? Why or why not? Based on the literature cited here, I expect that women's transportation needs are not being served by the options available to them. The overarching message women and girls receive about the city is that it is not safe for them (Uteng et al. 2019). With the public transportation options in Atlanta being as described, it is unlikely that all of women's many needs are being met (including caretaking for elders and children, engaging with the community, and working for pay) (Uteng et al. 2019). In addition, if women want to be social and independent actors and gain suitable employment (Uteng 2009; Bohon et al. 2008) but the transportation systems available to them inhibit women from doing so (Uteng et al. 2019), then it is unlikely that those social needs are being met.

According to the 2003 *Making the Connections* report, there are five key barriers that keep people without transportation access from accessing services: transport availability (routes and frequency), cost, services located in inaccessible places, safety and security concerns, and the travel times involved (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2003). Most of these are echoed in literature cited here. (See Uteng 2009; Bose 2014; Yu 2016; Bohon et al. 2008; and Karim 2015 for examples detailing each). I expect that all these concerns will be relevant to the lives of my respondents. In addition, there may also be particular needs related to having histories of trauma, immigrant experiences, being a woman, or having children that the current transportation options available are unable to fulfil.

3. Does your neighborhood have your desired transportation options that you can access? If not, what is lacking and what would you like to have in your community? Using the SEU report's (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2003) list of what makes a transportation resource accessible or not (safety, ability to get to the resource, reasonable time and ease, etc.), I expect to find that the women in this study do have unmet access needs in their neighborhoods. I expect that presence of transit services, cost, routes and frequency, and safety concerns in neighborhoods will be the most salient based on the literature that has focused on resettled refugee women as a whole (Karim 2015; Uteng 2009, Malik 2024). I expect to find that respondents may feel safety is lacking on the available transportation options, that the available options are not conducive to traveling with children and shopping bags, or that the available transportation options do not facilitate the daily flow of life during resettlement (such as commuting to and from work, shopping, getting to educational opportunities, participating in children's enrichment, and utilizing healthcare; or stacking these activities together in one trip) (Bohon et al. 2008; Bellmann et al. 2000).

Authors in the literature point to resettled women wanting transportation options and locations that feel safe (Karim 2015), that have connectivity to other infrastructure such as sidewalks (Bose 2014), that promote social interactions with others (Rishbeth and Finney 2005), and that make logistical sense for having shopping or children in tow (Bohon et al. 2018). I expect that women will want transportation options that allow them to get to necessary physical destinations (work, home, school, health facilities, resettlement organizations) in reasonable time and with reasonable cost (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2003).

4. Have you had to make sacrifices (work, family, healthcare) due to difficulty gaining transportation? If so, in what way? It is well-documented in the literature that women do make sacrifices in their lives because of transportation difficulties. Women pass up opportunities to move into different industries or get better jobs because of transportation barriers (Bohon et al. 2008; Uteng 2009; Uteng et al. 2019). Women also struggle with not being able to physically be there for children’s school events because of transportation route frequency (Bohon et al. 2008). And finally, women are known to forego their own healthcare needs because of transportation woes, such as a culturally appropriate women’s clinic moving farther away from a connective bus stop (Bose 2014).

The transport and social exclusion framework states that transportation barriers hinder inclusion in society for people who have disadvantages in overcoming those barriers (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2003). When women make sacrifices in terms of their work, children’s enrichment, or healthcare, it is counter-productive to the governmental goal of “self-sufficiency,” but moreover is counter-productive to women’s full engagement with society and likely has implications on all three outcomes. For instance, sacrificing better work due to lack of transportation is likely to hinder a woman’s economic prospects. Sacrificing time with children

or engagement in their enrichment activities likely has emotional and developmental impacts on both children and parent, such as feeling out of control of one's life (Davenport 2017) or unable to meet parental responsibilities (Bohon et al. 2008). It may even result in unsafe conditions, such as when women attributed being unable to attend a car seat safety workshop because of transportation difficulties (Bohon et al. 2008). And sacrificing one's own healthcare needs (preventive and acute care) likely has implications for women's long-term health and well-being, such as missing early signs of diabetes or high blood pressure (Edward and Hines-Martin 2014).

Though there is a long list of potential difficulties in securing transportation, I also expect to find that the women in this study are resourceful in finding ways to meet their needs—they are not as “stuck” as a scant transit map might suggest (Gilbert 1998). Examples of such resourcefulness might include drawing upon community social resources to meet their transportation needs, whether it be through carpooling, ridesharing, sharing childcare, relying on friends or neighbors to move about the city, or utilizing new technologies such as scooter sharing.

3.6.3 Mobility Interview Questions & Expectations

In answer to my mobility interview questions, I expect to find the following based on the guidance provided by the mobility justice framework and the supporting literature. Each question is detailed below, and a summary of the questions and expectations is available in Table 2.3.

Table 3.4: Mobility Interview Questions and Expectations

Question	Expectation
1. What does the ability to move as you desire mean to you?	Mobility is associated with freedom, choices, a better life, and becoming independent from the government or assistance. Overcoming mobility obstacles is related to women's goals and identity.
2. How has your ability to move affected your work, family, or healthcare use?	Mobility plays a role in taking advantage of work, family, and healthcare opportunities in resettlement. There are place-based traits of the Atlanta metro that hamper or facilitate women's mobility.
3. If you have had to make sacrifices (work, family, healthcare) due to your inability to move, how did that affect your experience of resettlement?	Women make tradeoffs in resettlement, such as living farther away from resources in order to be close to family and friends.

1. What does the ability to move as you desire mean to you? Based on evidence showing that resettled women desire to drive the action in their own lives, I predict that women may associate mobility with freedom, choices, starting a new life or bettering their life, and reducing their imposed dependence on the government (Uteng 2009; Davenport 2017; Bohon et al. 2008; Farber et al. 2018). Based on the literature, being mobile is associated with having better outcomes such as gaining citizenship and employment, having more opportunities, developing self-identity, and becoming a part of a community. Refugee women have survived some of the most extreme conditions in human mobility experience, so I predict that perceiving control over personal mobility would be an important part of women's goals and identity.

2. How has your ability to move affected your work, family, or healthcare use?

Throughout the literature there are examples of mobility-related factors at play in people's ability

to take advantage of opportunities: selecting work opportunities based on commute length (Uteng 2009; Gilbert 1998); selecting how and if to enroll children in enrichment activities that require transport (Gilbert 1998); and foregoing healthcare because of difficulties in getting to culturally appropriate clinic (Bose 2014). Based on the literature cited here, I predict that the transportation options available to women during resettlement shape their options and opportunities in work, family, and healthcare use.

In addition to the above, this question may reveal some place-based factors that further shape women's ability to travel from place to place. The examples from Uteng (2009), Bose (2014), and others (Chaney et al. 2018) did not take place in Atlanta. Atlanta's peculiarities may in fact hinder or facilitate taking opportunities that are unattainable in other cities. Compared to resettlement in Norway, for instance (Uteng 2009), Atlanta's weather may facilitate non-automobile mobility if newcomers are accustomed to mobile life in warm climates. If this project's participants can shed insight on those peculiarities, it will be extremely useful to future research of this topic.

3. If you have had to make sacrifices (work, family, healthcare) due to your inability to move, how did that affect your experience of resettlement? To begin, I anticipate that participants may not have the same understanding of "sacrifice" as I would use it based on my upbringing in US culture. As a hypothetical example: while some women may view giving up a great career opportunity to spend more time with children a "sacrifice," participants in this study may view spending more time with children as the ultimate life opportunity. This may also reveal differences in women's perceptions of what choices are available to them, or what even constitutes a choice. I expect to find that women have made tradeoffs during resettlement due to mobility difficulties, whether it be absorbing the higher cost of one transportation mode for

greater feelings of safety, staying in an unpleasant job because the employer offers transportation (Bose 2014), or not attending social activities because of lack of childcare options (Gilbert 1998).

I expect that participants' mental and emotional well-being may suffer due to challenges in getting to places of social interaction. Evidence suggests that women experience difficult emotions due to transportation issues (Karim 2015; Wachter et al. 2016; Yu 2016; Wood, McGrath, and Young 2012). Communities of resettled people also strategize about how to get out of their initial resettlement neighborhoods (Chaney et al. 2018), indicating that some may perceive there to be better opportunities and well-being elsewhere. There may also be legal repercussions if women have chronic issues with getting to mandated English language and work training courses. Women may weigh the risks and benefits of entering into undesirable work due to the perception that the company-subsidized transportation is better than trying to navigate a commute alone (Uteng 2009). Because this study is not a controlled clinical trial, it is impossible to detect causal changes in health because of mobility issues, but women may experience changes in health during resettlement due to having to delay care (Edward and Hines-Martin 2014).

3.7 Coding Techniques

This project employed a grounded theory-inspired coding process. I used an open-axial-selective coding process to analyze interview transcripts. This section explains the benefits of the NVivo data analysis software, and then turns to a discussion of each of the three coding phases. An example of my coding approach is available in Table 3.2.

Table 3.5: Sample Coding Table

Raw Data	Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding
	identify indicators and comparison of those indicators to themselves and one another; what are the literal words used;	relate the open coded concepts to one another and try to understand relationships between them; reexamine codes derived in open coding and how can they be categorized given similar codes	identify a core variable that connects with the most other variables and make it the center of the story
Saima: Getting around in Atlanta is really, really, really horrible...Especially for the beginning, you need a job, but then where do you get a job? Oh, it's either Walmart or any warehouse bakeries and stuff. That's your first choice, but then you need a car for that. And if you think about MARTA, it's horrible that you can't get there on time. It's like, you have to leave 2 hours early and then you will get back to your home 2 hours after you're working.	need a job; Wal-Mart and bakery warehouses; need a car for work; MARTA; car	places to work in initial resettlement; MARTA can't get you to work on time; waste time getting to work in public transportation; location of resettlement home in relation to sites of work (time and transportation options)	Transportation options for getting to work

3.7.1 Data Analysis Software

To effectively manage and analyze my data, as well as keep track of all research activities, I employed NVivo qualitative software. This software is available to GSU students, as are free resources for training in it. I familiarized myself with the NVivo platform through different research projects and through training provided by GSU library staff. This software enables me to move through the three stages of coding I describe below (Hutchison 2010). In

addition, NVivo allows for graphic demonstrations of the relationships between variables, which aided me in developing the overarching story that emerges from the data.

3.7.2 *Open Coding*

Once I created a transcript and uploaded it to my NVivo file, I engaged in the first task of analysis: “open coding.” The open coding process entails identification of indicators and constant comparison of those indicators to themselves and one another, noting differences between them (LaRossa 2005).

3.7.3 *Axial Coding*

The next stage, “axial coding,” helped me understand the conditions in which concepts are or are not relevant and the strength of relationships between concepts. During axial coding, the processes by which refugees’ reality is socially constructed became more apparent: LaRossa (2005) suggests using “-ing” verbs during axial coding to show how a process is unfolding. This is also the phase during which I started to relate the open coded concepts to one another and try to understand relationships between them.

Once the open coding and axial coding were complete, I was able to visualize my higher-level codes with tools such as NVivo’s coding hierarchy, Figure 3.2.



Figure 3.2: Sample Treemap of Axial Codes Created with NVivo

3.7.4 *Selective Coding*

The third coding phase I undertook is that of “selective coding.” During this phase, the goal is to create an overarching “story” of the data, especially considering contradictions that emerge (LaRossa 2005). At this point in my analysis, I have identified a “core” variable that connects with the most other variables, and then made it the center of the story I tell with the data (LaRossa 2005). This process developed the narrative of my interviews in a compelling way.

3.8 Special Considerations in Research with Refugees

This section will highlight important aspects of conducting research with refugees that will help shape my process. These aspects include minimizing risk and maximizing community benefit; informed consent; maintaining privacy; and language and communication barriers.

3.8.1 *Minimizing Risk and Maximizing Benefit*

One of the most important considerations to account for in working with refugees, as noted by the literature, is minimizing risk to participants while maximizing benefit to the community (Mansell et al. 2013; Clark-Kazak 2017; Bose 2020). In researching refugees, respondents’ “suffering is instrumentalized” and power differentials between researcher and participant should be minimized or eliminated—to the extent possible (Ellis et al. 2007). Below I explain why my research findings should be presented back to the community at the conclusion of my project, the concept of critical reflexivity (which I used throughout the research process), and the potential benefit of sharing one’s story through research.

3.8.1.1 *Presenting Findings to the Community*

As the researcher in this project, I gained insight into an important topic and the invaluable benefit of progressing towards completion of my PhD, but I hope to provide a concrete benefit to the community of study as well (Clark-Kazak 2017; Ellis et al. 2007). One

way I plan to provide a benefit is to present my findings back to the community in an aggregated form. The purpose of community-oriented research is action and using the findings to make something better (Bilodeau et al. 2009; Bose 2020).

When I first presented the idea of this research to the director of the women's resettlement organization, she asked that I share my research findings back with the community once I'm finished. Doing so is in line with feminist research principles and is an obligation and desire I aim to fulfill. By presenting my findings in an aggregated form, I hope to give back knowledge that the resettlement community can use to further benefit their members.

3.8.1.2 Critical Reflexivity

Feminist geographers have given a laundry list of reasons why a project like this one needs to incorporate critical reflexivity, aside from the potential to do actual harm to individuals or the community (Rose 1997). For instance, I am gaining institutional power (through earning a PhD) based on the experiences of women who gave me their time, perspective, and stories. I can walk away from the reality of resettlement at any time, while the participants live in it (Lammers 2007). I do not have to live as a target of xenophobic individuals or policies that the participants have likely encountered. I have also chosen the "final interpretation" of the participants' words, deciding what the research categories and questions are, and presented the material in a way that ultimately will benefit me. Thus, without critical reflection on how this knowledge will be used, I could be reifying the power imbalances that I claim to want to shift.

3.8.1.3 The Benefit of Sharing One's Story

In contrast to the potential for exploiting participants' experiences, there is some evidence that speaking about one's experiences is a form of support that refugees may find beneficial: authors found that the support and social interaction that a mental health intervention

program provided to participants was more valuable (to the participants) than the actual content of the intervention (Baird et al 2017). The caveat here is that I am not a refugee and am unlikely to be providing the same kind of mental or emotional support as the women in the above study gave one another.

3.8.2 Cultural Interpretations of Consent

Consent is subject to various cultural interpretations. Authors detail many issues in this arena: cultural collective values may clash with an institutional review board's expectation that every individual consent for themselves (Ellis et al. 2007). This cultural trait may also make it difficult for people who believe that subjecting themselves to higher individual risk can be for the good of their community to understand the Western notion of consent (Ellis et al. 2007). The concept of "voluntary" consent may be nonsensical to people whose community leaders (rather than average community members) are expected to consent for the group, or for people who have experienced coercion in the past (Ellis et al. 2007). In addition, intimidating written documents may be coercive to people with varying levels of literacy and to those who fear for their legal status (Ellis et al. 2007). When Davenport (2017) encountered respondents not wishing to sign their legal names on a consent form, the author offered the option of verbal recorded consent, which was then kept separate from interview recordings to maintain confidentiality. Considering all of these concerns, Ellis et al. (2007) caution against making sweeping generalizations about refugees' agency and ability to consent, and advocate for negotiating the best ethical practices at each phase of research.

4 RESULTS

Given limited prior research and theory around the experiences of refugee women, this study broadly sought to understand issues around space, transportation, and mobility during resettlement in Atlanta. The first part of the results will focus on the central theme that emerged from the interviews— transportation in car-centric Atlanta. Then, given the exploratory nature of this study and importance of providing a voice for refugee women, the second part of the results focuses on emergent themes of work, gender, childcare, and language and ESL classes as they relate to women’s lives during resettlement.

4.1 Participant Demographics

The initial demographic questions I asked of participants gave me an understanding of some of their background traits, as well as their history of car ownership and resettlement in Atlanta. These results are presented in Table 4.1 and Table 4.2.

Table 4.1: Sample Characteristics 1

Characteristic	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Average Used
Time in Atlanta (Years)	0	9	4	Mean
Year Left Home Country	2006	2021	2021	Mode
Age	21	61	32	Median
Family Members in Household	3	9	6	Mode
Number of Children	1	6	4	Mode

Table 4.2: Sample Characteristics 2

Characteristic	N
<i>Working outside the home, part time</i>	17
<i>Unemployed, housewife, and mother</i>	13
Home Location	
<i>DeKalb County</i>	16
<i>Gwinnett County</i>	12
<i>Cobb County</i>	1
<i>Barrow County</i>	1
Own a Car/Access to Family Car	
<i>Yes</i>	25
<i>No</i>	5

4.2 Transportation in Car-Centric Atlanta

As discussed in the literature review, the car-centric nature of Atlanta can serve as an obstacle for resettlement. Indeed, personal vehicles are often the assumed or required mode of transport. Transportation options are often limited for daily needs, and locations—including neighborhoods—are far apart from each other. Given the research on these factors, it is unsurprising that resettled women confirmed how Atlanta’s car-centricity affected their (im)mobility during resettlement. In particular, the interviews show that: driving is viewed as necessary for getting to sites of daily life; other transportation options are not feasible or suitable; car ownership is made difficult by the conditions of resettlement; and that driving alone is important to the development of women’s self-concept. Each of these are discussed below. To give an example of how I coded the raw data, Table 4.3 gives the open-axial-selective coding for the subtheme of “Driving is Necessary to Get to Sites of Daily Life” within the main theme of “Transportation in Car-Centric Atlanta.

Table 4.3: Process of Coding "Driving is Necessary for Getting to Sites of Daily Life"

Raw Data	Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding		
	identify indicators and comparison of those indicators to themselves and one another	relate the open coded concepts to one another and try to understand relationships between them	identify a core variable that connects with the most other variables and make it the center of the story		
<p>Saima: Getting around in Atlanta is really, really, really horrible...Especially for the beginning, you need a job, but then where do you get a job? Oh, it's either Walmart or any warehouse bakeries and stuff. That's your first choice, but then you need a car for that. And if you think about MARTA, it's horrible that you can't get there on time. It's like, you have to leave 2 hours early and then you will get back to your home 2 hours after you're working.</p>	<p>Wal-Mart, warehouse; first arrival; need a car, MARTA; 2 hours; bad experience</p>	<p>metro locations; resettlement process; transportation options; time; choosing</p>	<p>Work</p>	<p>Driving Is Necessary for Getting to Sites of Daily Life</p>	<p>Transportation in Car-Centric Atlanta</p>
<p>Muzhgan: The closest playground which we have is a 10-minute or 15-minute drive. But there is nothing on a walking distance, like none of the grocery shops. The doctors, if we seek employment, or anything for my child—nothing is on a walking distance. We have to drive.</p>	<p>children; playground; groceries; doctors; walking; distance; time</p>	<p>children's needs; time; healthcare; transportation options</p>	<p>Taking Care of Kids and Household</p>		

Raw Data	Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding		
<p>Marya: Until we got a car, I didn't even think of going to our PCP (primary care practitioner) for my own health because of the car situation. And I would only ask for help when it's related to my son. And then I only did the first health screening where our case manager took us. Now, I just have a PCP where I go for the yearly checkup. And I kind of avoid going for small pains and stuff. If I have a situation, I just take a painkiller and just deal with it.</p>	<p>healthcare; children; health screening; need a car; (resettlement); case manager; first arrival; avoid healthcare; medicine; deal with it</p>	<p>choosing; need a car; children's needs; healthcare</p>	<p>Healthcare</p>		

4.2.1 Driving Is Necessary for Getting to Sites of Daily Life

Resettling in Atlanta entails getting to multiple locations in the course of daily life. Being able to drive or having access to a ride in a personal vehicle is prerequisite to being able to get to all these places. As Shichi notes:

Here, if you don't have clothes on, you can manage, but you need to have a car.

The important locations that women referenced in their interviews include work, places for children's and household needs, and sites of healthcare.

4.2.1.1 Work

Some of the women in this study either already had a job outside the home or aspired to get a job in the future. However, the car-centric context of resettlement in Atlanta provides a challenge to women looking to secure work for themselves. As Saima puts it:

Getting around in Atlanta is really, really, really horrible...Especially for the beginning, you need a job, but then where do you get a job? Oh, it's either Walmart or any warehouse bakeries and stuff. That's your first choice, but then you need a car for that. And if you think about MARTA, it's horrible that you can't get there on time. It's like, you have to leave 2 hours early and then you will get back to your home 2 hours after you're working.

In Saima's view, the resettlement process gives newcomers few choices about which work to engage in.⁴ Saima suggests that the few options newcomers have are likely to be far enough away from resettlement neighborhoods to require being able to drive to. This would not be an issue if other cost-effective, reliable transportation options exist, but that is not the case in car-

⁴ Employers that hire newcomers may be those whose jobs require physical labor, low levels of English proficiency, or who have relationships with resettlement agencies.

centric Atlanta. The MARTA bus routes Saima mentions will not get resettled people to their jobs on time without a heavy time investment—an extra 4 hours of one’s day spent in transit.

Thus, newcomers are faced with a scenario where they are expected and required to work, work requires access to a vehicle and the ability to drive it, and few viable alternatives to investing in personal automobility. Work is discussed further in the “Work” section of these results.

4.2.1.2 Taking Care of Kids and Household

Women in this study take on the majority of the work of childcare and household tasks (discussed further in the Childcare section (p. 139)). As such, women expressed that the places they needed to be able to get to for the care of their children and their household depended on being able to drive. This is either because the distance is too great to travel by walking, or because holding shopping bags and children’s hands while walking a far distance was a physically strenuous task. Muzhgan illustrates the first when she says,

The closest playground which we have is a 10-minute or 15-minute drive. But there is nothing on a walking distance, like none of the grocery shops. The doctors, if we seek employment, or anything for my child—nothing is on a walking distance. We have to drive.

Here, Muzhgan stresses that nothing she needs for her child is within walking distance from her home. For many in this study, walking may be the only possible alternative to driving, but Muzhgan says this is not possible. She must drive. Below, Mitra reiterates that different locations where she lived around the Atlanta metro challenged her with similar transportation issues:

When we came, we were at extended stay for 45 days. And from there, the closest grocery shop was 45 minutes’ walking distance. Me and my husband would walk to the grocery shop, and usually we couldn't get so much stuff because then it was

hard to walk with that much food. When we moved Loganville, it's also the same situation. Nothing is in walking distance. The closest Walmart is a 35-minute walk. Until we got the car, we would go by walking there because there are no buses in Gwinnett County... it was really hard to survive without having a car.

Mitra reiterates that driving a car is necessary for household tasks like buying groceries. But her words also reinforce that the car-centricness of Atlanta is pervasive in multiple locations where she has lived throughout the resettlement process. She even acknowledges that using the bus would be a logical intermediate step for someone in her position, but even that is not feasible because bus routes in her area simply don't exist. Mitra's sentiment echoes that of other women in the study, who noted that having to walk to buy groceries creates multiple strains in women's time and energy: not only can they purchase less food at once, but that in turn means that they have to take more walking trips to satisfy their household's grocery needs. With walking times to grocery stores being quite long, it is easy to see how the household's shopping needs could easily take up much of women's time and effort.

4.2.1.3 Healthcare

Women discussed the link between transportation options and their usage of healthcare. Here, Marya describes how owning a car impacted her healthcare use:

Until we got a car, I didn't even think of going to our PCP (primary care practitioner) for my own health because of the car situation. And I would only ask for help when it's related to my son. And then I only did the first health screening where our case manager took us. Now, I just have a PCP where I go for the yearly checkup. And I kind of avoid going for small pains and stuff. If I have a situation, I just take a painkiller and just deal with it.

Marya illustrates here how not having a car directly impacted her thinking around accessing healthcare for herself. She, along with other women in the study, use the phrase, “I didn’t even think about it” to describe her thought process in deciding which places she can and cannot reach without having a car—getting to some places, such as doctors’ offices, is quite literally unthinkable in that situation. However, Marya does use a different thought process as it relates to her son’s health, as she would ask for help from others. The choosing and sacrificing Marya demonstrates because of her transportation situation results in Marya not seeking healthcare when she is in pain.

In summary, women in this study note that getting to sites of work, care of kids and household, and healthcare are all in jeopardy during resettlement, and they directly tie that challenge to not owning a car. This is in keeping with the car-centric transportation system dominant in Atlanta, whereby car ownership and driving takes precedence to the detriment of alternative transportation modes. Women acknowledge the other options theoretically available to them—particularly walking and riding the bus—but note why these options are not feasible solutions to help them meet their needs during resettlement. The following section delves further into the practical reasons why non-automobile travel is not feasible or suitable to their lives during resettlement.

4.2.2 Non-car Transportation Isn’t Feasible or Suitable

As discussed in the literature review, mobility is comprised of multiple aspects, including space between locations and the transportation means available to traverse that space. Resettlement within a car-centric area means that places are far enough away to necessitate driving a car and entails few transportation options beyond cars are available to negotiate those distances.

Women in this study describe how they are in fact negotiating space with limited suitable non-car transportation options during their resettlement in Atlanta. The most cited non-car option is the MARTA transit system, which includes both bus and train. However, women discuss why riding the bus is not feasible when shopping or with children in tow, that transit options do not go to the places they need to reach, and that places are too far away to manage using public transit.

4.2.2.1 With Kids and Shopping

As women in this study tend to take on the majority of household and childcare tasks, it is understandable why a main issue they have with the bus is that it does not cater to women holding children's hands and shopping bags. Marya's discusses the physical challenges and comparisons between riding the bus and driving her own car with her son:

There are so many reasons why going alone in my own car will be better than a bus. I don't feel secure when I'm riding in the bus. And also taking my son out of the stroller or loading and unloading the stroller back and forth to the bus. And especially places where you have to take 2 buses—it's like a nightmare. And then if you go for shopping, then I would have bags of the shopping in my hand. And then I would have to take my son out, and then pull the stroller, put it on the bus, take it back out. Overall, with all these things and the language barrier with it, I would feel that having my own car will make it much easier. Because I don't have to move the car seat or the stroller back and forth and then also weather wise, I could turn the AC on and off, and [my son] doesn't have to be outside on the road in the cold winds. Distance-wise, I could reach places sooner if I have my own car rather than [ride] the bus.

