

**THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS AMONGST REFUGEES  
RESETTLED THROUGH THE COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP SCHEME AND  
THE VULNERABLE PERSONS RESETTLEMENT SCHEME**

by

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## **Abstract**

The dramatic increase in the number of displaced people in the last decade, predominantly hosted by low and middle-income countries, has prompted a reassessment of solutions to ensure international protection and shared responsibilities for refugees. In response, resettlement programmes have been developed and expanded worldwide, allowing the transfer of refugees from first asylum countries to third countries. In 2014, the UK launched the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), aiming to resettle 20,000 refugees from the Syrian conflict. Through the programmes, refugees are supported by local authorities and an assigned caseworker to aid their integration processes. Simultaneously, sponsorship programmes, allowing individuals to sponsor refugee families and support their integration processes, have emerged in nearly twenty countries. In Europe, the UK developed the first Community Sponsorship (CS) scheme in 2016.

Behind the enthusiasm for sponsorship programmes often lies the assumption that sponsored refugees receive better assistance than those resettled by government-led programmes, due to the support provided by volunteers' networks facilitating their integration processes. However, there is a paucity of comparative studies providing evidence supporting this assumption, especially outside Canada, where sponsorship programmes differ significantly from those developed in Europe. Additionally, although the importance of social networks in integration processes is widely recognised, several knowledge gaps exist regarding the formation and development of refugees' social networks and their role in supporting integration processes.

Drawing on migration literature and social network analysis, this study addresses these knowledge gaps by comparing the social networks of refugees resettled through VPRS

and CS with a view to understanding how different types of social connections and resources they provide shape integration processes. In addition to distinguishing between types of relationships and resources, this study's conceptual framework also considers individual-level factors, such as refugees' socio-demographic and migration characteristics, as well as contextual-level factors in shaping social networks and integration outcomes and processes.

The findings reveal significant depth and breadth differences between the social networks developed by CS and VPRS refugees, suggesting that through CS, refugees are more likely to develop broader and more diversified social networks compared to VPRS refugees. Differences in the types of resources available through social networks further highlight that sponsored refugees can access more tailored practical and emotional support than VPRS refugees. Utilising the Indicators of Integration framework, the study indicates that these variations in social networks and resources do not always lead to substantial disparities in integration outcomes, particularly in functional aspects, as the presence of a social network is insufficient to overcome structural barriers hindering integration processes. However, the presence of caring relationships providing emotional support among sponsored refugees' social networks underscores the significance of these relationships in integration processes. Specifically, sponsored refugees reported how these relationships enable them to feel more confident and comfortable, develop relationships with the wider community and increase their willingness and ability to reciprocate, positively impacting their integration processes.

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### **List of abbreviations**

ACRS - Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme

ARAP - Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy

ASRs - Asylum Seekers and Refugees

CS - Community Sponsorship

CSV - Comma-separated values

DBS - Disclosure and Barring Service

ESOL - English for speakers of other languages

EU - European Union

EVW - European Volunteer Worker

FoI - Facilitators of Integration

GARs - Government-Assisted Refugees

GCSE - General Certificate of Secondary Education

GP - General Practitioner

GRSI - Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative

IDPs - Internally Displaced Persons

IOM - International Organization for Migration

IRO - International Refugee Organization

JWG - Joint Working Group for Refugees from Chile in Britain

LHA - Local Housing Allowance

NGOs - Non-Governmental Organisations

NHS - National Health Service

PSR - Private Sponsorship of Refugees

RAP - Resettlement Assistance Program

SPSS - Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

UKRS - UK Resettlement Scheme

UN - United Nations

UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

VCRS - Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme

VPRS - Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

In this study, I investigate and compare the social networks of refugees resettled through the Community Sponsorship scheme (CS) and the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS). The aim is to understand how different types of social relationships and the resources exchanged within social networks can support integration processes. The research is centred around three primary questions. Firstly, I explore the differences between the social networks of CS and VPRS resettled refugees. Secondly, I investigate the resources available and exchanged through various social relationships. Finally, I analyse how the presence or absence of different types of social relationships and networks' resources shape integration outcomes and processes. In the following section, I provide the contextual background that led to the development of this study.

### **1.1 Refugee resettlement: context and policies**

The outbreak of the civil war in Syria in 2011 forced millions of Syrian people to move in search of safety. In Europe, from 2014 to 2021, 21,652 people died while attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea (IOM, 2021), a route that was defined as the 'most dangerous' for migrants in 2016 (Robins, 2017: 64). The arrival of millions of individuals seeking asylum in Europe has contributed to reopening the debate on enhancing the protection and assistance for refugees, along with bolstering support for countries hosting refugees (UNHCR, 2018a). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) invited countries to offer safe places for Syrian refugees by implementing resettlement schemes, including family reunification and sponsorship programmes (UNHCR, 2014a).

In 2014, the British Government launched VPRS to resettle refugees fleeing the Syrian conflict in the UK. Under this scheme, refugees identified as vulnerable by UNHCR were referred to the Home Office (Wilkins, 2020). Once the Home Office agreed to accept them, VPRS refugees were relocated to local authorities that voluntarily pledged to support them, providing caseworker assistance for the first year (Wilkins, 2020). The decision to develop such a resettlement scheme was not immediate, but came about following advocacy and pressure from leading charitable organisations (Merrill and Grice, 2014). Some European countries, such as Germany and Ireland, had already pledged and declared their intention to implement resettlement programmes in 2013, while the UK refused to expand its resettlement capacity under the existing Gateway resettlement programme (UNHCR, 2013a).

In 2015, the image of the lifeless body of three-year-old Alan Kurdi, who drowned along with many others while crossing the Mediterranean Sea, garnered global attention. Charitable and faith-based organisations, but also single individuals, mobilised to pressure the British Government to take action and show their willingness to welcome refugees (Finch, 2015). The Government responded by extending VPRS with the commitment to resettle 20,000 refugees in five years (UNHCR, 2017) and announcing the launch of the CS scheme, involving private and community actors in the resettlement of refugees (*Independent*, 2015).

A key characteristic of sponsorship programmes is the involvement of private or community actors in supporting the resettlement and integration processes of refugees (Agatiello, 2022). The first sponsorship programme was launched in Canada and its history can be traced back to the end of the Second World War, but it was only in the 1970s, with the Southeast Asian crisis, that sponsorship was legally established (Lehr

and Dyck, 2020). Since then, approved organisations or groups of at least five people have sponsored the resettlement of more than 300,000 refugees, including at least 30,000 Syrian individuals between 2015 and 2020 (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2020).

In 2016, the Government of Canada, in partnership with UNHCR, the Open Society Foundations, the Giustra Foundation and the University of Ottawa, launched the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI) in order to share its experience and support with other countries wishing to develop sponsorship schemes for refugee resettlement (GRSI, n.d.). In 2019, the European Commission (2019, online) further offered Member States 'funding for fostering the integration of persons in need of protection through private sponsorship schemes'. In under a decade, nearly 20 countries have launched sponsorship programmes that directly involve private and community actors in supporting refugee resettlement (Zanzuchi et al., 2023).

In Europe, the UK led the development of resettlement-based programmes with the launch of CS in 2016. Through the scheme, sponsoring groups can submit a detailed resettlement plan to the Home Office and seek approval from local authorities to welcome a refugee family and support them for at least one year (HM Government, 2018a). In seven years since the scheme's initiation, 1,000 refugees have been sponsored across the UK (Reset, 2023). In 2018, the Home Office also granted £1 million to fund the organisation Reset, which aims to support community sponsorship groups and provide them with training (UK Visas and Immigration and the Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP, 2018). In 2020, the number of refugees sponsored through CS was made additional to the country's established national resettlement quota (Home Office, 2019). Sponsorship has also been employed to address the most recent crises,

such as the Ukraine war, with the development of the Homes for Ukraine scheme, although this initiative differs from CS in several ways, as I explain in the following chapter.

