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Lessons in Shared Sufficiency: How Refugees and Community Partners Practice Belonging at a Faith-Based Community Hub

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M.Div., Emory University, 2016
B.A., Rhodes College, 2013

Advisor: Ellen Ott Marshall, Ph.D.

An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

Lessons in Shared Sufficiency: How Refugees and Community Partners Practice Belonging at a Faith-Based Community Hub

By Janelle Lindsay Adams

This dissertation employs qualitative methods to investigate practices of belonging in the context of refugee resettlement. Drawing on participant observation, interviews, and focus groups with the onsite partners of Lattice Ministries, a faith-based community hub in the U.S. Southeast, I demonstrate how established Americans and individuals who came to this country as refugees are working to expand opportunities to belong together. My research partners are designing for belonging and practicing recognition, accompaniment, and turning. By engaging these practices, my interlocutors contribute to processes of moral formation. As they practice belonging across difference, these newcomers and established Americans shed light on the paucity of self-sufficiency as the *telos* for refugee resettlement. Amid limitations and challenges, my research partners work to build a community sustained by and oriented towards the *telos* of shared sufficiency. My findings illuminate the reality that the work of growing belonging can be shared. They offer resources for faith communities involved in refugee resettlement that seek to ground their work in a framework of belonging. This research also underscores the need for belonging practices and a reorientation to shared sufficiency in societies characterized by individualism, loneliness, and polarization.

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Preface

My personal and professional experiences with belonging shape every page of the work that follows. While the labor of making oneself belong typically falls on the individual in the U.S., my life has been changed repeatedly by situations in which others voluntarily collectivized that work on my behalf. These experiences of unexpectedly finding that the burden of creating belonging for myself did not fall on my shoulders alone have been deeply formative. Indeed, they have disclosed for me important truths about what it means to live a good life. Studying abroad in Dakar, Senegal and living with a Muslim, Senegalese family as an undergraduate Religious Studies major, I experienced what it was like to be on the receiving end of invitations into belonging. My hosts invited me into the family with a new name (Amy Diallo, meaning beloved and bold), specific roles and responsibilities, and hours-long conversations around shared meals on a woven rug on the floor. My elderly host father, Papy Jo, became an enduring friend. He generously engaged me in conversations about Sufism, Christianity, and Senegalese culture and taught me to pepper my French with Wolof and Pulaar phrases. His response to my gratitude for the family's hospitality has not left my head since the first time I heard it in the fall of 2011. My every "thank you" was met with his emphatic and gracious reply: "It's nothing. If I were in your country, you would do the same for me."

I carried Papy Jo's words with me when I returned to school in Memphis, Tennessee. For, while there was not necessarily a large Senegalese immigrant community in the city, I knew that there were communities from West Africa and beyond in the area. I also knew I was practicing *nothing* akin to the radical hospitality and invitation into belonging that I had received as a (very) temporary immigrant to Senegal. Returning to finish college with Papy Jo's refrain in my mind, I sought out ways to "do the same." I learned about the community of individuals who had come to Memphis as refugees and devoted a summer to researching the different ways that faith-based

communities were responding. During my senior year, I interned with one of the groups I had connected with through that research and taught a kindergarten readiness class to refugee preschoolers. Following graduation, I accepted an admissions offer from Candler School of Theology in part due to the institution's connections to organizations involved in refugee resettlement. During my time at Candler, opportunities to engage with these organizations through contextual education enriched my coursework and deepened the formative nature of the M.Div. program for me. Learning different approaches to community development while working side-by-side with refuge seekers from around the world felt like stepping into my commissioning from Papy Jo to extend pockets of belonging for and with newcomers just as he had done for me.

Papy Jo's charge to extend belonging remained at the forefront of my mind as I graduated from Candler and began working in the "Ashland" community with first a community development organization and then a refugee resettlement agency. With the former, I helped organize community dialogues and facilitated participatory decision-making processes regarding how best to use grant funds. While I worked with refugees who had been in the community anywhere from five to fifteen years—individuals and families who, on paper, had done the settling implied in resettlement— I found that so many barriers continued to shape their daily lives. Making sure that people who wanted to be at community meetings could access information about the event in a language they knew, find reliable transportation, and secure trustworthy childcare was a tremendous challenge. I quickly learned that, because of persisting cultural taboos against women working and learning to drive in many cultures, women from refugee backgrounds find themselves in their apartments either alone or with their young children far more frequently than their male family members. As such, they often have fewer

opportunities to learn English and experience higher rates of isolation. This, in turn, leaves them with diminished resources for coping with the everyday stressors of life in the U.S.,[1] much less for navigating the complex puzzle they had to solve to participate in the local community. It was in this role that I learned just how significant of a chasm stretches between financial self-sufficiency, which many had achieved, and feeling at home and connected to one's community. This work entailed many joyful moments, as I witnessed women tapping into the support provided by the community development organization to advocate for needed changes in their local schools and to earn a credential that opened doors to securing employment at early learning centers. I also learned how daunting it could be to sustain new leadership and community roles when a new child was born or when illness or disabilities within the family shifted in ways that required greater levels of care.

When the grant funding that would have enabled me to continue in this work failed to materialize, I stepped into a role at a resettlement agency in which I trained groups of faith-based volunteers to accompany newly arrived families for a year. This work was beautiful and exhausting, hopeful and heartbreaking. Witnessing moments when refugees and committed volunteers broke through their assumptions of what their relationships should or could look like while celebrating a milestone or battling the school system for more adequate accommodations together, those moments sometimes felt like visions of *basileia tou theou*, the kin-dom of God breaking into the world as we know it. Reflecting on the significance of relationships with people who were not paid professionals during a season when everyone else he knew were service providers or social workers, Mupanza, a father of a family matched with a faith community team,

[1] Linda L. Halcón, Cheryl L. Robertson, and Karen A. Monsen, "Evaluating Health Realization for Coping Among Refugee Women," *Journal of Loss and Trauma* 15, no. 5 (September 14, 2010): 409, https://doi.org/10.1080/15325024.2010.507645.

shared, “When it is hot or when it is raining, you find a place to stand. They have been that to my family. They have been my shelter.” At the same time, I witnessed how much these families were impacted by the systematic dismantling of the nation’s resettlement infrastructure under Donald Trump’s first presidential administration and grieved as my friends and colleagues, who themselves first came to the U.S. as refugees, were laid off abruptly despite the wisdom and expertise they brought to their work. This dissertation is shaped by both sides of these experiences: the hope and joy of witnessing the good and world-changing work of community groups doing what they can, and the heartache that comes with witnessing the structural constraints that both necessitated and limited this work.

In both roles, I sought out small ways to make it easier both for newly arrived refugees to feel at home in the Ashland community and for long-time U.S. residents to better understand why these newest neighbors were coming and what it might look like to adapt with them. I found that as resources dwindled under Donald Trump’s first term in office, the need to pay attention to these kinds of questions grew, while the capacity to do so vanished. Thus, I found myself returning to school, with every intention of remaining connected to the Ashland community. What I had not quite anticipated, however, was the potent combination of factors that would make it increasingly difficult to do so. The ongoing effects of the Trump administration continued to scatter the people with whom I had been in relationship, the initial adjustment to doctoral work overwhelmed me, and, most disruptive of all, the COVID-19 pandemic began when I was a single semester into the doctoral program.

As a result of these overlapping constraints, when Charlie, a friend I had known at Candler, invited me to serve on the board of Lattice Ministries—an Ashland community hub that is the home of multiple faith communities, refugee-supporting nonprofits, and recreation

groups— I responded with an enthusiastic "yes." Here was an opportunity to stay at least a little connected to the Ashland community as well as to make my coursework feel more concrete and grounded. After serving on the board of Lattice Ministries for several years, I realized that it was, to me, a "bright spot."[2] As I note in the introduction that follows, I first stumbled across the concept of bright spots in the community development world.[3] In that field, bright spots are important to seek out because they prove that things can indeed be different. They shed light both on innovative ways to respond to social issues and on the nature of these issues themselves. In a time when resettlement infrastructure had been whittled down and polarization seemed at a historic high, here was a place where community groups invested in the flourishing of newcomers could collaborate. Too, as the site of a Presbyterian church that birthed life as it faced its closing, I was struck by its witness to the power of resurrection for other churches navigating pending closures. Together, the groups on campus were deepening what it means to offer refuge, insisting that this should entail space and room to belong and not only administrative permission to cross our borders and contribute to the economy.

While some might wonder whether perhaps I saw belonging happening at Lattice Ministries because that was what I was looking for, the decade I spent in and around the Ashland community had shown me just how central questions of belonging are for newcomers remaking their lives here. Too, conducting initial content analysis of Lattice Ministries' newsletters and emails, I could not ignore how often belonging was invoked as central to its mission and vision. Eileen Campbell-Reed writes of the fine line between bias and the kind of intuition that emerges

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[2] When I decided to ask Lattice Ministries and its partners to host my dissertation research, I resigned from the board to avoid potential conflicts of interest.

[3] Chip Heath and Dan Heath, *Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard*, Kindle Edition (Crown Currency, 2010); Richard Pascale, Jerry Sternin, and Monique Sternin, *The Power of Positive Deviance: How Unlikely Innovators Solve the World's Toughest Problems*, American First edition (Boston, Mass: Harvard Business Review Press, 2010).

from years spent in relationship with people and places. She explains, "What is feared to be bias by some may actually be practical wisdom or expertise on the part of the researcher who understands the case at hand based on years of observation, research, and writing about the subject."[4] Having been on the receiving end of invitations into belonging myself, I believe I was well-poised to recognize this work in the community in which I had planted roots.

During the fifteen months I spent hanging out on Lattice Ministries' campus with groups like ABC, Kuumba, and Mulunda Worshipping Community, it was apparent that expanding opportunities to belong remains an ever-unfinished project. The work of unsettling established boundaries of belonging to include across multiple lines of difference happens both consistently and imperfectly. Not everyone on campus is friends. Language and cultural barriers persist. Many of the established Americans who spend time on campus wish they were more connected to newcomers in the community than they are currently. And yet, the work faithfully continues, as together individuals and groups strive to remove barriers to belonging on a day-to-day basis. Spaces of belonging are being created, and, as I argue throughout the dissertation, people are changing. Among the most dedicated members of the Lattice Ministries community, I find individuals in the process of becoming people of belonging—people who design time and space for belonging and who participate in their own processes of formation by engaging the belonging practices of recognition, accompaniment, and turning. As peacebuilder John Paul Lederach affirms in reference to the heightened polarization the U.S. is facing, "In the broad landscape of facing down a civil war, each of us matters. The quality of how we relate and stay in relationship

[4] Eileen R. Campbell-Reed, "The Power and Danger of a Single Case Study in Practical Theological Research," in *Conundrums in Practical Theology*, ed. Joyce Ann Mercer and Bonnie Miller-McLemore (Brill, 2016), 39, http://brill.com/view/title/33423.

across difference matters. And every small act to heal our tattered social fabric matters."[5] In the pages that follow, I suggest we catch glimpses of our society's social fabric being mended, one practice of belonging at a time.

[5] John Paul Lederach, *The Pocket Guide for Facing Down a Civil War: Surprising Ideas from Everyday People Who Shifted the Cycles of Violence*, 2024, 6.

When Nobody is Outside: An Introduction

"Belonging is a strategy to survive." –Wilo

"Belonging is when nobody is outside."—Zari

Welcome to Lattice Ministries

A few months before starting my ethnographic research at Lattice Ministries, I join an online meeting between the onsite partners that call Lattice Ministries' campus home, the offsite partners that support the community financially and through volunteering, and the Ashland County commissioners. Lattice Ministries is a community hub in Ashland. Located in the Southeast region of the U.S., the small city of Ashland is known for its high density of diversity resulting from refugee resettlement. Lattice Ministries was birthed through a collaboration between the Presbytery—the regional denominational body supporting Presbyterian Churches (U.S.A.)—and New Hope Presbyterian Church during its final years as an independent congregation. During the time of my research, the campus is home to six churches that worship in languages ranging from Swahili and Amharic to Zo and Karen; six nonprofit organizations that offer services and skills training to individuals who came to the U.S. as refugees and asylum seekers; and three recreation groups that include adult basketball and badminton teams and a children's martial arts group.[6] Lattice Ministries' executive director, Charlie, and board member, Tammy, convened this particular meeting so that the partners might share about the work unfolding on the campus and ask for county support.[7] "We love coming to campus, it's a community," shares Jamila on behalf of ABC, the multi-generational literacy program she manages for mothers who came to the U.S. as refugees and their children. Meera, co-founder of a

[6] See Appendix A for a list of the organizations that feature prominently in this research.
[7] All names have been changed to protect the privacy of my research partners, including the names of individuals, organizations, and locations. See Appendix B for a list of research partners' pseudonyms and associated organizations.

badminton club that includes members from over ten countries, muses, “COVID was a big thing for our group. Being able to get together and still play on campus was a huge thing that kept us going.” Dr. Sharon, who runs Trinity Academy, a private school focused on meeting the needs of children with learning differences, notes that they do not try to minimize the students’ challenges. Rather, they emphasize their strengths through learning cohorts that invite older students to mentor younger ones and through hands-on field trips. “We are growing a culture of food,” Kamali shares of Growing Refuge, the nonprofit that creates access for former refugees with agricultural backgrounds to land and gardening materials so that they can maintain their cultural growing practices here. Olivia celebrates some good news from her organization, Breaking Bread, which provides job training and professional certification in food handling to individuals who have experienced forced migration. One of their first trainees recently launched a restaurant with her family. Kweks, in turn, shares that Kuumba, a nonprofit organization that offers holistic sewing and leadership initiatives for women who came to the U.S. as refugees, recently concluded a successful mask-sewing initiative that enabled Kuumba students to bring home income during the worst months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now they are working to connect the women, their families, and their broader networks with rent assistance and other social services necessitated by the pandemic through their newly trained team of multilingual community ambassadors.

After hearing from the onsite partners of ABC, the badminton group, Trinity Academy, Growing Refuge, and Breaking Bread, Charlie turns the mic over to representatives of Lattice Ministries’ offsite partners. Kay, a member of the New Hope Presbyterian congregation that first cast the vision of the campus as a place of community for newcomers, shares, “It was a joy to be a part of the beginning.” She adds, “Our church has closed, but I get to be a part of it still.” The

88-year-old continues to volunteer with some of the organizations on campus. At the time of this meeting, New Hope Presbyterian Church had recently "engrafted"—the Presbyterian term for merging into another congregation when a church is no longer financially viable—into Pleasant Grove Presbyterian Church. Ironically, New Hope Presbyterian had launched Pleasant Grove during its peak in the late 1950s. In the years leading up to the engrafting, New Hope members embraced the call of their minister, Pastor Jay, to care more about being good neighbors than about the congregation's self-preservation. While the badminton group had been meeting at New Hope Presbyterian long before the arrival of Pastor Jay—the White, Spanish-speaking minister who had originally envisioned starting bilingual ministries—Jay helped the congregation slowly cultivate partnerships with Trinity Academy, Kuumba, ABC, Breaking Bread, Growing Refuge, and Mulunda Worshipping Community in response to the neighborhood's changing demographics and needs. During the final years before the engrafting, as the congregation struggled to pay their bills and manage the most pressing repair issues on their large and aging campus, New Hope Presbyterian invited other local churches and the Presbytery to support their blossoming partnerships and the church's growing role as a hub for the diverse, local community. And so it was that Lattice Ministries was born.[8]

Cody, the board chair of Lattice Ministries and a member of Grace Presbyterian, a church located about thirty minutes away from Lattice Ministries and one of its longstanding partners, draws the introductions with the county commissioners to a close by noting, "The tentacles of Lattice Ministries go far beyond this campus." He concludes, "It has really impacted my life…So many people who have been impacted by war and oppression end up in our corner, and we have visions far beyond what Lattice Ministries is today." Charlie then turns the floor over to the

[8] See Appendix C for an overview of this timeline.

commissioners, who ask, with small chuckles, if they can join the badminton team. They then inquire more seriously: "How can we be of service?"

While only a meeting, that time online together reveals a dense web of relationships between individual leaders and organizations on and off campus. For example, Meera mentions that her badminton group recently collected backpacks for families involved with ABC, Kuumba, and Mulunda Worshipping Community—a pan-African congregation that meets on Lattice Ministries' campus, and one of six congregations not represented at the meeting. Dr. Sharon shares that her students benefit greatly from interacting with the other organizations that call Lattice Ministries home. Just a week before the meeting with the commissioners, her students enjoyed salads made with vegetables grown in the plots managed by Growing Refuge. Olivia notes that Breaking Bread could not have launched if New Hope Presbyterian had not invited them to use their kitchen free of charge when they were first starting out and, later, at below-market rates. Likewise, I was struck by the way Lattice Ministries staff and board members leveraged their connections to make it possible for Kweks to ask commissioners to prioritize bringing more small-scale manufacturers to the area, for Olivia to inquire about the county's plans for workforce development, and for the commissioners to share details about community development block grants and the process to register as local small business enterprises so that they can access available contracts. Listening in as the onsite and offsite partners told stories of collaborating to meet needs and build community, I witnessed the social fabric of Ashland being mended and strengthened in real time.[9]

[9] While the work that follows primarily investigates the ways the onsite partners of Lattice Ministries seek to practice belonging within their organizations and interpersonal relationships, I should note that they also endeavor to remove barriers to belonging in more structural ways. For example, Lattice Ministries co-sponsors an annual advocacy day at the state capitol and recruits volunteers to speak to legislators about policies that endanger newcomers' ability to thrive. However, this belonging-relevant political activity does not take centerstage because my ethnographic research occurred during Joe Biden's presidency. If I were to conduct this research today, I

The Mission is Self-Sufficiency

Soon after I attended this meeting, I log into another Zoom call that leaves me with a very different takeaway: "The mission is self-sufficiency." The quarterly, online public meeting I joined brings together refugee "stakeholders": relevant state officials, refugee resettlement agency staff, and leaders of various refugee-led and refugee-serving nonprofits. Throughout the call, the idea that self-sufficiency is the goal of refugee resettlement is conveyed clearly and continuously. The self-sufficiency that the state and local partners at the meeting see themselves promoting is, strikingly, both economic and social. "Social self-sufficiency?" I jot down in my fieldnotes at the time. "Isn't that an oxymoron?" As I explore in the following chapter, this emphasis on self-sufficiency as the overarching goal of refugee resettlement is visible in everything from the Office of Refugee Resettlement's mission statement to the communications materials of the local agencies that manage new arrivals' cases on the ground. To draw on the teleological language employed by Christian ethicists ever since Thomas Aquinas integrated Aristotelian philosophy with theology in the 13th century, self-sufficiency is the *telos* or guiding vision of the resettlement system in this country.[10] In many ways, framing self-sufficiency as the purpose of resettlement makes good political sense. It taps into the insight that the public is less likely to oppose resettlement if agencies can prove that these newcomers are contributing to (rather than draining) the economy. This has been especially true since 2016, when the resettlement program that had enjoyed bipartisan sponsorship since 1980 fell under attack, and support for the U.S.'s commitment to resettle became increasingly tenuous.[11] Moreover, there is

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imagine that political conversations and activism would be much more central in my research partners' conversations and practices than they were in 2022.

[10] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: Prima Secundae, 71-114*, trans. Laurence Shapcote, Latin/English Edition of the Works of St. Thomas Aquinas / Saint Thomas Aquinas, Vol. 16 (Lander, Wyoming: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012).

[11] By bipartisan support, I am referring to the fact that, since its inception in 1980, both Republican and Democratic presidents have supported the U.S. refugee resettlement program and approved the admission of similar numbers of

something to be said about the fact that newcomers themselves fervently wish to make a good living once they have found their footing here. They are eager to contribute to their new communities. And yet, hearing self-sufficiency touted repeatedly as *the* ultimate good by some of the staunchest supporters of resettlement in the state, I am struck by how short self-sufficiency falls in relation to flourishing. The portrait self-sufficiency paints of what it looks like to live a good life in this country is incomplete at best, both for newcomers and established Americans. At worst, self-sufficiency as *telos* draws established Americans into competitive, individualistic, and profit-oriented lifestyles and diminishes refugees' worth to their ability to produce.

As I pore over my fieldnotes nearly a year after this meeting, I am startled to recall similar language that appeared during a Kuumba graduation. Hoping to dislodge the memory, I search through my fieldnotes file. I notice just how often "graduation" appears in my notes. Kuumba's sewing program graduation was the first among many I attended while doing this research, followed by two ABC graduations for women and their children held in playgrounds. I also attended my Kuumba friend Durga's graduation from her language program at a community college, held on the college campus with caps, gowns, and pomp and circumstance aplenty. And I found myself attending my ABC friend Enatye's daughter's friend's graduation dinner, held at a local Ethiopian restaurant. Finally, I attended a second Kuumba graduation, as another cohort of community members completed the nine-month training during my time with the community hub. When I at last find the pages dedicated to the first Kuumba graduation I attended, held in

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refugees from one administration to the next. Donald Trump was the first to diverge from this pattern, countering Joe Biden's admissions ceiling of 85,000 with a historically low ceiling just under 12,000. However, even though both parties have historically supported refugee resettlement officially, Rawan Arar and David FitzGerald's research reveals public opinion has often diverged. They explain, "While there is significant support in most surveyed countries for the principle of asylum, there is far less support for the admission of large numbers of refugees who are not highly educated and who are perceived as difficult to assimilate." Migration Policy Institute, "U.S. Annual Refugee Resettlement Ceilings and Number of Refugees Admitted, 1980-Present," migrationpolicy.org, August 13, 2013, https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/us-refugee-resettlement; Rawan Arar and David Scott FitzGerald, *The Refugee System: A Sociological Approach*, 1st edition (Cambridge: Polity, 2022), 244.

the gym on Lattice Ministries' campus, the relevant section jumps from the page. Kuumba COO Kweks has just called Aberash, a sewing program graduate, to the front of the room to receive her diploma and a brand-new Singer sewing machine. He tells us that she is known fondly as "the diva" in the Kuumba community. Wearing a vibrantly colored, floor-length dress of her own creation, Aberash tells the crowd about how much she has learned since becoming connected to Kuumba three years ago. She looks confidently into the crowd and concludes, "As women, we can do anything if we work hard. I am not dependent. From now [on], I depend on myself."

Reading over my notes, I glimpse my uncertainty about how to interpret her speech at the time, with its proud assertion of self-sufficiency. The lengthy and joyous graduation felt delightfully familiar. It took me back to hours-long celebrations I attended as a college student studying abroad in Senegal and offered an unexpected opportunity to catch up with the father of a family I had once worked with at a resettlement agency who was there to support a relative graduating from the program. The proclamation of independence, however, was jarring. I expected to hear "self-sufficiency" language from nonprofit and government employees. I did not expect to hear the language of self-sufficiency from my research partners with refugee backgrounds.[12] Given how dedicated the newcomers on Lattice Ministries' campus are to supporting their extended co-ethnic communities and other, more newly arrived newcomers, this valorization of independence felt out of place.

[12] Throughout the dissertation, I use the term "research partner" to refer to the individuals at Lattice Ministries with whom I conducted participant observation, interviews, focus groups, and readbacks. My research partners include both established Americans (U.S. residents whose families have been here for three or more generations) and individuals who first came to this country as refugees. In general, my research partners were staff of the organizations on Lattice Ministries' campus, or they were involved as board members or volunteers. I did not seek to build research relationship with individuals coming to, say, learn English at ABC or receive support in navigating social services at Kuumba. These individuals tended to have to come much more recently to the U.S. than staff members with refugee backgrounds and, as such, were in more acute stages of adjustment and homemaking. While my research partners were not involved in data collection or coding, they supported me in formulating my research questions and describing the key themes emerging from the data.

And, indeed, I did hear multiple references to more overtly countercultural concepts like *ubuntu*, the African philosophy of interdependence, in my interviews. “I am because I belong,” Wilo, a friend and Lattice Ministries board member from the Democratic Republic of Congo, explains to me over hibiscus tea. Kamali, a leader at Growing Refuge who grew up in a refugee camp in Nepal, tells me, “I become me when I am with my community.” And yet, Aberash’s words were not an anomaly either. Kuumba founder Gladys tells me that Kuumba hopes to help “women who are trying to figure out how to be able to stand on their own two feet.” Over injera and lentils, ABC teacher Enatye tells me that a good life means everyone can “help themselves.”

For several months I continued to grapple with the tension between my research partners’ framing of self-sufficiency as a worthy goal and their consistent prioritization of the work of building community and drawing the circles of belonging to that community ever wider. At first, this reality feels like an inconsistency between means and ends. While research partners’ practices of belonging made sense to me, their stated goal of self-sufficiency did not. Only slowly did I come to see that the “self” in my research partners’ visions of self-sufficiency diverged from the individualistic view of self that is so common in the U.S. As I argue in chapter one and return to in the conclusion, the prioritization of individualized sufficiency imperils flourishing for those who came here in search of refuge and impoverishes quality of life for those who were born in the U.S. However, my research partners at Lattice Ministries revealed my instinctive rejection of its value altogether as being naively out of touch with material realities. The importance of sufficiency, of having enough, came up again and again as my research partners shared with me their visions of a good life in this country. What surfaces in my research partners’ reflections and actions is not only a deep valuing of sufficiency—of clean water and safe roofs over their heads, of being able to provide for themselves after forced migration made

securing these necessities so challenging—but also a simultaneous insistence that the subject experiencing sufficiency cannot be limited to the individual.

The kind of sufficiency my research partners are working tirelessly towards is one that includes their communities. In their visions of a good life and their dreams for this country, my research partners articulate a vision of sufficiency that is collective, not individual. Over time, exploring this tension between former refugees' deep commitments to their communities and their valuing of being able to "depend on themselves" led me to the concept of *shared* sufficiency—a vision in which enough is only enough when it is shared, a *telos* that is brought within reach through practices that extend opportunities to belong.

With this more expansive view of sufficiency in hand, the tension between means and end dissipates. Practicing belonging is entirely consistent with a *telos* of shared sufficiency, as belonging both creates sufficiency and helps us desire it for one another. Practices of belonging illuminate what a guiding vision of shared sufficiency requires of us all, particularly among those of us who, as established Americans, have been conditioned to seek sufficiency in its most individualistic form. In focus groups, community members associated with Lattice Ministries, Kuumba, ABC, and Grace Presbyterian Church created numerous drawings in which I could see this *telos* of shared sufficiency clearly. These drawings are not "selfless," showing only a thriving community with no room for the individual. Nor are they "selfish," depicting money, status, or attainment for individuals exclusively. Rather, they are self-full, depicting individuals, their homes, their children, and their hobbies *as well as* the communities they are working to sustain.[13] These selves are capacious and collective, encompassing individuals, their local communities in

[13] Carol Gilligan's critique of the way women in the U.S. have historically been socialized to equate selflessness with goodness informs my thinking about self-fullness. Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), http://proxy.library.emory.edu/login?url=http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.32978.

the U.S., and, for many, communities in the countries from which circumstances required them to leave.[14]

In this dissertation, I explore the practices of belonging that I witness unfolding during my time spent with Lattice Ministries, its onsite partners, and its offsite partners or supporters—the practices that draw the *telos* of shared sufficiency closer and that shed light on what having enough means and requires. Drawing on over a year of participant observation, forty interviews, four focus groups, and eight readback sessions in which key interlocutors offered feedback on emerging themes, I identify the ways that Lattice Ministries and its nonprofit and faith community partners endeavor to shift the burden of belonging from the individual to the collective. I suggest that Lattice Ministries and its partners work to expand opportunities to belong against the backdrop of a society that would habituate us all to prioritize individualistic notions of sufficiency. Belonging, I argue, is made possible when we design for it and then choose to continuously practice recognizing, accompanying, turning towards one another across difference, and turning away from all forms of othering. I suggest that attending to Lattice Ministries and its partners sheds light on ways that faith communities can respond to the global crisis of forced migration faithfully and concretely by working to extend belonging in their neighborhoods and by actively participating in their formation into people who strive towards a *telos* of *shared* rather than *self* sufficiency.

Entering the Conversation

This research extends three interdisciplinary conversations. The first conversation pertains to migration experiences and life after migration—both for those who have been on the

[14] Sharon Welch's insights about the need to "find a larger self" are relevant here, a connection I explore in greater depth in chapter three. Sharon D. Welch, *A Feminist Ethic of Risk*, Revised edition (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 162.

move and for those who have long resided in the communities that receive them. The second conversation pertains to belonging: what it means, why it matters, how it can be harmful, and possible ways of both theorizing and practicing belonging to reduce its potential for harm. The third and final conversation pertains to the nature of practices and how they contribute to who we are becoming by shaping our dispositions and orienting us towards a particular *telos*.

Immigration

Within the fields of social and theological ethics, the need for more just immigration policies has long been a central topic of concern. Whether drawing on Catholic social teaching and narratives of migration,[15] philosophical ethics and case studies,[16] or political and historical analysis paired with scriptural interpretations,[17] these ethicists consistently name the sin inherent in current immigration policies in the U.S. and offer alternative norms by which we might construct a new system. While hospitality has been offered as a guiding ethical norm for immigration reform, many contemporary scholars suggest hospitality must either be radicalized (as is the case in Kristin Heyer's and Ilsup Ahn's work), or it must be replaced by other norms that more accurately convey U.S. complicity in causing migration (as is the case for scholars like Miguel de la Torre and Tisha Rajendra). These alternate norms include solidarity, humanity, responsibility, and justice. Another area of generative ethical reflection pertains to the experiences of refugees and immigrants following migration. Scholars working in this area draw on religious resources as well as case studies and ethnographic work to call for more robust

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[15] Kristin E. Heyer, *Kinship Across Borders: A Christian Ethic of Immigration*, Moral Traditions Series (Washington, D.C., Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2012), http://pid.emory.edu/d564x; David Hollenbach, *Humanity in Crisis: Ethical and Religious Response to Refugees*, Moral Traditions Series. (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2019).

[16] Ilsup Ahn, *Religious Ethics and Migration: Doing Justice to Undocumented Workers*, Routledge Studies in Religion 34 (New York: Routledge, 2013).

[17] Miguel A. De La Torre, *The U.S. Immigration Crisis: Toward an Ethics of Place*, Illustrated edition (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2016).

forms of solidarity with these communities. For example, research in this strand of the conversation highlights the need to learn from Sikh communities' practice of fearless hospitality,[18] to reflect on the Lord's Prayer and its invitation to develop our capacity to "hallow" the life of asylum seekers who have been excluded from political communities,[19] and to draw inspiration from the Eucharistic call to the solidarity modeled by Jesus.[20] Scholars also draw on Christian and Muslim teachings on bearing witness,[21] and they reflect on interfaith organizing efforts through the lens of the invocation in Galatians 2 to remember the poor.[22] My research extends both conversations. Just as U.S. immigration and asylum policies are unjust and require ethical interventions, so too is the case regarding the policies that shape life following resettlement. Moreover, just as we have much to learn about solidarity from refuge seekers, we can also learn about cultivating more expansive conditions of belonging and sufficiency from those who have created belonging anew for themselves and their communities here.

Practical theology as a field calls attention to the ethical and theological significance of the practices of faith communities and community organizations,[23] and it attends to the role of moral formation in contributing to individuals' and communities' ability to offer care across different lines of difference.[24] Specifically in relation to immigration, Susanna Snyder explores

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[18] Laura E. Alexander, "(The Image of) God in All of Us," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 47, no. 4 (2019): 653–78, https://doi.org/10.1111/jore.12285.
[19] Luke Bretherton, "The Duty of Care to Refugees, Christian Cosmopolitanism, and the Hallowing of Bare Life," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 19, no. 1 (2006): 39–61, https://doi.org/10.1177/0953946806062268.
[20] Daniel G. Groody, "Cup of Suffering, Chalice of Salvation: Refugees, Lampedusa, and the Eucharist," *Theological Studies* 78, no. 4 (December 1, 2017): 960–87, https://doi.org/10.1177/0040563917731745.
[21] Joshua Ralston, "Bearing Witness: Reframing Christian–Muslim Encounter in Light of the Refugee Crisis," *Theology Today (Ephrata, Pa.)* 74, no. 1 (2017): 22–35, https://doi.org/10.1177/0040573616689837.
[22] C. Melissa Snarr, "Remembering the Poor: Interfaith Collaboration, Neoliberalism, and an Anti-Imperial Gospel," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 37, no. 1 (2017): 25–44, https://doi.org/10.1353/sce.2017.0005.
[23] Mary McClintock Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption: Theology for a Worldly Church*, 1 edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, U.S.A., 2010); Rebecca F. Spurrier, *The Disabled Church: Human Difference and the Art of Communal Worship*, First edition. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019).
[24] Melinda A. McGarrah Sharp, *Misunderstanding Stories: Toward a Postcolonial Pastoral Theology* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2013); Melinda A. McGarrah Sharp, *Creating Resistances: Pastoral Care in a Postcolonial World* (Boston: Brill, 2020).

the work of churches and organizations responding to asylum seekers using ethnographic research in the U.K.[25] Contributors to *The Human Dilemma of Displacement: Towards a Practical Theology and Ecclesiology of Home* reflect theologically on the experiences of refuge seekers and the faith communities that are shaped by their participation in the South African context.[26] The Society for Intercultural Pastoral Care and Counseling's edited volume, *Where are We? Pastoral Environments and Care for Migrants*, foregrounds practices of interreligious care and activism occurring in diverse contexts.[27] My research extends such work to suggest that, just as people of faith working with refuge seekers might draw on and reconsider resources like the books of Ezra-Nehemiah and Ruth (as Susanna Snyder does to support her call for moving from an ecology of fear to one of faith), doctrines about the church (as do the authors of *The Human Dilemma of Displacement*), or resources for caring across different lines of difference found in Christianity (like the authors of *Where are We?*), so too might engaging practices of belonging shed new light on theological claims.

Finally, sociology as a discipline has long been interested in both the pathways by which individuals come to migrate and the processes that happen after migration—specifically, the mechanisms and outcomes of immigrant assimilation. Classic works in sociology explore trends related immigrants' education, income, marriage, and residential outcomes and investigate how and why they might differ from those of established Americans.[28] Another body of macro-level

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[25] Susanna Snyder, *Asylum-Seeking, Migration and Church*, 1st edition (Farmhan Surrey, England; Burlington, Vermont: Routledge, 2012).
[26] Alfred R. Brunsdon, *The Human Dilemma of Displacement: Towards a Practical Theology and Ecclesiology of Home* (AOSIS, 2020).
[27] Dominiek Lootens, *Where Are We? Pastoral Environments and Care for Migrants: Intercultural and Interreligious Perspectives*, ed. Daniel Schipani and Martin Walton (Düsseldorf, Germany: Society for Intercultural Pastoral Care and Counseling, 2018).
[28] Irene Bloemraad, *Becoming a Citizen: Incorporating Immigrants and Refugees in the United States and Canada* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Heba Gowayed, *Refuge : How the State Shapes Human Potential* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022); Richard D. Alba and Nancy Foner, *Strangers No More: Immigration and the Challenges of Integration in North America and Western Europe* (Princeton: University Press, 2015); John

sociological research focuses on integration, also referred to as incorporation. This work explores the extent to which immigrants are supported in or prohibited from participating in their new society by institutions and structures.[29] These scholars often highlight the structural barriers and facilitators of immigrants' adaptation to and participation in their communities. A smaller body of literature highlights the practices employed by individual immigrants to support the adjustment process. They call attention to the spatial strategies employed by immigrants to render their communities more familiar.[30]

In addition to these macro and micro level studies, another body of sociological research explores the nature of immigrant adaptation on a meso-level. These studies highlight the importance of local institutions, coethnic community organizations, and faith communities. They find that the availability and accessibility of "mainstream" institutions can support immigrants in accessing needed resources and building connections with established residents.[31] Immigrants also integrate into their communities through coethnic social networks and community organizations.[32] The benefits provided by coethnic groups are most pronounced in immigrant

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Mollenkopf and Manuel Pastor, eds., *Unsettled Americans: Metropolitan Context and Civic Leadership for Immigrant Integration* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016); Jennifer A. Jones, *The Browning of the New South* (Chicago: The University Of Chicago Press, 2019).

[29] Bloemraad, *Becoming a Citizen*; Alba and Foner, *Strangers No More*; Mollenkopf and Pastor, *Unsettled Americans*; Jones, *The Browning of the New South*.

[30] Paolo Boccagni, *Migration and the Search for Home: Mapping Domestic Space in Migrants' Everyday Lives*, Mobility & Politics. (New York, NY, U.S.A.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Paolo Boccagni and Jan Willem Duyvendak, "Homemaking in the Public. On the Scales and Stakes of Framing, Feeling, and Claiming Extra-domestic Space as 'Home,'" *Sociology Compass* 15, no. 6 (2021): n/a, https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12886; Kyohee Kim and Peer Smets, "Home Experiences and Homemaking Practices of Single Syrian Refugees in an Innovative Housing Project in Amsterdam," *Current Sociology* 68, no. 5 (September 2020): 607–27, https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392120927744; Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Manuel Pastor, *South Central Dreams: Finding Home and Building Community in South L.A.* (New York: NYU Press, 2021).

[31] Justin Peter Steil and Ion Bogdan Vasi, "The New Immigration Contestation: Social Movements and Local Immigration Policy Making in the United States, 2000–2011," *American Journal of Sociology* 119, no. 4 (January 1, 2014): 1104–55, https://doi.org/10.1086/675301.

[32] Kim Ebert and Dina G. Okamoto, "Social Citizenship, Integration and Collective Action: Immigrant Civic Engagement in the United States," *Social Forces* 91, no. 4 (2013): 1267–92, https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sot009; Mollenkopf and Pastor, *Unsettled Americans*.

communities that include a wide range of educational and income backgrounds.[33] Faith communities play an important role in this as well. For example, Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo's *God's Heart Has No Borders* demonstrates how religion can serve as an integration resource by providing immigrants with opportunities to build connections, cultivate hybrid cultural identities, and access community resources.[34] Research also reveals the protective nature of religion for refugees during and following resettlement,[35] as well as the challenge particular theological beliefs can pose for individuals working through trauma resulting from forced displacement.[36]

A final thread in this conversation explores established Americans' responses to the presence of immigrants and refugees in their communities. Tomás Jiménez identifies the myriad ways established Americans and immigrants mutually adapt both consciously and subconsciously.[37] Other scholars point to the reactive ways established residents respond to the arrival of new immigrant groups.[38] Studies demonstrate the negative impact of demographic distance (or the degree to which immigrants are seen as different),[39] the extent to which

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[33] Min Zhou and Roberto G. Gonzales, "Divergent Destinies: Children of Immigrants Growing Up in the United States," *Annual Review of Sociology* 45, no. 1 (July 30, 2019): 383–99, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-073018-022424; Chenoa A. Flippen and Dylan Farrell-Bryan, "New Destinations and the Changing Geography of Immigrant Incorporation," *Annual Review of Sociology* 47, no. 1 (July 31, 2021): 479–500, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-090320-100926; Alejandro Portes, "Migration and Social Change: Some Conceptual Reflections," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36, no. 10 (2010): 1537–63, https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2010.489370.

[34] Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *God's Heart Has No Borders: How Religious Activists Are Working for Immigrant Rights* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); See also Alba and Foner, *Strangers No More*.

[35] Pyong Gap Min and Sou Hyun Jang, "The Diversity of Asian Immigrants' Participation in Religious Institutions in the United States," *Sociology of Religion* 76, no. 3 (September 1, 2015): 253–74, https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/srv025; Stephen Wu et al., "Religion and Refugee Well-Being: The Importance of Inclusive Community," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 60, no. 2 (2021): 291–308, https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12702.

[36] Nicole Fox, "'God Must Have Been Sleeping': Faith as an Obstacle and a Resource for Rwandan Genocide Survivors in the United States," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 51, no. 1 (2012): 65–78, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2011.01624.x.

[37] Tomás R. Jiménez, *The Other Side of Assimilation: How Immigrants Are Changing American Life* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2017).

[38] Boccagni, *Migration and the Search for Home*.

[39] Mollenkopf and Pastor, *Unsettled Americans*.

immigrants are framed as a threat to one's way of life,[40] and the existence of local restrictive legislation on established Americans' reactions to newcomers.[41] Related studies highlight the ways that others can be mobilized to act on behalf of immigrants. These demonstrate how immigrant residents who are more established can raise support for newcomers,[42] everyday interactions between U.S.-born Americans and immigrants can disrupt stereotypes, [43] and the combination of well-resourced institutions with low levels of inequality can yield more favorable and welcoming responses.[44] Most of these studies do not focus on refugees specifically, though there are notable exceptions. For example, Alastair Ager and Alison Strang's research yielded a multifaceted conceptualization of refugee integration. In their framework, rights and citizenship form the essential foundation that is then built on as former refuge seekers learn the language, build social ties, secure long-term housing, and pursue educational opportunities.[45] Doris Provine and Paul Lewis's study compares the contrasting reception of refugees and undocumented immigrants in Phoenix, Arizona and shows the difference federal support of newcomers can make.[46] Rawan Arar and David Scott FitzGerald employ a systems approach to displacement and resettlement to reveal that "most major refugee admissions programs were opposed by the public" in the U.S. They argue that, to enhance support for refugees, established Americans must

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[40] Boccagni and Duyvendak, "Homemaking in the Public. On the Scales and Stakes of Framing, Feeling, and Claiming Extra-domestic Space as 'Home.'"
[41] Flippen and Farrell-Bryan, "New Destinations and the Changing Geography of Immigrant Incorporation."
[42] Kraig Beyerlein and Mark Chaves, "The Political Mobilization of America's Congregations," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 59, no. 4 (2020): 663–74, https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12680.
[43] Jiménez, *The Other Side of Assimilation*.
[44] Alba and Foner, *Strangers No More*.
[45] Alastair Ager and Alison Strang, "Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 21, no. 2 (June 1, 2008): 166–91, https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fen016; Alison Strang and Alastair Ager, "Refugee Integration: Emerging Trends and Remaining Agendas," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23, no. 4 (December 2010): 589–607, https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feq046; Jini E Puma, Gary Lichtenstein, and Paul Stein, "The RISE Survey: Developing and Implementing a Valid and Reliable Quantitative Measure of Refugee Integration in the United States," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 31, no. 4 (December 2018): 605–25, https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fex047.
[46] Doris Marie Provine and Paul G Lewis, "Chill Winds in the Valley of the Sun: Immigrant Integration in the Phoenix Region," in *Unsettled Americans: Metropolitan Context and Civic Leadership for Immigrant Integration*, ed. John Mollenkopf and Manuel Pastor (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), 189–222.

reckon with the reality that "the refugee system is never static. Today's hosts can become tomorrow's refugees."[47] Anthropologist Catherine Besteman's study of Somali Bantu refuge seekers' experiences in Lewiston, Maine highlights how local governments' and institutions' responses range from xenophobia to coalition building and advocacy.[48] My research extends these conversations by showing how shared practices of belonging can provide refuge seekers and long-time U.S. residents active ways to deepen their connections to the changing communities in which they find themselves.

Belonging

This research also enters longstanding conversations about belonging. Belonging, according to Nichole Argo and Hammad Sheikh, the researchers of the Belonging Barometer study, "is about the quality of fit between oneself and a setting." They continue:

> When one belongs, they feel emotionally connected, welcomed, included, and satisfied in their relationships. They know that they are valued for who they are as well as for their contributions, can bring their whole and authentic self to the table, and are comfortable expressing their thoughts and opinions regardless as to whether they diverge from dominant perspectives. In addition, they understand how things work within a given setting, feel treated equally, and perceive that they are able to influence decisions.[49]

Argo and Sheikh's work reveals that belonging is both an internal feeling and a reflection of external conditions. Susie Wise, a design thinker and practitioner whose insights inform chapter one, likewise offers a multidimensional definition of the concept. She suggests, "*Belonging* is being accepted and invited to participate; being part of something and having the opportunity to show up as yourself. More than that, it means being able to raise issues and confront harsh truths

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[47] Arar and FitzGerald, *The Refugee System*, 244, 248.
[48] Catherine Lowe Besteman, *Making Refuge: Somali Bantu Refugees and Lewiston, Maine* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).
[49] Nichole Argo and Hammad Sheikh, "The Belonging Barometer: The State of Belonging in America" (Over Zero and American Immigration Council, 2023), v, https://www.projectoverzero.org/media-and-publications/belongingbarometer.

as a full member of the community."[50] While I started not with the literature's definition of belonging but, rather, with my interlocutors' (like those offered by Wilo and Zari at the opening of this chapter), I found a similar emphasis on the many dimensions of belonging as it pertains to other people, spaces, institutions, and communities while doing this research. Accordingly, when I refer to belonging, I mean to describe a state of being in which individuals know their presence and perspective matter, they experience opportunities to give and receive care, and they feel safe enough to risk vulnerability and exercise agency.

Both my research partners and the literature affirm that belonging matters. As I explore throughout the dissertation, belonging holds positive implications for our health, our quality of life, our work performance, and our civic participation.[51] Experiencing belonging in contexts of diversity is particularly good for us.[52] Belonging, however, is not an unequivocal or unambiguous good. Sociologists, geographers, historians of religion, and forced migration scholars alike highlight the reality that belonging is inherently political.[53] It cannot exist without exclusion. Other bodies of scholarship highlight the connections between belonging, practice, place, and affect. In relation to practice, sociological research suggests that belonging is

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[50] Susie Wise, *Design for Belonging: How to Build Inclusion and Collaboration in Your Communities* (Ten Speed Press, 2022), 3.
[51] Argo and Sheikh, "The Belonging Barometer."
[52] Argo and Sheikh, 50.
[53] Nira Yuval-Davis, *The Politics of Belonging: Intersectional Contestations*, 1st edition (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2011); Marco Antonsich, "Searching for Belonging – An Analytical Framework," *Geography Compass* 4, no. 6 (2010): 644–59, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2009.00317.x; Tovi Fenster, "The Right to the Gendered City: Different Formations of Belonging in Everyday Life," *Journal of Gender Studies*, November 1, 2005, https://doi.org/10.1080/09589230500264109; Daniel Trudeau, "Politics of Belonging in the Construction of Landscapes: Place-Making, Boundary-Drawing and Exclusion," *Cultural Geographies* 13, no. 3 (2006): 421–43; R. Scott Hanson and Martin E. Marty, *City of Gods: Religious Freedom, Immigration, and Pluralism in Flushing, Queens* (New York: Empire State Editions, 2016); Caroline Nagel, "Rethinking Geographies of Assimilation," *Professional Geographer* 61, no. 3 (January 1, 2009): 400–407; Mette Strømsø, "'All People Living in Norway Could Become Norwegian': How Ordinary People Blur the Boundaries of Nationhood," *Ethnicities* 19, no. 6 (2019): 1138–57; N. Binaisa, "African Migrants Negotiate 'home' and 'Belonging,'" 2011, https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid%3A18fe4074-2e05-4351-a7f6-f72fd24a57bc; René Girard and Rob Grayson, "Belonging," *Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture* 23, no. 1 (2016): 1–12, https://doi.org/10.14321/contagion.23.1.0001.

something that must be continuously negotiated; it is not a static quality or state of being.[54] Numerous scholars explore the importance of practices that promote a sense of agency or control for individuals belonging to communities that have been historically marginalized; they show how these practices can cultivate a sense of belonging, albeit one that is often conditional or transient.[55] For example, Rachelle Green investigates practices of "critical carceral creativity" that create "a space of being and belonging" within a theological education program in prison.[56] Scholars also point to the practices of nations that seek to promote experiences of national belonging on both conscious and subconscious levels.[57] In relation to place, scholars with backgrounds ranging from social and cultural geography to theology note that practices of belonging can serve to construct place in particular ways.[58] For example, Jennifer Ayres's work unearths practices of faith communities that contribute to an orientation of *inhabitance* that "is attentive to place," "embraces vulnerability," and "cultivates community."[59]

In regard to the ways that belonging can be weaponized, research shows how the affective dimension of belonging can work hand in hand with its political nature.[60] For example,

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[54] Vikki Bell, *Performativity and Belonging*, Theory, Culture & Society. (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1999), 3, 8, http://proxy.library.emory.edu/login?url=http://sk.sagepub.com/books/performativity-and-belonging; David Jacobson, *Place and Belonging in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 186.

[55] Fenster, "The Right to the Gendered City"; bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1999); Nancy Lynne Westfield, *Dear Sisters: A Womanist Practice of Hospitality* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2001).

[56] Rachelle Green, "Carve Out Living Space: Creativity, Counter-Environments, and the Formation of Salvific Community in Person," *Practical Matters: A Journal of Religious Practices and Practical Theology*, no. 14 (2021): 14.

[57] Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 1st edition (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1995); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised edition (London New York: Verso, 2016).

[58] Trudeau, "Politics of Belonging in the Construction of Landscapes"; Binaisa, "African Migrants Negotiate 'home' and 'Belonging'"; Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (Yale University Press, 2010), https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1np8j2.

[59] Jennifer R. Ayres, *Inhabitance: Ecological Religious Education* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2019), 81, 82, 83.

[60] Antonsich, "Searching for Belonging – An Analytical Framework"; Fenster, "The Right to the Gendered City"; Binaisa, "African Migrants Negotiate 'home' and 'Belonging'"; Elspeth Probyn, *Outside Belongings* (New York London: Routledge, 1996); Aimee Carrillo Rowe, "Be Longing: Toward a Feminist Politics of Relation," *NWSA*

Sara Ahmed notes that affect can be that which "gives us a dwelling place" or that which fixes judgement and "sticky associations" on others in ways that repel and isolate.[61] Theologian Willie James Jennings makes the case that the "social imagination" of Christianity has been distorted by whiteness and colonizing impulses in ways that yield violent projects of belonging.[62] Similarly, ethicist Laura Stivers shows how desire for belonging can be exploited to naturalize the marginalization of particular groups.[63]

A final body of related scholarship explores the possibility of "playing with" the concept and "logic of belonging."[64] For example, María Lugones proposes the "practice of hanging out" as a form of "spatial politics that emphasize difference" and that represent a temporary, potentially less problematic alternative to belonging.[65] Mariana Ortega calls for a "decentered praxis of home-making and belonging" in her conceptualization of "hometactics."[66] Aimee Carrillo Rowe, in turn, develops a concept of differential belonging in response to her concern that singular belonging harmfully severs our affective ties to those who we deem to be "different." This form of belonging requires "agency and accountability" to move between "resistive or transformative modes of belonging."[67]

Journal 17, no. 2 (2005): 15–46; Keri Day, *Religious Resistance to Neoliberalism: Womanist and Black Feminist Perspectives* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/emory/detail.action?docID=4716509.

[61] Sara Ahmed, "Collective Feelings: Or, the Impressions Left by Others," *Theory, Culture & Society* 21, no. 2 (2004): 27, 33, https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276404042133.

[62] Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*, 228, 239, 294.

[63] Laura Stivers, "A Sense of Place in a Globalized World: Place-Based Organizing for Corporate Accountability," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 27, no. 1 (2007): 95.

[64] Adrian Favell, "To Belong or Not to Belong: The Postnational Question," in *The Politics of Belonging: Migrants and Minorities in Contemporary Europe*, ed. Andrew Geddes and Adrian Favell, Contemporary Trends in European Social Sciences (Aldershot, Hants, England; Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate, 1999), 220.

[65] María Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 168, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/emory/detail.action?docID=1352201.

[66] Mariana Ortega, *In-between: Latina Feminist Phenomenology, Multiplicity, and the Self*, SUNY Series, Philosophy and Race. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016), 181.

[67] Aimee Carrillo Rowe, "Be Longing: Toward a Feminist Politics of Relation," *NWSA Journal* 17, no. 2 (2005): 38, 32, https://doi.org/10.1353/nwsa.2005.0043.

My research extends this conversation by foregrounding questions about how opportunities to belong are being expanded in a community with high levels of demographic distance resulting from refugee resettlement. While communitarians within Christian ethics have long pointed to the significance of practices within homogenous faith-based communities,[68] this dissertation investigates the practices of communities whose members diverge across numerous ascriptive identity markers. I seek to offer thick descriptions of how established Americans in general and people of faith specifically can share the work of growing belonging with refuge seekers in their communities. I offer ethical analysis and theological reflection on the significance of these belonging practices and the way they can work to move us towards richer, more expansive definitions of what it means to experience sufficiency.