Marya contrasts traveling on the bus with driving her own car, whereby safety, comfort, convenience, and time involved in driving is superior to the experience of riding the bus. Even if a bus were available and ran on preferred times, it likely still could not offer the conveniences or comfort she gets from driving a car, where Marya can adjust the experience to her or her child's preference. She also mentions that connecting between two bus lines while traveling with children is a "nightmare," which reveals just how untenable getting around Atlanta on the bus system is for her in terms of the bus's routes, schedules, and connectivity. While Marya focused on the physical challenge of managing a child and stroller on the bus, others acknowledge the spatial dilemma that Atlanta presents newcomers, such as places being too far away from each other to manage using public transit options.

4.2.2.2 Places are Too Far Away to Manage Using Transit Options

As noted above, driving a personal vehicle is the preferred mode of transportation for women during resettlement in car-centric Atlanta. In addition to the aspects of travel mentioned above, suitable transportation options cover the spatial dimension of travel across distance—getting from point A to point B. Zohra's quote below responds to a question of how far apart places she needed to reach are:

The places I needed to go were not close to my house. The bus on Valley Brook Road won't arrive quickly or there's only one bus every two hours. I have to walk from Valley Brook Road to Lawrenceville Highway because there the bus would come quicker than it does on Valley Brook...And for the PCP of my children, they were not close to my house. I needed a ride.

Zohra describes her knowledge and experience of using the bus, including learning where to walk to pick up a bus faster than along her road. So, Zohra is familiar with the bus system and

recognizes that if she needs to get to her children’s doctor, the bus will not be a feasible option. Again, we see here that women recognize the bus as a possible option for some trips, but for others—especially healthcare locations—the bus is not a feasible option. The only alternative women have is to find someone to drive them.

4.2.2.3 *Transit Doesn’t Go to the Needed Places*

Similar to the ways in which women’s mobility is limited by places being too far away, women are limited in how they can use the transit system if routes, stops, and schedules do not connect them to the places they need to go. When asked if it has ever been difficult to get to work, Zaha states:

Sometimes, yes, it was difficult because there are certain places the bus doesn't have routes. Where I live now, there's no bus routes here. You can't find a bus. You have to have a car or else you can't get anywhere. You have to get Uber or something, because there's no bus routes. That's when I started asking the other person to drop me off, because there was no way I could get to work with the bus because they didn't have the routes on that side [of town].

Being able to take transit for daily commuting implies that transit stops and routes travel to the locations women need to reach. But Zaha’s quote emphasizes that there are no bus routes where she lives, nor does bus service exist close to the location of her work. Zaha also highlights Atlanta’s car-centricness: women view having a car as necessary to get “anywhere” during resettlement in Atlanta; and that needed locations (in this case, work) are too far away to manage without a car in the absence of feasible transit options. Having exhausted the option of taking the bus to get to work, Zaha resorts to asking a driver to drop her off.

Given the car-centric nature of Atlanta's transportation system, this can be limiting for women who want to use the lower-cost option of taking public transportation to their needed destinations during the resettlement process. However, the public transportation system lacks feasibility and suitability for meeting women's needs. From kids and shopping, places being too far away, and transit not traveling to needed locations, women in this study describe that public transportation options are not suitable for their needs during resettlement in Atlanta. Indeed, we can see that women resort to driving themselves or being driven by someone else, whether through an Uber trip or asking someone else for a ride.

4.2.3 Car Ownership is Made Difficult by the Conditions of Resettlement

Given how unfeasible it is for women to reach their needed destinations using public transit, car ownership and driving is the preferred method of transportation for women during resettlement in Atlanta. However, owning a car is no easy task to accomplish for newcomers, especially given the conditions of resettlement that women and their families are faced with. This section will discuss the expense of owning a car, the language barrier on the driver's permit testing, and the lack of training and resources women get during the resettlement process.

4.2.3.1 Expensive and Difficult to Save on One Income

Given how important it is to be able to reach needed destinations during resettlement and how public transportation often fails to meet those needs, women view owning a car as an important but expensive part of their family's resettlement life. At the end of our interview, Muzhgan wanted to emphasize:

The transportation is definitely something very big for all the people who come and get resettled in the United States and especially in Georgia. Not having a good public transportation—especially in Gwinnett County, there is no public

transportation—in Europe and stuff, there are trains and metros which you can use. But here, the only option you have is that you have to buy your own car, and then buying a car is not easy. It's not like \$1,000 or \$2,000; you definitely need a good amount of money and then you have to be able to pay the insurance for the car monthly. So, it is a big cost, and a lot of the families are not able to get to that point very quickly.

Muzhgan shares her view that cars are big financial purchases, that they come with ongoing costs like insurance, and that many families are not able to purchase one quickly upon their arrival in Georgia. The large expense of buying and owning a car may be detrimental to women and their families during resettlement especially because, as we have seen above, cars are viewed as necessary to reach destinations like healthcare and work. This scenario may be putting women in an untenable situation where they are unable to achieve sustainable employment: women need a car to work but can't get a car without being able to save income from their work.

4.2.3.2 *Difficult to Get permit with Language Barrier*

Owning and driving a car is not just financially difficult to accomplish, but women also have trouble passing the written permit test because of language barriers. Though media attention has brought to the attention of the Department of Driver Services that people need translation services in Dari at the Clarkston area branches,⁵ many women struggled to pass the permit test without interpretation assistance. Marya's quote below shows how this challenge plays out:

The permit test—I'm in a desperate need. I feel like if there would be permit tests with the questions [translated] for us in our own language, that would be really

⁵ The translator for this project was instrumental in getting Dari language interpretation services at the DDS during the course of our data collection.

helpful for me...I'm teaching myself the English language and I'm better at driving than getting the permit. I would be easily able to get the road test passed because I'm already a very good driver. And my husband keeps teaching me, and I was also driving in Kabul with my husband. So that is a very important step that I've taken, and I keep practicing driving, but the thing I'm struggling with is the permit test. I have failed a few times by I'm still learning and I'm still going to go again and again until I get the permit test passed.

Marya's quote shows how the language barrier and lack of support to overcome it can result in women not being able to become drivers, even despite having the requisite driving skills and experience. Marya's words also illustrate that there is a lack of formal assistance in helping women become drivers—she relies on herself and her husband for English and driving education.

4.2.3.3 Lack of Assistance and Training During Resettlement

When given the opportunity to state what assistance they wish they'd had in their resettlement, many women advised that learning how to drive in Atlanta is a must. As Shichi states, women desire help with driving as part of their resettlement assistance:

I wish there would be something that's part of the resettlement where they will be teaching you how to drive. Because that is such a very needed service and even the men who have driven, maybe like 10 years, 12 years in Afghanistan—we don't have highways in Afghanistan. So, it's all other roads. So now driving in the highway is very, very, very hard for Afghans...That's why now inside of our community we are always hearing about accidents involving Afghans. So, maybe that's another reason

[why there are so many accidents]: they have never been able to learn how to drive in the highways with the American rules and regulations.

Shichi makes a point here that learning to drive is both a safety and mobility issue. In terms of safety, even Afghan men who have experience operating a vehicle are not sufficiently informed on US driving rules and highway driving. The high instance of accidents involving Afghans has implications for the safety of not only the drivers but also for non-driving women and children who may be dependent on Afghan men for their mobility. As resettlement assistance currently does not include driver's training and safety education, resettling families are without formal help in learning how to safely operate a vehicle—in a city where learning to do so is central to being able to get around.

This section has covered three ways that car ownership and driving is made difficult by the conditions of resettlement in car-centric Atlanta: cars are expensive and difficult to save for on one income; passing the driver's permit test is difficult with a language barrier; and there is a lack of formal help with learning to drive a car during resettlement. Given the above discussion showing how necessary driving a car is in Atlanta, these challenges indicate that learning to drive may be extra difficult to achieve while being more central to daily life in resettlement.

4.2.4 Driving Alone is Important for Women's Self-Concept

In the discussion above, I showed how driving is central for women's daily tasks during resettlement in car-centric Atlanta. But mobility also has consequences for how women feel about themselves and their new lives in Atlanta. This section will show how automobility is central to women's self-concept in terms of feelings of independence, parenthood, and sense of building a better life for their families.

4.2.4.1 *Becoming Independent and Self-confident*

During our interviews, I asked women what the ability to move means to them and how it affected their life during resettlement. The answers to these questions show that mobility affects women's self-confidence and feelings of independence—demonstrating that mobility is not just a practical concern but an emotional and social one as well. Interestingly, women view their mobility through the lens of being able to help others—their children, husbands, and others within their community. See how Asal's feelings of self are shaped by her mobility:

It definitely feels very independent for me when I'm able to drive around. And the best feeling for me is that I'm helping other people with transportation right now. Since I don't have a job, I have time and I really feel so good about helping other new families...Whoever tells me that they need to go anywhere, I help them...because I have seen how bad it feels.

Asal's heartfelt sentiment shows how she has funneled the independence she's gained by being able to drive into helping others in the community who need transportation. Though Asal may be coming from a position of relative privilege (since she does not have a job but still has access to a car), her memory of how bad immobility feels fuels her desire to help others who are still in a mobility-disadvantaged position.

Saima also expresses her independence through mobility, but connects her feelings of independence to her memories of mobile life in Afghanistan:

Oh, [being able to move] means to me everything. It means to me my life—like I won't be able to get a job without transportation. I won't be able to get help my family or other people who I want to help. So definitely it means above anything for me to be able to get around. And other thing is that with our culture, especially

in Afghanistan...A woman can't go outside by her own. You need to have a man with you, or at least another grown up woman who has experience. So, here going out, just by yourself gives you a feeling of independency. And then it gives you a feeling of, "Okay, I'm able to do this. Why wasn't I allowed to do this by my own there?" It's so much fun and it just builds [your] character in a different way when you are able to do it by yourself.

Saima's words give a sense of the joy that independence brings when women are able to leave home on their own. She frames her new independence in relation to the mobility limitations placed upon women in Afghanistan and remarks that going out by herself build her character and feelings of competence in a way that she hadn't experienced before. Saima's quote shows how the importance of leaving the house alone goes beyond the practical need to run errands for daily life—it actually builds her own feelings about herself and her own capabilities in her new life. Similarly, by contrasting the limitations on her mobility in Afghanistan, Saima shows how mobility norms (and laws) impact personal and social life; by leaving home alone, she is able to interact with the world in a new way, acting as her own person independent of a chaperone's guidance.

Asal and Saima both express that being able to drive by themselves in the US has been of the utmost importance to developing their sense of independence. Both women mention that driving alone has been important to allowing them to fulfill their desires to help others in their mobility struggles and to act independently. In car-centric Atlanta, being able to drive is more than a practical concern: achieving personal mobility by driving a car allows women to shape their self-perceptions and interact with the world in a way that they choose for themselves.

4.2.4.2 *Feelings of Being a Parent*

Women connect driving alone not only to feelings of independence, but also to feelings about being a parent and taking care of their families. I asked women how they felt when they were and were not able to get somewhere during resettlement, and many connected their feelings to helping their husbands and getting children where they need to go. In these ways, women again showed that their feelings about their personal mobility is tied to helping and taking care of others. For instance, Gulpari says the following:

I feel so blessed when I'm able to get around, especially with my children's school. If they missed their bus, I have my car now, I can drive them. If there is grocery shopping, I can go and get things up with my own choice instead of keep calling my husband or telling him what I need. I can basically look through the spices, get everything which I need for my grocery. And also, I haven't missed any doctor's appointments right now, and I can take care of the health of my children and myself better having a transportation.

Here, Gulpari connects being able to drive and having her own car to multiple aspects of family care: buying and choosing groceries, getting children to school in case they miss the bus, and getting children to doctor's appointments. Gulpari mentions that she feels "blessed" and uses "my own choice" in getting around, indicating that she views the ability to move as a benefit to her life. But here again, we see that women's mobility in a car-centric resettlement context is about more than an individual concern—Gulpari indicates that her ability to move has had a beneficial impact on her entire family, especially impacting her children's education and access to healthcare.

4.2.4.3 *A Better Life for Family*

In addition to building women's self-confidence and ability to take care of their family, women also link driving alone to a better life for their family. In particular, women link being able to drive to becoming employed and having an income. In Nasrin's words,

My life has completely changed after I'm able to drive. Right now, I'm taking my one child to the daycare, and then the other child to soccer team where he needed to go. The [non-profit cooking program] which I joined, that is basically the reason that I'm able to drive. Otherwise, if I wouldn't be able to drive, I wouldn't be able to do anything with the employment too, because you have to go to get your groceries, you have to attend the markets and all that stuff. That wouldn't be possible if I would not drive. So, I definitely feel that I'm very empowered, and I feel that one other thing is all the responsibilities from my house, financially too, I take care of those now. And my husband tells me that, "I feel much relieved now that you are helping me with all these."

In Nasrin's view, driving has completely changed her life and what she is able to do for her family and for herself. In addition to taking her children to daily activities like daycare and soccer, Nasrin has been able to gain employment through a non-profit's cooking training program. This, in turn, has had an impact on her family's finances and Nasrin's ability to take on household responsibilities. We see in Nasrin's words that she directly links being able to drive to gaining employment, caring for children and their opportunities, empowering Nasrin's own self-concept, and sharing in household burdens and financial responsibilities with her husband.

4.2.5 *Summary of Transportation*

Throughout this section, I have explored how being able to drive in the car-centric resettlement context of Atlanta is necessary for daily tasks, why non-car transportation is not feasible, and what extra barriers make owning and driving a car extra difficult for resettled women. Finally, I discussed why being able to drive in such a context is also important for women's self-concept. Importantly, participants' quotes throughout this last section highlight that women have a strong desire to help others—their children, husbands, and other newcomers in their communities—and view driving as a key way to achieve that purpose. The quotes used throughout this section show that women view being able to drive as not only a necessary part of the resettlement process, but also a crucial way to develop their independence and ability to care for the people around them.

Transportation access is so important because it impacts many aspects of women's lives during resettlement: from meeting daily needs, to helping community members, to developing a confident and empowered sense of self. This illustrates why comprehensive transportation policies can have profound impacts across people's lives and why they need to address the needs of women getting their new lives started in Atlanta.

Though transportation issues and their impacts were central to the purpose of this study, interviews revealed additional themes that color the stories of resettlement in Atlanta, including work, gender, childcare, and language and ESL classes. Each of these is discussed below.

4.3 *Additional Themes Around Resettlement*

Due to the exploratory nature of this project, additional themes that do not directly relate to transportation and mobility emerged during the interviews. They are work, gender, childcare, and language and ESL classes.

4.3.1 *Work*

As discussed in the literature review, refugees becoming employed and paying their own living expenses is the main measure used by resettlement agencies to determine financial “self-sufficiency.” Here, women revealed to me that finding work for themselves is also important to their feelings of independence, but there are multiple reasons why obtaining work is a big challenge during resettlement in Atlanta. Though reaching the official metric of “self-sufficiency” within a given timeframe may be ubiquitous in the refugee resettlement industry, it does not take into consideration the unique obstacles newcomers face when resettling in a car-centric area like Atlanta.

This section will discuss how the conditions of resettlement in Atlanta impact refugees’ work (newcomers must work as soon as possible; high cost of living; and Atlanta’s spatial characteristics) and the three main barriers women cite that keep them from being able to work.

4.3.1.1 *Conditions of Resettlement Impact Work*

The conditions of the resettlement context refugees are placed in impacts their working lives. My interviews revealed three main characteristics that impact women’s work: the requirement to work as quickly as possible, the high cost of living in Atlanta, and Atlanta’s spatial characteristics that necessitate having a car in order to work.

4.3.1.1.1 *Newcomers are Required to Work as Quickly as Possible*

Resettlement agencies’ push for newcomers to become “self-sufficient” as quickly as possible (i.e. the agency no longer pays for any living expenses) results in newcomers taking jobs that tend to be both physically demanding and low wage. Muslima says,

...And the first 90 days, the way the resettlement agencies do it, [they’re] paying your rent and your utilities. But then you have to accept the first job [they] offer

you or the first place [they] take you. Other than that, [they] didn't offer any 1 on 1 support, or anything related to your education. They don't even bother to seek out better employment for you. They're just going to put you [in] whatever is available for them.

In Muslima's view, agencies give 90 days of financial assistance to refugees in exchange for them taking the first job available and becoming "self-sufficient" as quickly as possible.

Muslima's words hint at the relationship between resettlement agencies and local employers who hire refugees, particularly that agencies are aware of which employers are willing to hire refugees. Agencies give no investment in developing newcomers' education or assisting with career development—which would likely pay for itself down the line in the form of newcomers being better positioned to get better-paying jobs. Without getting better education or job skills during the resettlement period, newcomers are likely to be stuck in low wage work long-term. In this way, the condition of resettlement that pushes people into low wage work as soon as possible likely hampers newcomers' ability to develop their future career and earnings. Saadri's words reveal the type of work newcomers are pushed into:

...I would really like to mention the employment part of [resettlement] because for someone who comes new here the most challenging thing is getting good employment. Right now, my husband's job is very hard. Like, it requires a lot of physical strength. But then it's not very good pay. When it comes to me, because of the language barrier I have and the transportation [issues], I'm not even able to find good employment as quickly as I want. So, definitely more career pathways or more help with employment and better pay is something I feel everyone should have.

Saadri wanted people to know the difficulties refugee families face in finding employment.

Saadri indicates that newcomers (in this case, especially men) are taking jobs that are not only low-income, but also physically demanding. She also notes her desire to find a job for herself quickly, but there are serious barriers (language and transportation, discussed later) stopping her from doing so. She also indicates that refugee women may have extra barriers to entering the workforce which are different to the work expected of or undertaken by refugee men.

With Muslima and Saadri's quotes above, we can see that refugee men are placed into physically demanding, low-wage work. Meanwhile, refugee women face language and transportation barriers which make finding work more difficult. This paints an image of newcomer households having one single income (when a husband is present), little opportunity to advance their incomes or job skills, and living in a resettlement context that all but necessitates two incomes to survive financially.

4.3.1.1.2 Cost of Living

When refugees arrive in the US, they may be surprised to find that the cost of living is different from that of their home countries, such that two incomes are needed to survive financially. Take Marya's quote:

In our country, if one person would work, it was enough for 10 to 15 people. But in the United States, even if you are 2 people at home, you both have to work in order to have a good life. If my husband is working, it's only enough for rent and utilities, but if [we] really want to buy a house or move forward, then I also need to jump in and work.

Marya's words show that she feels the need to have two incomes in order to have enough money to sustain their household, as her husband's income is not enough for expenses beyond rent and

utilities. For Marya, having a “good life,” “moving forward,” and buying a house are byproducts of having two incomes. “Jumping in” to work may not always have been an expected part of the plan, especially given how different the financial circumstances were in her home country.

However, Marya came to realize that having a job would be necessary for her family to own a home.

As mentioned above, however, women experience extra barriers to becoming employed. Here’s how Lila frames those challenges as they relate to the high relative cost of living in the US:

Getting my own driving license and also learning English—those are the steps which I’m learning so I can get a good job. And then me and my husband, our plan is to get 2 jobs so that we can work together and buy a house because the rent amount which we are paying right now is \$1,850, which is very high.

Lila recognizes the situation she’s in as a newcomer is untenable without two incomes. To live in Lawrenceville and pay such a high rent—in addition to the likely high costs of transportation required of living in the suburbs—is a very high cost of living Lila experiences by most standards. Lila is working on multiple challenges to obtain a good job for herself (learning a new language, learning how to drive, and learning how to pass the driver’s license testing). According to Lila’s view, a good job is needed in order to buy a house and escape the extremely high rent her family is paying. This contrasts sharply with the resettlement agencies’ expectation to get work quickly; there is a lot of effort required by newcomers to obtain “good” work to survive financially.

4.3.1.1.3 Atlanta's Spatial Characteristics

As alluded to by multiple women's quotes in the section above, women view being able to drive as necessary to being able to work. This is because work locations are not close to residential areas where refugees tend to be resettled in DeKalb and Gwinnett Counties. When women discuss their "transportation" issues in conjunction with viewing the spatial distances themselves as problematic, revealing the interconnected nature of space, transportation, and mobility. Take for instance how Muslima, living in Norcross, views her commute:

Almost all the places where we want to go are so far away from each other. And especially from Norcross it at least takes me 40 minutes to get to the doctor's appointment or even my job, my husband's job—everything is located apart from me.

For Muslima, almost everything is far from her home in Norcross. Rather than discussing the spatial characteristics of the Atlanta metro, she frames the distance in terms of how long it takes her to get around, which is more comprehensible for her than using spatial dimensions, and also does a better job of conveying how much of her daily life is spent commuting to work. Work not being close to home, given all the places women need to get themselves and their children on a daily basis, can represent quite a transportation challenge.

In addition to the jobs themselves being far from home, much-needed job skills training is also far from home. Saadri says:

ESL classes along with some of the skill building classes, I wish would be closer to me. Then I would be even employed by now. I'm really interested to learn sewing. But I know of 1 or 2 places which teach women how to sew and then they get them certified. But they are not close to our house. So, the sewing classes, or career

development classes, along with ESL classes, are very important to have closer to where you resettle.

Given what women mentioned earlier about needing job skills training in order to obtain work, it is unsurprising that women like Saadri wish that training, along with ESL classes, were available closer to home. Saadri also points to her lost potential, saying she would likely be employed if training were closer to home. She also makes note of how important it is for resources to be close to resettlement neighborhoods, otherwise more people may wind up in a similar position to her: wanting to work, but unable to train for it.

Women need to work to have a “good life,” but work is far away, transportation is an ever-present challenge, and the job skills training needed to be qualified to work is also unreachable. This paints a picture where women recognize the need for and desire to work, all while having extra transportation and knowledge barriers preventing them from doing so. The next section will discuss the three barriers of transportation, childcare, and language in more detail.

4.3.1.2 Barriers That Lead Women to Sacrifice Work

As has been discussed already, refugee women may face extra barriers than men in obtaining work and may desire specifically “good” work that provides a high enough income for financial sustainability. In particular, women mentioned that the three barriers of transportation, childcare, and language keep them from working. These factors often intersect and overlap one another, as Kamelah’s quote illustrates:

With the job opportunities and with the language, the transportation plays a big role in my life. Even if I try to get a job, nothing is in a walking distance from where I live. And also, even if I think of a job right now, I have to improve my language

first because the closest [places] are Kroger and Walmart where you need to speak some English. So first, I need to improve my English, but then, the ESL classes are not available in Gwinnett County.

Kamelah is dealing with multiple challenges at once: transportation issues, being far from work and ESL opportunities, and work opportunities requiring English proficiency. The overlapping nature of these barriers, in addition to childcare, may make it very difficult for refugee women to discern a workable starting place to begin trying to secure employment.

4.3.1.2.1 Transportation

Transportation is a major barrier that women say keeps them from being able to even consider finding a job. Some of the quotes above have included this sentiment. For some, like Mitra, transportation issues caused her to sacrifice getting job training:

I have sacrificed a lot of the work opportunities...My English is medium level. So, I was able to attend the [nonprofit center] cohort where the ladies were getting 6 months of free transportation and childcare. Just because I wasn't located very close and I didn't have a reliable transportation, I couldn't get into those cohorts. There are jobs that I feel that I can do, but I cannot because of transportation.

Mitra was qualified for a nonprofit program because of her language skills but felt ultimately unable to take advantage of the opportunity because of transportation issues in getting across town. She views this as a sacrifice of her working life, which is tied to the long distances between locations and the lack of transportation options she has to traverse the metro area.

Shadleen, who started a catering business, shows the role transportation played in her thinking about her work:

From the day I've arrived, I'm working on my own business and food...I didn't even begin [the business] properly until I was driving because that wasn't even option. So, once I started driving, then I began catering.

For Shadleen, starting her catering business was directly dependent upon her being able to drive; it “wasn’t even an option” to consider doing otherwise. Mitra and Shadleen’s quotes both show how transportation is directly related to self-sufficiency in that women are unable to learn new job skills, improve their English, or start their own businesses without having transportation in place. Thus, transportation being a barrier to work has significant implications for women’s long-term economic prospects (more on this in the discussion section).

4.3.1.2.2 Childcare

The lack of adequate childcare options features prominently in many women’s quotes about how childcare impacts their ability to work. For instance, Asal describes her childcare situation:

I did work in a bakery for 3 months only. Because my son, during my working shift, would need to wait in the neighbor's house [from 2] until 5 [when] I arrive from work. That situation wasn't going very well with my son, and he would get sick at the neighbor's house. It was difficult for my son, sometimes the neighbor wasn't taking care of him. Sometimes it was hard for him, he wasn't getting along with the neighbors’ children. So finally, I gave up, I was like, “No, I don't want to do the job and I will just stay home.” And after that job, I did take care of a family's son at home, and I had an Arabic-speaking neighbor who needed help with the childcare of their son. So, I did that also for 2 months, but that also didn't work out. So that's the only two things I did for work.

Here, Asal describes how the uncertainty about her son's wellbeing in his daycare situation outweighed the work she did at her bakery job. Despite Asal's efforts to be employed, her childcare issues became too much to overcome, and she decided to quit working outside the home. In Nasrin's words, the responsibility of childcare remained an issue even after her transportation was addressed:

The transportation was one reason, but other reason was the childcare problem that I had. Because of my back-to-back children, they were small. I couldn't go to work before, and the transportation was also a factor. But when I joined [nonprofit cooking program], then my husband basically gave me the work car he had—he assigned a van to me to make it easier for me going to the market. Right now, I can drive, and I have the car, but still with my childcare situation, it is hard to go to work. So, childcare and transportation are basically both factors that I'm not employed.

Nasrin's case gives interesting insight, because she is someone who does have the privilege of access to her own vehicle and yet still finds childcare to be a big enough factor to keep her from being able to work. Nasrin's and Asal's quotes also highlight that the responsibility for childcare seems to fall on mothers rather than fathers, though this project cannot directly address fathers' views or experiences of childcare (discussed more below in the Childcare section (p. 139)). If women tend to have responsibility for childcare, but few viable childcare options exist for them, it makes sense that many women opt out of working outside the home, at least until children are of school age.

4.3.1.2.3 Language

The final major barrier that women say keeps them from engaging in paid work is their English language barrier. As Kamelah mentioned above, women often view language as a prerequisite for getting a job, but English language classes are hard to get to. Shichi gives a positive example of how she took advice from previously resettled refugees about how to improve her situation through language learning:

When I asked people who have resettled before me what are the good steps I can take? Everyone was telling me that I need to improve my English and continue with my studies in order to get a better job. I feel that was one of the best steps I took, to enroll myself in the college. And now that I go there, every day when I learn something new, I feel very good. And then with a one-year or two-year certification I could have my own job. The other good thing is now that my children are in childcare, it gives me some time to not worry about them. And also, my son is really improving with his situation, he's not as naughty or as stressful as he was. So now I feel that my life is back on track, but we just need to follow the tracks.