In Table 1, I present the differences between VPRS and CS programmes. However, the most striking difference between CS and VPRS is that sponsored refugees are assisted by local volunteer groups, who are often available at any time and can provide newcomers with emotional support and ad hoc services, such as childcare and transportation (Fratzke and Dorst, 2019). VPRS refugees, supported by local authorities, which voluntarily participate in the programme, are aided in their integration processes by a professional caseworker. Caseworkers usually assist several families simultaneously and are unable to provide the same level of support offered by community sponsorship groups (Reset, 2021a). In the UK, a full-time caseworker, for instance, typically supports 5 to 15 families (Home Office, 2023a), while in Canada, the average caseload for a caseworker comprises 70 refugee families (Fratzke and Dorst, 2019).

**Table 1: Differences between VPRS and CS (HM Government, 2018a; Home Office, 2020a)**

	VPRS	CS
Sponsored and supported by	Local authorities are required to assign a caseworker to refugee families	Community sponsorship group, groups of volunteers
Support duration	Local authorities receive five years of funding to support refugees, providing them with a caseworker for intensive assistance during the first year	One year

Accommodation	Local authorities provide accommodation for arriving refugees upon their arrival. There is no specific indication regarding the duration of the accommodation	Provide accommodation for at least the first two years
Funding	Local Authorities receive funding for five years (at least £20,520 per refugee, divided into: £8,520 for the first year, £5,000 for the second year, £3,700 for the third year, £2,300 for the fourth year and £1,000 for the fifth year)	CS groups must raise at least £9,000 per household

Evidence, mainly from Canada, often quoted to promote sponsorship programmes, suggests that sponsored refugees can achieve better integration outcomes because their relationships with sponsors offer emotional and tailored support (European Commission, 2018; Fratzke and Dorst, 2019). Additionally, through sponsors' networks, refugees can have more access to opportunities, such as employment (European Commission, 2018). However, there is a lack of comparative studies to suggest that sponsored refugees experience better integration achievements than refugees resettled through established resettlement programmes (Stansbury, 2021). A few comparative studies have been conducted in Canada, but they often fail to consider the social-demographic characteristics of refugees, which may explain differences in achieved integration outcomes (Stansbury, 2021). The Canadian Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) Programme also substantially differs from European sponsorship programmes as sponsors can directly name the refugees to resettle

(Stansbury, 2021). Therefore, while refugees are often sponsored by family members in Canada, in programmes such as CS and Humanitarian Corridors refugees and sponsors usually do not know each other (Reset, 2019a).

Additionally, some studies also found that integration processes can be challenging if CS groups are not adequately prepared to assist refugees and/or adopt a 'paternalistic approach', treating refugees more as children rather than as equal individuals (Smith et al., 2017; European Commission, 2018; Haugen et al., 2020). Establishing social connections between refugees and sponsors may not be sufficient to help refugees achieve economic independence or receive the needed emotional support (Phillimore et al., 2021). The positive impact of social interactions between refugees and members of the general population in integration thus depends on the quality of social relationships (Hynie, 2018). However, even in the broader literature on migration studies, there is little understanding of the formation and development of social relationships and how these shape integration processes (Bilecen et al., 2018).

To fill these knowledge gaps, I draw upon migration literature and social network analysis and compare the social networks of refugees resettled through VPRS and CS. The objective is to understand the interrelationship between different types of networks and the support they provide in the context of two distinct resettlement schemes, with a view to understanding networks' effect on integration processes. 'While many researchers acknowledge the influential role of network formation in refugee resettlement, most research does not specify the constraining or enabling impacts of these ties in the resettlement process' (Lamba, 2003: 48). Exploring how social networks and the support embedded and provided by social connections work, can help develop programmes and policies which maximise the social connections'

benefits and reduce risks. As an increasing number of countries are developing sponsorship programmes, the findings of my study are timely because 'little evidence is available about how well such programmes are performing, their impact on refugees and receiving communities, or how to invest smartly to scale up operations' (Beirens and Ahad, 2020: 3). In this study, I raise awareness about the dynamics of social networks, offering valuable insights for developing programmes and policies that can facilitate integration processes. Findings may also be of interest to non-governmental organisations (NGOs), charities and individuals working with refugees and migrants, and refugees themselves. Suggesting new ways of thinking about social connections, with this study, I aim to offer fresh perspectives that can inspire further research on socialisation and integration within the framework of our increasingly super-diverse society.

It must be noted that as sponsorship programmes are being developed worldwide, critiques are raised about the fairness of these schemes and their impact on the refugee protection system (Bond, 2021; D'Avino, 2022). Some authors have commented that, despite some basic level of assistance offered to sponsored and government-supported refugees, requiring sponsorship groups to develop an ad-hoc resettlement plan for their sponsored family means that CS refugees 'receive many additional tangible and intangible benefits that are simply not available to newcomers supported through a fully professionalized model' (Bond, 2021: 161). The difference in the support received can strengthen a two-tier system of international protection in which refugees receive unequal assistance depending on the way they enter the country (Karyotis et al., 2021). We must further acknowledge that, while developing sponsorship programmes, countries such as Canada and the UK are also

implementing policies to reduce the spontaneous arrivals of asylum-seekers on their territory, encouraging a distinction between people deserving and undeserving of international protection (Labman, 2011). 'Deserving' are said to be resettled refugees who wait patiently to be offered a solution, while 'undeserving' are those who 'jump the queue', entering a country without documents and accessing the asylum system (Labman, 2011). The 1951 Refugee Convention stipulates that the way a person enters the country should not be taken into account when processing asylum claims (UNHCR, 1951). However, the UK *Nationality and Borders Bill* introduced in July 2021 announced the implementation of restrictive and discriminatory measures for asylum-seekers and recognised refugees who arrived in the UK undocumented. The bill classifies refugees into two groups according to their entry into the country, with Group 2 refugees, who do not come directly to the UK from 'a country or territory where their life or freedom was threatened', having restricted or no rights to settle in the country, to access public funds and to apply for family reunification compared to Group 1 (Nationality and Borders Bill, 2021: 12). The so-called Borders Bill reinforces the distinction between deserving resettled refugees and undeserving refugees with an in-country asylum claim. Furthermore, the recently enacted *Illegal Migration Act 2023* (c. 37: 2) empowers the UK's Home Secretary to classify any asylum claims from individuals who entered the country undocumented as 'inadmissible', subjecting them to detention and removal to their home country or third countries.

Countries are not obliged to resettle refugees, but under the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, they have a legal obligation to consider each asylum application made inside their borders and provide protection for refugees, regardless of how they enter the country to seek asylum. There is a risk that governments use resettlement

and sponsorship schemes more as a tool of migration management, providing a safe place to just a few selected individuals, rather than a tool of international protection to offer solutions for people seeking refuge (Milner, 2003; D'Avino, 2022). Additionally, with states shifting their responsibility of providing refugee protection to ordinary people, 'volunteers become the "face of the state"' acting according to their own values and beliefs (Humphris, 2019: 95). In a time in which austerity has decreased the level of support provided by states and the hostile environment has limited the services for refugees, volunteers are left to decide if and to what extent some individuals need assistance, potentially basing their choices on their idea of 'deservingness' (Humphris, 2019). As a result, the sponsor-newcomer relationship and the integration processes can be negatively impacted if volunteers feel that refugees do not fit into sponsors' expected behaviours and values and do not embody the role of 'the Good Immigrant' (Shukla, 2019).