Practices and Moral Formation

As this is a work about practices of belonging, it is important, finally, to situate my research in ongoing conversations about practices. Within the discipline of religion, it is hard to speak about practices without referring to Pierre Bourdieu and Alasdair MacIntyre. In Bourdieu's 1977 classic, *Outline of a Theory of Practice,* the French sociologist advances the concept of practice to explicate the way individuals both have a degree of agency and are at the same time constrained by the "structure" imposed by society. Bourdieu works with the guiding metaphor of a game to delineate the distinguishing characteristics of practice. Within a game, there are certain rules (or social norms) to which players submit as a condition to play. As they develop excellence in playing the game, those rules become part of players' *habitus*. Bourdieu defines

[68] For example, see Stanley Hauerwas, "Bearing Reality: A Christian Meditation," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 33, no. 1 (2013): 3–20; for a critique of this, see Elizabeth M. Bounds, *Coming Together/Coming Apart: Religion, Community, and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 1997); and Miguel A. De La Torre, "Stanley Hauerwas on Church," in *Beyond the Pale: Reading Ethics from the Margins*, ed. Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas and Miguel A. De La Torre (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 217–24.

habitus as "the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations."[69] Engaging practices related to the game forms the player in a particular kind of *habitus,* and that habituation enables the player to engage those practices without being fully conscious of them. Beyond the hypothetical world of the game, we engage in practices on a regular basis in our everyday lives as we learn to cook in a particular way, socialize in a new community, or develop a novel skill. Each of these kinds of ordinary practices "installs" in us a habituation that works on our minds, our bodies, our ways of moving through the world. For example, as I practice improvisational comedy or intercultural communication, I naturally find myself shifting into different bodily postures and mindsets without making conscious decisions to do so.

Alasdair MacIntyre builds on Bourdieu's work and draws it into the field of ethics. MacIntyre defines a practice as "any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended."[70] For MacIntyre, it is through our conscious practices that we are formed or malformed. Habituation and formation occur when we commit ourselves to the internal rather than external goods of a practice. He illustrates this through the classic example of a child who initially learns to play chess for a reward of candy but later comes to love the game for its own sake.[71] For MacIntyre, it is important that practices are located within and evaluated by a community's tradition. "A practice," he insists, "involves standards of excellence and obedience

[69] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 78.
[70] Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 187.
[71] MacIntyre, 188.

to rules as well as the achievement of goods."[72] These standards are only legible in the context of a tradition, be it religious, philosophical, cultural, or legal.[73]

Both Bourdieu's and MacIntyre's perspectives provide relevant insight into the work that follows. Bourdieu's interest in the way practices become unconscious through the process of habituation into certain social norms illuminates how the U.S.'s valorization of self-sufficiency becomes formative for so many without our conscious choosing of self-sufficiency as a personal value. By participating in U.S. institutions and society, we are formed into a *habitus* of individualism and oriented towards a *telos* of self-sufficiency. In turn, MacIntyre's more conscious view of practice and the connections he draws between practice, virtue, and tradition shed light on the reality that we can choose otherwise: we can choose to mindfully, intentionally engage in practices of belonging within a community that evaluates the degree to which our practices are lifegiving or harmful. We can choose to apprentice ourselves to communities developing a countercultural tradition that upholds *shared* rather than *self* sufficiency as a *telos* worthy of our practices.

Elaine Graham's work on practice is also relevant here. Graham advances a "model of pastoral theology as *critical theology of Christian practice*" and argues that faith communities' practices are "bearers of ultimate truth-claims."[74] Rather than seeing practice as "the application of theological understanding," Graham suggests that practice might in fact be the "foundation" of

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[72] MacIntyre, 190.

[73] My practice of improvisational comedy illuminates how tradition provides both a community from which to learn and metrics of evaluation. Having trained at Dad's Garage through the theater's class system, the way I now practice improv can be understood and evaluated in a meaningful sense by this community. Were I to start practicing improv in a new context, I would need to retrain. While Dad's Garage teaches a play- and listening-based approach, other improv traditions stress starting with foundational principles like game, framing, and justification. This requires a different kind of habituation.

[74] Elaine L. Graham, *Transforming Practice: Pastoral Theology in an Age of Uncertainty* (London; New York: Mowbray, 1996), 3, 97.

Christianity itself.[75] For Graham, good pastoral theology is that which contributes to and is shaped by transformed practice, such that the practices of a community can act as authentic bearers of hope and obligation and can disclose something true about the nature of God. I suggest that my research partners are doing theological work both when they intentionally engage practices of belonging and as they are subconsciously formed into a *habitus* and oriented towards a *telos* of shared sufficiency over time. While U.S. culture is the structure forming established Americans and newly arrived refuge seekers into dispositions of individualism, practices of belonging push against this *habitus* and raise the possibility of something new. In turn, the "ultimate truth-claims" that practices of belonging disclose pertain to both the nature of humans, as fundamentally interdependent, and of the Divine, who chose to belong to all created beings through the Incarnation.[76] If, as Graham suggests, "engagement in new practices gives rise to new knowledge," [77] practicing recognizing, accompanying, and turning births knowledge we need about living well in the U.S. today. These practices have the power not only to contribute to the formation of individuals who first consciously engage them and then become increasingly habituated to and by them. Rather, they can also slowly contribute to the development of a countercultural tradition and community in which shared sufficiency is valued as a *telos* and to which community members from around the world can apprentice in new ways of being.

Finally, it must be noted that scholars of practice increasingly call attention to the ways that practices can be deployed to exclude people who we perceive as being not like us, to cover up histories of violent exclusion, and to reinforce in-group dynamics. For example, these

[75] Graham, 111.
[76] Graham, 97.
[77] Graham, 99.

scholars show how practices like baptism and the Eucharist have served to assimilate "outsiders" and paper over the racist legacies of religious communities.[78] Practices of belonging carry potential for harm, particularly if used in ways that create new versions of "us" and "them" rather than serving to unsettle and expand boundaries of belonging across difference. I endeavor to attend to the "shadow side" of practices in the "limitations" sections of each subsequent chapter.

Contributing to This Interdisciplinary Conversation

In sum, while informed by conversations in both the humanities and social sciences, my primary contribution is to the field of Christian ethics. My contribution to Christian ethics is two-fold: first, this work critically attends to the agency of those who came to this country in search of refuge. In my research, it is not just the established Americans who do the work of welcome and care. Rather, the leadership and belonging-supportive labor of individuals who formerly came to this country in search of refuge is front and center. Aside from Susanna Snyder's important volume in practical theology, *Asylum-Seeking, Migration and Church*,[79] and article-length treatments of the topic like Laura Alexander's "(The Image of) God in All of Us" and Melissa Snarr's "Remembering the Poor,"[80] there is a dearth of work in Christian ethics that centers the agency of refugees. Second, this dissertation provides an ethnographically informed treatment of belonging that supplements the more theoretical work of Christian ethicists like Willie James Jennings and Keri Day. For example, Jennings writes of the possibility of "a people

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[78] Brandy Daniels, "Is There No Gomorrah? Christian Ethics, Identity, and the Turn to Ecclesial Practices:," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 39, no. 2 (November 25, 2019): 287–302; Katie M. Grimes, "Breaking the Body of Christ: The Sacraments of Initiation in a Habitat of White Supremacy," *Political Theology* 18, no. 1 (2017): 22–43, https://doi.org/10.1179/1743171915Y.0000000005; Lauren F. Winner, *The Dangers of Christian Practice: On Wayward Gifts, Characteristic Damage, and Sin* (New Haven: Yale University press, 2018), https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/emory/detail.action?docID=5535508.

[79] Snyder, *Asylum-Seeking, Migration and Church*.

[80] Alexander, "(The Image of) God in All of Us"; Snarr, "Remembering the Poor."

defined by their cultural differences yet who…enfold the old cultural logics and practices inside the new ones of others and they enfold the cultural logics and practices of others inside their own." I suggest my work offers a richly textured image of what this "mutual enfolding" looks and feels like.[81] Closely related, this research contributes to the interdisciplinary conversation about belonging led by the Othering & Belonging Institute among others and invites that conversation to engage more deeply with the resources of Christian ethics.

While my work primarily contributes to Christian ethics, this dissertation secondarily contributes to practical theology and the social sciences. To the conversation about practices, my research reveals the significance of practice in reorienting individuals and communities towards a new *telos*. In the conclusion, I reflect on the futility of willing ourselves towards a new *telos* when we have been deeply formed in another one, and the dissertation in its entirety offers concrete examples of what formation-in-process looks like. Finally, scholars and practitioners alike are sounding the alarm about the crises of xenophobia and discrimination as well as of loneliness and isolation. As historian Erika Lee suggests, xenophobia is one of the U.S.'s most urgent challenges. Addressing this issue requires immediate attention and labor.[82] Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, in turn, warns of the direct connection between loneliness and heightened "risk for premature death."[83] My dissertation offers an image of what it looks like to respond to both crises and, amid challenges and limitations, to try to belong together.

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[81] Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*, 273.
[82] Erika Lee, *America for Americans: A History of Xenophobia in the United States*, First edition. (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2019), 338.
[83] Vivek Murthy, "Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community," 2022, 8.

Methods and Methodology

Guiding Questions

When I first began this research, the concept I hoped to explore was what I thought of as "belonging *in the meantime*." I was drawn to the idea that belonging might insulate people, holding them over and providing a protective cushion in the absence of structural change. Accordingly, my primary descriptive question was, "How do organizations and communities seek to promote belonging in the meantime?" I also hoped to investigate impact, asking "How do different approaches to creating belonging impact communities?" My normative question starting out was, "What do these communities teach us about living in the meantime?" As I moved into participant observation, however, the "meantime" framing quickly fell away. While it resonated with my own sensibilities about the importance of both working towards structural change and securing quality of life in the meantime, I immediately found that this framing did not do much analytically to speak to my research partners' current experiences. By and large, people do not conceive of themselves as living in the "meantime," but, rather, in a relentlessly demanding present.

What did surface, as noted above, was an interest in the *telos* of belonging, the end or ideal towards which belonging might move us. This interest emerged particularly among my interlocutors who first came to the U.S. as refugees and immigrants. While they were quick to affirm belonging as essential to their wellbeing and to the meaning of a good life, they suggested that the guiding vision of expanding opportunities to belong extends beyond a sense of connection to their new communities and to U.S. residents of different backgrounds. Rather, the *telos* of belonging proved to be a vision of shared sufficiency, a state of abundance and of having enough that is shared collectively beyond the nuclear family. Over time, my descriptive question evolved to read as follows: "How are these groups comprised of individuals who came to the

U.S. as refugees or immigrants and those whose families have resided in the U.S. for three or more generations working to expand opportunities to belong? What practices are they engaging?" My normative question took the form of, "What is the ethical significance of these practices of belonging?" Finally, I also sought to keep my eyes and ears open to the theological significance of these practices for my research partners to glean what they might have to share with communities of faith.

Methods

My research design incorporated methods from social and theological ethics, practical theology, and the social sciences. Data collection and data analysis proceeded simultaneously during the fifteen-month period in which most of my research took place. From August of 2022 to December of 2023, I engaged in participant observation on 106 occasions for an average of two hours. Following each observation, I wrote fieldnotes as soon as I could after leaving the site. In my fieldnotes, I recorded a chronological log of what I had experienced and reflexivity notes that captured how my relationships and moments of connection and disconnection might be shaping my interpretation of events. From there, I responded to a series of analytic prompts, including questions about anything surprising or puzzling and identifying what my observations might be a "case" or example of. Finally, I responded to theological prompts, including questions like "What does this say to people of faith?" and "What might this say about God?"[84]

From November of 2022 to October of 2023, I interviewed a total of 40 individuals, conducted four focus groups, and led eight readback sessions to solicit feedback from key interlocutors on my emerging research themes. Participants in my research interviews and focus groups came from sixteen countries in addition to the U.S.: Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burma, the

[84] See Appendix E for my fieldnote template.

Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Iraq, Jamaica, Kenya, Pakistan, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, and Scotland. My interviews typically took sixty to eighty minutes, while focus groups averaged two hours and fifteen minutes. During interviews, I worked through a series of questions that started with basics pertaining to how the individual became connected to Lattice Ministries and their role in relation to the community hub. From there, we moved into discussions about what it means to live a good life in the U.S. I would prompt my research partners to share three essentials for living a good life here and then invite them to reflect on how (if at all) belonging fits into that vision, what belonging means, what makes it possible for them and others to experience it, and what gets in the way. Finally, we closed with conversation about the impact of organizations like Lattice Ministries, ABC, and Kuumba on belonging and on any experiences they had on campus of the Divine or the holy that they were willing to share.[85] Following each interview, I would record a memo that followed the structure of my fieldnotes detailed above: describing what happened, considering my positionality and relationships, and recording anything I was struck by conceptually or theologically.

I facilitated four focus groups with community members of ABC, Kuumba, Lattice Ministries onsite partners, and Grace Presbyterian Church respectively. To open these conversations, I invited participants to spend the first ten minutes drawing. They responded to a series of prompts pertaining to what a good life in the U.S. looks like to them before taking turns sharing their images with one another. From there, we discussed the relationship of belonging to those images, the meaning of belonging, and the role of the organizations they were connected to in relation to belonging.[86] I recorded a focus group memo following the completion of each focus group.

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[85] See Appendix F for my interview guide.
[86] See Appendix G for my focus group guide.

In the final months of research, I facilitated eight readback sessions with key interlocutors connected to Lattice Ministries, Kuumba, Mulunda Worshipping Community, and ABC. In these conversations, which lasted between an hour and an hour and a half, I shared a series of one-page summaries of the themes that had surfaced throughout the ongoing data collection and data analysis processes and asked them to respond. As we moved from page to page, I invited research partners to name what resonated, what felt off, what might be missing, and any thoughts or questions that were coming to them.[87] I then recorded brief memos after the conversations that described our interactions and flagged the ways that their feedback might hone my analysis. It was during this process that a critique of self-sufficiency and a vision of shared sufficiency began to emerge alongside greater clarity on the nature of design for belonging and the practices of recognition, accompaniment, and turning.[88]

Throughout the process of data collection, data analysis unfolded not only in the form of copious fieldnotes and interview logs (totaling 328 and 681 single-spaced pages in turn), but also through coding in the qualitative coding software MAXQDA. Following Nicole Deterding and Mary Waters' "flexible coding" process, during the early phases of data collection I used my interview protocols and the initial themes that surfaced during observations as "index codes" that served to break my data into manageable subsets. I wrote memos throughout the coding process to capture emerging questions and patterns. I then used the process of abductive analysis to develop analytic codes that captured emerging themes and hunches and applied these to the most relevant portions of the data.[89]

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[87] See Appendix H for the handouts I used during the readback sessions.
[88] See Appendix D for a visual overview of these principles and practices.
[89] Nicole M. Deterding and Mary C. Waters, "Flexible Coding of In-Depth Interviews: A Twenty-First-Century Approach," *Sociological Methods & Research*, 2018, 4912411879937-, https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124118799377.

Abductive analysis offers a pragmatist, "middle ground" alternative to both grounded theory (which claims to be entirely inductive) and extended case methods (which are heavily theory-driven). Abductive analysis requires the researcher to simultaneously immerse oneself in research contexts and relevant literature to identify surprising phenomena that the literature cannot fully explain.[90] Once a surprising phenomenon has been identified, the researcher adopting an abductive approach then uses variation to understand and theorize the dynamic in question.[91] The overall "surprising phenomenon" that guided my initial data collection pertained to the fact that, though the literature points to belonging as something that, for refugees and immigrants is (a) achieved through individual labor, as newcomers work to adapt to their new country and (b) most likely to occur in the homogenous spaces, say, of co-ethnic organizations and immigrant faith communities,[92] in the organizations on Lattice Ministries' campus, belonging is picked up as a collective endeavor by community members with a high degree of demographic difference. What later emerged as surprising was my research partners' lived resistance to self-sufficiency and the overarching *telos* of shared sufficiency that guided their practices. Abductive analysis prompted me to inquire of my data, "What is this a case of?" and enabled me to surface design, recognition, accompaniment, and turning as distinct mechanisms for extending opportunities to belong.

Finally, analysis also unfolded in a spiritual register. I was deeply struck by the question posed by Eileen Campbell-Reed and Christian Scharen in their article "Ethnography on Holy

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[90] Iddo Tavory and Stefan Timmermans, *Abductive Analysis: Theorizing Qualitative Research* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), 19.
[91] Tavory and Timmermans, 67.
[92] See, for example, Richard D. Alba and Victor Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003); Zhou and Gonzales, "Divergent Destinies."

Ground": "What research methods allow 'descriptive theology' to be fully theological?"[93] Arguing that "ethnographic interviewing is practical theological work," they present a number of practices that they introduce when jointly facilitating focus groups to "refashion ethnographic methods as practical theological and spiritual practice."[94] This not only guided my research methods—inspiring me to always bring fresh flowers and homemade baked goods to focus groups and interviews that took place inside of people's homes as an act of reciprocal hospitality—but also to practice reading my fieldnotes and interview transcripts as a form of *lectio Divina*. For example, upon the application of index codes to an interview transcript, I then played Taizé music while reading over the transcript once more. Silent retreats also shaped my data analysis throughout the research project, as these times of solitude and distance from the pressures of everyday life helped me attend first to the importance of design and the practices of recognition, accompaniment, and turning, and, later, to the critique of self-sufficiency that these practices carry.[95]

Methodological Commitments

My methodology is shaped by several commitments. First, I seek to do research in an anticolonial way that attends to the insights offered by postcolonial, feminist, womanist, and *mujerista* perspectives about the ongoing relevance of attending to power dynamics throughout the research initiative and of centering marginalized voices not only during data collection but

[93] Eileen R. Campbell-Reed and Christian Scharen, "Ethnography on Holy Ground: How Qualitative Interviewing Is Practical Theological Work," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 17, no. 2 (2013): 237, https://doi.org/10.1515/ijpt-2013-0015.
[94] Campbell-Reed and Scharen, 232, 255.
[95] The edited volume *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Theology and Qualitative Theology* was published just as I was beginning my research and served as an ongoing source of guidance on how to practice social scientific and theological methods simultaneously. Pete Ward and Knut Tveitereid, eds., *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Theology and Qualitative Research*, Wiley Blackwell Companions to Religion (Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell, 2022).

also throughout the data analysis process.[96] Dána-Ain Davis and Christa Craven's work on the possibilities of feminist ethnography that matters to and is shaped by local communities represented a gold standard for me and informed my decision to incorporate readbacks into my research process.[97] The edited volume *Qualitative Inquiry and Social Justice: Toward a Politics of Hope* inspired me to think critically about the benchmarks of quality for my work. The authors challenge positivist "objective" standards for evaluating research.[98] The contributors to this volume collectively assert that research in the twenty-first century should instead be judged by its ability to promote social justice and contribute to "human discourses that create sacred and spiritual spaces for persons and their moral communities."[99] Likewise, Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's work pushed me to reflect critically on my methods and analysis throughout the process. They challenge researchers to resist the historical "fixation" on "eliciting pain stories from communities that are not White, not wealthy, and not straight" and to instead practice what they call "desire-centered research."[100] Of the latter, they suggest that "desire-centered research does not deny the experience of tragedy, trauma, and pain, but positions the knowing derived from such experiences as wise."[101] Together, these scholars helped me to practice critical reflexivity

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[96] Emmanuel Y. Lartey, *Postcolonializing God: New Perspectives on Pastoral and Practical Theology* (London, England ; Norwich, England: SCM Press, 2013), https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/emory/detail.action?docID=3306226; Pui Lan Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005); Welch, *A Feminist Ethic of Risk*; Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, Revised 10th anniversary edition.. (New York: Routledge, 2000), http://www.emory.eblib.com/EBLWeb/patron/?target=patron&extendedid=P%5F178421%5F0&userid=%5Eu; Katie G. Cannon, *Katie's Canon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community* (New York: Continuum, 1995); Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *En La Lucha in the Struggle: Elaborating a Mujerista Theology*, 10th anniversary edition. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004).

[97] Dána-Ain Davis and Christa Craven, *Feminist Ethnography: Thinking through Methodologies, Challenges, and Possibilities* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2016), 114.

[98] Norman K. Denzin and Michael D. Giardina, "Introduction," in *Qualitative Inquiry and Social Justice toward a Politics of Hope* (Walnut Creek, Calif.: Left Coast Press, 2009), 36, 29.

[99] Denzin and Giardina, 29, 41.

[100] Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "R-Words: Refusing Research," in *Humanizing Research: Decolonizing Qualitative Inquiry with Youth and Communities*, 2014, 227.

[101] Tuck and Yang, 231.

about my positionality as a White woman born in this country and to navigate power in relational, life-giving ways. My commitment to practicing anticolonial research pushed me to make the process as participatory and collaborative as I could, to resist extracting communal knowledge, and to hold myself accountable to finding ways to contribute to the wellbeing of the community by following questions the community itself is interested in and exploring a variety of ways of sharing my findings.

Second, my methodology is shaped by a commitment to working interdisciplinarily. As a Christian social ethicist, I believe that my research is incomplete without the resources and insights offered by the social sciences and theology, as well as by philosophical and theological ethics. Inspired by Dustin Benac's essay in the *Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Theology and Qualitative Research*,[102] which proposes the selection of a metaphor to guide interdisciplinary work, I worked with the metaphor of a kaleidoscope to help me sift through my questions and my data using different disciplinary perspectives. While the same colorful materials are at play in the "kaleidoscope" of my site whether I approach them through the lens of ethics, practical theology, or sociology, what appears as the pattern's center shifts with the turn of my hands. Through the sociological view of the scope, "how" inquiries come into view: How are opportunities to belong expanded? How do groups and organizations shift the work of belonging from an individual burden to something collective? The ethical turn of the kaleidoscope invites me to ask: What norms are at play in this work of extending belonging? What critiques and constructive proposals can we derive from studying groups seeking to cultivate belonging in this context? Finally, turning the kaleidoscope to the practical theological lens, I ask: What practices

[102] Dustin Benac, "The Craft of Theology and Qualitative Research," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Theology and Qualitative Research*, ed. Pete Ward and Knut Tveitereid, Wiley Blackwell Companions to Religion (Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell, 2022), 27–36.

are being engaged in this work of growing belonging, and what do they tell us of the Divine? What commitments do they challenge us to make? This commitment to interdisciplinarity also meant engaging spiritual practices as part of my data collection and analysis phases as noted above.

Third and finally, my research is guided by an epistemology of friendship. I believe that what I know in the deepest sense emerges through friendships of trust and accountability. As such, it was my friendships with women like Enatye at ABC and Durga at Kuumba that served as a north star throughout the research process. As I facilitated research interviews and focus groups, I sought to honor these growing friendships and invited my interlocutors to engage in narrative practices that were meaningful to them. My hope in creating time for my research partners to reflect without distraction and to be listened to intently was that these conversations might in some small way affirm their agency and their sense of belonging in the community while also, perhaps, lifting up a perspective that revealed something true about themselves or the organization they support that they might not have reflected on before. I aspired to enact Pierre Bourdieu's insight that research practices like interviews can be "a sort of *intellectual love*" in that they offer "an exceptional opportunity…[for research partners] to testify, to make themselves heard, to transfer their experience from the private to the public sphere."[103] While I read Paul Stoller's *Wisdom from the Edge* after completing my research, I found in it a helpful articulation of what I have intuited throughout my research experiences for years. Stoller suggests that ethnographic work that speaks to readers emerges from the sharing of "stories gleaned from slowly developed friendships that are full of love and loss." It is my sincere hope

[103] Pierre Bourdieu, "Understanding," *Theory, Culture & Society* 13, no. 2 (May 1, 1996): 24, https://doi.org/10.1177/026327696013002002.

that the pages that follow reflect his insistence on portraying research partners with dignity and vulnerability.[104]

Throughout this dissertation, I foreground the voices and practices of my research partners as an intentional expression of these methodological commitments. These individuals and the community groups and organizations their labor makes possible have been doing ethically, theologically, and theoretically significant work for years—long before I entered the scene with my academic lenses and research protocols. Throughout the data collection, analysis, and writing phases of the research process, I have sought to honor this reality by working with them as research *partners* rather than *subjects*.

I understand the descriptive portions of the chapters that follow to be normative in three critical ways. First, as an ethicist and practical theologian working with the methods of anthropology and sociology, I do not believe objective or "purely" descriptive work is possible. With many others, I posit that, when we describe, we are also interpreting; and this interpretation is inherently normative work.[105] Second, my descriptions of my research partners' practices suggest that their experiences are not only substantive sources for but also expressions *of* ethics and theology.[106] Third, throughout these descriptive segments, I make choices to insistently center the insights of former refugees as countercultural wisdom with which long-time U.S. residents like me need to reckon. The epistemological privilege I grant to my research partners who came to the U.S. in search of refuge is as central to the normative contribution of this

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[104] Paul Stoller, *Wisdom from the Edge: Writing Ethnography in Turbulent Times* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2023), 36.
[105] Tone Stangeland Kaufman, "From the Outside, Within, or In Between? Normativity at Work in Empirical Practical Theological Research," in *Conundrums in Practical Theology*, ed. Joyce Ann Mercer and Bonnie Miller-McLemore (Brill, 2016), 138, http://brill.com/view/title/33423.
[106] Christian Batalden Scharen and Aana Marie Vigen, *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics* (London; New York, New York: Continuum, 2011).

dissertation as my more overtly constructive claims about shared sufficiency and the spiritual nature of the work of extending belonging.

I understand the central movements of Christian ethics to be descriptive, normative, and constructive. As such, whether I am describing the practices I am witnessing, critiquing the root causes of the challenges these practices respond to, or arguing for the need for formation into a new *telos* through these practices, I am practicing the art of Christian ethics. The commitments named above inform how I navigate the tension between descriptive and normative moves as a Christian ethicist. For example, when I abductively draw on literature from the social sciences or theology and place this work in conversation with the insights of my research partners, I am doing so with the intention of shedding new light in both directions. I understand these movements to reflect what Tone Stangeland Kaufman describes as "normativity-from-within," in which relevant literature contributes to one's "horizon of understanding" rather than serving as a "measuring rod for evaluating."[107] While working interdisciplinarily can, at times, be unwieldy, I suggest that a key strength of my method is the way a picture of belonging practices emerges from my research partners and then comes into clearer focus in conversation with ethics, theology, and the social sciences.

Terms and Names

In what follows, I work with Tomás Jiménez's definition of the term "established Americans." Jiménez defines "established Americans" as individuals whose families have lived in the U.S. for three generations or longer and, as such, whose immigration histories pre-date the 1965 Hart Celler Act.[108] What I find helpful about this term is that it draws a clear boundary

[107] Kaufman, "From the Outside, Within, or In Between? Normativity at Work in Empirical Practical Theological Research," 150, 153.
[108] Jiménez, *The Other Side of Assimilation*, 3.

around residents who are not first or second-generation immigrants and therefore likely have stable access to "mainstream" institutions.[109] What is more, individuals who are "established" in this way are likely to have been formed in the individualistic *habitus* that orients us towards a *telos* of self-sufficiency simply by means of engaging in the institutions and culture of this country.[110] What is less clarifying is the use of the word "Americans" to refer to U.S. residents specifically. While a concise short-hand, I want to acknowledge the way it centers the U.S. on the continent and obscures the reality that everyone from Canada to Argentina can rightly be called Americans.

Equally complicated is my use of the term "newcomers" and "newly arrived" to describe individuals who have come to the U.S. as refugees. As scholars like Heba Gowayed have observed, there is often resistance to the term "refugee" among those who have experienced forced displacement and resettlement.[111] I am drawn to Susanna Snyder's alternative proposal and use of the more agentive "those seeking asylum" and "those seeking sanctuary" and at times follow suit with "those seeking refuge" or "refuge seekers."[112] However, I found that my research partners who had come here through the resettlement process were far more likely to use the succinct term, "newcomers." For example, Sayari, Zari, and Wilo consistently employ this vocabulary. As such, I also use "newcomer" terminology throughout the dissertation. It is

[109] Richard Alba and Nancy Foner's define as mainstream "those social and cultural spaces where the native majority feels 'at home' or, in other words, where its presence is taken for granted and seen as unproblematic." Alba and Foner, *Strangers No More*, 5.
[110] Robert N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart, With a New Preface: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (University of California Press, 2007); Kevin Nanakdewa et al., "The Salience of Choice Fuels Independence: Implications for Self-Perception, Cognition, and Behavior," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118, no. 30 (July 27, 2021): e2021727118, https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2021727118; Bo Bian et al., "Individualism During Crises," SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, July 9, 2021), https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3626841; Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values* (SAGE, 1984).
[111] Gowayed, *Refuge*.
[112] Snyder, *Asylum-Seeking, Migration and Church*.

important to note, however, that this term is rightly contested. If we take seriously the histories of colonization and forced displacement of indigenous populations in North America by the White communities arriving from Europe, we are reminded that all but Native Americans are rightly included in the category of "newcomer." I should also note that I intentionally capitalize the word "White" as well as "Black" when referring to U.S. residents. While it is more common to capitalize the latter than the former, I am informed by scholars like Eve Ewing who argue that failing to capitalize "white" contributes to the illusion that Whiteness is a raceless, cultureless default.[113]

Finally, all names have been changed to protect the confidentiality of my research partners. Most pseudonyms used throughout the dissertation were chosen during interviews and focus groups. The few exceptions are those whose preferred pseudonyms too closely mirrored their given names. The names of the organizations like Lattice Ministries and ABC have also been changed, as has the name of the city, which I call Ashland. Like many places in the U.S., Ashland has been a site for refugee resettlement for thirty years and is now a place characterized by a high density of population diversity. To protect the confidentiality of my research partners, I forgo extended analysis of the local and regional contexts of Lattice Ministries. I acknowledge this as a shortcoming of this work, as belonging and resettlement are deeply contextualized matters.

[113] Eve L. Ewing, "I'm a Black Scholar Who Studies Race. Here's Why I Capitalize 'White.,'" *ZORA* (blog), July 2, 2020, https://zora.medium.com/im-a-black-scholar-who-studies-race-here-s-why-i-capitalize-white-f94883aa2dd3.

Dissertation Roadmap

"Listen. The quick version of this story is useless. Let's agree to have a complicated conversation." –Daniel Nayeri [114]

In the pages that follow, I argue that learning from the stories of belonging shared by individuals who first came to the U.S. in search of refuge is essential. Refuge seekers unmask the inadequacy of self-sufficiency as an orienting *telos* and invite established Americans to imagine and work towards a shared experience of enough-ness, a sufficiency made possible when we experience belonging together. While privilege can insulate some communities from perceiving their need for this richer vision of the good, that need persists all the same. As sociologist Matthew Desmond describes:

> Compared to a freedom that is contingent on our bank accounts—rich people's freedom—a freedom that comes from shared responsibility, shared purpose and gain, and shared abundance and commitment strikes me as a different sort of human liberation altogether: deeper, warmer, more lush… We can feel it, the emotional violence we inflict upon ourselves, knowing that our abundance causes others' misery.[115]

How much more joyful, or in Desmond's words, lush, the world might be if we moved towards the *telos* of shared sufficiency cast by my research partners as they work to attend to the material realities of newcomers and strive to make it possible for entire communities to experience a good life in the U.S.

Experiencing belonging across difference, I argue, moves established Americans towards *desiring* shared sufficiency rather than settling for "enough" for ourselves and our nuclear families alone. The practices of belonging that I observed at Lattice Ministries and its partners draw us towards shared sufficiency in specific ways. In each of the body chapters of this dissertation, I begin with a thick description of the practice I observed and experienced. I then

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[114] Daniel Nayeri, *Everything Sad Is Untrue* (Chronicle Books, 2020), 16.
[115] Matthew Desmond, *Poverty, by America* (New York: Crown, 2023), 181.

place my observations in conversation with relevant literature in sociology, ethics, and theology, so that deeper understanding of the practices' implications can emerge abductively. Finally, I conclude each chapter with a consideration of both the challenges Lattice Ministries community members face as they seek to cultivate each practice and the inherent limitations of practices of belonging operating in a society that creates conditions of nonbelonging in myriad structural ways.

Design for belonging, explored in chapter one, highlights the possibility of alternative ways of creating spaces, policies, and programs so that they hold time and space for all to belong—not just for the prototypical self-sufficient individual who drives, speaks and reads English, and sends emails. In this chapter, "Doors are Open: Principles of Design for Belonging," I identify the ways Lattice Ministries designs for belonging by attending to the design for belonging principles of beginning with safety and then building in opportunities for participation and play. I demonstrate how the minimalist design of the resettlement system diminishes possibilities for living a good life in this country and how designing can bring collective flourishing closer to hand. I explore how the practice of design can leverage the dynamic of organizational embeddedness and argue that design sheds critical light on the way we have organized society with little time or space for belonging.

Recognition, the practice explored in chapter two, is foundational to moving towards realizing shared sufficiency. For, if established Americans are unable to recognize newcomers as agents and, moreover, as fellow human beings, there is no way we will broaden our circle of who we think about when we seek to ensure there is "enough." In this chapter, "You Are First Human: Practicing Recognition*,"* I demonstrate how ABC, the multigenerational literacy program on Lattice Ministries' campus, engages practices of recognition that affirm one another's humanity,

giftedness and ability to contribute, and membership in the community. I consider how recognition affirms the agentive homemaking work of refugees and immigrants. I draw on womanist ethics to reveal the ethical critique that recognition offers of policies that require immigrants to start from scratch and stereotypes that make the work of recognition even more challenging. I consider the difficulty we experience when seeking to recognize one another across multiple kinds of difference at once and how, at times, recognition of some can come at the inadvertent expense of others.

Accompaniment, the practice highlighted in chapter three, reveals all the threats to enough-ness that people from different social locations experience, and it illuminates an alternative path forward. In this chapter, "It Looks Like Holding their Hand: Practicing Accompaniment," I explore how Kuumba, the holistic sewing and leadership nonprofit on campus, models the practice of accompaniment towards healing, access, and empowerment, both interpersonally and organizationally. I draw on the concept of affordances to shed light on the way the practice of accompaniment functions and place the work of Kuumba in conversation with the ethics of care to advance a critique of contemporary understandings of care as a privatized and apolitical commodity. I consider how attempts to practice accompaniment can collide with the overwhelm baked into our schedules, jeopardizing our ability to sustain this practice. I conclude the chapter by exploring how accompaniment helps draw us towards an alternative ethic of shared sufficiency as we meet one another's needs through belonging together.

Finally, turning, the practice explored in chapter four, is that which infuses us with the desire for shared sufficiency. When we turn towards friendships across difference and away from the individualistic, atomized visions of the good life into which we have been formed, we

harness a desire for collective enough-ness, for shared sufficiency that makes the other practices possible. In this chapter, "Riding on the Wind of the Spirit: Practicing Turning," I explore the practice of turning in conversation with the church that gave birth to Lattice Ministries, New Hope Presbyterian Church, and Lattice Ministries' partner churches like Grace Presbyterian and Oak Pointe Presbyterian. Specifically, I highlight the ways these established Americans are turning towards empathy and away from fear, towards action and away from helplessness, and towards long-term friendships and away from othering. I show how turning does affective work that responds to the politicalization of refugee resettlement. And I explore how this practice contributes to the moral formation of established Americans such that we can begin to resist the default American *habitus* of individualism and *telos* of self-sufficiency.

I conclude the dissertation with updates on the community organizations that hosted my research and reflections on the implications of my research partners' practices. I reflect on the significance of Lattice Ministries' work amid the crisis of belonging the U.S. currently faces. I suggest that this community's practices of belonging disrupt the individualism that goes unquestioned when we belong solely to people with whom we share ascriptive identity markers like race, ethnicity, and religion. Too, I consider the significant spiritual and theological weight these practices carry for faith-based individuals and communities.

While informed by voices from all over the world, this dissertation invites U.S.-born Americans in particular to heed the request that opened this section. "Listen," former refugee and novelist Daniel Nayeri writes from the perspective of his 12-year-old self to recount his family's experience of fleeing Iran and being resettled in Oklahoma: "The quick version of this story is useless. Let's agree to have a complicated conversation."[116] In bringing together stories and

[116] Nayeri, *Everything Sad Is Untrue*, 16.

perspectives shared by those who came here seeking refuge and those who are trying to learn to be better neighbors to them, I hope to spark one such complicated conversation. I desire to help those whose skin color, religion, dress, accent, and more mark them as automatically belonging to consider what it means to expand that belonging so that, in the words of Zari, who supports the work of Lattice Ministries, Kuumba, and Mulunda Worshipping Community, "nobody is outside." What might happen if we name the boundaries of belonging that enable us to find our footing at the expense of others, if we trouble and expand these boundaries? How might we unsettle our own sense of belonging so that others might more easily access it? As Wilo, who first came to the U.S in search of asylum and today leads a Black American and a Congolese congregation in addition to serving on the board of Lattice Ministries explains, "Belonging is a survival strategy." While that survival is more obviously a question of life and death for refuge seekers, for established Americans experiencing loneliness and languishing at unprecedented rates, learning how to belong better just might save our lives as well.

My research partners who came here as refugees have carved out pockets of belonging for themselves and others within the context of a barren welcome. They have both received support from the organizations I explore in the chapters that follow, *and* they make the work of these organizations possible. I believe in the power of organizations to surpass our individual limitations and to leverage our collective strengths, and I think the story of the role of organizations in creating community and extending possibilities of belonging for those who came seeking refuge and U.S.-born Americans alike is one that is worth telling. But I never want this story of organizational and collective practice to eclipse that of my individual research partners. These individuals from all over the world are making it their lives' work to ensure that things are different for those who come after them. People like Enatye and Zam at ABC, Gladys

and Zari at Kuumba, Pastor Joseph, Wilo, Sayari, and so many others are reweaving the nation's social fabric one practice of belonging at a time, growing it into a quilt of shared sufficiency with room for us all. In the chapters that follow, I show how these individuals and the organizations they work with engage this project of reweaving in ways that are at once ordinary and worldmaking. I invite readers to listen in on this complicated conversation to discern how some of these practices might work in their own contexts and how they, too, might imagine and work towards a vision of shared sufficiency in which all have what they need to live well.

Indeed, this research was guided by my intuition that Lattice Ministries and its partners are "bright spots" from which other communities and individuals can learn. The concept of "bright spots" resonates deeply with my approach to research and ethics. Bright spots are sources of hope, evidence that it is possible to bridge the gap that ethicists have so long concerned themselves with between how society *is* and how it *ought* to be. Bright spots shed critical light on the issues they respond to while also concretely revealing contextualized ways of responding that we might try to replicate and adapt elsewhere. This concept has been engrained with how I move through the world and my research sites for so long that it took time to identify where I first came across this term. I finally located it in Chip and Dan Heath's book *Switch* and realized that they developed this language in conversation with Jerry Sternin's work on positive deviance. While endeavoring to address malnutrition in Vietnam, Sternin noticed that, despite the same conditions of poverty and lack of access to nutritious sources of food, some children fell on the positive side of the statistical bell curve tracking their developmental health. This inspired Sternin to study the behaviors that the mothers of these children employed to create this "positive

deviance" and to develop groups that supported other mothers in learning from these women's habits.[117]

Chip and Dan Heath explore the relevance of positive deviance for workplace, communal, and societal change and propose the language of "bright spots" as alternative language that is less laden with the statistical denotation and negative connotation of "deviance."[118] They suggest that, "To pursue bright spots is to ask the question 'What's working, and how can we do more of it?'…These flashes of success—these bright spots—can illuminate the road map for action and spark the hope that change is possible."[119] This framing speaks to my experience and training in community development methods like asset-based community development and appreciative inquiry.[120] The place to begin, always, is to insistently inquire about what is working despite it all.

In this time of profound polarization and isolation,[121] the Lattice Ministries community is imperfectly and tenaciously attempting to remove barriers to belonging for newcomers and learn how to belong together. In ethics, we devote considerable energies to describing and critiquing the gap between what is and what ought to be. The gap between *is* and *ought* is one of tragedy,

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[117] Pascale, Sternin, and Sternin, *The Power of Positive Deviance*.
[118] Heath and Heath, *Switch*, 39.
[119] Heath and Heath, 45, 48.
[120] For example, founders of asset-based community development methodology John Kretzmann and John McKnight write, "Every single person has capacities, abilities and gifts. Living a good life depends on whether those capacities can be used, abilities expressed and gifts given. If they are, the person will be valued, feel powerful and well-connected to the people around them. And the community around the person will be more powerful because of the contribution the person is making." John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*, 1st edition (Acta Pubns, 1993), 13; For Appreciative Inquiry, in turn, the fundamental starting point to community-based work is the assumption that, "in every society, organization, or group, something works." Sue Annis Hammond, *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry, 2nd Edition*, 2nd edition (Thin Book Pub Co, 1998), 20.
[121] Vivek H. Murthy, *Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World*, 1st edition (New York, NY: Harper, 2020); Matthew Shaer, "Why Is the Loneliness Epidemic So Hard to Cure?," *The New York Times*, August 27, 2024, sec. Magazine, https://www.nytimes.com/2024/08/27/magazine/loneliness-epidemic-cure.html; Richard Weissbourd, Virginia Lovison, and Eric Torres, "Loneliness in America: How the Pandemic Has Deepened an Epidemic of Loneliness," Making Care Common Project (Harvard University, February 2021), https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/reports/loneliness-in-america.

injustice, and harm. Bright spots like Lattice Ministries bridge that gap. The community makes clear that things not only should be different, but that they *can* be. Living differently, in a more shared-sufficient way, is within reach even within a deeply individualistic society. My research partners make clear that we *can* practice belonging across difference and, in so doing, contribute to our own processes of moral formation in ways that reorient us from a *telos* of self sufficiency to one of shared sufficiency. In what follows, I analyze this bright spot's belonging practices and explore their implications for the rest of us.

Doors are Open: Principles of Design for Belonging

"Everyone can't fit in my shoes. So, how can we build structures that can move? What we design will determine what becomes." –Pastor Joseph

"It's a beloved community; it's not just a program. We love coming to campus, it's a community." –Jamila

"Why should it be incumbent on you to adapt to a corporate structure when I can just as easily make my own changes?"—Sarah

"Where I come from, doors are open." –Zainab

Design by Default

As anthropologist Catherine Besteman incisively puts it, refugee resettlement in the United States is essentially a matter of geography. For the families and individuals chosen for resettlement, the nation commits to "provide a relatively safe physical environment within which refugees can attempt, with little assistance, to create a new future."[122] Every element of the refugee resettlement infrastructure is designed to reflect this minimalist conception of what it means to offer refuge. To demonstrate the ways that organizations like Lattice Ministries and its onsite partners are unsettling resettlement by developing an expanded sense of the obligations and responsibilities refuge entails, I first offer an image of how the refugee resettlement system is currently designed to work.

The process of resettlement begins in the "first country of asylum"—the nation to which a refugee has fled to seek shelter in a refugee camp but in which long-term relocation through "local integration" has been ruled out because of human rights violations perpetrated by that government or the sheer number of refuge seekers being hosted there. Life in this country is often characterized by a state of limbo, as refuge seekers are neither allowed to work beyond the limits of the camp nor to enroll in the neighboring communities' schools. Although meant to be

[122] Besteman, *Making Refuge*, 136.

temporary, it is not uncommon to hear of families waiting in camps for ten to twenty years. While I never ask about this part of my research partners' lives, at times the individuals I have become close to volunteer stories of their time in refugee camps. For example, Kamali, a petite woman in her early thirties with a ready smile, tells me over chai lattes about her experience growing up in a camp in Nepal until she was eighteen. On the one hand, Kamali, who is now a manager at Growing Refuge, explains that there were some positives about life there. Her life felt manageable. She and her family knew and worried about their neighbors, who knew and worried about them: "Our world was so small. We could not see beyond the camp." She contrasts this with the emotional toll it takes today whenever she hears about global tragedies and feels unable to respond meaningfully. On the other hand, Kamali recalls, "Everything was limited—water, food, even education." Gesturing to indicate the height of the picnic table at which we are sitting, she adds wryly, "You could not dream bigger than you. You have only up to your height for your dreams."

While living in a camp, the first step required to become eligible for long-term resettlement in a "third country" is to register as a refugee with the United Nations department responsible for refugee resettlement, the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR). The UNHCR then selects those who they deem most vulnerable to recommend for resettlement. As Heba Gowayed observes in her research with Syrian refugees, there is dark irony here. While refuge seekers are often granted resettlement because of the additional layers of vulnerabilities they experience, they are then denied support for managing those vulnerabilities following arrival.[123] Backlogs and the time-intensive nature of conducting multiple rounds of life interviews and security screenings can cause this early stage in the

[123] Gowayed, *Refuge*.

process, Refugee Status Determination, to take years.[124] The process can be traumatic, as refuge seekers must make their narratives of persecution and flight fit bureaucratic expectations. Moreover, lapses of memory—common after trauma—can be seen as a sign of dishonesty and manipulation. Author Dina Nayeri writes of how the invasive interviews that began the resettlement process continued long after her family's arrival to the U.S.: "We had to turn our ordeal into a good, persuasive story or risk being sent back. Then, after asylum was secured, we had to relive that story again and again, to earn our place, to calm casual skeptics. Every day of her new life, the refugee is asked to differentiate herself from the opportunist, the economic migrant."[125]

Once someone has made it through this process, they are then referred to one of the twenty-three countries participating in the UNHCR refugee resettlement program, and these countries conduct additional screenings.[126] Individuals being considered for resettlement to the U.S. must undergo screenings by the Department of Homeland Security, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Defense, Department of State, United States Intelligence Community, and Department of Health and Human Services. This process can take anywhere from 18 to 36 months.[127] Like the Refugee Status Determination process, backlogs plague this step. During Donald Trump's first presidential term, for example, key positions responsible for

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[124] Congressional Research Service, "Global Refugee Resettlement: Selected Issues and Questions" (Congressional Research Service, January 27, 2022), https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/IF10611.pdf.
[125] Dina Nayeri, *The Ungrateful Refugee: What Immigrants Never Tell You* (Catapult, 2019), loc. 299.
[126] Gillian Triggs, Lawrence Bartlett, and John Slocum, "Third Country Solutions for Refugees: Roadmap 2030," Global Compact on Refugees (UNHCR, June 2022), 12, https://globalcompactrefugees.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/Third%20Country%20Solutions%20for%20Refugees%20-%20Roadmap%202030.pdf.
[127] IRC staff, "How the U.S. Refugee Vetting and Resettlement Process Really Works," *Rescue.Org* (blog), December 23, 2015, https://www.rescue.org/article/how-us-refugee-vetting-and-resettlement-process-really-works#:~:text=The%20process%20typically%20takes%20up,%2C%20and%20in%2Dperson%20interviews.

screening refugees for resettlement to the U.S. went intentionally unstaffed, and numerous local resettlement offices in the U.S. were forced to close due to the reduction of federal funding.[128]

When an individual or family has been accepted for resettlement by the U.S., the International Organization of Migration assigns the case to a voluntary agency. Ten voluntary agencies (known as VOLAGS) contract with the federal government to uphold the U.S.'s commitments to the UNHCR 1967 Protocol on the Status of Refugees. These voluntary agencies are both religious, like Catholic Charities, Church World Service, and Episcopal Migration Ministries, and secular, like the International Rescue Committee and the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants. While some, like the International Rescue Committee, have offices throughout the country, others, like Global Refuge, coordinate with affiliated partners across the U.S. that are independent entities. Once a VOLAG receives a case, they assign it to a local office or affiliated partner, and that local entity then assigns it to a case manager.

Once a local resettlement agency staff member receives an individual's or family's case, they must procure an apartment and as many donated furnishings as they can. Those furniture items that are deemed essential but not donated are purchased using funds from the fixed sum allotted per arrival through the Refugee Cash Assistance program. This amount varies from state to state but is often close to $1,000 a month for one couple for up to twelve months.[129] Then, when the refugee "case" arrives, a cascading series of timelines detonates. Within the first 24 hours, the individual or family receives a safety orientation to their apartment. Soon after, they are taken shopping for groceries and cell phones, expenses that are likewise deducted from their

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[128] Hamed Aleaziz, "The U.S. Is Rebuilding a Legal Pathway for Refugees. The Election Could Change That.," *The New York Times*, April 3, 2024, sec. U.S., https://www.nytimes.com/2024/04/02/us/politics/legal-pathway-refugees-election.html.

[129] Melissa Goldin, "No, Migrants Do Not Receive $2,200 Each Month from the Federal Government," *AP News*, October 2, 2023, sec. AP Fact Check, https://apnews.com/article/fact-check-illegal-2200-payment-government-821946727757.

initial cash allowance. As soon as possible after arrival, the case manager takes the new arrivals for health screenings, English as a Second Language tests, and appointments at the Department of Motor Vehicles (where they can receive state identification cards). Once health screenings and placement tests have been completed, children are enrolled in local schools. Unless a special intervention is available, children are placed in grades according to age rather than English ability or educational background. The adults, meanwhile, attend "Extended Cultural Orientation" classes at their local resettlement agency. "Extended" refers to the fact that they attended a brief (usually two-day) orientation before leaving for the U.S. rather than the duration or depth of the course, which can last anywhere from a few hours to two weeks. At the orientation, newcomers are reminded of "hot button" issues like U.S. laws pertaining to the discipline of children. Class members practice using U.S. currency, discuss local weather, and begin learning traffic signs.

During these early weeks following arrival, resettlement agency staff with specialized training assess whether the individual is a good candidate for programs like Match Grant. Match Grant is an early employment program that temporarily increases a family's monthly allowance for eight months. This supplants Refugee Cash Assistance, meaning that their access to federal cash assistance terminates four months earlier than it does for those not in the program. Among other eligibility requirements, enrollment in Match Grant requires the individual to begin working as soon as legally possible and to attend job coaching opportunities offered by the agency.[130] Individuals are also evaluated for enrollment in Intensive Case Management, a

[130] Office of Refugee Resettlement, "Voluntary Agencies Matching Grant Program," April 29, 2024, https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/refugees/matching-grants.

program that enables families with, for example, children with disabilities or members with acute mental health challenges to receive case manager assistance for up to five years.[131]

By the third month of a newcomer's arrival to the U.S., almost all services have been administered: children are in school; usually at least one adult in the household is working, while another might be attending an ESOL program; and the family is enrolled in the benefits programs for which they are eligible, like Medicare and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Within 90 days, the "reception and placement" period is complete. The case is declared "closed" unless extenuating circumstances have been identified that qualify for additional support.[132] Adults are invited to return to the agency when it is time to begin studying for the citizenship exam five years later and to keep an eye out for other grant-funded initiatives the agency might provide down the road.[133] Despite these contingencies, on a very practical level the relationship between the new arrival and the agency responsible for helping them get settled in the U.S. is terminated. Case managers are explicitly and implicitly encouraged to move on so as to more fully give their attention to their most newly arrived cases.

In 2023, this infrastructure gained a new layer of complexity, when President Joe Biden's administration launched the Welcome Corps program to enable private, community-based sponsorship. While countries like Canada have long participated in dual federal- and community-based refugee sponsorship pathways, this program brings private, community-based resettlement to the U.S. for the first time. At present, the number of refugees resettled through the Welcome

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[131] Cade Hajovsky, "Beyond 90 Days: Intensive Case Management," *World Relief* (blog), March 2, 2023, https://worldrelief.org/spblog-beyond-90-days-intensive-case-management/.
[132] RCUSA staff, "Resettlement Process - Refugee Council USA," *Refugee Council USA* (blog), December 20, 2023, https://rcusa.org/resources/resettlement-process/.
[133] On the topic of citizenship, Gowayed had this to say of her research partners, "none of the men or women in this book had the English proficiency required to sit for the citizenship exam once they were finally eligible to apply five years after arrival. The reason for this is clear- the United States failed to support them or invest in their language skills." Gowayed, *Refuge*, 120.

Corps subtracts from the presidential determination, the number of refugees to be resettled that year.[134] As such, this pathway does not increase the number of refugees who are able to come this country but, rather, shifts some of the costs typically covered through federal and VOLAG partnerships to private citizens and redistributes some of the work entailed in supporting refugees following resettlement from resettlement agency staff to community members. The impact of these shifts remains to be seen, as does the future of the program under Donald Trump's second administration. During his first days in office, he signed an executive order to halt all resettlement, including community sponsorship, for an unspecified period of review. Uncertainty remains as to whether this is a temporary or permanent suspension for the Welcome Corps.[135]

As a former employee of a local VOLAG affiliate, I firmly believe that these agencies do vital, lifesaving work. Public assistance programs in the U.S. are designed to prioritize the prevention of abuse of the system over and above the goal of ensuring that the nation's most marginalized residents receive what they need.[136] This design is not accidental, but, rather, tied to the U.S.'s history of structural racism. The nation's "threadbare social safety net" is a direct result of the history of "disenfranchisement of black Americans."[137] Resettlement staff enact essential design interventions when they do what they can to help newcomers receive every form of service and assistance to which their refugee status entitles them. Case workers with lived experience of forced migration play an especially critical role in the resettlement process. While the average resettlement agency employee is a White woman in her late 20s with a college

[134] Historically, the presidential determination has been treated as a goal—the number the president's administration wants to see resettled. Under the Trump administration, it became a ceiling, with minimal efforts made to reach it.
[135] Welcome.US, "Policy Update: U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, Including the Welcome Corps, Suspended until Further Notice," January 21, 2025, https://welcome.us/explainers/us-refugee-admissions-program-including-the-welcome-corps-suspended-until-further-notice.
[136] Desmond, *Poverty, by America*, 88–90; Celeste Watkins-Hayes, *The New Welfare Bureaucrats: Entanglements of Race, Class, and Policy Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).
[137] Gowayed, *Refuge*, 3.

degree, research shows that it is the staff members who formerly came to the U.S. as refugees who can provide compassionate support sustainably over time.[138] My own tenure as an "average" employee who experienced severe burnout following the 2016 election provides anecdotal evidence to support this finding. All the same, established American and former refugee staff alike genuinely do what they can to maximize funding, services, and local support for the newcomers in their charge. The problem is the design of the resettlement system, which, as established above, is *intended* to provide little more than "a relatively safe physical environment."[139]

In contrast to this minimal commitment, a maximalist vision of refugee could bolster a resettlement system that prioritizes the healing, safety, and flourishing of newcomers. Such a system would be grounded in norms like human dignity and mutuality and shaped by the awareness that any nation might conceivably face the precarity and violence that refugee-producing nations contend with currently. Too, it would be rooted in the understanding that all humans have the capacity to contribute in ways that greatly exceed their lifetime earning potential. It would honor the truth that "integration" can never be limited to economic terms exclusively, nor is it a process that involves newcomers alone. Experiences of belonging would be prioritized as an essential outcome of the process.