Shichi's words show how the factors of childcare and language overlap in terms of her feelings about her life and getting herself a good job. Shichi has hope for the future because she feels she's taking the right steps to create a better life for her family, and language learning plays a role in building the skills she needs to get a good job. While Shichi's experience is further along in the immigration journey, Marya shows the challenging side of how central language is to a better life for a newer newcomer:

It's so difficult for someone who doesn't speak the language to figure out the [Uber or Lyft] application. And then if you don't have a bank account, you can't even put

any information there. Like, if you have your cash money, you still cannot go anywhere if you cannot figure out the Lyft and Uber. I really struggled with that situation. And other than that, the language is the main issue which I and other Afghan women have. Like, if you think of transportation: language is a problem. If you think of a job: then language is a problem. I'm looking forward to improve my English and even if I'm at home, I tried to learn from YouTube videos or online stuff. So, that could help me moving forward.

Marya has had difficult experiences with language, transportation, and work, which offers some contrast to where Shichi is in her resettlement journey. Marya cannot figure out how to use rideshare apps without knowing English, nor does she feel she can figure out other forms of transportation or get a job without having higher English proficiency. But she does say that learning more English could help her move forward in her immigration journey, indicating that she does have some hope and a plan for the future and that learning English plays a role in being able to get a job.

4.3.1.3 Summary of Work

This section discussed how the conditions of resettlement and three major barriers make it more difficult for women to engage in work for pay. The push by resettlement agencies to get employed as quickly as possible makes it difficult for women to get the job skills and education they need to engage in work that is not low wage. Being pushed into low wage work makes self-sufficiency extremely difficult for women and their families, as the high cost of living in Atlanta requires higher wages to stay afloat. And Atlanta's spatial characteristics mean that sites of work are not close to resettlement neighborhoods, which pushes people to need cars (which are huge expenses) to get around. Women revealed that lack of reliable transportation options, difficulty

finding appropriate childcare situations, and low English proficiency are three barriers that stop women from becoming employed. These quotes show how women's self-sufficiency is hampered by these barriers, which may have broad implications for their families.

Together, refugees are often pushed into low-paying work, where two incomes are needed to get ahead, and where women are unable to contribute financially because of childcare, language, and transportation barriers. This may keep people in a lower-income financial situation than they may otherwise be in.

4.3.2 Gender

Cultural gender norms and expectations also emerged as an important theme in successful resettlement, especially as the relationship relates to care of the children and household and women's ability to drive. The conditions of resettlement encourage families to fall into a gendered division of labor, where men work for pay outside the home and women care for children and household. Women's answers also revealed that their husbands' support played a key role in women's mobility.

4.3.2.1 Resettlement Conditions Encourage Gendered Division of Labor

As discussed earlier, the resettlement context has a large influence over how newcomers navigate their new environments. In the "Work" section above, I already discussed how the push to be employed quickly, combined with Atlanta's unique spatial layout, creates a situation where families need a car to get to work, and that work is often low wage.

It emerged in my interviews that many women were not working for pay, but rather their husbands were the primary household earner. In addition, women tend to be responsible for household chores and care for children, especially those under the age of 4. In order to get to their job, husbands are usually the daily drivers of the household car, meaning that women have

to schedule care for household and children around their husbands' work schedules. These patterns are discussed below.

4.3.2.1.1 Women Work without Pay at Home, Men Work for Pay Outside the Home

The women in my study tend to be unemployed or employed part-time within the childcare or food service industries. Their husbands, however, are much more likely to be engaged in work for pay outside the home and this is the primary source of household income. A common industry husbands engage in is commercial driving (CDL), which holds a unique set of challenges for families, as Shadleen says:

Seven months [after arriving], [my husband] went to get the CDL license to become a truck driver. So after that, then those were my hard days with transportation, because then I couldn't drive and my husband was not there to support with that...So the most important step I feel I took is that even though I was a new arrival for 7 months, I let my husband go to get a CDL license because I feel that a lot of the time, because of the doctor's appointment, and because the women don't take the responsibility on, the husbands are usually stuck with the low paying job. So, I'm so happy that I let him go. And that was the reason that he had a good income, and he was able to save money. We bought a house and right now I feel that whenever my husband talks about his income and stuff, he always is very thankful to me that even though I didn't speak English, I was not very familiarized with the environment, but I still I was able to take care of my kids alone.

Shadleen makes note of a common pattern she witnesses, where husbands are stuck in low wage work because they need to be able to drive their families around to appointments. (We will see later that husbands do tend to be responsible for driving family members to appointments such as

these, taking off work or scheduling around work to do so). But in Shadleen's experience, investing in her husband's career by taking on responsibility for the children has paid off in her husband's higher wages—enough so that they were able to save for a house. But Shadleen did not have a job at the time, though she did become involved in food service later. So, during the family's first months in Atlanta, their priority was investing in her husband's career, rather than Shadleen also getting a job.

Gulpari emphasizes why she did not work during her resettlement:

I wasn't able to go anywhere at all and usually the only place I would go was the Publix, which was walking distance from me. Other than that, because [of] not having the stroller, we couldn't take the baby out. So usually, my husband would go for the grocery shopping. I had the small baby, and I was pregnant. So, I wasn't even able to go out or work, which I haven't done. My husband was the one who was doing it.

Gulpari had a young child and was pregnant during her resettlement. She says that her husband would go grocery shopping while she stayed home with the child, since they did not have a stroller to bring the baby along shopping. And importantly, her husband was doing the work for pay.

The pattern exhibited in these two quotes matches with the overall picture that some of the conditions of resettlement tend to fall along gendered lines for the women in this study. For instance, the push to work quickly results in men entering the low wage workforce, while women with young children stay home to care for kids. This in itself may work for families and may feel familiar given their cultural backgrounds and norms around work and parenthood. However,

women revealed that it is a problem for them when their husbands have the family car when it is needed for household and childcare tasks.

4.3.2.1.2 Husbands' Control of the Car

Though women in this study tend to stay home and care for young children, they have many destinations they need to reach in performing that care. If their husbands take the car to work (or often, use the car for working rideshare), it is not available for women to use during the day. This hampers women being able to accomplish their household and childcare tasks. For instance, take the example Barsha gives of her son's medical emergency:

Yes, there was one incident where my son had really a bad stomachache and then he was going to collapse. But my husband was [driving] Uber, and I couldn't figure out anything. I didn't speak English so I remember taking my son and going outside on the road, and then asking for help if anyone could call the emergency line for me. I had to wait there until my husband dropped that Uber booking he had...So he was supposed to make sure he drops the person he has picked up. So, he finished that, and then he came back, and it took 2 hours. And that's a sad memory for me.

When Barsha experienced a medical emergency of her son, she was unable to get him to a medical facility because her husband was using the car as a rideshare driver and could not desert his passenger. Desperate for help and unable to communicate the emergency, Barsha had no other option than to ask for help from strangers while waiting for her husband to get home. Though this frightening scenario seems extreme, other women in this study described similar memories of medical emergencies occurring without the language skills or transportation to act accordingly. In this way, husbands having access to the family car for work can have serious consequences when women at home experience urgent medical situations.

In another example, Damsa shows us how having less practice navigating the community impacted her ability to care for her children:

One of the incidents I remember all the time is when my husband couldn't pick up the kids. The kids were less than 2 miles from the school, so we don't get a bus, we have to walk our children. Usually, my husband would pick up my children from the school. But on that one day he couldn't come from his job and then I got a call from the school that you have to come pick up your kids. I didn't know where the school is, and I couldn't figure out the GPS thing and I didn't know where to go. And then my daughter was 8 months or 9 months old. So, I put her in the stroller and then all the way I was crying, going round and round and round in the roads. And then I followed the yellow lights so that I could find the school—you know, there are yellow lights on the school route.

Damsa's memory shows that she was unable to navigate her community when she needed to pick her children up from school. This shows that women being unfamiliar with driving, not having access to their own transportation, or having the ability to use GPS to navigate to important places in the surrounding community can result in difficult situations such as this. As in the previous quote, we see that husbands having control of the family car can result in wives and children having to navigate difficult circumstances without transportation.

4.3.2.1.3 Wives Must Wait on Husbands and Schedule with Them

In addition to women having to navigate abrupt situations, like the two outlined above, when a car is not available to them, they must also wait for their husbands and work around their schedules to accomplish household and childcare tasks. Lila sums it up:

Definitely it is hard when I want to take my kids outside or I have enrolled them in teams. Because my husband is an Uber driver and I usually have to wait for him, when he's available and can drive. Otherwise, I cannot take my kids outside at all.

Lila's quote shows that she "cannot take her kids outside at all" unless her husband is home to drive them. This may have negative effects on children if they are unable to attend extracurricular activities because of a lack of transportation. This also has an impact on the family's ability to get to healthcare, as Marya describes:

After struggling a lot, now I buy a lot of medicines and keep it in my refrigerator. So that's one help and also, if there is something that I am struggling with, since it's my first baby, then I call my mother to give me some home remedies until my husband comes. Two times my husband had to come [home from work] because [the baby's] fever was not going down. So, he had to come early from his job and take the child. And then the manager wasn't happy with that situation. So now we don't even consider doing that because the manager has warned my husband that you cannot leave the job.

Marya has come up with her own stopgap measure of stocking medicine in case her child gets sick because of the difficulty she and her husband have experienced with transportation and work. In this situation, a combination of work policies and lack of transportation for Marya result in her child potentially missing out on needed healthcare—the child must wait until their father comes home to get to medical attention.

Given the difficulties outlined above, it is no surprise that women strongly desire to be able to drive themselves and their children around town, have their own income, and share in the

responsibility of childcare. Husbands' attitudes play a role in women's ability to learn to drive and take the permit test.

4.3.2.1.4 Husbands' Attitude in Teaching Driving

As men tend to be more familiar with driving and have more experience in doing so, women often look to their husbands for help when it's time to learn to drive. This support is a big help in women having someone they can learn from, as Ramineh recalls:

My husband was a big support...I got the permit license after doing a lot of practice at home, and then one month, my husband took off from work during Ramadan so that he could teach me how to drive. And during that month, my husband taught me how to drive. The important steps [I took] were definitely educating myself and then trying hard to get the license quickly.

Ramineh's husband took the time off work to teach her how to drive. She mentions this support as being big for her in learning how to drive and getting her license quickly. In light of other examples women shared of their husbands helping them learn to drive, Ramineh's story is actually unique. Many women shared that their husbands' stress while teaching driving caused themselves to also have heightened emotions. Take, for instance, Shichi's story of learning to drive with her husband:

One day, we were driving and then I did signal to turn the left side. And then the other car hit my car. I got into the accident, but I wasn't worried about myself, my health. The only thing I was worried [about] is that how would I answer my husband now, what is he going to tell me now? And he's not going to teach me again.

For any new driver, this could be a very scary scenario, but may be especially so for a newcomer who has new laws and procedures to navigate in the case of an accident. Shichi's main concern

in the face of her accident is whether her husband would continue to support her in learning to drive, indicating just how important continuing on her mobility journey is for Shichi. In light of Ramineh's quote above, it also shows just how important a spouse's support is to refugee women's feelings about driving and her own mobility.

4.3.2.2 Summary of Gender

Given that husbands tend to be the first person in the household to learn to drive and be employed, they play a big role in women's relationships to their own ability to drive and work for pay. Resettlement conditions encourage a gendered division of labor in two main ways: women work at home without pay, while men enter the paid workforce; and men have primary control over the family car in order to work. This division often results in situations where women and children go without necessary help, such as medical care. Women also rely on their husbands to help them practice driving, which gives crucial experience in becoming a safe driver. However, husbands' attitudes toward their wives becoming mobile in this way can vary widely, with support or lack thereof playing a big role in women's feelings about learning to drive.

4.3.3 Childcare

Throughout the interviews, women shared with me that childcare plays a big role in their lives, but there was an unvoiced theme throughout: childcare is largely a concern that women are responsible for. This fits with the general pattern of the heteronormative, gendered division of labor discussed earlier, wherein men work for pay outside the home and women are responsible for the care of home and children. This may be especially true given that many of the women in this study are either unemployed or working part time (often in food service, from home).

This leads to four themes of women's discussions of childcare: that women are largely responsible for the care of children; that outside childcare is unavailable; that women want to provide childcare for one another within the community; and that the lack of childcare hampers women's ability to engage in work and education.

4.3.3.1 Women are Largely Responsible for their Family's Childcare Needs

Because this study only asked women their experiences, I am unable to accurately gauge how the husbands in these families view childcare. However, from women's responses, I have gathered the largely unspoken pattern of women being responsible for childcare. I say "largely unspoken" because the assumption that men do not struggle between childcare and paid work runs throughout women's stories. Though women do make some mention of husbands altering their daily schedules in order to make sure their kids are picked up, women's examples of the sacrifices they have made to care for children under the age of four are much more numerous.

Take, for instance, Shichi's story about her husband's capacity to care for their children while she shopped:

It's so stressful to go to places right now...I cannot go for simple things. Like for grocery shopping, if I want to go, then I have to take my children. And I have a newborn, so one person has to sit in the car and then the other has to go to do the groceries. Whenever I go, I want to have some time to shop around. But my husband keeps calling me like, my son is bothering him, or my daughter is bothering him. So, it's very stressful for all of our family that I'm not able to drive...

In this example, Shichi is unable to shop while her children and husband are in the car because the children are bothering⁶ their father. She brings this scenario up in response to my questions about her being able to drive by herself, which would alleviate the need for children and husband to sit in the car while she shops. However, Shichi's example is interesting because it highlights how her responsibilities include both buying the needed groceries and keeping children's behavior in check, even when her husband is around to care for them. Because there isn't a suitable alternative to this childcare issue, Shichi's ability to shop for groceries alone is strained.

4.3.3.2 *Outside Childcare is Expensive and Unavailable*

Childcare is expensive and difficult to come by with ESL classes in this study. Although some women said they would like to do mutual childcare for neighbors (discussed later in this section), this did not seem to be the prevalent method. Women tend to care for their own children at home, often to the detriment of engaging in other social activities like work or education. Though most women did not specifically say that daycare for their children was unaffordable, it seemed to "go without saying" that the reason women weren't using outside childcare was because of the cost. Zohra's quote below is one of the few times an interviewee did say specifically that childcare was expensive for her:

I had to wait four years before getting a job because of my son, and the daycares around us were very expensive. The minimum is \$150 a week. So, I had to wait until [availability from a nonprofit program] where they cover the childcare and transportation for the ladies so that I could go. If there wasn't a program like this,

⁶ I want to leave the interpretation of this word open, as it may not have been intended to mean something akin to "pestering" or "nuisance."

which would address our needs, I wouldn't even be able to go right now to the job I'm going.

Zohra mentions that \$150 a week is very expensive for her, and that if she weren't enrolled in the nonprofit program that provides childcare and transportation ("our" needs), she wouldn't be able to work as she currently is. That a nonprofit program is already trying to alleviate the stress of transportation and childcare for women to prepare for employment speaks to the prevalence of these issues for resettled refugee women, and also highlights that childcare responsibility is falling upon women, rather than men. (In all my interviews, I never heard of a program targeting resettled refugee men's issues with childcare to alleviate that barrier for preparing to work.)

In addition to childcare being expensive, it is very hard to come by for women, especially for ESL classes in the Clarkston area. ESL classes that have childcare available is one of the most cited needs the women in my study express. For instance, take Sapidah's words:

The ESL classes and not having enough ESL centers in Clarkston—as big as the need is, there is very few places where you can go for English classes. And also, if there is any place which would offer childcare, that would be great for people. I'm planning to get my CDA license, so hopefully like with that and then with educating myself more on the English language, I would be able to do better in my life.

Sapidah wanted other people to understand that there is not enough ESL support in Clarkston, and that childcare with the ESL classes is highly needed. She also connects ESL classes with childcare to her ability to get a job and emphasizes that these are barriers to her "doing better" in her life. Interestingly, she is pursuing a CDA (Child Development Associate) license, which would make her qualified to work in a childcare setting professionally—essentially, to start being paid for the work she is already doing. Based on Sapidah's words, we can see the importance of

childcare to women progressing in their careers and skills—it provides women time away from their children to focus on their own goals. She also shows us that there is simply not enough support for this advancement to go around in Clarkston.

Zohra and Sapidah's quotes show that childcare is too expensive for newcomers to afford—so prevalently so that nonprofit programs have stepped in to try bridging the gap. Support for women's childcare needs is directly tied to their ability to advance in their language and career skills, which women deeply desire access to. In the absence of enough childcare support, women express that they would like to provide care for one another.

4.3.3.3 *Women Want to Provide Childcare for Each Other*

Given that there is not enough support for women's childcare needs during resettlement, and especially since having affordable childcare is related to women's ability to advance their language and career skills, it makes sense that women would seek alternative childcare options. For some, that alternative is providing mutual childcare for community members. Marya describes her vision for exchanging childcare:

If I were in the locations, like Clarkston and Decatur, where other Afghan communities are, that would be better for me. Because then I could make friends there from my community. We could do childcare for each other, and then we could attend class English classes that way. And then the ESL classes are also within walking distance there. So, I feel that if I would be in Clarkston or Decatur, that would be a better option than [where I am in] Stone Mountain.

Marya wants to be able to give and receive childcare with Afghans in the community as a way of everyone being able to attend ESL classes. She also connects this exchange of help to making friends in the community. In addition, Marya wishes she were able to walk to ESL classes, thus

alleviating the burden of transportation. Marya believes that having ESL classes nearby and neighbors to exchange childcare with are benefits of living in Clarkston or Decatur, rather than Stone Mountain. This enhances the point made earlier about Atlanta's resettlement context. Places are too far apart to be able to survive without driving, but there is also a maldistribution of support that impacts women's ability to get education and childcare support when they live in outer suburbs, like Stone Mountain. While Marya wished her neighborhood had the things she described, Gulpari explains how her community connections were helpful in reality:

Two things really worked well. One is the location for that Publix really helped us because whatever we needed, medicine wise, food wise, at least there was a place where I could walk and get those things. And then the second thing is that after 3 or 4 months of being here, I got to know other families who have who are in a similar situation like me and who are newly arrived. So, we basically connected to each other and exchanged phone numbers so we would either walk together or either help each other with childcare. So, the community connections have helped me a lot.

Having other families in a similar situation is a source of childcare support for Gulpari, and she says that is one thing that worked well for her resettlement life. These connections also provide company in walking through the neighborhood together. These are both things that Marya, in Stone Mountain, does not have.

4.3.3.4 The Lack of Childcare Hampers Women's Activities

The final theme of childcare is that women make sacrifices of their work and education because of childcare difficulties. This ties into other childcare-related themes mentioned above,

and also that childcare is a barrier to women working. Take Barsha's quote below, which shows just how much family responsibility women shoulder:

[Missing out on work] definitely affects me in a negative way because I have 2 small children... [Before they were 4, the issue] was transportation. But even after getting my own car, now, with the childcare situation, I'm not able to find a job or go anywhere. My family in Afghanistan also needs financial support and I wish I would be able to go outside of my house, find a job and support them as well as my own family here.

Barsha wishes she could financially care for her family in the US and in Afghanistan by getting a job. But childcare continues to pose a barrier to Barsha's working life, even after she is able to secure transportation for herself. This shows how a resettled family's barriers can change over time and as children's ages change. When Barsha's kids were younger, she didn't have a car, so she was able to provide childcare because she couldn't work. But once she got a car, Barsha was still unable to work because her youngest children are too young to spend the day at school.

The lack of childcare solutions also impacts women's educational attainment, as Asal explains:

I would definitely feel that having better ESL classes around me would make my life easier. For 2 years I went to [nonprofit women's ESL with childcare] which is twice a week. I would go there with the bus. It will take me one and a half hour each way to reach the ESL class. Even with going there, my son wasn't good at the childcare, and they would call me from the class that you have to come because your son keeps crying. I would put that effort, I would go all the way there, but still because of my son, I wasn't even able to learn how I needed to, or how others were

learning. So, a closer ESL class would solve my problem in the sense that I would have left my son to a neighbor and then went [to ESL] because it would take a shorter time if it's closer.

In addition to emphasizing how disruptive childcare issues are for women's learning, Asal also shows us how the spatial layout of the neighborhood could have helped her in this scenario. By having the ESL class closer, she would be able to leave her child with a neighbor for less time than it would take to travel to the current ESL class by bus and back. Asal compares her own life to those of others, saying that she wasn't able to learn the way others were learning, even with having childcare for her son.

4.3.3.5 Summary of Childcare

Throughout this section, I have discussed how childcare impacts women's lives in resettlement. I find that women are largely responsible for childcare, outside childcare is too expensive and difficult to find, women would prefer to be able to provide mutual childcare to one another in their community, and that the lack of suitable childcare options hampers women's ability to work and educate themselves.

While men tend to work for pay while women care for children at home without pay (at least during initial resettlement), it seems that women desire to take that time out of the workforce to become educated, build their skills, and prepare for a better job than they may otherwise take if they entered straight into work upon resettlement. Women want to build their skills, learn better English, and feel prepared and confident before heading to work, which some have never done outside the home. However, as we have seen, childcare is a big barrier to women being able to work or get an education—even where childcare options do exist, various reasons prevent it from being compatible for the children or parents. This gap between women's

desire for advancement and the realities of life may prevent women from reaching their career potential, or even from being able to earn an income to care for their families or send money to their home country.

4.3.4 Language and ESL Classes

As mentioned multiple times throughout the analysis above, resettled refugee women desire to learn English as a way to a better life in the US. Women view learning English as a way to understand their new environment, to learn how to navigate, and as a steppingstone to better opportunities. However, they shared with me that there is not enough ESL support or classes available in the Clarkston area. And missing out on ESL education (as discussed above, they do due to transportation and childcare barriers) can isolate women from other social engagements.

4.3.4.1 Women Desire to Learn English

Women reveal how strongly they want to learn English by displaying the lengths they would go to to reach an ESL class. Take, for instance, Zohra's story of trying to get to ESL:

Me and my husband, for 3 months, went from Decatur to Clarkston, which is a 9-minute drive. We would go to [community college], and it would take us 2 hours to go back and forth in the bus, so that we could get some help with our language barriers. We both would go after walking the kids to the school to [community college]. And then at 1:00 we would walk back to the children's school, get our children from school, and then come home... I feel that if there would be the ESL classes closer to my house, I would have managed with my neighbors. Like, they would have taken care of the child for three hours and then I would have attended [the ESL class]. But since it was a longer route and going back and forth with the bus was impossible, almost, with the newborn. Yeah, I had to stop.

Zohra recognized the ESL class as a way to tackle her language barrier, but ultimately could not manage the bus travel times with picking up her children from school. She, like Asal describes in the section above, wishes they could have exchanged childcare with a neighbor in order to facilitate more time learning in a closer ESL class.

Women also recognize that being less familiar with English could be hampering their awareness of their environment. For instance, Gulpari acknowledges that she may not have been aware of opportunities available to her:

Not only we couldn't go to the ESL classes. It was also the matter of the awareness.

We were not even aware that there is an ESL class where we could go. After 2 years of me being there, then people who were living in Clarkston they told me that there is a class where I could go.

This could be a very frustrating scenario Gulpari may have found herself in: it is difficult to even locate the help or knowledge she needs to move onto a better life path—or to learn only much later that help was available if she'd known where to ask for it. This highlights that newcomers are falling through the cracks of assistance (if indeed there are available resources) due to a lack of knowledge transmission within the community. This may tie to the push to “self-sufficiency,” as people fall off the roster of support eligibility, they may also lose connection with the networks of help that people need during the long-term process of refugee resettlement.

4.3.4.2 Missing Out on ESL Opportunities Affects Other Opportunities

Learning English is an important step women feel they must take in order to progress during resettlement. As Rana says,

Going to ESL classes is a positive step where I feel that I can change my life.

Missing out on language training is about more than personal enrichment—it is a way for women to build a better future for themselves and their families. Kamelah’s words below make it quite clear how missing out on language help is impacting her ability to work:

I definitely want to improve my situation but at this point, I feel that I'm very lost. Whatever steps I want to take, it's always with a barrier. Like with ESL classes, how do I do that? Until I go in person in a place, I can't even get on to a Zoom call to do that. And then with the job, it's related to language and transportation. I want to change my situation, definitely. But I haven't taken any steps because I'm not able to.

Undoubtedly, Kamelah wants to make changes in her life. Language learning is a first priority for Kamelah, but it requires transportation to get to. And in order to get a job, she needs to learn some language, which she feels unable to do. In this way, Kamelah feels she is missing out on opportunities like work. For women to strongly desire to be able to learn and work but be unable to, more support is needed so that every woman has the ability to change her life.

From women’s first languages not being on the permit test to an overall lack of language support for learning how to navigate public transportation, language is a serious barrier that keeps women from other areas of social life. See how Zohra describes her experience trying to navigate public transportation:

The biggest barrier I feel for someone to resettle in a different country is the language. Maybe the bus was coming [to my stop] regularly, but because we don't know the language and we didn't know how to figure out the bus app and to see the exact timing, maybe that's why we were always missing the bus and we had to travel that extra mile. Definitely having more resources with the language would

have improved my life in so many ways. And I feel sad for other people who are getting resettled after me. I wish that there would be more a language support in different places.

For Zohra, getting help navigating the public transportation options, including the bus schedule, route, and app would have improved her life during resettlement. She points to a lack of language resources and empathizes with people resettled after her for having to navigate resettlement without the resources Zohra knows they will need.

4.3.4.3 There is Not Enough ESL Support in Resettlement

Despite women's strong desire to access ESL classes, the Clarkston area lacks enough classes to accommodate everyone who wants to learn. Take Marya's quote, where she explains her location in relation to available ESL classes:

There is nothing close to our house. I'm living in one of the apartment complexes in Stone Mountain where the nearest food mart is an 8-minute drive. So, even if you walk to a bus station for 15 minutes, and then it's 2 buses until you get to a Walmart or Kroger—places where they have medicine or food. So, nothing is close, basically. And also, there is no ESL class in Stone Mountain. There's only one in Clarkston, which I cannot go to.