Despite criticisms, resettlement and sponsorship programmes are key solutions for refugees. Such schemes can not only offer protection to refugees, but they can facilitate burden- and responsibility-sharing amongst countries, demonstrating a collective commitment to addressing refugees' challenges (UNHCR, 2018a). A burden-sharing mechanism is essential as 76% of people in need of international protection 'are hosted in low- and middle-income countries' (UNHCR, 2023a: 2). Furthermore, in contrast to the other durable solutions of voluntary repatriation and local integration, resettlement stands out as the sole option that grants refugees the chance to relocate to Western countries, a prospect highly esteemed by refugees for its potential to enhance employment prospects and access to education opportunities (Long, 2014).

However, ‘the assumption that refugees will be better off after resettlement may indeed be true, but there are limited data’, even in countries with a long history of resettlement (Ahad et al., 2020: 3). Additionally, the enthusiasm for sponsorship programmes as a way to facilitate integration processes, bringing together newcomers and members of the hosting community, is at the moment not adequately supported by evidence showing to what extent such social connections can ease integration. The lack of comparative studies also does not clarify if and how sponsored refugees are better assisted than refugees resettled through programmes led by governmental institutions. My personal experience also contributed to my motivation to conduct this study. Firstly, as a migrant myself, I experienced the process of building a social network in a new country. Although I was a voluntary migrant and a European Union (EU) citizen arriving in the UK before Brexit, establishing relationships was not easy. In 2018, I became involved in CS by leading one of the pioneering sponsoring groups in the UK. This experience has opened up several opportunities for me, including establishing social connections with people in my area whom I had never connected with before, despite living in the same area for about three years. I was further impressed that according to a Twitter (now X) poll conducted by Reset (2020), the aspect most cherished by most volunteers within CS was making friends, thereby highlighting the importance of social connections. Through my experience as a CS group member and as a researcher coordinating evaluations on sponsoring programmes in six European countries, I have also learned that groups of volunteers have specific skills, experiences and knowledge that shape how they approach the sponsoring process and their relationship with refugee families. Therefore, I wonder how such diversity in sponsorship groups and the paucity of comparative studies amongst sponsored and local authority-supported

refugees can enable the claim that CS newcomers have more facilitated integration processes, thanks to their connections with members of the hosting population, compared to refugees resettled through programmes led by institutions. With this study, I aim to provide findings that can fill the knowledge gap on this topic and help policymakers as well as sponsors and refugees to create new opportunities for the future of community sponsorship and government-led resettlement programmes.

Having set out the context and the reasons behind this study, the following section clarifies some of the terms used before moving to present the aim and objectives of the research in detail.

## **1.2 Definition of terms**

### ***1.2.1 Forced migrants, refugees and resettled refugees***

According to the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Glossary on Migration (IOM: 2019: 77), 'forced migration' means 'a migratory movement which, although the drivers can be diverse, involves force, compulsion, or coercion'. The definition includes refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), asylum-seekers, victims of human trafficking, but also other groups of people such as 'environmental refugees' whose number is hardly assessed (Castles, 2003). In the global world, drawing a distinction between voluntary migrants and forced ones has become extremely challenging, especially considering the multitude of reasons, often overlapping, why people migrate. Nonetheless, the recognition of categories such as refugees as different from migrants remains essential to guarantee humanitarian protection and respect international law (Feller, 2005). The unique status of refugees is recognised legally by the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, which state that a person should be granted refugee status if:

owing to well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, [he] is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country (UNHCR, 1951: 14).

Although it can be arguable that the legal framework is essential in the distinction between refugees and voluntary migrants, it must also be acknowledged that such categorisations do not fully represent the situation in which many forced or voluntary migrants live. There can be cases in which people meet the requirements to be granted refugee status, but decide intentionally not to claim asylum and migrate using other legal or irregular pathways. On the other hand, sometimes the situation in which refugees and other forced migrants find themselves is very similar (Bakewell, 2011).

In this study, I focus on refugees who have had their legal status recognised and, in particular, on resettled refugees, those who have been transferred 'from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State which has agreed to admit them' (UNHCR, 2011: 3). However, it is recognised that the term 'refugee', as a legal category, excludes the experience of many individuals who are in conditions similar to those of refugees. Therefore, in the literature review of this study, I adopt the broader denomination of forced migrants, referring to the experience of individuals who migrate against their wishes. 'Forced migrants are one category in a much larger population of migrants who are moving for equally complex but essentially voluntary reasons' (Zetter, 2007: 179). What is then highly relevant is that social networks play a fundamental role in the processes of forced migration (Castles, 2003). Nevertheless, the active role of the single individual in building and using social networks is here recognised in order to avoid the creation of 'a collective identity built upon an externally

constructed fictive unity based on “refugeeness” that in many cases might not necessarily reflect the aims or aspirations of the groups being thus categorised’ (Piacentini, 2012: 9).

With the clarification of key terms used in the study, I move to outline the research aim and objectives in the following section.

### **1.2.2 *Sponsored and local authority-supported refugees***

Sponsorship programmes lack a clear definition and have been designed and operated differently in several countries (European Commission, 2018). Such programmes are often referred to as private or community sponsorship interchangeably. However, there are substantial differences between the two types. According to UNHCR, private sponsorship programmes are considered Complementary Pathways, involving public and private actors in selecting refugees for resettlement, while also being responsible for supporting the settlement processes (UNHCR, n.d.). Complementary Pathways include the Canadian PSR programme as well as Humanitarian Corridors, sponsorship programmes developed in Italy and France (Agatiello, 2022). CS programmes, such as the British one, are instead resettlement-based models, where refugees are selected and identified by UNHCR, although the number of sponsored refugees is often additional to countries’ national resettlement quotas (Agatiello, 2022). As both private and community sponsorship programmes involve the participation of public and private actors in welcoming and supporting refugees, I use the word sponsorship alone to refer to both types of initiative. However, with the focus being on the UK’s CS programme, I refer to participants in this study as CS refugees and only use the expression privately sponsored refugees in relationship to the Canadian PSR programme.

Additionally, in the limited comparative studies conducted in Canada, the experiences of privately sponsored refugees are often contrasted with those of Government-Assisted Refugees (GAR) who arrived in the country through traditional UNHCR resettlement programmes without the involvement of private and public actors similar to VPRS. Canadian GAR refugees receive financial support through the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP), which is directly managed by the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (Government of Canada, 2023). In VPRS, instead, a key role is played by local authorities rather than the national government. Local authorities are the main actors responsible for supporting refugees, although they receive government funding when they voluntarily decide to welcome refugees (Wilkins, 2020). Given such difference, I would refer to VPRS refugees as local authority-supported refugees, while GAR will be mainly used to refer to the Canadian case and, more generally, to indicate non-sponsored resettled refugees.

### **1.2.3 Integration**

In academic literature, integration is a highly contested concept, especially because it suggests 'immigrants *must* conform to the norms and values of the dominant majority in order to be accepted' (Penninx and Garcés-Mascreñas, 2016: 12). While some authors have recommended replacing integration with other words, such as settlement, it is still unclear if these alternatives can effectively circumvent the challenges and concerns that critics of integration have identified (Spencer, 2022). Additionally, integration is widely used in migration studies and resettlement policy (Grzymala-Kazłowska and Phillimore, 2018). For such reasons, I adopt the concept of integration or integration processes in this study, acknowledging it as comprising multi-dimensional, multi-directional, context-based and opportunity structures-dependent

processes where responsibilities are shared between actors, including both refugees and members of the host community (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019; Phillimore, 2021). A more detailed discussion of the concept of integration and how I understood it in this study is included in Chapter Four.

### **1.3 Aim and objectives**

With this study, I compare and explore the kind of social networks of refugees resettled in the UK through CS and VPRS, in order to understand the interrelationship between the established social connections and the support received through them, with a view to comprehend how combinations of social networks and support linked to social connections can impact integration processes. To achieve my aim, I have three objectives.