A resettlement system designed with the *telos* of newcomer belonging and flourishing in mind would build in an abundance of both time and space. It would acknowledge that the work of trauma healing and cultural adjustment can take years and so would create different pathways into the workforce. It would likewise recognize that the intensely privatized relationship Americans have with space is foreign in many other cultures and thus would seek to (re)create

[138] Graeme Rodgers, "Compassion as Integration? Refugee Resettlement Practitioners with Lived Experience."
[139] Besteman, *Making Refuge*, 136.

the commons by, for example, planting gardens or building courtyards around resettlement offices so that newcomers could bump into friendly faces, rest, and play in a space that did not require payment for entry.

This is not the system that United States refugee policy has designed. Rather than being guided by a vision of newcomer flourishing, the U.S. resettlement system historically has been shaped by national self-interest. Indeed, our nation's system violated the UNHCR's 1951 convention and 1967 protocol for years by prioritizing the resettlement of refugees fleeing Communist regimes deemed enemies of the nation. Though U.S. resettlement policy officially came into good standing with President Jimmy Carter's signing of the 1980 Refugee Act (which finally removed the stipulation about Communist countries),[140] the question of who "counts" as a refugee continues to retain troublingly political undertones.[141] For example, the nation continues to willfully deny the asylum claims of refugees fleeing Central American countries like El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras—places experiencing refugee crises to which U.S. military involvement in the region has contributed directly.[142] At the same time, politicians have been quick to create streamlined, albeit temporary, pathways for Ukrainians to find safety in the U.S. from Russia, the nation's historic nemesis.[143]

While American political interests are maximized in foreign policy, our nation's economic interests take center stage in domestic resettlement policy. The system's design prioritizes efficiency by minimizing expense, and it maximizes National Gross Domestic Product

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[140] Edward M. Kennedy, "Refugee Act of 1980," *The International Migration Review* 15, no. 1/2 (1981): 141–56, https://doi.org/10.2307/2545333.
[141] Nicholas T. Pruitt, *Open Hearts, Closed Doors: Immigration Reform and the Waning of Mainline Protestantism* (New York: NYU Press, 2021).
[142] Center for Preventative Action, "Instability in the Northern Triangle," Global Conflict Tracker, accessed July 16, 2024, https://cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violent-instability-northern-triangle.
[143] Nayla Rush, "Uniting for Ukraine: A New 'Privately' Sponsored Pathway to the United States," CIS.org, June 15, 2022, https://cis.org/Report/Uniting-Ukraine-New-Privately-Sponsored-Pathway-United-States.

by incentivizing newcomers' immediate entry into the workforce. The nation's thin conception of the meaning of refuge culminates in a thin, reductionist view of integration. Indeed, as Badiah Haffejee and Jean East remark, "Embedded in the Refugee Act of 1980 is a philosophy that increasingly views full and meaningful integration for all resettled refugees from the perspective of economic independence or competence."[144] Self-sufficiency is the guiding *telos* toward which every step of the resettlement process is oriented, leaving little to no room for attending to questions of belonging and flourishing.

Language of self-sufficiency peppers the literature produced by agencies working at every level of the U.S. resettlement process. The Office of Refugee Resettlement, for example, suggests that it exists to provide "new populations with the opportunity to achieve their full potential"[145] and to manage "social services that help refugees become self-sufficient as quickly as possible after their arrival in the United States."[146] Refugee service agencies, in turn, tout their caseload's self-sufficiency rates in everything from board reports to donor newsletters, a ritual that both strategically responds to locals' fears that refugees are bad for the economy and reflects the system's design. While newcomers themselves deeply value the ability to earn a living, having been legally prohibited from doing so in refugee camps, this system's demand for their immediate employment runs counter to their ability to heal, adjust, and develop the relevant language and work skills that would make meaningful employment possible. Instead, as Melissa Snarr explains, refugees in the U.S. are "being ushered into a neoliberal economy that emphasizes self-sufficiency while trapping many of them in working poverty."[147] Ultimately, this

[144] Badiah Haffejee and Jean F. East, "African Women Refugee Resettlement: A Womanist Analysis," *Affilia* 31, no. 2 (May 2016): 235, https://doi.org/10.1177/0886109915595840.
[145] Office of Refugee Resettlement, "About," Office of Refugee Resettlement: An Office of the Administration for Children & Families, March 11, 2021, https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/about.
[146] Office of Refugee Resettlement, "What We Do," Office of Refugee Resettlement: An Office of the Administration for Children & Families, March 1, 2022, https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/about/what-we-do.
[147] Snarr, "Remembering the Poor," 26.

push towards immediate employment and productivity can be self-defeating. As Heba Gowayed finds, "The policy goal of 'self-sufficiency,' or non-reliance on government assistance, pushes new arrivals into low-income jobs where they cannot secure a living wage. This has the unintended consequence of discouraging 'self-sufficiency' definitionally— it encourages the reliance on government assistance, not because people don't want to work, but because they cannot make ends meet from work."[148] For so many newcomers, essentials like learning English and developing familiarity with their new culture and community is deprioritized by necessity, squeezed into nonworking hours or confined exclusively to the initial weeks in the U.S. before their employment authorization paperwork arrives and employment is secured at a site like a poultry processing plant or home furnishing warehouse.

On an individual level, some resettlement staff endeavor to intervene in the system's design for self-sufficiency. For example, Wilo, who first came to the U.S. as an asylum-seeker from the Congo and currently serves on the board of Lattice Ministries, prioritized learning every new arrival's full name as well as some basic greetings in their home language when he worked as a case manager at a refugee resettlement agency. When I interned with the agency in 2013, his evident love for the individuals he worked with made him my instant role model, as did his genuine greeting of all he encountered with a warm, "Hello, my friend." When Wilo realized that new arrivals often left the first meal provided by the agency untouched, he improvised. While the standard protocol entailed picking up food from one of the local restaurants in Ashland, Wilo would instead divert the funds so that a family he had previously resettled from a similar area might make a homecooked meal that would fill the newcomers' apartment with familiar aromas. Over time, however, Wilo's insistence on tarrying—on taking the time needed to get to know

[148] Gowayed, *Refuge*, 49.

everyone in his caseload and discerning what might help ease their transition process—ran up against the constraints embedded in the system's design for efficiency and the cultivation of self-sufficiency. On paper, his outcomes looked less "successful" due to the longer launchpad he tried to create. The way that he stayed in touch with newcomers long after their cases were supposed to be closed came to be held against him. When the first Trump administration's dramatic cuts to refugee resettlement funding catalyzed waves of layoffs, Wilo was one of the first to lose his job at the resettlement agency where we had become coworkers and friends.

Wilo's layoff is emblematic of a larger trend in resettlement agencies. When times are good, popular support is strong, and grant funds are ample, employees have room to agentively stretch the bounds of their organizations' missions to include far more than self-sufficiency and to define integration in capacious terms that exceed economic metrics. Under these conditions, staff might pair individuals with mentors and community groups, pilot creative extensions to cultural and community orientation programs, or explore the possibility of job placements that, though requiring a later start date to allow newcomers to acquire necessary skills, ultimately enable a higher quality of life than the standard factory positions. For example, the statewide program that I managed for the same resettlement agency where I had previously interned and where Wilo worked connected refugee families with faith-based groups comprised of 10 to 12 volunteers for the span of a year. It explicitly sought to cultivate "the long welcome" by building community capacity to assist newcomers beyond the "stabilization period" that had to be the resettlement agency's priority. By the end of the first Trump administration, however, both my program and the national program that funded mine no longer existed. For, when crises in the form of national administrations hostile to refugees, state and local politicians willing to stoke fears to boost their own popularity, or global pandemics like COVID-19 take place, the system

reverts to its original design. With the contraction of funds comes a hyperfocus on equipping a family to survive financially, and attention to matters of belonging understandably yet tragically evaporates.

Lattice Ministries' Design

Within this system, Lattice Ministries functions as a design intervention by creating time and space to belong. It does so both for the individuals who come to campus to worship, learn, volunteer, or play, and for the groups and organizations that make their home on campus. Many of these groups are led by individuals who first came to the U.S. as refugees (like the six congregations and ABC, co-led by Jamila) or immigrants (like Kuumba and the badminton team). Supporting the belonging of these groups directly feeds into expanding opportunities for belonging for individual newcomers, as extensive research demonstrates the positive impact on newcomer adaptation of co-ethnic organizations, immigrant faith communities, and organizations that bring immigrants into contact with people from different backgrounds.[149]

While resettlement agencies must perform their designated role by rapidly propelling newcomers towards employment, the timeline becomes more elastic on Lattice Ministries' campus. In contrast to the resettlement system's design for integration-*as*-employment, the ecosystem of faith communities, nonprofit organizations, and recreation groups on Lattice Ministries' campus function to slow down the countdown and expand the meaning of refuge and integration. In Lattice Ministries executive director Charlie's words, Lattice Ministries exists to

[149] John Mollenkopf and Manuel Pastor, "The Ethnic Mosaic: Immigrant Integration at the Metropolitan Scale," in *Unsettled Americans: Metropolitan Context and Civic Leadership for Immigrant Integration*, ed. John Mollenkopf and Manuel Pastor (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), 7; Ebert and Okamoto, "Social Citizenship, Integration and Collective Action," 1289; Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou, "Transnationalism and Development: Mexican and Chinese Immigrant Organizations in the United States," *Population and Development Review* 38, no. 2 (2012): 191–220, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1728-4457.2012.00489.x; Hondagneu-Sotelo, *God's Heart Has No Borders*; Bloemraad, *Becoming a Citizen*; Flippen and Farrell-Bryan, "New Destinations and the Changing Geography of Immigrant Incorporation."

attend to the "longer questions of belonging" by taking a more holistic view of what integration, adaptation, and participation mean. Cases are not closed on Lattice Ministries' campus. Rather, friendships are cultivated, skills are practiced, and play is experienced. Here, new arrivals can be elders and mentors within the context of faith communities that worship in their home languages. Rather than finding themselves identified by case number, with their reception and placement "timer" steadily ticking down, here, newcomers can both offer and receive spiritual care within the context of relationships that take their time. Worship services extend from morning to afternoon and from afternoon to evening, reflecting both newcomers' cultural style of worship and the fact that here, for a moment, there is all the time in the world. Skills like English conversation, sewing, and citizenship test preparation are acquired slowly and intentionally.

By making it possible for diverse groups to share space through affordable rent, Lattice Ministries also creates space for belonging on campus. For so many newcomers in Ashland, Lattice Ministries functions as a life-giving third space that is neither their home nor their place of work. As Sheila Liming explains, "Third places exist to span the divide between rich and poor, between the backyard playset class and the playing-in-the-street class, and to make the experience of being around different kinds of people feel habitual, meaning both more likely and less threatening."[150] The campus becomes a space where newcomers can bump into one another and get to know long-time community residents as well. It shrinks the frequently overwhelming scale of the large Southeastern city that Ashland abuts to the size of a 12-acre campus on which entire families are known by name. Newcomers build relationships and learn skills in spaces designed for their comfort and ease.

[150] Sheila Liming, *Hanging Out: The Radical Power of Killing Time* (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2023), locs. 1841–1842.

Lattice Ministries makes space for belonging on campus on an organizational level as well through monthly partner meetings and community grants. Lattice Ministries' staff and board members convene partner meetings that bring the leaders of the nonprofit organizations, faith communities, and recreational groups on campus together for an hour each month. These meetings play a crucial part of the campus's design, as they enable onsite partners to share the joys and challenges facing their communities, exchange information, and pool resources in ways that directly support their ability to expand belonging opportunities for the newcomers in their communities. At times, supporting, offsite partners, like leadership of various local churches, also attend, and they too are invited to share both their news and their needs.

For example, during one monthly partner meeting, Gladys, the striking and warm-natured CEO of Kuumba, asked for help raising money for sewing machines for an upcoming Kuumba graduation. Judy, a leader in the Presbyterian denomination's women's group in her late seventies, jumped in to say she thinks she can take care of it in her network. Pastor Baruti, the pastor of the newest faith community on campus, added a prayer to the agenda in response to Judy's concern for an in-law facing a new cancer diagnosis. These meetings strengthen relationships between the groups in ways that shape life on Lattice Ministries' campus year-round. Tammy, a Lattice Ministries board member and frequent facilitator of these monthly meetings, explains that partner meetings matter because they offer an opportunity for all to practice "looking out for each other" across "a mixture of cultures, personalities, backgrounds, and languages." While some but certainly not all these groups would no doubt cross paths in the Ashland community, Lattice Ministries' design ensures that these interactions occur richly and regularly. This web of organizational belonging adds layers of overlap and resource sharing that

bring established Americans and newcomers involved in differing partner groups into relationship as well.

While the U.S.'s migration policies and resettlement infrastructure have been designed for the efficient production of self-sufficiency, a different kind of design can be witnessed on Lattice Ministries' campus. As will be explored in greater depth in chapter four, the New Hope Presbyterian congregation that eventually gave birth to Lattice Ministries was compelled by the vision of becoming what they thought of as a "Ruth community." By this they meant a place where, just as the biblical narrative suggests Ruth and Naomi came to claim one another as family across their differences (Ruth 1:16), so too might people from myriad ethnic and religious backgrounds learn to belong to one another on the church's spacious campus. While former members of the congregation admit that they did not necessarily know what it would look like to become a Ruth community of belonging in practice at the time, it is clear that their vision of what they were designing for influenced the decisions they made about how to gather together, which partnerships to enter, and how to structure leases with these new partners. Again and again, as the congregation's newest neighbors approached looking for space to worship, like Pastor Joseph's and Pastor Thang's congregations, or places for newcomer families to connect, learn skills, and receive assistance, like ABC and Kuumba, New Hope Presbyterian's leadership chose not to do business as usual.

It would have been easy for the New Hope Presbyterian community to hold fast to the church's original design, even as the congregation aged and the budget shrank. So many churches today remain wedded to their "default" design, persisting in envisioning their members as their primary constituents, tithes as their income, and church maintenance as the proper outlet for that income. The New Hope Presbyterian congregation dared to re-design, to insist that

church needed to be designed for more than their own members. Through the years leading up to the birth of Lattice Ministries and the eventual engrafting of New Hope Presbyterian Church into Pleasant Grove Presbyterian Church, design for belonging resulted in decisions that would turn the campus into a place where the church's established American members and the neighborhood's newest residents would have time and space to belong. Designing for a Ruth community led the congregation and its leaders to resist the pull to self-preservation that might have been served by charging market-level rent; to instead prioritize participatory decision-making when it came time to assess the church's future viability; and to navigate their final years as a congregation in a way that ensured the community's partners would continue to have a place on campus as long as they desired it.

By bringing together so many groups onto a shared campus and, once a month, into the same (physical or online) room, Lattice Ministries helps to create what the Hinterland Lab describes as a "good container." Writing about interpersonal friendship, the lab's report suggests that "most enduring friendships benefit from being held in a container. Good containers have a structure or rhythm and balance intention with air."[151] The campus of Lattice Ministries offers a physical container that works through proximity,[152] while the monthly meetings provide the rhythm. In turn, Lattice Ministries' community micro-grant initiative is filled with air—opportunities for experimentation and creativity.

Created to support groups in leveraging their combined resources, onsite partners are eligible to receive grants for up to $1,000 whenever they work with another Lattice Ministries

[151] Ryan Hubbard and Robin Parkin, "Kitestring: Finding and Keeping Close Friends in the Modern World" (Hinterland Lab, n.d.), 52, https://assets-global.website-files.com/638838eb977ba008c248b08b/63e2dd0f1401307ae397cf64_Kitestring%2Breport%2Bfinding%2Band%2Bkeeping%2Bclose%2Bfriends%2Bv33.pdf.
[152] Hubbard and Parkin, 66.

partner. Using Lattice Ministries grants, Pastor Joseph's and Pastor Mhisho's congregations were able to offer an abundant Christmas meal for the broader community following their first-ever joint worship service. Joseph also used a Lattice Ministries grant to partner with Gladys and Kuumba to host a community-wide book drive in honor of International Children's Book Day. Additionally, Mulunda Worshiping Community and Kuumba employed one of these grants to host a COVID-19 vaccination drive. Pastor Joseph, a deeply reflective leader in his mid-forties originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo who is the lead pastor of his local congregation, a Lattice Ministries board member, and a staff member of the Presbyterian Church (USA) denomination, tells me that he thinks the Lattice Ministries community grants and monthly meetings combine to help organizations experience a sense of belonging on campus. "Everybody comes and goes," he muses, "but it's like there is a common purpose, common vision that is bringing us together." Within this container, belonging is created among the different partners in ways that, in turn, lower barriers to belonging for families and individuals participating within them.

As Dr. Sharon puts it, the power of Lattice Ministries is "the people on campus." She tells me that being located at Lattice Ministries has enabled her Trinity Academy students to benefit from many of the partners on campus. For example, Kuumba's gregarious CFO Kweks stepped in to be their yearbook photographer, and Charlie often leads their weekly chapel service. Grace, a White woman in her fifties whose accent reveals the decades she lived in New York, speaks to the difference it makes to be on campus as well, telling me that she has recruited both Charlie and Gladys in recent years to testify at the state capitol and give speeches during the annual advocacy day co-hosted by her nonprofit, Healing Horizons. While Grace had become accustomed to working from home when the clinical side of Healing Horizons grew to the extent

that there was no longer space for the advocacy staff to meet at the same location, relocating her office to Lattice Ministries' campus has made her days more enjoyable. Lattice Ministries, Grace explains, gives her the chance to be part "of that community… [that is] creating strength where there wasn't strength before. That's what Lattice Ministries allows us to do." In sum, Lattice Ministries' design is deeply intentional when it comes to time and space, and this intentionality is directed towards the ends of expanding opportunities for belonging on both interpersonal and organizational levels.

Introducing Design

As professor of design Susie Wise explains, "If you want to create change, you've gotta make something."[153] Design is an intentional process by which individuals work towards the change they desire, be it in relation to physical spaces, programs, policies, or gatherings. By its very nature, design creates, builds, and experiments. Design casts a vision of a desired goal and then requires its practitioners to purposefully prototype and see what moves them closer to or further from that goal. Design can be "for" any number of outcomes. For example, one might design for accessibility, for equity, or for maximum efficiency. In what follows, I propose that design for belonging must be guided by three key principles. But first, I briefly locate the concept of design within the related literature.

Design is an emerging field of scholarship and practice that increasingly is seen as related to yet distinct from the field of architecture. Design is an inherently interdisciplinary concept, with natural intersections with diverse fields like disability studies, education, and the arts. While these fields take up different questions and perspectives when it comes to design, they share an interest in how design can help us be intentional about our use of space and time. As an ethicist

[153] Wise, *Design for Belonging*, xiii.

studying practices of belonging, I find the concept of design generative for illuminating the significance of the way Lattice Ministries and its partners intervene into and unsettle the refugee resettlement ecosystem.

Design plays a prominent role in disability studies literature. Universal Design has been propounded as one solution for removing societal barriers experienced by people with disabilities. In its heyday in the 1970s and 1980s, Universal Design was touted as simply the best design for everyone considering the different mobility needs humans both with and without disabilities experience throughout the course of their lifespans. Universal Design has contributed to positive changes like a push for flexible classrooms with movable tables and chairs and a greater number of curb cuts on sidewalks. Within critical disability or crip studies, however, scholars like Aimi Hamraie contest the optimistic narrative that positions Universal Design as "merely commonsense, good design for all." Positing that this rosy view of Universal Design problematically "elides the frictioned struggles and strategic interventions that accessible design produces and therefore tells us little about the critical work of negotiating, contesting, and remaking access-knowledge," [154] Hamraie argues that "barrier-free design was firmly situated in twentieth-century notions of productive citizenship."[155] In other words, Hamraie suggests that Universal Design can ultimately leverage design for the wrong goal. While the field of critical disability studies casts a vision of a radically reimagined society, in Hamraie's reading, Universal Design seeks to help the status quo work ever more efficiently.[156]

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[154] Aimi Hamraie, *Building Access: Universal Design and the Politics of Disability* (Minneapolis, Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 259.
[155] Hamraie, 10.
[156] See also Nirmala Erevelles, *Disability and Difference in Global Contexts: Enabling a Transformative Body Politic*, 1st edition.. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

Architect, ethicist, and theologian Elise Edwards also draws attention to the significance of the question of what we are designing for. Arguing that the *telos* of design must be to "promote the flourishing and empowerment of women and marginalized communities," Edwards suggests that we see design as "prophetic action and an exercise of moral agency." [157] While she is writing specifically with architectural design in mind, her work nonetheless holds implications for the design of spaces, gatherings, and programs as well. Edwards's insight into the collective nature of design and the way people of faith are called to design for good in their communities resonates with my own findings about design for belonging. Edwards asserts, "Each design decision-maker is a problem-solver capable of becoming an agent who envisions the transformation of what exists into what could be. Designers do not accept that what exists will always exist."[158] For Edwards, design is a theologically significant act, as it is one means by which Christians participate in co-creating with God.[159]

Educational theorist David Orr explores design in relation to ecological literacy and care. For Orr, the *telos* of design should be love of the earth. Orr suggests that society's current design takes "whatever wanderlust exists in the human soul" and turns it "into a feedback system" that results in "a cycle of futility, destruction, violence."[160] In contrast, he describes good design as "farms, buildings, neighborhoods, cities, and entire industries powered by renewable energy and discharging no waste and integrated into wholes in which the parts reinforce a larger emergent harmony. It is, in short, the art and science of applied resilience."[161] While harmony functions as the measure of the goodness of design for Orr, I believe that, when it comes to designing for

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[157] Elise M. Edwards, *Architecture, Theology, and Ethics: Making Architectural Design More Just* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2024), 23.
[158] Edwards, 35.
[159] Edwards, 15.
[160] David W. Orr, *Hope Is an Imperative: The Essential David Orr*, 1st ed. 2011. (Washington, DC: Island Press/Center for Resource Economics, Imprint: Island Press, 2011), 220.
[161] Orr, 163.

belonging in the context of refugee resettlement, safety, participation, and play are fitting metrics.

Theologian Willie James Jennings is also concerned with questions of design. Jennings writes about building and design with a focus on the ways theological schools might reckon with the malformation that occurs in these contexts. According to Jennings, the work of building "is a gift given to us by God. It is a doing that speaks our destiny, and it is inescapable." What is less inevitable is the aims towards which an institution builds. In Jennings's words, "We build either toward life or toward death," and "it takes a discernment that can see when institutional operations are moving in the right direction, spiraling up toward life and away from death."[162] Within the context of theological education, Jennings reveals that building towards death can take the form of "a pedagogical imagination calibrated to forming white self-sufficient men and a related pedagogical imagination calibrated to forming a Christian racial and cultural homogeneity that yet performs the nationalist vision of that same white self-sufficient man."[163] I find Jennings's insight into the power of design relevant to the work at hand. Spaces and programs can be designed in ways that incline us toward perceiving our interconnectedness or that reinforce a *habitus* of individualism.

Finally, Susie Wise looks specifically at the way organizations and groups might design for belonging. She suggests that design for belonging uses various levers to attend to different moments of belonging. She articulates the following as being essential moments of belonging: "the invitation, entering, participating, code switching, contributing, flowing, dissenting, repairing, diverging and exiting."[164] Working with "levers" like space, events, rituals, grouping,

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[162] Willie James Jennings, *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2020), 104, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/emory/detail.action?docID=6326198.
[163] Jennings, 7.
[164] Wise, *Design for Belonging*, 32–33.

communications, food, schedules and rhythms, Wise reveals, can help cultivate each of these moments and make it easier (or harder) for people to access a sense of belonging.[165]

In sum, while Hamraie highlights the importance of interrogating what we are designing for, Edwards reveals design to be a theologically significant and constructive way of engaging the world around us. Orr highlights the need for design to be guided by intentional principles, while Jennings draws attention to design's power to form individuals and communities for good or for ill. Wise, finally, clarifies the mechanisms of design and makes clear just how varied design for belonging tools can be. Together, this interdisciplinary group of scholars paints an image of design as a creative and critical practice—an image that resonates deeply with my experience of the significance of design on Lattice Ministries' campus.

Principles of Design

Design for belonging, my time with Lattice Ministries helped me see, upholds three key principles. First, belonging-centered design starts with the physical and emotional safety of all stakeholders, but especially of those who have been made most vulnerable. Second, design for belonging prioritizes opportunities for participation. Third, and finally, design for belonging seeks out and activates moments of levity and play.

Design for Safety

The foundational principle of design for belonging is holistic safety. While the physical and emotional safety of all current and imagined future members of the community should be considered, the safety of the most marginalized individuals necessarily takes precedence over that of those whose privilege already affords them a measure of safety. In the case of my research site, Lattice Ministries, this principle means that the safety of newcomers is placed at the heart of

[165] Wise, 84.

organizational and programmatic design. When it comes to individuals who have come to the U.S. as refugees and asylum seekers, safety from violence is fundamental. Just as essential, though perhaps less obvious, is safety from assimilatory forces—those mechanisms that would suggest that, to become "Americans," important facets of one's cultural and religious heritage must be left behind.

Safety from Violence

If the promise of resettlement to the U.S. is to "provide a relatively safe physical environment within which refugees can attempt, with little assistance, to create a new future,"[166] this promise is often broken. This harsh reality was underscored for me by the two focus groups I facilitated that were comprised almost exclusively of participants who had come to this country as refugees and asylum-seekers. The first of these took place at ABC's second location (which is now closed), at the Ashland Community Center. While I had intended to facilitate the group conversation with ABC's teachers at their Lattice Ministries site, where I volunteered in the baby room throughout the school year, burst pipes over the winter holidays led to multiple months of displacement and interruption of normal programming for the mothers and children enrolled there.

Still wearing masks at that point of the pandemic, the teachers who participated were careful to project loudly so that all who had gathered around the long office table—in total, eleven women from eight countries—could hear as they reflected on what makes for a good life in the U.S. Some women opened the goodie bags I had prepared with clementines, oatmeal cranberry cookies, and dates, while those observing Ramadan packed them in their purses while assuring me that they would be enjoyed after they broke their fasts at sunset. Though none of my

[166] Besteman, *Making Refuge*, 136.

focus group questions ask specifically about safety, I hastily highlight the theme's prominence in fieldnotes following our conversation. At first, safety was raised as a positive part of life in the U.S. For example, Noor, an elegant woman from Iraq in her early fifties whose hijab always matches her jewelry, expressed her gratitude for the absence of war in this country. Aisha, an energetic woman in her thirties originally from Somalia, spoke about how significant it is that people can practice their religions in this country without fear of government persecution.

The conversation quickly changed tone, however, when I asked the ABC teachers about their dreams for this country. To encourage them to creatively engage the question, I invited them to consider the prompt, "If you were president of the U.S., what would you change to make it easier to belong?" Dontal, a woman whose gentle demeanor makes her a favorite of children and mothers alike and who first came to the U.S. from Eritrea, jumped in without hesitation to assert, "No more gun violence!" She shared her perception that not only is gun violence a significant national issue, but also that violence in general is a concern in the local community. "The Ashland community is not safe for our kids, our family," she insisted, "We need security for our kids to play and enjoy." She added that she would like to see a greater presence of police at the local park. While Dontal expressed trust in law enforcement, that trust is not always shared by newcomers in the community who experienced violence at the hands of police in their countries of origin. Noor echoed Dontal's concerns and added that another safety concern in the U.S. pertains to dangerous drivers: "People drive like they're on the interstate instead of in apartment complexes!" The whole group expressed their agreement with Noor's assessment, no doubt thinking of a tragedy that touched the ABC community a few years earlier when a teacher's toddler was killed in a hit-and-run car accident in a local apartment complex.

A similar conversational pattern emerges when I facilitate a focus group a few months later with Kuumba's case managers, sewing instructors, and community ambassadors. As this conversation took place well after the conclusion of Ramadan, we met for a lunch catered by the group's go-to spot, Chick-fil-A, in Lattice Ministries' gym (which is located on the level below Kuumba's resource navigation offices and sewing classrooms). Over chicken nuggets, salad, and brownies, the ten women eagerly jumped into the discussion. Like the teachers at ABC, they were quick to affirm that the U.S. offers substantial benefits when it comes to safety. Narges, a young woman from Afghanistan and one of Kuumba's most recent hires, drew sharp contrasts between her country of origin and the U.S.: "I like America because it's safer than Afghanistan, my country." She added that here, you are not subjected to the question, "What religion are you?"—a query that carried dangerously political inflections in Afghanistan. Durga, Kuumba's office administrator at the time and my friend through the Kuumba ESL Buddy program, expressed her gratitude for safety in the form of freedom of speech and religion in the U.S. Soon, however, the conversation shifted. Gladys raised the unsafe conditions asylum seekers are subjected to in the U.S. When asked the question about the first changes they would make were they powerful national leaders, Tes, an expressive woman in her early twenties from Eritrea, asserted, "I would work on ending violence, whether that be [through] gun control or providing more jobs." She confidently concluded, "You can say the U.S. is safe to a certain point, but sometimes it's out of control—so I'll work on that!"

As the reflections of the ABC and Kuumba teams make clear, safe spaces, programs, and communities do not just happen. They must be built through intentional design. When it comes to individuals who have sought refuge in the U.S., safety against violence must be foregrounded in design before other kinds of safety can be secured or dimensions of belonging considered. In

contrast to my research partners' mixed perceptions of safety in the U.S., in general I heard agreement that the campus of Lattice Ministries is, by design, a safe place. For example, Kweks tells me that Kuumba chose to locate their social services and sewing program at Lattice Ministries rather than work out of a more central location that he toured in downtown Ashland. Lattice Ministries felt like a place where women could feel safe coming both during the day and in the evening. Gladys shares that, above all else, her hope is for Kuumba to be "a place where you feel safe." The ABC teachers affirm Kweks' perception. Noor tells me of Lattice Ministries, "Kids feel safe here." Zainab agrees, adding, "The mothers too, the teachers—we feel belonging here." These descriptions of Lattice Ministries as a space where people can experience safety reflect community members' understanding that belonging cannot be cultivated in unsafe spaces.

Lattice Ministries designs for belonging by prioritizing safety from violence in two specific ways: first, through attention to the built and natural environment of the campus and second, through the intentional creation of partnerships in the surrounding community. This first practice of attending to safety can be witnessed from the earliest days of Lattice Ministries' existence. Mark, the White pastor of an affluent Presbyterian congregation in the neighborhood that borders Ashland and the first board chair of Lattice Ministries, tells me that the woods on campus used to attract deer hunters. Aware of the violence so many refugees have experienced in the years leading up to resettlement, the board offered a resounding "no" when hunters asked for permission to hunt on site. Design for safety takes a more quotidian form in the campus rounds that Lattice Ministries executive director Charlie conducts with Jean, a former refugee from the D.R.C. who is the facilities manager. Together, they spend time simply walking the campus at least once a week. They do so, in Charlie's words, "to make sure spaces are safe and clean and functional and welcoming, and there's no issues that we're not aware of." Sarah, the director of

ABC, reflects on just how far the campus has come thanks to Charlie and the board's attention to safety on campus. She tells me that a simple but powerful step Lattice Ministries took was to invest in better lighting in the parking lot. Gladys recalls her delight when she learned that the newly birthed Lattice Ministries intended to take active responsibility for maintaining the safety and upkeep of the aging campus. She shares, "We very much welcomed the idea of having folks who would be especially taking care of the facilities that needed so much attention. We really welcomed that, and we are very happy to have folks around us who are intentionally making sure that we have a safe and welcoming space to provide our programs."

Designing for safety also takes the form of proactively building relationships with the broader Ashland community. For example, during my year of fieldwork, Lattice Ministries hosted local law enforcement officers, a city commissioner, and members from a neighboring subdivision that is infamous in the area for its absentee landlords and incidents of car theft, vandalism, and conflict. For two hours, community members sipped lemonade from Styrofoam cups and munched from snack-sized bags of Sun Chips as officers shared their personal cell phone numbers and the commissioner checked possible dates for a neighborhood clean-up. The meeting organizer closed the meeting by warmly thanking Lattice Ministries for being a safe space for the community to gather and for supporting efforts to enhance the safety of the area. These kinds of intentional meetings make the neighborhood around Lattice Ministries (and, therefore, Lattice Ministries itself) safer. They bring people into conversation, raise awareness about the kinds of resources that are available, and deepen collective investment in looking out for one another and their community. As Salma, an ABC teacher originally from Sudan and a natural leader in the community, poignantly shared about her country of origin, "Back home, you're not scared of your neighbor." That is so often not the case here. Connecting neighbors to

one another not only reduces incidents of violence in the community, but it also lays an essential foundation for experiences of belonging to slowly grow.

Safety from Assimilation

Just as design for belonging must adhere to the principle of foregrounding safety from physical violence or danger, so too must it strive to create safety from assimilation. At first glance, the impulse to assimilate can be mistaken for welcome and acceptance. After all, assimilatory messages can convey an invitation to belong to those whose identities mark them as different from the group, community, or society in question. However, such invitations come with unacceptably high costs, a reality my research partners see clearly. Requiring newcomers to change their clothing, cultural or religious practices, or other aspects of their identity as conditions for belonging enacts a form of symbolic violence. Symbolic violence unfolds as actors ranging from governments and societal institutions to news outlets and popular media engage in the work of "transforming one arbitrary cultural standpoint in social space into a universal standard, or a taken-for-granted 'doxa,' against which other cultural positions can only come off as deficient."[167] As leaders of the Othering & Belonging Institute, john a. powell and Stephen Menendian explain, "Rather than reduce intergroup inequality or marginality, assimilation seeks to erase the differences upon which othering is structured."[168] To return to Willie James Jennings' argument introduced above, efforts to assimilate "others" so that they are more like "us" are antithetical to true, life-affirming belonging. Jennings' work highlights the way systems within higher education generally and theological schools specifically are complicit

[167] Martin Petzke, "The Culture of Official Statistics. Symbolic Domination and 'Bourgeois' Assimilation in Quantitative Measurements of Immigrant Integration in Germany," *Theory and Society* 52, no. 2 (2023): 213, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-022-09503-2; Pierre Bourdieu, *On the State: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1989-1992*, English edition. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), 222–23.
[168] john a powell and Stephen Menendian, "The Problem of Othering: Towards Inclusiveness and Belonging," *Othering and Belonging* (blog), June 29, 2017, https://www.otheringandbelonging.org/the-problem-of-othering/.

in "forming white self-sufficient men."[169] He suggests that no matter one's gender or racial background, succeeding in these institutions can require disconnecting from one's community and denying ones' lived experiences. Such theological education is malforming, drawing students away from their communities of belonging and clouding their awareness of who they truly are as interdependent and rooted beings.

Many local institutions and community spaces play similarly assimilatory functions. The bar for entry is high, demanding English proficiency, discouraging the use of other languages even at home, stigmatizing use of public benefit programs, and assuming one will not need to pause for prayer, be fasting, or have religious or cultural dietary needs. Even when established Americans have no desire to advance an assimilatory agenda and perpetrate the symbolic violence it entails, when we do not pause to take stock of how we are setting up our programs, spaces, and gatherings, we are prone to do what is comfortable for us and design with individuals who speak English, drive cars, send emails, and identify as Judeo-Christian or nonreligious exclusively in mind.

Design that counters assimilatory forces can and should shape our physical spaces. ABC's classroom walls, covered with posters in the languages of its community members and images representing women and children from around the world, are designed to communicate that their students are welcome, that they already belong to the community as they are, and that they do not have to make changes to fit in or access community membership. So too do Kuumba's colorful fabrics and displays of beautiful dresses representing cultures from all over the world convey powerful messages of belonging. Gladys names that the need to create safety from the pressure to assimilate intentionally informs her choices about Kuumba's environment

[169] Jennings, *After Whiteness*, 7.

and programs. Her decisions are guided by her vision of Kuumba as "a place where you feel understood, where you feel comfortable to be in and be yourself, a place where your culture is respected, and you are able to have those intimate conversations without the fear of judgment."

Designing for safety from assimilation often requires boundaries to be drawn around what is and is not acceptable practice in the community or organization. Lattice Ministries and its onsite partners consistently specify certain prohibitions on campus. For example, at Kuumba, a commitment is made that Muslim women will not be asked to sew short skirts or shorts. Charlie, a thoughtful White man in his early thirties with roots in the Anglican tradition, has committed to open the monthly onsite partners meetings with a poem or reflection after learning that his previous practice of opening with prayer was challenging for some of the non-Christian members participating in the meeting. Lattice Ministries' board is clear about their prohibition of proselytizing on campus, and this consideration is built into the process of discerning whether to enter new partner relationships.

There are several organizational practices to which Lattice Ministries partners are positively committed as well. For example, among many of the onsite organizations, there is a commitment to be a place where community members can openly discuss religion. Gladys describes Kuumba as the "safest space to discuss spirituality and faith" for newcomers and notes that the taboo nature of religious discussion in so many other spaces in the U.S. contrasts sharply with the centrality of religion for many newcomers. The same is true of Meera's badminton group, where players make an intentional commitment to acknowledge and celebrate one another on their respective religious holidays. Another commitment relevant to this principle of designing for safety from assimilation can be witnessed at ABC. Jamila, the site manager of ABC's location at Lattice Ministries who has a way of befriending everyone she meets,

highlights how the staff intentionally address the different privacy needs of their school community. She notes that a woman wearing a niqab might require more privacy than a Christian woman and that breastfeeding women in general require ABC to exercise careful design when it comes to managing the flow of visitors into the school space.[170] Likewise, ABC crafts their school schedule with Muslim prayer times in mind and serves halal options when the community shares a meal. Lattice Ministries has adopted this commitment as well, ensuring that, whenever a campus-wide gathering takes place, the food comes from the local halal-certified restaurant owned by Jamila's cousin.

Design for safety from assimilatory pressures also ensures that any cultural or religious adaptation taken by community members is voluntary, chosen on their own terms rather than as a condition for belonging. Gladys spells this out explicitly regarding Kuumba's programmatic design. When the women enrolled in Kuumba's sewing program decide they want to learn English, they do so in a way that is dictated by their own learning priorities through Kuumba's ESL Buddy Program. Never is English made to be a prerequisite for participation in the sewing program, however. It is up to the students to decide whether this is a priority for them and, if so, to what degree to prioritize it.

Design for safety from assimilation also takes the form of actively analyzing and working to shape culture on organizational, local, and societal levels. As Grace, the director of Healing Horizons (the mental health organization whose advocacy office is located at Lattice Ministries) explains, one way to remove barriers that refugees and asylum seekers face is to "start to have [states in the Southeast] view newcomers in a positive way and to really embrace them as adding to our economy, culture, and society and not detracting." For Healing Horizons, attempts to

[170] A niqab is a veil that covers a woman's hair and face but not her eyes.

redesign societal perceptions of refugees takes the form of strategic advocacy, partnership-building, and awareness raising campaigns. Clair, a White minister at one of Lattice Ministries' offsite partner churches, suggests that Lattice Ministries designs for safety from assimilation by working to be a place where community members receive the message, "You're welcome here. We're not going to call the police if you're a young person of color walking across campus—because you're ours, we want you here, and you belong here. You can come here and find someone who is happy to see you." Becoming a community that can genuinely convey this message requires intentional design. Making this message a reality requires open conversations with established Americans about the need to prioritize the safety of others over our own desires for comfort. Design comes into play here as we practice noticing who does and does not feel entitled to be in a space and as we adjust based on these observations.[171]

For some newcomers, the very definition of belonging is safety. For example, when explaining her understanding of belonging to me, Durga, a petite woman originally from Pakistan with a witty sense of humor, shared, "I'm not sure if I am right or wrong, but belonging is, I think, safety, support, or protection—that kind of thing." Others make clear the way that participation—the design for belonging principle to which I turn next—cannot be supported until safety has been secured. Gladys insists, "If you're not comfortable, you're not going to ask for help…you have to feel safe." Finally, others reveal the reciprocal, mutually reinforcing relationship between safety and belonging, and suggest that, just as you cannot belong when you do not feel safe, experiencing belonging to a place can make you feel safer. ABC director Sarah, a White woman with a welcoming demeanor, explains of belonging:

> It really gives a sense of safety and power, not power to be used against someone, but strength…With so many women in this community, they are from strong communities, not this rugged individualism [that conveys] you should be strong on your own. There's

[171] Wise, *Design for Belonging*, 28.

> this kind of assumption that strength comes from the group, and so many have lost that. And now to have that again is exciting.

Sarah speaks directly to the importance of making design explicit and unearths the way that assimilation into independence and self-sufficiency can all too easily be baked into organizational, policy, and program design when left uninterrogated. Lattice Ministries partner organizations like ABC and Kuumba illuminate the labor involved in actively designing in ways that resists formation into self-sufficiency and the temptation to make becoming like "us" a condition for belonging.

Design for Participation

The second principle of design for belonging is that participation must be planned for. Like safety, participation does not just happen. While designing for belonging is an inherently nonlinear and iterative process, sequencing is still relevant. Design must first build with safety at its core before participation and play are possible. Lattice Ministries board member Tammy, a gregarious White woman in her mid-sixties, articulates the relationship between safety and participation. She explains that real interaction and connection across difference are "not going to happen unless you feel safe, you're ok, and you trust who you're talking to." Once safety has been designed for, belonging can be supported when we design for participation through attention to space, communal and individual needs, and agency.

Space

The space in which our communities and organizations gather can serve as a facilitator or inhibitor of participation. Indeed, space is the first "lever" of design that Susie Wise highlights,[172] and it is often foregrounded in disability literature as well. At ABC, Sarah explains

[172] Wise, 84.

that they try to make sure every detail communicates the message to children that "we've set this whole place up for you." They hang posters with multiple languages on the walls, use children's books that reflect the cultural background of children in the room, and prioritize toys and activities that reflect close attention to children's developmental stages. Along the hallway of Lattice Ministries' office building, colorful maps invite community members to indicate other countries that are part of their life narratives using stickers. Similarly, Kuumba's social services office welcomes visitors with parking lot signs proclaiming the languages spoken by staff inside. Each design element sends the signal to newcomers that their presence is anticipated and welcomed and not a deviation from the norm.

As I observed at Lattice Ministries, design for belonging uses space to make participation easier in part through the organizational practice of storage. In Mario Small's research exploring the difference that "organizational embeddedness" in "the right organizations" can make on an individual's social capital, he identifies validation, storage, referral, and collaboration as the mechanisms by which organizations can challenge network inequality, the unequal distribution of opportunity-generating connections in society.[173] In Small's framework, storage refers to "how libraries, schools, childcare centers, community centers, churches, and other organizations serve as repositories of information and resources." [174] While one might typically associate storage with material possessions, here storage entails not only the stockpiling of needed material resources, but also of information and connections.

On Lattice Ministries' campus, partners practice storage both actively and passively. When Naomi at ABC distributes diapers for students to take home or accompanies them to the

[173] Mario Luis Small, *Unanticipated Gains: Origins of Network Inequality in Everyday Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 177, https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195384352.001.0001.
[174] Small, 187.

local library and explains how borrowing privileges work, active storage is taking place. When Kuumba displays information about the SNAP program, county food pantries, domestic violence assistance, breast cancer detection, and COVID-19 vaccine drives in the entryway leading to the sewing classrooms and their social services offices, passive storage is taking place. This storage is rendered even more valuable to individuals connected to Kuumba by the fact that these flyers have been translated by staff into multiple languages. Storage is also used to support participation among and across Lattice Ministries partners. For example, Charlie uses both printed flyers in the Lattice Ministries office and regular "resource round-up" emails to ensure that onsite partner staff can inform the people they work with about relevant events and services available on campus and in the broader community. While the inability to meet one's material needs or to find out about opportunities in the community can thwart newcomers' participation, storage at a community hub like Lattice Ministries makes it easier for community members to access needed resources and information and, in turn, to participate in ways that contribute to their ability to experience belonging.

Needs

Closely related, design for participation requires learning from and planning around the needs that have been surfaced through the belonging practice explored in the following chapter, accompaniment. As individuals and organizations accompany newcomers, they inevitably bump into access barriers related to language, transportation, cultural differences, and the dearth of affordable childcare in the U.S. While accompaniment requires a willingness to pivot and either create or "become" access in the face of these barriers, design for participation entails creating places and programs in a way that anticipates and addresses these barriers and related needs from the outset.

Sadie, a real estate agent and long-time volunteer with Mulunda Worshiping Community's afterschool initiative, drives home the connection between belonging and design that attends to needs. She explains that belonging can only happen when "you know that you are cared for, that you're safe, and that your needs are being met by people who care about the origin of those needs." At Lattice Ministries, participation is supported through attention to religious, communication, and scheduling needs. For example, design for participation can be seen in the way that ABC closed for Ramadan last year while Kuumba did not. Gladys explains that, although she proposed closing for the Muslim holy month of prayer and fasting, she received feedback from the women in the sewing program that they would like to continue their classes. ABC students, in contrast, named the difficulty of mobilizing their children for school while the mothers were fasting. As such, both organizations' decisions reflect a commitment to build their programs in ways that support participation.

Sayari's work creating Mwanga Wa Jua is a prime illustration of designing with the needs of the community in mind from the outset. A graduate of a master's program in tropical forest management in Congo, Sayari and I first met when he was working with Growing Refuge and was leading a workday to prepare the garden beds on Lattice Ministries' campus for the fall planting season. Now an employee of one of the local refugee resettlement agencies, the charismatic 40-year-old is in the process of launching his own nonprofit with support from his network at Lattice Ministries. Sayari tells me that he began dreaming about building his own organization when he realized how much children struggled during long Sunday church services that did not include opportunities for them to be outside and play in nature. Responding to their need for more embodied opportunities to engage, Sayari borrowed the church van and began facilitating trips to places like the local botanical garden and the zoo. During one trip, Sayari tells

me, "One kid was like, 'Hey, I want to come here every day.' And that was the moment I thought, this is something really cool to do—not only cool, but *important.*" While launching his nonprofit, he realized both that children benefited greatly from being outside and that parents had concerns about sending their children on outings without them. In response, Sayari reworked his plans and decided to facilitate nature excursions that brought both adults and their children together to experience the natural beauty of their new community, enabling families to participate through intentional, responsive design.

ABC powerfully illustrates what it looks like to (re)design with one another's communications needs in mind. A few years ago, the organization made the shift from email to What's App, both for communicating with the mothers enrolled in the literacy program and with the teaching team. As Sarah explains, "I didn't do What's App before two years ago. But why should it be incumbent on you to adapt to a corporate structure when I can just as easily make my own changes?" On an interpersonal level, Sadie reflects on the way her experience volunteering with Mulunda Worshiping Community and its afterschool program prompted her to essentially "redesign" her own manner of communication. She tells me, "I knew that there was a language barrier, and I felt like I somehow wanted to take better care of my words…I found myself slowing down, I found myself trying to be clearer, trying to be very direct in my communication."

Lattice Ministries designs with an eye toward communication needs when it formally solicits feedback from its onsite partners through an annual survey that invites groups to consider how Lattice Ministries might better support their work. The partner meetings are also a space for partners to contribute to Lattice Ministries' vision and decisions. Sarah names how significant it has been through the years that the partner meetings have been "listening spaces" rather than

opportunities for a hierarchical landlord to tell partners what needs to be done. Tammy shares that the communications Charlie sends among partners on a regular basis have shifted in tone and content over time thanks to partners' requests for more details on community resources, events, and webinars and a little less theological reflection.

Through the years, this attention to needs has prompted Lattice Ministries partners to support participation by collaborating. Collaboration—the organizational practice that Mario Small names as "the costliest of all mechanisms for brokering resources"—includes instances in which an organization "did more than mere referring; it collaborated in the provision of the resource, providing logistical support for the externally provided good." [175] Among the childcare centers Small studied, he found that some would bring in mental health practitioners to lead workshops on topics like stress management rather than simply referring parents to such professionals. On Lattice Ministries' campus, this organizational practice takes place when ABC brings someone in to talk with the students about the process of taking the citizenship exam or when Dr. Sharon facilitates fieldtrips to community businesses that are open to hosting student interns. Several significant moments of collaboration have been named already in reference to Lattice Ministries' community grants: for example, Mulunda Worshiping Community and Kuumba employed a community grant to host a COVID-19 vaccine drive on campus. Collaboration at Lattice Ministries enables community members to get their needs met within the context of the community and, in so doing, supports their ability to continue to participate in the life of that community.

Attention to needs can also be facilitated through the organizational mechanism of referral. Small highlights the significance of the way some childcare centers "held

[175] Small, 152.

semipermanent arrangements with multiple resource providers through which the providers received clients and center parents received a discount or free services." [176] On Lattice Ministries campus, referral happens every time Gladys, upon learning that a woman in the sewing program is seeking spiritual counsel or care, refers them to a faith community that meets on campus at which their home language is spoken. Further, Gladys has met with the leaders of all six churches on campus to ensure they know about the services Kuumba offers so that referral flows both ways. These referrals extend to the recreational groups as well. Gladys tells me they were recently able to help the son of a badminton team member with applying for a social service to which he is entitled. Durga was connected to driving lessons through Kuumba's referral. Kweks notes that they frequently make personal referrals to a job placement organization that they trust in the community when someone is looking for non-sewing related jobs after graduation.

Referral also occurs among the partners in ways that directly benefit the individuals who participate with the different groups and organizations on campus. While one might expect this to occur primarily among the nonprofits focused on refugee services, Dr. Sharon makes clear that referral extends to include her predominantly Black American students as well. Dr. Sharon was referred to a community connection by another partner during a monthly partner meeting when she was struggling to find affordable laptops for her students several years ago. As a result of this referral, her school can consistently and freely access computers as well as ongoing technical assistance. Similarly, Sharon and Jamila have engaged in referral conversations about the possibility of enrolling an ABC graduate in Trinity Academy. Concerned that the child would not receive the individualized attention he requires at a public elementary school, Jamila wondered whether the smaller learning environment and Christian context of Sharon's school might both

[176] Small, 152.

be positives in the eyes of the child's conservative Muslim parents. Just as attention to welcoming, accessible space can reduce barriers to participation, so too does an intentional assessment of newcomers' needs open pathways into participating in local programs and the broader community.

Agency

Building with an eye towards participation is also supported through attention to agency. This can take several forms, including invitations to step into new roles and the creation of an empowering structure. Pastor Joseph highlights the strength of the connection between supporting agency through invitation and designing for participation. Joseph explains that, while young adults in general became less connected to local faith communities in the U.S. during the pandemic, this was not the case at Mulunda Worshiping Community. Joseph muses that this was in part because he had to rely on them heavily for their assistance when he realized the congregation needed to pivot to online worship. Young adults not only helped with editing videos, but they also played music for the recorded services. While this increased participation happened because of necessity, it only strengthened Joseph's commitment to invite young adults' greater participation in the ministries of Mulunda at every turn. Pastor Joseph's awareness of the importance of supporting the agency of community members in programming and in the work of design itself reflects design scholar Susie Wise's injunction to attend to both "participation" and "contribution" as essential moments of belonging.[177]

For Joseph, the key question when it comes to design is one of participation: "*Who* is designing? Who is participating in that design?" He highlights the frequency with which design does not include the people for whom the design intervention is intended and gives the example

[177] Wise, *Design for Belonging*, 32–33.

of American aid in the Democratic Republic of Congo as a cautionary tale. While the national staple is rice, the program tried to help farmers grow bananas. Joseph concludes, "If those participating in that structure are not a part of the design, there's a discrepancy." Lessons gleaned from this stark failure to design in a participatory way inform his leadership of Mulunda and his plans for the community's young adults. Reflecting on the Mulunda community's and Lattice Ministries' futures, he muses, "Everyone can't fit in my shoes. So, how can we build structures that can move?" This idea of movable structures that adapt to different community members' needs while at the same time honoring their agency brings us back to the Hinterland Lab report's insight into the significance of "air" as well as structure when it comes to supporting relationships.[178]

Charlie points to the way that structure and commitment can strengthen agency. He notes just how significant a mutually agreed upon lease can be, comparing Lattice Ministries' leases with onsite partners to biblical covenants: "When something comes up, we can revisit the covenant—that's how Israel functioned and how Israel became a community of belonging, by having a covenant before God and each other, and we are trying to do the same." Here we find a form of what the Hinterland Lab report refers to as a "container."[179] Leases provide structure within which a relationship of trust and reciprocity can develop and support the agency of the organizations on campus to act within agreed upon parameters. Meera, the captain of the badminton team, notes how meaningful it was when her group was given the greenlight through an updated lease agreement with Lattice Ministries to paint the appropriate lines for a badminton

[178] Hubbard and Parkin, "Kitestring: Finding and Keeping Close Friends in the Modern World," 52; This insight is similarly captured and enacted in the work of Alexander Calder, one of the inventors of the mobile. Unsatisfied with art that "would be perfect but…always still," he sought to create pieces that could "catch the air." Marla Prather, *Alexander Calder, 1898-1976* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1998), 57, 230.
[179] Hubbard and Parkin, "Kitestring: Finding and Keeping Close Friends in the Modern World," 52.

court in the gym after years of having put down and then removed temporary tape lines. “This is our home,” she affirms, and Lattice Ministries’ decision to allow onsite groups to use their spaces as they wish cemented that.