Marya explains how the transportation system is not suited to her need to get from Stone Mountain to Clarkston for ESL, or for grocery shopping. And she shows that despite many women being located outside of Clarkston during resettlement, there are no ESL classes in that part of DeKalb County or beyond.

In addition to there not being enough ESL classes available, or them not being located in women's neighborhoods, there are not enough ESL classes that provide childcare. In fact,

throughout my interviews I only heard of classes at two resettlement service providers that do provide some childcare. This is not enough to serve the entire resettled refugee community of thousands of people. This was a very specific need that women said they need to be filled. Asal's quote below sums up the pattern that women fall into when they cannot find childcare:

I just have a little thing to add. There is really a lack of ESL classes around. The places where people get resettled, and especially for someone who has children, it's like a nightmare to find the ESL class with the childcare. So basically, the mothers are just left with a choice that you have to stay at home for 4 years. And then once your child is in the school, then you can think of yourself.

The specific need for ESL classes that provide childcare is so great, Asal says, that women make the choice to “think of themselves” only after their children are four years old. Women waiting four years before investing in themselves due to childcare issues represents a serious failure of the resettlement system, and likely has repercussions throughout the families impacted by resettlement in Atlanta. Resettled women need ESL classes that understand and conform to their needs—transportation, scheduling, childcare, and location.

4.3.4.4 Summary of Language and ESL Classes

For the women in this study, learning the English language is of the utmost importance in their lives; women view learning English as a way to create a better way forward for themselves. Women want to learn English very badly, going to great lengths to get to the few ESL classes available to them. But the knowledge about what classes are available is spotty, as some women find they were unaware there were classes they could go to. Women also recognize that there is not enough language support surrounding the Clarkston area to meet the need for newcomers to

learn. Especially acute is the need for ESL classes that provide childcare so that mothers can learn.

Given that resettled women connect language learning to their ability to get a good job, it follows that lack of language learning resources may be hampering newcomers in finding sustainable employment. When tied with other barriers, such as lack of affordable childcare and transportation, it is unsurprising that many of the women in this study choose to stay home with their children until school age, despite wanting to learn and work outside the home. If the barriers that hamper women's language aspirations are not addressed, families may continue to pay the price of a resettlement system that is not equipped to teach English to thousands of newcomers a year. The community of resettlement providers must meet women where they are (literally) by providing services such as transportation and childcare to facilitate women's language learning goals. More policy suggestions to address this unmet need are discussed in the following section.

4.4 Summary of Answers to Research Questions

My first research question was, *what are the space, transportation, and mobility experiences of resettled refugee women and how do they navigate everyday life during resettlement in Atlanta?* The above discussion of my results shows that women have many difficult experiences of space, transportation, and mobility that impact their lives across multiple dimensions.

Regarding space, women emphasized the importance of being close to needed destinations during resettlement, because long distances pose an extra challenge when they don't have a personal vehicle. The spatial theme overlaps with other challenges of resettlement, such

as high costs of housing across the metro area. Affordable housing, especially for large and extended families, is not necessarily located in the same areas as resettlement service providers.

Women's transportation experiences show that public transit in its current form is not suitable for women's daily needs. Women's experiences trying to navigate the city without a car revealed many frustrations—ranging from language barriers, inconsistency of bus service, and lack of needed stops and bus routes—that make public transportation undesirable to use during resettlement.

The mobility experiences women shared with me tie into the answers of both this first question and my second research question, *what does mobility mean to resettled refugee women?* The answers women provided showed how crucial being able to drive alone in a car-centric city is to women's daily lives and self-concepts. Being able to navigate the city alone results in positive feelings of self and helping others in the community, while being unable to drive alone causes women to feel dependent, sad, and lack the ability to care for self and family.

Lastly, *what sacrifices do women make in the face of mobility challenges?* Women revealed many sacrifices they made in the face of mobility challenges, especially in the realms of work, children's opportunities, healthcare, and women's own education. Women delay entering the paid workforce for four or more years while they have children younger than school age. Women are unable to transport their children to social activities or participate in their schooling, and even miss out on necessary healthcare due to lack of transportation. Women delay their own healthcare, including pregnancy care appointments, when transportation is an insurmountable challenge. And women's inability to get themselves to ESL classes adds an additional challenge to being able to work for pay.

5 DISCUSSION

This study sought to better understand the mobility experiences of refugee women during their resettlement in Atlanta. Here, I will discuss the main, overarching findings as they relate to key themes that emerged from the interviews, including transportation in car-centric Atlanta and the other topics of work, childcare, gender, and language and ESL classes. I will also discuss potential policy implications of the study findings.

5.1.1 Transportation in Car-Centric Atlanta

Two main findings emerged in my analysis of women's experiences with transportation in car-centric Atlanta: first, that driving is necessary for everyday resettlement life; and second that being able to drive shapes women's concept of self. After discussion of these findings and how they compare with expectations from reviewing the literature, I turn to policy implications related to transportation.

5.1.1.1 Driving is Necessary for Everyday Resettlement Life in Atlanta

Women view driving as a necessary part of everyday life during resettlement in Atlanta, highlighting the need for a car or a ride in a car to get places. They also discussed many factors that contribute to car driving being the only realistic option for them; and how they make sacrifices of work, family, and healthcare when they are unable to drive.

Women explain how driving is necessary to everyday resettlement life. They mention that they "didn't even think about" getting a job until they had their own car, or that they "needed a ride" in order to get to the doctor's office across town. Some women even suggested that families should spend the life savings they bring to the US on a car rather than household necessities—having a car is that crucial to resettlement life. Given that they also did not

experience Atlanta's public transit system as a reliable form of transportation, driving a personal vehicle is viewed as the only long-term, permanent solution for life in Atlanta.

Based on my understanding of the literature surrounding resettlement elsewhere, many of my findings match my expectations from my literature review. For instance, the spatial aspects of resettlement neighborhoods do seem to be dislocated from areas of employment (see Bose 2014)—so much so that women are unable to get to work or forego working altogether due to how far away opportunities are. This ties to my main transportation theme because, lacking transportation methods to traverse those long distances between home and work, women are left with few options to engage in paid work outside the home. Tying to both the gender and transportation themes, I also find that women's transportation needs are often secondary to those of their working and driving husbands (see Uteng et al. 2019), even to the point that women do not have access to the family car when an emergency strikes.

I was surprised to learn from the interviews how insufficient women found the public transportation options that connect resettlement neighborhoods like Clarkston to the wider Atlanta metro. This contrasts with the reputation Clarkston has been given as having good access to public transportation options (Long 2017). My results indicate that women don't view the bus as a viable option for their lives, so resettlement policy and practice may be mistaken to focus on public transportation as a reason to locate resettlement in the Clarkston area. If women need to drive in order to become employed, for instance, then resettlement policy should focus more on getting women driving independently than learning to use a public transit system that doesn't suit their needs and isn't viewed as a long-term solution to resettlement life.

When women decide not to take certain trips by non-car means or choose not to go out because they can't drive themselves, they make sacrifices impacting their work, family, and

healthcare usage. As examples, many women felt they were unable to get a job because they didn't have their own car. Children missed out on birthday parties, school events, extracurricular activities, and religious and social events when the family did not have access to a car ride. And women shared so many examples of how they and their children missed out on healthcare appointments (including pregnancy checkups, vaccine administration, and emergency care) due to not being able to get to the doctor's office. Not being able to drive themselves limits not only women's ability to interact with their social worlds, but also the opportunities they can provide for their children.

For resettling women, transportation and mobility is not just about getting from points A to B; it is about establishing themselves in a new country, embracing opportunities for themselves and their children, and developing their character into who they want to be. Transportation and mobility (and the policies that shape them) affect every aspect of women's lives, from daily needs like healthcare and work to the opportunities they can provide for their children. When women sacrifice their needs due to transportation and mobility challenges, the success of their resettlement process is jeopardized.

5.1.1.2 Being Able to Drive Shapes Women's Concept of Self

Given that the resettlement context of Atlanta has a car-centric transportation regime, it may be unsurprising that women view driving a car as essential to their daily lives here. However, the impact of being able to drive goes beyond the practical necessities of daily life: it affects women's concept of self. Women highlight their feelings and describe themselves in light of their in/ability to drive; they connect their mobile lives in their home countries with their driving mobility during resettlement; and they relate their mobile, driving selves to how they can serve other people through transportation help.

Women connected being unable to drive with negative, difficult emotions. However, they connected to being able to drive with uplifted, positive self-descriptions. For instance, women used words like “bad memory,” “upset,” and “hopeless” to describe their *feelings* about being unable to get themselves or their children somewhere important. Women used words like “confident,” “empowered,” and “independent” to describe *themselves* when they were able to get to a needed destination. This shows an interesting difference in how women thought of themselves in light of their mobility circumstances. When mobility is strained, women point to their feelings about the situation rather than what the strain means about them personally. However, when mobility is freer, women view themselves as empowered actors who can make changes for their own lives.

Women also connected their mobile lives in Atlanta to memories of movement in their home countries. For instance, women ponder why they were unable to go out before and marvel at how confident they had become upon learning to drive; they empathize with women back home who are unable to go out alone; they happily embrace their mobility as a way to compensate for the worry they feel for family members still in the crisis zone; and they enjoy exploring Georgia’s landscapes while holding in mind how different it is from that of their home countries. In these ways, women use their mobility to reflect on their life histories and the countries they fled.

Once women have their own cars, they relate their newly mobile selves to how they could serve others—children, husbands, and other community members. Some women feel blessed that they could now help their husbands with household income by getting a job; happy and responsible that they could take their children to all their activities; and independent to be able to help community members in need of transportation. This mobility helping contrasts with how

women felt burdened by having to ask others for help with transportation: they dreamed of the day when they would not only no longer have to ask others but could give help in return. Being able to drive allows women to fulfill their desire to give back to other people in their lives.

Based on the literature review, I did expect mobility to have a deeper meaning to women than simply the ability to get around town (see Jeekel 2014; Uteng 2009; Bose 2014; Bohon et al. 2008; Farber et al. 2018). The finding that women in this study connected mobility to so many different concepts (serving others, feeling blessed or independent, and being a good parent, to name a few) is strong evidence of mobility's relationship to mental and emotional health, as well as how feelings of altruism can manifest into community helping behavior. When resettlement and transportation policies do not align with women's needs during resettlement, their self-concept and successful resettlement are threatened. On the other hand, when women are able to make mobility choices that suit their resettlement needs, their empowered self-concept facilitates them to serve the resettlement community.

5.1.1.3 Policy Implications Related to Transportation

Because of driving's ubiquity for resettlement life in Atlanta and the serious barriers women face in becoming mobile, policy changes related to resettlement support are needed. Women need more assistance in learning to drive and the public transportation options on the eastern side of the Atlanta metro need to be reinforced. Each of these changes are discussed below. These recommendations are built from both my observations of women's needs and their direct words on the topic.

5.1.1.3.1 Women Need More Assistance Learning to Drive

Women often come to the US with little familiarity with driving, but they quickly find that driving is a required skill if they are to successfully build lives for themselves in Atlanta's

car-centric culture. Because of this gap between women's driving skills and the reality of their daily need to drive, newcomers need more support from resettlement organizations in becoming auto mobile. Women need help in the entire lifecycle of becoming car drivers and owners: learning how to drive; getting comfortable driving alone; gaining confidence as a driver; learning the driver's permit and license test; learning about signage and driving rules; getting help buying a car; and gaining familiarity with driving highways and interstates.

The current supply of driver's education is inadequate to meet women's needs, especially because the high cost of driving courses is out of reach for many women⁷. And the importance of resettlement organizations taking responsibility for establishing a baseline of driving knowledge cannot be understated, as women shared that even the men who drove in Afghanistan are prone to traffic accidents when driving in the US. This poses a real safety issue for the community.

5.1.1.3.2 Current Public Transportation Options Need to be Reinforced

Women do not view using public transportation options as a long-term alternative to learning to drive. They described many reasons why public transportation options were not suitable for their lives and stated that learning to drive was a high priority for them. For instance, bus routes do not run frequently enough; bus stops are not convenient for families; the system of having to go to a train station to use the bus card is challenging; and it takes too long to get across town. These issues push women toward asking friends for car rides or waiting until their families own a car to start exploring the city's offerings.

Though the public transportation system is not a great option, many women are unable to buy a car quickly. Buying a car is a huge expense that can be difficult to save for on one income.

⁷ Note: Driver's education programs for refugee women do exist, such as Women Behind the Wheel in Stone Mountain (Johnson 2024).

For these reasons, public transportation options—especially in resettlement neighborhoods—should be strengthened to support women’s social needs during the time between initial resettlement and the achievement of buying a car. Especially needed are better connections between bus routes; more buses serving routes (less time between buses); bus routes that go where newcomers need to reach; cultural competency training for MARTA staff; and bus schedules that accommodate shift work.

Though women would likely still desire to become auto-mobile (unless the culture of mobility in Atlanta drastically changed), at least having reliable, affordable, and consistent bus and train service would get women to jobs, healthcare, children’s schools, and shopping—perhaps even speeding up the time it would take women to become employed and economically self-sufficient. This is to say nothing of the greater public good (cleaner air, decrease in traffic, smaller proportion of household income spent on automobility) that enhanced public transportation could supply to the Atlanta area for newcomers and long-term residents alike.

5.1.2 Other Resettlement-related Policy Topics

In addition to the transportation-related factors that impact women, the topics of work, childcare, and language were also directly and indirectly related to the overarching story of mobility and resettlement in Atlanta. Women emphasized a few key points that have special impact on their lives during resettlement, and they overlap multiple concepts, such as language and childcare; language and mobility. Those are: women need ESL classes with childcare; and Afghan languages must be available on the driver’s permit test. Each of these is discussed below.

5.1.2.1 ESL Classes with Childcare

Though both language learning and childcare are discussed separately in the results section, I had to emphasize the importance women placed on ESL classes with childcare because

it is such a specific need that many women expressed. Childcare is deeply connected with other aspects of women's lives, such as women's ability to work, the gendered division of labor in the household, and women's ability to get the language training they need during resettlement. The lack of ESL classes that provide childcare is a serious barrier that keeps women from getting the language education they need to improve their lives. Women mentioned only two organizations that provide childcare with the ESL classes—to serve around a thousand newcomers to the Clarkston area per year. Numerically, this cannot be sufficient to adequately serve everyone in need. Women need to be able to access the locations of ESL classes with childcare easily. The trouble of navigating public transit to the classes often poses a barrier for mother and children, who then cannot focus due to exhaustion during class time.

Multiple options exist to increase the availability and accessibility of childcare and ESL classes. Though women expressed that they prefer the social bonding afforded by in-person classes, perhaps one solution would be to provide more virtual participation options for when transportation is too much of a barrier. Another could be ESL teachers going into apartment communities where newcomers live to provide instruction time. Agencies could invest in transportation resources like minibuses or vans to pick up and drop off learners. As women themselves suggested, friends could rotate between themselves, providing childcare at home while others attend class. And resettlement organizations need to coordinate the marketing of their available ESL classes, across agencies, language groups, and Clarkston area neighborhoods.

A combination of all these steps may be needed to make a difference for newcomers in need of English education. But without a strong investment by resettlement policymakers and a concerted effort to understand and address how intertwined childcare is with women's other resettlement needs, newcomer women will continue to be left with too few options to learn

English and improve their career choices. By placing more emphasis on access to English education, resettlement agencies may actually improve resettlement outcomes by giving women the space and time to establish their language skills before moving into higher paying work.

5.1.2.2 Afghan Language on the Driver's Permit Test

With driving being a necessary skill for long-term resettlement and adjustment to life in Atlanta, having the driver's permit test available to take in an Afghan language is a logical need for newcomers. Women need to be able to take the written driver's permit test in their own language, whether translated into written language or with the assistance of a language interpreter. Especially given how central being able to drive is to being able to work, transport children to activities, become educated, and access healthcare, unnecessary barriers like language in the permit test should be eliminated for the wellbeing of the resettlement community. While some strides have already been made even during the course of this research⁸, more languages and interpreters should be made available for newcomers in taking the driver's permit test.

⁸ Note: as of 5/14/2024, the Georgia State Department of Driver Services website states that the Road Rules part of the driver's exam is available in Dari and Farsi, but not other Afghan languages such as Pashto, Uzbek, Turkmen, etc. (<https://dds.georgia.gov/list-languages>)

6 LIMITATIONS

This project was subject to limitations that may have affected the data I was able to collect and thus the conclusions I draw from them. These limitations include language, recruitment, and the project's cross-sectional design.

6.1.1 Language

In my initial project proposal, I did not plan on having access to an interpreter. Thus, I assumed all my interviews would need to be conducted in English since I am not fluent in a refugee language. Upon beginning data collection, however, I realized that I was not able to delve deeply into the interview topics due to the language barriers interviewees faced. This greatly hampered the understanding of women's experiences that I was able to gain through the interviews. I then began the process of bringing an Afghan American interpreter onboard so that I could gain better data.

Having the interpreter on the project staff brought with it some new challenges (such as training and paperwork with GSU's IRB), but many more benefits. Among them is the intended benefit of gaining better data through deeper conversations in women's first languages. But an additional benefit was that, by having a trusted interpreter, the project gained legitimacy in a community that may have reason to be hesitant to discuss their immigration journeys with outsider researchers like me. This leads to the next limitation of the project: recruitment.

6.1.2 Recruitment

Because this project was limited by funding, time, and scope constraints, the recruitment was also limited. I could not interview people indefinitely and had to recruit from the people who were reasonably available through the interpreter's social network. Recruiting through the interpreter's network means that the sample of people I interviewed are likely to be more

privileged than those who were not in this network, as those who knew about the study were already connected with the interpreter and the help she provides to the community. Women who were already more left out of resettlement resources, such as those who have undocumented status or entered the US through the lottery system, are thus less likely to have been included in the study.

Because the Afghan women in the study are likely to be more privileged than those who were not available to be sampled to be in the study, my findings may be conservative in the challenges women face during resettlement. I may have missed out on hearing experiences outside of the norm for people in this social network. For instance, because the interpreter recruited among Dari-speaking women, I may have missed the unique experiences of Pashto speakers. This could be important because, as mentioned above, mobility issues such as the driver's permit test being available in Dari language would not necessarily benefit Pashto language speakers.

6.1.3 Cross Sectional

I was not able to conduct a longitudinal study, which would have had great benefits to understanding resettlement mobility as a process that takes years. I was only able to ask women to reflect on their experiences, some of which could have been most pertinent to this study up to ten years ago. This could introduce some bias into women's recollections, as they may remember their initial resettlement years as much more or less challenging than they would have described at the time. In fact, multiple participants did say how grateful they were to be past the initial challenges of resettlement and may have declined to fully relive those years with me.

Future studies should attempt a longitudinal design in order to see how women and their families adapt to life in Atlanta and the role that car ownership and car driving plays in their

social lives over time. This would benefit our understanding of resettlement and mobility because it would more clearly plot how mobility skills and resources shape women's social lives (such as integration into the community, education, healthcare usage, and work), as well as understanding women's mobility goals (such as learning to drive) and the steps they take to accomplish them in the face of resettlement challenges.

7 CONCLUSION

This exploratory study of refugee women's experiences of mobility during resettlement in Atlanta reveals the centrality of car driving to social life. Driving or having reliable transportation is not only a necessary part of getting around for women's daily activities, but auto-mobility is also an important part of how women develop their sense of self in their new communities. Additionally, women make many sacrifices of work, education, and healthcare due to lacking the mobility resources they need during resettlement. Resettlement policymakers need to address women's needs—especially as it relates to them being able to drive and access ESL instruction—because of how closely women tie these to being able to get a job and care for their families. Getting a job and taking care of the family, in turn, are closely related to outcomes of successful resettlement.

To be certain, policy efforts around transportation and mobility can be informed by the findings in this study. However, the findings from this study tell a story beyond transportation and mobility. The findings not only highlight the interconnectedness of transportation and mobility (and related policies), but also a wide range of factors that are critical for successful resettlement—access to ESL instruction, language accessibility in transportation and learning to drive, affordable childcare, resettling in a location that facilitates mobility, and job training services.

From a sociological perspective, this study highlights the role of social policy (or lack thereof) in shaping the experiences of refugee women and their success in navigating everyday life. Failing to create and implement policy related to transportation will likely have far reaching implications for refugee women and successful resettlement, at the individual, family, and community levels. For instance, policies necessitating resettling women learning to drive (and

providing the requisite funding and resources to support this aim) would support women's desires to get around town for daily needs (ESL classes, jobs, and taking care of family needs). In turn, such policies would support women's self-concept as empowered and competent caregivers of their families and community members in need.

This research points the way for future research covering multiple topics in refugee resettlement and mobility. For instance, research should delve into cultural differences among resettled people and what specific barriers people overcome and adaptations they employ to become mobile. More work should be done to understand how the interdependent relationships between wives and their husbands affect the family's mobility throughout the resettlement timeline. And the mobility barriers to work, education, and healthcare that newcomer families endure deserve closer examination, especially as parents' mobility challenges relate to lost opportunities for children.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Guide

Opening: In your own words, please describe your experiences of getting around Atlanta during your resettlement.

- How would you describe getting around in Atlanta?
- Looking back, do you feel you were able to get where you needed to go?
 - What places did you need to get to?
 - Were places far away from each other?
 - Were places far from home?
- How long did travel take?
- How did you get around?

Do transit-related factors (travel distances, travel times, or difficulty in moving around) negatively impact refugee women regarding work, children, or healthcare during resettlement?

- Was it ever difficult to get to work? To an activity for your child? Or to a health appointment?
 - What was the issue that made it difficult to get there?
 - How did you deal with the difficulty?
 - If you never had an issue, what worked well for you?

How does the in/ability to move affect women's work, family, or healthcare use during resettlement?

- Did you ever miss out on an opportunity at work because you couldn't get there? for your child? or to take care of your health?
 - What was the opportunity?

- How did missing out affect you?
 - Your work?
 - Your children?
 - Your health?

Do resettlement neighborhoods have women's desired transportation options, and are those options accessible to them? If not, what is lacking and what would women desire to have in their communities?

- What did you use in your resettlement neighborhood to help you to get around?
 - Were these transportation methods suitable to your needs?
 - Why or why not?
- What do you wish you'd had in your neighborhood, if anything?
- How would you describe your resettlement neighborhood's location compared to the places you needed to get to?

What does the ability to move as one desires mean to women during resettlement?

- How did you feel if and when you were unable to get somewhere important?
- How did you feel if and when you were able to get somewhere important?
- How did being able to move around affect your life during resettlement?
- What does it mean to you to be able to move around the city?

Closing: thank you for sharing your experiences. I want to respect your time, but if you would like to share anything else about what we've discussed, please feel free to do so at this time:

- Is there anything else you'd like to share about resettlement, transportation, or getting around in Atlanta?
- Anything else about getting to work, children's opportunities, or healthcare appointments?

- Anything else you would want people to know about your resettlement experience?

Appendix B: Recruitment Flyer

Department of Sociology IRB Approval #: H22584

**REFUGEE WOMEN IN
ATLANTA:
SHARE YOUR STORY!****What is this study about?**

This study explores women's experiences getting around town during refugee resettlement in Atlanta.

Who can participate?

Women who meet all these:

- are 18 or older
- have children
- resettled in Atlanta as a refugee in the last 15 years
- are able to speak English fluently

Why participate?

You will help advance understanding of what it's like to resettle in Atlanta. You may also enjoy sharing your story with others.

To get started

email lgreenwood2@student.gsu.edu

call 404-494-0416

or scan the QR code



Receive a \$50 gift card for one hour of your time.

Appendix C: Consent Form

Georgia State University
Department of Sociology
Informed Consent

Title: REFUGEES IN TRANSIT: REFUGEE WOMEN'S VIEWS ON SPACE,
TRANSPORTATION, AND MOBILITY DURING RESETTLEMENT IN ATLANTA

Principal Investigator: Mathew Gayman
PhD Student Principal Investigator: Leanna Greenwood

I. Purpose:

You are invited to join in a research study. The goal of the study is to understand women's experiences of refugee resettlement in Atlanta. You are invited to join the study because you are a woman who has resettled in Atlanta. A total of 30 participants will be in the study. Being in the study will require around 60 minutes of your time.

II. Procedures:

If you choose to be in the study, you will be asked some questions. The questions are about getting around in Atlanta. If you choose to be in the study, you will be asked to attend an interview. The interview will be in a public place. The interview will be tape recorded. You will receive a \$50 VISA gift card in exchange for one hour of your time.

III. Risks:

You will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life.

IV. Benefits:

There are no direct benefits for being in this study. You may feel good about sharing your experiences. We hope to gain information about resettlement in Atlanta. This study will help future research. Your participation in this study will not be tied to the benefits you receive at resettlement organizations.

V. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Participation in research is voluntary. "Voluntary" means you do not have to be in this study. The interview will stop if you decide to be in the study and change your mind. You have the right to stop at any time. You may skip questions or stop being in the study at any time.

VI. Confidentiality:

We will keep your records private to as much as possible by law. Leanna Greenwood will have access to the information you give. We will use a fake name for you on study records. We will make a transcript of your taped interview using Microsoft Word. The information you give will be stored on a password-protected computer. Your name will never be attached to the recording or transcript so you cannot be identified. We will not share your name or other facts about you with other people. The results will be summarized in group form. You will not be identified personally.

VII. Contact Persons:

Email Mathew Gayman at mgayman@gsu.edu if you have questions, concerns, or complaints about this study. You can also email if you think you have been harmed by the study. Call Susan Vogtner in the Georgia State University Office of Research Integrity at 404-413-3513 or svogtner1@gsu.edu if you want to talk to someone who is not part of the study team. You can talk about questions, concerns about your rights, offer input, get information, or make suggestions about the study.

VIII. Copy of Consent Form to Participant:

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you are willing to volunteer for this research and be tape recorded, please sign below.

Participant	Date
Principal Investigator or Researcher Obtaining Consent	Date

Appendix D: Demographic Questions

1. What is your home country? _____
2. How long have you been in the Atlanta area? _____
3. What year did you leave your home country? _____
4. What is your age? (Approximate age is fine) _____
5. How many family members live in your household now? _____
6. How many children do you have? _____
7. What is your occupation? _____
- 8a. Do you own a car? _____
 - 8b. (If applicable) How long have you owned a car? _____
9. What neighborhood or area do you live in now? _____
10. What is your main mode of transportation? _____

Appendix E: Full Listing of Results by Interview Question

Space

What places did you need to get to?