Objective 1: My first objective is to analyse and compare the kinds of social networks built by refugees resettled through CS and VPRS. This objective helps to explore the assumption behind the development of sponsorship programmes that, compared to local authority-supported newcomers, sponsored refugees are more likely to develop social connections with members of the wider community.

Objective 2: The second objective is to explore the relationship between different types of social connections and the resources accessible through these connections. For individuals such as refugees, who have been forcibly separated from their networks in their country of origin, 'social support networks' are particularly important as they are often 'one of the few resources available' (Lamba and Krahn, 2003: 336). However, I assume that the possession of a social network does not directly lead to benefits such as access and ownership of resources. Therefore, attention is paid to the distinction

between types of social connections and ‘what is exchanged through them’ (Phillimore 2012 in Strang et al., 2017: 211).

Objective 3: The final objective is to investigate how the combination and/or the absence of social networks and resources accessed through established social connections shape refugees’ integration. The starting point is that while having social connections is better than not having any social relationships (Cheung and Phillimore, 2013), not all social connections shape individuals’ experience positively. When looking at integration processes, the resources a refugee gains from being part of a social network can be helpful, for instance, in finding a job, which can be seen as a successful integration outcome. However, the employment that refugees secure through their social connections may be low-paid and poor quality, ultimately hindering integration processes rather than facilitating them. The implication is that the effects of social networks on migrants’ experience are connected to other factors, such as people’s personal experience and the context in which social relationships are developed (Garip, 2008). Especially for refugees, personal traits and contextual influences are significant, wherein the ‘perceived forcedness of migration and associated perils’ play a pivotal role in shaping integration processes (Echterhoff et al., 2020).

Given the wide recognition of the key role of social networks in integration (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019), it is essential to understand how these networks operate and how they can shape integration processes. My findings aim to provide evidence that would shed light on the relationship between the formation and development of social connections,

the provision of support, and successful integration, comparing the experience of refugees resettled through CS and VPRS.

#### **1.4 Structure of the thesis**

In Chapter Two, I delve into the concept of resettlement, offering an overview of its history and how policies have evolved to address specific situations. Focusing on the UK, I present resettlement programmes developed from the early 2000s to recent initiatives like VPRS. Additionally, I explore the context that led to the development of sponsorship programmes, providing detailed insights into the operations of the UK's CS scheme. Chapter Two concludes by delineating the context that led to the development of this study, the study's importance, and my personal interest in the topic.

In Chapter Three, I start by laying out the groundwork regarding the literature on social networks. I then shift the focus to social networks within the context of migration studies. I further present policies employing concepts like social capital and binary classifications of social connections based on national and ethnic criteria. I emphasise the benefits of adopting a social network analysis approach to understand migrants' social networks, stressing the need to consider the multifaceted dynamics of social interaction and migration processes.

In Chapter Four, I focus on integration, explaining its conceptualisation and operationalisation while presenting various models aiming to capture its complexity. I delve into the role of social networks in different domains of integration, drawing on studies focusing on resettled and sponsored refugees. This chapter concludes by introducing the conceptual framework guiding this study.

Subsequently, in Chapter Five, I describe the methodology adopted, provide the rationale for methodological choices, discuss ethical considerations, address challenges, and outline limitations. The chapter concludes with an introduction to the sample participating in this study.

In Chapters Six and Seven, I present my findings. In Chapter Six, I primarily focus on delineating differences identified between VPRS and CS refugees' social networks, detailing their types of relationships and the resources facilitated through these connections. Meanwhile, in Chapter Seven, I explore the impact of social networks on integration processes, examining how the combination of various connection types and resources influences these processes.

In Chapter Eight, I provide an overview of my findings, delving into a comprehensive discussion that directly addresses the three primary research questions of this study. Additionally, I acknowledge and address limitations pertaining to the quality and general applicability of the findings.

In the conclusion, Chapter Nine, I present the empirical, theoretical and methodological implications of my study. I offer suggestions for further research and conclude the thesis with recommendations aimed at policymakers, refugee-focused organisations, volunteers and refugees themselves.

## **CHAPTER 2: RESETTLEMENT AND SPONSORSHIP**

In this chapter, I provide a comprehensive exploration of resettlement, tracing its historical roots and evolution, particularly focusing on the UK's involvement in various resettlement programmes from the mid-20th century to the present day. I describe the development of schemes such as the Mandate Resettlement Scheme and the Gateway Protection Programme, as well as more recent initiatives like VPRS and CS, which constitute the primary focus of this study. In the chapter, I outline the context, criteria and challenges associated with each programme, emphasising the evolving nature of resettlement in response to global refugee emergencies, including the most recent events affecting people from Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine. Additionally, I discuss the emergence and potential impact of sponsorship programmes as a complementary approach to resettlement, highlighting the role of community involvement in supporting refugees and fostering positive integration outcomes. Ultimately, I explain how I aim to contribute to the discourse on offering third-country solutions and enhancing assistance for refugees by examining the interplay between policy, social networks and integration.

### **2.1 Resettlement**

Resettlement is defined by UNHCR as 'the selection and transfer of refugees from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State which has agreed to admit them – as refugees – with permanent residence status' (UNHCR, 2011: 3). Resettlement, along with voluntary repatriation and local integration, is one of the three UNHCR durable solutions for refugees (UNHCR, 2022). Although UNHCR states that all three solutions are non-hierarchical, but complementary, there have been tendencies to prefer one practice over another. Countries do not have a legal obligation

to offer resettlement places, with the development of resettlement programmes and associated criteria dependent on governments' voluntary decisions. Gallagher (1994) and Chimni (2004) point out that the state's preference for specific policies does not depend exclusively upon humanitarian factors, but rather on political reasons determined by the context and the actors involved. Through this brief history of resettlement, I point to the main events which led to the development of resettlement programmes, with a particular focus on the UK.

### ***2.1.1 Brief history of resettlement and resettlement programmes in the UK***

Resettlement was adopted as a solution to refugee situations even before the establishment of UNHCR in 1950. Between the two world wars, for instance, the International Office for Refugees, founded in 1930 by the League of Nations, helped the resettlement of refugees from Saar, a European territory, whose administration was granted to France as compensation for the First World War, but it was re-occupied by Nazi Germany following a referendum in 1935 (Hathaway, 1984).

With the end of the Second World War and 12 million refugees left in Europe (Connor, 2018), the International Refugee Organization (IRO) was established, resettling over one million refugees until the creation of UNHCR (UNHCR, 2019a). In the UK, the shortage of workers and the concern about a decreasing population, rather than humanitarian reasons, pushed the Labour Government to launch programmes to resettle displaced people (Stadulis, 1952). The first approved scheme was the Polish Resettlement Corps (1946), which aimed to support the settlement of Polish servicemen who could not return to their homeland at the end of the war. Focusing only on a specific group of refugees, this initiative allowed the resettlement of 150,000 men with their dependants, who received both economic and educational support and

a path to British citizenship (Blaszczyk, 2017). Successive resettlement schemes included the Balt Cygnet, for the recruitment of Baltic women for domestic work, and the Westward Ho, for all nationalities living in refugee camps in Europe. These last two programmes were part of a broader scheme firstly called the Displaced Persons Scheme, then renamed European Volunteer Worker (EVW), given the negative association attributed to the term 'displaced' (Kay and Miles, 1988: 217). The people accepted under EVW served to cover the shortage of labour, and their entry was restricted to the government's appointed employment (with a twelve months' probation period) and specific selection criteria were applied, including age restriction and physical fitness, alongside limited support for the workers' dependants and ambiguity on a possible right of settlement (Kay and Miles, 1988).