In conclusion, design for belonging must seek to support participation. Cultivating participation requires attention to space, to community members’ material needs, and to their agency as well. Participation and design for belonging function in a virtuous cycle: design that enhances participation expands belonging opportunities, and participation in the design process can reinforce belonging and improve design quality. Participatory design is part of Lattice Ministries’ origin story, as Mulunda Worshiping Community, ABC, Kuumba, and Breaking Bread each helped to cast the vision of the campus as a place where all could belong. Pastor Joseph’s insight warrants repeating here: “Who is designing? Who is participating in that design?”

Design for Play

Finally, just as design for belonging must prioritize safety and participation, so too, my research partners affirm, must it strive to support play. Play speaks to the “air” component raised by the Hinterland Lab report on friendship, which suggested friendships are best held by “containers” combining structure and air, or room for creativity and play.[180] Although design for play might sound counterintuitive, given the common association between play and spontaneity, in fact play is something for which we can and should plan. Though play can come naturally to children—especially children whose material needs are amply covered—it can be out of reach for adults and children whose families live at or beneath the poverty line.

[180] Hubbard and Parkin, 52.

Play and belonging exist in a mutually reinforcing relationship. When we feel we belong, we can play, Play helps adults and children alike let their guards down, show up with openness, and experience ease and flow.[181] Sayari highlights the power of play when sharing about his nascent nonprofit, Mwanga Wa Jua, which, as noted above, is designed to make it easier for both children and their families to engage playfully in nature. That time outside together, Sayari explains, holds a restorative quality, offering a chance "to get resources again and to keep going." Sarah observes a similar dynamic at work within ABC programming, telling me about the joy that often fills both the children's and mothers' classroom spaces. Of the mothers, she reflects, "I just don't think these women are laughing that hard anywhere else." Furthermore, when we allow ourselves to play, we are far more likely to experience one another as peers, contributing to nonhierarchical relationships that are conducive to growing a sense of belonging. Lattice Ministries' director, Charlie, insightfully speaks to the importance of play when it comes to experiencing belonging in the context of diversity. For adults and children alike, Charlie suggests, play enables people to engage "shoulder to shoulder and not receiving a service."

Playing together disrupts hierarchies and troubles stereotypes. As Gordon Allport's intergroup contact theory suggests, interacting in a sustained and nonhierarchical way with someone who had previously been deemed as belonging to the "out-group" has the power to disrupt patterns of othering.[182] Playing fits these requirements better than any activity I can think of. As Meera explains, "This is the thing: no matter what culture, what background, what

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[181] Courtney T. Goto, *The Grace of Playing: Pedagogies for Leaning into God's New Creation* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016), http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/emory/detail.action?docID=4652346; Jaco Hamman, "Playing," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology* (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2011), 42–50, https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444345742.ch3; Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, "The Royal Road: Children, Play, and the Religious Life," *Pastoral Psychology* 58, no. 5–6 (2009): 505–19, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-009-0241-7.
[182] Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice: 25th Anniversary Edition*, Unabridged edition (Reading, Mass: Basic Books, 1979).

community we are from, when we come on the court, we are one family." Design for play entails attention to the "unnecessary" and to beauty.

The "Unnecessary"

While organizations working to support newcomers are so often forced by necessity to focus on urgent matters like securing employment and paying bills, play requires spaciousness. It demands attention that extends beyond that which is immediately necessary. Jamila and Charlie first drew my attention to the relationship between play and the "unnecessary." At a monthly Lattice Ministries partner meeting, Jamila shared that she and the other ABC staff will be facilitating teatime for the mothers in the program. She explained that when they offered this time at the end of the fall semester the previous year, she was surprised by just how meaningful it was for everyone. Jamila recalled that mothers came up to her afterwards and confided, "'We just felt special when the tea came to us.' So, we're doing it again, that small thing where they just sit down and we're able to serve them: 'Would you like sugar, cream?'" For women who usually find themselves navigating life at a breakneck pace, being served cardamom tea and ginger cookies and having the opportunity to leisurely "hang out" with others is a playful, restorative experience. Play likewise takes place during the "extra" moments when congregation members enjoy shared meals after worshiping at Mulunda Worshiping Community and as sewing students relish in one another's company at Kuumba, surprising each other with cake on their birthdays and celebrating when a peer sells a dress she has sewn.

After Jamila shared about the experience of serving tea to the mothers in the program at the end of the fall semester, Charlie reflected on the extra planning entailed in providing that time and how that is both "another task on someone's task list" but also "what makes people feel a sense of not just transaction wholeness." Regrettably, taking time to attend to excess, to create

conditions of spaciousness and abundance, can fall to the wayside when crises emerge. For example, during the pandemic many of ABC's natural rhythms were disrupted, including their practice of sharing meals with mothers, children, and teachers alike to mark significant religious holidays and milestones for community members. It has taken intentional discernment and effort to reintroduce opportunities for play that include the mothers and not only their children.

Charlie captures the importance of attending to the unnecessary in his choice of a poem to open a Lattice Ministries monthly partner meeting. He tells the group that he chose the poem "Red Brocade" by Naomi Shihab Nye because of its resonance with the way Lattice Ministries partners operate. Nye reflects on Arab traditions of hospitality, concluding with the powerful lines:

> No, I was not busy when you came!
> I was not preparing to be busy…
> Your plate is waiting.
> We will snip fresh mint into your tea.

Lattice Ministries, I suggest, prepares to be unbusy and "snips fresh mint" for tea when its community members design for play and take the time that is needed to seize and expand on moments of levity. For Jamila, who says of the work happening on Lattice Ministries' campus, "It's a beloved community, it's not just a program," attention to the seemingly unnecessary is vital when it comes to growing belonging.

Beauty

My research partners also helped me see that design for play can be supported through attention to beauty. Tammy describes the connection between belonging and beauty, explaining, "The sense of beauty, that is something that we can share. It's not language restricted." Beauty

supports play in that it can spark a sense of delight, wonder, and awe.[183] Sayari's organization seeks to connect newcomers to the natural beauty of their new environment, grounded in the awareness that this not only supports play but can also facilitate a deeper sense of belonging as children and their parents learn to recognize local trees and birds. Pastor Thang, whose Zo congregation first got its start on Lattice Ministries' campus, also points to the connection between beauty and belonging. He describes the campus as a "beautiful garden of belonging—very multi-ethnic, multiracial, multi-language" where "God's presence is [in] the multitude of languages, people, ethnicity, color, creed." Elise Edwards makes a robust case for the importance of beauty when it comes to design. She argues, "Beauty does more than provide an aesthetic experience—or to be more precise, we can say that *through* an aesthetic experience like creating a beautiful object or beholding one, beauty offers something crucial to human souls." She continues, "By providing pleasure and aesthetic appeal, beauty contributes to *shalom,* a part of God's design for human flourishing."[184]

I see this connection between design, space, beauty, and play at work in Lattice Ministries' central courtyard on a regular basis. This space approximates the common spaces newcomers might have known in their countries of origin. ABC teachers reflected on the stark contrast between the way neighbors could flow into and out of one another's homes organically in other countries and the absence of spaces and rhythms to facilitate that in the U.S. As Zainab put it during our focus group conversation, "Here, you don't see your neighbors, there's a door there. Where I come from, doors are open." Zainab reflected on how someone across her street moved in a year ago and they still don't know each other, to which Aisha replied sardonically,

[183] Dacher Keltner, *Awe: The New Science of Everyday Wonder and How It Can Transform Your Life* (Penguin, 2024).
[184] Edwards, *Architecture, Theology, and Ethics*, 153.

"You've graduated"—implying that Zainab is describing a quintessentially American experience. In the public green spaces on Lattice Ministries' campus, I glimpse an attempt at designing beautiful space where doors are indeed open. The extent to which this is a priority on campus can be witnessed in Charlie's recruitment of Sage as a "beautification" volunteer. Formerly involved with Mulunda Worshiping Community's afterschool program, Sage's focus these days on campus is attending to making the shared outdoor spaces beautiful and inviting. In this central courtyard, people linger. They pause to admire the flowers and stay to chat with another mother in ABC; with Gladys, as she heads to Kuumba's sewing classrooms above the gym; with Dr. Sharon, as she leads her students to the garden beds at the front of the Lattice Ministries property. Children blow bubbles, play with chalk, and amuse themselves with make-believe games under the gaze of an entire community of mothers.

In conclusion, gathering playfully enables community members to engage as peers and "playmates," rather than as service recipients; to be present to joy; and to temporarily suspend awareness of the constraints that can characterize life following resettlement. When designed for in advance, play has the power to disrupt power dynamics and upend the traditional scripts of how we are expected to behave with one another. Because play is supported by attention to excess, to the "nonessential," to beauty, it requires substantial bandwidth to facilitate. While play occurs primarily within individual onsite partners, I suggest that the fact of their belonging to the Lattice Ministries ecosystem frees up the bandwidth necessary to support it. On the logistical side, every time Lattice Ministries takes responsibility for managing an issue on campus, the partner groups are supported in playfully engaging their community members rather than dealing with the stress of problem-solving. Too, when Lattice Ministries brings a Scout troop to campus to clear trails in the furthest corner of campus, the space is rendered more conducive to play.

Finally, whenever Lattice Ministries hosts gatherings to celebrate upcoming winter holidays or joint meetings with partner staff and board members over Nepali samosas or a meal catered from a local Afghan restaurant, Lattice Ministries invites staff to experience play for a moment as well before returning refreshed to face the organizational and communal needs that can feel so unending at times.

Limitations of Design

Although we can create places, programs, gatherings, and policies with the intention of adhering to the principles of belonging, our ability to implement these intentions is often partial. Again and again, the Lattice Ministries community's efforts to design for belonging bumped into barriers to executing this design. Seeking to act on design principles surfaced the reality that designing for the safety, participation, and play of *all* is an unreachable ideal. In designing for the belonging of some—in Lattice Ministries' case, of individuals who came to the U.S. as refugees—the community inadvertently makes the choice to deprioritize supporting the belonging of others.

This tension surfaces most acutely at Lattice Ministries in relation to people experiencing homelessness. Through the years, the shady woods on Lattice Ministries' campus have attracted individuals and families seeking refuge not from political or religious persecution but from the harsh exposure to the elements and human violence that issue from being unhoused. While the newcomers with refugee and asylum-seeker backgrounds are invited into the heart of campus life, the individuals and families who sleep in the woods in search of shelter are not. Lattice Ministries staff do what they can to respond to these individuals with dignity and care. Charlie worked with the board to compile information about affordable housing, community shelters, and food pantries. He keeps hygiene kits in his office for distribution. I witness Charlie's desire to be welcoming to all at work one afternoon, as I dash back and forth from my car to the tiny

campus library where I am hosting a focus group with Lattice Ministries partners. As I carry in a load of art supplies and snacks from the parking lot, a White man approaches me from the campus woods and asks me for "the tall guy." Knowing he must mean Charlie, who at over six feet tall might be intimidating were it not for his kind demeaner, I promise to send him out. When I return to my car for a final load, I see Charlie is sharing a water bottle and hygiene kit with the man and talking through available options.

Tammy tells me that her involvement with the organization has raised her awareness of "our inadequacies as a nation for people who don't have homes." Through the years, she explains, "so many homeless people come up that have nothing to do with refugees, but they need a place to belong to, they need shelter, safety, a place to put their things, and that's what they're lacking." At the same time, she is clear that Lattice Ministries' policy needs to be to consistently redirect people to organizations more focused on the issue of homelessness. For example, during a monthly partner meeting that Tammy facilitated, Dr. Sharon, a vivacious Black woman in her mid-fifties, shared that a parent who had come to campus to meet with her left before the meeting began after having been approached by (in the parent's words) a "junkie" in the parking lot. Sharon mused that this "doesn't look good when you're trying to do business, but I guess [the campus woods] are just a safe place for them." Tammy interjected, "But it's not safe for them, is the thing, especially not for people with children."

The limitations of our ability to design for safety fully and for everyone became particularly pronounced on Lattice Ministries campus when a former partner, Breaking Bread, experienced two break-ins and thefts in one summer, reportedly by a family with a toddler staying in the property's woods. The family in question was known by several on campus. Gladys had recently given them diapers. In the fall after this eventful summer, Breaking Bread

eventually had to close for good. While not a direct result of the break-ins, the financial precarity experienced by the organization was exacerbated by them. Sarah powerfully captures the tension inherent in our limited ability to design for safety for all who are rendered unsafe in this country. She recalls, “There used to be people experiencing homelessness who were outside a lot, and our teachers and even our students were like, ‘Can we just take them some water? Can we take them some food?’ They were a little bit threatening and sometimes felt dangerous, and yet I think our teachers and students still just identified with them.” As her reflection reveals, on the one hand, homelessness is a separate issue from those facing the refuge seekers prioritized by most of the groups on campus. On the other, displacement from one’s home and the resulting instability is a thread that runs across the experiences of individuals seeking refuge and those who have been unhoused.

The inability of organizations like Lattice Ministries to design for the safety of all is genuinely tragic. While communities like Lattice Ministries work with the implicit hope that, just as they have chosen to focus their efforts in support of newcomers, other communities and organizations will specialize in responding to and preventing the precarity of homelessness. From a certain vantage point, this is true. Some churches and nonprofits take this issue on directly. And yet, there remains the reality that there are some individuals in our community for whom most are not willing or perhaps not able to prioritize, for whom no one, it seems, takes responsibility. The Christian theological concept of structural sin speaks to this reality. Moving beyond personal sin, structural sin includes harmful systems and ideologies like racism. This concept resonates with the struggles of my research partners in that it speaks to the way that, even as these systems exceed our individual choices, we are often enmeshed and complicit in them. Tisha Rajendra describes structural sin as “sin that appears not in the human will alone but

in social institutions, ideologies, and practices" and clarifies that it harmfully "affects narratives of relationships in two ways: (1) it entrenches inaccurate relationships into patterns of domination and exploitation, and (2) it conditions relationships into patterns of domination and exploitation."[185] When it comes to the design for belonging principle of prioritizing safety, structural sin plays a role in limiting even the most intentional efforts. Our limitations make it impossible for us to prioritize the safety of all groups to the same degree simultaneously. It is not only a matter of individual and organizational priorities; the limitation is also structural in nature. These decisions, actions, and designs are embedded in larger systems and structures that perpetuate displacement, poverty, and violence. And it is structural sin in the forms of everything from global warfare to domestic economic inequality that renders so many community members unsafe to begin with.

Finitude also places limits on our ability to enact our commitments to design for participation. On Lattice Ministries' campus, the seemingly simple task of scheduling monthly partner meetings illustrates the challenges posed by this design for belonging principle. Jay, the former pastor of New Hope Presbyterian, the congregation that birthed Lattice Ministries, recalls how difficult scheduling was in the early days of Lattice Ministries. Established Americans would observe with frustration that, for example, "the Africans are not meeting with us at our assigned times…[yet] they didn't ask the Africans what time is good to meet!" Lattice Ministries continues to play with design on this front, alternating meeting at 1:00 pm on Zoom some months and 6:00 pm in person other months in hopes of supporting collaboration opportunities for all.

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[185] Tisha M. Rajendra, *Migrants and Citizens: Justice and Responsibility in the Ethics of Immigration* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2017), 49, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/emory/detail.action?docID=4983600.

Design for participation is limited by our finite resources and by the expenses we are willing and able to incur on behalf of supporting this intention. Tammy, a current board member of Lattice Ministries, reflects on the frequent absence of many of the church pastors at the onsite partner meetings today. She perceives the primary obstacle to be related to language and shares her sadness that Lattice Ministries has not yet found a way to design around that issue. While the staff associated with the nonprofits on campus largely speak English, the pastors of co-ethnic congregations in many cases do not. Lattice Ministries does not currently include interpretation in its budget for monthly meetings, though the desirability of having access to a call-in language line for the front office and all the onsite partners has been raised at several board meetings. This unresolved issue holds true of work with newcomers more broadly. If we want to remove barriers to participation for those who came here as refugees and immigrants, it means we need design that includes interpretation of meetings, translation of materials, transportation, and childcare. These are costly considerations which nonprofit budgets cannot always stretch to encompass.

Questions of who we hope will participate can also be raised in relation to Lattice Ministries' history as a former church and an ongoing ministry of the PC(USA). While the presence of large crosses in sanctuary spaces has been named as potentially unwelcoming to the numerous Muslim families coming to campus for programs hosted by ABC, Kuumba, and other onsite partners that are not faith communities, ultimately it has been decided for the time being that these will remain. At present, all six of the communities that worship on campus are Christian. Some point to the reality that being grounded in one's religious identity makes one a better partner in interreligious dialogue. While that well may be, it is also likely that some non-Christian families would more readily experience a sense of belonging on campus were such overt symbols of Christianity removed.

Finally, design for play faces barriers in the form of the overwhelm facing nearly everyone in American society, including those with privilege,[186] and the material precarity newcomers experience. It can be hard to make a case for play when you know how much needs to be done or just how overworked and exhausted the community is. Drinking tea or playing badminton can feel trivial when so many urgent needs are bearing down from all sides. As writer Sheila Liming suggests, "Hanging out, which involves killing time in the presence of others, is about carving out a space that is big enough to accommodate these kinds of relational fluctuations, allowing them to stretch and unfurl as necessary…Hanging out means marking out a space that is big enough to house both the camaraderie that gets built in the moment along with mistakes, attitudinal spikes, and second chances."[187] This is a high bar to reach in relation to both space and time when living close to or below the poverty line. Sayari captures the relentless pace of American life, particularly for individuals who, immediately after resettlement, are "slotted" into jobs with long commutes and longer hours and who are also expected to find time to learn English: "That's too much day!"

This is where the structural sin that contributes to play inequality comes into view. For individuals with privilege, the problem of "too much day" can be managed in part by the purchase of cooking, cleaning, or childcare services and of play opportunities that others facilitate. Though this form of inequality seems less immediately urgent than inequalities, say, in healthcare and education, we should not overlook play's relevance to our human ability to flourish. As Brigid Schulte finds, "In the purest sense, leisure is not being slothful, idle, or frivolous. It is…simply being open to the wonder and marvel of the present…to choose to do

[186] Brigid Schulte, *Overwhelmed: Work, Love, and Play When No One Has the Time*, 1st edition (New York: Sarah Crichton Books, 2014).
[187] Liming, *Hanging Out*, loc. 2748.

something with no other aim than that it refreshes the soul, or to choose to do nothing at all. To just be and feel fully alive."[188] When considered in this robust way, the importance of supporting play for all community members emerges more clearly. Moving the needle on play inequality will require serious changes to the way society compensates care labor and an expansion of opportunities for meaningful employment for newcomers, among many other structural changes. When groups on Lattice Ministries' campus like Kuumba work to broaden economic opportunities for women who came here as refugees and asylum seekers, they take an initial step in this direction and render time for play more accessible.

As the stories above reveal, our power to design is often limited to very local levels—sometimes to that of the organizational or programmatic sphere. While we can design spaces and programs that honor the belonging principles of safety, participation, and play within our communities and our organizations, our ability to secure these essentials for ourselves and our newest neighbors in the broader society is often tragically constrained. As Emmanuel Lartey's work on postcolonializing pastoral care illustrates, "An individual cannot be well in a sick society." Just as "individuals who receive excellent therapy and whose inner lives are repaired only to return into unwholesome social circumstances will soon be re-infected and need to return for individual therapy,"[189] so too will individuals who experience opportunities to belong at Lattice Ministries and then go out into a world where they are met with racism and xenophobia have difficulty holding onto the conviction of their belongingness. Local designs for belonging bump up against and are impinged by powerful societal forces of othering.

Jamila highlights this reality as she laments the fact that, no matter how much a community endeavors to support its members and create spaces of belonging, so much remains

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[188] Schulte, *Overwhelmed*, 51.
[189] Lartey, *Postcolonializing God: New Perspectives on Pastoral and Practical Theology*, 121.

out of one's control at the societal level. She tells me that, for example, her Eritrean American community is still reeling from a young teen's death by suicide. His death raises questions, she says, like "Why is this happening in our community, where are we not connecting? Are they trying to make us proud? Do we just not know them?" It also, I suggest, raises the issue of how challenging it is to be well in an unwell society, as this young man's death cannot be separated from the national youth mental health crisis.[190] Design can offer false comfort if we allow ourselves to assume that attempts to redress systemic problems like these are "probably irrelevant because better design and market adjustments can substitute for governmental regulation and thereby eliminate most of the sources of political controversy."[191] Far from seeing design as a silver bullet, we must learn to embrace an approach to design that "focuses on the structure of problems as opposed to their coefficients,"[192] while at the same time being honest about its limitations.

So many of the individuals who spend time on Lattice Ministries' campus face racism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia in their day-to-day lives. As such, it is a lot to ask for them to feel safe in a world that has, in their experiences, proven to be unsafe; to participate in a society that often shuns their contributions; and to play while utterly worn down. And yet, in the midst of it all, I believe these moments of respite still matter. As the Belonging Barometer study shows, moments of belonging on the local level can ripple out, changing how someone feels in other spaces and giving them needed energy and resources to navigate daily challenges. Experiencing belonging in one realm *can* contribute to greater wellbeing in others. Nichole Argo and Hammad

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[190] Susanne Schweizer, Rebecca P. Lawson, and Sarah-Jayne Blakemore, "Uncertainty as a Driver of the Youth Mental Health Crisis," *Current Opinion in Psychology* 53 (October 1, 2023): 101657, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2023.101657.
[191] Orr, *Hope Is an Imperative: The Essential David Orr*, 327.
[192] Orr, 169.

Sheikh find, for example, "a positive association between friendship belonging and civic engagement, and a negative correlation between friendship belonging and feelings of marginalization."[193] When Zam, a "Baby Room" teacher at ABC, is affirmed as belonging to the community, it offers her a little insulation from the biting sting of the judgment she perceives being directed her way at the dentist's office as a result of her accent. Likewise, Amani, a sewing instructor a Kuumba originally from Somalia, tells me that her experience of family among the other sewing instructors and case managers lessens the hurtful impact of the wary looks she receives from strangers as a Black woman wearing a hijab.

Similarly, Susie Wise shares that her own experience belonging to a group that gathered weekly for fellowship "made [her] realize that belonging *somewhere* can be a helpful driver for doing other things; for example, exploring a boundary, stretching, taking a risk, coming and going."[194] Accordingly, the agency involved in designing should not be discounted. Though focused on architectural design, Elise Edwards's work is again relevant here, as she invites us to adopt "an understanding of design as prophetic action."[195] While designing for belonging with attention to the principles of centering safety, participation, and play does not heal or transform society writ large, it importantly nevertheless casts a vision of how things could and should be.

Practicing Design

When it comes to built spaces, design is not something that gets checked off a to do list once and for all. Elise Edwards explains that "although it seems that design ends when construction does, it actually continues well after the post-occupancy evaluations of new construction have concluded."[196] So too is the case when it comes to designing programs,

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[193] Argo and Sheikh, "The Belonging Barometer," 30.
[194] Wise, *Design for Belonging*, 76.
[195] Edwards, *Architecture, Theology, and Ethics*, 39.
[196] Edwards, 27.

practices, policies, and gatherings for belonging. As Susie Wise asserts, "Noticing what is working and for whom, who belongs and who doesn't, and when and under what circumstances gets you ready to design to change culture, to craft everyday acts of intentional design toward belonging and away from othering."[197] Because community members are ever fluctuating, this labor of noticing must continue as long as the community does if it is to be a space of belonging across difference. As john a. powell advocates, "Belonging means more than just being seen. Belonging entails having a meaningful voice and the opportunity to participate in the design of social and cultural structures. Belonging means having the right to contribute and to make demands on society and political institutions."[198] Design for belonging, therefore, must be an ongoing practice as new voices enter community spaces and reshape them with their presence. Finally, ongoing attention to design is also needed because, as Willie James Jennings highlights, humans are always building and creating— "it is inescapable." Whether one builds "toward life or toward death," however, depends on the quality and intentionality of the design.[199]

While I believe that the design for belonging principles of prioritizing safety, participation, and play carry across settings, application will necessarily adapt to the specific needs of the community in which one seeks to grow belonging. As newcomers become more involved, redesign in which they play a greater role in the design process will be essential. In the chapters that follow, I explore three practices that work in tandem with these design principles to expand belonging opportunities: recognizing, accompanying, and turning. Each of these practices exist in a mutual reinforcing relationship with the practice of design. For, as individuals and community groups recognize, accompany, and turn, they learn more about what kinds of

[197] Wise, *Design for Belonging*, 28.
[198] powell and Menendian, "The Problem of Othering."
[199] Jennings, *After Whiteness*, 104.

spaces, programs, and practices required for flourishing. As they practice design informed by what they learn from recognizing, accompanying, and turning, they contribute to the creation of spaces where “doors are open”—spaces that make engaging these countercultural practices of belonging easier and that contribute to the formation of communities of shared sufficiency.

You are First Human: Practicing Recognition

"*No one in the world, no one would love to become an immigrant. Becoming an immigrant is the final result for you to survive. Therefore, when you get to a place, you would love to be treated as a human rather than immigrant. You are first human, and I truly believe that belonging will help us feel that we all belong to the same human family."* –Wilo

"Here, the mother is the teacher." –Zam

"You are part of this group, and we notice when you're not here." –Sarah

Introducing Recognition

"There's one more story I want to tell you," Sarah, ABC's director says towards the end of our two-hour-long conversation in ABC's colorful, comfortable office on Lattice Ministries' campus. Our conversation took place in mid-December, just weeks before pipes bursting over the winter holidays required the school to pivot and operate solely out of their second location at the Ashland Community Center for the spring semester. Tucking her long blond hair behind her ears, Sarah beams as she recalls the events of what she refers to as "the miracle of the Yellow Room." Sarah tells me about Yonas, a four-year-old boy on the autism spectrum whose behaviors can be particularly disruptive. Sarah explains, "He's a little boy who I think, if I had been a teacher and he came in, I would be like, '*He's here*!'" Her voice lowers ominously to convey dread with these last words. However, the boy's teachers have learned to respond to him differently. Sarah shares:

> One of his teachers in the room, Malak, she's already down on his level, and she's just like "Oh, Yonas is here, come in, come in!" And then the Tigrinya speaking teacher Dontal starts speaking to him: "Oh, we've been waiting for you. I'm so glad you're here!" And they are genuinely happy…The other children are seeing this, and they've been with him. They *know* what happens when Yonas arrives. Yet they're seeing such gentleness and joy as this little boy comes in the room…And then for the mom to get to see that! I don't think anywhere [else] in the world are people *excited* when he arrives.

As the Yellow Room teachers respond to Yonas with genuine joy, they engage the belonging practice of recognition. They practice perceiving Yonas truly, as a beloved member of the community. In so doing, they invite others in the ABC community to do so as well.

No doubt in part due to the field's close relationship to psychology, pastoral theology has long been interested in the concept of recognition. For example, Phillis Sheppard draws on Heinz Kohut's work on developmental needs to highlight how important it is for Black women to experience mirroring from others that conveys they are recognized as whole human beings. As Sheppard explains, "mirroring is necessary for the formation of a cohesive, positive sense of self."[200] For Black women, access to this mirroring can be particularly fraught due to the pervasive "idealization, the cultural devaluing of black women, and the cultural mirroring of distorted images of black women." In response, she calls for investment in "the sites of black life that provide opportunities for mirroring that counter these distortions.[201] Melinda McGarrah Sharp, in turn, works with Erik Erikson's model of human development to make the case that "recognition as a process that involves a human being and her or his community(ies) of belonging is key both to provoking and to resolving experiences of identity crisis."[202] She explores the way colonialism has blocked opportunities for recognition among formerly colonized communities and continues to render attempts to extend recognition across difference fraught. Despite its significance, recognition was not a concept I had in mind when I began this research. I started practicing participant observation thinking about concepts like care, moral agency, and the tension between the ideal of structural change and the protection that belonging might offer in the meantime. However, spending time with ABC, the multigenerational literacy organization on Lattice Ministries' campus, quickly affirmed the truth of these insights from pastoral belonging and revealed recognition to be a practice with deep relevance to belonging.

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[200] Phillis Isabella Sheppard, *Self, Culture, and Others in Womanist Practical Theology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 11, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/emory/detail.action?docID=678813.
[201] Sheppard, 12.
[202] McGarrah Sharp, *Misunderstanding Stories*, 85.

ABC has made its home on Lattice Ministries' campus since the days of New Hope Presbyterian Church, years before Lattice Ministries came into existence. The only multigenerational literacy program in the area for families who first came to the U.S. as refugees, at ABC, mothers and babies come to learn and play together in classrooms where resources in a multitude of languages cover the walls. The shelves feature books like *The Runaway Injera*, set in Ethiopia, and *Baby Goes to Market*, set in Nigeria. About three-quarters of ABC's teachers first came to the U.S. as refugees. A significant number of staff previously participated in the program themselves. They express satisfaction and pride in the fact that they now teach with empathy and awareness in the classrooms where they and their children were once students.

During the year of my fieldwork, I spent three to four hours at ABC on a weekly basis. In the fall, I volunteered in the Blue Room, affectionately known as the Baby Room, at ABC's Lattice Ministries' location. I took an unplanned hiatus from volunteering in January and February as ABC staff triaged and improvised as best they could in light of the disruption caused by burst pipes and ensuing water damage on Lattice Ministries' campus. In pairs, teachers conducted in-person visits and checked in with the mothers regularly over the phone. In March, I reunited with my Blue Room teaching team at ABC's Ashland Community Center location, where ABC had implemented a staggered schedule to continue serving as many families as possible.

In just a few short weeks, mornings in the Blue Room became a highlight of my weeks. The mornings passed both quickly and, during the rare occasions when all six to twelve infants napped at the same time, leisurely. Blue Room teachers Enatye and Zam warmly welcomed me into the space and showed me the ropes. Although it would be several weeks before the children were acclimated enough to implement it, Enatye made sure I was familiar with the Blue Room's

schedule during my first morning there: 8:30-9:00 preparing toys, music, books; 9-9:30 playing, singing; 9:30-10:00 reading books and snack time; 10:00-11:00 nap time; 11:00-11:30 change diapers; 11:30-12:00 preparing kids; 12:00-12:30 PACT time (Parent and Child Together). But really, Enatye added, "The children are the schedule." Soon, Zam started teasing me upon arrival about my "absence" the day before, despite knowing I only volunteered on a weekly basis. "Where were you?" she would say affectionately, while giving me a hug and sharing about some of the children's antics I had missed. I learn so much during my time with Enatye and Zam and, during my shorter duration at the second location, with Noor.

In her early seventies, though easily mistaken for at least ten years younger, Enatye is both regal and warm. For work, she often dresses in velour track suits. As she begins inviting me to spend time with her outside of ABC, I quickly learn that she is an elegant dresser, known for her stylish, embroidered gowns from her country of origin, Ethiopia. Though Zam, in her late thirties, is as knowledgeable as Enatye when it comes to childcare, Enatye's age makes her the respected leader in the classroom. As the children adjust to the space and their teachers, it is Enatye who leads us through the classroom songs. We open with the "Salaam Song," greeting each child by name. When the teachers know the correct word for "welcome" in the child's home language, Enatye or Zam substitute it appropriately, and I clumsily follow along. Then we sing of variety of songs that change throughout the semester, at times to match the "book of the month" that we read each week and that eventually gets sent home with each child when we switch to a new book. When our book of the month is *Baby Goes to Market*, Enatye leads us in a rousing rendition of the "Banana Song." Though I realize after a few weeks that the song is about "*going* bananas," Enatye's version has us cheerfully shouting, "Go, banana!" We belly laugh when I tell her my mental image accompanying the song is of us cheering bananas on in a race. As we sing,

we hold the youngest children in our laps. I follow Zam's lead and gently move the babies' hands to mirror her hand motions.

Zam exudes a quiet confidence and poise. Mothers know she is the one to go to when their child cannot stop crying. When they return a child to the room after breastfeeding during their class break, I watch as they vie for the chance to place their baby directly in Zam's arms—a trend that holds true whether they, like Zam, are originally from Burma, or from other regions and cultures entirely, like Afghanistan, Sudan, or Congo. This proves an impossibility, and some settle with handing their baby to me. Zam patiently coaches me in mimicking her approach to gently shushing the babies to sleep, prompting me to put blankets over them and rock them "just so." Though her pregnancy following my year with ABC prevented me from staying in as close of contact with Zam as I do with Enatye, during that year I found myself apprenticing to this younger, petite teacher just as much as I did to Enatye.

After the mothers' classes—which include English in various levels and a citizenship class for those who have been in the country for four or more years—it is then time for everyone's favorite part of the day: PACT time! In a process of organized chaos, mothers quickly find their children and head to their assigned room. Teachers rotate as well, with Salma and Hla joining me in the Blue Room from the Red and Yellow Rooms where they work with three and two-year-olds respectively. "Be with your baby now," Salma kindly, firmly instructs mothers throughout PACT time, pausing to repeat this whenever she sees a cell phone emerge from a mother's pocket or when women start chatting with each other during the time reserved for reading to their children in their home languages. Hla leads us in signing: first the "Salaam" welcome song, which we "perform" while moving in a circle, then "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes," to which we add in words from Arabic, Amharic, and Zomi. Then Salma passes out copies

of the book of the month. She reads it in English, then she invites mothers to read it in their home language to their children. Then we do a brief activity that is loosely related to the book. When reading *Errol's Garden*, for example, each family plants a bean seed in a reusable cup and checks on its progress throughout the month.

Finally, we say our goodbyes, and mothers and children make their way down hallways covered with photos of the school community captioned with phrases like, "I make dalma with my teacher," and "I speak my home language with my teachers." On any given morning, Zam can be seen rushing after a mother with a child's forgotten shoe or toy in hand, while Enatye can be overheard inquiring about a mother's husband's diabetes or requesting an update on a child who has graduated from the program whose younger siblings still attend. Sarah, ABC's executive director, is here at least twice a week, giving hugs and checking in with the teachers. And Jamila, the Lattice Ministries location's site manager, oversees it all, deftly moving between languages while seeing everyone off. Then she switches gears to prepare whatever teachers' meeting, training, or gathering is on the agenda that afternoon.

In what follows, I trace the ways recognition as a belonging practice is adopted by Lattice Ministries partners and, in particular, by ABC. By recognition, I mean the conscious practice of perceiving the other as a being full of agency and potential. After exploring the multi-faceted ways that my research partners engage this practice, I consider why it matters. I turn to Heba Gowayed's work to consider how the practice can be adopted on different scales, be it national, organizational, or interpersonal. I then draw on Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Manuel Pastor's work on homemaking and suggest that recognition of newcomers' homemaking work can contribute to their sense of belonging and increase homemaking opportunities. I also consider the way the practice of recognition can serve as a response to the violence of distortion. The work of

Emilie Townes and Patricia Hill Collins on controlling images, countermemory, and naming help illuminate this form of violence and shed light on how recognition can counter it. Finally, I consider the limitations of the practice and tease out its relationship to belonging.

Practicing Recognition

Spending time with the Lattice Ministries community and ABC revealed the multi-faceted nature of recognition as a belonging practice. First and most fundamentally, recognition begins with an acknowledgement of the humanity of the other. Second, recognition as a belonging practice requires an affirmation of the other as someone who contributes, someone who has gifts and strengths as well as needs. Third, recognition entails attesting to the other's state of belonging or "belongingness" to and in the community. And fourth, belonging often requires practices of self-recognition as well, both of one's own giftedness and of one's connection to the community.

Recognizing Humans

My research partners make clear that, at the most foundational level, practicing recognition requires affirming the humanity of all people, established American and newcomer alike. Recognizing one another as humans necessitates a resistance of the temptation to "other" and place distance between ourselves and newcomers. Too, it requires a commitment to connect to newcomers as complex human beings by listening deeply—even and especially in the absence of a shared language. Sayari, who, as noted in the preceding chapter is currently launching a nonprofit focused on connecting children from refugee backgrounds to nature, draws my attention to the quotidian ways established Americans foreground the foreignness of newcomers over and above their humanity in ways that contribute to experiences of othering. His least favorite question in the world is, he tells me, "Where are you from?" He explains that this question communicates, "You don't belong to here…You're being seen as different." He

suggests that learning to shift the question to something like, “Where were you born?” might convey interest without distancing. For this is something all Americans can answer, including those who were born in this country but are now living far from their hometowns. Sayari shakes his head at the absurdity of the classic question, “Where are you from?” He asks with rhetorical flair, “What do people ‘from here’ look like? We are so diverse! Just try to see that immigrant, that newcomer like a person!”

Wilo, who is currently a board member of Lattice Ministries and the minister of both a Congolese and a Black American congregation, describes the Lattice Ministries community’s efforts to recognize as “the humanization ministry.” He elaborates:

> As I keep telling people, no one in the world, no one would love to become an immigrant. Becoming an immigrant is the final result for you to survive. Therefore, when you get to a place, you would love to be treated as a human rather than immigrant. You are first human, and I truly believe that belonging will help us feel that we all belong to the same human family.

Recognition of one another’s humanity requires the intentional and ongoing choice to be in the humanization ministry and to resist the ease with which we might otherwise reduce someone to their immigration status. Durga, who works as an administrative assistant at Kuumba while also participating in their various programs, highlights the importance of the fact that individuals who come to Kuumba for assistance are consistently met with “a friendly face and welcoming environment.” Drawing on her own experience as someone who came to this country in search of safety, Durga posits that, when people walk through Kuumba’s door for the first time, they carry “a little bit of fear: how will I communicate with the people? Is there anyone who will understand?” While Durga herself often does not speak the language of the newcomers who stop by the office, she loves being able to connect them with a Kuumba staff member who does. She also works hard to honor their humanity by conveying kindness through her body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice.

Zari, who tells me that recognition is the essence of belonging, shares that one of the main ways they extend recognition at Kuumba is by paying attention to stories. She shares, "It's easy to dismiss them, to say, 'Your problem is not important,' and focus on people who speak your language. [But] I see people seeing them *as people* at Kuumba every day." As I know from my experience working in refugee resettlement, it is all too common for newcomers to be treated as a collection of problems and to be shuffled from one office to the next without anyone addressing the root issues at hand. At Kuumba, however, Zari notes that the ethos is "I see you, what can I do for you?" Newcomers are respected as humans at Kuumba, where staff members ask questions like, "What did you do back home?" and "Tell me about your kids."

Similarly, at ABC mothers are invited to share about what childhood looked like for them in their countries of origin, what it means to be a good parent in their culture, and what they want the ABC community to know about their children. Children of all ages are recognized as full humans at ABC as well. This can be witnessed in the scripts printed and hung around the Blue Room classroom that remind teachers to communicate intentionally with children of all ages, including babies. One such script, hung by the changing station, reads, "It's time to change your diaper. It is wet, that doesn't feel good." Another, by the sink, reads, "It's snack time. This is a healthy snack. Let's wash our hands." A giant poster on one wall reads, "We love our babies." Underneath this poster are the names, ages, and photos of seventeen children who attend the school on either Mondays and Wednesdays or Tuesdays and Thursdays. On the back of the classroom door, I notice a handout that reminds teachers of typical milestones to watch for at four, six, nine, and twelve months. It also includes a line about how there is no such thing as "normal" development—a line Sarah reiterates when we speak in the ABC office before the winter break. "Children develop at different rates," she explains, "so we just kind of watch them

and take notes on how they develop." If a child is identified as needing additional support in any way, teachers schedule a check-in with the mother, Jamila, and Naomi, the staff member who is responsible for helping school families access needed support. Through it all, the humanity of the mother and her child is centered and affirmed.

Recognizing Contributors

Jamila, the site manager of ABC, makes clear that, in addition to recognizing the humanity of others, newcomers' ability to contribute must also be witnessed if belonging is to be experienced. Contributing, Jamila asserts, is a nonnegotiable for belonging: "To me, belonging is not only receiving. Belonging is more when you start to give back too. You saw what was needed, and you responded." Jamila's instincts are affirmed both by the researchers of the Belonging Barometer project, whose study led them to include "being valued as a person and for one's contributions" as a key measure of belonging,[203] and the design scholar and practitioner Susie Wise, who describes contributing as "the holy grail." Wise suggests contribution functions as "a circle—the more you belong, the more you can contribute; the more you contribute, likely the more you belong."[204] I see the truth of this one morning at ABC, when both Enatye and Zam have powerful stories to share about recognition and contribution.

Enatye feeds Hagos and I feed Bennu in adjacent "baby activity centers" (the rather grand name for those chairs that encircle the infant, enabling them to bounce while interacting with attached mobiles). As we do so, Enatye explains that, before the previous weekend, it had been three or four years since she has been back to her church due to COVID-19. Zam teases Enatye about her math and expresses surprise that it had been so long since Enatye went to the church that we both know she loves. Enatye explains that everyone at church hugs and kisses so much—

[203] Argo and Sheikh, "The Belonging Barometer," 6.
[204] Wise, *Design for Belonging*, 33.

a fact she pantomimes dramatically—that she just knew she had to wait it out. She adds that, with "things in her family," she couldn't risk catching "that *thing*." Turning back to her experience on Sunday, she proudly tells us that the church leaders made sure she could sit in what was once her usual spot and playfully posits that her return was "breaking news." This joke has some truth to it, we later learn, as she shares about the calls she received from her adult children and friends requesting verification that they had heard correctly: Enatye was indeed back in church.

Just a week after Enatye's momentous return to church, Zam brings in photos of the "minister appreciation award," flowers, and a check that included contributions from numerous church members that she received to honor her service to the faith community's children. Zam tells us that friends from her church also came over after the service to continue celebrating the occasion. With gleaming eyes, she shares that they brought gifts for her and her children. She shows me a photo of her giving a speech of gratitude at the front of the church while holding her award, a large American flag prominent in the background.

Enatye too, brings additional church news to share the week following her initial return. She tells us about a baptism that took place on Sunday and, noting the cultural practice in which the family members of the person being baptized wear "family clothes"— tailored outfits made from the same fabric—she adds that she, along with the child's biological relatives, was given family clothes to wear that morning. "Wow," I remark, touched by this story, "Enatye, you are family to them too." "Of course," she says, "of course." In these specific places and times, Enatye is recognized as a wise teacher and family member, and Zam is recognized as a leader and minister. At ABC and in their churches, both women are recognized as contributing, a

recognition that only serves to deepen their own felt sense of belonging in these spaces and draws them into deeper levels of participation.

On Lattice Ministries' campus, recognizing newcomers as contributors happens on two levels. First, newcomers are affirmed as being able to contribute skills. Second, the contribution of their cultural wisdom and traditions is also recognized and honored. This first form of recognizing contribution is illustrated powerfully by ABC. While individuals who came to the U.S. as refugees are often placed in "unskilled," arduous, and low-paying positions at warehouses and poultry processing factories, at ABC they are recognized as skillful contributors. Hired as teachers, their life experiences prior to coming to the U.S. are honored, not dismissed. On my first day in the Blue Room, Enatye shows me one of her favorite things in the classroom: next to a large, laminated copy of the alphabet in Amharic is a small, framed piece of paper that reads, "Teachers plant the seeds of knowledge that will grow forever." While this line is typed, underneath this Sarah has written in red ink, "Thanks for all you do!" "It's just paper," Enatye acknowledges, "but it's not just paper to me." This kind of recognition takes place at Kuumba as well, as women's skills are celebrated through a beautiful ceremony when they graduate from the sewing academy and as many of them are hired to work as community ambassadors, case workers, and sewing instructors following graduation.

Similarly, while those who came here in search of refuge often find their cultural parenting styles denigrated and are exhorted to adjust quickly to American approaches to discipline and education, at ABC refugee mothers are recognized as experts on their children's needs and gifts. On multiple occasions this is emphasized in the Blue Room. "Here, the mother is the teacher," Zam tells me and Noor, when a mother swiftly comforts her previously inconsolable child by swaddling her and rocking her to sleep. On another morning, Enatye

muses, “Mommies become the teachers,” when Faheem’s mother reminds us to feed him his banana in small bites so that he does not subsequently spit it back up. Recognition is extended to children as well. Sarah, the executive director of ABC during the time of my research, explains, “The children are teaching the mothers too…literacy goes both ways!”

Finally, at ABC, this recognition of former refugees as leaders and contributors is reinforced through a consistent recognition of the value of the language skills and cultural and experiential knowledge they bring with them. While many places encourage refugees and immigrants to speak English even at home and treat maternal languages as liabilities for children’s development, at ABC home languages and cultures are treated as essential assets. As noted above, time is structured into the school day for mothers to read to their children in their home languages. Teachers are encouraged to use multiple languages in their teaching. At ABC, Enatye can read books like *The Runaway Injera* in her home language of Amharic to the infants in her class; Zam can sing lullabies in Zomi and Burmese. The “focus words” of the month hanging on the walls are written not just in English, but also Zomi, Amharic, Arabic, and Burmese. They are accompanied by illustrations. Jamila explains that she sees recognition “in the pictures on our walls, the music that we play.” She continues, “I see it in the language…that’s why we have mothers read in their own language and sing songs from their childhood.” This recognition of newcomers as contributors in multiple ways does not, however preclude recognition of pressing material needs. Indeed, one of the features that sets ABC apart is its understanding that women with young children have specific needs that most adult literacy programs fail to acknowledge.

Recognizing Community Members

Third, in addition to being recognized as humans and as individuals with skills and experience to contribute, being recognized as belonging to the community is essential. On

Lattice Ministries' campus, I see this form of recognition occurring through affirmations that one's presence is missed when one is not there and through treating one another as family. On this first point, Sarah narrates the way Jamila calls mothers who have not been in class for multiple weeks. While some mothers expect her to call to fuss about their poor attendance, they instead experience care and an affirmation of their belongingness in the ABC community. Jamila tenderly asks, "Is it so hard right now? I'm so sorry. Can I bring you some food? Can you just go outside today, just go be in the sun for a little while? Could you come to school? We really miss you. Just to see your sisters would help so much." Sarah notes that this recognition of one's presence and absence is practiced among the children as well, as teachers pantomime calling absent children with the class using toy telephones: "The kids, they get to name who's not there that day. So, I would say that's something we want to instill from the earliest time: that you are part of this group, and we notice when you're not here."

A similarly powerful moment of recognition plays out in the beginner's English class for mothers enrolled in ABC. When Forozan, a young mother of three, found out that her brother had been killed in Afghanistan, for weeks she stayed home with her children, numb with grief. When finally, she decided she could put off her return to school no longer, she brought her husband with her that first morning. As he spoke more English than she did, Forozan had him share her news with Jamila and Sarah. The two women, in turn, pulled aside the beginner class's teacher, Sandy, who at first wondered how, if at all, she was equipped to respond. Thinking on her feet, she led the class in learning words about grief and loss, and then the class community made cards for Forozan. One by one, the women in the class, many of whom shared only a few words in common with her, delivered their cards with forehead kisses for their grieving classmate.

Wilo highlights the power of another method of recognizing belongingness: the use of kinship language. Reflecting on the depth of challenges he faced when he first sought asylum in the U.S., he recalls the impact it made when, upon learning he was struggling, the pastor of his church created a "small circle of people who were meeting with [Wilo] once a month just to check how [he] was doing, how [his] asylum case was evolving." The result? Wilo recalls that, "For the first time, I found that I belonged to that church. I found a new family for America." Gladys also notes the centrality of this recognition at Kuumba: "Family—we use the language of Kuumba family. It's embedded in Kuumba's culture." This recognition of belonging is evident among ABC teachers as well. Enatye explains that, through the years, the women have been intentional about attending one another's relatives' funerals "so that it's like we have family here." I see this message of belonging reinforced in subtler ways as well when, for example, Hla includes pictures of women gardening from each of the families' countries of origin in PACT time and invites mothers to share about their own gardening experiences after reading *Errol's Garden.* Too, ABC helps recognize and affirm community members' belonging to the U.S. and not just to the school by celebrating every time a student passes her citizenship exam.

Recognizing Oneself

Fourth, and finally, Lattice Ministries community members reveal the role that self-recognition can play when it comes to creating opportunities to belong. While it is challenging and perhaps even impossible to secure belonging in the absence of recognition extended by other newcomers or established Americans, recognizing one's own membership in the community and one's own ability to contribute nonetheless can play a positive and significant role. Summer, a Presbyterian denominational leader supportive of Lattice Ministries, highlights the role of recognizing one's connections to the community: "Belonging is an acknowledgement of what is

actually true. I was created in an ecosystem, I exist in an ecosystem, and I have to decide whether or not I'm going to live as if that is true."

Pastor Thang, whose congregation first got its start on the Lattice Ministries campus, recognizes the belongingness of his Mara-speaking church as he speaks to the community's impact on Ashland. He asserts, "We are not visitors anymore, right? So many people came in as refugee and first-generation immigrants to stay, and then we have the naturalized citizens, we have bought houses, our kids were born here, raised here. And we have planted churches, so we are making history." Dr. Sharon, the director of Trinity Academy, a school for children with individualized learning plans that meets on Lattice Ministries' campus, illustrates a similar form of self-recognition on a collective level as she narrates the shift that occurred when she stopped questioning her school's place on campus as one of the only groups not focused on newcomers and instead affirmed the role they were positioned to play. She came to claim of herself and her school, "We belong. As much as there's so many different cultures on campus, we are part of the difference in the cultures. You know what I mean? So, we represent the Black community."

A striking instance of self-recognition occurs during a conversation with Maryam, an ABC teacher originally from Sudan and an Ashland community leader who I have known since 2014. During a visit to her apartment prior to the winter holidays, Maryam and I catch up over sugary cups of tea, almonds, and date cookies. She tells me about each of her children's academic achievements since we last crossed paths, her work with ABC, and other community happenings. In her turquoise hijab and floral dress, Maryam looks just as she did when we first met ten years ago, so it surprises me to realize just how much her daughters and son have grown up. Maryam tells me that her youngest now goes to elementary school in a different building than her daughters did. When funding for the new building had been approved, the principal told

Maryam, "Your wish has come true," because Maryam had long been an advocate for better school conditions. Maryam beams as she tells me that, while her high school daughters' homework far exceeds the level of education she received and is therefore beyond her ability to correct, she nonetheless maintains a practice of looking over everything and inviting her girls to talk through their work. Despite the limited access to education with which she grew up and the imperfect English she had when she first started advocating in the community following resettlement, Maryam refuses to be disempowered. Instead, she consistently recognizes the role she must play as her children's first teacher, as a mother of students in the public school system, and as a teacher and mentor in the ABC community. She reflects on the ABC community with deep gratitude, musing that the love and recognition she receives there "is from my God."

These instances of self-recognition mirror an important aspect of the design of Fearless Dialogues, Gregory Ellison's initiative to help "communities to see the invisible, to hear the muted, and to create change through quiet resistance and fearless speech."[205] As Ellison and his team welcome community members to events, they invite everyone to choose a name tag that reflects the gifts that they are bringing into the space. Options include words like "healer," "artist," "educator," and "neighbor." Once individuals have recognized these gifted roles in themselves, the facilitators recognize them again with the words, "It is good to finally see you. Welcome to Fearless Dialogues. Are you ready for change?"[206] Self-recognition and the recognition of one's ability to contribute go hand in hand, converging to create spaces of belonging and action.

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[205] Gregory C. Ellison II, *Fearless Dialogues: A New Movement for Justice* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017), 2, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/emory/detail.action?docID=5974076.
[206] Ellison II, 4.

Attending to the work of the onsite partners of Lattice Ministries yields the following inductive definition of recognition: first, recognition entails the acknowledgment of the other's humanity. Second, recognition requires the acknowledgment of the other's strengths, gifts, and capacities—an acknowledgment that does not deny the realities of the other's material needs. Third, recognition necessitates an acceptance of the reality that the other belongs to this space, to these people, to us, just as we belong to them. And fourth, affirming one's own strengths and belongingness can strengthen the belonging possibilities created by these other forms of recognition.

Why Recognition Matters

Recognition as a practice matters for several reasons. First, recognition among groups like Lattice Ministries partner organizations can serve as a local intervention that softens the blow of the denial of recognition on a national level. Second, recognition can serve to affirm and extend newcomers' abilities to make themselves at home in their new communities. Third, recognition can serve as a life-affirming response to the violence of distortion. Fourth and finally, recognition carries theological significance for many who practice it on Lattice Ministries' campus.