To tackle this question, I first sought to understand where women need to get to during resettlement. Women responded with not just desired destinations, but also challenges, things that worked well for their lives, and sacrifices they had to make because of various barriers. I will discuss each below.

Grocery and Everyday Needs

The destinations women named that they desired to have around them included general shopping and everyday life, needs for the immigration and resettlement process, healthcare for themselves and children, ESL classes, social needs, mobility needs, and places for their children. For general shopping and everyday life, women stated that they needed grocery stores that included halal foods, general foods such as Publix and Walmart, and Thrift Town in downtown Clarkston. They also stated that places to do general shopping, like for clothes and household items needed for a resettling family, were essential.

The places needed for the immigration and resettlement process included offices where they could apply for legal status and complete biometric applications. The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS), Social Security office, and places to pick up donations were also mentioned as important locations.

The resettlement process also entails numerous health appointments. Among the locations mentioned that women needed to get to were DeKalb Hospital to receive vaccines, their initial required health screening, places to buy medicine for children (which could be

grocery stores), and places to buy infant formula. Finally, women frequently mentioned specialty and pregnancy doctor's appointments.

Women also frequently mentioned the need for ESL classes in their neighborhoods, which will be discussed throughout this results section because it was so prominent. They also mentioned that they needed to be close to their social connections, such as places of worship and friends' homes. They also mentioned the Department of Driver Services (DDS), because so many were currently or had previously pursued getting their driver's licenses. Finally, children's needs were singled out in that women mentioned they needed places for their children to have fun, such as playgrounds, as well as having schools close by.

Challenges in Getting to Places

When answering where they needed to get to, women also made note of the challenges in getting to these places. This is interesting because it shows the interconnected nature of space, transportation, and mobility; when responding to my question about needed destinations, women are highlighting how places being far apart posed transportation challenges, or how their mobility was affected by their location in the resettlement process.

Women showed many challenges in their ability to get to their needed destinations. These included language barriers, physical demands, places being too far away, lack of knowledge or awareness, and transportation issues.

The **language barrier** is a prominent theme throughout women's responses. Navigating the MARTA system with limited English knowledge could be difficult at multiple junctures: difficulty downloading and understanding the app, difficulty asking questions to drivers or other passengers, and difficulty understanding place names and one's location along bus routes were all challenges related to language.

The **physical demands** of having to walk with shopping bags and holding children's hands appeared in many women's answers. The scene of a woman walking long distances to either a location or bus stop along busy roads while holding children, pushing strollers, or holding a child's hand is one that revealed itself often. When women have to carry lots of shopping bags back home, the situation appears even more physically demanding. Additionally, women mentioned that the weather in Georgia is not conducive—and sometimes even harmful to children's health—in walking long distances so burdened, especially in the cold or hot temperatures. Women may also have to walk their children to multiple schools for both drop off and pick up, which could take hours out of her day.

Especially in the case of getting to specialty doctor's appointments and ESL classes, **places being too far away** posed a real challenge. Often these places were outside of DeKalb or Gwinnett counties, and women specifically stated that, while they are comfortable driving on surface streets, driving on highways is not yet comfortable for them. This meant that getting to a specialist in Alpharetta, who may be the only one accepting their insurance, could be impossible. Many of the women I talked with lived outside of the Clarkston area where the majority of available ESL classes are located. For a woman resettled in Stone Mountain or Norcross, getting to an ESL class in Clarkston could be impossible with the limited transportation options available to them.

Women stated that **lack of knowledge or awareness** made it difficult to get to their needed destinations, especially once their case manager (if any) became unresponsive to their requests for help. Women stated they were told to "figure it out" once their caseworker had fulfilled the requirement to take newcomers to their health screening, or once their formal resettlement assistance had ended. Some women stated that they did not feel equipped to manage

their transportation needs on their own. As will be discussed in the overarching theme of “the family in resettlement,” women may not be the first drivers for their households, and as such did not know how to navigate their surroundings alone. Because husbands did the majority or all of the driving with the family car, women often did not know how to navigate for themselves. It was also difficult for women to navigate using GPS, especially if that is a new skill for them or if directions are only available in English.

Women frequently mentioned waiting for their husbands and the unreliable nature of using the bus as two **transportation issues** they face during resettlement. In most cases, husbands were the first family members to get their license, drive, and own a car. This resulted in women often having to wait for their husbands to get home to have a ride to their needed destinations. Women also stated that the bus was rarely on time, making it very difficult to get to appointments on time.

What Worked Well and Solutions

Given the list of needed destinations and challenges faced in getting there, I wanted to know what solutions women had and what worked well for them to overcome those challenges. These solutions included places being within walking distance, seeking and receiving help with transportation, and organizing time and space.

Women mentioned that **places being within walking distance** was a huge help to their resettlement experience. Some women had work, children’s school, primary care doctors, and friends within close proximity to their homes. Other women mentioned that their resettlement neighborhood was a great place to be resettled. Shops that had everything a family needed in one location, such as Wal-Mart, were also mentioned as being valuable for their lives.

Seeking and receiving help played a large role in solutions women had for their challenges. They mentioned numerous groups of people who provided rides to important locations: community members and friends who were willing to carpool together, case managers helped with transportation sometimes, volunteers helped women schedule and get to appointments and to the DDS for permit testing, and husbands drove when they were not working and had a car to drive.

Lastly, women overcame spatial challenges by **organizing their time and the space** they need to traverse. For instance, one woman changed their doctors to one whose office is closer to home, which made it easier to make it to appointments. Other women mentioned that being extremely organized with their time made scheduling appointments easier. Examples of this include determining your shopping list in advance of going to the grocery store, making food ahead of time for the entire week, and only scheduling doctor's appointments when the husband was available to drive.

Sacrifices Made

When discussing their ability to get to needed destinations, I asked women to explain if and how they had to make sacrifices due to the challenges they encountered. Among the sacrifices made were those related to children's enrichment, time, healthcare, work, and social relationships.

Children's enrichment often took a backseat when it became challenging to get somewhere. For instance, women stated that they couldn't offer children fun activities outside the home, opting instead to watch a favorite movie together or cook a favorite treat at home. Going somewhere "for fun" was not an option, and only women only went places that were strictly necessary.

The **time** investment that women made to get places came up repeatedly, especially when women compared how long a trip would take on public transit versus driving a private car. One woman decided that the time investment of figuring out how to use MARTA was not worth it—she decided to walk everywhere instead.

Women expressed that their **healthcare** visits were sacrificed due to difficulty getting there. These included biweekly pregnancy checkups, having to bring someone else (often a child) to interpret during doctor visits, and not going to see the doctor unless it was an absolute necessity, or a child didn't have needed medicine.

Social relationships suffered during resettlement. One woman managed her inability to shop at her leisure by making grocery lists instead of asking someone to take her to the store every time she realized she needed something. Others expressed words of shame or guilt at having to ask for help or borrowing household items frequently. Social relationships also suffered because some interviewees arrived in the US during COVID lockdowns. She expressed great regret that her resettlement was shaped by social isolation caused by fewer social gatherings.

Finally, the ability to **work** was often sacrificed—for both husbands and wives—due to difficulty getting around. Women often stated that they “couldn't even think of” getting a job or education while their transportation situation was so limited. Another said that her husband's work situation suffered when he would often leave work in order to take a family member somewhere.

Were Places Far Away from Each Other?

To further understand how the women in this study thought about the distances they had to travel to get to needed locations, I asked if the places they named above were far away from

each other and far away from home (described below). They tended to answer questions about spatial proximity in relation to walking, driving/riding in a car, or taking the bus—another example of how space, transportation, and mobility are inherently linked together. The answers highlight how **subjective and relative** time and space are for different women; how **spatial proximity is judged in relation to the mode of transport**; and that the **demands of caring for children or carrying bags influenced if a place could be reached at all**.

Perceptions of spatial distance is both **subjective and relative**—a 30-minute walk could be “close” for one person but too far for another; likewise, a 30-minute bus ride could be considered “close” because someone has figured out how to navigate the bus system, or because they have no other transportation option available. Damsa says, “They were not on a walking distance, but definitely if you don't have a choice, then you would walk even if it's further away. Yeah. So, to answer the question, they were not close.” While Rabia compared locations with her perception of how far away Atlanta is: “No, not really, like, maybe 30 minutes away. Only Atlanta was far for me.”

The **mode of transportation played a role in how women perceived the distance between locations**: Marya said, “There is nothing close to our house and I'm living in one of the apartment complexes in Stone Mountain where the nearest food Mart is an 8-minute drive. So, even if you walk to a bus station, it's like 15 minutes, walking to the bus and then 2 buses. Until you get a Walmart or Kroger...where they have medicine or food. Yeah, so nothing is close basically.” In trying to get to doctor's appointments, Shadleen reveals how it was actually “unthinkable” to traverse a distance by bus but possible by private car: “...And the other thing with the doctor's appointment, some of the doctors were really far away. So, I couldn't even think of bus because then I had to come back on time to get my other 2 children. So, then that was hard

for me to know, like, bus was not reliable to drop me back on time. So, for that, I would schedule the doctor's appointment when my husband was at home...I would schedule the appointments on that week.”

The **demands of caring for children and carrying bags** influenced if a woman perceived a place as reachable. “...And then if I go to Thrift Town, that Thrift Town is the only place which is close to my house. But I cannot find everything which I need there and also things are a bit expensive at Thrift Town. Yeah, and then the other problem I have is that I cannot walk with 2 people, with 2 children. Yeah, because I will have the stroller in my hand, and it will be hard to carry the groceries” (Shichi). “Yes, [places] were far apart and then the other really serious problem was that we couldn't get so much in our hands. So, basically, like if you are walking, you can't get everything you need. So, then we will take we will take trips. Or one time I remember I was so exhausted. I had so many bags in my hand...” (Saima).

Were Places Far Away from Home?

The responses to this question reveal a wide spectrum of perceptions of places being very close to being very far from home. The most commonly described locations were grocery shopping and doctor's offices, indicating the importance of food shopping and healthcare to interviewees' lives during resettlement. Responses show three points of interest relevant to space: the **ability to get to transportation infrastructure**; how spatial distances shape the **desire to travel**; and that some women were **willing to walk but distances were not perceived as walkable**.

An important point brought up when answering this question is that the ability to even take public transportation is not present in some resettlement areas. In essence, people are not even able to **get to transportation infrastructure** easily. “...Also, the bus stops were closer are

closer in Clarkston because in Stone Mountain they had to walk for 20 minutes to get to the bus stop. So, even the bus stop was not closer” (Asal). This highlights how a distance of about a mile to transportation infrastructure can create a significant physical demand on people to walk.

Very interestingly, Sumbul highlighted how she did not **desire to travel** outside of her resettlement neighborhood: “No. I didn't want to go anywhere far anyways, because all my friends are around the same area that we live... So, it didn't come to mind to go somewhere further because whatever I needed, whatever I wanted, it was all around me.” Again, this shows the connection between space and mobility, that the desire to travel around town was shaped by the character of the space around her.

Finally, the respondents show a **willingness to move by walking, but perceived distances as unwalkable**: “A little bit, because I couldn't walk there. If it was near, I could have walked, but it wasn't that close to my house” (Nageenah). In this case, spatial distance proved to be a significant challenge for Nageenah who was willing and able to take transportation into her own hands.

How long did travel take?

To further understand what the spatial environment looked like for women in their resettlement, I asked the follow up question, “how long did travel take?” While some offered travel times in miles or minutes, more often the women would give answers that revealed their motivations in choosing to go or not go somewhere. Women illustrated that **knowledge and choosing, physical demands, driving a car, and spatial traits** all influenced how they conceptualized how long travel took.

Women displayed their process of gaining **knowledge and choosing** the best path forward when answering how long travel took. For instance, they mentioned there was a big

knowledge hurdle that they needed to get over in order to be able to use MARTA—as mentioned above, some would choose to walk rather than invest in learning the MARTA system. They had to figure out where the routes go, what the stops are, what is the schedule, and what the addresses are that they’re trying to get to. One even said “it’s a nightmare” to figure out getting somewhere with the bus, especially navigating multiple bus transfers or getting across Atlanta. One woman mentioned that once she got a car, she realized that the bus route actually took her all the way around her destination rather than going straight to it. Women had to choose when something was worth trying to navigate to. For instance, could she hold off on buying groceries in order to shop once for more items? It was also difficult and time consuming to take children out on errands, so she may make the choice not to go out this time. COVID also played a role in women choosing not to go out, as some did not feel comfortable being in the confined space of the bus during the outbreak.

As mentioned above, the **physical demands** of going out contributed to the experience of how long travel took. For instance, one woman mentioned how going out meant taking her young son’s stroller up and down apartment stairs, getting it, him, and her bags on the bus, and then having to carry any purchases: “it’s a headache.” Another example one woman mentioned is having to cross the main roads with her children to get to the park, which could entail physical danger. In addition, one woman mentioned that even if the grocery store is very close by walking distance, she couldn’t carry very much shopping in her hands because of the physical demands of that. She would have to go more often and carry fewer purchases each time, which could mean she spent more time shopping.

Women displayed their understanding of distance through their discussion of **driving a car**. Many mentioned that, even with a car, places were still up to an hour away. “In Norcross,

almost everything is far away,” one woman noted. They also revealed the idea that traveling farther from home is possible once you purchase a car—this changes the experience of space when compared with walking. “Having a car or someone to drive you makes things easier.” When one woman mentioned that volunteers would help her get to an appointment, it was always with the subtext that the volunteer was specifically driving them in a private vehicle—no one said a volunteer would take them on public transit.

The **spatial traits** of the world around them also shaped women’s understanding of how long it took to get where they needed to go. Some mentioned that their apartments, for instance, didn’t have a play area for their children, meaning that they had to find somewhere else to take their kids to play. One woman mentioned that her apartment complex has cars driving by, so it’s not a safe place for her kids to play. Another expressed some frustration that it shouldn’t be so difficult to travel with your kids somewhere. Another expressed that her insurance dictated which doctors she could see, so traveling to see specialists was much more difficult than seeing a primary care physician in Decatur.

How would you describe your resettlement neighborhood’s location compared to the places you needed to get to?

When answering this question, respondents’ answers tended to fall into 2 categories: needs and positive aspects of their resettlement neighborhoods and the surrounding space. Each are discussed below.

Needs

When discussing their needs for their resettlement neighborhood in comparison to the places they need to go, women mentioned both unmet needs and what they desire to have in their neighborhood. Among the needs expressed are **ESL classes that provide childcare,**

resettlement services and community support, and healthy, safe, and quiet neighborhoods with good schools.

One of the most prominent needs women expressed to me during interviews is the need for **ESL classes that provide childcare**. Women mentioned multiple aspects of their need for ESL classes. For one, they mentioned that there are simply not enough classes or in enough locations around Clarkston's vicinity. Others noted that they were not even aware that classes existed for them to partake in for a long time after resettlement. Others mentioned that even if a class did not provide childcare, perhaps they could share childcare responsibilities at home with other community members so they could rotate attendance. Some women mentioned that where they were resettled, outside of the Clarkston area, there were no classes that they could possibly attend. They had the perception that there were ESL and resettlement resources available in Clarkston. Another woman mentioned that since she was unable to attend ESL classes, she felt very isolated from her community and linked that to her mental health challenges.

Women consistently stated the perception that Clarkston had more **resettlement services and community support** than other places they were resettled in the Atlanta metro. Things like making friends in the Afghan community, Afghans getting together socially in Clarkston, discussing life situations with others who can offer assistance, and getting help from neighbors were all mentioned as social interactions women felt they were missing out on, or heard from others were available in Clarkston. Some women also said they specifically needed to be around people who understand immigrant experiences, people from "the same community," and having a diversity of culture and language. Access to healthcare facilities, especially primary care doctors, was among the most important qualities women expressed need for.

Women expressed other factors—those of a **healthy, safe, and quiet neighborhood with good schools** were most desirable for them during resettlement. This includes concern over their children’s school ratings; apartments that are hygienic, updated, and cared for; and concern over drug and gang activity in children’s schools. One woman compared Clarkston, where she lived, negatively to nearby Decatur: “I liked Decatur so much at the time, because it was a beautiful city. You know, whenever I would go there, I would be like, oh, this is America, you know, not Clarkston” (Behnaz).

Positive Aspects of Resettlement Neighborhoods

Women expressed both positive and negative assessments of Clarkston as a place to resettle, using their knowledge of others’ experiences elsewhere to gauge how well Clarkston met their needs.

Among the positive assessments, one person said that she wished every family could be resettled in Clarkston: “...Clarkston is very good. I would love every family to get resettled in Clarkston because there are so much support from other community members. Everything is close. And people who live there are mostly the same immigrants, and they understand each other...If I compare locations, then Clarkston was the best place to get resettled” (Shadleen).

Women also want things to be close by and judged Clarkston based on this criterion: “What I’m hearing from other Afghans is that there, there is so much support in Clarkston and there are playgrounds and stuff, which are close to your house” (Nosheen). Others judged their own neighborhoods against Clarkston: “If I would be in the locations like Clarkston and Decatur where other Afghan communities are, that would be better for me because then I could make, friends there from my community. We could do childcare for each other, and then we could attend class English classes that way. And then the ESL classes are also on a walking distance

there. If I would be in Clarkston or Decatur, that would be a better option than Stone Mountain” (Marya). “I would definitely say that the location we were resettled was not a good location. And compared to Clarkston where I see that the ESL classes are closer, there are the Mommy and Me (pregnancy and literacy class) where they offer a childcare are closer, the groceries are close enough and also the bus stops are closer in Clarkston. Because in Stone Mountain we have to walk for 20 minutes to get to the bus stop. So, even the bus stop was not closer” (Asal).

What Do You Wish You'd Had in Your Resettlement Neighborhood?

Women expressed a desire to have a variety of resources closer to them in response to this question. Many responses focused on **education and uplifting** of themselves (ESL, job skills training, work), **transportation**, and the **daily needs of a family** (healthcare, shopping, social relations, play areas for children).

Among those who expressed desire for opportunities to **educate and uplift** themselves, closer ESL opportunities was a prominent desire. Beta says, “The ESL class, I feel that if we had an ESL class then that would have been a big help.” Even more, the desire for ESL classes where a mother can focus on her studies instead of childcare was apparent: “I feel that if there would be the ESL classes closer to my house, I would have managed with my neighbors like, they would have taken care of my child for three hours and then I would have attended it. But since it was a longer route and going back and forth with the bus, which was impossible almost with the newborn. I had to stop” (Zohra). Saadri desires job training as well: “The ESL classes along with some of the skill building classes, I wish would be closer to me. Then I would be even employed by now. I'm really interested to learn sewing. But I know of 1 or 2 places, which teach women how to sew and then they get them certified but they, they are not close to our house. So, the

sewing classes are like career development classes with ESL classes are very important to have closer to a place where you resettle.”

Women also expressed the need for better **transportation** options in their resettlement neighborhoods: “Bus stops close by our homes. You know like some people now, they have Uber and Lyft. And they can book, right? I wish it was like, a pop-up or something like a public transit that you could call them to come and pick you up and drop you off” (Nageenah). “And then near my neighborhood, I wish there would be public transportation” (Mitra).

Finally, women wished that the **daily needs of a family** were closer to their neighborhoods. This includes shopping for modest clothes, groceries, and cultural foods: “Halal grocery stores, and Muslim clothing...our clothing is a little [more] covered than the regular clothing. Like, some people don't mind wearing short clothes, but then some people are very specific for getting longer clothes” (Mitra). “I would say the ESL class I wish there would be an ESL class which was closer to my house. And also, my children's doctor, if that would be closer to me then that [would] make my life easier” (Barsha). “The doctors, I would wish they would be closer to us. ESL classes, and also grocery stores, which had all the ingredients which we need. So, we didn't have to go so many places” (Gulpari).

Transportation

My main research question for transportation is: Do movement-related factors (travel distances, travel times, difficulty moving around) negatively impact refugee women regarding work, children, or healthcare during resettlement? My interview questions are: Were you able to get where you need to go? Has it ever been difficult to get to an activity for your children? Has it ever been difficult to get to a health appointment? Has it ever been difficult to get to work? Is transportation a factor in you not having work outside the home? What role did the caseworker

have in helping you get around? Were there any other sources to help you get around? Do you feel the transportation methods you had were suitable to you?

Were You Able to Get Where You Needed to Go?

Many responses to this question indicate that no, women were not able to get where they needed to go during their resettlement. Some women even put it as such: “I was not able to go anywhere that I needed.” The prominent themes within the answers included **waiting for my husband, getting transportation help from others, and women’s childcare responsibilities** that shaped their ability to leave home. Though this question was asked at the same time as the spatial questions, these themes help to shape understanding of the circumstances under which women were able to venture outside their homes, which lends itself to the discussion of mobility. Multiple women mentioned that **waiting for their husbands** to come home with the family car played a big role in whether they were able to reach needed destinations. Lila says, “Not all the places that I want to go, because I have to wait for my husband, until he’s at home with me, otherwise I can’t go places by my own.” Barsha echoes that sentiment: “No, it wasn't easy because most of the time my husband was at work, and I was not able to drive. So, definitely I wasn't able to go the places I want to.” This indicates that women may not have viewed taking the bus or walking as viable options to get to their needed destinations.

Other women answered this question by bringing up the **transportation help they received from others**: volunteers, husbands, friends, community members, or family. Saadri says, “No, I wasn't able to go wherever I wanted because I would have to schedule with other people's time. If there was someone available, they would take me and then also it was also a matter of someone who knows, like, where to go and knows the language. So that I would go with that person.” Ramineh even chose to live with family members who could provide

transportation help rather than be located close to services in Clarkston: “In 2015, there were not so many Afghans. That's why we decided to be with my sister. So, it was very easy for us. Like, either the husband of my sister or [my] sister would take us places where we needed to go.”

These sources of help were pinpointed as the reasons why women were able to go anywhere during resettlement.

Women's childcare responsibilities also featured prominently in women's perceptions of their ability to reach destinations. Shadleen documents her determination in reaching an ESL class with her young son in tow: “One place which was very important for me was the IRC's ESL classes...I would go with 2 connecting buses to IRC every day...no matter if it was raining, if it was cold, it was hot...But after 1 year my son didn't like it there and he would cry all the time in the child care. So, then that made me quit going to the ESL. But otherwise, I tried so hard. And I was constantly going there for 1 year.”

Has it ever been difficult to get to an activity for your children?

A few women said no, they hadn't missed anything for their children (Shahina, Zaha, and Sumbul). The majority of responses to this question indicate that yes, women have missed activities for their children due to transportation issues. In particular, women report missing **school-related activities; fun, sports, and social events; and health-related activities.**

Waiting for my husband was also a present theme, while some women reported that they “**didn't even think about**” attending events due to transportation barriers. Some women explained how they **worked around transportation barriers** to get their children around town.

Women expressed that missing **school-related activities** for children weighed heavily on them. Barsha missed opportunities: “When my kids were in the school, and they would always want parents to come visit the school, or if there are conferences and stuff. I was never able to

join those meetings.” Nasrin says she may not have been aware of how to get her children to the bus: “I remember a couple of times in the beginning when we came, I had to walk my children back and forth to the school with the smaller ones in the stroller. I can't remember what was the reason why a bus wasn't assigned to them, or because I wasn't understanding the language, I couldn't get to the bus. But basically, it was hard for me to get my children to school, which is a very important activity.” And Asal notes the difficulty of getting her children to school in cold weather without a car: “The very common things like taking my kids to the school. One of my children was in elementary school, and they didn't provide a bus because it was a mile away. So, it was really hard for me to take the child back and forth while I had other children at home. But I still would walk the one child, and especially during winters, it was early in the morning. So, it was hard to walk with the child in the wind and though the cold weather.” And Saadri notes the lack of alternatives if her children missed the bus: “But with two [children], there are times when I miss the bus because the bus does not have a certain time or...if we wake up late or... if one of them is sick...if I'm busy...then I don't have a second option. When I missed the bus, that's when I feel that if I would have my own car, I would just drive my son or my daughter. So, they miss the whole day because they don't have a ride to school.”

Women also report missing **fun, sports, and social events** for their children. Damsa says, “Yeah, for the two first years, there were so many times that I wanted to take my kids to a place, but I couldn't...Most of them are fun places where they wanted to go. Or if any of the other community members would invite us for a party or birthday party, I couldn't go because of the car situation.” Saadri's older children missed out on sports: “Especially with the teenagers, there are a lot of places where they want to go. And they like sports. They want to learn, and my

son has a favorite playground where he always wants to go. But because of the lack of transportation, I'm not able to take him.”

Women report missing **health-related activities** for their children as well. For Marya, getting medicine for her infant posed challenges: “The newborn or the infant has so many needs, I would usually have to buy clothes for him regularly, because he grows so fast out of the clothes and I really struggled when he has diarrhea, for example, or a fever. And then I cannot get the medicine because I don't have any transportation. Then I have to wait until evening, and he has to suffer until my husband comes.” Muslima notes how her children have missed their vaccination schedule: “With my child, the health appointments are very tricky. I missed so many appointments with vaccines. When we came, I ended up getting my child all the vaccines at one time because the doctor said ‘You have missed two or three appointments. So now, we have to give the child all the vaccines together.’ So, I definitely think that I have missed a lot on health appointments for my child.” And Rabia makes note of how physically demanding transportation can be: “Doctor’s appointments. It's hard to get the train with kids and strollers and their stuff, their bags and all that. I have to have someone with me to help me.”

Waiting for a husband to come home played a role here as well, as Zohra says, “If my husband is not home, and we don't have the car, yes, definitely there have been times where we were not able to get our kids where we wanted to take them.” Lila, Marya, Ramineh, and Shandana expressed a similar sentiment as well.

Women use the phrase “**I didn't even think about it,**” to describe their thinking around non-essential trips. Asal says, “We were not even thinking about taking children to any activities and stuff.” Kamelah says, “If [the children] want to go to any fun places, or sports and stuff...I

don't even think about it because they know that I'm not in a condition to drive them financially and physically.”