Subsequently, during the first period of the Cold War, resettlement was implemented on a case-by-case basis to address specific situations as they arose. Firstly, with the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, the UK developed a resettlement programme to help Hungarian refugees following the Soviet Union invasion the same year. The UK resettled 20,990 people who had found refuge in Austria; the work of selection was coordinated by the Home Office and the charity British Council for Aid to Refugees (now known as the Refugee Council), with volunteers supporting the reception of refugees (Taylor, 2016). The involvement of actors at all levels, from international organisations to local communities, and the institution of the post-war welfare state, which granted the newcomers almost the same rights as British citizens, were two notable aspects of the resettlement of Hungarian refugees in the UK. Resettled people were expected to show gratefulness by conforming to certain expectations and British values (Taylor, 2016).

During the 1970s, the British Government launched the first official resettlement programme for non-Europeans following the decision of the President of Uganda, Idi Amin, to expel all Asians from the country. Responding to UNHCR's call to support Asian people fleeing Uganda, the UK established the Uganda Resettlement Board in 1972. However, the scheme was exclusively open for British passport-holders and their dependants and did not aid the integration of newcomers into the country. The Uganda Resettlement Board was, in fact, mainly focused on the reception and the relocation of Asian people, assuming that self-sufficiency was reachable in a short time with very little assistance (Kuepper et al.,1976). Sixteen centres were created to receive the Ugandan Asians and a total of 28,608 arrived through the Uganda Resettlement Board (Asians from Uganda, 2012). Local authorities and voluntary organisations played an important role in housing, employment, language classes and health support, especially after the newcomers moved from their temporary accommodation (Kuepper et al.,1976).

Voluntary organisations were also key actors, if not essential, in the reception of Chileans in the UK after Pinochet's coup d'état in 1973. The resettlement of Chileans was hindered by the Tory Government, which feared the arrival of communists in the country (Ramirez Soto, 2014). In 1974, when the Labour Party came to power, 30,000 Chilean refugees were resettled in the UK thanks to the work of the Joint Working Group for Refugees from Chile in Britain (JWG) and other charitable organisations (López Zarzosa, 2016). The group of charities and volunteers, with little assistance from the Home Office, worked to support almost every aspect of the resettlement processes of Chileans, and to some little extent also Argentineans and Uruguayans,

from the arrival at the airport to dealing with physical and emotional distress (Miorelli and Piersanti, 2021).

The situation of Chileans was overshadowed by the arrival of another group of refugees in the UK, the Vietnamese. The end of the war in Vietnam in 1975 and the establishment of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in 1976 left more than 3 million people searching for refuge (UNHCR, 2019a), and more than 1,300,000 people were resettled (UNHCR, 2000). Although the UK's response to the problem was initially delayed, Margaret Thatcher's Government agreed on a resettlement quota of 10,000 refugees following the United Nations (UN) Meeting on Refugees and Displaced Persons in South-East Asia in 1979 (Travis, 2009). The total number of Vietnamese welcomed in the UK by the early 1990s was 24,000 (Barber, 2021). The British Government did not apply strict criteria in the selection of refugees and focused its policy on the dispersal of newcomers around the UK within three months of staying in temporary camps, where English classes and cultural orientation were provided (Robinson and Hale, 1989). Once again, the role of charities and volunteers was essential in the relocation and resettlement of Vietnamese refugees, but it did not come without negative consequences 'since the volunteer support groups suffered "compassion fatigue" and the responsibility fell on a few individuals who felt themselves overtaxed and used' (Robinson and Hale, 1989: 5).

The resettlement programme for Vietnamese refugees had many similarities with another quota scheme developed in the 1990s for Bosnian people after the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Through the Bosnian programme, the government aimed to implement a policy of clustering, dispersing refugees around the country after a short stay in reception centres, depending on the voluntary participation of local authorities

in providing housing (Robinson and Coleman, 2000). Moreover, it was the first time that an official public-private partnership was established as the government stipulated an agreement with the British Refugee Council and the British Red Cross to help refugees through different aspects of their resettlement processes, especially with respect to integration, where the state institutions' action was limited (van Selm, 2003).

The Indochinese crisis of the 1980s was a “turning point” in the history of resettlement (UNHCR, 2000). At the end of the 80s, the rise in the number of Vietnamese asylum-seekers in Western countries brought governments to question the genuineness of these refugees. They subsequently developed the Comprehensive Plan of Action in 1989, which ‘introduced the idea of regional screening and repatriation (including forced return of the screened-out)’, eroding the commitment for third-country resettlement (Robinson, 2004: 321). From being Western states’ preferred solution (UNHCR, 2006a), resettlement became the ‘least preferred solution to a refugee problem’ (UNHCR, 1995: no pagination) and was perceived as a pull factor, encouraging people to become refugees (UNHCR, 1995). The idea that resettlement was more part of the problem than of the solution was advanced (Labman, 2007; Moretti, 2015: 76). With the end of the cold war, UNHCR started rethinking its policy to lead the expansion of resettlement worldwide, given states’ criticism of the management of the Indo-Chinese crisis, which decreased the countries’ willingness to offer resettlement places for refugees (Garnier, 2014). As a result, in collaboration with UNHCR, the UK adopted new resettlement programmes that were less developed for ad hoc situations and have been in place until today: the Mandate Refugee scheme and the Gateway Protection Programme (Gateway).

### **2.1.2 The Mandate Resettlement Scheme**

The Mandate Resettlement Scheme, launched in 1995, 'has no quota, and will resettle refugees from anywhere in the world if they have been referred to the UK by UNHCR' (UNHCR, 2018b: 5). The term 'Mandate refugees' indicates 'Persons who are recognised as refugees by UNHCR acting under the authority of its Statute and relevant UN General Assembly resolutions' (UNHCR, 2006b: 444). Under this scheme, resettlement places are offered to refugees and their dependents who have a settled family member in the UK who can provide accommodation and support for the newcomers, while the Home Office only covers the travel and medical expenses (Wilkins, 2020). In the last ten years, less than three hundred refugees have been resettled in the UK under the Mandate scheme (Home Office, 2020b). Bianchini (2010) highlighted some issues that could explain the small number resettled through this programme: the lack of extensive explanation and a right of appeal when an application is refused, and the insufficient knowledge and readiness of the decision makers in taking into account refugees' requests. In addition, no particular dispositions are in place for vulnerable categories such as victims of violence or torture, women at risk and elderly persons (UNHCR, 2018b).

### **2.1.3 The Gateway Protection Programme**

The Gateway Protection Programme was established in 2004 and had an annual quota of 750 refugees (UNHCR, 2018b). This scheme was for refugees in a protracted situation, 'a long-lasting and intractable state of limbo. Their lives may not be at risk, but their basic rights and essential economic, social and psychological needs remain unfulfilled after years in exile' (UNHCR, 2004a: 1). In addition, to be considered under the protracted situation category, the refugee group needed to be of at least 25,000

people of the same nationality (UNHCR, 2016) and to be eligible for the Gateway scheme, a refugee must have spent at least five years in this state of limbo (UNHCR, 2018b). However, the estimated average time that refugees live in protracted situations was 26 years in 2015 (UNHCR, 2016). Once in the UK, resettled refugees under the Gateway Protection Programme were provided with assistance from IOM and local authorities for one year (Home Office, 2018). The resettled individuals were granted Indefinite Leave to Enter as refugees (like refugees resettled through Mandate) and were linked to a caseworker who helped them in their processes of integration and housing, with all the financial expenses covered by the central government (Home Office, 2018). Evaluations of the Gateway programme showed that the level of refugees' satisfaction depended on their relationship with caseworkers, and refugees expressed a need to receive more assistance and guidance both before their arrival in the country and after the post-arrival twelve months, in particular for accessing language classes and employment (Evans and Murray, 2009; Platts-Fowler and Robinson, 2011). In addition, Cramb and Hudek (2005) highlighted the necessity of a more explicit distinction of the roles and responsibilities amongst all the actors involved in the resettlement processes, from the Home Office to local authorities and charity organisations.