A Local Intervention

The interpersonal and organizational practice of recognition on Lattice Ministries' campus runs in stark contrast to the way recognition is largely denied societally to individuals who came to the U.S. as refugees. Heba Gowayed's cross-national study of Syrian refugees' experiences in the U.S., Canada, and Germany illustrates the importance of recognition on the national level. Through ethnographic research in each country, Gowayed discovered that "human capital is less a measure of the 'value in a person' than the measure of *who* is valued. Who is valued determines who receives *investment*—who is afforded the opportunities to build skills and

credentials. And who is valued matters for who is *recognized*—whose skills and credentials are seen as economically viable and deemed worthy of pay."[207] Gowayed demonstrates that, on one end of the spectrum, Germany invests in refugees through its robust social safety net but does not recognize their existing human capital through credentialization processes that require them to start over. In contrast, in Canada, there are high levels of investment. Refugees can access social services and English language learning opportunities for years. Too, there are high levels of recognition, as the government runs programs to help with credentialing processes so that refuge seekers can continue in their previously chosen fields. Finally, on the opposite end of the spectrum, Gowayed reveals how the U.S. neither invests in nor recognizes refugees. Here, they are integrated into systems of poverty that are inherently shaped by racism, and they are required to start from scratch with the positions that resettlement agency staff do their best to procure for them.[208]

Because, as Gowayed's research makes clear, governmental recognition and investment shape the post-resettlement experiences of her research interlocutors by structuring their access to resources and their ability to participate in their communities, the absence of both in the U.S. means that local recognition interventions are critical, albeit limited. Lattice Ministries and its partners like Mulunda Worshipping Community, ABC, and Kuumba cannot make up for the dearth of support provided for newcomers on a national level, but they can and do address some of the challenges created by this absence. On Lattice Ministries' campus, the economic recognition of which Gowayed writes takes place at ABC, in the hiring of former refugees and the support of language acquisition that makes the literal and metaphorical translation of credentials more feasible. So too is the case at Kuumba, where former newcomers are hired as

[207] Gowayed, *Refuge*, 11.
[208] Gowayed, 49.

sewing instructors, community ambassadors, and case managers, and where training in sewing opens new employment pathways. This was also the case of two former onsite partners, Breaking Bread (which, as noted in the preceding chapter, is now closed) and Growing Refuge (which still operates but no longer manages gardens on Lattice Ministries' campus). At the same time, the recognition practices on Lattice Ministries' campus also exceed economic and employment-related recognition. Recognition is practiced on an ontological level as well, as individuals who came here as refugees are recognized as more than service recipients in need of assistance, but also as teachers, leaders, and humans with much to offer.

Expanding Homemaking

The practice of recognition is also significant because of the way it can affirm, reinforce, and perhaps even extend the homemaking work of newcomers. Homemaking is a relatively new way of thinking about the work and agency entailed in the processes by which immigrants adapt to their new country and local communities. Historically, as noted in the introduction, studies of immigration have centered the extent to which immigrants' educational, financial, and residential attainment compares to that of U.S.-born Americans.[209] Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Manuel Pastor's research on the way that immigrants from Latin America make their way in South L.A. resists this bias-laden framing. Instead, the researchers focus on four processes by which immigrants make themselves at home: "Establishing security, achieving familiarity, securing control/autonomy, and experiencing a sense of future-making."[210] Considering everything from the way that Latino immigrants turn to their Black neighbors for help understanding cultural expectations about parenting in the U.S. to their participation in community gardens and the

[209] Hondagneu-Sotelo and Pastor, *South Central Dreams*, 12–13.
[210] Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Veronica Montes, "Echando Raíces, Settling In," in *South Central Dreams: Finding Home and Building Community in South L.A.*, by Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Manuel Pastor (New York: NYU Press, 2021), 82.

hosting of fiestas in their backyards, the researchers show how immigrants' homemaking processes interact with and influence the metaphorical and, at times, literal landscape into which they are settling.

Hondagneu-Sotelo and Pastor's work is relevant for my research with Lattice Ministries for several reasons. Most fundamentally, I see newcomers actively engaging processes of homemaking on Lattice Ministries' campus. For example, teachers and students alike use ABC to deepen their security, familiarity, autonomy, and future-making capacities. Teachers earn an income in a positive work environment, while students develop language skills that make navigating the community more feasible and create new possibilities for employment. Newcomers actively use these employment and skills-building opportunities to support the cultivation of security, autonomy, and future-making. Too, ABC becomes a place of treasured familiarity, a place where teachers, mothers, and children know they are known. ABC is a place where, in the words of Naomi, women feel they can "come as [they] are, take a deep breath while [they're] here, and learn." In the absence of recognition, homemaking possibilities can be curtailed. If ABC were not a place where community members and organizational policies practiced recognizing newcomers and established Americans as fellow humans, contributors, and community members, it is easy to imagine that the staff would primarily be comprised of established Americans, the use of non-English home languages would be prohibited, and students would experience the organization as a place to receive a service rather than as a resource and partner in their homemaking work.

Moreover, ABC is not only a place where newcomers are able to practice homemaking because recognition practices create space for this work. ABC is also, significantly, one of the rare places where this agentive work of making home is witnessed, mirrored, and affirmed. Such

recognition of homemaking might, I suggest, deepen and expand possibilities for belonging through the creation of a virtuous cycle. That is, recognition makes it easier to engage freely and comfortably in the work of "establishing security, achieving familiarity, securing control/autonomy, and experiencing a sense of future-making."[211] This work contributes to being able to feel at home in a space. When it is acknowledged and celebrated by others rather than contested, newcomers are invited to deepen and expand their homemaking work in ways that increase the likelihood that they are recognized as belonging and contributing and that help newer newcomers feel comfortable similarly investing.

In American society writ large, the homemaking of refuge seekers is often fiercely contested by those who have lived their whole lives in the communities into which newcomers are settling. This reality has been highly visible in recent election cycles, with immigration policy and the U.S.-Mexico border becoming political flashpoints used by politicians to mobilize voters. Paulo Boccagni explains that, when the "home projects" of immigrant communities seem to conflict with those of established residents, the latter can react defensively by embracing "domopolitics" that deploy anti-immigrant policies to protect their "nation-as-home."[212] These reactions are often rooted in deep-seated fears that their way of life is endangered.[213] One does not need to look far in American politics for examples of the ways domopolitics is mobilized against newcomers. Donald Trump recently suggested immigrants are "poisoning the blood of our country," and far-right opponents of immigration are calling for children of immigrants to be banned from schools as a means of catalyzing "self-deportation."[214] This rhetoric denies the right

[211] Hondagneu-Sotelo and Montes, 82.
[212] Boccagni, *Migration and the Search for Home*, 100, 88, 62.
[213] Boccagni and Duyvendak, "Homemaking in the Public. On the Scales and Stakes of Framing, Feeling, and Claiming Extra-domestic Space as 'Home,'" 5.
[214] Emily Bazelon, "The Right-Wing Dream of 'Self-Deportation,'" *The New York Times*, July 27, 2024, sec. Magazine, https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/27/magazine/the-right-wing-dream-of-self-deportation.html.

of newcomers to make themselves at home in the U.S. Far from recognizing their agency in homemaking, such politics frame them as threats to established Americans' ability to feel at home in the U.S.

Such resistance to the homemaking of newcomers not only engenders support for anti-immigrant policies, but it can also deepen experiences of nonbelonging among refugees and immigrants. As researchers with Over Zero and the American Immigration Council's Belonging Barometer project found, social connection, psychological safety, and co-creation are constituent components of belonging. Ignoring, dismissing, or protesting the agency with which newcomers cultivate belonging in this country can preclude the possibility of relationship building, threaten their safety (psychological and otherwise), and fundamentally jeopardize their sense of being able to "co-create the organizations, systems, and structures that shape one's future."[215]

Practices of recognition at ABC and on Lattice Ministries' campus serve as a powerful form of resistance against domopolitics and us-versus-them conceptions of homemaking and who "gets" to feel at home. By consistently witnessing and affirming the homemaking of the women in their program and by continuing to invite U.S.-born Americans to participate as volunteers and donors who practice recognizing as well, organizations like ABC make it possible for newcomers to find pockets of belonging within a broader society that increasingly perceives their homemaking as a threat. When so many voices in politics and media convey the message to refuge seekers that they do not belong, ABC and Lattice Ministries' practices of recognition insist otherwise. In affirming the right of immigrants and refugees to make themselves at home in the U.S., recognition unsettles traditional boundaries of belonging and makes room for more expansive boundaries to be drawn.

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[215] Argo and Sheikh, "The Belonging Barometer," 7.

Countering the Violence of Distortion

While Heba Gowayed's work reveals the way the denial of recognition structurally shapes access to opportunities and homemaking research illuminates how reactive politics that frame the homemaking of immigrants and established residents as conflictual can lead to nonbelonging, womanist scholarship clarifies how recognition's opposite—the distortion of reality—functions as a form of violence. Too, it sheds light on how the practice of recognition can serve to redress this violence. The emotional and material harm caused by distortion of what is true comes through clearly in my conversations with Lattice Ministries community members. For example, Clearette, a community leader who works with Kuumba as a community ambassador, tells me that, for refugees here in the U.S., "Even if you have your degrees or anything, they just consider you like somebody from kindergarten." Her family has experienced this harsh reality first-hand, with Clearette's husband's ongoing struggle to find a suitable job due to his lack of U.S. credentials. Wilo echoes this assessment. Despite Wilo's advanced degrees in biology, philosophy, and theology, he received numerous employment rejections during his initial years in the U.S. Upon hearing his accent, potential employers signaled, "You are not educated…these degrees are meaningless because they are from overseas." This story plays out again and again in the community, narrated in turn with self-deprecating humor, frustration, and exhaustion. Princess, a case worker with Kuumba with a bubbly personality, visibly shrinks in on herself as she tells me about her uncle who, despite having earned a PhD before becoming a refugee, "can't do anything here." Of established Americans, Princess concludes with an emphatic shake of her head, "They should know that we are educated somehow, that we can do something."

Emilie Townes and Patricia Hill Collins help clarify the way that this distortion of reality enacts violence. Turning to literature and popular culture, Emilie Townes shows how structural evil creates and is sustained through the production of stereotypes. Her work explores the way stereotypes like Mammy, Sapphire, and Welfare Queen circulate distorted images of Black womanhood. Townes reveals the mutually reinforcing relationship between these degrading stereotypes and policies that imperil Black women's life chances. For example, the depiction of Black women as Mammy not only denied Black women's sexuality, but these dehumanizing images also offered a shield behind which White men could hide from charges of sexual violence.[216] The images of Black Matriarch and Welfare Queen, in turn, portrayed Black women as bad mothers—"the Mammy gone bad"—who irresponsibly had numerous offspring as a strategy for avoiding entering the workforce.[217] These images not only denied the historical violence of slavery, Jim Crow, and contemporary discrimination that served to separate Black mothers from their children or that continue to prevent them from seeing the material fruits of their labor. They also provided an essential foundation for punitive welfare policies. From a policymaker's perspective, if only bad mothers are on welfare—mothers, that is, who are not like us, not like *our* mothers—then of course the program should be designed to minimize the amount of assistance and the length of time this limited assistance is available.[218] Townes' work shows how White Americans both distort what is true passively, as we imbibe pernicious stereotypes from media and popular culture, and actively, as we support policies and programs that continue to make aspects of these stereotypes real by imposing labyrinthine constraints on Black women that place them at risk of poverty and limit their access to resources. The results of the

[216] Emilie Maureen Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, Black Religion, Womanist Thought, Social Justice. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 31.
[217] Townes, 115.
[218] Townes, 116.

compounding challenges facing Black women in this country can be fatal. For example, Black babies face a risk of death at twice the rate of White babies. Black women's risk of giving birth to infants of low birth weight remains over twice as high as that of their White counterparts.[219]

Patricia Hill Collins similarly helps reveal the way distortion of reality perpetuates harm. She explores the stereotypes of Mammy, Black Matriarch, and Jezebel. She explains, "These controlling images are designed to make racism, sexism, poverty, and other forms of social injustice appear to be a natural, normal, and inevitable part of everyday life."[220] When we participate in distortion, we fail to perceive not only the other in their full humanity, but also the systems and structures that cause them suffering. Hill Collins's matrix of domination—the framework by which she categorizes the way oppression occurs in society—reveals the precise way distortion enacts violence. She suggests that the matrix includes four quadrants or domains. The structural domain "organizes oppression."[221] The disciplinary domain "manages power relations" and functions to exclude people from accessing and participating in social institutions.[222] The hegemonic domain "justifies oppression."[223] And the interpersonal domain "influences everyday lived experience and the individual consciousness that ensues."[224] Within this matrix, distortion of what is true creates stereotypes within the hegemonic domain that contribute to exclusionary policies in the structural domain and discriminatory ones in the disciplinary domain. In turn, the harsh realities of exclusion and discrimination feed into the

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[219] Earnestine Willis et al., "Conquering Racial Disparities in Perinatal Outcomes," *Clinics in Perinatology* 41, no. 4 (December 2014): 847–75, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.clp.2014.08.008; Lindsay S. Womack, Lauren M. Roseen, and Joyce A. Martin, "Singleton Low Birthweight Rates, by Race and Hispanic Origin: United States, 2006–2016," NCHS Data Brief (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018), https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db306.htm.
[220] Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 69.
[221] Hill Collins, 276, 277.
[222] Hill Collins, 280.
[223] Hill Collins, 276.
[224] Hill Collins, 276, 287.

stereotypes of the hegemonic domain, and all three influence interpersonal behavior and make it hard for us to recognize one another.

The violence of distortion publicly plays out today in U.S. politics and policies related to immigration, asylum, and resettlement. These systems rely on and contribute to stereotypes on both sides of the pernicious binary of "deserving" and "undeserving" immigrants. For refugees and asylum-seekers whose immigration status, race, religion, and/or class mark them as "undeserving," stereotypes like Security Threat and Welfare Freeloader imperil dignity and personhood. At the same time, stereotypes like Innocent Victim and Destitute Single Mother threaten that of those deemed "deserving." These stereotypes justify the limited support provided in the integration process, as immigrants are deemed either too likely to take advantage of the system or as "lost causes" for whom we have minimal expectations of community participation or contribution.

In the months leading up to the 2024 U.S. presidential election, the dynamics identified by Emilie Townes and Patricia Hill Collins were particularly visible. When Donald Trump threatened to enact a second "Muslim ban,"[225] he drew on and contributed to stereotypes about Muslim immigrants as terrorists that circulated aggressively during the years following September 11, 2001 but that have their roots in European colonization and the U.S.'s history of imperial interests in the Middle East.[226] This stereotype produces oppression in what Hill Collins refers to as the hegemonic domain while supporting exclusionary and discriminatory policies in the structural and disciplinary domains. In turn, by drumming up fear of Muslims among

[225] Kourosh Ziabari, "Why Isn't America Talking about Trump's Planned Muslim Ban 2.0?," *Hyphen.*, October 29, 2024, https://hyphenonline.com/2024/10/29/why-isnt-america-talking-about-trumps-planned-muslim-ban-2-0/.
[226] Sahar F. Aziz, *The Racial Muslim: When Racism Quashes Religious Freedom*, First edition (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2021).

established Americans, the deployment of this intentional distortion of the truth also contributes to harm in the interpersonal domain.

Catherine Besteman captures the effect of such distortion in her research with the Somali Bantu community in Lewistown, Maine:

> Positioning Somalis as foreign, disempowered refugees burdens them as unworthy recipients of hospitality because dispossessed refugees are presumed to be unable to reciprocate. Additionally, in return for charity, humanitarianism demands silence, dependence, and the renunciation of civic and political rights, an expectation that extends from the refugee camps to the new homes of resettled refugees, where their welcome demands an apolitical life of silence, docility, conformity, and unending gratitude.

The denial of the ability to contribute forecloses the possibility of mutual relationships in which the dignity of all is upheld and belonging can be experienced together. Author Dina Nayeri reflects on the kind of compulsory gratitude that denies the personhood of the refuge seeker. She muses that, for most who have found safety, "Gratitude is a fact of a refugee's inner life; it doesn't need to be compelled. Every day after rescue pulses with thanks. My gratitude is personal and vast and it steers my every footfall." The problem is when this is the only form of speech allowed to the refuge seeker, when established Americans refuse to recognize them in the acts of contribution, celebration, protest, or critique. Nayeri continues of her gratitude, "It is mine. I no longer need to offer it as appeasement to citizens who had nothing to do with my rescue."[227]

Distortion of reality as a form of symbolic and structural violence often begets further, physical violence. For example, in the U.K., anti-immigrant riots spread after the perpetrator of a fatal stabbing incident was misidentified as an undocumented immigrant. Immigrants were subsequently equated with violent criminals in certain media sources, with the result being that British citizens with immigrant backgrounds did not feel safe leaving their homes in parts of the

[227] Nayeri, *The Ungrateful Refugee*, 5094.

country like Sunderland, where rioters broke into buildings and started fires.[228] A similar dynamic played out in the U.S. in Springfield, Ohio, where the verifiably false rumors spread by then vice presidential candidate J.D. Vance and amplified by Donald Trump about Haitian immigrants led to the proliferation of threats of violence against the Haitian community.[229]

Recognition as a Form of Countermemory

Both Emilie Townes and Patricia Hill Collins offer insight into ways that the violence of distortion might be countered that resonate deeply with the practice of recognition I witness at ABC and on Lattice Ministries' campus. Emilie Townes explores the practice of countermemory, which I would describe as a form of recognition that is oriented towards the past, yet which supports our ability to practice recognition in the present. Countermemory entails looking at history from a counterhegemonic perspective.[230] Townes explains, "As a tool and strategy, countermemory challenges images that denigrate and asphyxiate."[231] In practicing countermemory, we re-read history in a way that enables us to see communities and populations that have been marginalized as full humans, as contributors, and as fellow community members. When those who have been most directly affected by oppression practice countermemory, they reclaim their communities as agents and not just victims in ways that can support their practice of self-recognition in the present. As Townes, writing of Black women in the U.S. specifically, asserts, "We must name ourselves with precise anger and ornery love while turning justice and truth into a new analysis of our ethical dilemma."[232] Similarly, Patricia Hill Collins argues that

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[228] Amelia Nierenberg, "'Why Trash Your Own Town?' An English City Reckons with a Riot.," *The New York Times*, August 6, 2024, sec. World, https://www.nytimes.com/2024/08/06/world/europe/uk-riots-sunderland.html.
[229] Obed Manuel, "Bomb Threats Followed Trump's False Claims about Springfield. Some Haitians May Leave," *NPR*, September 19, 2024, sec. National, https://www.npr.org/2024/09/19/nx-s1-5114047/springfield-ohio-haitian-migrants-trump-safety-concerns.
[230] Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, 16.
[231] Townes, 27.
[232] Townes, 55.

self-definition is required to counter the harm done by controlling images.[233] "Naming," Hill Collins asserts, "becomes a way of transcending the limitations of intersecting oppressions."[234]

Countermemory and naming in relation to refugees and immigrants challenges us to go beyond simple platitudes about the U.S. as a nation of immigrants to see more plainly both the way the nation has been founded and developed through policies of exclusion *and* the ways that newcomers have played vital roles in creating legacies of resistance and communal transformation. As historian Jeannine Hill Fletcher explains, we have to face head-on "the way the disparity and injustice we experience today has been legislated by the United States since the beginning of its history"—a task that White, Christian Americans can struggle with in particular.[235] More honestly reckoning with these histories can support our ability to practice recognition and resist the violence of distortion in our politics, policies, and personal interactions today. Too, established Americans and newcomers alike can benefit from practicing countermemory to recover the ways that immigrants have positively shaped communities and institutions in the U.S. throughout the nation's history.[236]

In addition to practicing countermemory as we seek truer narratives about who we are as Americans, we can also endeavor to read contemporary circumstances through lenses that

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[233] Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 36.
[234] Hill Collins, 118.
[235] Jeannine Hill Fletcher, *The Sin of White Supremacy Christianity, Racism, and Religious Diversity in America* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2017), ix, http://proxy.library.emory.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=1901335.
[236] For example, Helen Kim's work highlighting the solidarity that motivated two Japanese nuns, Bernadette and Susanna, to voluntarily live in an internment camp during WWII in order to provide spiritual care to interred Japanese Americans—despite the fact that their status as Maryknoll sisters exempted them from Executive Order 9066— offers a powerful example of a countermemory that could challenge the anti-immigrant policies propped up by failure to recognize. These women, Kim notes, were "the ones who fulfilled not only their religious ideals but also U.S. democratic ideals of justice and liberty, as if to claim that which they would have been denied, challenging the very meaning of citizenship." Indeed, Kim's practice of countermemory recognizes these Japanese immigrants as having become more American in values and practice than the policies and politicians of that era. Helen Jin Kim, "Asian American Women's History Is American Religious History," Asian Christianity in the Diaspora (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 89–107, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-36818-0_7.

support recognition. Contemporary accounts of the agency and moral leadership of refugees and immigrants in our communities can help dismantle stereotypes, for they expose them as distorted and harmful to both the subject and holder of that false image. For example, Laura Alexander's reflection on the hospitality provided by a Sikh gurdwara functions as a powerful, contemporary countermemory to stereotypes birthed out of fear. Alexander recounts the story of the Sikh gurdwara that opened its doors when 180,000 residents of Sacramento, California were temporarily evacuated due to concerns about erosion surrounding a dam in 2017 a mere three weeks into President Trump's first term. Citing news stories from the time, Alexander shows how the experience of receiving *material* hospitality from Sikh neighbors, many whose countries of origin were impacted by the travel ban imposed by the Trump administration, inspired some established Americans to publicly express their desire for the U.S. to extend *political* hospitality to Sikh refugees.[237] As Alexander asserts, "Christians in the United States can and should learn from many Sikhs—and from their own Christian ethical mandates—to cast out fear by providing stable and robust communities from which their members can reach out to refugees and other strangers in a spirit of hospitality and not suspicion."[238] Narrativized, first-hand accounts of the experiences of refugees and asylum-seekers are another resource for revealing the incompleteness and inadequacy of our accounts of each other. For example, Daniel Nayeri's *Everything Sad is Untrue* poignantly captures an eleven-year-old's shock as he comes to understand how Americans perceive people who, like Daniel and his mother, arrived here as refugees: "People in Oklahoma think this must be how refugees are—never sitting, never sleeping, like they have no knees and no dreams."[239]

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[237] Alexander, "(The Image of) God in All of Us," 655.
[238] Alexander, 660.
[239] Nayeri, *Everything Sad Is Untrue*, 135.

When my research partners practice self-recognition, they engage in powerful acts of naming that resist distortion of the truth. Hill Collins muses, "Some women write themselves free…other women talk themselves free."[240] Refuge seekers contribute to their self-definition and freedom through homemaking as well. The framework of homemaking explored above powerfully recenters newcomers' histories, interests, desires, and capacities. I see naming at work when research partners who have come here as refugees have me over for tea, and I am regaled with stories about the family members, hometowns, and accomplishments associated with the furniture and memorabilia throughout the home. While it might at first glance seem gendered or even unfeminist to suggest that a woman who first came to the U.S. as a refugee participates in self-definition through hosting, I am convinced that, for many, the act of extending hospitality reflects the truth of the individual's ability to contribute and their active engagement in the process of making themselves and their guests at home in unfamiliar terrain. Too, to return to Phillis Sheppard's insight, receiving such hospitality invites me to hold up a healthy mirror to my hosts, reflecting back a truer image than the distorted one they might encounter in the news.[241]

I experience this vividly when Noor, an ABC teacher, has me over for lunch. We sit on plush sofas in her home's second living room, which has been painted red and features framed Qur'anic verses and a photo of her husband's recent *hajj* (or pilgrimage) to Mecca. She serves me three different kinds of bread containing meat and vegetables, as well as salad and large, grilled peppers stuffed with onions. She shares with me how strange and quiet Ashland felt to her when she first moved here, having previously worked in the bustling city of Baghdad as a nurse. Walking all over Ashland with her son, though born of necessity, in time helped her develop a

[240] Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 119.
[241] Sheppard, *Self, Culture, and Others in Womanist Practical Theology*, 11, 12.

sense of being at home here. She used to bump into Sarah, who would say, "Noor, what are you doing here? You're everywhere! You're amazing!" She recalls the difference it made when she was hired by ABC: "Even though I was the only one from Iraq, everyone felt like family…I went there, and I wasn't alone. I wasn't lonely anymore." While the U.S. has not proven to be the dream she had anticipated, she has used ABC and her home as resources for making herself at home all the same. She has worked hard to know her neighbors, taking over plates of food to others living on her cul-de-sac and inviting people over for meals at every opportunity. Recognizing the contribution she and her ABC friends have to offer, she holds up her hand and suggests, "Every finger is different, every finger plays a different role, just like people. You have to trust people."

Theological Significance

Finally, the practice of recognition matters because of its theological significance to some of my research partners. Wilo, for example, draws on the Christian concept of *imago Dei* to capture the power of recognition. He muses, "When I meet a stranger for the first time, if I see that stranger as a threat, that will close all windows of discovering who he is. But if I recognize this is an *imago Dei*, then I'll open my heart, then I'll be patient...If we recognize, then can we be *surprised* by the gifts." For those within the Christian tradition, the doctrine of *imago Dei* invites us to examine our capacities for distancing and for distorting reality. *Imago Dei*—the Christian affirmation that all are made in the image of God— is a challenging and countercultural principle. Protestant reformer John Calvin posited that the *imago Dei* in all humans enables us to perceive God's beauty and glory as though it were reflected by a mirror.[242] As Ellen Ott Marshall asserts, "When taken seriously, the image of God muddies our lives, our politics, and our

[242] See, for example, John Calvin, *John Calvin: Works and Correspondence.* (Charlottesville: InteLex Corporation, 2002), I.V.3, I.XIV.21, https://emory.primo.exlibrisgroup.com.

speech….it binds us to people from whom we might prefer to get away."[243] *Imago Dei* requires us to see God not only within our refugee and immigrant neighbors but also within established Americans who are fearful and angry about their presence and whose political views we find problematic.

For interlocutors like Wilo, when we practice recognition, we practice affirming the *imago Dei* in all and renouncing stereotypes like Security Threat and Destitute Single Mother as well as the seemingly more positive images that likewise flatten difference and reduce people to their ability to be "like us." In this category, I include images like Model Minority and Grateful Refugee. Among established Americans, the result of evaluating newcomers' worth by their proximity to our espoused ideals rather than by *imago Dei* entrenches us more deeply into images like the Self-Made Man and Bootstrapping Striver—images that constrain our imaginations, justify policies that harm all but the wealthiest among us, and pit us against one another in ways that make recognition all but impossible.

For other research partners, the language of neighboring conveys the theological significance of the practice of recognition. Indeed, the language of recognizing the other as neighbor rather than stranger peppers community members' recollections of New Hope Presbyterian Church's experience of opening the campus to new partnerships. As Margaret, a denominational leader who supported the creation of Lattice Ministries recalls, "Pastor Jay really was able to preach a message of reaching out to our community and of asking who our neighbor is." Pastor Jay himself points to Jesus's response to the lawyer who asks Jesus "Who is my neighbor?":

> The lawyer asks, 'Who's my neighbor?' And I think that's the problem, right? Are you open to what it means to be in relationship with your neighbor? Who's my neighbor?

[243] Ellen Ott Marshall, *Introduction to Christian Ethics: Conflict, Faith, and Human Life* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2018), 56.

> And how am I going to be in relationship with them? If you walk in my door that makes you my neighbor, right? I mean, how can I say you're not my neighbor— you're in my door.

These commitments to learning to recognize all as neighbor and to wrestling with the responsibilities neighboring entails continue to influence Lattice Ministries today. For example, Cody, the board chair during the time of my research, explains to me of his work with the organization, "This is what I fall back on: you know Christ, and love your neighbor as yourself, and you know who is my neighbor? Well, it's pretty much everybody."

Like *imago Dei,* this language of neighbor carries deep theological significance. While the importance of neighbor-love is stressed throughout the Hebrew Bible and Greek New Testament, perhaps the most evocative instance—and the one to which Lattice Ministries community members make direct reference—is found in the gospel of Luke. In response to Jesus's teaching about the importance of love for neighbor, a lawyer queries Jesus about the identity of that neighbor. Jesus replies with the parable of the Good Samaritan, a narrative in which a stranger, the Samaritan, is not only reframed as neighbor but is, in fact, the protagonist of the narrative. It is the Samaritan stranger who practices recognition, stopping in his tracks as he finds a fellow human left for dead by the side of the road and who honors the responsibilities that come when we perceive our connection as neighbors by providing the care the man needs to recover (Luke 10:25-37). As Melinda McGarrah Sharp suggests, "Recognition begins with assenting to the personhood of other human beings as neighbor."[244] Embodied understanding of this truth can be glimpsed in Lattice Ministries' past and present, as they practice recognizing rather than distorting what is true.

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[244] McGarrah Sharp, *Misunderstanding Stories*, 104.

Recognition and Its Limits

Recognition of agency and belongingness is not perfectly practiced when it comes to Lattice Ministries (or any site, for that matter). Indeed, some painful instances of misrecognition and distortion took place during the period leading up to the community hub's inception. While the congregation of New Hope Presbyterian Church has been rightly lauded for its role in creating the conditions that birthed Lattice Ministries and, as I argue here, ought to be held up as a model of a life-giving way to navigate congregational decline, I must also make clear that the congregation had hoped to continue to exist alongside the shared space ministry they nurtured into being. Some former members question the way certain decisions were made to provide denominational support and resources to Lattice Ministries and not to the congregation that incubated it. As Peter, who was a leader in the congregation at the time tells me, "There was this sort of misapprehension, and it comes into the development of Lattice Ministries. Misapprehension, I think, can be cringeworthy. But there's also misapprehension about power and privilege and status." In some former members' perspectives, the denomination failed to adequately recognize the giftedness of the congregation, instead seeing only the fruits of that church's efforts to create space for the community and build relationships with their neighbors. "We're not here as supplicants at the table," Peter recalls insisting at one of the visioning meetings—an insistence on the congregations' ability to co-create, as I see it, and an invitation to other church partners to extend recognition of this ability. Furthermore, Peter's point about "misapprehension" speaks to some of New Hope Presbyterian's members' sense that, while they had taken the time through the years to practice recognizing their new neighbors on campus, the new supporters of Lattice Ministries were drawn to the innovative nature of the shared space approach but had neglected to do the hard work required to recognize truly and respond.

My research also captured moments in which countermemory was not cultivated, when dominant threads in American history went unchallenged and undisrupted. I see this happening specifically in Lattice Ministries' ongoing uncertainty about its relationship with and responsibility to Black American neighbors. Several interlocutors bring this to my attention as an area in which the community struggles to live out the normative claiming of recognition. The reality is that the neighborhood in which Lattice Ministries is located is not entirely comprised of refugees and immigrants. Rather, its location borders a historically disenfranchised Black community, a truth that is largely not reflected in the make-up of the organization's onsite partners. As a person of color who is a supporter of Lattice Ministries puts it plainly:

> White folks are able to skip that whole slavery piece with Black and brown immigrant bodies [rather] than Black bodies. So, we are hyper-invested in belonging to one racial group or multiple racial groups, but not the one relationship that has been the most tumultuous *while* you are in a Black neighborhood or right behind the projects. Then your role of belonging will be limited. Or just to say, if you're Black and brown and new here, we could work with you. But if your descendants are the enslaved, not so much.

Dr. Sharon, the director of one of the only programs on campus that primarily supports Black American families, tells me that, as the focus on refugees and immigrants became more singular as New Hope Presbyterian Church engrafted and Lattice Ministries grew, she wondered, "What is happening here?" and questioned whether her school community would continue to have a place on Lattice Ministries' campus. As noted in the self-recognition section above, over time Sharon made a choice to claim the belongingness of herself and her organization to Lattice Ministries. She has built substantive relationships with other partners on campus and sees her organization as essential to the Lattice Ministries ecosystem because of the way they "represent the Black community." As a result, she remains determined to "make us belong," even when that requires her to call out insufficient recognition of the realities of the community in which Lattice Ministries is embedded.

Finally, my interlocutors teach me that not all forms of misrecognition are harmful distortions. To be sure, failure to move beyond stereotypes of newcomers as Security Threat, Welfare Freeloader, Innocent Victim, or Destitute Single Mother implicates us in both structural and interpersonal distortion of what is true. However, to initially recognize someone as "new" or "not from here" can, at times, present an opening. Sarah tells me of her experience accompanying a Burmese community member's son to enroll in college and witnessing the school nurse help update his immunization record. Initially misunderstanding how the young man pronounced his country of origin, the nurse smilingly blamed her own thick Kentucky accent before asking him to repeat it. Sarah narrates the experience as an example in which the initial lack of recognition opened into further conversation and connection. "Perhaps," Sarah muses, "when you don't recognize, you can let it be an opportunity." Durga reflects similarly that sometimes it is important to recognize someone as a newcomer: "Being treated as newcomer sometimes is good, sometimes not…Because sometimes people *do* need help. We just shouldn't ignore their intelligence, their capabilities too. We should give them a free hand and proper training."

As religion scholar Robert Orsi reflects, "Difference is not otherness, in other words."[245] Though offered in a reflection on fieldwork in religious studies, this insight speaks to the nuance intimated by my research partners about the difference between accidental misrecognition and participating in distortion that contributes to the stereotypes that womanist and Black feminist scholars unmask as evil. While the latter forecloses possibilities for recognizing shared humanity, giftedness, and belongingness, the former can create opportunities for relationship that leads to clearer, more complex recognition. Melinda McGarrah Sharp's model of intercultural

[245] Robert A. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2005), 162.

crisis and repair is rooted in her belief that "when we human beings try to connect in meaningful and not so meaningful ways, we miss each other." For her, these challenges to recognition are not only "ingredient in committing to intercultural relationships in the first place."[246] They are, further, that which can "*move* us in the midst of otherwise sustained, committed connections." Such movement, though often painful and messy, can draw us into relationships that "honor rather than collapse differences" and in which recognition can be extended on a mutual basis. [247]

Recognition and Belonging

To do the work of unsettling our fixed sense of belonging and expanding opportunities to belong to newcomers, established Americans must learn to recognize. The community of Lattice Ministries reveals the truth that each day presents new opportunities for individuals and community groups involved in refugee resettlement and refugee ministries to recognize more truly than the day before, to open themselves up to being recognized as well, and to allow this recognition to change them in ways that disrupt old ways of belonging. My research partners point to the power and possibility of adopting recognition not only as a practice but also as a norm against which established Americans might judge our actions, our institutions, and our societies. As the ABC community makes clear, recognition calls for personal and collective changes so that so that the agency, giftedness, desires, and complexities of *all* neighbors are readily recognizable—and not just their vulnerability and material need. Recognition requires calling out and addressing the violence of distortion present in stereotypes, policies, and politics. Recognition as a norm insists that individuals and community organizations begin learning to be, in Wilo's powerful turn of phrase, in the "humanization ministry." In the absence of this, it is

[246] McGarrah Sharp, *Misunderstanding Stories*, 67.
[247] McGarrah Sharp, 68.

little wonder that, in the meantime, ABC's work has been described as "the most profound mental health work" in the community.

Recognition is fundamental for belonging for both objective and subjective reasons. Objectively, one does not belong in a space, a program, or a community when one's presence, humanity, or contribution is denied. It is also nearly impossible to feel a subjective sense of belonging in these circumstances. Being recognized both enables individuals to experience a sense of belonging and gives them access to participating in design and contributing to and benefiting from the belonging practice taken up in the next chapter, accompaniment. When someone is recognized as belonging, it renders them legible as someone available to accompany and be accompanied in turn. Recognition places newcomers and established Americans alike in the scope of the community's care and concern.

Too, the *telos* of shared sufficiency that, as I delve into in the following chapter, belonging practices can move communities towards, ultimately falls apart without recognition. To live into a vision of shared enoughness and to resist the powerful lure of an individualized sufficiency that stops at our nuclear families, established Americans must recognize others as humans capable of contributing to us. Without this recognition, we will not be open to receiving. Moreover, established Americans must recognize the other's belongingness to the communities where we likewise experience belonging. Without this, individuals and community groups will fail to be open to giving and to expanding the subject of "enough" when we work towards a state of sufficiency. To begin to live lives in ways that create enough for all, recognition of newcomers as fellow humans, contributors, and community members is required. As my research partners remind all of us involved in the work of responding to refugees, we must practice, like Sarah, "notic[ing] when you're not here," and, like Jamila, inviting one another into the sun.

It Looks Like Holding Their Hand: Practicing Accompaniment

"If you want a woman to come and sew, and her wellbeing is compromised, how will she even come to the program? So, the program doesn't start from sewing. The program starts from the woman's wellbeing." –Kweks

"It is a holistic approach in helping these women who are trying to figure out how to be able to stand on their own two feet. How do we make that happen for them? It looks like holding their hand until they're able to get on their own two feet. So, whatever need they have, we take it upon ourselves to figure out how to get an answer for them." –Gladys

Introducing Accompaniment

Walking to Gladys's office on the upper story of the campus gym, I bump into Lattice Ministries' executive director, Charlie. He greets me warmly and explains he is on his way to drop off an application and encourage Gladys to apply for one of Lattice Ministries' community grants for Kuumba's upcoming event. I wave to Gladys and wait by the door as Charlie offers her the form and reminds her that up to $1,000 is available. As Charlie exits, a woman from northeastern Africa approaches from the other side of the hallway, smiles at me, and dashes in to pick something up from one of the many shelves lining Gladys's office walls. As I enter the office, I see that a woman from southeast Asia has been in the office this whole time, efficiently folding and storing fabric on the shelves. Gladys is the CEO of Kuumba, the holistic sewing and leadership organization whose classrooms and social service navigation offices are housed at Lattice Ministries. Originally from Kenya, Gladys is in her late forties. Her dimpled smile and big laugh are two of her trademark features. On that early fall day, Gladys's hair is piled on top of her head and wrapped in colorful fabric. She wears a long-sleeved, dark gray dress, against which her necklace—made by Kuumba and featuring buttons covered with different pieces of fabric—stands out beautifully. I am there to reconnect and to explore with Gladys how I might "hang out" with the Kuumba community on a more regular basis. Because of the pandemic, it has been years since we used to regularly bump into one another at Ashland community events.

We reflect on how joyful the recent Kuumba graduation was. Gladys enthuses, “You got to see the celebration side of Kuumba!” She also updates me on their new location in the heart of Ashland, which now doubles as a storefront and a space for Kuumba community members to engage in their individualized English conversation program, “ESL Buddies.” As Gladys catches me up on the way Kuumba expanded its social services navigation support due to COVID-19, she reflects, “We thank God for the opportunity to do this ministry. [During the pandemic], we became the go-to place for anything, everything. People come to us knowing, ‘I’m sure I’ll find someone who speaks my language there.’” I am struck by the power in this statement, immediately scribbling down Gladys’s words as I leave her office. For, in a society in which newly arrived refugees can be made to feel insignificant and alone when they do not arrive to the country speaking fluent English, Kuumba’s reputation as a place where all will be heard and understood is deeply countercultural. So too is being the “go-to” place, when so much of life in the U.S. feels piecemeal and mystifying during the period following resettlement.

Throughout the year, as I hung out at Kuumba’s Ashland office each week with Durga, my Kuumba ESL conversation partner, and attended various Kuumba events, I came to understand that one of Kuumba’s primary ways of growing opportunities for belonging was through the practice of accompaniment. Again and again, I witnessed Kuumba staff and community members commit to listen, to come alongside, and to address all issues that emerged along the way together. At Kuumba, accompaniment is engaged as an interpersonal and organizational practice, as newcomers accompany one another and are accompanied by the organization on their journeys towards healing, access, and empowerment. Accompaniment as practiced at Kuumba resonates with my observations of movement chaplains—individuals and collectives committed to offering spiritual and material care to activists involved in social justice

movements. When I researched their work in a previous study, I was struck by the way movement chaplains bring care out of private clinician offices onto the streets. They share the labor of spiritual care among collectives of movement chaplains involved in the same local branches of movements. And they rightly insist that care should be accessible throughout a movement's life cycle—from the more obvious stages of protest and civil disobedience to quieter moments of defeat, planning, and celebration.[248]

Accompaniment as practiced at Kuumba also evokes the scholarship of *mujerista* theologian Ada María Isasi-Díaz. Though she does not work with the language of accompaniment, Isasi-Díaz writes powerfully of the way solidarity requires people with more power to learn to listen to the granular, messy details of *lo cotidiano*, the everyday realities of people who have been marginalized. This solidarity then requires those with more power to refuse to stop there and move on, but, rather, to engage in the work of advancing justice alongside those who are most directly affected by its absence. Isasi-Díaz argues:

> Mutuality as an element of solidarity must push the oppressed and their 'friends' to revolutionary politics. Mutuality urges them to envision and work toward alternative nonoppressive systems; otherwise they will not be able to sustain the revolutionary momentum that makes liberation possible. Mutuality must push the oppressed and their 'friends' to resist easy, partial solutions which may indeed alleviate oppression but not lead to liberation.[249]

While the colorful, bustling spaces of Kuumba's offices and sewing classrooms might not, at first glance, seem revolutionary, I believe that the practice of insistent accompaniment I observed at Kuumba contributes to the creation of these alternative systems and to experiences of freedom and belonging in the Kuumba community.

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[248] Janelle Lindsay Adams, "Midwifing Social Movements: How Movement Chaplains Practice Pastoral Theology Through Accessible, Critical, and Collective Spiritual Care," *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 33, no. 3 (2023): 203–20, https://doi.org/10.1080/10649867.2023.2255465.

[249] Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology : A Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1996), 98.

At Kuumba, women from various countries in Africa, the Middle East, and South and Southeast Asia come together for sewing classes. Of the sewing initiative, which has grown to include up to 70 students at a time, Gladys shares, "I always brag that we look like the United Nations in there!" In addition to its flagship sewing program, Kuumba also provides support to anyone in the community who needs help navigating and accessing the social services to which they are entitled. Gladys and COO Kweks work with a staff of sixteen that includes sewing instructors, case managers, and a therapist. The staff speaks close to 20 languages, enabling the organization to live up to its reputation, as noted above, as a place where, no matter where an individual is from, they know they can find someone who will understand them at Kuumba. In addition to the striking diversity of the team, Gladys's and Kweks's willingness to pivot to address new community needs as they surface is a hallmark of the organization.

This commitment to do what it takes to mobilize relationships and resources to address shared needs can be witnessed in the story of Kuumba's founding. Having earned a Master of Public Health and worked in community clinics following graduation, Gladys initially envisioned Kuumba as a public health organization. As an immigrant from Kenya, Gladys had firsthand experience with the challenges of navigating the American healthcare system. For several years she found herself offering free advice to recently arrived refugees and immigrants from her "office" in a neighborhood coffeeshop. Over time, however, as she heard more and more women express the desire to experience a greater sense of control over their lives in the U.S., Gladys realized how bleak the employment landscape could be for women who first came here as refugees. While men are often placed in positions at poultry processing plants located hours outside the city of resettlement, women are constrained from accepting such jobs when

they have young children at home or when they come from cultural contexts that consider it taboo for women to work outside of the home.

Eventually, Gladys settled on sewing as a skill that might generate income and support the kind of flexible schedule often needed by mothers. Today, women can enroll in a nine-month sewing program that culminates in a graduation at which graduates wear, showcase, and sell items they have made during the year. Upon graduating, some use their skills to launch home-based businesses, while others join Kuumba's small-scale manufacturing team. Participation in the sewing academy is not free, as paying tuition helps ensure students' investment in prioritizing this skills- and community-building opportunity. However, whenever a student cannot pay the full amount, Gladys invites them to proceed with enrolling and then fundraises at churches connected to Lattice Ministries to fill the gap. Lattice Ministries' board members also allocate funds to sponsor women in the program whenever possible.

Kuumba graduations are, without doubt, one of the most joyful occasions in the Ashland community each year. The event spans over three hours and includes a slide show, the presentation of awards to various supporters, musical performances by some of the sewing students (and, in one woman's case, by her husband and son), speeches by Gladys and Kweks, the presentation of each graduate with a brand-new Singer sewing machine one by one, and finally a giant potluck. When I attend in 2022, Gladys opened with striking words: "Women are an endangered species." She continued to share that, in the process of launching and sustaining Kuumba, she has "had to kick down a few doors" and she hopes that participation in the Kuumba community enables others to do likewise. She called out the ways the community supports one another by offering rides to new students, mentoring one another, and becoming teachers, case workers, and community ambassadors following graduation. While most women responded to

the presentation of their new sewing machine with huge smiles, hugs for Gladys and their sewing instructors, and enthusiastic waves to their family members, a few gave speeches of their own. One graduate, Aimée, stole the show when she shared that she not only graduated from Kuumba that day, but that she had also become a U.S. citizen earlier that morning. The mother of six and caregiver of eight switched seamlessly between English and Swahili, concluding proudly, "I am so happy—I have two certificates in one day!" She credited these accomplishments in large part to Kuumba, the organization that supported her in the face of every obstacle.

In what follows, I begin with a descriptive analysis of the ways I see and hear my research partners at Kuumba practicing accompaniment. By accompaniment, I mean the practice of choosing to walk alongside someone over time. In contrast to service provision (which, while often essential, can have firm parameters around what is and is not included in the scope of care), accompaniment requires holistic care that responds to needs that surface slowly with time. I then draw on resources from the social sciences and ethics to explore the significance of the practice of accompaniment. Specifically, I turn to Arseli Dokumaci's work with the concept of affordances and suggest that the Kuumba community both generates new affordances and becomes affordances for newcomers when they remain stubbornly absent in the resettlement landscape. I then consider the ethical significance of accompaniment by turning to the ethics of care. Drawing on the scholarship of Joan Tronto and Christina Sharpe, I demonstrate how accompaniment reveals the way society typically siloes the components of the care process that should be integrated, narrowly delimits the boundaries of care responsibilities, and ignores the historical conditions necessitating care. Accompaniment has the power to counter all three of these tendencies. I then explore how the practice of accompaniment carries theological significance for some of my interlocutors before tracing the way accompaniment critiques the

telos of self-sufficiency and illuminates the path towards shared sufficiency. Finally, I identify the limitations of the practice and consider why accompaniment matters for belonging.

Practicing Accompaniment

Spending time with the Kuumba community showed me that the interpersonal and organizational belonging practice of accompaniment entails a foundational commitment to support the healing and wellbeing of the one being accompanied. Furthermore, accompaniment requires attention to questions of access. Finally, accompaniment necessitates movement towards the empowerment of the one being accompanied so that they, in turn, might be prepared to accompany the "newer newcomer" down the road.

Accompanying Towards Healing

At Kuumba, accompaniment starts by foregrounding the healing and wellbeing of the one being accompanied. While it is conceivable that, in some contexts, one might grow belonging possibilities by accompanying towards access and empowerment alone, in the context of refugee resettlement, attention to healing is foundational. The work of Kuumba is rooted in awareness of how challenging it is to live healthily in a new cultural context while experiencing the material poverty and isolation that can follow experiences of displacement. Accompanying on the road to healing requires asking questions about the root issues impacting wellbeing and taking time to get to know the individual as a complex, multi-faceted human being. Kweks, Kuumba's gregarious COO who immigrated to the U.S. from Ghana, highlights the way a commitment to healing-oriented practices of accompaniment shapes Kuumba's sewing initiative: *"*If you want a woman to come and sew, and her wellbeing is compromised, how will she even come to the program? So, the program doesn't start from sewing. The program starts from the woman's wellbeing." Of the time it can take to even know how to begin walking with someone towards a place of greater wellbeing, Gladys shares that Kuumba's team of case managers and community

ambassadors are “trained to figure out beyond what is being presented to them.” She seeks to model this slow, deep listening. Gladys explains, “I have to have my finger on the pulse of every single aspect of what’s going on at Kuumba…I have to spend time being in the space where I can engage the women who have joined the sewing program and getting to know them. I also have to spend time with our staff, hearing from them, talking to them about their challenges, what’s going on in the community, and what they are hearing from the community.”

One of the most obvious ways in which Kuumba accompanies the women in their community towards healing is by connecting them with the therapist who officially joined the team a few years ago. While some organizations might see the hiring of an in-house therapist as extraneous to their primary mission and an unnecessary overhead expenditure, Gladys knew that, with careful interpretation—literal and figurative—access to a mental health professional could make navigating the stress of life in the U.S. while coping with the trauma entailed in displacement more manageable. Gladys explains that the Kuumba team took considerable time when making this hiring decision to ensure they could identify someone familiar with the cultural backgrounds and migration experiences of the community. Though therapy is, as Gladys puts it, “an alien concept” for many, the mental health professional they hired is adept at helping women feel comfortable. She frames their sessions as something important they are doing to take care of themselves so that they can continue taking care of others. Gladys shares that she understands one of Kummba’s roles to be that of helping women find a balance between resisting the assimilationist forces that can be so powerful in the U.S. on the one hand and the temptation to exist in an insular bubble on the other. In Gladys’s words, the therapist helps newcomers answer the question, “How do I make space within this culture?”

While connecting community members to therapy is a clear example of healing-oriented accompaniment, Kuumba accompanies newcomers toward healing in more indirect ways as well. Three stories illustrate how this healing-focused accompaniment takes place at Kuumba in ways that expand opportunities for belonging. While the first two reveal the way Kuumba as an organization accompanies newcomers toward healing, the third highlights how accompaniment towards healing also unfolds as an interpersonal practice in the Kuumba community. The first story was relayed to me by Kweks, who has been involved in the organization from nearly the beginning. When asked about a time when he witnessed someone experiencing belonging at Kuumba, Kweks tells me about Nina, a woman from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Kweks recalls that, when Nina first started attending Kuumba's sewing academy, she came across as "very quiet, subdued, not really able to join in conversations or participate." Aware of how easy it is to simply assume that someone is unfriendly, Kweks committed to ascertaining, in his words, "What is the deal? What's the underlying factor?" Through conversations spanning multiple months as Nina came in for sewing classes and resource navigation assistance, Kweks learned that Nina was not only trained as a midwife but also fluent in four languages. While naturally outgoing, Nina had suffered acutely since arriving in the U.S. Although Nina and her young son anticipated that Nina's husband and older children would soon be resettled after them, the election of Donald Trump and the restrictions to resettlement that his presidency inaugurated interrupted these plans and resulted in years of separation for her family. Realizing just how alone Nina felt in her new community, Kweks encouraged her to train to become a community ambassador through Kuumba, sensing that such work might mitigate her feelings of isolation and helplessness. Today, Nina provides interpretation services and facilitates health workshops for her community. Reflecting on Nina's experience of being accompanied by Kuumba, Kweks says,

"I think that made her feel better mentally and also spiritually, physically, and economically." Although this story might sound like one of interpersonal accompaniment, I consider this a case of organizational accompaniment as well, as Kuumba's structure and expansive, flexible focus made it possible for Kweks to take the time that was necessary to understand the source of Nina's challenges and begin addressing them through different organizational resources.

Zari, a woman in her early forties originally from Kenya, tells me about Ahmad, an elderly man from Afghanistan whom she met at Kuumba's social services office. Zari, who works not only with Kuumba as the administrative director, but also with Charlie at Lattice Ministries and Pastor Joseph at Mulunda Worshipping Community, recalls sensing that Ahmad was experiencing despair. It took time to understand what was at the heart of his difficulties. After several appointments, Zari realized that some of his pain was caused by his living situation. Placed by his resettlement agency in a room of a Christian family's home, Ahmad unexpectedly found himself unable to maintain his prayer schedule, which did not align with the host family's rhythms. He struggled with feeling that they did not want him there. Kuumba was able to identify a Muslim family who had come to the U.S. through the resettlement system years before who were happy to host Ahmad. Zari posits that a key difference between his current housing situation and his previous one is that the new hosts "understood the trauma he'd been through back home" as well as the challenges of having "lost everything" and having to "start from scratch" here. Zari remains in communication with Ahmad, who, she reports, now seems to be adjusting better. "Finding him somewhere to be where he could feel happy was key for us," Zari explains, "so we did that."

Finally, accompanying towards healing is not only facilitated through Kuumba's programs and staff, but it also takes place interpersonally, within Kuumba's community of

sewers and friends. Narges, a 30-year-old woman from Afghanistan who is an assistant sewing instructor with Kuumba, tells me about her experiences as a student in the sewing initiative, which she joined soon after she came to the U.S. She shares that before becoming connected to Kuumba, she used to feel isolated and exhausted by daily life in the U.S. "But when I find Kuumba," she shares, "Kuumba is my second family." When her husband would call her while she was at a sewing class and ask where she was, she would tease, "I'm at home," as Kuumba came to feel like home for her through her growing connections with fellow sewing students. Kweks similarly names the healing effect that connecting to the Kuumba community can have on women in the program. As women from around the world share stories of war, persecution, and forced migration, they come to see that, despite differences of race, religion, language, and cultural background, in the narrative of the other, "That's *my* story!"