Some women **worked around transportation barriers** to get their children around town. For instance, Shadleen explains how she had help to transport her children: “Even though I wasn't driving, I would still make sure like my friends, or [a] volunteer, or my Afghan friends would take my kids to the activities they were supposed to go.” Ramineh moved to be close to help: “During my pregnancy, when we came new, my husband’s first job was to pursue being a CDL driver. He had to go to another state to do his job so after my baby was born, then it started to be difficult because I didn't have any—my husband was not at home. I didn't have anyone to drive me to the doctor's appointment. And that's the reason that I moved to Decatur, because my other sister-in-law is in Decatur. And there is a volunteer named Melissa⁹. She's not with any nonprofits, she is just volunteering always with the pregnant ladies. So, Melissa told me, ‘If you are closer to Decatur, I will take you to your doctor's appointment.’ So that's why I moved to Decatur, so that I had Melissa’s support and my sister in law’s support with my pregnancy and the doctor's appointment.” Rana and Beta relied on the support of volunteers for transportation to health appointments.

Has it ever been difficult to get to a health appointment?

Some women (Lila, Ramineh, Shahina, Zaha, Rabia, and Sumbul) stated that they **did not experience difficulty** in getting to health appointments. Lila says, “So far, my husband takes us for the doctor’s appointment. Since it’s Uber and Lyft, he doesn’t work a lot so we [can get to] the appointment...” Zaha utilizes a free service through her insurance: “Later on, I found out that with Medicaid, you can get an Uber that they will pay for. And they'll just pick you up for

⁹ This volunteer is mentioned in more than one interview. Her name is changed.

that appointment time and then they'll drop you back off at the place that need. It did have a lot of waiting time, you did have to wait. But it worked out well.” Sumbul plans with her husband but notes her family does not have a lot of healthcare appointments: “We used to book appointments...so my husband...he used to take us. If not, then I used to go with my friends or sometimes I used to take public transit, but not a lot of times, only sometimes... I never felt that I need to go and you can't go. Thank goodness my kids are healthy, myself, and my husband, we don't need to go much to see a doctor or anything. Only like the regular checkups, their dentist appointments. That's it.” And Ramineh had the help of the volunteer named Melissa: “There wasn't any appointment that I have missed because Melissa was very great. I would tell her a day before and she would manage her time to take me.”

In contrast, most of the other women did say they had difficulty getting to health appointments for themselves and family members. These include **avoiding going to the doctor, using unsuitable transportation methods, complaints about public transportation, scheduling difficulties, doctors' locations, and various other barriers.**

Some women **avoid going to the doctor** for their own ailments (Marya and Behnaz). Some women note that the options available to them were **not suitable**, especially during their pregnancies or for children's appointments. Barsha says, “Yes, it was summer when we arrived here and definitely walking a long period of time, and then catching the bus was not a good option for my pregnancy. I would always feel very upset and sad about it that during my pregnancy, I should have a reliable transportation, but I didn't have that.” Nasrin says, “Yes, there have been difficulties with doctor's appointments for my children. I remember, there was this time that we didn't had a [ride] and then we had to use the options like the bus to take him to

the doctor. So, definitely, I remember a lot of the times where we had to figure out what we need to do...to figure out the transportation and there wasn't any option for my children's healthcare.”

Other **complaints about using public transit** are present in the data. One mentioned is having a language barrier Gulpari says, “There were 2 or 3 times I did miss my pregnancy appointments...The transportation and language barrier, I would say, were two of the specific [reasons why] I couldn't...go to the places I needed to.” Having long wait times is another reason, evidenced by Shandana: “Yes, yes it was hard. It's hard because...[we wait] more than 30 minutes where at the bus’s stop...Until the bus comes, sometimes we are looking at the schedules, and we missed the bus. It was so hard to get there on time for appointments.” Zohra’s husband had trouble with missing the bus: “One time my husband had an appointment at the refugee clinic and then he couldn't get the bus. So, then he walked 9-minute drive in 2 hours. He walked to the clinic and had his appointment and then he walked back to the house.”

Three women mentioned **scheduling difficulties** as a barrier to getting to doctor’s appointments. Asal says, “Yes, it was definitely difficult because even when my husband bought the car, he had a working shift which was during the day. So, we couldn't go to our regular doctor's appointment and there were several times when we would miss the doctor's appointment because of the transportation.” Saadri says, “[We had] difficulty with transportation and the doctor's appointment especially because we're 6 people in 1 house. My husband works first shift, which is from 4 AM to 2 PM because then he will have those 2 or 3 hours to take each one of us to the doctor's appointment. That's the biggest issue which we are having right now, that he can't work any other shifts. Because he has to take the dentals, the PCP appointments, and whatever appointments we have. He would take us after 2 o'clock. And then still, if there are appointments that are not available after 2, then he would take that day off from work.” And Muslima says,

“The timing of our jobs is one problem, and then it's not even just me but my son, my mother, and father. All of these appointments are dependent on me and my husband, so definitely it's not working with one car. So, we're looking to buy another car so if there are days that I could work from home, I could do those doctor's appointments and if I couldn't do some days then maybe my husband could do some part.”

Three women brought up **doctors' locations** as a barrier to getting to appointments. Mitra says, “My pregnancy appointments were really hard for me to get there every time they wanted me to be there. And then other than that my eyesight is really bad and at night, when I drive, I don't see clearly. But the only doctor which we know that accepts Amerigroup is in all the way in Alpharetta and I can't even drive that far.” Saima says, “[It was hard to get to] health appointments, yes. Because the doctors were located further away...It was very hard without the transportation.” And Nageenah puts it, “In the first few years, my doctors used to be far away from home. So yes, it was difficult to get there. And then Thank God that we changed it, so we got some other doctors that was closer to our place to go for our regular visits and stuff.”

Various other barriers arose in the responses. Shichi explains how she couldn't get help from her case manager during her pregnancy: “We did have a lot of difficulties in getting to the doctor's appointments. I was six months pregnant when I came here. And then I wasn't able to see any doctor for one and a half months, and I would keep checking with my case manager [because] this is a very important time. [In this] trimester of the pregnancy I need to see a doctor regularly, but the case manager never paid attention. And then, finally, my husband and I had to reach out to the supervisor of the case manager. And then they took us seriously, and after that, they helped with the doctor's appointment.” Sapidah makes note of two issues, cost and COVID: “With healthcare, yeah, we have missed a lot of our appointments in the beginning. But then a lot

of our money [was] spent on Uber, because my son was small and basically with COVID and stuff, we couldn't use the bus. We used Uber a lot and that's where a lot of our savings went. And afterwards when I got pregnant, if we would get an Uber, I would go. And there was a volunteer named Melissa, who has also helped me one time. Other than that, my husband would get me an Uber, but sometimes I would miss the appointments, yes."

Has it ever been difficult to get to work?

Some women felt that they **had not had difficulty getting to work**, but for different reasons. These reasons range from work being close to home; gauging difficulty in comparison to the experiences of others; being able to coordinate transportation with others; feeling that there were no work opportunities available to miss; and not working.

For instance, Nageenah says, "No, thankfully, my job was close to the house." Rabia echoes this sentiment: "No, not really, but I used Marta before. But then now I use my car. So, my work is at Avondale, 20 minutes away from my home. It's not that far away." Sumbul similarly did not express that her situation with work was difficult but makes a **comparison with the struggles of others**: "...I got work in the same place where my kids go to school... Yeah, I drop my kids and then I'm in the same school with them... Thankfully I wasn't bad, but for most people, it is really bad. I see people are struggling, standing in the dark or waiting for somebody come pick them up and drop them, and sometimes it's hard." Zaha was able to coordinate with a coworker to get to work: "When I started working, I still didn't have a car. Cause I got my car, as I said about a year now, so I used to drive with someone else. I arranged my work schedule [to be the] same work schedule with them. So, they were working 9 to 5, so I talked to the manager—I used to work at Marshall's at the time—...since I don't have transportation, if they could just give me the schedule from 9 to 5. So, that person can come drop me off and then when

he's going home, he can pick me up and take me home as well.” Shahina says she didn't not have difficulty getting to work. Gulpari has a different experience: “I feel that there wasn't any employment opportunities for me.” Lastly, Asal “gave up” on working due to childcare issues: “I did work in a bakery for 3 months only. Because during my working shift, when my son would come from the school at 2:30, then he would need to wait in the neighbor's house until 5 when I arrive from work. So that situation wasn't going very well with my son, and he would get sick at neighbor's house. And basically, it was difficult for my son—sometimes the neighbor wasn't taking care of my son. Sometimes it was hard for my son. He wasn't getting along with the neighbors' children, or something like that. So finally, I gave up. I was like, no, I don't want to do the job and I will just stay home...”

Multiple women said that **they didn't work**, so the question did not really apply to them. Behnaz says, “I didn't work because I had small kids. So, I didn't work. It was just my husband, and he would most of the time walk to his work, because the bus will be late. So, he would just walk.” Saima says, “So, because of the transportation, I didn't even think of a job at that point. I started working after a year.” Barsha and Shadleen note that they could not start their food businesses until they had transportation. Shadleen puts it, “From the day I've arrived, I'm working on my own business and food. I didn't even begin it properly until I was driving because that wasn't even option. So, once I started driving, then I began catering.”

Two women explain that **even with driving a car**, they still had challenges getting to work. Zohra says, “Definitely, it's very hard with having car but having two people driving it. My husband works [Lyft and Uber] at night. Since in the morning the traffic is bad. So, until my husband comes home, and I get the car, and I go to work, I'm always 10 minutes late for work.” And Nasrin says, “It was the transportation was one reason, but other reason was the childcare

problem that I had. That's why, because of my back-to-back children, that they were small. I couldn't go to work before and the transportation was also a factor, but when I joined [nonprofit cooking program], then my husband basically gave me the work car me...to make it easier for me, going to the market. But again, right now I can drive, and I have the car, but still with my childcare situation, it is hard to go to work. So, childcare and transportation are basically both factors why I'm not employed.

Is transportation a factor in you not having work outside the home?

All but one response to this question indicate that yes, transportation does play a role in their employment status. This question was only asked in interviews after the interpreter came on board. One group of affirmative responses mention that **transportation** is the sole reason why they are not employed. Another group mentions a **combination of transportation, language, and childcare** difficulties contributing to not being employed. And one response mentions that **childcare** is the sole reason for not being employed.

Four women point to **transportation** as the sole reason why they are not employed. Saadri says, "My employment is very much related to the transportation. Because all of my children are school age and I don't have any difficulty with them. My husband has applied in his job to find if they are hiring another person, so that we could go together in the morning and then come back at 2 o'clock. But we haven't heard from them, but as soon as I get my driving license, yeah, my next step is to look for employment...If you don't have any childcare needs, it's easier for you." Sapidah notes the strain on the family when only one person does all the driving: "Transportation has played a big role with my employment...in the beginning years I wasn't pregnant and my two kids were in school, but because of not having transportation I couldn't go to employment...When I got my job at a child care center, they enrolled my son as well for the

childcare. But then again, I tried for two weeks, I went there. But then my husband couldn't do the transportation. Since I didn't have my own car and my own license...I tried my best, and I went through several jobs, but I had to quit because it wasn't possible. And my husband is working and he's studying, and then he has to take care of the family, so it was just getting too much on him." And Muzhgan expresses a similar sentiment: "The transportation was the factor that I left my job. There was no other excuse. The excuse was the transportation, and it was too much on my brother-in-law to keep driving us back and forth." Muslima specifically notes the cost of transportation to get herself to work: "The main challenge with the transportation right now is the cost of the car. This is my second job and I'm not able to save enough money from that job in order to buy a car. I was able to get the permit and license because I do know some English... [my job now] is again, 45 minutes from me. So, half of the money has gone into the gas and then with all the bills and stuff, I end up with basically 0 amount of saving right now."

Six women mention that a combination of **childcare, transportation, health, and language** contributed to not having employment. Mitra mentions childcare, transportation, and language: "It was transportation, and also the childcare needs I had. I would say that both played a role of me being unemployed. In the beginning, it was so much happening with the children. But right now, I do want to work especially around Clarkston and Decatur area. And I have found some of the work opportunities there. But I couldn't go because of the transportation. I'm currently studying at Georgia Tech, so I'm waiting for my language to be improved for at least a year and then I can start." Beta mentions her health: "The reason that I haven't been able to do any employment, there are 2 reasons. One is the transportation, but the other is my health. When I came, I was pregnant...when I got pregnant, that was the reason that I couldn't do anything because I was not in a situation to go look for work. And then the other reason was the

transportation part.” Both Nasrin and Behnaz point to childcare and transportation. Behnaz says, “Yeah, both because I had small kids, and I couldn't afford the childcare and also because of transportation. Because we only had one car. If we had 2 cars, I could have done something.” Rana mentions language and transportation: “I will rate it equally [for] the employment, the language barrier and the transportations are all equally, very important.” Kamelah echoes this sentiment, adding that nothing is in walking distance for her to work at: “With the jobs, even if I try to get a job, nothing is in a walking distance from where I live. And also, even if I think of a job right now, I have to improve my language first because the closest are Kroger and Walmart and stuff where you need to speak some English. So first, I need to improve my English, but then, the ESL classes are not available in Gwinnett County.”

Lastly, Lila notes that **childcare** is the sole reason for her unemployment: “There is a Marshall’s where I found a job, but I couldn’t go there because of my child’s childcare situation. The job wasn’t the problem. I could get there because it’s so close to my house. The problem was the childcare is \$240 per week. That’s why now I have to go to school so I can get a job.”

What role did the caseworker have in helping you get around?

The responses to this question show a wide range of assistance received from case managers. Some women **did not have case managers** at all because of their immigration status (the names of whom are held back for privacy reasons). Among these responses, however, women did give insight on why not having a case manager caused issues: not having assistance from resettlement agencies, not having access to public benefits, and it taking a long time to get connected to the mentorship of others.

Other women who did have one said their case manager provided minimal assistance, such as only taking family members to one initial (required) health screening: “Our caseworker

has never taken us to any appointments. The only problem which the caseworker has helped out with was my mother in law's health screening. Other than that, her our appointments, my children's, everything we were by ourselves...Whenever we reached out to the caseworker, he said that 'You guys are too far out of the way, I'm not able to come and help you,' (Lila). Damsa says, "The case worker never helped us with any transportation part. Once a month, we would see our case manager and that was also for the necessities. He would come enroll our children in school. And then he wouldn't even talk to us like, what is the school route or how do you take them there? How to get back? We had to figure out everything by ourselves and after 6 months, he wouldn't even answer our calls. Like, we have no idea where he is." Nasrin's experience adds some further context: "We haven't gotten much help from the case manager, because they were simply scared of the fact that it's COVID and maybe that gave them a good excuse. More than them, the American volunteers were a better help."

Among the help women said the case workers did provide were the initial health screening (Lila, Marya, Asal, Muzhgan, Mitra, Rana, Saima), getting essentials for the home (Barsha, Muzhgan), and demonstrating how to use the MARTA bus, app, and card (Zohra, Shichi, Gulpari, Shadleen, Saadri, Rana, Behnaz, Mylene).

Some women expressed they felt their case worker did give a lot of help. Sumbul says, "At first, when we got here, we had a case worker, they used to help us with everything when we used to have an appointment or getting some of our paperwork done. They used to come or take us from home, right to the place that we were, we were supposed to go." Shandana's experience was: "They helped us for everything just one time. For grocery, one time. For doctor's appointment, one time. Not everything, every day...The agencies came and help us just for one time...And they told us you have to do it by yourself." And Beta did not have formal

resettlement assistance but was able to get help through a nonprofit: “Our resettlement agency...I'm so grateful for the support they provided me and wherever we needed to go in the beginning. [There were two case managers for just our family.] They were able to serve us in a much better way than a resettlement agency would...We had those connections [with volunteers] because of the agency who resettled us and I'm so grateful for all the help.”

Were there any other sources to help you get around?

Women mentioned multiple sources of help in transportation. Other Afghan families in the neighborhood came up most frequently as a source of help in transportation (Damsa, Zohra, Shichi, Barsha, Asal, Nasrin, Saima, Shandana). Volunteers from churches and nonprofit agencies also featured prevalently in the responses (Shadleen, Ramineh, Saadri, Mitra, Rana, Saima). Family friends also played a role (Gulpari, Nageenah). Family members were also helpful, sometimes even providing housing for newcomers (Ramineh, Kamelah, Sumbul).

Three responses provide interesting supplement to the answers above about sources of help with transportation. Shichi says, “There was one neighbor who has helped her only three times with the groceries, but then...since it's American life, the neighbor was also busy with his work. So, I cannot ask someone ‘Oh, I need tomatoes. Can you take me?’ ‘Oh, today I need a medicine for my child. Can you take me?’ Basically, if it's not a big desperate need, people cannot help you with that...Now when I see newcomers coming in, I really feel so bad for them, even though it's a very short time for them. But now I have a car. So now I really want to help others who are struggling because I understand how that struggle is.” Marya expresses a similar sentiment about asking for help after owning a car: “After my husband got the car, we have never asked the community members or friends to help because everyone has a job. Either they are day shift or night shift. So, we don't want to bother them. When you don't have a car, at least

you have the excused that, ‘I don't have a car, can you help me?’ But when you get a car and you ask people, then they're like, ‘Oh, you can go in the evening—why are you asking me?’ I don't feel comfortable now that we have a car to ask for help.” And Asal observes, “There was no support other than the Afghan neighbors we had. Right now, when I see other newcomer Afghans who are coming, they have more American and Afghan volunteers helping them. In our time, when we resettled, there was not that much awareness, or maybe there weren't so many volunteers. So, the people who I'm seeing right now have more support than what we had.”

Do you feel the transportation methods you had were suitable to you?

About half of the women interviewed said that yes, some aspects of the transportation methods they had were suitable, while the other half said it was not suitable for them. Most of those who answered yes offered some qualifying information that helped explain their reasoning. Some women gave no qualifications in saying their transportation was suitable, only stated that **it was suitable**. Beta says, “At that point, I feel that that [the bus, volunteer help, and case workers' help] were more than enough for us and it was really good because without those support, I can't even imagine us being at the place where we are right now.” For instance, Lila says, “For the first year, [asking family and scheduling rides with my husband] was suitable because definitely we needed the time to get our own licenses. But it's not a permanent solution so that's why I'm getting my driver's license, so I could get around easily.” Shahina says, “Yes, in terms of the places where I used to go at that time, during our first year of living in Atlanta, it was fine. But then if you'd like to keep moving around, then there were of course some areas that don't connect with the MARTA bus. They don't go there or there are some areas where the MARTA train does not arrive there...but at the beginning it was very helpful.” Saadri and Sumbul also express that their options were suitable.

Most of the other affirmative responses **give some comparisons** in saying which transportation was suitable. For instance, Shadleen compares the bus with her other option of walking: “Yeah, I feel that [the bus] was suitable at that time. Like instead of walking definitely bus was a better option.” Saima compares rideshare with MARTA: “Yeah, the Lyft and Uber, they were suitable. They were comfortable. But the MARTA was not suitable, not at all. Lifting, and then if you have children, it's even harder like, they can't walk. If my daughter is with me, I would take her stroller, but then mostly I was going during their school hours so that I don't have to walk them with me.” And Nageenah compares the bus with driving: “[The bus is suitable], Yeah...but no, I would love to drive. I want to drive. But it's not easy. It's expensive nowadays. You see the gas price, insurance, the car, everything. Having a car is not easy to have. Especially if you don't drive or don't go around a lot.”

Some other women **give some conditions** under which their transportation is suitable. Behnaz says “Yeah, because it was just my husband that was working, we couldn't afford a taxi or an Uber. So, bus was very good for us at the time... [having children on the bus] was the most difficult part for me because at that time, the buses will be just full of people. So, it was really hard to get in the bus and then bend your stroller with you and take it with you and then have your child in your arms. The seats will be full. So, that was the hardest part and the most horrible experience of me to have a stroller with you in the bus.” Zaha says of the bus routes, “At some times, yes, [the bus is suitable] and at some times, it was difficult. Because there are certain places the bus doesn't have routes. Like where I live now, there's no bus routes here. You can't find a bus. You have to have a car or else you can't get anywhere. You have to get Uber or something, because there's no bus routes. That's when I started asking [another] person to drop me off, because there was nobody—there was no way I could get to work with a bus because

they didn't have the routes on that side.” Shandana laughingly says, “Yes, the bus was good. If the bus is coming on time.”

For those who state that no, their transportation options were not suitable, some emphasize that **having their own car** is or would be the most suitable option. Marya says, “There are so many options where going alone in my own car will be better than a bus. I don't feel secure when I'm riding in the bus and also taking my son out of the stroller or, loading and unloading the stroller back and forth in the bus. And especially places where you have to take two buses, it's like a nightmare. And then if you go for shopping, then I would have bags of the shopping in my hand. And then I would have to take my son out, and then pull the stroller, put it in the bus, take it back out. Overall, with all these things and the language barrier with it, I would feel that having my own car will make it very easier. Because I don't have to move the car seat or the stroller back and forth and then also with weather wise, too, my son...doesn't have to be outside on the road in the cold winds. Distance-wise, I could reach places sooner than a bus, if I have my own car.” Rana says, “Definitely [asking others for help] is not suitable. Last night one of our neighbors was helping my husband to take him to the grocery shopping, but then apparently my child has said that she wants to go with her father. But the neighbors said, ‘No, I cannot take children.’ For the two hours when my husband was shopping around, and until he came back, my daughter kept crying about it that, ‘Why am I not there with my father? or ‘Why couldn't I go?’ With the private transportation, definitely those will be addressed.” And Kamelah says, “Definitely [asking my landlord for help] is not suitable. But I'm just trying to be thankful for whatever I have at the moment. And I feel that I could do much more if I had my own transportation.”

Some women stated that they **had no choice** in the matter. Damsa says, “Even though we didn't have any choice at that time, I won't say it was suitable because either I have to walk, which is not suitable, and then if the community members are taking me then I would keep feeling bad that, ‘Oh someone else had to skip their own work and they are taking us,’ and ‘Until what time this will be like this?’ I'm always thinking that we are not self-sufficient anymore and we need someone for our daily tasks.” Similarly, Gulpari says, “It wasn't that they were not suitable, but basically we didn't have a choice...The bus, I would say, is definitely a very confusing route to go. And also, it takes so much time.”

Other responses say that using **the bus was not suitable** for them and list their reasons for saying so. One is difficulty holding children in the bus, as told by Shichi: “No, definitely [the bus] is not suitable for my needs because imagine, I have 2 children, and then the bus driver tells me that I have to hold my child. I cannot leave them in the stroller, so then, how do I keep holding my two children all the way when they want to get out? What about people who have more than two? How is a mother able to keep holding three or four children at a time? Shichi brings up another issue, which is the timing and connections of the bus routes: “The timing is really bad. If you miss a bus, then it's really hard to catch another. You have to wait a certain time and then if I want to go to Stone Mountain, I have to take three buses because none of the buses goes to the places where I want in one stop.” Mitra echoes this saying the bus does not go where she needs: “Because of my husband's jobs, no. I think that right now our transportation is not enough for our family needs. The health care appointments and then right now where I'm studying, they require me to come for some classes, especially the math subject is in person. So, I'm not able to go there. So, yeah, it's not suitable for our current needs.” And Rabia remembers that the bus and trains would leave without her: “I have specific times where if I missed it,

they're not going to stop for you. Especially train, they have to leave in a certain time. Sometimes, I'm just walking, I'm walking and they saw me. They just shut the door and [leave]; they don't wait for you to ride the train. So, yeah, we'll be missing it...it's just stressful for me, just to get in the train and bus and scary also.”

Mobility

My main research questions for mobility are: What does the ability to move as one desires mean to women during resettlement? How does the in/ability to move affect women’s work, family, or healthcare use during resettlement? My interview questions are:

Have you ever had to make a sacrifice of work, family, or healthcare due to difficulty getting around?

Many women answered in the affirmative, that they did feel they’d made certain sacrifices. Some women directly **linked the sacrifices to difficulties surrounding childcare and transportation** and those that **were not directly linked**.

The women who **linked the sacrifices to difficulties surrounding childcare and transportation** named their freedom and independence, job opportunities, and ESL learning among the sacrifices. Muzhgan feels she sacrificed her freedom: “The sacrifice is I would say, giving up on my employment and income and also...staying at home is a very big sacrifice for me and my son...because in Afghanistan I was a nurse practitioner in the hospital, and then I was also studying so I was mostly not home, and I was so busy with building my career. But then all of a sudden, when I came here now, I don't have any option to go out. So, it definitely affects me very badly and I feel that I have sacrificed my freedom of going out because of these barriers.” Mitra notes of a missed job training opportunity, “I feel that I have sacrificed a lot of the work

opportunities. My English is medium level. So, I was able to attend the nonprofit cohort¹⁰ where the ladies were getting 6 months of free transportation and childcare. Just because I wasn't located very close, and I didn't have a reliable transportation I couldn't get into those cohorts. Or there are jobs that I feel that I can do, but I cannot because of transportation.” Gulpari links the sacrifices of ESL due to transportation: “The only thing I regret about not being able to drive before, is that if I would have been able to drive at that time, or have transportation, I would be able to get to ESL classes much sooner than now. Because of the lack of transportation, I couldn't go to classes where they were offering childcare so that's something I feel I have missed.”

Other responses that did link to transportation difficulties included the ability to do things for children, mental peace, and the ability to enjoy going out. For example, “One thing, which I feel that maybe we all have sacrificed because of the lack of transportation, was not having birthday parties for my children. Because that requires someone to go get the cake and stuff. And then, if you want to invite people, you have to have a car so that you're going back and forth, shopping for groceries and stuff. A lot of the time when my children asked me, I'm like, ‘Oh, it's very hard with one car to manage. So, I won't celebrate your birthday. Maybe we can celebrate it next year,” (Saadri). Shichi mentions her mental peace: “The biggest thing was the mental peace that not there because of the transportation. It was just an extra level of stress on our daily lives...In Afghanistan, it wasn't as important that each family needs a car. In Afghanistan if you have a car, maybe there are not so many doctor's appointments or women don't work outside. Or there are school buses for the school and the taxis are very easy to rent. Like, if you walk down your house, there is a taxi stand with very good rates. So, it was really stressful and hard for us to

¹⁰ Nonprofit name withheld for privacy.

shift. And then here, if you don't have clothes on, you can manage, but you need to have a car.” And Shahina feels she sacrificed going out: “We could not go to the restaurants at that time. We could not go shopping and we could not go to any of the malls. We could not go just enjoy our weekend or do any kind of family activity, not going to a park, not going to like, anywhere else, not hanging out with anyone, because of not having a transportation.”