## **2.2 'Resettlement's Renaissance'**

At the beginning of the 2000s, the importance of resettlement was then reaffirmed in the UNHCR Global Consultations on International Protection and the Agenda for Protection, starting what has been defined as 'Resettlement's Renaissance' (Labman, 2007). With the aim to expand the number of countries offering resettlement programmes, the UN Agenda for Protection (UN General Assembly, 2002) highlighted

the burden-sharing mechanism that resettlement could offer to countries of first asylum, considering that even today 84% of all refugees are hosted in the world's poorest regions (CARE, 2019). In 2004, a Multilateral Framework of Understanding on Resettlement was developed in order to maximise resettlement's benefits not only for the resettled refugees, but also for the whole international community (UNHCR, 2003; UNHCR, 2004b). In the last 10 years, there has been a notable increase in the number of states providing resettlement schemes 'from 14 resettlement States in 2005 to 27 resettlement States worldwide in 2013' (UNHCR, 2013b: 6).

### ***2.2.1 The Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme***

In 2014, with more than 50 million people seeking refuge, UNHCR registered the highest number of forced displaced people globally since the Second World War (UNHCR, 2014b). The drastic increase in forced displacement was mainly caused by the war in Syria and conflicts in Africa (UNHCR, 2014b). Under pressure from national and international organisations, the British Government launched VPRS to resettle 'some of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees' (Deputy Prime Minister's Office et al., 2014: online). Without an initially established quota, the scheme targeted older Syrian people, disabled individuals and victims of torture, granting them Humanitarian Protection for five years (Wilkins, 2020). In September 2015, Prime Minister David Cameron pledged to resettle 20,000 refugees under VPRS in five years (HC Deb 7 September 2015). Subsequently, in 2017 the scheme was extended 'to make it accessible, regardless of nationality, to the most vulnerable refugees in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey who have fled the Syrian conflict', granting them refugee status and the possibility to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain without costs after five years (UNHCR, 2018b: 3). In 2016, the government also introduced the Vulnerable

Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS) to resettle 'children and their families of any nationality who are in either Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon or Turkey' (Wilkins, 2020: 15).

Under VPRS (and VCRS), before they arrived in the UK, refugees received 10 hours of cultural orientation usually delivered by IOM, which further arranged travel assistance (UNHCR, 2018b). Once in the UK, resettled individuals, usually family units, were supported by local authorities, which had voluntarily offered to participate in the scheme and satisfied the Home Office's requirements (LGA, 2016). The local authorities' decision to accept refugees under VPRS was based on the resettled families' needs, the availability of housing, school places and health services, and the absence of likelihood of disruption in the local community (UNHCR, 2017). An agreement was then arranged between the local authority and the Secretary of State for the Home Department, which provides five years of funding for an amount of less than £9,000 for each resettled individual for the first year, with additional costs for children's education, and a total of £10,000 per person across the remaining four years (Home Office, 2020a). The local authority was then responsible for achieving the 'statement of outcome' stated in the signed agreement, including welcoming the family at the airport, providing them with furnished accommodation, helping in registering with services such as Jobcentre, general practitioner (GP), and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes (Home Office, 2020a). Even if the appointed funding for the resettled family was for five years, clear objectives to assist newcomers were just stated for the refugees' first year in the UK, while for the remaining four years, the reduced financial support was granted to the local authority only 'to support Refugees on their journey towards integration and self-sufficiency' (Home Office, 2020a: 25).

Local authorities could establish partnerships with charitable or faith organisations and volunteers' groups to meet the needs of the resettled families (UNHCR, 2017).

By March 2020, 19,768 refugees had been resettled in the UK under the VPRS, falling short of the targeted 20,000 due to the effects of COVID-19 (Home Office, 2020c). Additional obstacles to the VPRS implementation further included the shortage of affordable accommodation for resettled families, worsened by the reduction of housing benefit introduced in 2016; inadequate information supplied to the refugees before they arrived in the UK; the lack of a comprehensive national integration policy and appropriate mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the scheme's outcomes (Bolt, 2018).

### ***2.2.2 The UK Resettlement Scheme***

In 2019, a new global resettlement scheme was announced to combine three existing programmes: VPRS, VCRS and the Gateway (Wilkins, 2020). The new programme, called the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), works in the same way as VPRS with refugee families supported for 12 months by a caseworker provided by the local authorities which voluntarily participate in the programme and receive a five-year fund to assist with the resettlement processes (Home Office, 2021a). The launch of UKRS was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic and it only started operating in 2021 (Home Office, 2021a). When first announced, UKRS had a quota of 5,000 refugees for the first year (Wilkins, 2020), but the latest guide on the scheme stated that the number of resettled refugees is contingent on forthcoming government funding pledges and local authorities' ability to assist refugees (Home Office, 2021a). Up until June 2023, 2,307 refugees had been resettled via UKRS (Home Office, 2023b).

### **2.2.3 The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme**

In the past three years, two other events led to the development of schemes to grant entry into the UK to people from Afghanistan and Ukraine. In the summer of 2021, with the Taliban taking over Afghanistan, millions of Afghans were forced to leave their homes. The dramatic images of Kabul airport crowded with people trying to leave Afghanistan, with some people losing their lives in the attempt, went viral. It was estimated that half of the population of Afghanistan was in need of assistance (UN, 2021). Operation Pitting and the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) were launched, to relocate to the UK British nationals and Afghans who had been working for the British Government in Afghanistan (Ministry of Defence, 2021a; Ministry of Defence, 2021b). In August 2021, the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) was announced with the aim to resettle 5,000 people from Afghanistan in the first year and a total of 20,000 in the further years (UK Visas and Immigration and Home Office, 2021). Community sponsorship groups were also allowed to sponsor the resettlement of Afghan refugees under ACRS (Reset, 2021b). In the last two years, about 9,700 people were resettled through ACRS, including 39 via CS (Home Office, 2023c).

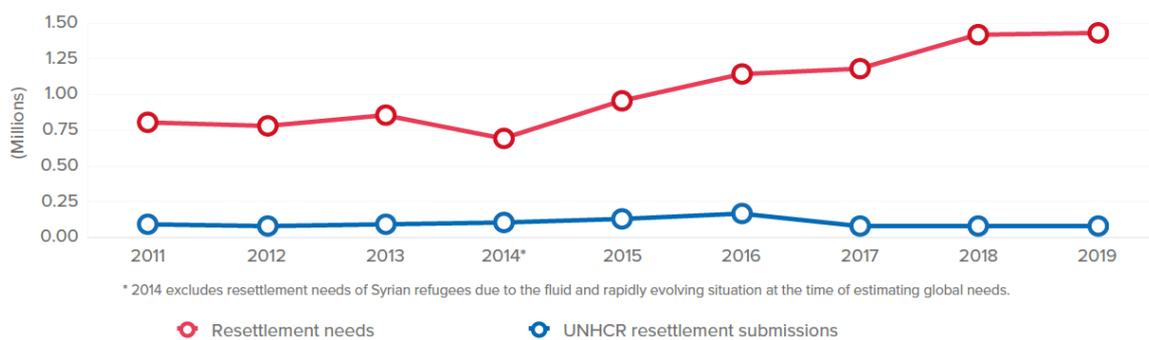
The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 triggered the development of another scheme, Homes for Ukraine, which I discuss in Section 2.4.