Accompanying Towards Access

Accompanying towards access is another way in which belonging is supported at Kuumba. In Gladys's words, "We have become the go-to place for anything, everything." The truth of this statement can be glimpsed while hanging out by the Lattice Ministries gym, where Kuumba's social service offices are housed. On a single afternoon, I meet an Afghan woman hoping to enroll in the sewing program, a Burmese man who is there to learn about rent assistance opportunities, and a Congolese elder inquiring about support her pregnant granddaughter could receive from Kuumba as she prepares her application for the Childcare and Parent Services program. While the sewing program is the most well-known initiative of Kuumba—in part thanks to their beautifully appointed showroom in downtown Ashland and the popularity of their handsewn dresses, purses, and trinkets at local markets—commitments to accompany the women in their program on an organizational level have inspired Kuumba to

offer everything from financial literacy workshops and classes on using technology to facilitated conversations with youth about healthy relationships and webinars detailing how to register a business in the state.

Kuumba has grown organically through the years, as Gladys and Kweks paid close attention to each of the many obstacles that might prompt a woman to drop out of the sewing program. Initially, when they would learn that someone had stopped attending because, for example, they had not received the state benefit that would enable them to access childcare at a more affordable rate, Gladys or Kweks would make a personal referral to an organization they knew could support the woman in navigating the convoluted application process. However, with time they began to see that such referrals often did not result in the woman's return to the Kuumba community. Something went wrong along the way. As such, they eventually hired their own staff to help community members navigate available resources.

Accompanying towards access is made possible first and foremost through language. As noted above, close to 20 languages are spoken by Kuumba team members. As Tes, a young case manager from Eritrea, puts it, when newcomers walk into her office and realize where she is from, they exclaim, "Thank God you're here! You can understand us…you know our people!" Relationships of trust and safety also facilitate access-building. Gladys explains that this trust "makes the difference between you getting a skill set that sets you up on a path to self-sufficiency or dropping out of a program." This sense of trust is deepened by Kuumba's ongoing commitment to address community members' needs and not just immediately refer them out to other organizations. Accompanying towards access builds newcomers' capacity to navigate complex American systems and contributes to their sense that they understand how things work

in this country. Over time, this access-building enables accompanying towards empowerment to occur, as newcomers eventually can spend less time focused on the consuming work of survival.

Kuumba's work during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic stands out as a particularly striking example of access-oriented accompaniment. When the pandemic began, Gladys's public health background made her keenly aware of how important it would be to help the community access information they could trust. Kuumba quickly launched a helpline so that community members could reach someone on the team at almost any point in the day. Of that challenging, uncertain period at the beginning of the pandemic, Gladys shares:

> Folks have really entrusted us with their lives. The community had so many questions, they had so much information bombarding them, they were so confused. So, for us to be accessible and have that helpline, for someone to call in and ask for a Swahili speaking case manager who can explain to them where and why they should get tested…There's that relief of ok, these are folks that I can really trust, folks who have already invested in me in some way.

Clearette, a graduate of the sewing program who is currently employed as a part-time Kuumba community ambassador, tells me that much of her job in that phase of the pandemic involved making short videos in multiple languages on the importance of masking and social distancing that she would then post on various social media group pages and circulate via WhatsApp. She elaborates, "I was advising my people in French, I was doing videos in French and Swahili. Anything to share to our community so they can know how to protect themselves." As the vaccine became available, Kuumba partnered with public health institutions to host a number of vaccination drives in the community.

On a smaller scale, Durga, a graduate of the sewing program and a current administrative manager at Kuumba's storeroom, tells me a story that highlights Kuumba's commitment to accompany towards access. Stressing that Kuumba will do what it takes to connect community members with what they need, be it through activating their networks or creative problem

solving, Durga tells me of the time a man from Iraq came into the storeroom on a freezing winter day. He explained that his family has not been able to afford a mattress and that he, his wife, and his four daughters have been sleeping on the floor—a situation that became increasingly untenable as temperatures fell. While Kuumba, clearly, has nothing to do with mattresses, Kweks committed to figuring out a solution as soon as Durga contacted him about the situation. Within a few hours, Kweks had located a mattress and borrowed a truck to ensure the family would not face one more night on the floor. Of her Kuumba colleagues, Durga emphasizes, "If they have anything *or* if they don't, they arrange it! They use their contacts, they arrange, and they help people. I am the witness of that!"

Finally, on an interpersonal level, Kuumba's ESL Buddy program facilitates access-oriented accompaniment between established Americans and newcomers. Over the past two years, Kuumba has piloted an initiative that pairs English learners with established Americans for an hour of conversation each week. Noting that most of the women in the program completed some number of English classes during the initial months after resettlement, Gladys explains that these classes often do not have much of an impact on women who have come to this country seeking refuge. Typically taking place during the chaos of a woman's first months in the U.S., comprised of large groups, and often led by male teachers, the classroom space is frequently not one in which refugee women feel comfortable speaking out and practicing. When paired with another woman in the familiar and private setting of Kuumba's office, sewing students can set their own learning goals with their conversation partners and build confidence in moving towards that goal, be it applying to college or becoming more comfortable speaking up at the doctor's office.

Cal, an ESL Buddy with two women in the Kuumba community, tells me how her weekly conversations have led her to unexpected places and given her newfound awareness of just how opaque many systems are in this country. Explaining how she has worked with one of her "buddies" for the last six months to apply for and enroll in a local college, Cal remarks, "It was a learning process for me too!" As one challenge after another arose, the practice of accompaniment led Cal to continue working with her friend to tackle issues one by one so that she could access the educational opportunities she had dreamt about for so long. During my weekly ESL Buddy sessions with Durga, I both practice accompaniment towards access and witness her doing the same as she answers the phone and greets visitors at the door. While I help her access small pieces of information, like who to contact at an organization she wants to connect with and how to write a business letter in the U.S., she helps all who stop by the Kuumba showroom access support from Kuumba staff fluent in their home languages.

Accompanying Towards Empowerment

Third, and finally, Kuumba also accompanies towards empowerment. This form of accompaniment is focused on helping community members build power. They do so by supporting newcomers in gaining a sense of self-efficacy through skill-building, as Kuumba community members learn everything from sewing and computer basics to financial literacy and leadership skills through their engagement with the organization. In the words of Catie, the volunteer director of the ESL Buddy program, Kuumba "helps people to open a series of doors to get them closer to be able to determine their own lives here in America." Similarly, Gladys names the significance of accompaniment with an eye ever towards Kuumba community members' own hopes and dreams: "It is a holistic approach in helping these women who are trying to figure out how to be able to stand on their own two feet. How do we make that happen

for them? It looks like holding their hand until they're able to get on their own two feet. So, whatever need they have, we take it upon ourselves to figure out how to get an answer for them."

Kuumba's community ambassador initiative and the youth leadership program perhaps best exemplify Kuumba's commitment to accompany towards empowerment. Clearette, introduced above, is one of ten women currently employed parttime by Kuumba to work as community ambassadors. Initially conceived of as a role to help Kuumba's sewing and social services staff with interpretation and translation, the role has continued to expand alongside the emerging needs of the community. Today, the ambassadors have been CITI-certified by the private university from which Gladys graduated, and at times they conduct community-based research that is then shared with local stakeholders. They have completed trainings in everything from domestic violence awareness and advocacy skills to resource navigation. The youth leadership program likewise helps young women develop confidence working in English and supporting community members of all backgrounds. Most of the youth trained by Kuumba continue their education at colleges or universities and many work for Kuumba over school breaks.

Clearette tells me about how significant the opportunity to work as a community ambassador has been for her, sharing with a laugh that it has helped her become far less shy than she used to be. It has also contributed to her sense of purpose. "I have to share my experience," she tells me. "I have to encourage [newcomers], make them feel like you've got this, you *are* somebody, you know? Even if other people can reject you, just know there are people that still love you. That's the experience that I see at Kuumba, and that's my way." In addition to her sense that Kuumba has helped her "understand the pain of others," it has also, Clearette stresses, "helped [her] learn how to be independent." Similarly, the experience of working as a leader in

the Kuumba community became a source of strength for Nina, who now owns her first home and is preparing for reunification with her family.

Durga speaks to Kuumba's practice of empowerment-oriented accompaniment as well. Durga approached Gladys and Kweks about the possibility of working for the organization at the end of her first semester in the sewing program. She explained that, while certain health conditions that were exacerbated by her forced migration experiences prevent her from working a 9:00 am- 5:00 pm job or one with demanding physical requirements, she believes deeply in the work of Kuumba and saw opportunities to contribute to the organization through her computer and accounting skills. Today she works at Kuumba's showroom, where she answers the phone, greets community members as they drop by looking for Gladys or seeking the social services office located at Lattice Ministries, and works on various administrative tasks whenever the place is empty. When I ask her to tell me more about the job she essentially created for herself, she says, "Daily, I receive so many phone calls, and some people want rental assistance, and today I received a phone call, and the lady was crying, literally, as she said, 'I want a place to live, shelter'…So now I can say that I am contributing a little bit in that." As Durga's own history includes a period of homelessness, helping connect an unhoused community member with Kuumba's many resources is both life-giving for her and a challenge to which she brings patience, persistence, and compassion. She shares, "Kuumba gave me confidence…I learn so many things over here, so I feel I'm a little bit skilled in my area. They are training me, they are teaching, so now I can work anywhere." In addition to her role with Kuumba, Durga has, with Kuumba's support, begun to develop her own business to sell handmade and imported items from India and Pakistan at local craft fairs.

Attending to the work of Kuumba staff and community members yields the following robust picture of accompaniment: first, accompaniment is rooted in a commitment to supporting the other person's wellbeing. Individuals and organizations engaging this practice begin with a concern about what is going on in the other's life and the root issues that pose threats to wellness and healing. Accompaniment towards healing requires a commitment to be present with and supportive of the other's journey to address these root issues. Second, accompaniment requires attention to access issues. Accompaniment entails analysis of the barriers that stand between the person and the resources they need to address the root issues surfaced on the road to healing. It then requires identification of opportunities to leverage organizational and interpersonal connections and resources to address some of these barriers. Finally, in addition to being oriented towards healing and access, accompaniment requires journeying towards empowerment. Accompaniment as a belonging practice is about helping the one being accompanied build power and reach a place where they are ready to accompany the more newly arrived individual or family on the journey.

Why Accompaniment Matters

The practice of accompaniment matters for several reasons. First, accompaniment can either activate or create affordances. It enables community members to procure or become what is needed in the otherwise affordance-barren resettlement landscape. Second, accompaniment enacts the ethics of care. It unveils the contemporary dis-integration of care, its overly narrow and parochial boundaries, and its historicity. Accompaniment also matters theologically to several of my interlocutors because of the way it invokes incarnation. Finally, accompaniment enables us to embody a life-giving alternative to the American *telos* of self-sufficiency by drawing us into shared sufficiency.

Affordances and Accompaniment

Arseli Dokumaci's work on "people as affordances" sheds light on how accompaniment contributes to belonging by revealing, making accessible, or creating the resources that people require to meet their personal, familial, or communal needs. The psychologist James Gibson initially developed the concept of affordances in relation to perception. Like a well-designed door that visually invites people to push rather than pull in order to open it —but neither causes the act of opening nor communicates quite the same invitation to a toddler—Gibson understood affordances as potentialities that might or might not be activated by the subject that perceives them.[250] Dokumaci draws the concept into the fields of disability studies and anthropology. Describing disability as "a shrinking down of the environment and its available affordances,"[251] she suggests that "this shrinkage can also incite invention and improvisation that make the same environment afford otherwise and 'slantwise' (Ahmed 2006:65), leading to microactivist affordances."[252] Some of these affordances can be accomplished solo. Dokumaci offers the examples of the way someone experiencing chronic pain might learn to twist a bottle rather than its cap to open it or remove a dress shirt by treating it as a sweater.[253] Dokumaci's ethnographic interviews also suggest that "people can enable the emergence of, or directly become, affordances for one another, especially when the affordances that their coming-together might create do not and could not otherwise exist within the niche they share."[254] She offers examples that occur within families, like a father carrying his son to school when faced with the barrier of

[250] James J. (James Jerome) Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979).
[251] Arseli Dokumaci, "A Theory of Microactivist Affordances: Disability, Disorientations, and Improvisations," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 118, no. 3 (2019): 497, https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-7616127.
[252] Arseli Dokumaci, "People as Affordances: Building Disability Worlds through Care Intimacy," *Current Anthropology* 61, no. S21 (February 1, 2020): S99, https://doi.org/10.1086/705783.
[253] Dokumaci, "A Theory of Microactivist Affordances."
[254] Dokumaci, "People as Affordances," S100.

a bumpy road and lack of accessible transportation or a spouse creating a piping extension that enables his wife to water her garden with less pain.[255] I suggest that this idea of people both "enabl[ing] the emergence of" and "directly becom[ing] affordances for one another" holds powerful political and social implications when it travels beyond the familial sphere.[256]

Activating Affordances

While the experiences of people with disabilities and those of newcomers diverge considerably, I would argue that a commonality across these lived experiences is a scarcity of affordances. While someone who has lived in the U.S. for some time can navigate their community and perceive available affordances in everything from a city map that highlights the location of a public library to a flyer on a bathroom stall advertising a caregiver's support group, such affordances are not perceivable by individuals who do not yet speak English or who come from cultural contexts that differ considerably from the U.S. Some of this dearth of affordances is redressed as (or if) individuals learn English and acclimate to their new communities. However, certain "affordance deserts" are bound to persist. For example, for individuals used to spending their lives surrounded by expansive kinship networks, care resources like individual therapy will remain unrecognizable as affordances without an intervention of some kind.

Organizations like Kuumba help women who came here in search of refuge learn to perceive the affordances available to be activated through their resource navigation services. These services are extensive, free, and provided in languages that range from French, Arabic, and Swahili to Dari, Karen, and Bravanese. Kuumba's interventions make affordances legible and accessible to community members who otherwise would not be able to take advantage of

[255] Dokumaci, "People as Affordances."
[256] Dokumaci, S100.

federally funded programs like LIHEAP, a Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program. Interventions in the form of people who speak one's language, can assess eligibility, and submit a series of complicated forms transforms a previously abstract program into an affordance that makes paying one's energy bills far more feasible. Thanks to interventions from organizations like Kuumba, inhospitable landscapes can become more inviting, legible, and resource rich. Accompaniment practices support community members in learning where in the environment affordances are located and developing the skills needed to make use of them.

Becoming Affordances

Kuumba's commitment to accompaniment means that, when affordances are not available for activation through interpretation and the sharing of relationships and resources, the organization instead seeks to become the affordances that are needed. In so doing, the Kuumba community collectivizes Dokumaci's powerful theory of care. This becoming of what is needed is evident in the founding of the organization. Keenly familiar with the absence of gathering spaces for women coming from societies with more communal orientations, Gladys set out to create that space. Aware of the limited opportunities for women to earn an income when they had young children at home or when cultural norms from their countries of origin made their husbands or fathers wary about them working outside of their homes, Gladys identified a form of work that could be done either at home or at Kuumba, among an all-women team.

While these forms of becoming unfolded with intention, at other times this collective becoming of what is needed happens spontaneously within the community Kuumba nurtures. For example, Tes shares that she has more family now thanks to Kuumba. Zari, she tells me, is her "work mom" and, she continues with arms gesturing to the case management team, "I also have extra family here." When forced displacement has severed existing kinship networks, "extra

family" can be life-changing to find and become for one another. Gladys muses on the way this happens among the women participating in the sewing academy and leadership initiatives at Kuumba: "The women, we call each other sister a lot… [there's a] strong sense of, I am here, I have gone through this process before. Let me help you do the same. We are here together."

This becoming of the affordance, this creation of what was not previously there, is evident too in the story shared above of Kweks's accompaniment of Nina. After years of suffering through the challenges of familial separation, Nina stumbled upon Kuumba where, in Kweks's telling, she encountered the message, "Half of your family might be gone, but this is your family right now." Kuumba became the affordances she needed. With time, Nina became increasingly involved in the organization and, in her role as a Kuumba community ambassador, she now generates affordances for newcomers.

Belonging and Abundant Affordances

When Kuumba activates or becomes the affordances that are needed as an organization and a community, Kuumba addresses the challenge of affordance deserts that exacerbate vulnerability among newcomers. Indeed, I would suggest that Kuumba's practices of accompaniment yield an exponential growth of affordances. As women like Nina and Durga are accompanied on the journey to empowerment, they, in turn, stand ready to accompany and to either tap into or become affordances for those in their own spheres of influence at Kuumba and beyond. Whether formally, as Kuumba case managers and community ambassadors, or informally, as neighbors and friends, these women go on to support the healing, access, and empowerment of others.

The work of creating an abundance of affordances holds direct implications for belonging. Most fundamentally, accompaniment that generates affordances serves to remove

barriers that newcomers face when attempting to meet their individual, familial, and communal needs. To explain this role played by Kuumba, Zari draws on a Swahili proverb: "The dew that falls early in the morning, the first people who go, they take all the dew. Those who come after, the path will be clear so that they can walk." She elaborates of the Kuumba team, "Somehow, we clear that path. We say, hey, step here; you may not need to step here." In contrast, when the ability to meet needs is blocked, any hope of experiencing belonging is stymied. Moreover, research reveals that feeling as though one knows how things work in a particular context goes hand in hand with the ability to access a sense of belonging in that context.[257] Kuumba's affordance-activating work of helping community members navigate resources and gain confidence in their ability to access them on their own slowly lowers the threshold to belonging for individuals who came to the U.S. as refugees and immigrants. In sum, the concept of affordances helps shed light on the ways accompaniment practices work to grow belonging opportunities. In turn, exploring accompaniment practices in the context of Kuumba shows how the concept of affordances can travel beyond the field of disability studies and the context of familial settings into organizational and communal contexts where newcomers are navigating resource deserts.

The Ethics of Care and Accompaniment

To highlight the ethical significance of accompaniment, I turn to the ethics of care. This ethical approach takes a caring relationship as its starting point. It is inherently contextual, factoring in the power dynamics, gifts, and needs present in each relationship.[258] Within this approach to ethics, the good life is made good through care. A vision of a world in which all can

[257] Argo and Sheikh, "The Belonging Barometer."
[258] Virginia Held, *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global* (New York: Oxford University Press, Oxford University Press USA - OSO, 2005), 10, https://doi.org/10.1093/0195180992.001.0001.

receive the care they need offers a resource for evaluating actions and structures within the ethics of care. In sum, an ethic of care evaluates society on the basis of the care it is able to provide, insists on a relational view of what it means to be human, holds care accountable to the historical realities that shape contemporary care contexts, and casts a vision of a flourishing future characterized by interdependence.[259] While some scholars critique the ethics of care for overemphasizing the interpersonal at the expense of the political, I find that this charge does not hold true in the case of contemporary formulations. In what follows, I explore Joan Tronto's and Christina Sharpe's theorizations of the ethics of care to tease out the way accompaniment enacts the ethics of care by exposing the carelessness of U.S. society and calling for care-full alternatives.

Revealing the Dis-integration of Care

Joan Tronto elaborates an ethic of care that defines care as both a practice and a process. She identifies "moral elements" that are required for each part of the caring process.[260] The ethics of care, Tronto posits, requires us to move through all five parts of the care process: caring about, which requires the "moral element" of attentiveness; taking care of, which requires responsibility; care-giving, which requires competence; care-receiving, which requires responsiveness;[261] and caring with, a final care process she elaborates in later publications, which necessitates "plurality, communication, trust and respect, solidarity."[262] Far too commonly, as Tronto highlights, these care phases are not integrated. Tronto describes this dis-integration as

[259] Joan C. Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Joan C. Tronto, *Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality, and Justice*, UPCC Book Collections on Project MUSE (New York, NY, New York: New York University Press, 2013), http://proxy.library.emory.edu/login?url=http://muse.jhu.edu/books/9780814770450/.
[260] Tronto, *Moral Boundaries*, 134.
[261] Tronto, 105.
[262] Tronto, *Caring Democracy*, 35.

"privileged irresponsibility"—a dynamic by which "those who are relatively privileged are granted by that privilege the opportunity simply to ignore certain forms of hardships that they do not face."[263] Those with more power practice caring about and taking care of, while those with less are assigned the tasks of care-giving and care-receiving. In Tronto's framework, this dis-integration is a distortion of care that is both created by and contributes to inequality. Accompaniment as a belonging practice makes plain these care inequalities and requires the steps of the care process to be integrated. Journeying alongside someone towards healing, access, and empowerment necessitates moving beyond caring about into the challenging work of taking care of and care-giving. Too, the mutual nature of accompaniment makes possible the sharing of care-receiving and caring with.

Kuumba engages each of the components of the care process through its organizational and interpersonal practices of accompaniment. The organization *cares about* the experiences of refugee women, attending to the circumstances in their lives that prevent them from participating in Kuumba programs. The organization *takes care of* the community it forms. When, in practicing the attentiveness of caring about, a new barrier is revealed, Kuumba staff take responsibility either for creating a solution or using their relationships to generate one. Kuumba *care-gives*, skillfully responding to the needs they have learned about in these earlier steps of the care process. Kuumba also *care-receives*, as it creates pathways for participants of its programs to subsequently become its leaders. More personally, Gladys and the community ambassadors remain in caring, mutual relationships with the women in the Kuumba community. Finally, Kuumba excels at *caring with*, building in opportunities for dialogue, shared decision-making, and robust participation at every turn.

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[263] Tronto, *Moral Boundaries*, 120–21.

A powerful example of the way accompaniment serves to integrate the elements of care is found in Kuumba's work addressing healthcare challenges that result from female genital mutilation (FGM). According to Gladys, 57 women in the Kuumba community live with ongoing complications resulting from FGM practices in their countries of origin. Even after Kuumba became aware of this fact, it would have been entirely understandable for the organization to care about this hard reality without choosing to take care *of* it. After all, Kuumba runs a sewing academy, not a specialized health clinic. However, as more women shared about the pain they experienced daily resulting from FGM, Gladys chose to take responsibility. She activated her networks to identify a doctor with expertise in FGM-reversal operations. The Kuumba team learned just how much money would be required to finance such a procedure and developed a line of items whose sale proceeds go entirely towards this specified fund. Then Kuumba facilitated care-giving, enabling a woman experiencing acute pain to receive the first operation of this kind among the Kuumba community. Following the procedure, Kuumba community members cared for her by checking in on her regularly and ensuring she had access to all that she needed to recover fully. She, in turn, is now engaging in care-giving and caring with, as she collaborates with Kuumba to document the process and help other women waiting for the procedure know what to expect.

Unmasking Our Narrow Circles of Care

The ethics of care also unmasks the way it has become acceptable in U.S. society to narrowly define our circles of care to the nuclear family primarily and to those who we identify as being "like us" secondarily. Joan Tronto illustrates how privilege and inequality distort care with her concept of care passes. While all should be involved in deciding how care is provided for everyone in society, people with power both exclude certain voices from the table and excuse

themselves from the work of participating in these decisions. Tronto argues that certain passes have typically been given to men (the "production" and "protection" passes that stipulate they are not responsible for worrying about care because they are producing and protecting); to privileged women (the "care-for-my-own" pass that suggests they are not responsible for caring about others' children because caring for their own is all-consuming); and to the market itself to justify leaving everything to its domain (the "bootstraps" and "charity" passes that suggest that anyone can "make it" with enough hard work and that inequality is not a societal issue because individuals can give charitably if they feel so inclined).[264] These passes are used to justify disparities in who engages in care labor and in who receives care. The ethics of care makes these passes visible, which is a first step in revoking them and working to ensure that all have equal standing when it comes to assigning care. This, in turn, can lead to the reform and reimagination of all societal institutions so that they are understood properly as existing to enable everyone to give and receive the care they need.

Accompaniment revokes the "care-for-my own" pass and insists that everyone in our path deserves to be walked with. Kuumba offers a glimpse of what a world without care passes might look like, a world in which all passes have been revoked, and all must honestly reckon with their responsibilities to their neighbors. While Kuumba was founded with women arriving from francophone African countries in mind, Kuumba's history is punctuated by the refrain, "We could not turn them away." Rather than choosing to delimit their circle of care narrowly to individuals from central African countries, Gladys and Kweks again and again expanded their sense of responsibility to include refuge-seekers from east African countries like Somalia, Southeast Asian countries like Burma, and Middle Eastern countries like Afghanistan. Too, while

[264] Tronto, *Caring Democracy*.

Gladys is motivated by her Christian faith, from day one she sought to include women of all faith backgrounds in Kuumba's community of care.

Exposing Historical Contexts of Care

Third, accompaniment exposes the historical conditions that necessitate care. Christina Sharpe's development of an ethic of care that calls for and enacts what she describes as "wake work" illuminates this point. Insisting that all care takes place in the wake of American slavery, of "the past that is not past,"[265] Sharpe suggests that wake work involves practices of grief, support, tending, and imagination. She writes, "Living as I have argued we do in the wake of slavery…we yet reimagine and transform spaces for and practices of an ethics of care (as in repair, maintenance, attention), an ethics of seeing, and of *being* in the wake as consciousness; as a way of remembering and observance that started with the door of no return, continued in the hold of the ship and on the shore."[266] In contrast to Sharpe's powerful vision, much of the care work that takes place in the U.S. operates with a willful ignorance of the wake. Nonprofits, understandably, wish to unequivocally position themselves as the "good guys" without having to delve into the structural conditions that require their work in the first place. Arguing that care work must grapple with positionality and historicity raises some ambivalent implications. On the one hand, nonprofits that support individuals who came here as refugees work agentively within a deeply challenging political environment. On the other hand, the voluntary agencies and nonprofits that comprise the resettlement ecosystem nonetheless contribute to the idea that the wake is only "out there" in the form of autocratic governments from which the U.S. is "rescuing" refugees. This narrative obscures the wakes to which the U.S. has contributed directly: both abroad, through foreign policies that created instability, and at home, through a safety net that

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[265] Christina Elizabeth Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 13.
[266] Sharpe, 130–31.

essentially has been dismantled as part and parcel of the legacies of slavery and anti-Black racism.[267] Author Viet Thanh Nguyen poignantly highlights this reality in his conclusion to *The Refugees*: "I am a bad refugee because I insist on seeing the historical reasons that create refugees and the historical reasons for denying refugee status to certain populations."[268]

Accompaniment demands acknowledgment of the wake. To journey alongside requires taking the time to see to the heart of the issue and not simply offer a Band-Aid to smooth things over. The story of Ahmad illustrates this truth. As Zari shared about the importance of finding him a new home placement, it was clear she did not simply think this was a problem of clashing personalities. She did not place the blame for the conflict solely on the individual Christian family who offered Ahmad his first room. Rather, she positioned the issue within the reality of American Islamophobia and a system that reduces refugees to their vulnerabilities as a condition of their resettlement.

Kuumba's work of accompaniment towards healing honors the reality that things are not as they should be. Violations occurred that should never have happened, not only in newcomers' countries of origin, but also in the U.S. in the form of everything from the xenophobia, racism, and discrimination that so many newcomers face to the poverty that the system integrates them into. Kuumba's accompaniment towards healing enacts the work of attention and seeing, while their accompaniment towards access and empowerment foregrounds repair, maintenance, and imagination. Accompaniment positions the one doing the accompanying in the wake, even when they are differentially located. It requires established Americans to grapple with the way that systems that serve them are utterly failing others. While accompaniment at Kuumba does not

[267] Gowayed, *Refuge*, 3.
[268] Viet Thanh Nguyen, *The Refugees*, First Edition (New York, NY: Grove Press, 2017), loc. 2513.

necessarily change these structural conditions, it does go a long way towards the vital ends of creating "livable moments, spaces, and places in the midst of all that [is] unlivable."[269]

Theological Significance

The practice of accompaniment also matters theologically to some of my research partners. In response to my question about whether and how they experience the divine, sacred, or holy on Lattice Ministries' campus, several respond using language that invokes the incarnation, the Christian doctrine affirming that God willingly became flesh and blood to walk among us through the birth of Jesus. Interlocutors like Zari suggest that it is in accompanying that God's incarnational presence becomes visible. "We see God every day on that campus," Zari tells me as we catch up over lunch at an Ethiopian restaurant located just a few minutes down the street from Lattice Ministries' campus. She continues, "Just even that people are aware that this is a place you can come, feel welcome, and get help…People are there every day believing in walking alongside people, and to me that's God." Reflections on the work that unfolds in Kuumba's offices and sewing rooms shared by caseworkers Tes and Millen likewise carry undertones of incarnation, of God's direct presence and involvement on Lattice Ministries' campus. Tes shares, "When I'm doing applications, especially if I see a family that really needs the help, I'm always internally praying, 'Oh God, please help me so she can get approved or they can get approved,' and stuff like that. And once they end up getting approved, I'm like, 'My faith has worked miracles on this application, God heard my prayers!" Millen responds with confidence, "I feel like that's definitely God working through you to just help anyone [God] can."

[269] Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 4.

While reflections on accompaniment, walking alongside, and incarnation feel particularly salient at Kuumba, they are not reserved to this Lattice Ministries onsite partner alone. Joseph, the pastor of the pan-African congregation Mulunda Worshipping Community, tells me he experiences God's presence in the way that people's needs are met all over campus and in the witness Lattice Ministries carries for other churches in the area. Wilo, a Lattice Ministries board member, reflects similarly on his experience of God on campus:

> I see God every day. I see God every day, and the question is, why are we doing this job? …What we do is responding to Matthew 25: 'I was a stranger, and you welcomed me. I was naked, you clothed me.' And doing what we do becomes for us an opportunity to touch, to see God, Jesus himself, through all those people.

In Wilo's reflection, accompaniment is a response to the incarnation and to Jesus' insistence that he *is* the poor, the stranger, the marginalized.

Author of *Three Mile an Hour God*, Kōsuke Koyama poignantly asserts that "God walks 'slowly' because [God] is love. Love has its speed…It is the speed we walk and therefore it is the speed the love of God walks."[270] For many involved with Kuumba and other Lattice Ministries' partners, the practice of accompaniment is training in walking slowly, in walking at the speed of God. As Zari explains of accompaniment, there is a vital mutuality: "You walk alongside each other. It's two-ways. We learn from each other, we're walking together." Theologically, I suggest we extend this one step further: as we accompany, we are not only accompanied by the one we are walking with, but also by the incarnate God who walks alongside us.

In the U.S. today, it is dangerously easy to imagine that incarnation is about a Jesus just like "us." As Phillis Sheppard explains, "This line of thinking, where Jesus is appropriated as white for white supremacy, is theologically blasphemous because it reduces incarnation to specific bodies." She continues, "A Womanist incarnational theology declares that God shows up

[270] Kōsuke Koyama, *Three Mile an Hour God : Biblical Reflections* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1980), 7.

in the cacophony of Black bodies under siege in a world incessantly ruptured by violence and subjected to the salvo of white supremacy."[271] The women with whom I have spent so much time throughout the research process—women like Gladys, Zari, and Durga—suggest that the incarnation is a continuously present event as community members pick up the practice of accompaniment. As they accompany one another and those who continue to arrive to the U.S. in search of refuge, God's presence is made viscerally real.

Shared Sufficiency and Accompaniment

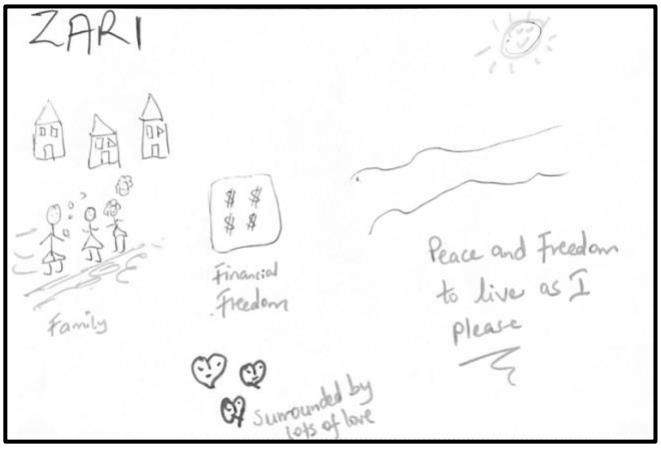
Finally, the practice of accompaniment is significant because of the way it exposes the existential loneliness of the *telos* that orients not only the refugee resettlement system but also U.S. society: self-sufficiency. While everything from history books and op-ed pieces to popular music and films valorize independence as *the* way to move through life successfully in this country, Zari makes clear that accompaniment illuminates an alternative way of being. Reflecting on the meaning of a good life in this country, Zari shares:

> I want to say that if you have a good source of income in the US, you could live a comfortable life, right? The only problem with that is living a comfortable life when your brother or sister or sibling is not…It's like you're doing well, but you're not trying to lift other people with you…Of course having a good source of income so that we can be able to pay bills and survive is important, but that's not as important as bringing others along to experience the same kind of success or comfort that you're experiencing.

"Bringing others along" captures the essence of accompaniment. In its fullest expression, accompaniment and being accompanied are ongoing processes: we accompany one another to deeper levels of healing, access, and empowerment and into new places of belonging and flourishing. Looking at the drawing Zari contributed of her own vision of a good life in the U.S. during the focus group I facilitated with the Kuumba team, we see, that, in addition to drawing

[271] Phillis Isabella Sheppard, "Reclaiming Incarnation in Black Life: Black Bodies and Healing Practices in Womanist Pastoral Care," *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 0, no. 0 (November 24, 2022): 11, 12, https://doi.org/10.1080/10649867.2022.2140257.

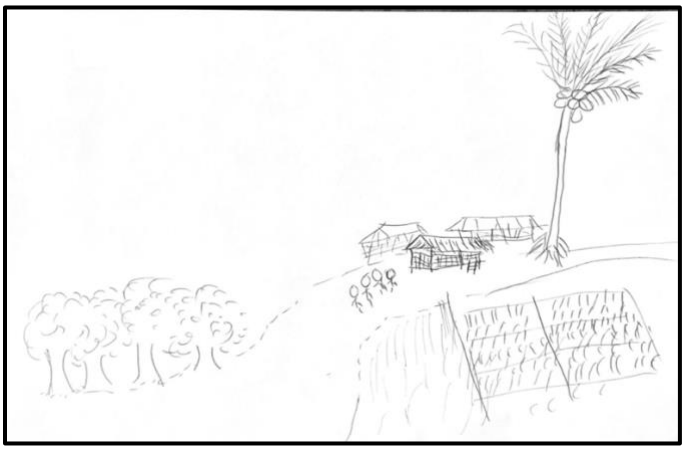
her immediate family members, dollar signs representing financial freedom, and a smiling sun over a river, Zari has added a cluster of hearts to which she includes the label "surrounded by lots of love" and the freestanding words "peace and freedom to live as I *please*." Removed from her reflection on the inadequacy of a good income, one might suppose the hearts refer to her family and that the note about freedom conveys a wish for noninterference into her family's business. However, her insistent emphasis on "bringing others along" invites an alternate interpretation of the drawing. As her family is already represented with stick figures, the hearts represent her community. Moreover, for Zari, "what she pleases" is to work for the flourishing of everyone, to leave no one behind. It is only by committing herself to this kind of work that she feels a good life is possible. She tells me, "I find this is how I want to live my life fully, even with my family, even with my child…Yes, we seek a better house, a better car, but life is beyond that. It's human beings."



1: Zari's Drawing of a Good Life in the U.S.

Flower, a bubbly case manager with Kuumba, shares a vision of a good life in the U.S. that also speaks to the power of accompaniment to expose the inadequacy of the American ethos of self-sufficiency. Flower's drawing of her good life in the U.S. features a community in Burma, her country of origin. Although I at first wondered whether I had insufficiently explained the exercise, our conversation revealed that was not the case. Rather, Flower asserts through her

drawing that living a good life here includes being able to return often to, in her words, "help them, the poor people—those who have to run around." Thus, while she does not draw dollar signs, money bags, or include the words "financial freedom" that appear on many of the other Kuumba case managers' and sewing instructors' pages (the latter a testament, I believe, to the training they receive at Kuumba on financial literacy), Flower's drawing assumes both some financial security and the attainment of citizenship. Both are valued for their ability to be leveraged on behalf of a broader self, a self that is constituted in community.



2: Flower's Drawing of a Good Life in the U.S.

Tes, a Tigrinya-speaking case worker from Ethiopia, addresses this explicitly: "If you have an individualistic viewpoint, then you would not care. You're like, oh, well, I work for my money so me and my family can enjoy it. But what about your neighbor who is struggling?" These women are powerfully living out the countercultural truth that "to work with others is not to lose oneself, but first and foremost, it is to find a larger self."[272] As they accompany, they are expanding the subject and meaning of sufficiency.

During the Kuumba focus group discussion, the women contrast the communal orientation experienced in their countries of origin with, as they put it, the "every person for

[272] Welch, *A Feminist Ethic of Risk*, 162.

themselves" mindset they witness here. They reflect on how this outlook overlooks the structural challenges faced by people with less power and privilege than the ones who are quick to point to their own "bootstrapping" pasts. Tes explains, "Back home, everybody's helping everybody. So even if I have $100, I wouldn't feel bad if I give $50 to my neighbor. In America, that never happens! They would give you $1.00, or they would be like, 'You can work for yourself, or you can do this. You have pants, you have legs.'" "'You are an adult,'" chimes in Durga, echoing, no doubt, a line that was hurled her way during her tumultuous early years of seeking asylum in the U.S. Amani, a Muslim woman from Sudan, emphatically draws the exchange to a close: "Nobody is hungry back home."

In addition to revealing the way the *telos* of self-sufficiency can be materially and existentially impoverishing, the practice of accompaniment also enables community members to live out its alternative and move towards a vision of sufficiency that is shared. Accompaniment reveals the barriers to enough-ness that people from different social locations experience. Accompanying sheds light on the way sufficiency is often structurally out of reach for some groups of people. When we who experience sufficiency in our daily lives accompany those who do not, it becomes clear that this state of having enough is not simply something that we have earned and are therefore entitled to. As Zari reflects on her experience practicing accompaniment at Kuumba, she shares, "It has made me really understand different types of struggles that I never imagined I would be involved with directly. It also makes me selflessly get into people, situations, and try to figure out how to get them to a better place."

Practicing accompaniment contributes to a *telos* of shared sufficiency by making visible to accompaniment practitioners the ways that they, too, have been accompanied. For established Americans, accompaniment breaks open the illusion of self-sufficiency. As Cal, an ESL Buddy

at Kuumba, helps Mayimuna navigate cultural differences between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the U.S., Cal is reminded of the way fellow teachers at her place of employment helped her navigate challenges tied to living in the South for the first time. For example, she laughs as she remembers how they had to teach her to not be offended when students called her "ma'am," a title she initially found insulting. Likewise, working with newly resettled families at a resettlement agency in the past helped me to see just how much I take for granted the way most systems work for me and any help I might need is within reach. Watching women like Zari and Gladys accompany newcomers reminds me of the accompanying care I have received throughout my life and of all who helped me find my bearings, build community, and connect with needed resources and opportunities following a move. Too, it also reminds me to acknowledge the ways I am currently being accompanied—not only by family and friends from various seasons of life, but also by my research partners. These realizations pull me onto the path of shared sufficiency, challenging me to accompany those around me whenever and however I can from a place of deep gratitude for the ways I am being accompanied.

While the *telos* of self-sufficiency makes it both difficult to accompany each other and to perceive those times when we are on the receiving end of accompaniment, the Kuumba team speaks openly about the ways they experience accompaniment and live into a state of shared sufficiency within the community of their coworkers and, at times, with the individuals they assist. Flower, for example, shares, "I feel very special. You know why? My clients give me lots of vegetables and sometimes fish." Durga teases in response, "Nice clients—give me the list of those clients!" After a moment of laughter, Flower returns to the meaningfulness of this moment of mutuality: "That's why I feel so special, and I feel like something. It's real." Tes and Princess tell me that they have multiple work moms, as they know they can always go to Gladys or Zari

for support when feeling overwhelmed by the challenges facing those who walk through Kuumba's doors. With tears in her eyes, Amani reflects on how Kuumba accompanied her just when she needed it most, on the heels of several isolating years following resettlement: "When I came here [to Kuumba], I saw my people. Somebody looked like me. Everything was so joyful. And then after six months now, I'm assistant teacher, and every time we hear somebody who makes you want to cry, you go to Gladys, like 'Somebody needs help.' And she helps them." In these practices of accompaniment, the *telos* of self-sufficiency is not only exposed for its harmfulness. Rather, the path towards its alternative, shared sufficiency, is illuminated and embraced as the Kuumba community engages this mutual practice.

Accompaniment and Its Limits

The practice of accompaniment at Kuumba reveals just how countercultural belonging practices can be. While this is true of recognition, design, and turning as well, I feel the countercultural challenge of growing belonging most viscerally in relation to accompaniment. On an individual level, life in the U.S. seems as though it were set up to leave no room for accompaniment. As Sheila Liming explains in her book *Hanging Out*, our daily lives include neither the time nor the space to be together. [273] Yet accompaniment requires both, and in ample quantities. Root issues do not reveal themselves in a 30-minute consultation but, rather, in the context of a relationship. Americans today experience overwhelm and burnout at unprecedented rates.[274] As a result, our chances of ever finding the resilience to accompany someone by moving through more than one part of the care process, much less all five, feels remote. I know just how much my own life is not designed with accompaniment in mind when I attend to the tightness in

[273] Liming, *Hanging Out*.
[274] Jonathan Malesic, *The End of Burnout: Why Work Drains Us and How to Build Better Lives*, First Edition (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2022).

my chest or the sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach that surface when I dwell on the "taking responsibility" phase of the care process, for example.

Accompaniment is likewise countercultural on an organizational level. In the U.S., organizations are required to specialize to navigate the complicated bureaucratic processes set up to prevent our social services from being taken advantage of.[275] Matthew Desmond's work exposes the way these systems are designed to maximize their own protection and not, as might be presumed, to optimize their ability to meet the needs of the most vulnerable. Moreover, as Gladys is deeply aware, programs with a top-down approach more readily access needed grant funding and government support than do grassroots organizations like Kuumba, whose accompanying work is messier, more organic, and, therefore, harder to quantify and scale.[276]

Accompaniment sometimes culminates in the end of an organization. While some organizations manage to flexibly pivot time and time again when faced with the changing needs of their community members, this is not always possible. This reality was made clear on Lattice Ministries' campus by Breaking Bread, a small social enterprise that, as mentioned in chapter one, experienced several break-ins during a period when they were already struggling to stay afloat. Breaking Bread launched almost simultaneously with Lattice Ministries and made use of the large kitchen that had once been employed for New Hope Presbyterian Wednesday dinners and other community meals. Helping individuals who had come to the U.S. as refuge-seekers become certified for food handling and catering and training them in baking, a hallmark of

[275] Desmond, *Poverty, by America*.

[276] Catherine Besteman's research captures this tension in funding priorities in her study of resettlement conditions in Lewistown, Maine. She observes, "There is also something oddly awry in a system that awards millions of dollars in ORR [Office of Refugee Resettlement] grants to organizations like VOLAGS [voluntary agencies] that offer short-term, basic, occasional services to refugees while absorbing part of the grants as administrative overhead. For instance, in 2008, ORR provided half a million dollars in grant funding to the local VOLAG and the State of Maine Multicultural Affairs Office for refugee assistance, while Trinity's total 2008 annual budget was about $150,000 and the Somali Bantu association's bud get was under $10,000." Besteman, *Making Refuge*, 230.

Breaking Bread's model was the organization's commitment to pay bakers in their program a living wage.

While Olivia had first launched Breaking Bread because of her awareness of the dearth of jobs that offered good working conditions and wages in the Ashland community, she found that this need shifted over time. During an emotional Lattice Ministries partners meeting, Olivia reflected on how the pandemic forced employers to raise wages and offer benefits—a positive development for workers that meant a livable wage was less rare. Too, given the way the Trump administration had limited resettlement to such a degree that, even a few years later, so many of the few refuge-seekers arriving were individuals from Afghanistan with professional backgrounds and degrees, the number of individuals looking for training in a new trade had diminished. "I'm not entirely sure that what we have done is needed," Olivia named plainly as she shared with other onsite partners that Breaking Bread would be closing its doors. Each baker with the program had secured a spot at other local bakeries thanks to Olivia's efforts, which, as Charlie mused, ensured that "nothing undoes the work that's been done by Breaking Bread." The reverberations of Breaking Bread's closure continue to be felt on Lattice Ministries' campus years later. The organization bore witness to the fact that, while staying close to the needs of the community and accompanying accordingly is vital, it is not always enough. Breaking Bread's story reveals the hard truth that accompanying indefinitely is also not always possible. Sometimes a group or an organization can only accompany for so long. Sustaining the work of accompaniment requires both broad networks and deep wells of support. While being embedded in the community ecosystem of the Lattice Ministries hub made Breaking Bread's accompanying work feasible for a season, in the end it was not enough for the organization to continue in the face of macro factors like changing resettlement patterns and an evolving labor market.

Accompaniment and Belonging

Accompaniment is so central to belonging that I glimpse the practice within several of my interlocutors' definitions of the term. Durga, for example, tells me, "Belonging is a chain of people to support you." Sayari muses, "Belonging is a journey where you give and receive help along the way." This understanding of belonging is not limited to refuge-seekers but surfaces in conversation with established Americans as well. For example, Madeline, a member of Grace Presbyterian who has volunteered with ABC through the years, suggests, "Belonging means never feeling like you're alone. You've always got some sort of support somewhere from someone." Similarly, Lattice Ministries board chair Cody reflects on the accompaniment he received from Grace Presbyterian Church when his wife was diagnosed with breast cancer: "Belonging is having a community to love you and help out when facing life's crises—it makes a big damn difference when you've got people that surround you and lift you up."

Human ability to belong on our own is often limited. Established Americans and newcomers alike need help to experience the healing, access, and empowerment that supports full participation in a community, an organization, a society. My research partners at Kuumba show both how individuals can accompany one another into belonging and how organizations can facilitate that accompaniment. Kuumba's practices of accompaniment invite people of faith who wish to expand opportunities for belonging to include those who came here in search of refuge to consider the implications of all that would have to shift personally, communally, and societally were we to commit ourselves fully to the ethical demands of accompaniment. Embracing accompaniment would change funding priorities societally and scheduling priorities individually. Accompaniment requires slowing down, leaving room for interruption. As theologian Brian Brock suggests, "Getting good at waiting, at travelling at the speed of the

slowest in our families, is a deep practice, one that takes a lifetime to master."[277] Brock is writing about his experience learning to care well for and with Adam, his teenage son who has developmental and intellectual disabilities. Though focused on this specific context, Brock's suggestion that we must "get good at waiting" and "travelling at the speed of the slowest" ought to be extended to communal contexts where the need for slowness emerges in myriad ways. In community, all humans, at different times and for different reasons, require others to slow down on their accounts.

The Kuumba community has developed expertise in this art of "travelling at the speed of the slowest." Kuumba offers a glimpse of the possibilities that emerge when we learn to mutually accompany— as the processes of care are integrated, and moments of shared sufficiency are catalyzed. Kuumba offers an example of what it looks like to stay insistently accountable to the needs that emerge in the daily lives of the women and families they accompany and to build a community in which the root causes of those needs are addressed. They illustrate what it looks like to train in the hard and joyful work of "sustain[ing] the revolutionary momentum that makes liberation possible."[278] Myriad barriers to flourishing are removed, and belonging opportunities are grown as, in the words of Zari, "We learn from each other, we're walking together."

[277] Brian Brock, "Waiting for One Another," in *Parenting for a Better World: Justice Practices for Your Family and the Planet*, ed. Susanna Snyder and Ellen Ott Marshall (Chalice Press, 2022), 82.
[278] Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 98.

Riding on the Wind of the Spirit: Practicing Turning Towards and Away

"At church, we're plodding along…But if we take the initiative to raise our sail up in a project or opportunity and the Holy Spirit, the wind of the Spirit, catches that sail, we just go shooting forward...This whole refugee thing is a classic example. We just went down on this little trip to visit refugees, and we raised the sail, and Grace Presbyterian has been riding on the wind of the Spirit ever since."—Fred, member of Grace Presbyterian Church

Introducing Turning

When I first walked into ABC's office, one of the details I noticed immediately was a framed picture of Fred and Warren, two Grace Presbyterian Church members. Fred and Warren are 86 and 76 respectively. Both men sport giant grins and hammers in the photo. Someone has placed a hot pink sticky note with the word "family" on the frame. As I take in the photo and its "caption," I recall that I have heard others refer to Fred and Warren as the "grandfathers" of ABC. How did these two White men become honorary family members of an organization that caters to refugee women and their children, I wonder, as I study the photograph. This wondering leads me into the long history of Grace Presbyterian Church's support for Lattice Ministries since its inception and, before that, its connection to the campus during the New Hope Presbyterian days. As I get to know Grace Presbyterian members involved in Lattice Ministries, the formative nature of these partnerships shines through. I notice this as well with former members of New Hope Presbyterian Church and some of the Lattice Ministries board members who are most heavily involved with the community hub.

Listening to these established Americans' stories of the impact that extending and experiencing belonging on campus has had, I realize that I am glimpsing processes of moral formation at work. These U.S.-born Americans are actively participating in their formation through small, concrete, and ongoing decisions and actions. I come to think of these small acts as the practice of turning. As established Americans engage turning as an intentional practice, turning is also working on them in subconscious ways. Turning forms them into people more

likely and able to keep *on* turning. The belonging practices outlined in this chapter are not about transformation, total or otherwise. Rather, this chapter features the gentler, more gradual changes that occur in processes of formation and becoming. While the narratives of my research partners evoke turning, what I witnessed had more to do with turning *towards* and turning *away* than turning *around.* Rather than any dramatic reversal of course*,* my research partners' stories feature reflections on the seemingly ordinary and mundane. Far from narrating revelatory "lightbulb moments," they tell me about literally changing the lightbulbs, making snacks, and rearranging old spaces so that they hold room for new neighbors.

Rebecca Todd Peters observes, "Relationships of solidarity with individuals and communities across lines of difference— be that across town or across the world— offers the possibility for *metanoia*, for first-world Christians to begin to see the world from new and different vantage points, vantage points that may disrupt what we think we know."[279] This insight resonates deeply with my own findings. At Lattice Ministries, relationships are catalysts for turning and, at the same time, turning is also that which enables and sustains relationships of solidarity across difference. Sustained friendship across demographic distance requires not a one-time reversal, but a lifetime of choosing to turn towards one another and away from everything in our society that would keep us apart. While the other practices introduced thus far—recognition, accompaniment, and design—can be practiced by newly arrived refugees and established U.S. residents alike, the practice of turning towards and away is one that I offer primarily to established Americans as an essential part of our role in expanding opportunities for belonging.

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[279] Rebecca Todd Peters, *Solidarity Ethics: Transformation in a Globalized World* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), 114.

Attending to the experiences of long-time U.S. residents like Fred and Warren reveals a pluriform practice of turning and, more specifically, of turning towards. Again and again, members of the Grace Presbyterian community and other established Americans connected to Lattice Ministries have practiced turning towards empathy, concrete action, and long-term, accountable friendships. However, turning towards empathy, action, and friendships is insufficient for expanding opportunities for belonging on their own. Speaking with individuals who came to the U.S. in search of refuge about their understanding of why Americans struggle with belonging sheds light on what more is needed: practices of turning away. My research partners make clear that established Americans need to turn away from fear so that we can turn towards empathy. We need to turn away from helplessness so that we can turn towards action. And, finally, established Americans and newcomers alike illuminate the reality that, if we are going to be able to turn towards friendship, we need to turn away from the othering that keeps us from recognizing and accompanying one another.

In what follows, I begin with a descriptive analysis of the ways I see and hear my research partners practice turning towards and away. By turning, I mean the small, everyday decisions established Americans make that change their behaviors and, ultimately, their dispositions. I then draw on interdisciplinary research to consider why turning matters, both as a form of affective labor and as a means of moral formation into specific virtues as individuals and communities. I also consider the limitations of the practice. Finally, I conclude with a reflection on the relationship between turning and belonging.

Practicing Turning

Spending time with the Lattice Ministries board members and members of the congregations New Hope Presbyterian and Grace Presbyterian showed me that the interpersonal belonging practice of turning is essential for established Americans wishing to expand

opportunities to belong. Turning requires an intentional embrace of empathy, action, and accountable friendship. This turning towards requires a simultaneous renunciation or turning away from fear, apathy, and othering. Turning is a countercultural practice that requires a certain distancing from U.S. values and norms. As such, turning is something I witnessed unfolding on a continuous basis in small and ordinary ways among my established American research partners.

Turning Towards Empathy

My conversation partners highlighted three different modes of turning towards that are required for growing belonging opportunities between established Americans and newcomers: turning towards empathy, concrete action, and long-term friendships. Turning towards empathy was seen by many as an entry point into turning towards action and friendships, although this form of turning towards did not inevitably lead into the other kinds of turning.