Women made note of some sacrifices that were **not linked to transportation issues or childcare**. For instance, Kamelah noted that her sacrifices were for her children’s safety:

“Whatever my difficulty is, there are so many sacrifices which I gave, but I'm still hopeful that it won't affect my children. The sacrifice of leaving my house and my job and stuff in Kabul will be a benefit for my children's future here. I gave up on all of that because I wanted my kids to be safe.”

Some women answered that no, they did not feel they’d made a sacrifice. Interestingly, two women provided extra explanation about their “no” answer: “I won't consider it as a sacrifice because my family's also very important to me. I would say more like an adjustment you have to make because you love your husband, and you love your son. So, I wouldn’t consider it as a sacrifice,” (Marya). And Nasrin puts it, “I feel that basically the troubles that I had, I have overcome. And those are part of your life, like it's not something that stayed forever.”

How do you feel when you are able to get somewhere important?

Most of the responses to this question reflect positive feelings, such as gratitude, being blessed, happy, empowered, and confident. Responses to this question reflect **feelings tied to parenthood, feelings of (in)dependence, and reflection on family remaining in the home country**.

Many responses show that the **feelings tied to parenthood** played a role. For instance, Asal says, “Right now I feel so blessed when I can reach everywhere on time, especially for my children. I feel blessed and happy when I'm able to get the places they want to go.” Similarly, Gulpari says, “I would feel very happy and then basically, I would think, okay, this was my goal of the day, and I accomplished it. Or if it's a doctor's appointment, I would be like, okay, it's good. I'm glad that it's done for my child.” Rana says, “Definitely, I feel much better when I go to places where I want to, because then my children feel good. I feel good. And then we feel like it changes our day.” Muslima says, “Definitely, I would feel happy and whatever is my responsibility—if I'm able to do all of my responsibilities on time. And if I'm able to take all of my family members to their appointments and stuff on time, then that makes me happy.”

Feelings of **independence or lack of dependence** came into play in some responses. Lila says, “When my family and my husband are helping me getting places, the only bad thing is that I wish I could do it by myself so that I wouldn't have to spend someone else's time.” Zohra puts it this way: “I definitely feel very good right now. I feel like now I have the freedom that I can go wherever I want to. And basically, I am not dependent on someone else to take me.” Barsha says, “Right now I have a very good feeling when I can reach anywhere where I want, and I feel that I don't even need to ask anyone or schedule with their time. I can do whatever I want with my own time.”

Marya connected her mobility with a **reflection on family remaining in the home country**. “At that time, I feel blessed and happy. I tried to enjoy that moment because I'm alone, far away from my own family. So, if I'm able to go places where I want to, then I try to enjoy that time, and...kind of [remember] the times when I miss my family. So, when I'm able to go to

places, then I want to make up my time back from that time. I try to not worry at those moments so that I could enjoy the good time I'm having.”

How do you feel when you are unable to get somewhere important?

Responses to this question reveal a few different themes, such as experiencing **difficult feelings or having emotional reactions, feeling hopeless, never experiencing being unable to get somewhere important, reference to specific locations or events, comparisons to others, and worry over others.**

Many responses to this question included mention of experiencing **difficult feelings or having emotional reactions**: “Heartbroken,” (Shandana), “Stressed,” (Mylene), “Nervous,” (Rabia), “Scared and sad,” (Muna). Behnaz answers this way: “To be honest, I would just cry most of the time because it is very hard. Like, when you don't have family with you and you feel like so hopeless, you feel like you can't do anything. I would just cry.”

Many also used the specific language of “**hopeless**” to describe the feeling, for instance: “I definitely had a bad feeling, and you feel hopeless when you decide on or something, or if you want to go places, but you cannot,” (Gulpari).

A few women reported that, actually, they **never experienced being unable to get somewhere important**: “I have never had that because me and my husband are working together. Wherever I need to go, he takes me there” (Lila). Sumbul says: “I would get sad, mostly, but that never happened. Only like, if I or my kids were sick or something...but [other] than that never like, missed any opportunity to get anywhere that I wanted to.” Similarly, Shadleen notes, “Usually the stuff where I needed to go, I would find a way. If there were gatherings and stuff [with] the friends, there was a good friend who would always drive her...If I couldn't go, then I would just deal with it like, it wasn't a big deal kind of thing.”

When answering the question, some women made references to **specific locations or events** they wanted to attend, which gives extra insight on what women may feel they miss out on. Barsha felt she missed out on gatherings with friends: “Definitely it was not a good feeling. It was a bad feeling, especially when I had some friends and they would gather around and their children would gather, but then I wasn't able to go there because of the transportation. So definitely it wasn't a good feeling. It was a, a hopeless feeling.” Asal notes how doctors’ appointment scheduling created added difficulty: “That was a bad feeling and there were times when we would reach to a doctor's appointment maybe 2 minutes later or 5 minutes late...then they would say no, it's canceled because you're not on time. So, definitely, yeah, it was hard on us.” And Ramineh missed the opportunity for pregnancy education and support at a nonprofit: “The one place which I will always remember that I really wanted to go, but I couldn't go, was that during my pregnancy, other Afghans were going to [this place]. And they were getting the pregnancy classes, they were getting education around the pregnancy, and also there was a donation center where they would donate new items for infants and babies. I will always remember that I really wanted to go there and get some stuff and get some education. But I never found the transportation to get there.”

Some women also made **comparisons to others** in answering the question. Saadri says, “It's a bad feeling. Definitely I become upset. I feel like, why am I not able to do the stuff, which, for example, another person can do?” Marya says, “Since everything is so different here than our country, in our country, basically men are the ones who drive so I never felt like I am in need of driving or going somewhere by myself. But here, I feel that if I cannot go places where I want to, I feel weak, and I feel that I should be changing this situation into where I would have my own transportation and I could go places where I want to.” Nageenah puts it as “I would feel sad that I

couldn't get to the place that I wanted to. I feel bad that, “Why I'm not driving?” you know? That comes in mind, I wish if I was driving, this wouldn't happen to me.”

Finally, Damsa contributes two observations in her response: gratitude that those days are over and an illustration at how she **worried** over her husband's routine: “Overall there were so many things which were bothering us and right now, when I think about it, I always feel blessed that it's good that those days are passed. When my husband started working—because without having a car he still needed to work in order to pay the rent and utilities and stuff—he got a job in Dekalb Farmer's Market, which was 2 hours' walk from each side. So, he would walk 4 hours a day to go to a job and come back and he's working the night shift, which will end at 11 and then he would reach home by 1 AM or 1:30. At that time, I wasn't able to sleep properly because I would be keep thinking that something might happen to him while he's on his way.”

Do you have any good or bad memories of getting around the city?

This question was asked only of Dari speakers since it was added after the Dari interpreter came onto the project. The good memories speak of **reduced anxieties, hope and freedom to move, and getting help.**

The mentions of **reduced anxiety** cover different life domains of transportation, childbirth, and bodily safety. For instance, Zohra said getting a car meant she no longer had to wait for the bus: “I would say the good memories is that we got our own car and then we were not worried about bus routes. [I have used the bus a lot.] That was a relief that now we don't have to wait on the bus.” Gulpari mentioned her anxiety over giving birth in the US and how the experience turned out better than she'd hoped: “I was really stressed how would things go with my labor and the delivery and how I would take care of my child, because usually in Afghanistan...we live in joint families, so inside of the house, we have so much support. So, I

was so stressed, but then when I got admitted to the hospital, the childbirth was so easy and all the medications and basically the health services provided here were much better than Afghanistan and I really felt very good after that. Like that was one of my best memories, having the easy labor and being able to get back get back to a normal routine quickly compared to how I would in Afghanistan.” Another poignant example is the reduced anxiety Kamelah shared about: “The good memories are the peace that me and my children have here, that is a very blessing thing. In Afghanistan, I would always be worried if my children are out, or if they are going to school because there were so many bomb blasts. Like here, at least I have that peace of mind that they're safe and they're getting a good education. I take that as a blessing.”

Women also mentioned the good memories of **hope and freedom to move**. Gulpari shared this joyous memory of her husband achieving his permit: “When my husband got his permit license, and then driving license, whenever he would come, we would all laugh and basically dance because of the joy we were having that, okay now he will get a car and we would be able to get around.” Damsa shared about her own achievements in mobility: “I do have very good memories after all the challenges. The achievements were my good memories like, when we got our car, that was a very good memory and then when I passed the permit test, and then I passed the license tests. Those are all very good memories that I had.” Barsha shares: “Getting my permit license was one of the best memories I had. And that was basically my way to my freedom. And I was like, okay, now I could take other steps, I could find employment, I could learn English now that I'm able to move around.” Additionally, some women mentioned the specific freedom to explore Georgia nature as an enduring good memory: Muzhgan states: “The good memories are all the beautiful places in Georgia. Afghanistan is a mountainous country, so

when we come here, it looks very fresh and green, which is very unlike Afghanistan. So, she says those are good memories, like wherever I go and explore the nature.”

Women recalled memories of **getting help** during resettlement that had stayed with them. Behnaz shares a difficult memory of her and her son’s discomfort: “One day, it was really windy, and it was raining so bad. On that day I missed my bus from IRC, and then I had to wait for another hour. For the first 45 minutes me and my son waited, and it was very hard. There was a fire department trucks that drove by the side of us so and all of the water from the road came on our clothes, and we were so wet. But God sends an angel, and he send us this person who stopped his car, and he asked me if he could drive us home. That person, I will always remember that. That was a bad day with a bad weather but then that person came, and he dropped me home. So, there was a helper.” Lila shares how important it was to have the help of her brother-in-law: “The best part for us is that my husband’s brother was already living here. And that’s why when we came here my good memories are that we go and visit them very often and we go outside with them. And also, they have helped us a lot with getting around. That’s we never have to find like bus routes or something.”

The bad memories speak of **being without help, missing out, and the challenges of adjusting to life during resettlement**. Multiple women shared difficult experiences of medical emergencies where they were **without help**. Ramineh shares about her experience during a medical emergency: “One of the memories I would always remember is that when I was 9 months pregnant, living in Decatur, my husband was in another state driving. Suddenly, in the middle of the night at 3:30 AM, I started to have a kidney pain...I got these strong, sharp kidney pains, and I was 9 months pregnant. I keep calling people like, I call my husband. He didn’t answer. I call my sister-in-law, neighbors, and then finally one Afghan neighbor lady, she picked

up and then she was the one who came and got me to the hospital. I didn't know what to do at that time. And I wasn't even able to call people, but I called them so much and then there was this lady who came and helped me. I will always remember that and that bad memory.” Barsha shared about not having help during her son’s emergency: “There was one incident that my son had really a bad stomachache and then he was going to collapse. But my husband was driving Uber, and I couldn't figure out anything, I didn't speak English. So, I remember taking my son and going outside on the road, and then asking for help, if anyone could call the emergency line for me. I had to wait there until my husband dropped that Uber booking he had, because he was supposed to make sure he drops off the person he has picked up. So, he finished that, and then he came back. That took 2 hours. And that's a sad memory for me.”

Some women revealed the difficulty of **missing out** on important occasions. Mitra shares: “One of the bad memories is that I'm resettled so far away. So, I feel very left out. Even during this Eid last weekend, I met a family from Clarkston, and they keep telling me that the Eid is much better in Clarkston and all the neighbors are visiting each other. It's very similar to what we did in Afghanistan. Whereas in Loganville, we don't have anyone to go to their house and stuff. And we feel like we're really left out.” Muzhgan states: “Whenever I have missed the doctor's appointment or any other important appointment, that is a bad memory for me.”

Lastly, the **challenges of adjusting to life during resettlement** created some bad memories. Rana shares: “The worst memory I have is when they brought us to this house, like, there was literally nothing, just one dining table was standing there. And then my daughter started crying. She was like, ‘Oh my God, what kind of house is this? Like how are we going to live [like] this? We don't have anything.’ Right now, too, with the day to day of the things where I'm dealing with the stress of the language barrier or the financial burdens—all of that adds up to

my bad memories.” Marya also reveals what it was like upon arrival at her new home: “The bad memories were mostly in the beginning. Because when we came, we couldn't afford buying the TV and we didn't have Internet in our house. So, while we were missing our families, and then our country was in the crisis situation, we didn't have anything in our house to keep ourselves busy. And then, because of the transportation, we couldn't go out. So, it was really like, sad days that we didn't have anything to do.”

What does it mean to you to be able to move around the city? / How did being able or unable to move around affect your life during resettlement?

These two questions were asked interchangeably, as the interpreter suggested that they were asked in the same way in the Dari language. Most of the responses to this question expressed positive feelings about being able to move around the city, either through women's experiences or their perceptions about what that experience will be like in the future. In particular, women mentioned the **positive feelings and experiences**, the ability to **help others**, and **comparisons to life in Afghanistan**. Others also mentioned **becoming mobile is difficult** and that **car ownership is a necessity in Georgia**.

Most women expressed **positive feelings and experiences** tied to the ability to move. These include setting goals for oneself: “If I would be able to go places without anyone's help, then I would feel independent, and I would feel that I was able to achieve something which I really wanted to. And now I could have more goals, like having my job and maybe starting having my own income,” (Marya). Gratitude that hopeless times are over: “Overall there were problems and there were situations of when I was feeling hopeless and stuff. But I'm thankful to God now that time is over and this time is also going to be over. But overall things are improving from day one until now and things are getting easier,” (Zohra). And that being able to move will

change one's life: "It will be a great feeling for me if it's a day that comes because then I will be able to get a job, get independent, and go places where I want. Definitely it's going to change my entire life," (Rana). Mylene explains how moving around teaches newcomers about their environment: "It's good to move around. When you are moving around, you will know the place that you supposed to know. Like somewhere maybe there is a playground, [but I didn't] know...But if you [are] driving around, [you realize]—oh! There it is! Activities happen here!...It's better to move around sometimes to see what's happening in the area...You can find something that you did not know."

The ability to **help others** with transportation and mobility came up multiple times in answers to this question. Asal has been dubbed by others a "free case worker" because of the help she provides her community: "It definitely feels very independent for me when I'm able to drive around. And the best feeling is that I'm helping other people with transportation right now. Since I don't have a job, I have time and I really feel so good about helping other new families... I don't care if someone is from the same tribe which I am or if they speak the same language. Whoever I see is in need of transportation, I help them because I have seen how bad it feels." Kamelah explains what she think it will be like when she is able to help others: "For me being alone here, it would definitely mean [the] world to be independent. Everyone has a dream of being independent and not asking anyone for help and being able to help others. It's very important for me to get independent."

Women made **comparisons to life in Afghanistan** when explaining what the ability to move means to them. Lila says, "Unlike Afghanistan...I was not feeling this safe. But here, walking at least I feel safe. And I feel that a woman should be able to get outside and go do something." Shadleen says, "When I think about if I compare my life not having a car and not

being able to drive, especially in Afghanistan. And now that I'm driving, I feel that I'm so powerful, I'm so independent. I can do stuff for my children.” And Muslima puts it, “For me it definitely makes a big difference if I'm independent and then I'm able to drive around here in America, and then I would feel the same way how I was able to do whatever I was able to do in Afghanistan, and I would be able to achieve that many things here. Once I have my own car and I'm not bounded on someone else's time and schedule.”

In addition to the hopeful and positive messages expressed above, some women revealed the **difficulty of achieving mobility**. Shichi explains, “It definitely means a lot for me to be independent. You guys cannot imagine how much stress I'm dealing with when I talk to my husband and when I ask him to teach me how to drive.” Shichi goes on to detail the stressful experiences navigating her husband’s feelings about her driving. Ramineh reiterates the importance of owning a car in Georgia: “I would say having transportation in Georgia is like, even if you don't have shoes to wear you need to have a car to drive to places. Because if you don't have a car, you cannot even plan places to go or do the normal things you would do for your life.”

What are the steps you're taking to improve your situation?/ What steps did you take to solve the problem?

This question “What are the steps you're taking to improve your situation?” was asked only of Dari speakers, as it was added once the Dari interpreter came onboard the project. The responses to the question fall under the following categories: **getting the permit, license, and learning to drive; learning English; becoming employed or getting training; husband’s support and employment; other actions; and unable to improve the situation.**

Getting the permit, license, and learning to drive is one of the most frequent responses to this question. Some women mentioned the help the on-site interpreter provided at the Department of Driver Services (Saadri, Rana), although it should be noted that the interpreter uses Farsi language, not Dari. Another mentioned that they felt the need to learn to drive quickly because their husbands left the family for work training for months at a time (Asal). Others noted that getting licensed and learning to drive is quite challenging: “I struggled two years and after two years, I was able to get my permit test passed, so that was something pretty good which I did” (Zohra). Barsha says: “The most important step was taking my permit license, which was hard for, uh, for me with the language barrier. But after so many tries, finally I was able to get that.” Asal states, “It’s not easy for someone to come new and then learn something they haven’t done in their life.”

Learning English is another prevalent theme in responses to this question. In addition to learning English generally, some mentioned different strategies used: “I educated myself a lot from the YouTube videos. I would learn the English language from YouTube videos” (Ramineh). “I’m constantly going to ESL classes, which is a positive step I feel that can change my life” (Rana). “Wherever there was English class where they were providing the childcare, I was going to those classes and even if it took me a long walk, I would still go there. And then when I came back to home, I always watch the cartoons and stuff with my kids and then I asked them to translate it for me” (Damsa).

Some women also mentioned that **becoming employed or getting training** was an important step they took. Lila states that getting a job is part of her plan: “Getting my own driving license and also learning English. Those are the steps which I’m learning both so I can get a good job. And then me and my husband, our plan is to get 2 jobs so that we can work

together and buy a house because the rent amount which we are paying right now is \$1,850, which is very high.” Muzhgan is seeking job training: “[This nonprofit has a learning process] for whoever had a medical degree from their country. I have a medical degree from Afghanistan. I was in the last year of becoming a doctor, but then, unfortunately, I came here, so I did apply for that [program] and then they're going to recertify the people who come from different countries and have a medical background. And then that way, they will be certified dental assistants.” And Muslima says, “One [thing I did to improve our situation] was finding a better job, which is the current job I have. This is a very important step towards my self-sufficiency.”

Many women mentioned the **role their husbands played in supporting their family's situation**. Zohra says, “As a family, my husband was really good, he worked extra in the first month so that he could save the money to be able to buy our car.” Ramineh says, “One month, my husband took off from work during Ramadan so that he could teach me how to drive.” Shadleen shares, “Even though I was a new arrival for 7 months, I let my husband go get a CDL license because I feel that a lot of the time, because of the doctor's appointment, and because the women don't take the responsibility on, the husbands are usually stuck with the low paying job. So, I'm so happy that I let him go. And that was the reason that he had a good income, and he was able to save money. We bought a house and right now also, I feel that whenever my husband talks about his income and stuff, he always is very thankful to me that even though I didn't speak English, I was not very familiarized with the environment, but I still I was able to take care of my kids alone.”

Other actions women took to improve their situations include asking advice from others (Shichi, Marya, and Nasrin); praying to God for help and patience (Behnaz); keeping children occupied with baking to ward off stress (Gulpari); and keeping a stock of medicines in the

refrigerator (Marya). Additionally, one woman mentioned reaching out for resettlement help, including applying for asylum early and seeking donations (Nosheen).

Importantly, some women **did not feel that they had taken steps to improve their situations**. Kamelah says she feels lost: “I definitely want to improve my situation where I am, but at this point, I feel that I'm very lost. And whatever steps I want to take, it's always with a barrier. Like with ESL classes, how do I do that? If I don't go in person in a place I can't even get on to a Zoom call to do that. And then with the job and stuff, it's related to language and transportation.” Rana says, “Mostly I make myself and my children busy by cooking or watching TV or something, but then most of the time I just get bored and then I sit down and then I cry about the situation I have.” And Beta says, “I don't think that we have done a lot to improve our situation, because I had a lot to deal with my health and with my pregnancy. Basically, that didn't allow me to do better with the ESL classes.”

Other Topics

Because this is an exploratory study, I wanted to provide space for women to discuss any additional topics they felt were important to share. As such, I asked these questions at the end of the interview: What else would you like to share about resettlement, transportation, or getting around in Atlanta? What else would you like to share about getting to work, children's opportunities, or healthcare appointments? What else would you want people to know about your resettlement experience? What were the resources that were helpful for you?

What else would you like to share about resettlement, transportation, or getting around in Atlanta?

Responses to this question featured issues **with language, transportation, and resettlement**. The language issues included passing the permit test, empathy for others who are

learning English during resettlement, and the desire for ESL classes that cater to their needs. The transportation issues raised surround public transportation and the need for help in learning how to get around. And the resettlement issues include gaining employment, the amount of support for resettlement, and mentorship.

Language was the most prevalent topic brought up by women when answering this question. Thirteen women mentioned **language** in itself as something additional they wanted to share in the interview. Within the topic of language, women mentioned preparing to drive (and taking the permit test), empathy for others who are resettled without English language skills, and ESL classes that cater to women's needs. An additional two women mentioned language as it relates to transportation and employment.

Damsa, Shichi, Gulpari, Shadleen, and Saima all mentioned the difficulty of **passing the permit test** due to Dari language translation not being available at the Department of Driver Services¹¹. Shichi puts it, “[One of] the most important things I would say is having our language in the permit test. I know someone who is here for five years, and that lady still says that “Oh, that will be one of the best days of my life when I get my permit license,” and she is a good driver. She knows how to drive. But because of the language, she's not able to give the test.” Two women admitted that they had traveled out of state to a permitting office where they could use a Dari translator: “The part of the resettlement I would like to mention is how getting the permit is hard for people who don't know English. I personally had to go to Florida in order to be able to give the test in my own language.” Gulpari had a similar experience.

¹¹ During the course of this research, the interpreter, through her own work, was able to secure Dari language interpretation at the DDS for permit testers.

A few women expressed **understanding for others** who are resettled in Georgia without language skills. Beta says, “I think that the main issue is I hate to see that the United States is bringing people, but then there is not enough support to learn a new language...Everything makes a lot of sense if you know the language, but then the barrier you face when you don't know the language, is really, it's really great. You cannot do anything around that barrier. And she said that I hope that there would be more support for ESL for people who come afterwards.” Zohra says, “The biggest barrier for someone to resettle in a different country is the language. Maybe the bus was coming there regularly, but because we don't know the language and we didn't know how to figure out the bus app and to see the exact timing, maybe that's why we were always missing the bus and we had to travel that extra mile. So, definitely having more resources with the language would have improved my life in so many ways. And I feel sad for other people who are getting resettled after me. I wish that there would be more a language support in different places.”

Two women mentioned the desire to have **ESL classes that catered** to their needs. For instance, Damsa says, “...And then the second thing is that I wish there would be an ESL class in Clarkston which would provide childcare. There is only one... and it's each Saturday. I wish they would give classes on daily basis, which we could go with our children.” And Kamelah expressed a different concern: “I have [health conditions]. So, it's really hard for me to ask my neighbor, my relative, every time to take me to doctors and stuff. Definitely if there is more support with ESL; I wish there would be online ESL classes which I could join, or if there would be any places closer to my house where I could go to learn language, then that would be perfect.” Two women gave responses tying language to **transportation and employment**. Marya ties language to the ability to use rideshare services and work: “There is one other thing that I want to

mention: figuring out the Lyft and Uber...In our country, it was so easy, you could just ask a taxi driver, 'How much will it take to drop me to this stop?' So, it was easier, they could speak your language and you could just go outside, and taxis were available at every street. But here, it's so difficult for someone who doesn't speak the language to figure out the [smartphone] application. And then if you don't have a bank account, you can't even put any information there. [Even if] you have your cash money, you still cannot go any anywhere. If you cannot figure out the Lyft and Uber...I really struggled with that situation. And other than that, she says that the language is the main issue, which she and other Afghan women have. If you think of transportation: language is a problem. If you think of a job: then language is a problem." Saadri says, "There are a lot of things with the resettlement where I would really like to mention the employment part of it. Because for someone who comes new here the most challenging thing is getting good employment. Right now, my husband's job is very hard. It requires a lot of physical strength. But then it's not like, very good pay. And when it comes to me, because of the language barrier I have and the transportation, I'm not even able to find good employment as quickly as I want. So, definitely more career pathways or more help with employment and better pay. It's something she feels everyone should ask [for]."

Transportation was another prevalent theme in the answers to this question. Responses tended to feature **public transportation** (Barsha, Muzhgan, Mitra, Kamelah, and Shandana) and **the need for help** from resettlement agencies.

Multiple women state that the public transportation in their area is lacking. Muzhgan compares the US resettlement environment with that of Europe, "The transportation is definitely something very big for all the people who come and get resettled in the United States and especially in Georgia. Not having a good public transportation, especially in Gwinnett County,

there is no public transportation. In Europe and there are trains and metros which you can use. But here the only option you have is that you have to buy your own car, and then buying a car is not easy. It's not like a \$1,000 dollar or \$2,000; you definitely need a good amount of money and then you have to be able to pay the insurance for the car monthly. So, it is a big cost, and a lot of the families are not able to get to that point very quickly.” Barsha looks at public transportation as it relates to her children’s schooling: “Not having a good public transportation system is really bad. When I didn't have a car, then if I would miss my children's school bus, then basically, that day was done for us. And then my child would not go to school. They would miss on the school. But now, even if I missed the bus, at least I have a car and then I can drive them. But not having a car, it not only destroyed my day, but also their day and then they would basically miss seven hours of education because of me not having a car, basically.” Mitra and Kamelah also note that the public transportation in Gwinnett County is an unmet need. And Shandana makes a practical suggestion: “Mostly if the buses come a lot, like every ten minutes or five minutes, it should be good. It will be easy for everyone because every day, the new peoples come from everywhere to Atlanta. Maybe it's good for the future for the new people.”