## **2.3 Refugee sponsoring programmes**

Despite the worldwide rise of resettlement programmes, the option to be resettled remains available only for a few refugees. The traditional resettlement countries - the USA, Canada and Australia - welcome more than 80 per cent of all resettled refugees (UNHCR, 2020). UNHCR (2019b: 27) estimates that given the resettlement places

offered by states and the number of displaced people, ‘it will take 18 years for the 1.4 million refugees to be resettled’. The gap between refugees in need of resettlement and those who accessed UNHCR resettlement solutions has been rising steeply since 2014 (UNHCR, 2020) (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Gap between refugees in need of being resettled and UNHCR resettlement submissions (UNHCR, 2020: 51)**



The COVID-19 pandemic aggravated the situation of forcibly displaced people, reducing the possibility of accessing solutions such as resettlement to a third country, with many countries closing their borders and suspending resettlement programmes (UNHCR, 2021). In 2020, there was a 69 per cent drop in resettled refugees compared to the prior year, with only 34,400 out of an estimated 1.4 million refugees in need of resettlement being able to access such programmes (UNHCR, 2021).

Following the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants in 2016, a Global Compact on Refugees was developed in 2018 to address the pressing global challenges related to forced displacement and the protection of refugees. Amongst its solutions for refugees, the Global Compact not only stated the necessity to expand resettlement programmes, but also to develop sponsorship programmes to increase refugees’ solutions (UNHCR, 2018a).

Although the participation of charitable and faith organisations and volunteers in helping refugees is not an entirely new phenomenon, the development of sponsorship programmes has increased private and public actors' responsibilities and participation in the field of refugees. Through sponsorship, groups of individuals are responsible for supporting refugees to achieve integration outcomes (Fratzke and Dorst, 2019). However, 'integration is a shared responsibility', wherein all actors, including governments, members of the hosting community and newcomers, are accountable (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019: 21).

With GRSI and drawing on the long history of sponsorship in Canada, sponsorship programmes have been developed in several countries in less than ten years, beginning from the UK's CS scheme in Europe.

### **2.3.1 The Community Sponsorship Scheme**

'Community sponsorship enables community groups to directly welcome and support a resettled family into their local community' (Department for International Development et al., 2023: online). The CS scheme was first announced by the then-Home Secretary Theresa May at the Conservative Party Conference in Manchester in October 2015 (*Independent*, 2015). Despite the civil society's enthusiasm, the first family resettled under the CS scheme arrived in the UK almost a year after the programme was first announced and was resettled in Lambeth with the support of the Archbishop of Canterbury and volunteers (Sherwood, 2016). Subsequently, the first official community group was established in Flixton in 2016 (Sponsor Refugees, 2021). Initially, the refugees resettled through CS were part of the eligible individuals under VPRS and VCRS and were 'granted refugee status with five years leave to remain' upon arrival in the UK (Wilkins, 2020: 9). With the development of UKRS and the end

of VPRS, in 2020 sponsored refugees became additional to the annual resettlement quota (Wilkins, 2020), with both CS and resettled refugees being granted five-years Indefinite Leave to Enter and the possibility to apply for British citizenship after (UNHCR, 2023b). Sponsoring groups in the UK are not involved in the refugee selection process as in the Canadian Private Sponsorship, but only individuals meeting the 1951 UN Convention definition of refugee and selected by UNHCR according to vulnerability criteria can access CS.

To sponsor refugees, a community group, registered as or in partnership with a charity, needs to have approval from the Home Office, showing it has adequate experience and resources to support the resettlement of a refugee family (HM Government, 2018a). The charity under which the group acts is called 'Lead Sponsor' and 'is ultimately accountable for the resettlement support provided by' sponsoring groups (HM Government, 2018b: 2). CS groups 'vary in size but are often made up of 5 to 20 members, some of whom might take on specialist roles' (HM Government, 2018b: 2). Local authorities are also involved in CS as they are, for instance, responsible for ensuring that an adequate safeguarding policy is in place and the accommodation provided by the group respects health and safety standards (Reset, 2019b). Apart from the limited tasks undertaken by the Lead Sponsors and local authorities, most of the work in CS is assigned to the community groups. The CS group, which can also comprise individuals who, even without knowing each other, come together solely for the purpose of the scheme, must find independent accommodation available for the sponsored family for at least two years. The accommodation's rent should be at the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate to enable refugee families to cover the cost, or sponsoring groups can provide financial support to pay for it (Home Office, 2022).

Then, to gain the Home Office's final approval, the community group has to raise at least £9,000 per householder and prepare a detailed resettlement plan to support the resettled family from their arrival at the airport through the end of the first year in the UK. Some of the responsibilities of the community group include supporting the family in accessing medical services, English classes, local schools for children and the Jobcentre (HM Government, 2018c).

A preliminary evaluation of the UK's CS indicated that 'Social connections are at the heart' of the scheme, shaping positively the experience of sponsored refugees who, supported by volunteers in several ways, are able to develop a wide social network (Phillimore et al., 2020: 21). However, the evaluation also found challenges, often shared by other resettled refugees, that can hinder integration processes (Phillimore et al., 2020). Therefore, it remains unclear to what extent 'the community-led approach will lead to positive integration outcomes for refugees and communities' as expected by the Home Office (2024: online), especially given the lack of comparative studies between the experience of sponsored refugees and other resettled refugees, such as VPRS.

## **2.4 Looking forwards**

The 2013 UNHCR report indicated that there were 45.2 million displaced people in the world (UNHCR, 2013c). Ten years later, this number has more than doubled (UNHCR, 2023a). These numbers are likely to increase even further given the rising number of natural disasters due to climate change, which predicts that 86 million people will migrate from Africa (d'Orsi, 2023) and 'because conflicts are often protracted, and durable solutions are lacking' (World Bank, 2023: 208). Increasing solutions for displaced people is therefore urgently needed.

Sponsorship programmes are seen as ‘a promising approach to refugee protection’ (Bond and Maniatis, 2021: 189). While increasing the number of places available to people in need of international protection, sponsoring can also help counter the divisive narratives surrounding refugees and foster more positive attitudes towards refugees and migrants (Valcárcel Silvela, 2019; Bond, 2021). By establishing relationships with refugees, CS groups can develop a better understanding of people’s differences and situations, and become more welcoming and accepting of diversity (Phillimore and Reyes, 2020a). As sponsors then share their experiences within their wider networks, a more positive narrative about refugees can grow amongst people who are not directly involved in sponsorship (More in Common, 2019 in Bond, 2021). These positive effects are significant given the widespread surge of negative attitudes towards migrants and refugees (Ambrosini and Schnyder von Wartensee, 2022).

A sponsoring approach has also recently been employed in the UK to address the needs of people from Ukraine following the Russian invasion. The Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine) differs substantially from CS as sponsors can establish contacts with the people they want to sponsor and host them in their homes for at least six months. Sponsored Ukrainians are also granted a 3-year visa to stay in the UK instead of Indefinite Leave to Entry (UK Visas and Immigration and Home Office, 2023). Although the Homes for Ukraine scheme allowed 133,400 people escaping the Ukraine war to arrive in the UK from March 2022 to September 2023 (Home Office and UK Visas and Immigration, 2023), it has also raised some concerns. Sponsored Ukrainians have experienced difficulties in accessing the healthcare system and employment opportunities (Poppleton et al., 2023; Galpin et al., 2023) and finding accommodation at the end of the six-month sponsorship (Machin, 2023),

leading to a surge in homelessness (Evans, 2023). Despite these challenges, data from the Office for National Statistics (2023) showed that 67% of sponsors reported building strong relationships with their guests and, for this reason, continued hosting them after the end of the sponsoring agreement, with 60% of respondents also keen to welcome other refugees in the future.

