

“I Will Walk With You” : The Role of Engaged Communities in the Work of Jesuit Refugee Service

Background

- The UNHCR defines a refugee as someone outside their country of origin due to a fear of persecution or threat to physical safety because of their race, religion, ethnicity, political beliefs, or socio-economic class.
- Jesuit Refugee Service is a program run by the Society of Jesus, also known as the Jesuits that operates on 6 continents in over 50 countries
- JRS was founded in November 1980 in response to Vietnamese boat refugees seeking safety around the world



JRS USA Fast Facts

- Main office: Washington DC, USA
- Programs:
 - Caminar Contigo: USA Binational Border Program
 - Detention Chaplaincy Project
 - Migrant Accompaniment Network
 - Advocacy
- Social conditions focused on: Incorporated all with focus on cultural perceptions

Jenny Renner

French & Francophone Studies major
Anthropology & Education minors
Global Impacts Pathway

Research Questions

- Do social conditions influence the work of resettlement agencies?
 - Historical connections of the country to refugee resettlement
 - Legal systems for admitting refugees
 - Cultural perceptions of refugees
- If so, which external social condition has the greatest impact?
- What can I as an individual, or Wooster as a community, do to positively impact the work of resettlement agencies?

JRS France Fast Facts

- Main office: Paris, France
- Programs:
 - Lodging: JRS Welcome, JRS Ruralité, JRS Cool Welcome Fontenay
 - Basic needs: JRS École de français, JRS Santé, JRS Jeunes
 - Legal: JRS Intégration, JRS Accompagnement juridique, JRS Plaidoyer
- Social conditions focused on: Almost exclusively centered around cultural perceptions



Parts of my Project

- Chapter 1: Introduction to my project overall
- Chapter 2: A comprehensive overview of terms in relation to refugees and an introduction to Jesuit Refugee Service
- Chapter 3: United States, social conditions, and JRS USA
- Chapter 4: France, social conditions, and JRS France
- Conclusion and future applications of my research

Conclusions

- Yes, social conditions can be an external factor influencing the work of resettlement agencies
- The greatest impact comes from cultural perceptions of resettlement agencies and the refugees they serve
 - History is unchangeable, so while an important influence, it is static
 - Legal systems do not change overnight; only with a shift in attitudes of elected officials can improve legal conditions for refugees
- Everyone can help by sharing positive conceptions of refugees with family and friends, in a form of passive work. Getting involved in advocacy or volunteering are great ways to work actively as well

Applications post-Wooster

- I can continue to support the work of resettlement agencies by also continuing to talk about, care about, and spread positive perceptions of refugees to anyone around me
- Carrying my research into my career, I will be better prepared and understand the complexities of resettlement and more mindful of my work
- This research could be continued at a graduate level should I chose to get a master's degree at a later date

Relevant Sites for This Poster

- <https://jrs.net>
- <https://www.jrsusa.org/>
- <https://www.jrsfrance.org>
- <https://www.unhcr.org>