The other prevalent theme within answers about transportation focus on the **need for help** in learning how to get around during resettlement. Shichi, Muna, Mylene, Rabia mention this. Mylene shares, “...Especially [for] those don’t know the place, they need to provide, transportation, or a bus, like a tourist... You know if you have children, and they are just home, it’s not good. Children need to go play; they love to play. They need to walk around. But if they are new, they don’t know where to go. They are just at home eating, sleeping, watching TV—it’s not life. They are not enjoying life. So, when they provide like some bus, like [for] tourists, to bring them somewhere to go visit, to go somewhere to see the place, for the children. That would

be helpful!” And Shichi wants help for Afghans to learn about driving in the US: “I wish there would be some [help] that's part of the resettlement—teaching you how to drive. Because that is such a very needed service and even the men who have driven, maybe like, ten years, twelve years in Afghanistan—we don't have highways in Afghanistan. So, it's all other roads. So now driving in highway is very, very, very hard for Afghans. And she does say that that's why now, inside of our community we are always hearing about accidents [involving] Afghans. So, maybe that's another reason that they have never been able to learn how to drive in the highways or with the American rules and regulations.” Muna offers specific skills needed to ride buses: “Perhaps we need to teach them how to get the bus. For example, this side [is] different, across [on] another side, [it] maybe goes somewhere [else]. [If they're lost] they need to ask the driver...and focus [on] the street before they pull [the cable].” And Rabia mentions her preference for a personal vehicle over public transportation: “Transportation with the MARTA train will be easier if you find someone that really can help you and guide you through it. But for me, to have your own car will be more safe and convenient. You don't have to wait in a cold or hot weather.”

A few women made comments about **resettlement-related issues**, such as gaining employment, the amount of support for resettlement, and mentorship. Regarding employment, Marya makes a comparison to her home country: “In our country, if one person would work, it was enough for ten to fifteen people. But in the United States, even if you are two people at home, you both have to work in order to have a good life. I feel that if my husband is working, it's only enough for my rent and utilities. But if you really want to buy a house or move forward, then I also need to jump in and work.” Rana mentions, “I would say that the language barrier is the first, then transportation. And also having a sustainable employment so that you could sustain, and you could do things that you want to do for yourself and your children.” Muslima's

response contains comments about both employment and the next theme of support, discussed below: “Overall with the resettlement agency of myself and other Afghans I have talked with, I feel that the mentorship period is very [short]. And every family needs at least, someone to mentor them for a year. With everything, there's so many cultural differences and the environment is very different, and you come from a war zone, and you are hopeful that you will have an easier life here. But then here, it's like the next war begins. And you have to figure out all these things by yourself. And you don't have so many resources. So, in order to make this journey easier, I wish they would be more mentorship, or more support than just the first ninety days. And the first ninety days also, the way the resettlement agencies do it, they're like ‘Oh the ninety days I'm paying your rent and your utilities. But then you have to accept the first job I offer you or the first place I take you and then other than that, I won't offer any one-on-one support, or anything related to your education.’ Or even if they don't bother to seek out better employment for you, they're just going to put you [in] whatever is available for them.”

Continuing from Muslima's response above, support and mentorship is the final theme within the answers to this question. Asal notes, “So in regards to the resettlement and how I'm seeing the resettlement overall with the new Afghans who have come recently. I see that there is a lot more help right now, which is a good thing. About the community members, nowadays, there are more community members around, and in every neighborhood, if someone is newly resettled, they have more community support.” Ramineh mentions the importance of place in getting access to services: “I feel that for resettlement it's very important to be at a good location. And I feel that people who are around Clarkston and Decatur area, the case managers also go visit them frequently and there are more resources. There are grocery shops and halal food

basically closer to them. And our case manager would not visit us very often because he would say that it's a long commute for him. So, the location is very important for people who resettle.”

What else would you like to share about getting to work, children's opportunities, or healthcare appointments?

Responses to this question fell around three large topics: the most frequent is **what support women need** during resettlement; another is the **elements of mobility** that contribute to women's experiences; and the last is **advice to others** who are experiencing resettlement.

What support women need

Many women took this question as an opportunity to share about **the support they needed** during their resettlement. These responses covered a wide range of topics, the most frequent being language support; support for children; healthcare; and social relationships. Less frequently-mentioned topics include immigration and transportation. Many of the topics intersect with one another.

Language support was mentioned on its own once but also in relation to other aspects of life, such as healthcare and transportation. For instance, Shadleen says, "...The ESL was basically my main concern. And with the children, all the resources which are there are very helpful." Language intersects with children's education when Gulpari says, "For the school system, I wish they had all the languages which the parents speak. Because usually when I'm getting the flyers and stuff or the report cards even, since they're not in Dari or Farsi, I'm not able to read it. With my children, maybe the things which are in their benefit, they would share it with me. But maybe there are notes and stuff [that] the teachers want me to read, and maybe my child doesn't want me to read that. So, I am not able to read it. So, if these notes and stuff, the communication, would have a translation support, then I would be able to communicate with the

teachers. And the barrier of language is a big deal for me when it comes to the school system.” Saima echoes that the lack of language support for families with children in school is a barrier. And Damsa connects childcare to her own education: “I feel that childcare is really needed for ESL classes.”

Language is also mentioned as it relates to receiving healthcare. Saima gives multiple examples of: “If there is a way the insurances could make it more language accessible. Because I know that—I found it out in my fourth year in the United States that you can actually get a ride from Peach State Health Plan, or any health plan that you have. If you tell them 3 days before. But just because of the language barrier, the families don't know...”. Saima goes on about healthcare: “These health places, which we go [to], the doctor's appointment doesn't have any language support. I have had hundreds of clients calling me in their doctor's appointment like, ‘How do I fill out this application? What does it say?’” Damsa echoes this sentiment about filling out forms and describing ailments: “When we go to the doctor, we don't know what the forms say, and we are having a hard time filling out the forms and we don't know how to even describe our problem to the doctor.” Marya shares her technique for health care communication: “When we go to the doctor...I don't know the language, [so] then it's really hard for me to describe what problem my son has. And then usually, I have to search with Google ahead of the time so that I have some pictures to share with the doctor, to explain to her or to him. I wish there would be some language support during the doctor's appointments.” And Saadri makes a point about children’s education: “Because of not having interpretation during doctor's appointment, a lot of families struggle. Specifically, with us, if we have an important doctor's appointment, we will tell our bigger children—like the eleven-year-old, the twelve-year old, and the fourteen-year-old, not to go to school that day. Which is not good, just because we need the interpretation help. We

will tell them that, 'Hey, you guys don't go today so that you could help us for the doctor's appointment.'”

Support for children and childcare is the next most-frequent theme in responses. Two responses pertain to childcare support. Ramineh makes this connection: “A better childcare support system. Maybe if there would be an easier way to get qualified for a childcare support? That would be great. Because that's the reason which is keeping me behind.” Barsha connects childcare with language learning: “Childcare. And not having a childcare for low-income families. I wish that if there would be any ESL class with child support, because I see a lot of other women stuck with the same problem. There is not a childcare where they can put my children. It's very hard to get approved [for a government childcare subsidy] the childcare being a big need during the resettlement.” One response is about children’s social needs: “I wish there would be like a workshop or children’s activities planned through the nonprofits where they could provide transportation and get together all the children, once a week maybe or twice a month. So at least that would be an outdoor activity for children who come. But most of the families, similar to mine, are having the issue [where they] kind of get isolated because of the transportation, and especially language barrier, and the families just prefer to stay at home,” (Muslima). Rana expresses concern over her child in school: “My daughter's age and the classroom she's placed [in]. My daughter is much bigger than the grade she's placed [in], and all her classmates are very much [smaller] than her. So, I really hate to see that happen. And then my daughter, she's always giving me a hard time in the morning when she goes to school because she's like, 'I don't want go want to go to school because my classmates are making fun of me,' or like, 'I'm [the biggest] in the class.’”

One response mentions healthcare coverage as it relates to children's health: "Well, the healthcare is difficult because if you don't have Medicaid insurance, it's really difficult to go to the doctor's appointment...And that they consider your income, especially for children, [is] extremely difficult, because they get sick easily. And you have to constantly take them to the doctors. If you don't have Medicaid, I'm not able to pay it. I have seen a lot of other families as well have the difficulty with the insurance. Insurance is a really big thing here. Especially for kids," (Zaha). Another mentions healthcare as it relates to transportation: "The transportation during the health care appointments, because none of the agencies offer that. They basically just take you for the first healthcare screening. But other than that, you are left alone. So, some more support with the transportation" (Muslima).

Social relationships is another topic revealed in the responses. Zohra mentions mentorship and helping: "With the job and doctor's appointment I wish for myself and other new arrivals that there would be more support and mentorship, for maybe getting around. If they would have had someone who could at least show them which route to go or what are your options. Because when you are new in United States, there are so many things which are available, but you don't know about it." Nosheen mentions her desire to make an impact in her society: "Related to work, I would like to add this. In Afghanistan I was a teacher, and every morning, when I would wake up, I would have this positive energy. I'd dress up, and I have a positive energy to start the day. But here, because it looks so challenging—transportation is one big issue. And then maybe if I found employment where people are willing to drive me back and forth then what do I do with my documentation? And then if documentation and transportation is solved, I still have to learn a new language. So, it looks like a lot, but I'm hoping for the day

where it will be the same for me here: I wake up every morning and then dress up with a hope that I'm making a difference in the society.”

Two comments about the immigration process reveal additional support women need. Kamelah says, “I wish there would be more help for people like me, who don't have support. People sponsor people just to get here, but then they are not responsible for all of their lives. I wish that this difference wouldn't exist. If you come through an agency, you can help at least for six months, but then if you are sponsored by someone, then you get no help.” Zohra highlights how support has changed over time for the resettlement community: “As I'm living in Decatur, I see a lot of the other families in the same situation. I feel that in my time they were fewer refugees. So at least there were more resources, but right now...all the nonprofits are getting overwhelmed. For example, you have one case manager with two hundred families.”

Elements of Mobility

Some women mention elements of mobility in their responses. For instance, Lila connects her mobility to practicing and her husband's job: “My husband...is in the process of trying to get another job. Then probably it would be hard for me to get my kids to places which are far away. But the places which are close, like school and the grocery shopping, I would be able to get there. But the appointments which are far away, for those I will have a problem. In the beginning it will be hard but then as I get more practice, then I could go places which are far.” Damsa mentions that her language needs to be added to the permit test. Behnaz discusses transporting her children: “Well, right now, it's very easy for me. It is good because my work is very close to me. My kids are going by bus. So, I can make it to every appointment, I can go wherever I want with my kids, especially during the weekend. So, it is good.” Rabia notes how her life changed when she got a car: “Now, everything is easier when I get my own car. My

appointments, my kids' appointments, school, work. That was so much easier for me to just go with my own car." And Shichi states, "I wish that, again, the driving classes would be part of the resettlement...that as [a nonprofit could] have the permit test...if [they] could do something related to driving."

Advice to others

The last major topic brought up is advice to others. These include how to ride the bus, taking advantage of opportunity, being prepared for challenges, and how employers should treat their workers. Muna says, "About the bus, they need to [leave] the house [early]. They need to ask what time the bus comes. [They need to know] the time the bus [comes] in this area. Sometimes they [are] late a little bit. They need to [be] there. For example, if they have appointment with the doctor, for example, [at] six o'clock, they need [leave] the house, like 5:15 or 5:30 to get the bus earlier. Go earlier before the appointment...If it's the first year in United States, make sure. Ask the driver of the bus, '[Do] you go [to] this area?' Give them the address. Before, when I [got lost], I give the driver the address where I have to go, [and asked,] 'Do you go [to] this address or not?' I can ask him; I want to make sure." Shandana and Sumbul emphasize the opportunity to study. Sumbul says, "I want everybody to look for...an opportunity to study. They need to go study and get a good job." Shandana says, "[There's] opportunity here. It's good, they can study. They become a good person in the future if they have a good education." Beta's advice is about challenges: "When you come new here, nothing is easy, and everything is hard. I can't think of one thing to tell you, it's basically A to Z everything is a challenge until you become a little familiar with this stuff." And Mylene says of employers, "The bus needs to respect the schedule for those who are going to work. Some companies need to understand the worker...They need to understand if we are parents, we have children. So, we

need to take care also of our children. It's like we are working for them years, but we need also to help also our children. So, they need to give us time we all need...And some jobs also need to make a party...They say we have a party, invite your family. Yeah, like one party for Christmas, or something. They need to allow you also to come to bring your children...It makes the kids happy! 'Oh, I'm going to my mommy's work! I will see it!'"

What else would you want people to know about your resettlement experience?

Women answered that **ESL with childcare** remained a concern they wanted others to know about their resettlement experience (Damsa, Zohra, Barsha, Asal, Sapidah). Others said that **language** (Kamelah and Shandana), **healthcare** (Rana), **employment opportunities** (Saadri), **giving help** (Saima), and **transportation** (Muzhgan, Muna) are among the topics that women wanted to share. Two women shared their **feelings about their resettlement** (Lila, Sumbul). Some women wanted to **offer advice** to others, particularly that 'difficult days will pass' and to 'stay strong' (Behnaz, Zaha, Mylene). Other advice centered on getting educated, mobile, and improving your life (Muna, Nageenah, Mylene).

ESL classes that provide childcare is a major point mentioned by multiple women. Damsa says, "I would say... there should be more opportunities for women like me, who have children and who want to receive their college degree, or go to GED and stuff. So I wish [there] would be any childcare resources or ESL, more language support." Zohra puts it, "I would like to mention the difficulties I had with the childcare and similarly other people are also may be in the same situation like me. I had to wait four years before getting a job because of my son—that the daycares around us were very expensive and the minimum is \$150 a week. So, I had to wait until [nonprofit provided program with childcare and transportation costs covered]. If there wasn't a program like this, which would address our needs, I wouldn't even be able to go right now to the

job I'm going.” Barsha says, “I would like to emphasize the childcare a little more. Because I feel that I'm really struggling with the lack of having a good childcare for my children, or if there was a childcare, then I would be able to do a job or something else with my life.” Asal adds, “I just have a little thing to add: that there is really lack of ESL classes around. The places where people get resettled, and especially for someone who has children it's like a nightmare to find the ESL class with the childcare. So basically, the mothers are just left with a choice that you have to stay at home for four years. And then once your child is in the school, then you can think of yourself.”

Two other mentions of **language** emerged. Kamelah says, “With the healthcare appointments, there is no interpretation help . Whenever I go there, I'm just asking for help. Like for transportation, I need help. And then for language, I need help. I wish there would be some help—over-the-phone interpretation or something, so that people would actually be able to say their problems to the doctors without an interpreter. Without someone being with them.” Shandana adds, “The hardest [is] we don't know the language. Language is hard, [and] we don't know that some addresses. [This is] hard.”

Rana uses the opportunity to discuss a **healthcare** issue her husband is having, after which she says, “So we really hope there would be like, more support for new families going through the health care processes and getting doctor's appointments and stuff. If there would be more support in that area.” Saadri emphasized **employment opportunities**. Saima expressed how much of an impact a volunteer’s time made on her life: “I would really want to share how that one person who helped me learn how to drive made a huge difference in my life. And whenever I drive to places, and then I accomplish something with that...it basically fulfills one of the needs of my life. I offer a prayer for him, and I'm like, ‘Oh, God bless [volunteer], you are

so sweet. If you wouldn't have taught me how to drive, how would I be able to do the things which I can do right now?' So, if people could really think about helping people and becoming mentors. There are small things your two hours of a weekend won't mean something to you. But if you try to help someone in that hour, that can change someone's life."

Muzhgan's words about **transportation** emphasize how she feels about its role during resettlement: "Again I would emphasize the transportation thing. I would suggest other people who come, especially Afghans, when they come, then they do bring some money with them. They would sell their houses, whatever they have because in their heads, they are prepared for a new country, and they're like, 'Okay, I need to have at least \$10,000 dollars in my pocket. If there is a situation where I don't have any help, then at least I have a backup.' So, I suggest whoever comes new, the first thing they need to buy is a car. Because most of the families, they come here, then they spend all the money on buying a bed or furniture and household stuff. But I believe that a car is much important than those things. So, whoever comes, they should buy a car with those savings, and then they can buy the household stuff from their monthly paychecks." And Muna notes that taking the bus long-term is difficult: "I want to tell the people, the bus is hard. [To use] the bus many years is hard for them. They need to [learn] how to drive here, learning how to drive the car, buy the car."

Lila and Sumbul wanted to share their **feelings about their resettlement**. Lila says, "Our own country was better in the sense that it was our own country, but as you all know there is war and women basically cannot do much on their own. So, in that sense I'm very happy to be in the United States and I'm happy that I would be able to drive and I'm safe when I go outside." And Sumbul compares her journey to others': "We are lucky that we have a really nice caseworker. Really nice people around us. But I told you, I saw a few people and families who struggle more

than us. They have they had a lot of tough times. For me, my experience is not really not bad at all.”

A few women had **advice** to share. One theme of advice is to ‘stay strong’ or that ‘difficult days will pass.’ Behnaz says, “I just want others to know that even if you feel helpless or hopeless, just believe that those days will pass. You are not going to stay in the same situation. Things will get better. Life will get better for you. It's just the beginning, just have patience and pray to God and everything will be fine.” Zaha puts it, “Just stay strong and I know there are difficult times that everybody goes through, but it will be over. And then you will get where you want to be at some point in your life.” And Mylene says, “Life is not easy, they need to be strong. Never give up. Especially if you want to succeed in life, you cannot give up. Or sometimes you know, things happen and it will make you cry...You go home and cry by yourself, you cry, you cry. But don’t give up. You say, God help me! You wake up, you dress, your life continues. Just, be strong in life. Especially in America you need to be strong. If you are a single mom, just be strong.”

Another theme of advice given is to seize opportunity to get educated and find a better job. Nageenah says, “I would tell them that you guys make sure you study, get your license, find a better work. And then enjoy your life.” And Mylene offers, “Life is not too easy but if you want to get like a good job...Sometimes they used to say, ‘Go to school, go to school.’ School is not only going to college. You can do a training also online. America has a lot of opportunity. A lot of opportunity. You can do a training online for four months, three months, you get your certificate then you get a good job, you know? People cannot come only rushing, they just come, ‘I’m going to work!’ No, make some training for you to have a good job, a good salary also.”

What were the resources that were helpful for you?

This question was only asked of Dari speakers, as it was added to the interview guide after the interpreter came on board the project. Answers to this question tended to fall around **people giving help** and the **types of help provided**.

Among the named **people giving help** are Afghan community members, nonprofits, family members, and volunteers (Saadri, Beta).

Many women (Zohra, Ramineh, Muzhgan, Muslima, Mitra, Rana, and Beta) mention how the mentorship and support of Afghan community members were very helpful during their resettlement. Muzhgan says, “Even the case manager wasn't that big of a help. But other than that, too, we didn't have any resources. But some of the families who have resettled before us, and if we are meeting them, then their inputs and... their mentorship is like a good resource. But other than that, we haven't had any other volunteers or any resources helping us.” Muslima makes note of how she wants to help others in return: “The resettlement agency... I think that our agency was no help because even talking to other Afghans and families who have already been here... the thing that they mentioned out of their own experience was much [more] helpful than the agency itself. I'm also looking forward to being like that mentor to a new family. If there's a new family, I'm—we are all willing to at least tell them that which route to go. Most of the families get stuck with... basically a result of a wrong decision because they didn't know. So, increasing more awareness. And I feel that the other Afghans who were resettled before me, the things which they told me were very helpful in our journey.”

Lila, Marya, Zohra, Shichi, and Rana all made mention of nonprofit help. Rana expresses her gratitude: “Overall I'm grateful to everyone who helped me. Starting from the case manager, he did his part. And then the Afghan community members, and then [the nonprofit] organization. All of these were great resources and, I appreciate the help. Even if it's a small help, still people

try to help us.” (The other women’s responses are quoted throughout the previous and following paragraphs.)

Family members already living in the US also played an important role for some women during resettlement. Ramineh says, “You know, the best support, or the resource we had was my sister. She acted like our mentor; she was there when we needed her. And the other Afghan families. When I came to Decatur how they were a great help to me, the community support and my family support.” And Saadri says, “Our biggest resource is our brother and his wife. And a lot of things, when we want to plan and then we need advice, we will ask them. Other than that, the case worker—I mentioned where he was helpful. The volunteers would help us with the donations and stuff. Other than that, we didn’t have much resources. So, the family members were a great resource to us.”

Lastly, among the sources of help is volunteers. Beta says, “I feel that the volunteers were a really great help. Other than that, a good case manager and the old community members. Those were all great helps.”

Among the **types of help provided** are financial assistance and help filling out applications for benefits, childcare benefits, energy assistance, and transportation to appointments.

Lila’s response shows two types of assistance she received: financial assistance and help filling out applications for benefits. “The financial support was very helpful for us from our resettlement agency, even though they didn’t do the other services. But they paid our rent [for a few months]. They gave us [money] for the kids monthly. And then the last check they gave us fifty dollars. Those financials were probably good to have...Also nonprofits which are helping us with Food Stamps and Medicaid applications, those are very helpful for us.” Zohra’s response

shows the support she got for childcare: “The [nonprofit] was another good resource, which has helped me throughout the process. [Another nonprofit] is helping with [a few months] of my childcare fee. [One nonprofit] provided three months of my son’s [childcare], then I was referred to a new program with the childcare support. [Those nonprofits] were the other resources besides our Afghan community who has helped me throughout the process.” Mary got help with energy assistance: “Other than [one nonprofit helping with] some of the stuff and the energy assistance...[only] the case managers and the community members. There were not any other resources.” And Shichi expresses gratitude for transportation and support for her permit testing and pregnancy: “Two of the nonprofits. One helped [with] taking me to the permit...I was so worried to pass the test, because I was like, ‘Oh [the employee] did this much hard work. She came to pick me up, she gave me her time. So, I really need to prove myself to her. Like, she taught me all the way and then she took me there.’ And then the other good resource was...really helpful during my pregnancy. They have also helped me with some of the appointments.”

Appendix F: Conducting Interviews

This section will outline the appropriateness of interviews for this project, detail how I conducted the interviews, and discuss important considerations for cultural competence when interviewing.

Appropriateness of Interviews

In-depth interviews are appropriate to answer my research questions for a few reasons. Perhaps the most important reason why in-depth interviews are preferable to other qualitative methods is because refugees as a population have such extremely diverse experiences. While some pioneering studies have developed some core concepts related to the resettlement experience (see Bose 2014; Wachter et al. 2016; Davenport 2017), much remains unknown and theoretical development has not centered this population or their experiences. This makes it difficult at this point to, for instance, develop a structured survey pertaining to refugees. It is difficult to even know what questions to ask regarding the resettlement experience, much less what to ask about the concepts I'm interested in here. Although my interview was guided by general questions pertaining to the focus of this study, in-depth interviews allow the researcher to probe participants' answers to questions with both focus and openness, which allows for new themes to emerge from the participants' words (Wachter and colleagues 2016).

Semi-Structured Interviews

The semi-structured format allows for an interview to be less rigid and more conversational than structured interviews and the approach is more like a topic or concept list than a closed-choice survey form (Scott and Garner 2013). Having a more free-flowing approach to the interview allowed new concepts or salient themes to emerge from the interviewee's own words and experiences. While I aimed to cover every topic on my interview guide with every

person, I also viewed this interview as an opportunity for unknown (to me) topics to emerge. The semi-structured interview allows respondents to frame their answers in the way they see fit, using the language and frames that express their meaning most fittingly (Scott and Garner 2013). This allowed for some balance between me bringing my research concepts to bear while allowing the data to come to me “open” (LaRossa 2005). Given the refugee resettlement experience in Atlanta is not well-documented in the literature, the semi-structured interview approach will allow new avenues of future research to emerge while building upon the few studies reviewed in the literature review section.

Documenting Perceptions & Perspectives

Interviews are suitable when the researcher’s goal is to understand the meanings and perspectives of the interviewees (Scott and Garner 2013): in this case, what refugees have experienced and desire regarding their mobility during resettlement in Atlanta. The in-depth interview process allows participants to “voice personal experiences about resettlement in America” (Davenport 2017). In this study I tried to understand the relationships between core variables during resettlement, but I also had some key concepts that I believe may be important to the mobility experienced during this time.

Deepen Understanding

In-depth interviews can provide a deeper understanding of concepts, relationships between topics, and context. Take the following example, which shows how in-depth interviews can build upon past research and deepen understanding of an under-studied topic. According to Bohon and colleagues (2008), much attention is spent on documenting the disparities between immigrant and US-born people in their transportation patterns, but much less attention has been paid to how those transportation disparities affect the *daily lives* and *desires* of those most

greatly impacted. For this reason, I asked participants about their lives in transit during resettlement, encompassing time and modes travelled, sacrifices and workarounds made due to transportation barriers, and what mobility resources they desired to have in their neighborhoods. The in-depth format allowed participants to use their own words to describe experiences, feelings, and desires, which made it ideal for the aims of this research.

Conducting Interviews

This section will cover how I conducted the interviews, including obtaining consent, probing, cultural competence, and gift cards.

Obtaining Consent

I met with the participant on the previously determined day and time, then began the consent process with the participant. During English language interviews, I displayed the consent form (Appendix C) and carefully read the consent form, systematically pausing to inquire whether the participant understood, needed clarification, or had questions. During Dari language interviews, the interpreter read the displayed Dari language form and read it aloud to the participant. The consent form outlines that: participation is completely voluntary; their participation is in no way tied to the services they will receive through the resettlement organization (if applicable); they may choose to not answer any questions they are not comfortable answering; and they may terminate the interview at any time. I documented consent by verbally asking the participant if they consented to participate. I offered to email a copy of the consent form if they wished for it. In addition to asking for consent for study participation, I also asked if I have permission to audio-record (or video-record, if conducted via video conferencing software) the interview for recall and accuracy purposes.

I stored all audio recordings securely on a password-protected hard drive. Following each interview, I transcribed the audio or video recordings, removing any identifiable information and changing names to pseudonyms in the process. Transcribed documents remain stored securely on a password-protected hard drive.

Probing

Probing is the process in which an interviewer digs deeper into a participant's response to gain further insight. I have written the probing questions into the interview guide (Appendix 1), where I can easily access them during the relevant questions. As can be seen in the interview guide, the probing questions ask for more context or connect the participant's response with concepts that I expected to be important based on my understanding of the literature. Even when a participant disagrees that the concepts related to their answers, which is new information that deepened my understanding of their experience. The probes also anticipate what I should ask if a participant answers "yes" or "no" to my original question. Some of the probes even had their own follow-up questions, which aimed to uncover participants' feelings, meanings, and understandings of their resettlement experiences.