Charlie, the executive director of Lattice Ministries, highlights the role of turning towards empathy as he describes the importance of preaching at churches throughout the area on a regular basis. He explains, "There's a story to tell about churches of the Presbytery having more of an imagination regarding welcoming the stranger and a sense of solidarity in their souls." While cultivating this empathic turning is a large part of Charlie's role, it is not one that he engages alone. For example, Cody, Lattice Ministries' board chair and a member of Grace Presbyterian Church, shows me a video he created for his church designed to generate empathy. In it, he walks viewers through a visualization exercise. He asks them to close their eyes before imagining being surrounded by unfamiliar languages and smells and trying to navigate grocery stores filled with foods they cannot identify. When I later facilitate a focus group at Grace Presbyterian Church, I am struck to see the video playing on a continual loop on the church's "Wall for Missions." Frank, a denominational leader who played a role in helping Lattice

Ministries launch, stresses the organization's power to disrupt established Americans' expectations in a way that allows new kinds of emotional connections to emerge. He tells me that, while White suburban churches head to Lattice Ministries expecting "poverty and people crying out for help," they find, instead, "vibrant communities and laughter." This discovery helps established Americans perceive their relatedness and counters the temptation to engage in othering.[280] While much is said about Lattice Ministries' role of drawing people towards empathy across difference, my research partners do not often narrate this practice of turning towards in their reflections. Rather, I sense this empathic turning occurring just below the surface. As Lattice Ministries community members tell me stories of turning towards action and friendship, their emotional identification and empathic connection with refuge seekers shines through.

Turning Towards Action

For many though not all established Americans connected to Lattice Ministries, this initial step of coming to see the similarities as well as the differences between themselves and newcomers and developing a baseline understanding of what the latter have been through draws them into practices of turning towards action. Such was certainly the case with the Grace Presbyterian members mentioned in the chapter's opening. After collaboratively preaching a sermon on Jesus's exhortation in Luke to his followers to focus more on their actions and less on the specific leaders with whom they affiliate, Doug, a Lattice Ministries board member and Grace Presbyterian's minister, decided to build on the empathic turning of the congregation and

[280] I have john a. powell and Stephen Menendian's conceptualization of othering here: "othering as a set of dynamics, processes, and structures that, consciously or unconsciously, denies, or fails to accord, full and equal membership in society as well as human dignity on the basis of social group affiliation and identity, and therefore tends to engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities." john a powell and Stephen Menendian, *Belonging without Othering: How We Save Ourselves and the World*, 1st edition (Stanford University Press, 2024), 5.

facilitate a fieldtrip to Ashland (the diverse community in which Lattice Ministries is located). At the time New Hope Presbyterian Church was still on campus, and Lattice Ministries had not yet been launched. Although Doug had initially arranged for church members to meet with staff at one of the local refugee resettlement agencies, that agency canceled on them the night before the fieldtrip due to a higher number of refugee arrivals that week than anticipated. Scrambling, Doug reached out to a friend from seminary, who put Doug in touch with Sarah at ABC. Sarah recalls wrestling with whether to say yes to hosting the group. She tells me she was feeling overcommitted at the time yet was also moved by Doug's request. Ultimately, the church group found itself meeting with Sarah and a few ABC teachers at the school's original location (a church that was later torn down and redeveloped as a site for evangelical organizations in the community). Towards the end of the fieldtrip, a Grace Presbyterian member asked Sarah what she and the school needed. After giving it some thought, she mentioned the school's perpetually long waiting list and her dream of renovating the unused preschool building she had heard about on New Hope Presbyterian's campus. Though New Hope Presbyterian Church members had been supportive of the preschool that shared the congregation's name and campus, over time it put such a strain on the church's already stretched finances that it had to be closed.

While Sarah had to return to work, the church members decided that having driven the hour into Ashland anyways, they might as well have a quick look at the site Sarah had referenced. Doug tells me they could tell immediately that the place had been closed quickly and that it had been in a rundown condition by the time of its closing. An open soda can was visible through the office window, and trash littered the floor. "I'll never forget, we were all peering in the windows," Doug tells me, "And I remember looking in the window and going, 'Oh God…This will never work!'" At this point in the story, Madeline, a church member who

participated in this historic fieldtrip, jumps in to share another member's reaction: "Fred's going, 'Oh yeah! This will work!'" While emotional connection inspired church members to participate in the fieldtrip, members transformed empathy into action as they committed to combine their experience and labor to help ABC open a second school on this abandoned part of New Hope Presbyterian's campus. Within two months, they had redone the ceiling tiles, changed—in Cody's estimate—192 light fixtures, replaced the plumbing, and painted every room. That fall, ABC invited mothers and children on the waitlist to come learn and play together on New Hope Presbyterian Church's campus.

While Grace Presbyterian's experience speaks to turning towards action as a group, this kind of active turning also takes place on an individual level. For example, Sage, a long-time volunteer with Mulunda Worshiping Community's afterschool tutoring program, shared that her experience with the program inspires her to take a more vocal stance whenever conversations about refugees take a hostile turn in her small, Southern hometown. Margaret, a denominational leader who, with Frank, helped support Lattice Ministries' creation, notes that her involvement with Lattice Ministries through the years prompted her to commit to "making room in [her] family budget for ministries of welcoming." Cal, an ESL Buddy with Kuumba, notes that her work supporting two of the women in Kuumba's sewing program has become an important habit. While she had to pause her involvement for a few months due to an injury, she tells me, "I knew every Friday that was where I was going to go."

Turning Towards Friendship

Finally, for some of my research partners, turning towards action culminated in turning towards long-term friendships with both organizations and individuals. Daniel Nayeri's narrativized account of his family's experience with resettlement following their forced departure

from Iran, *Everything Sad is Untrue*, is illuminating here. Reflecting on Scheherazade and *One Thousand and One Nights*, the Persian narrative that provides the novel's framework, young Daniel, the narrator, notes:

> The point of the Nights is that if you spend time with each other—if we really listen in the parlors of our minds and look at each other as we were meant to be seen—then we would fall in love. We would marvel at how beautifully we were made. We would never think to be villain kings, and we would never kill each other. Just the opposite. The stories aren't the thing. The thing is the story of the story. The spending of the time. The falling in love.[281]

This "spending of the time" and "falling in love" is an apt description of the experiences of several members of the Lattice Ministries community.

In the story shared in the opening of this chapter about the sticky note that reads "family" affixed to a photo of Fred and Warren, we see these two men being honored for having taken the time to slowly build relationships with ABC as an organization. Their reflections underscore the fact that these relationships were not built on Fred and Warren's terms but, rather, were cultivated with openness and a willingness to be challenged and changed. Fred notes how much fun it is to interact with the children at ABC when helping with a project but explains, "I can't say that I've gotten to know one family…We all have our place, and I'm ok with that." By accepting "his place" and faithfully showing up to tackle project after project rather than insisting on his right to get to know community members, he has, paradoxically, become a cherished member of the community.

Similarly, Sarah reflects in depth on the impact that sharing leadership of ABC with Jamila, the Muslim, Eritrean site manager of ABC's Lattice Ministries location, has had on her worldview and her way of being. From Jamila, Sarah has learned to practice "meditation in the moment" and to give her full presence and loving attention to the mother, child, or teacher in

[281] Nayeri, *Everything Sad Is Untrue*, 300.

front of her. Jamila and Sarah share openly with one another about their faith lives, Sarah tells me: “We’ll find commonality, and then we’re like ‘Oh, but Christianity would say this, and wow, a Muslim would interpret it this way…and it works somehow.” Sadie, who volunteered with Mulunda Worshiping Community’s afterschool program for nearly a decade, notes that, while her more formal involvement has waned due to career changes and the pandemic, she is the godmother of a child in the congregation, and she remains close with one of the young adult members whose journey to college she supported. Now a college graduate and an employee of a bank, this young man brings her to his workplace’s “family day” each year. Sadie shares that her relationships with Mulunda Worshiping Community members have changed her in myriad ways. She finds herself being more intentional in her word choices, “slowing down,” and “leaning into the patterns of avoidance of urgency” because, as she has learned, “there’s really no timeline when it comes to the Spirit.”

Turning Away from Fear

In addition to these forms of turning towards, my research participants also highlighted three forms of turning away that are essential for expanding belonging opportunities among long-time U.S. residents and individuals who have come here as refugees: turning away from fear, helplessness, and all forms of othering. Turning away from fear is a foundational turning practice. When established Americans perceive refugees and immigrants to be in competition with them over scarce resources or as different from them and their values to a threatening degree, fear can drown out the very possibility of empathy (not to mention action and friendship). This dynamic is heightened when politicians take advantage of crises like economic downturns, political polarization, and the opioid epidemic to make the case that “our” way of life

is under attack—nay, on the verge of extinction.[282] This dynamic is potently alive today, as evidenced by the extensive reporting of President Donald Trump's rhetoric about immigrants. Throughout the 2024 election cycle, he conflated immigrants with criminals, referred to them as animals, and warned that "they're poisoning the blood of our country."[283]

Cathy's experience subtly yet powerfully highlights the significance of turning away from fear. Cathy, a petite, stylish woman in her seventies, first became involved with Mulunda Worshiping Community twelve years ago. Mulunda Worshipping Community is a pan-African congregation that has worshiped at Lattice Ministries since the days of New Hope Presbyterian Church. At a dinner facilitated by the New Church Development Commission of the Presbytery, Cathy introduced herself as a retired accountant hoping to find outlets for offering her skills. She was startled and moved when Joseph, the Congolese pastor of Mulunda Worshiping Community, concluded his own introduction with a direct appeal to her: "We are ready for someone like you. Will you help us, Cathy?" As Cathy began working closely with Pastor Joseph, she was drawn into ongoing conversations related to New Hope Presbyterian Church, its campus, and its partners. Soon she found herself serving on a commission created to explore possibilities for New Hope Presbyterian's future, as the congregation's finances dwindled at the same time its community impact continued to expand. Sensing some of the complex dynamics on campus between New Hope Presbyterian, the partners it had welcomed on campus, and the Presbytery, Cathy proposed the initiation of the partner meetings discussed in chapter three, Practicing Design. These meetings were challenging for her at first, she states unabashedly. They required

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[282] Ebert and Okamoto, "Social Citizenship, Integration and Collective Action."

[283] Camilo Montoya-Galvez, "Trump and Allies Mischaracterize Data on Immigrants with Criminal Convictions. Here's Context on What the Numbers Actually Show.," *CBS News*, September 30, 2024, sec. Politics, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/immigrants-criminal-convictions-trump-ice/; ACLU, "Trump on Immigration: Tearing Apart Immigrant Families, Communities, and the Fabric of Our Nation" (American Civil Liberties Union, June 6, 2024), https://aclu.org/trump-on-immigration.

her to uproot long-learned feelings of discomfort in a community so different from the homogenous communities in which she had spent most of her life and, moreover, to walk directly into potential conflict. On a dark fall evening, Cathy arrived early to one of the first partner meetings on campus. Due to a perennially broken doorbell, she found herself in the position of needing to let everyone into the building as they arrived one by one. With a slightly rueful smile, Cathy shares:

> I'm just this little lady, you know, and there was not one face that came in that window that looked like me. And so, it was like, you know, I am really getting involved in something that I've never had an opportunity to experience before. So, the first couple of times I went and answered that door, I'm not going to lie, it was hard. It was a little scary. And then I'm like, it's ok, I can do this.

She tells me that these early partner meetings could be exhausting in their intensity, as emotions ran high due to the uncertainty surrounding New Hope's future and lack of clarity about what possible changes could mean for the nonprofits and immigrant faith communities on campus. Despite the challenges, Cathy remained clear that these meetings needed to happen. She recalls thinking of the different onsite partners, "They have no reason to believe us when we say we're not going to kick you out!" And so, she persisted. She continued showing up and being present through the discomfort. Cathy's commitments to Mulunda Worshiping Community and the fledging entity of Lattice Ministries required her to choose to turn away from fear—an emotional response that she had been taught implicitly and explicitly as a White woman living in the American Southeast. A few months after our interview, Cathy takes me back to her experience on Lattice Ministries' campus that dark evening years ago. Smiling and shaking her head as she reminisces about how she felt that night as she opened the door to let everyone in, she tells me that her involvement with Lattice Ministries has been opening new doors for *her* ever since.

Turning Away from Helplessness

Like turning away from fear, turning from helplessness is a requisite building block for growing belonging across difference. Nick highlights turning away from helplessness as a necessary place for established Americans to begin. The pastor of Oak Pointe Presbyterian, a church located ten minutes down the road from Lattice Ministries, Nick recalls the feelings of paralysis that his predominantly White congregation experienced in the wake of the 2016 presidential election and the anti-immigrant sentiments the election results seemed to communicate. Nick, his wife Julie, and a handful of other faith leaders in the community had to make a conscious decision to turn away from the helplessness they were experiencing so that they could move into faithful action that aligned with their reading of the gospel. For Nick, Oak Pointe Presbyterian, and their partner faith communities, this took the form of launching the New Sanctuary Movement in their city. Nick and Julie eventually dedicated multiple wings of Oak Pointe's church building to house individuals seeking asylum while they waited through years of limbo for their asylum cases to play out in a court system hostile to their presence. Because of the New Sanctuary Movement, multiple individuals and families have been able to learn English, participate in employment skills training, and become involved in their local communities instead of spending this time in the state's detention center—a center which is housed in a former prison and, therefore, is required to be run accordingly. I came to know Nick and some of the Oak Pointe Presbyterian members through Durga, my friend from Kuumba's ESL Buddy program. For the past few years, Durga has lived with her husband in a Sunday School classroom retrofitted as an apartment at Oak Pointe Presbyterian Church. Though a devout Hindu, Durga enjoys participating in special services with the congregation whose turning away from helplessness made space for her. "We are living at a very good place," she tells me, "Church is,

you know, a home of God." While participating in a focus group with other employees of Kuumba, Durga reflects on the challenges of making home and experiencing belonging when living far from family and loved ones. She concludes, "At the moment, I can say only Kuumba is my belonging—Kuumba *and* my church."

Turning Away from Othering

Finally, to turn towards friendship, my research partners make clear that we must learn to turn away from all forms of othering in our day-to-day lives. Othering, as john a. powell and Stephen Menendian of the Othering and Belonging Institute explain, refers to "a set of dynamics, processes, and structures that, consciously or unconsciously, denies, or fails to accord, full and equal membership in society as well as human dignity on the basis of social group affiliation and identity, and therefore tends to engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities."[284] Several individuals who first came to the U.S. as refugees or asylum seekers note the way that racism, classism, xenophobia, and related forms of discrimination prevent Americans from experiencing belonging and from extending opportunities to belong to others. Clearette, the Kuumba Ambassador introduced in chapter two, perceives racism and classism to be at the root of American loneliness. In her role as a customer service agent for a utility company (which she juggles with working for Kuumba and running her own business), Clearette hears story after story from established Americans that convince her that "loneliness is really killing them," and their misconceived views about others serve only to further isolate and depress. Wilo, the Lutheran pastor from Congo introduced in chapter one, succinctly captures the way these -isms are deployed against newcomers: "There is also what I call prejudice from some people, saying 'These are *only* refugees. These are *only*

[284] powell and Menendian, *Belonging without Othering*, 5.

immigrants…Therefore they are nothing.'" The need to turn away from the othering that threatens the material flourishing of those most directly impacted and the emotional and spiritual wellbeing of those with more power is highlighted by some of my established American research collaborators as well. For example, Mark, a pastor of a local Presbyterian church that is an ongoing supporter of Lattice Ministries, notes that classism influences belonging in the affluent community he serves and adds that it interacts with and compounds the effects of racism. Tammy, a Lattice Ministries board member, suggests that the community hub has a role to play in countering racism by bringing people into relationships across difference: "You can have one group saying, those Muslims…those whatever, fill in the blank. And if you've got people all together [here]…if we listen, there's a lot of tackling of some racist possibilities that could be achieved by the common sense of belonging—not only a shared space, but a common sense of belonging."

Why We Turn

Before considering the sociological and ethical implications of turning, it is worth briefly noting some possible catalysts of this practice. Turning away and turning towards can be mutually reinforcing, with the conviviality and affection of friendship that is generated by turning *towards* giving an individual renewed strength to turn *away*. Too, the renunciation of turning *away* can enable deeper relationships of mutuality and understanding to develop as we turn *towards*. They are not necessarily catalysts of one another, and they often, if not always, coincide. We can turn away from fear towards empathy, away from helplessness towards action, and away from othering towards friendship.

The life experiences named in reference to what made individuals more predisposed to turning included times of travel or other forms of momentary displacement, positive experiences

with a diverse community, and invitations to make connections with their faith tradition's teachings and their response to newcomers. The number of times travel was referenced surprised me (though considering the catalyzing role studying abroad has played in my life, I might have expected this). My established American interlocutors repeatedly reflected on experiences of challenge and growth that took place while they were abroad. Tammy compares her experience studying abroad in Spain as an undergraduate with those of individuals who have experienced displacement. On the one hand, she explains that it enabled her to experience the strain that comes with attempting to live in another language. On the other, she notes that, for those who come here seeking refuge, "It's not a year gig where they've got somebody who's watching over their needs for a whole year, you know, making sure everything's okay…they really have lost everything and left behind families." Cathy, in turn, recalls the stress she experienced when, on a visit to a family member living in China, she was unable to locate her niece's apartment and struggled to get in touch with her.

Similarly, others reflect on different kinds of disruptive experiences that have helped incline them towards turning. Frank, for example, points to the frequent moves his family made while he was growing up and to a family member's blindness as realities that made barriers to belonging more visible and salient to Frank than they otherwise might have been. Cal highlights her experience moving to and teaching in the South after years spent on the West Coast. She suggests this raised her awareness of culture and language barriers. Catie, Kuumba's (volunteer) coordinator of the ESL Buddy initiative, points both to her years living in Japan and her experience of teaching students in the juvenile courts system as relevant, formative catalysts.

For others, it is a positive prior experience with diverse community that makes turning more likely. Cody, for example, points to the impact of living in a subdivision that happens to

include individuals from Afghanistan, Kenya, Brazil, South Korea, Russia, and Italy. Maggie and Bob of Grace Presbyterian Church reflect on the learning involved in accompanying a newly arrived family from Burma for multiple years before their involvement with Lattice Ministries and ABC. Maggie shares that those friendships showed her the material excess that so many middle and upper middle-class Americans take for granted. For Bob, the key takeaway came from realizing that, after traumatic and prolonged displacement experiences, refugees are then essentially told upon arrival here, "We've got you covered for three months. After that, knock yourself out. You're on your own."

For many, this catalyst seems to create a virtuous cycle: experiencing genuinely diverse community in a sustained way can spark turning towards and away. And turning, in turn, makes such catalyzing experiences even more likely. Clair, a local Presbyterian minister, sums this up well when she muses, "When we actually live in diversity, it's so clear that this is God's creativity. It's so joyful, it's Pentecost and Babel all at once!" She recalls how, on the heels of working to support Kuumba' partnership with her own PC(USA) church to facilitate a COVID-19 vaccine drive, she immediately started looking for the funds for a children's vaccine drive, spurred on by having experienced and participated in "this gorgeous parade of folks from all over."

Naomi, an ABC staff member whose role involves helping ABC teachers and families navigate challenges like enrolling their children in public school and making necessary doctor appointments, provides insight into both how this reinforcing cycle of turning can work and how challenging it can be to initiate. She hypothesizes that people need to experience the reality of their belonging to others before they are able to take action or engage in advocacy alongside them: "If we aren't providing spaces for more people to be a part of and see the belonging, then

it's not seen as an urgency to make translation more accessible—that's not even at the forefront of people's minds until they experience the community and the belonging that are these spaces." As people experience belonging across difference, they are drawn into turning in ways that render belonging more accessible.

Another powerful catalyst for turning emerges when people draw connections between their faith commitments and their responsibilities to the newcomers in their community. This catalyst also plays out in *Everything Sad is Untrue*. Young Daniel reflects incredulously on the faith-inspired hospitality that his family's initial hosts in the U.S. extended:

> Can you believe that? Totally blind, they did that. They'd never even met us...That's almost as brave and kind and reckless as I can think of anybody being. Reader, if you think anything of Oklahomans, I hope you'll remember Jim and Jean Dawson, who were so Christian that they let a family of refugees come live with them until they could find a home, and who made them sandwiches with Pringles chips, which is the best chip any place has to offer, and means you're welcome, and who let them play with their grandson's Nintendo.[285]

A vivid example of this kind of catalyst in my own work has been introduced already, in the way that Grace Presbyterian's long-term relationship with ABC began with a sermon preached by Doug and an elder of the church.

Doug describes this as an "astonishing example of the power of the Word preached into the world…That was staggering to me." Charlie similarly names the significance of helping people not only wrap their minds around the statistics of forced displacement but also the "migration stories all over scripture." Grace—the director of the advocacy branch of Healing Horizons, whose advocacy office is located on Lattice Ministries' campus— reflects on the significance of being able to make a faith connection when it comes to advocating on the state level. Her organization not only works with immigrant faith community leaders to help mobilize

[285] Nayeri, *Everything Sad Is Untrue*, 330.

their communities, but they also endeavor to connect these faith leaders with state politicians who share their religious affiliation. This tactic has helped to depoliticize refugee issues to a degree by reframing them as matters of faith, not partisanship.

Historian Melissa Borja's research likewise highlights the way that involvement in refugee resettlement can be spurred on by religious conviction. Her study of Christian participation in resettlement initiatives in the Twin Cities with Southeast Asian refugees in the 1970s and 1980s leads Borja to suggest that, "for the Christian volunteers involved in refugee resettlement, the work of sponsoring and assisting refugees was a religious practice that expressed deep commitments to 'welcoming the stranger' and pursuing missionary work."[286] Employing a lived religion approach to her analysis of volunteers who worked with resettlement agencies to support Hmong refugees in making their homes in the U.S., Borja observes that their participation served as "a fulfilling form of service and a ministry of Christian compassion."[287] This enabled volunteers to sustain commitment to the work even as Southeast Asian refugee crises receded from the public consciousness. For many of the individuals involved in Lattice Ministries, the same holds true. Far more than simply a job or a volunteer commitment, the work of turning towards refuge seekers is imbued with theological significance. This can help make the long, slow work of turning towards not only empathy but also action and friendship more sustainable.

My research partners not only draw inspiration from their faith in ways that catalyze turning. They also point to the reality that turning is not, exclusively, a human activity. For some, turning happens in response to the Spirit of God. In my conversations with volunteers connected

[286] Melissa May Borja, *Follow the New Way: American Refugee Resettlement Policy and Hmong Religious Change* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2023), 28.
[287] Borja, 135.

to Lattice Ministries and the churches of New Hope Presbyterian and Grace Presbyterian, I catch intimations of the Spirit enabling and conspiring with the volunteers in their turning. Several of my research partners name the Spirit's presence at Lattice Ministries explicitly. Denominational leader Margaret tells me, "There's just a powerful spirit that is alive" on campus, adding that whenever she worships with one of the faith communities at Lattice Ministries, she is reminded of how narrow and specific her view of church has been. When participating with these faith communities on campus, she finds herself feeling far more receptive to miracles and the movement of the Spirit than she does in her everyday life. Lila, a retired Presbyterian minister and board member of Lattice Ministries, tells me of her strong sense of the Spirit's movement when Presbyterian church members from around the area gathered on the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service to remove every single piece of furniture from ABC's premises so that professionals could begin the long process of treating the water damage caused by multiple pipes bursting over the winter holidays. Former board chair Doug names his awareness of the moving of the Spirit when the Grace Presbyterian congregation responded so robustly to his sermon about refugees all those years ago. Fred, a member of Grace Presbyterian and "grandfather" to ABC, poetically describes the interplay between human initiative and the Spirit's movement with the metaphor of a sailboat: "If we take the initiative to raise our sail up in a project or opportunity and the Holy Spirit, the wind of the Spirit, catches that sail, we just go shooting forward…We just went down on this little trip to visit refugees, and we raised the sail, and Grace Presbyterian has been riding on that wind of the Spirit ever since."

Other research partners, however, remind me that just what exactly it looks like to turn in response to the Spirit is contested, subject to multiple interpretations. Jay, the pastor of New Hope Presbyterian in the years before Lattice Ministries' birth and the congregation's engrafting,

expresses his concern that an unwillingness to submit to the Spirit could ensnare Lattice Ministries in a transactional model that leaves little space for genuine relationships to take root. Jay notes that Presbyterians in general can struggle with being "very afraid of the Holy Spirit" and adds, "The Holy Spirit blows where it blows and does what it does, and it is a scary thing." He also acknowledges the challenges of keeping the campus lights on and doors open, hinting, perhaps, at a tension between Spirit-filled turning and design for long-term sustainability. Peter, who was an elder on the session during Jay's pastorate, shares his hope that, as Lattice Ministries continues to evolve, it will move beyond property management and "get the Spirit moving around it…I hope it would catch a vision." Jay's and Peter's observations raise questions about just how trustworthy our perceptions of the Spirit are—whether in daily life or, as in my case, in research. Natalie Wigg-Stevenson highlights this challenge in her ethnographic theological research, asserting, "We end up conflating feeling (particularly positive feeling) with the presence of God. We can pneumatologize affect, treating it as the Divine theological flourish at the end of our empirical claims."[288] Despite the challenges entailed in attending to the Spirit, I suggest that my research partners raise important insights into the reality that the work of turning specifically and of extending opportunities to belong more generally cannot be thought of in exclusively anthropocentric terms.

Defined in conversation with my research sites, turning towards entails cultivating empathy towards people we perceive to be different, transforming that empathy into action, and committing to long-term friendships with groups and individuals. Turning away involves an intentional rejection of fear and apathy, helplessness, and the othering that divides us. Turning

[288] Natalie Wigg-Stevenson, "Luring the Divine: Affect, Esthetics, and Future Directions for Ethnographic Theology's Contribution to the Christian Tradition," in *Conundrums in Practical Theology*, ed. Joyce Ann Mercer and Bonnie Miller-McLemore (Brill, 2016), 51, http://brill.com/view/title/33423.

away, while ongoing and often faltering, creates space to question and challenge the status quo when it comes to belonging. Turning towards empathy, action, and friendships imbues this critique with love, harnessing our affections to help us do the hard, uncomfortable work of engaging in solidarity with our heart and our hands in ways that change us and our communities over time.

Why Turning Matters

Affective Labor, Social Reflexivity, and Turning

To understand the significance of practices of turning, I draw on interdisciplinary research into the experiences of volunteers working with newly arrived refugees as well as faith-based volunteers more generally. Anthropologist Catherine Besteman's exploration of the responses of nonprofit organizations and faith communities to the presence of Somali Bantus in their previously homogenous town of Lewiston, Maine illuminates the import of turning towards for both individuals and communities. Sociologist Paul Lichterman's research on the difference it makes when faith-based groups involved in community organizing practice social reflexivity, in turn, sheds light on the potential impact of turning away.

Catherine Besteman suggests that the significance of the subjectivity of individuals working with refugees is too often lost in studies that focus on "how the helping professions police and discipline refugee subjects." Besteman writes, "Recognizing the emotional lives and personal philosophies of teachers, welfare officers, police, and other social services providers is important," for, while these employees and volunteers can be agents of neoliberal, hierarchical reform, they can also advance agendas for "professionalism, an expansive and future oriented understanding of community, and reflexive mutuality."[289]

[289] Besteman, *Making Refuge*, 175.

Besteman calls attention to these individuals' affective labor and suggests that, although caring professionals in Lewistown were often not able to achieve their desired advocacy outcomes, the affective work of those who developed an understanding of how unnecessarily challenging life could be for the Bantu newcomers in Lewistown should not be dismissed. Of the power of this response, Besteman writes: "They are engaged in the sort of affective work that attempts to buffer the blows of racism, xenophobia, and neoliberal demands for economic independence, self-sufficiency, autonomy, and self-help." However, she is also clear about the limitations: "The cost of loving one's way to social change is that change is incredibly incremental, more often personal than public, and emotionally costly as well as fulfilling."[290] Still, Besteman argues that "taking affective labor seriously as productive of social relations and moral communities…means validating the work of people like those profiled here as symbolically greater than their modest accomplishments might suggest."[291] I posit that turning towards matters particularly during periods like the present political climate in the U.S., when the issue of refugee resettlement has been so deeply politicized. Though turning towards does not inevitably or immediately yield the policy innovations and societal transformations that would enable newly arrived refuge seekers to flourish, it does create a more caring, less hostile resettlement landscape through its ripple effect. Everyone who is drawn into turning towards has the potential to catalyze the turning towards or, at least, the emotional softening, of the people in their immediate spheres.[292]

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[290] Besteman, *Making Refuge*.
[291] Besteman, 199.
[292] I see a powerful example of this in the way that faith leaders rallied around the Haitian community in Springfield, Ohio. While politicians like J.D. Vance spread viral falsehoods about immigrants eating their pets, the faith leaders denounced this claim and spoke out on behalf of the community. Kathryn Post, "'Haitians Are Not Eating Pets': Springfield Faith Leaders Stand with Embattled Migrants," *Religion News Service*, September 16, 2024, https://religionnews.com/2024/09/16/haitians-are-not-eating-pets-springfield-faith-leaders-stand-with-embattled-migrants/.

Paul Lichterman's research with a collective of faith-based groups concerned about the impact of welfare reform on their community sheds light on the significance of turning away. Lichterman's work grows out of his realization that social capital—a concept that has been utilized by sociologists since the early 1900s and which was popularized by Robert Putnam's 2000 bestseller, *Bowling Alone*—is insufficient for explaining how civic participation happens. Lichterman posits that, while social capital as conceived by Putnam can describe the different kinds of ties people develop within their peer group (bonding capital) and beyond it (bridging capital), it tells us little about how some groups are able to form the latter while others cultivate only the former despite their intentions to "spiral out" into the community.[293] Lichterman suggests that it is the internal customs and practices of a group that influence their ability to build community partnerships, move towards desired goals, and increase members' participation and felt sense of responsibility. In particular, he makes the case for the significance of the group-building custom of social reflexivity, which he describes as "a collective practice of imagining…[that] requires talking about differences and similarities straightforwardly, in the midst of forging relationships beyond the group."[294]

I argue that social reflexivity is practiced by Lattice Ministries' and its onsite partners' staff and volunteers in ways that support turning away from fear, helplessness, and harmful ideologies like racism. When Cathy tells stories about how she used to feel afraid as she let men from refugee backgrounds into the building for evening meetings, she invites her fellow White, female board members to both identify with her experience and to commit to growing out of that embodied discomfort. Likewise, when Lattice Ministries board members discuss everything from

[293] Paul Lichterman, *Elusive Togetherness: Church Groups Trying to Bridge America's Divisions*, Course Book., Princeton Studies in Cultural Sociology 52 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 26–28.
[294] Lichterman, 47.

the need for a land acknowledgment and the implications of the word "ministries" in their name to the organization's limited relationship with Black American neighbors, social reflexivity supports the community in turning away from othering. The land acknowledgement work, for example, calls into question their relationship to the property. It complexifies the way the history of the campus can be told, and it invites Lattice Ministries community members to recall that this space of belonging for so many who came here as refugees previously witnessed the state's forcible removable of Muscogee Creek peoples, effectively rendering them refugees so many years before.

Ongoing conversations about Lattice Ministries' distinctive role are likewise an example of social reflexivity at work. Noting the indirect role played by the organization, some board members are quick to cast visions of Lattice Ministries one day moving in more hands-on directions by opening a coffee shop or hosting a resource navigation center of its own. Others affirm the value Lattice Ministries brings to the community as an umbrella organization, noting the significance of its work as a connector, incubator, and hub. These conversations have the power to shape the relationships and goals that are prioritized by the organization—priorities that can lend momentum or resistance to turning. Lattice Ministries' ability to practice social reflexivity will be deepened if it can live into its expressed commitment to building a representative board and staff. Too, it will be important for the Lattice Ministries community to continue practicing social reflexivity intentionally across multiple contexts and with varied conversation partners (including the board, onsite partners, supporting churches, and local community members). As Paul Lichterman concludes, "For anyone who longs after a more solidary and just society, talking about culture is one very practical thing to do."[295]

[295] Lichterman, 263.

In sum, Lichterman's work sheds light on the way that turning away can help us engage in conversations about who we are and how we want to be in the community, which in turn can make it easier for us to resist racism and xenophobia and to turn away from our instinctual fear and resistance to change. Besteman's research highlights the significance of the way turning towards can contribute to an important form of affective labor. My research, in turn, extends these concepts by showing how both social reflexivity and affective labor have the capacity to contribute to the work of unsettling and expanding traditional boundaries of belonging in the context of refugee resettlement.

Virtue, Risk, and the Ethics of Turning

Practices of turning also derive significance from the way that they contribute to the moral formation of individuals and communities. A virtue approach to ethics helps to illuminate how moral formation occurs and why it matters. It sheds light on the way that moral formation slowly shapes our characters and dispositions, orienting us to a particular *telos* or vision of the good. Aristotle, considered one of the founding thinkers of this approach to ethics, elucidates the connection between virtue and moral formation. He posits, "By doing just things we become just; moderate things, moderate; and courageous things, courageous." He continues, "It makes no small difference, then, whether one is habituated in this or that way straight from childhood but a very great difference—or rather the whole difference."[296] While I find this approach to ethics generative for unspooling the way practices of belonging can form us into people who expand opportunities to belong, it must also be noted that virtue ethics is subject to critique. Katie Cannon indicted this approach to ethics for its failure to account for the realities of moral subjects who do not have a full range of choices before them but, rather, find their options

[296] Aristotle, *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), bks. 2, chapter 1, 27.

circumscribed by forces like racism and poverty. Aristotle posits, "virtue, therefore, is a characteristic marked by choice." [297] To this, Cannon rejoins that, while traditional virtue ethics has assumed that the moral agent cultivating virtue not only has choices but is also "to a considerable degree free and self directing," this assumption too often obscures the virtuous living of those who do so within layers of constraint. Accordingly, Cannon asserts, "the real-lived texture of Black life requires moral agency that may run contrary to the ethical boundaries of mainline Protestantism." [298] Cannon's work models the way attending to the experiences of constrained actors like Black women can and should reveal new, previously unrecognized or undervalued virtues—including unctuousness and Trickster-like slyness—that support survival, love, care, and hope amid oppressive circumstances. Keri Day makes a similar point, concluding that virtue ethics remains under suspicion among many scholars of color because, for so long, "the virtues have primarily focused on individual character formation within community with less robust analyses of *what counts* as virtue as well as the limits of exercising virtues within asymmetrical relations of power."[299]

Informed by these critical perspectives of virtue ethics, I suggest that turning towards and away are the specific processes by which people with power participate in their own formation into people willing to trouble the boundaries of belonging that have privileged them. The reflections of Kay, a White woman nearing 90 years-old and a member of New Hope Presbyterian for decades before the engrafting occurred, illustrate the role of turning towards and away in moral formation. Kay recalls feeling a vague sense of unease when friends left New Hope to join Pleasant Grove Presbyterian in the 1960s, the new church plant located outside of

[297] Aristotle, bks. 2, chapter 1, 35.
[298] Cannon, *Katie's Canon*, 58.
[299] Keri Day, *Notes of a Native Daughter: Testifying in Theological Education* (Eerdmans, 2021), loc. 784.

the city perimeter. Saddened to see church members contribute to what Kay later came to understand as White flight, she felt clear that, for herself and her husband, "It was not our decision…we were willing to be a part of whatever happened." Commitments to turn away from fear and othering and to turn towards across difference enabled Kay to become one of the most committed supporters of the process by which New Hope opened its doors to its neighbors. Attending as many of the on-campus youth sporting events as she could, directing traffic in the summer heat when Kuumba held an event or New Hope was facilitating a donation drive, and cooking for Thanksgiving gatherings that brought everyone together to "fill that gymnasium with people from all nations," Kay continued to invest in her own formation as a person who expands belonging opportunities.

As Mulunda Worshipping Community grew and started to use the sanctuary, Kay responded swiftly to the community's realization that the space was not set up to accommodate their preferred intergenerational worship style. In conversation with Charlie, Kay mobilized friends to help her transform the choir room—a room in which she had practiced for decades as a proud choir member— into a space where the congregations' children and youth could easily flow into and out of during Sunday morning services. A few years later, as it became clear that New Hope Presbyterian was nearing the end of its time as a congregation of its own, Kay again worked with friends, this time to catalog and transport the church's extensive choral music collection to a Methodist church that was opening a choral lending library in service of congregations that were struggling to afford the growing fees charged for choral music. While a cancer diagnosis prompted a move closer to family that prevents Kay from participating in the Pleasant Grove Presbyterian community as much as she would like, during the first year following the engrafting she would regularly offer rides to members of New Hope Presbyterian

who needed transportation to their "new" church. Looking back on her experiences with New Hope Presbyterian, Lattice Ministries, and Pleasant Grove Presbyterian, Kay reflects, "I see it [all] through the eyes of love." Turning away from fear towards empathy, away from helplessness towards action, away from othering towards friendship—these practices created opportunities for Kay to deepen her moral formation into a person whose disposition orients her to expansive belonging and a *telos* of shared sufficiency.

The potency of this kind of moral formation among people with privilege who can all too easily dismiss or ignore injustice is echoed in the work of Mary Jo Leddy, founder of the Romero House. Located in Toronto, Canada, the Romero House is "a community of welcome and accompaniment for newly arrived refugee claimants."[300] Leddy observes:

> Refugees burst upon our lives and upon our culture as the newcomers. They bring something quite unexpected into our rather predictable cultural patterns, if we let it be so. Everything depends, I have learned, on whether we expect the unexpected and the new. Once we stop trying to manage the differences of others, we might be taken aback by the fresh gifts that they bring, and a great and new hope.[301]

This work is so challenging and important that Leddy concludes "the future of the church will depend on a ceaseless openness to what is new and unfamiliar."[302] For my interlocutors, that stubborn openness is cultivated as they practice turning towards and away.

While a virtue approach to ethics sheds light on the way turning can draw individuals into slow processes of moral formation, the ethics of risk reveals how turning can contribute to the moral formation of *communities*. Sharon Welch's formulation of the ethics of risk takes as its starting point Katie Cannon's critique of virtue ethics' assumption of an unconstrained agent.[303]

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[300] "Home," Romero House, accessed September 23, 2024, https://romerohouse.org/.
[301] Mary Jo Leddy, *The Other Face of God: When the Stranger Calls Us Home* (Orbis Books, 2011), 7.
[302] Leddy, 6.
[303] It should be noted that some ethicists take issue with Welch's method of using her analysis of Black women's literature to lend support for her constructive ethic. I nonetheless find her work on the importance of resisting an ethic of control and risking action collectively to be provide important insights for privileged White communities to grapple with.

Welch calls for people with privilege to reckon with how the disproportionate amount of power that they have compared to individuals belonging to minoritized communities has formed them in an "ethic of control—the assumption that effective action is unambiguous, unilateral, and decisive."[304] An ethic of control casts the illusion that, when we act, we have control of the outcome. Accordingly, when it feels like we do not have the power the shape the outcome, we simply do not act. Welch suggests that we must embrace an ethic of risk that rejects any illusory claims of control and calls for action anyways. Welch asserts that, "to maintain resistance in the face of overwhelming odds," an ethic of risk requires "a redefinition of responsible action, grounding in community, and strategic risk-taking."[305] She offers a vision of responsible action as any step that will expand opportunities for further action in the future, as "the creation of a matrix for further resistance…constituted as much by the possibilities it creates as by its immediate results."[306] The communal aspect of an ethic of risk is essential, Welch posits, because of how deeply countercultural it can be to move away from an ethic of control. The "beloved community" most conducive to an ethic of risk is, Welch suggests, comprised of people directly and indirectly impacted by injustice: "Middle-class people can sustain work for justice when empowered by love for those who are oppressed."[307] Finally, "strategic risk-taking" entails "the decision to care and to act although there are no guarantees of success." Scary and overwhelming at times, such risk "requires immense daring and enables deep joy."[308]

I find these elements at work in the efforts of members of New Hope Presbyterian Church to practice turning towards and away. Adlin, formerly a leader at New Hope Presbyterian Church

[304] Welch, *A Feminist Ethic of Risk*, 25.
[305] Welch, 46.
[306] Welch, 74–75.
[307] Welch, 162.
[308] Welch, 68.

and now a member on the elder board of Pleasant Grove (the church into which New Hope Presbyterian engrafted), exemplifies the way turning and an ethic of risk can go hand in hand. Originally from Jamaica, Adlin moved to the South from New York City. The adoptive mother of a gay son, Adlin was inspired to find a church home following her move so that her child might be enveloped by a community of faith. When, after visiting New Hope, her son told her "I like this, I like here," Adlin decided they were ready to commit. Over the years, Adlin both shepherds New Hope Presbyterian and is herself shepherded by the church into an ethic of risk. The church increasingly becomes a community of resistance, as Adlin and the other members of the session invite Pastor Jay to become the minister of the small but active congregation.

Adlin reflects on the theology of abundance that Pastor Jay invited the congregation into, prompting her to revise her opinion about, for example, the Sanctuary Movement. While she had some initial misgivings when, during the search process, they learned of Jay's support of the movement, through ongoing conversations she came to believe, "If the church isn't going to be the sanctuary for people who need a place, a safe haven, where else would we find it?" Adlin recalls the changes that took place following Jay's arrival, as he sought to build on the strengths of church members and the asset of the church's capacious campus. While Adlin had already started transforming the light refreshments served after Sunday worship services into abundant meals, soon she found herself cooking for Pastor Joseph's pan-African congregation as well. Her experiences developing relationships with Mulunda Worshipping Community and the other refugee-led congregations that began calling New Hope Presbyterian's campus home, Adlin explains, "made [her] see Christianity and the work that we do in the name of Christ very differently." "And if *we're* not welcoming and creating a welcoming space…," she trails off, her words heavy with the implication that to fail to welcome is to fail to follow Christ.

Resisting the traditional impulse towards congregational preservation and maintenance of the status quo—an impulse that might have driven Adlin and the other elders to call for market-level rents from their new onsite partners—Pastor Jay, Adlin, and the members of New Hope Presbyterian Church embarked on the uncertain path of opening themselves up to new partnerships of care and accountability. Moreover, they invited their Presbytery partners to join them on a visioning process that held no guarantees for the congregation itself. The strategic risks taken by the congregation lead to what might be seen by some as ambivalent results. As noted in previous chapters, while in many ways the "Ruth community" envisioned by the original congregation is carried on by Lattice Ministries, the congregation itself had to face a departure from campus and an engrafting into Pleasant Grove Presbyterian just one year shy of its 70th birthday. Adlin recalls feeling some apprehension leading up to the engrafting process, while at the same time experiencing joy about what the congregation had helped to birth. Though she found it meaningful that the church into which they would be melding had initially been planted by New Hope Presbyterian, she worried about its historical relationship to racism and White flight. How would its history manifest in the congregation's present? She was delighted to find an anti-racism committee active in the congregation, and, moreover, to experience a "new welcome" there every day. "It's like nobody takes it for granted that Adlin is here now for almost three years." Adlin continues, "What I am able to say to them is, 'The fruit doesn't fall too far from the tree because the mother tree is New Hope.'"

For Adlin and the members of New Hope Presbyterian, practices of turning required an ethic of risk. As the community turned away from helplessness and towards action and away from needing things to stay the same and towards friendship, they redefined responsible action as acts of courageous hospitality. They opened the church doors and quite literally pulled up extra

chairs around their table in response to global displacement and local resettlement. As a community, they turned away from the racism that had previously led the congregation to plant a church in the more homogenous suburbs. And they risked inviting conversations with community and denominational partners about faithful next steps in a way that relinquished control over the congregation's future. This ethic of risk birthed something entirely new: a hub for the community in which organizations like ABC, Kuumba, Mulunda Worshiping Community, and so many others might create spaces of belonging.

A similar combination of responsible action, community, and risk can be glimpsed in the response of Nick's congregation to the 2016 presidential election. As readers will recall, for many individuals and communities, the period following the election was marked by deep discouragement and disillusionment. Welch suggests that, as tempting as it can be to succumb to these emotions following a setback, "becoming so easily discouraged is the privilege of those accustomed to too much power."[309] Nick's small congregation resisted the temptation to wallow and instead joined forces with concerned members of other local congregations and synagogues. Far from wringing their hands, members of Oak Pointe Presbyterian put those hands to the hard work of transforming Sunday School classrooms into homey, habitable spaces. They identified the different roles each were well-suited to fill, be it keeping up with asylum-seekers' legal cases, assisting with connecting their newest community members with ESL and medical resources, providing cultural orientation, or arranging transportation; and then they intentionally stepped into those roles. Despite various challenges, both legal and logistical, the community that came to surround Durga, her husband, and the others who came to the U.S. in search of safety who currently live at Oak Pointe Presbyterian collectively nurtured a sense of hope as they turned

[309] Welch, 41.

away from helplessness and fear towards empathy and action. Gathering once a month on Friday evenings as a collective that includes established Americans and newcomers alike, they turn towards accountable friendships while they share laughter and dumplings at a favorite Chinese restaurant down the road from Oak Pointe Presbyterian.

In the experiences of Adlin, New Hope Presbyterian, and Oak Pointe Presbyterian, turning is revealed to entail both the ethics of risk and to carry the power to cultivate communities of resistance. Attending to these communities' experiences calls for a reexamination of one's implicit theories of change and invites individuals to consider whether they truly believe change is possible, whether they are connected to communities enabling resistance on the issues about which they care most, and, if they are connected to a community, whether it is playing this role or, rather, enabling the collective to simply succumb to complacency and despair together. Turning draws us into an ethic of risk and forms us into people who resist the ethic of control. Turning critiques an unquestioning acceptance of the status quo, a willingness to simply be overwhelmed in the face of it all, and the failure to locate oneself in communities that can help take steps forward in solidarity—however small those steps may seem.

Turning and Its Limits

Turning, like design, recognition, and accompaniment, also has its limits. Individual attempts to turn away can bump into and be halted by institutions' need to maintain the status quo. Jay, the pastor of New Hope Presbyterian Church who first opened the campus doors to the congregation's neighbors and sought to cultivate a theology of abundance through his leadership, vividly brings this limitation to my attention. Describing the self-preservation mentality that can compel churches to see their own maintenance as their most important ministry and naming his desire for New Hope Presbyterian to dare to do church differently, he reflects, "It's counter to the

American middle class, it's countercultural to established, safe Protestant practices, where the Holy Spirit is very much contained, and Jesus has been domesticated." He continues, "The liberation of the church from its own idolatry and narcissism cannot take place in an echo chamber." If the church is to "become the heart of the community," Jay learned, it must turn away from solely being "a chaplaincy for the people that are there" and instead learn to chaplain the community beyond its walls. Nick similarly highlights how challenging it can be for U.S.-born residents to turn away from preconceived notions of how church and community must be done: "We have lived churches in silos for so long…And so belonging means allowing the other into your presence and forming a new sense of community, which, of course, means something may change."

More specifically, turning towards empathy can also yield change at a painfully slow rate or stop short of concrete (much less structural) change. Jonathan Haidt's work in moral psychology highlights how often the dynamic I am calling empathic turning can fail to yield action of any kind. Exploring recent works on what have been classified as "moral emotions," Haidt suggests that empathy generates *possibilities* for action. However, he makes clear that generating empathy across difference for strangers and acquaintances is far more challenging and less instinctive than it is in relation to our family and close friends. Too, Haidt's synthesis of the moral emotions research underscores the hard truth that these potentialities for action are often never activated.[310]

Therein lies a significant tension: we feel empathy for those we see as being like us, as being in some way "our own." And friendship can help do some of the work of shrinking the

[310] Jonathan Haidt, "The Moral Emotions," in *Handbook of Affective Sciences*, ed. Richard J. Davidson, Klaus R. Scherer, and H. Hill Goldsmith (Cary: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2002), 854, 862, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/emory/detail.action?docID=241684.

distance and difference we perceive between ourselves and others. Yet, we cannot fully move into friendship without empathy. The question is how one ever comes to enter this cycle—how one shifts from hearing about refugees, feeling overwhelmed, and doing nothing to becoming someone who responds with affect that leads to action and friendship. Furthermore, once empathy has been experienced, who is to say it will be channeled into action of any kind, much less that it yields the kind of *collective* action needed to facilitate community change? I experience some of the conundrums of turning towards during a four-part Sunday School class that Charlie facilitated at a largely white congregation that supports Lattice Ministries.

Charlie opens the first session with a powerful claim: "The refugee crisis is *the* moral crisis of our day." Before pressing play on a prerecorded video that provides a succinct overview of forced migration and refugee resettlement, Charlie adds, "This class is a small but not insignificant act of solidarity." After soaking up statistics that were new to most in the room, the members of this well-educated, activist congregation want to know what might be done. A retired teacher raises her hand, asking, "Can we talk about when resettlement works? Because maybe the answer is there, in what is working." Charlie notes that the class will indeed discuss responses going forward and encourages everyone to recall for now that participating in this class "is an act of solidarity with people in those straits." As the conversation continues, Charlie provides a historical example of just how powerful a force affective turning can be. He explains that resettlement in the U.S. was spearheaded initially by Lutherans who were concerned about their co-religionists in Germany during WWII and that, over time, "other Americans who weren't Lutheran said, 'That's a moral project I want to be part of.'" He concludes the morning arguing that it is this same energy, this same willingness to expand our circles of care and concern, that

must be harnessed today and adds that, if history is any indication, faith communities will be in the vanguard of this movement.

That Sunday morning, I found myself equally moved and uncertain. On the one hand, I resist the idea that simply being overwhelmed by the issue "counts" as solidarity. The work of growing belonging, surely, requires us to move from concern into taking concrete steps. On the other hand, I hear the truth in Charlie's words. So much of the work of responding to refugees occurs at the local level, particularly in conservative regions where state governments are hardly involved. Too, it takes local communities across the country speaking out on behalf of refugees to give leaders the political license they need to push for higher admission rates of refugees, better funding, and more favorable immigration and integration policies. As such, it *matters* when faith communities are concerned about refugees and immigrants. And yet, without a clear indication of how individuals might begin to act on that empathy, it seems likely that some in the class will get "stuck."[311] On occasions when I hear Charlie pair these statistics with invitations to upcoming advocacy days or to a concrete task that requires volunteers on campus, I wonder whether the chasm between empathy and action is diminished. Or, to draw on the terms of the affect literature reviewed in this section, I imagine that empathy's potentiality for action becomes more readily activated.

Turning towards empathy can also troublingly center the emotional experiences of established Americans. I see this with volunteers from another church who were working with Growing Refuge before that organization closed their site on Lattice Ministries' campus. While volunteers cheerfully helped rebuild broken raised beds and put down soil in the morning, by the

[311] I should be clear that it is not just Lattice Ministries that struggles with pairing invitations to empathy with invitations to act. At a wonderful event I attended recently, I heard a representative of a legal nonprofit in the refugee/asylee support community respond to the question of "how can we help?" with the response, "ask us!"

afternoon a few individuals were visibly irritated. “Where are the refugees?” they asked. “You see, I couldn’t care less about gardening,” one of the volunteers added emphatically. “It’s not about getting things done, it’s about relationship building.” They proceeded to suggest that the organization could arrange for refugees to be present the next time the volunteers came so that the volunteers could teach them about gardening in the U.S.

The volunteer coordinator gently reminded the volunteers that the growers involved in the organization were already very knowledgeable about gardening, and she reiterated her gratitude for their help meeting one of the organization’s needs. Even so, several group members left the experience frustrated, their vision of what turning towards looked like at odds with that of the organization. These volunteers cared. They were “all in” when it came to turning towards with their emotions. But they clung tightly to their desire to care on their terms and to control the outcome of their turning. They came to Lattice Ministries’ campus with a vision of teaching gardening to refugees. While not an inherently “bad” vision, it short-circuited the action they had been invited to turn towards. Although the garden volunteers desired to turn towards friendship, they struggled to decenter their emotional needs and preferences in a way that might have supported possibilities for relationship. Indeed, they seemed to be waiting for Growing Refuge and the newcomers connected to the organization to turn towards them instead. Moreover, while the Grace Presbyterian Church members turned away from helplessness and found meaning in the concrete tasks they could do for ABC, the garden volunteers stood firm in the conviction that nothing they could do would make a difference—according to their standards, at least.

Turning and Belonging

These complex practices of turning towards and away are arguably at the crux of the work of unsettling our sense of belonging and expanding belonging opportunities as established Americans. My research partners reveal the importance of becoming willing to give up the

privilege of unquestioned, settled belonging so that those whose lives have been so violently disrupted might likewise find room to belong. They also importantly highlight the necessity of engaging practices of belonging on a continual, day-to-day basis. The stories shared in the preceding pages are not ones of conversion or transformation. Rather, they relay the small moments and intentional choices that constitute the processes of individual and collective moral formation. My research partners at Lattice Ministries make clear that, just as formation is not a "one and done" matter, neither is the work of expanding opportunities to belong. Having practiced turning towards and away in the various manners illustrated above, the community cannot now "be still" and unmoving if it is going to continue practicing belonging and "riding on the wind of the Spirit."

Turning towards and away in the seasons ahead will require community members to wrestle seriously with questions about how to move beyond being a landlord with tenants, what it looks like to share power and engage in participatory decision-making, and what it might mean to turn not only to refugee and immigrant newcomers, but also to the Black American families who are equally their neighbors. As my research partners reveal, recognition, accompaniment, and design are not enough on their own when it comes to cultivating belonging. Turning away is needed so that enough critical space develops between us and the status quo—a status quo that includes us by excluding others. Such turning away is enabled by practices of social reflexivity that make what established Americans are attempting to turn away from more explicit and, therefore, easier to renounce. As the members of Grace Presbyterian and New Hope Presbyterian churches make clear, turning towards is required to sustain this hard work of wrestling with and challenging those boundaries of belonging. Affective responses like empathy draw individuals and groups deeper into the work. And, as they develop friendships across difference, such

emotion is increasingly likely to help us turn towards action. This affective work can help us desire something richer and more expansive than siloed lives of self-sufficiency. Turning can infuse in us a yearning for interdependent lives of shared sufficiency. Though often expressed in very small, ordinary acts, turning can have a ripple effect when it comes to belonging, carrying over into additional spaces.

This turning works to form those doing the turning into specific kinds of people: people who are growing opportunities to belong and who are expanding and collectivizing their understanding of what it means to have enough in the U.S. When individuals turn together, it contributes to the cultivation of communities capable of sustaining resistance. While not the overnight transformation that is portrayed in everything from biblical narratives to classic literature, my research partners' practice of turning carries theological and ethical heft. They reveal the seemingly ordinary moments of daily life to be critical opportunities to either choose to engage in countercultural moral formation or not—to decide instead to move forward on one's own, unchanged. Though these moments of turning towards and away or of remaining static and unturning are small, together they are shaping individuals and communities. Combined with the practices of recognition, accompaniment, and design introduced in chapters two through four, practices of turning carve out possibilities for belonging to be expanded and for moments of shared sufficiency to flourish.

My Family, They're All Coming: Concluding Notes

Belonging as a Public Good

On the heels of the U.S. 2024 presidential election, the nation's belonging deficit insists we pay it heed. For some, the election represented a chance to reclaim what "was." They longed for the return of a time when their belonging to the U.S. felt unequivocal, when the ability to earn a living was consistently within reach, when life felt more manageable. Between rapidly changing demographics and social movements that feel removed from their daily lives, these Americans fear they are being left behind. The election offered a way to express that fear and to reach for a past rendered rosy by their current vantage points. For others, this election represented a chance to affirm the belongingness of refugees and immigrants, of individuals identifying as transgender and nonbinary, of Black Americans, of women. The rhetoric against these groups since 2016 has called into question whether it is safe to belong in a country where dehumanization of fellow U.S. residents has been sanctioned and modeled by leaders and where policies under consideration have life and death implications. Though supporters on both sides of these issues often share more with one another than with the most ardent and extreme proponents in their own "camps,"[312] experientially this seems impossible. "How could I belong with someone who questions my right to be here?" some are asking. While for others the question is, "How could I feel connected to people who are threatening my way of life, who are trying to take my country away from me?"

[312] Curtis Puryear et al., "People Believe Political Opponents Accept Blatant Moral Wrongs, Fueling Partisan Divides" (OSF, January 11, 2022), https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/fk8g6; Emily Kubin, Kurt J. Gray, and Christian von Sikorski, "Reducing Political Dehumanization by Pairing Facts With Personal Experiences," *Political Psychology* 44, no. 5 (2023): 1119–40, https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12875; Chelsea Schein and Kurt Gray, "The Unifying Moral Dyad: Liberals and Conservatives Share the Same Harm-Based Moral Template," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 41, no. 8 (August 1, 2015): 1147–63, https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167215591501.

Against this political backdrop, it is little wonder that studies report that Americans grapple with ever higher rates of loneliness and report a declining number of relationships close enough to rely on when times are hard.[313] The consensus is clear that, while the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these trends in loneliness and isolation, it did not cause them.[314] This shortage in belonging has much to do with the amount of time we spend at work and on our phones, resulting in both social and sleep deprivation.[315] These deprivations lower individual and societal resilience, which had already been hollowed out by collective disinvestment from the voluntary associations that offered previous generations of Americans built-in sources of community.[316] On top of these interlocking factors, political polarization in the U.S brings the issue of belonging to a crisis point. Politicians relentlessly stoke fears about the tenuousness of long-time U.S. residents' belonging to this country, suggesting that their way of life is endangered by the country's immigration patterns and changing demographics.

This crisis of belonging matters. Feeling like you belong to a place and to other people can make all the difference in your ability to flourish—that elusive and orienting good that ethicists since the time of Aristotle have claimed as ultimate. When individuals can experience a sense of belonging in one area of their lives, the experience places limits on the harmful effects of feeling excluded or of being discriminated against in other areas. Research shows that belonging can act as a protective bubble in a way, gently shielding us amid material difficulty or emotionally challenging circumstances. To return to an example from a national study on

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[313] Shaer, "Why Is the Loneliness Epidemic So Hard to Cure?"
[314] Simon Gibbes, "A Crisis of Community: How an Epidemic of Loneliness Is Contributing to Social Disconnection in Churches," *Practical Theology* 15, no. 3 (May 4, 2022): 258–71, https://doi.org/10.1080/1756073X.2021.2019367; Weissbourd, Lovison, and Torres, "Loneliness in America"; Murthy, *Together*; Liming, *Hanging Out*.
[315] Jonathan Haidt, *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness* (New York: Penguin Press, 2024).
[316] Ted A. Smith, *The End of Theological Education* (Eerdmans, 2023), 28; Liming, *Hanging Out*; Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

belonging in the U.S., Nichole Argo and Hammad Sheikh find that "friendship belonging is associated with fewer feelings of national marginalization."[317] Belonging is good for us as individuals. It contributes to everything from our mental and emotional health to our performance at work. Belonging is also good for our communities and societies. When we feel we belong, we are far more likely to trust and participate in institutions and civic processes.[318] Strikingly, these dynamics are amplified when that sense of belonging is experienced in contexts of diversity. As Argo and Sheikh explain, "This study also suggests that diversity and belonging are interdependent, an insight that will grow increasingly important as the US becomes increasingly diverse. We all win when we strive to inculcate belonging in diverse workplaces or civic spaces. Conversely, we all lose when we don't combine diversity with belonging."[319]

Throughout this dissertation, we have seen the difference that belonging practices make at Lattice Ministries. Belonging here is indeed honored as a public good and practiced through social interactions of recognition, accompaniment, and turning. My research partners have also conveyed the many ways that belonging has theological meaning and value.

Belonging as Spiritual Work

As Jamila observes in chapter one, the groups on Lattice Ministries' campus are working to build "a beloved community" and "not just a program." My efforts to understand the contours of this distinction for my research partners often moved our conversations into theological and spiritual directions. While not a work of systematic theology, this interdisciplinary study is interested in questions of practice and practical theology. Questions of what, if any, is the theological significance of these practices to my interlocutors weave through the preceding

[317] Argo and Sheikh, "The Belonging Barometer," 47.
[318] Argo and Sheikh, v–vi.
[319] Argo and Sheikh, 50.

chapters. Attending to this significance leads me to affirm the spiritual dimension of the work of moving beyond running programs to cultivating beloved community that Jamila names and that I witness happening across the Lattice Ministries campus. Returning to Elaine Graham's point in the introduction, these practices of belonging not only reveal theological insights but might in fact serve as the basis of theology. [320] While religion was once conceived of primarily as a matter of belief, Graham and other practical theologians contribute to the broader "turn to practice" within religious studies by revealing the way that practice can function as theology.[321] Graham asserts that, as, "any Divine...dimension to human experience will only be authentically and reliably apprehended in the midst of human practice," the practices of communities "may therefore be seen as the foundation and not the application of theological understanding."[322] I suggest this is true of my research partners at Lattice Ministries. While many draw on scripture and doctrine as motivation for their practices of belonging, these practices are at the same time doing theological work that cultivates beloved community.

Biblical references for the beloved community regularly include the garden of Eden, where God places Adam and Eve in mutual relationship with one another, with the creatures whom they are invited to name and care for, and the earth itself. Beloved community is manifested among Jesus and his disciples, as they share daily life and offer healing and care to members of society who have been ostracized. And the book of Revelation offers a powerful image of beloved community, as God's dreams of *shalom* for all creation come to fruition.

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[320] Graham, *Transforming Practice*, 111.
[321] For more on the turn to practice within the discipline, see, for example, Manuel A. Vásquez, *More than Belief: A Materialist Theory of Religion* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); For practical theologians working in a similar vein, see, for example, McClintock Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption*; and Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, ed., *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, Wiley-Blackwell Companions to Religion. (Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), https://proxy.library.emory.edu/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/title/wileycprth?institutionId=716.
[322] Graham, *Transforming Practice*, 10, 111.

However, the Lattice Ministries community draws deeply on another story that guided the church that first cast the vision for the community hub's birth, New Hope Presbyterian. New Hope Presbyterian Church members found a powerfully clarifying image of beloved community in Ruth and Naomi's friendship across ethnic and cultural differences. In multiple conversations with former New Hope members, individuals reminded me of Ruth's moving insistence to Naomi:

> "Where you go, I will go;
>
> where you lodge, I will lodge;
>
> your people shall be my people
>
> and your God my God." (Ruth 1:16)

While in Ruth's case, the "your God my God" part of the verse suggests conversion from Ruth's Moabite religion as part of her adaptation to life in Bethlehem with her mother-in-law, New Hope Presbyterian members did not mean references to this passage in that way.

Rather, New Hope leaders like Adlin and Peter seem to suggest that, as individuals follow in Ruth's footsteps and courageously claim belonging with people who differ from them, God belongs to and is present to all parties. Adlin refers to this as "the blessing that Ruth got from that sense of relationship—that sense of loving and her desire to be loyal to her mother-in-law." She continues that, for New Hope Presbyterian Church members, embracing the vision of beloved community they found in Ruth meant "inviting people to come in, and they came, and they had a story, and it was something that benefited the community. We found a space for them." In Adlin's vision of a Ruth-inspired beloved community, the *telos* of shared sufficiency, of gifts offered and needs met with abundance, emerges clearly. Peter notes that the Ruth vision particularly resonated with both him and Adlin in part because they each came to the U.S. as immigrants. He

recalls that, when someone first brought up the idea that New Hope Presbyterian was becoming a Ruth community, he immediately took to it: "We're peoples from Scotland, from Jamaica, from Africa. We're even from Ohio!" He continues, "Ruth kind of encapsulated that—there's a sense of people coming together and sticking together and giving hospitality and becoming one."

Susanna Snyder's postcolonial reading of Ruth captures the sense of blessing emerging from community built across difference that Adlin and Peter speak to. Snyder highlights the way that, as an outsider multiple times over, Ruth ultimately is the "one who brings new and God-given life." Ruth not only is credited as part of the lineage of King David and, later, of Jesus, but also with sparking inventive readings of the Torah by challenging Israelites like Boaz, who Ruth eventually marries, to respond more generously to strangers like herself.[323] Snyder observes that the gift of new life that results from this encounter goes in multiple directions: "It is Ruth who brings new life to Boaz, Naomi and Israel at the same time as she receives new life through her relationship with Boaz."[324] New Hope Presbyterian Church sought to enact this insight in ordinary and profound ways.

To biblical images of beloved community, the Lattice Ministries community contributes a number of others: the Miracle of the Yellow Room, Enatye and Zam singing "Salaam" with children from all over the world, Kuumba's joyful graduation ceremonies, the family Kuumba case managers find and create for one another, Meera's international badminton team, Lattice Ministries' partner meetings, Fred and Warren quietly stepping in to fix things on campus, and worship occurring in over a dozen languages each Sunday. Each of these small moments adds texture to contemporary understandings of what beloved community looks and feels like. Each

[323] Snyder, *Asylum-Seeking, Migration and Church*, 168, 167.
[324] Susanna Snyder, "Encountering Asylum Seekers: An Ethic of Fear or Faith?," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 24, no. 3 (August 1, 2011): 363, https://doi.org/10.1177/0953946811405915.

casts a vision of a beloved community in which shared sufficiency is the norm and not the exception, where all are able to give what they can and receive what they need.

As Keri Day explains of Marin Luther King Jr.'s vision of beloved community, "Unlike some religious theologies that emphasize an apocalyptic eschatology, King's idea of beloved community emphasizes hope as a social practice in which such a community orients itself toward the realization of love, peace, joy, care, and more in the present order. King's vision of beloved community then radically provides the communal context out of which hope can be practiced and realized."[325] Several of my research partners shared this sense of working on something bigger, of cooperating with God in ways that also echo comments from architect and theological ethicist Elise Edwards. Edwards suggests, "When Christians understand that architectural design is an act of making the world, they will aspire to participate in this transformative work in a godly, righteous way. Design is both a process and an outcome of intention and inspiration, and both can reflect a divine vision of justice and goodness."[326] As I have argued above, this co-creation extends not only to the design of built spaces, but also to the design of programs, places, and the smallest of gatherings.

While it is beyond the scope of this project to fully flesh out a constructive theological argument, my research partners do shed light on the theological significance of the work of expanding belonging. They suggest that this work of growing belonging and contributing to beloved community is spiritual work. This fundamental recognition can be clearly witnessed in the Civil Rights Movement and the spiritual leadership of activists like Martin Luther King Jr., Howard Thurman, Rosemarie Freeney Harding, and so many others. It is captured by my research partners every time they shift into a theological register when talking about why

[325] Day, *Religious Resistance to Neoliberalism*, 171.
[326] Edwards, *Architecture, Theology, and Ethics*, 15.

belonging matters and why they are committed to expanding it. “God probably hangs out here at Lattice Ministries a lot,” board member Tammy tells me. “The air smells like God to me,” she continues with a grin, adding that the community of Lattice Ministries represents to her “what God wants for this world.” She concludes, “The buildings just reek of God’s love!” Similarly, campus leader Zari affirms, “We see God every day on that campus.” Too, recall the way that Wilo references the *imago Dei* as he talks about interacting with others: “When I meet a stranger for the first time, if I see that stranger as a threat, that will close all windows of discovering who he is. But if we recognize this is an *imago Dei*, then I’ll open my heart, then I’ll be patient...If we recognize, then can we be *surprised* by the gifts.”

My research partners again and again pointed to one another when asked about the sacred or holy on campus. Whether referring to God or Allah, my newcomer and established American research partners were clear that the divine was to be found in the face of the newest newcomer. This newest newcomer not only carries the image of God, the *imago Dei,* but also God’s presence is invoked between them and the one extending an invitation to them to find ease, be at home, have a cup of tea. Like Wilo’s recognition of the image of God in every person, Kuumba’s work of accompanying newcomers is a practice with spiritual power that responds to the perception of Divine presence in the other. Doctrines of incarnation in the Christian tradition assert that God entered human form so that we might know that we belong to God and that God belongs, in a very real and vulnerable sense, to us. In a spiritual and embodied way, incarnation is about accompaniment. This theological conviction and social practice are interwoven; and communicating the power of interaction at Kuumba requires an openness to its spiritual meaning as well. Gladys and Zari perceive God’s presence as they accompany one another and those who continue to arrive to the U.S, seeking refuge. I perceive this too in the care my research partners

extend to one another, not just at Kuumba but also at ABC and among Lattice Ministries' other partners. For example, when Maryam's sister was killed in the war in Sudan, Enatye is there, ready to offer presence and care. And she enables me to be there too, letting me know what is happening and reminding me, not for the first time, that, although people send flowers and cards in the U.S. when someone dies, elsewhere people go and sit vigil, accompanying the bereaved into a world in which their loved one is no longer with them. Kristin Heyer spells out the link between incarnation and accompaniment that I intuit interpersonally and organizationally at Kuumba and Lattice Ministries: "Incarnational solidarity departs from valuable intellectual and institutional dimensions of solidarity to immerse our bodies and expend precious energy in practices of concrete accompaniment in the real world."[327]

In sum, when organizations like Lattice Ministries design for the belonging of all, they proclaim a prophetic message to a world that delights in wielding belonging as a commodity, a weapon, something to be accessed only by those we perceive as being like us. Spending time with the stories of Lattice Ministries invites faith communities wishing to engage in the work of extending belonging possibilities in their neighborhoods to established Americans and newcomers alike to practice discerning who is missing from their spaces and how they might gather and create with everyone in mind from the very beginning. When Lattice Ministries community members design for belonging in a way that centers safety, participation, and play, they are also building up the beloved community, where all experience the reality of their belonging to one another, to the earth, and to the Divine. They are not only meeting the needs of those involved in the design and implementation; they are also engaged in labor that might inspire a fractured society towards different behaviors, practices, and goals. Likewise, when

[327] Kristin E. Heyer, "Radical Solidarity: Migration as Challenge for Contemporary Christian Ethics," *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* 14, no. 1 (February 27, 2017): 98, https://doi.org/10.5840/jcathsoc20171417.

ABC community members practice recognizing all humans, especially the newcomers in their midst, as humans, as contributors, and as community members, they engage in the theological work of honoring the *imago Dei*. They invite faith communities wishing to respond to the refugees and immigrants in their communities to engage in the spiritual practice of glimpsing God in all these neighbors and to courageously denounce the stereotypes and discriminatory policies that distort this vision. When Kuumba community members practice accompanying newcomers towards healing, access, and empowerment, they give weight to the theological claims of the incarnation, of a God who walks slowly with us at a human pace. They invite faith communities to practice accompaniment as a spiritual practice and to commit themselves to removing the barriers on the path towards flourishing together one by one as they encounter them. Finally, when New Hope Presbyterian and Grace Presbyterian church members practice turning away from fear towards empathy, away from helplessness towards action, and away from othering towards long-term friendship, they respond to the movement of the Spirit of God to sustain their practice. They reveal the reality that the work of expanding the boundaries of belonging is a more-than-human undertaking, that the Spirit is actively at work in the midst of it all. Taken together, the work of designing for belonging and practicing recognition, accompaniment, and turning can draw people of faith towards the realization of beloved community—a community in which the *telos* of shared sufficiency orients and sustains.

"The Journey Continues"

This work of building a beloved community is beset with challenges. The Lattice Ministries organizations that so generously hosted me and made this work possible remain, as ever, in a state of transition and flux. Breaking Bread, the organization that supported former refugees in receiving the certification required for catering, continues to be "on pause." The organization's director no longer attends Lattice Ministries partner meetings, and their social

media has been quiet for some time. Throughout the months following the organization's financial crisis—which culminated in all-staff lay-offs in August of 2022— Breaking Bread would use their social media to both publicly celebrate the new positions achieved by their former bakers as well as to highlight the different organizations in the community that had found ways to put their kitchen machinery and supplies to good use. As Olivia, the founder, shared the news of Breaking Bread's "pause" on a partner meeting zoom call, she noted that the staff all secured employment in contexts that were able to offer them pay raises: "Ultimately, this move fulfills our mission. It's just hard the way it happened." Like the New Hope Presbyterian congregation that prioritized care for the community over permanence, Breaking Break honored its limitations and gracefully let go. Jamila, ABC's site manager, spoke on behalf of the others present at the meeting: "I'm so sorry about what's happening. But trust me, you have seeded so many amazing things in our community. The journey continues." At various points throughout the following year, I would overhear reminiscences shared by Lattice Ministries board or staff members about Breaking Bread, Olivia, and her team.

The garden beds on campus formerly managed by Growing Refuge are in a state of mild disrepair. Sage, who, before the pandemic, had been a weekly volunteer with Peace Church's erstwhile afterschool initiative, now volunteers to beautify Lattice Ministries' campus grounds. While she tries to keep the beds from becoming too unmanageable, her focus is on the large flower bed located between ABC's building and the offices in which Charlie and Zari work and Dr. Sharon's Trinity Academy meets. Sayari left his position with Growing Refuge to work full-time with one of the refugee resettlement agencies in the area and create more time for launching the nonprofit he founded to help connect youth from refugee backgrounds to nature through hikes and a learning garden. He dreams of one day putting Lattice Ministries' garden beds to

good use, but for now he is starting by restoring the natural playground on campus in partnership with a suburban church he was connected to through Lattice Ministries' executive director, Charlie. I learn from Pastor Thang that these beds were once maintained by his Zo congregation, before the congregation's eventual move and split. Sayari tells me that he is hopeful that Growing Refuge is on the other side of the continual leadership transitions that led to the end of the organization's formal relationship with Lattice Ministries. As we catch up in a local coffee shop, I work with Sayari on the design of a survey he plans to distribute to adults with refugee backgrounds to learn more about the barriers the community faces when it comes to accessing and enjoying nature.

Pastor Joseph shares that Mulunda Worshipping Community is working to rebuild their afterschool initiative. While it had thrived before the pandemic, the combination of the loss of a key staff member and then the COVID-19 pandemic led to multiple false starts. The congregation itself is flourishing in terms of members and ministries, though finances are stressful. Uncertainty remains as to whether the agreement between the Presbytery and other Presbyterian Churches to support Pastor Joseph and Mulunda Worshipping Community will be extended long enough for the church to find its footing financially. The younger congregations on campus are also doing well. For example, when I meet with Pastor Mhisho to help him create a church website—doing my best to translate his French text into English—he shares that Joseph has helped him access support from the Presbytery and that their churches will collaborate for another joint service soon.

Sarah is no longer with ABC. To the surprise of teachers who love her, she resigned in the spring of 2023. "It's too much pressure," Enatye muses, as she catches me up on the latest news over the phone one rainy summer afternoon. The umbrella organization to which ABC belongs

made the decision to close ABC's other site, both in light of the leadership transitions and a financial crisis that loomed large and mysterious over the lives of ABC teachers that previous spring. While Kuumba is, in many ways, thriving, I inadvertently learn that Gladys is dramatically underpaid for her work as the CEO of the organization and that her position does not come with benefits like healthcare. While Durga loved her work with Kuumba, she eventually seeks employment elsewhere in the hopes of earning and saving more. Nick will retire from his role at Oak Pointe Presbyterian soon, and Durga hopes to have gained more financial stability by the time the leadership transition occurs. She and her husband continue to weather the intense uncertainty surrounding the future outcome of their asylum case.

The members of Grace Presbyterian Church remain as committed as ever to their partnership with Lattice Ministries, though they also express openness to the possibility of the Spirit drawing them into new relationships and kinds of work. On the heels of the events of the October 7th Hamas attack on Israel and the escalating waves of violence perpetrated against Palestinians in response, they intentionally deepened relationships with a local synagogue and *masjid* in their suburb. Of the former New Hope Presbyterian members I connect with, some, like Adlin, worship happily at Pleasant Grove Presbyterian Church. Others, like Peter, now find themselves enjoying quieter schedules on Sundays and occasionally drive by the Lattice Ministries campus when feeling nostalgic.

Finally, Lattice Ministries recently received substantial funding from a private, faith-based foundation that will enable the organization to continue taking care of issues resulting from the deferred maintenance that accumulated during the days of New Hope Presbyterian Church. Lattice Ministries' board is wrestling with how to recruit and support more diverse leadership going forward. While they hope to prioritize the onboarding of board members with

lived experience of forced migration, this aspiration is proving challenging to put into practice. Lattice Ministries hosted its first annual fundraiser and distributed awards to community leaders who have partnered with them in the work of belonging. Charlie and the Lattice Ministries board continue to discern the organization's role. It remains to be seen whether it is heading in the direction of the vision of Ruth community that New Hope Presbyterian Church members lovingly nurtured—or whether, perhaps, the community hub and its many partners are birthing a new vision responsive to the needs of the times and the movement of the Spirit. Through it all, beloved community is being built in fits and starts, through breakthroughs and breakdowns, as the community continues trying to belong together.

Receiving Belonging and Shared Sufficiency

"Are you secretly the mayor?" I tease Enatye over dinner last summer, after yet another group of men stops by our table to bow their heads, air kiss Enatye on the cheek three times, and greet us both with the customary Amharic exchange, "Selam nish?" "Selam."[328] Enatye beams at me, clearly tickled by the question, and then brings our conversation back to the topic we had been discussing—a personal crisis I had been facing throughout the summer. Quickly her affect changes, shifting from bemused to heavyhearted. She sighs deeply and reaches across the table to squeeze my hand. "I'm so sad you have this; life is so hard," she affirms. "But if it were smooth, it's no good. It *has* to go like this," she tells me, using her hand to illustrate the fluctuations of life by turning her palm upwards and downwards and upwards again. A few minutes into our conversation, we are interrupted again, as a woman in her forties comes and sits on the booth next to Enatye. She remembers meeting me at a graduation earlier in the summer and chats in English momentarily before switching to Amharic. As she and Enatye talk, I casually take in the

[328] Literally, "Are you at peace?" "Yes, I'm well, I'm at peace." The greeting is used the way "what's up?" or "how's it going?" are used in the U.S.

room, smiling at three stylish young women wearing hijabs to our left, who chatted amiably with us when Enatye and I were first seated and struggled to balance the table so it would stop wobbling ("Good neighbors!" Enatye remarked). To my right, a group seems to be celebrating something, as they clink their beers and glasses of wine and talk animatedly over their shared platter of injera, tibs, gomen, and lentils.

When the woman leaves our table a little while later, Enatye tells me that the reason she stayed with us for so long is that she is trying to matchmake her dinner companions and so wanted to give them a moment of privacy. I recall from my earlier meeting with her that she and Enatye are from the same town in Ethiopia. What I did not realize, however, is that the woman lived with Enatye when she first came to the U.S. and that Enatye helped her find her first job. No sooner has Enatye caught me up on these details than I see her beaming in the direction of the restaurant's entrance. "My family, they're all coming," she says delightedly, as another group of sharply dressed men in their 20s, 30s, and 40s approach. After offering the customary greeting, the oldest of the group informs me with a grin, "This is our mother." While none of the people who greet us throughout our dinner are biologically related to Enatye, it strikes me that almost half have lived with her and nearly everyone has been fed by her. I remark on this, and she responds firmly and simply: "People are struggling when they come here, so you have to help them."

Once more, we return to the topic of my personal woes, and she tells me of a similar experience her own daughter faced. She advises me to be with people who love me, let them take me to dinner; to stay busy; and to trust that doors will open in time. Enatye covers our shared bill, leaving a 60% cash tip for our young server, whose friend once stayed at Enatye's when in between jobs. "Tonight, I am a teacher," she tells me, referring to the advice she has gifted me

along with the meal. We take a turn around the room on our way out so that everyone can again bow their heads and say parting words. In her sleeveless, ankle-length white dress, her flowing shawl that has an elaborate border of stylized humans and flowers that matches the hem of her dress, and her hair blown out in loose curls, you would never know this "mayor," teacher, and mother of the community is in her seventies. I savor the quiet drama of her exit. "We will call each other!" she tells me in the parking lot before kissing my cheeks and getting into her car.

This memorable dinner takes place just two days after my interview with Thang, the pastor of a Zo congregation that first launched on the campus of New Hope Presbyterian Church. I happen to work on the transcript from Thang's interview when I return from dinner with Enatye. I smile when I realize the burble of the fish tank in Thang's living room provides unexpected texture to the audio file. The interview feels rich in multiple ways, not only because of the amazing Zo meal I was invited to participate in with Thang's family and housemates once the interview concluded at 9:00 pm, but also because of the narrative journey Thang takes me on throughout our conversation. At first, when we discuss what it takes to live a good life in this country, I am surprised by his seemingly unabashed embrace of the American Dream. His initial response takes us to the "life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness" clause in the preamble of the Constitution. Acknowledging that "people in power" here can "have these issues," he reminds me that even the worst of our political situations feels minor to his community when compared to the ethnic cleansing and state-sponsored violence that is occurring on the Indo-Burmese border. In contrast, here, he tells me, "We can pursue our American Dream"— a dream which, he elaborates, specifically includes a house and good education for his children. When he further affirms the truth behind the saying, "If you don't make it in America, you will never make it in the rest of the world," my conflicted feelings heighten. Inequality is rampant in the U.S., I think

to myself. With no safety net to speak of, not to mention the far-reaching impact of this nation's history with slavery and racism, well, it seems that many who flounder here might indeed flourish in other contexts. And yet, I do hear his point, this reminder that despite this country's challenges, for the most part people here do not live in fear of violence breaking out in the streets, institutions crumbling overnight, and the evaporation of their legal rights and protections.[329]

It is at this point in the interview, however, when Thang breaks open the American Dream, noting that, in addition to the necessities of a place to live and a way to make a living, he also believes that "a place to belong" is "becoming a basic need." His home, he explains, provides a sense of physical belonging because he always lives there with multiple Zo families: "So I don't only see my family every single day, I see three to four families living together. So that cluster of families living in one place, we feel safe because one can do what others cannot. You are supporting each other." Of his car, he explains, "It is a community car." He suggests that, in providing rides to members not only of his church but also of the broader Zo community, "it has become a channel that creates collective belonging." Around the dinner table, I see this active expansion of the American Dream at work. A young couple sit next to Thang's mother and wife, while a recent graduate sits next to me. Each of them, Thang reflects, will one day move out, and others will inevitably move in. But for now, they are part of the abundance of one another's lives. Sharing Thang's home is not just a matter of financial necessity for them, though that certainly plays a role. Rather, it is also part of what makes their lives good in the U.S., as everyone shares the cooking, cleaning, and laughter.

[329] While the statement I first drafted in the summer of 2023 subjectively feels more tenuous following the 2024 election, objectively I cannot deny that the U.S. experiences far more stability than so many other nations.

In the company of research partners like Enatye and Pastor Thang, I find myself staring down some of the most personally challenging implications of this research. I aspire to practice my way towards a more "shared sufficient" approach to my life. I want to be in the process of becoming a person whose budget and calendar reflects shared sufficiency as my guiding *telos.* And yet, my formation in the *habitus* of self-sufficiency runs deep. I perhaps have never felt this tension more acutely than when I discerned my marriage needed to end. As I moved through all the implications of this life-altering decision, I found myself yearning for self-sufficiency even as its mythical, illusory quality became more transparent than ever.

I felt this deep-seated need to prove to myself that I could make it through the remaining years of the PhD program on my own, that I did not need a partner's help. I craved a space that was entirely my own, even as I gratefully accepted friends' offers of guestrooms during the most acute season of this life transition. Sometimes the desire to keep moving reflected the deep meaning and pleasure I (often) find in my work. Yet there was a darker strain to this drive to stand on my own two feet as rapidly as possible that directly reflects the lie of the *telos* of self-sufficiency: a lies that suggests we are somehow worth more when we do not need assistance and that, if we are not able to take care of ourselves fully, we are somehow "behind." Two of my research partners, Enatye and Durga, joined the inner circle of friends and family who countered that message for me when I needed it most. While people at church sent check-in emails, Durga and Enatye showed up with meals. When I felt shame to struggle because of a choice I had made for myself (rather than, say, due to war and persecution), they reminded me that suffering is suffering and poured me more tea.

As a result of my personal experiences, I believe that starting by wishing for a changed *telos* does not get us very far. Rather, we practice our way towards this richer, more worthy

vision of the good day-by-day with small and faltering steps. Sometimes we are the ones who do the work of expanding belonging. And sometimes we are on the receiving end. Sometimes we all need turns being the one who experiences having enough because of our belonging. Receiving and extending belonging across difference, we are formed into the kinds of people with the dispositions and skills needed to make changes to our groups, organizations, policies, and programs—changes that make belonging more accessible and that reprioritize the flourishing of the collective. The bright spot of Lattice Ministries and its partners offers evidence that how things are is not how they have to be. Communities and individuals of all faith backgrounds can orient our lives in ways that resist the lure of self-sufficient individualism. Many of our nation's newest neighbors have lived other ways of being and are ready to teach those who are willing to dare to do things differently. As Lattice Ministries, ABC, Kuumba, New Hope Presbyterian, and Grace Presbyterian reveal, we can design differently. We can practice expanding opportunities to belong by recognizing, accompanying, and turning. The work is neither easy nor quick. But it is good. Being part of the collective effort to repair and extend the social fabric is deeply faithful, spiritual work, rich with meaning, purpose, and friendship. In building the beloved community, we find with Enatye, Pastor Thang, and so many others, that family is all around us, waiting to be ours if we are open to receiving them.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Organizations

- ABC: A multi-generational literacy program for refugee mothers and children that is located on Lattice Ministries' campus.
- Breaking Bread: A social enterprise that provided job training and professional certification in food handling to refugees and sold baked goods that used to be located on campus before its closing.
- Healing Horizons: A mental health organization that serves asylum-seekers whose advocacy office is located at Lattice Ministries.
- Grace Presbyterian Church: A longstanding supporting partner of Lattice Ministries.
- Growing Refuge: A nonprofit that helps former refugees who come from agricultural backgrounds access land and gardening materials so that they can maintain their cultural growing practices in their urban U.S. context. Managed beds on Lattice Ministries' campus until 2022.
- Kuumba: A nonprofit organization that offers holistic sewing and leadership initiatives for women who came to the U.S. as refugees, located on campus.
- Lattice Ministries: The community hub that is located on the campus that used to be home to New Hope Presbyterian church. Lattice Ministries is home to 16 onsite partners.
- Mulunda Worshipping Community: A pan-African congregation that meets on Lattice Ministries' campus.
- Mwanga Wa Jua: A nonprofit being launched by Sayari in partnership with Lattice Ministries.
- New Hope Presbyterian church: The PC(USA) congregation that helped give birth to Lattice Ministries.
- Oak Point Presbyterian: A PC(USA) church located near Lattice Ministries that is the host site of the Sanctuary Movement in the area.
- Trinity Academy: A private school focused on meeting the needs of children with learning differences, located on campus.
- Zo Worshipping Community: A church for Burmese refugees that met for years on campus.

Appendix B: Individuals

Organization	Role	Country of Origin	Age	Race	Religion
Lattice Ministries					
Charlie	Executive director	U.S.	30-40	White	Christian: Anglican
Tammy	Board member, volunteer	U.S.	60-70	White	Christian: Presbyterian
Cody	Board chair, volunteer	U.S.	60-70	White	Christian: Presbyterian
Jean	Facilities Manager	Democratic Republic of the Congo	30-40	Black	Christian
Cathy	Board member, member of initial steering committee	U.S.	70-80	White	Christian: Presbyterian
Wilo	Board member	Democratic Republic of the Congo	40-50	Black	Christian: Lutheran
Joseph	Pastor of Mulunda Worshipping Community, member of initial steering committee	Democratic Republic of the Congo	40-50	Black	Christian: Presbyterian
Mhisho	Pastor of Swahili-speaking congregation on campus	Democratic Republic of the Congo	40-50	Black	Christian
Baruti	Pastor of Swahili-speaking congregation on campus	Democratic Republic of the Congo	40-50	Black	Christian
Meera	Founder of badminton group	Kenya	50-60	Black	Christian

Sayari	Former employee of Growing Refuge, now launching nature nonprofit in partnership with Lattice Ministries, Mwanga Wa Jua	Democratic Republic of the Congo	30-40	Black	Christian: Presbyterian
Grace	Director of Healing Horizons	U.S.	50-60	White	Roman Catholic
Will	Director of youth basketball	U.S.	40-50	Black	Christian
Dr. Sharon	Director of Trinity Academy	U.S.	50-60	Black	Christian
ABC					
Jamila	Site Manager	Eritrea	40-50	Black	Muslim
Sarah	Executive Director	U.S.	50-60	White	Christian: Presbyterian
Enatye	Teacher	Ethiopia	70-80	Black	Orthodox Christian
Zam	Teacher	Burma	30-40	Asian	Christian
Hla	Teacher	Burma	40-50	Asian	Christian
Salma	Teacher	Sudan	40-50	Black	Muslim
Maryam	Teacher	Sudan	40-50	Black	Muslim
Naomi	Family Support services	U.S.	40-50	White	Christian
Noor	Teacher	Iraq	50-60	White	Muslim
Ellen	Teacher	U.S.	50-60	White	Christian
Sandy	Teacher	U.S.	30-40	White	Christian
Malak	Teacher	Iraq	40-50	White	Muslim
Sakine	Teacher	Afghanistan	30-40	Asian	Muslim
Zainab	Teacher	Somalia	30-40	Black	Muslim
Dontal	Teacher	Eritrea	30-40	Black	Christian
Aisha	Teacher	Somalia	30-40	Black	Muslim
Kuumba					

Gladys	CEO and founder	Kenya	40-50	Black	Christian: Presbyterian
Kweks	COO	Ghana	50-60	Black	Unknown
Zari	Administrative director, Kuumba. Also, admin assistant with Lattice Ministries and Mulunda	Kenya	40-50	Black	Christian
Durga	Office administrator	Pakistan	40-50	Asian	Hindu
Clearette	Community ambassador	Democratic Republic of the Congo	20-30	Black	Christian
Madina	Caseworker	U.S.	20-30	Black	Muslim
Millen	Caseworker	Ethiopia	20-30	Black	Orthodox Christian
Tes	Caseworker	Eritrea	20-30	Black	Catholic
Amani	Sewing instructor	Ethiopia	40-50	Black	Muslim
Flower	Caseworker	Burma	30-40	Asian	Christian
Princess	Caseworker	Rwanda	20-30	Black	Christian
Narges	Sewing instructor	Afghanistan	20-30	White	Muslim
Catie	Volunteer director of ESL Buddy program	U.S.	60-70	White	None
Cal	ESL Buddy volunteer	U.S.	70-80	Asian	unknown
Additional Lattice Ministries Volunteers and Former Partners					
Kamali	Employee of Growing Refuge	Bhutan	30-40	Asian	Christian
Thang	Pastor of Zo church that previously met on campus	India	40-50	Asian	Christian: Presbyterian
Olivia	Director of Breaking	U.S.	40-50	White	Christian: Presbyterian

	Bread (now closed)				
Judy	LM Board member	U.S.	70-80	White	Christian: Presbyterian
Henley	LM Board Member	U.S.	30-40	White	Christian: Presbyterian
Lila	LM Board member	U.S.	60-70	White	Christian: Presbyterian
Sage	Beautification volunteer, Lattice Ministries	U.S.	70-80	White	Christian: Presbyterian
Sadie	Mulunda volunteer	U.S.	60-70	White	Christian: Presbyterian
Abdul	Community leader	Somalia	30-40	Black	Muslim
New Hope Presbyterian					
Jay	Pastor of New Hope	U.S.	50-60	White	Christian: Presbyterian
Adlin	Elder on session of New Hope	Jamaica	70-80	White	Christian: Presbyterian
Peter	Elder on session of New Hope	Scotland	50-60	White	Christian: Presbyterian
Kay	New Hope member, volunteer	U.S.	80-90	White	Christian: Presbyterian
Grace Presbyterian					
Doug	Pastor of Grace Pres.	U.S.	40-50	White	Christian: Presbyterian
Fred	ABC and Lattice Ministries volunteer	U.S.	80-90	White	Christian: Presbyterian
Warren	ABC and LM volunteer	U.S.	70-80	White	Christian: Presbyterian
Madeline	ABC and LM volunteer	U.S.	70-80	White	Christian: Presbyterian
Bob	ABC and LM volunteer	U.S.	70-80	White	Christian: Presbyterian

Maggie	ABC and LM volunteer	U.S.	70-80	White	Christian: Presbyterian
Oak Pointe Presbyterian					
Nick	Pastor, co-founder of Sanctuary Movement in the area	U.S.	60-70	White	Christian: Presbyterian
Julie	Volunteer with Sanctuary	U.S.	60-70	White	Christian: Presbyterian
"Offsite" Supporting Partners					
Margaret	Board member, Presbytery leader	U.S.	50-60	White	Christian: Presbyterian
Frank	Presbytery leader involved in steering committee, launch	U.S.	60-70	White	Christian: Presbyterian
Summer	Presbytery leader involved in steering committee, launch	U.S.	40-50	Black	Christian: Presbyterian
Clair	Presbyterian minister involved in steering committee	U.S.	40-50	White	Christian: Presbyterian
Mark	Pastor of supporting church, first board chair at time of launch	U.S.	50-60	White	Christian: Presbyterian

Appendix C: A Brief Timeline

- 1952: New Hope Presbyterian Church was founded on border of Ashland, outside of a metropolitan area in the U.S. southeast
- Late 1950s: New Hope Presbyterian Church experiences its heyday with approximately 1,200 members. The church plants Pleasant Grove Presbyterian Church further from the metropolitan area in the suburbs.
- 2002: Meera's badminton team begins using New Hope Presbyterian Church's gym.
- 2010: Pastor Jay is called to become the minister of New Hope Presbyterian at a time when membership has declined to about 120.
- 2012: Pastor Jay invites Pastor Joseph and Pastor Thang to enter partnerships with New Hope. Thang moves into Jay's office, and both pastors' congregations begin worshipping on campus.
- 2014: New Hope supports Mulunda Worshipping Community in launching its afterschool program on campus. Local Presbyterian churches volunteer with New Hope to make some campus improvements for the growing campus community.
- 2014-2016: Trinity Academy, ABC, and Kuumba join the campus community.
- 2017 Steering Committee is launched through a collaboration between the Presbytery and New Hope Presbyterian to discern the future of the campus and the growing communities.
- December 2017: Lattice Ministries is launched as a nonprofit.
- January 2018: MLK Day of Service draws volunteers from 12 Presbyterian churches to do work on campus and mark the nonprofit's launch.
- August 2021: New Hope Presbyterian Church closes its doors. Members engraft into Pleasant Grove Presbyterian.
- August 2022: Breaking Bread goes on an indefinite pause. All employees are laid off after Olivia helps secure alternate employment for them.
- December 2022: Growing Refuge cancels its contract with Lattice Ministries because of leadership transitions.
- Spring 2023: Sayari's nonprofit Mwanga Wa Jua launches with support from Lattice Ministries.
- October 2024: Lattice Ministries hosts its first annual fundraiser.

Appendix D: Visual Overview of Findings

Below is a representation of the facets of the practices of recognition, accompaniment, and turning that I observed. While these three functioned as conscious and unconscious practices engaged on both interpersonal and organizational levels, the design for belonging principles functioned more as intentions than as practices. These intentions created the "container" in which the three practices could be engaged.

Design for Belonging Principles		
1. Design for Safety 2. Design for Participation 3. Design for Play		
Belonging Practices		
Recognizing	Accompanying	Turning
As humans	Towards healing	Towards empathy, away from fear
As contributors	Towards access	Towards action, away from helplessness
As community members	Towards empowerment	Towards friendship, away from othering

Appendix E: Fieldnote Template

Date, time, location:
Title:

***Chronological log**:*

Reflexivity notes

- How might my relationships—and moments of both connection and disconnection—be shaping how I interpret what I observe?

Conceptual analysis/analytic memo

- What is surprising/puzzling?
- What processes do I see at work?
- What is this a case of?
- How is what I'm observing challenging what I've read?
- What does this say about society?
- How are my themes showing up? [markers of belonging, relationship to care, interaction with inequality/ the Meantime]

Theological reflection memo

- What does this say to people of faith?
- What does this say about God?
- What might this say regarding doctrines: creation/ theological anthropology (what it means to be human), incarnation/Jesus/ Christology, doctrine of God, theodicy, Holy Spirit/Pneumatology, Trinity, sin, salvation/soteriology, and Ecclesiology (what it means to be church).

Appendix F: Interview Guide

About you

1. Would you tell me a little about what you do? I know you play many roles.

2. Would you tell me the story of how you first became connected to Lattice Ministries?

3. What is your relationship to the organization today? What does that look like for you?

Thoughts on belonging and the good life

4. If you had to describe what is essential for people to live a good, flourishing life in the U.S., what would you say? Can you name 3 essentials for living a good life here?

   If name new concepts: can you define that?

   Does belonging fit in your vision of a flourishing life in the U.S.? If so, where does it fall?

5. People have a lot of different understandings of belonging. What is belonging, in your opinion? And what does it mean *to you* to experience belonging or to feel at home?

6. Where are places that you see people experiencing belonging?

7. Where do *you* experience belonging? What do you think makes that possible?

8. Can you tell me the story of a time when you helped someone else experience belonging? Or when you saw other people or groups make it easier for someone to belong? What did that look like? How did that work?

9. What do you see as the primary barriers to belonging in the U.S.?

   For refugees and immigrants?
   For established Americans?

Impact of community organizations

10. What role do you see Lattice Ministries playing in the community?

    How, if at all, do you see Lattice Ministries' work being connected to belonging?

    Have you ever witnessed someone experiencing belonging there? If so, what did that look like? What happened?

11. What difference does Lattice Ministries make in your life?

    How, if at all, has your involvement with Lattice Ministries shaped your:

- relationship to the local community? To refugees? To established Americans?

- involvement with social justice issues and advocacy?

- faith beliefs and practices? [Is it connected to your faith or spirituality?]
    - Are you connected to a religious community? If so, do you speak about your work there? How do you talk about your work there?

12. Thinking about your faith, have you had any experiences of the divine or sacred connected to Lattice Ministries? If so, can you describe it? [Could you tell me about an experience at Lattice Ministries that felt sacred or holy?]

13. What are your hopes for Lattice Ministries? And for your community?

14. Is there anything we have not talked about that you would like to add?

    Is there anyone you think I should make sure to I speak to about Lattice Ministries and belonging?

15. I give everyone a different name in my writings to protect their privacy. Is there a name that you like that I can use for you?

Demographic Questions:

- Age:
- Race:
- Gender:
- Place of birth:
- Year of arrival to the U.S., if applicable:
- Do you identify with a religious tradition and/or denomination? If so, which one?

Appendix G: Focus Group Guide

Warming Up

The first thing we will do is draw. I will gather all the drawings at the end, as these will help my research too. Don't worry if you do not think of yourself as an artist. Stick figures are great!

There are no right or wrong ways to do this! We will be sharing these with each other, and I'll ask you to leave these with me at the end of our conversation. Please write your pretend name on the back.

I'm going to set a timer for 5 minutes, and I'll give you a heads up when there's 1 minute left.

- Draw what a good life in the U.S. looks like to you.
    - What does it look like to flourish or thrive here?
    - What does it feel like?
    - Sound like? Smell like?

- Share your drawings with the group. What did you draw? Why?

- Let's discuss as a group. What did you notice in one another's drawings? What stood out to you?

  Did you see any surprising similarities or differences?

Belonging

- If you had to describe what is essential for people to live a good, a flourishing life in the U.S., what would you say? Can you name 3 essential qualities, conditions, or things?

  What do those things mean to you/ how would you define them?

- Do you consider belonging as part of a good life? Where does it fall in relation to the other things you've named?

  What does belong or feeling at home mean to you?

- Tell me about your experience in the U.S. in relation to belonging.

  Is it easy or hard to belong here in the U.S.? Why? What makes it easy or hard?

- Describe a time when you've helped another person experience belonging or when you saw other people or groups make it easier for others to belong.

- If you had to name one thing that is most important to help people experience belonging or one thing that, when it's missing, it's impossible to experience belonging, what would that be?

  [Is there something key or critical to make people feel like they belong? Something that, without it, people can't experience belonging?

Group-Specific Questions

- We've talked about things that are important to thriving and belonging. How would you describe the organization's role in relation to those things?

- Thinking about the work the organization does, how is it related to belonging?

  Could you describe some organizational successes or challenges related to belonging?

- What is one thing the organization could do to be even more helpful? Why do you think it would be helpful to make those changes?

- If you could change one thing about life in the U.S. to make it easier to belong, what would it be? Why?

- Thinking about your faith, have you had any experiences of the divine or sacred connected to that organization? If so, can you describe it?

- What do you hope for the local community of Ashland? For the community of [the organization]?

- What do you hope for yourself and for your children?

Appendix H: Readback Handouts

To honor my methodological commitments, it was important to me to solicit feedback from my research partners the during data analysis phase of the research process. As such, I facilitated eight readback sessions with key conversation partners. During these sessions, I shared printed handouts of the pages below and asked research partners to reflect with me about what resonated, what did not, and what might be missing from my preliminary analysis of each emerging theme.

Recognizing

"We're all parts of the body, and we need each other."—Margaret

"As I keep telling people, no one in the world, no one would love to become an immigrant. Becoming an immigrant is the final result for you to survive. Therefore, when you get to a place, you would love to be treated as a human rather than immigrant. You are first human, and I truly believe that belonging will help us feel that we all belong to the same human family."– Wilo

"Can you belong if you're not respected? If you're not acknowledged?"– Summer

"If the self is not there, they are missed, they are noticed. And feeling like the whole is better because you're part of that."—Sarah

When we practice recognition, we affirm:

- One another's ability to contribute.
- One another's membership to the community.
- Our connection to one another as human beings.

Recognition critiques:

- The way the U.S. makes newcomers "start from scratch" when they arrive.
- The stereotypes that make it hard to recognize each other.

Consider:

1. Does this sound like something you or your organization does? If so, what language would you use for it?
2. Does anything about this feel off to you? What would you change?

Accompanying

"A chain of people to support you" –Durga

"A journey where you give and receive help along the way" – Sayari

"If you want a woman to come and sew, and her wellbeing is compromised, how will she even come to the program? So, the program doesn't start from sewing. The program starts from the woman's wellbeing." –Kweks

"It is like, I said, a holistic approach in helping these women who are trying to figure out how to just be able to stand on their own two feet. How do we make that happen for them? And it looks like holding their hand until they're able to get on their own two feet. So, whatever need they have, we take it upon ourselves to figure out how to get an answer for them." –Gladys

When we practice accompaniment, we commit to:

- Make changes to our organizations so that they meet real needs, remove barriers to access, and adapt as people's needs evolve.
- Draw on our past experiences with challenges to support others going through them now.

Accompaniment critiques:

- The way we tend to care about things but don't then take responsibility for them.
- The way it's easiest to care about the people who seem just like us or who we consider our "own."

Consider:

1. Does this sound like something you or your organization does? If so, what language would you use for it?
2. Does anything about this feel off to you? What would you change?

Designing

"Doors are open"—Zainab

"Here is an opportunity to nurture, build a beloved community of God's people, whether they be Christian or Muslim, badminton players or chefs or sewers, or after school kids who are trying to get help, needed help, with their homework. Here is an opportunity to create a foretaste of the Kingdom of heaven." ~ Mark

"We've set this whole place up for you." ~Sarah

"This is our home." ~ Meera

When we practice design, we create programs and spaces that:

- Support collaboration.
- Enable people to feel safe, emotionally and physically.
- Are easy to participate in.
- Are sustainable.

Design critiques:

- The way we set things up with the individual and not the community in mind.
- The way this "default" individual is usually male, white, English-speaking, and email-sending.

Consider:

1. Does this sound like something you or your organization does? If so, what language would you use for it?
2. Does anything about this feel off to you? What would you change?

Turning

"A drumbeat of togetherness"—Lila

"At church, we're plodding along…But if we take the initiative to raise our sail up in a project or opportunity and the Holy Spirit, the wind of the spirit, catches that sail, we just go shooting forward...This whole refugee thing is a classic example. We just went down on this little trip to visit refugees, and we raised the sail, and Grace Pres. has been riding that wind of the spirit." —Fred, member of Grace Presbyterian Church

"I'll never forget, we were all peering in the windows. They're all peering in the windows, and I remember looking in the window and going, 'oh God!' I remember I said to myself, this will never work!" —Doug, pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church
"And Fred's going oh yeah, this will work!"—Madeline, member of Grace Pres.

When we practice turning away, we say no to:

- Fear and helplessness.
- Needing things to be the way they've always been.
- Racism, classism, and other forms of discrimination.
- Understandings of a good life that focus on money and individual success.

When we practice turning towards, we say yes to:

- Feeling empathy and concern for others with different life experiences.
- Acting in solidarity.
- Friendships with people who challenge us and help us grow.

Turning critiques:

- The way we become hopeless in the face of injustice instead of joining together in action.

Consider:

1. Does this sound like something you or your organization does? If so, what language would you use for it?
2. Does anything about this feel off to you? What would you change?

Shared Sufficiency

"I am living with my friends, you know, so I don't only see my family every single day, I see 3 to 4 families living together…we feel safe. One can do what others cannot. You are supporting each other." –Thang

> *"Americans, they are struggling…But you know us, we live with joint family, and we support each other, you know?" –Kamali*

"I want to say that if you have a good source of income in the US, you could live a comfortable life, right? The only problem with that is living a comfortable life when your brother or sister or sibling is not… Of course, having a good source of income so that we can be able to pay bills and survive is important, but that's not as important as bringing others along to experience the same kind of success or comfort that you're experiencing." –Zari

"It was good, what I was doing, it was really nice at that time, but I didn't feel really accomplished, something is missing…The salary was good, but this is not right, something is not good…I don't feel like I'm doing something meaningful." –Sayari

When we work at creating shared sufficiency, we affirm:

- Thriving is only possible when you *and* your community have enough.
- "Enough-ness" is created when everyone gives what they can and receives what they need.

Shared sufficiency critiques:

- The American Dream. Shared sufficiency reveals that it is a nightmare.

Consider:

- Does this feel right to you? If shared sufficiency something you and your community are working towards? What feels off here?

Wrapping Up

Overall, consider:

1. What's missing?
    a. What are things you do to support belonging that aren't here?
    b. Or things that have helped you experience belonging before that aren't captured here?
2. What resonates the most?
3. What feels off or unfamiliar?
4. Ideas for organizations?
    a. What are things they can be doing to make belonging easier for all to access?
    b. What are ways they can grow further into these practices?
5. Ideas for faith communities?