It is evident that sponsorship programmes can have a pivotal role in addressing refugee issues. Like resettlement, sponsorship can offer not only protection but also an opportunity for refugees to rebuild their lives, allowing them to migrate and access social and economic opportunities in Western countries (Long, 2014). However, it must be ensured that the increase in resettlement places does not undermine or limit the right to claim asylum, which is a legal obligation for countries signatories of the 1951 Refugee Convention (Labman, 2011). Sponsorship programmes must be developed in addition to other durable solutions, such as resettlement (Hashimoto, 2021). Additionally, the development and implementation of sponsorship and resettlement programmes require careful consideration to ensure that the needs of displaced people are addressed, including long-term integration (Ahad et al., 2020; Bond, 2021).

With this study, I aim to contribute to the debate on refugees' solutions and expand knowledge on how resettlement and sponsorship programmes can be improved by examining and comparing the interrelationships between policy, social networks and integration amongst VPRS and CS refugees.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I presented the history of refugee resettlement, showing that even before the establishment of UNHCR, some schemes allowed refugees to be relocated to a third country. However, the adoption of resettlement as a solution to the refugee

problem has been sporadic, regarding only determinate groups of refugees in specific historical and political contexts. A closer analysis of the UK's resettlement history reveals that the involvement of civil society members, particularly faith-based and charitable organisations, in supporting resettled refugees is not something entirely new. Nevertheless, with the introduction of the CS scheme, the whole responsibility for the resettlement of refugees is held by public and private actors who volunteer to welcome and support newcomers. There is a growing enthusiasm for developing sponsorship programmes both in the UK and in other countries. A part of this enthusiasm is based on the assumption that sponsored resettled refugees are better assisted than local authority-supported ones because they can benefit from the social relationships with members of the hosting population. However, there is insufficient evidence to confirm such an assumption. Before discussing the role of social connections in shaping refugees' integration, in the next chapter, I review the literature on social networks, tracing the history of the concept and focusing on how the notion of social networks has been developed in migration studies and in relation to forced migrants.

## **CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW**

I begin this chapter by tracing the historical evolution of the concept of social networks, with reference to key academic figures who have contributed to this field of research. I then shift the focus to social networks in the context of migration studies, examining the different approaches and theories that have been used to study the social relationships of migrants and refugees. Finally, I emphasise the advantages of employing social network analysis to capture the complexity of social relationships and migrant processes.

### **3.1 Social networks: history and definition**

The expression 'social network' has tended in recent times to be associated with the Internet and social networking sites like Facebook and X (formerly Twitter). However, sociability cannot be dissociated from being human, as human beings are and always have been essentially social animals (Aristotle, c.328 B.C.). The history of social networks thus extends far beyond the advent of the internet and has roots that can be traced 'back to the first years of humanity' (Aydin, 2018: 74). Considering the extensive historical depth and the diverse array of contributors to social network analysis, crafting a linear historical account of the field's development is challenging. Nonetheless, it is possible to discern three principal strands that have contributed significantly to the evolution of modern social network analysis (Scott, 2000).

A first strand is linked to Jacob L. Moreno, the founder of sociometry, a tool for investigating the dynamics within a group and visually representing relationships between people (Korom, 2015). Starting from the assumption that every human interaction impacts global society to some degree, Moreno (1937: 208) aimed to understand the structure of human society by revealing 'the affinities, attractions and

repulsions, operating between persons and persons and between persons and objects'. Moreno suggested that the identification of an individual's network cannot be separated entirely from the whole social structure in which he/she is placed as both actual and potential human interrelations can promote negative or positive feelings impacting the cooperation in a group (Moreno, 1937).

At almost the same time while Moreno was developing his work, another strand of research that significantly contributed to the development of social network analysis emerged independently at Harvard, pioneered by W. Lloyd Warner. In his ethnographic research, Warner moved the attention away from social networks as only kin relationships and focused on 'clique', 'the intimate informal group of friends with whom one participates', that, according to his studies, 'operates as an instrument of the social structure' in a more powerful way than family relationships (Warner, 1942 in Oppenheim, 1955: 228). Warner's work is characterised by strong attention to the notion of ethnicity, which brings him to theorise a vertical stratification of society according to ethnic and racial features, but he fails to capture the dynamic and the transformative power that encounters amongst different groups generate (Kivisto, 2005).

Warner's work was strongly influenced by Radcliffe-Brown, who is recognised as the first academic to employ the term 'network' referring to social relationships (Gilchrist, 2019), emphasising the social structure in which human beings are embedded (Radcliffe-Brown, 1940). Radcliffe-Brown's influence extended to the development of a third strand within the evolution of social network analysis, focusing on the significance of conflict and power, rather than cohesion, in social relationships (Scott, 2000). Conducting his work at Manchester University, Barnes (1954: 43) introduced

the term 'social network' while exploring the relationships that an individual has with his/her kin, friends and neighbours. Inspired also by Moreno's work (Freeman, 2004), Barnes (1954: 43) recognised that 'We can of course think of the whole of social life as generating a network' with points representing individuals or groups and lines indicating relationships between them.

Despite the work of the above authors and others who contributed to the development of social network analysis in the same years, the theorisation of a social system as a network of social relations attracted the interest of academic researchers only during the last years of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s (Wolfe, 1978). A turning point in the study of social networks was reached with the work of Harrison White (Aydin, 2018), who focused on the nature of social relations and their transformative capacity in human life (White, 1992 and Wilson 1987, 1996 in Pescosolido, 2007).

Subsequently, Granovetter (1973), White's student, expanded the social network field with the strength-of-weak-ties theory. Granovetter (1973) sought to conceptualise a bridge between micro-level interactions and macro-level patterns within social networks. He introduced a critical distinction between strong and weak ties, wherein a combination of factors such as the duration of the relationship, emotional depth, intimacy and the extent of reciprocal support determined the strength of a tie (Granovetter, 1973). Granovetter (1995: 148) then emphasised the power of weak ties in providing individuals with information that otherwise would be unavailable amongst strong ties because 'our acquaintances are less likely than our close friends to know one another, and more likely to move in circles different from and beyond our own'. The strength-of-weak-ties concept thus highlights not only social relationships' strength, but also their role in accessing information.

Inspired by Granovetter's work, Burt (1995) discussed how people can gain advantages from their social networks. He focused on the network's structure and the place an individual occupies within the network to explore how people can obtain rewarding opportunities. Burt (1995) concluded that the most significant network benefits are reached through what he called 'structural holes', relationships between individuals who have no overlapping social connections. He assumes that 'opinion and behaviour are more homogeneous *within* than *between* groups, so people connected across groups are more familiar with alternative ways of thinking and behaving' (Burt, 2004: 349-350).

However, establishing connections amongst diverse social groups appears to be challenging due to the principle of homophily, one of the most observed forms of social interaction and the basic assumption of many studies on social networks. Homophily refers to the inclination of similar people to create a relationship and 'implies that distance in terms of social characteristics translates into network distance' and therefore, the flow of information 'through networks will tend to be localized' (McPherson et al., 2001: 416). The principle of homophily has significant consequences on the dynamics of people in a network, which do not always produce positive outcomes. For instance, in political science, Fowler and Smirnov (2005: 17) show how voter turnout is affected by group homogeneity and 'local imitation in a social network inherently yields negative feedback dynamics that encourage turnout'.

Another seminal work in the field of social networks is the 'Small World Theory' developed by Travers and Milgram (1969). The authors conducted an experiment to answer the question "what is the probability that any two people, selected arbitrarily from a large population, such as that of the United States, will know each other?"

(Travers and Milgram, 1969: 425). They stated that the length of a chain, that is the number of intermediaries connecting any two people, is around five individuals (5.2 links) (Travers and Milgram, 1969). While Travers and Milgram's study demonstrates how each person can be linked to any other individual through six intermediaries - six degrees of separation - another study carried out by the anthropologist Dunbar (1993) shows that 'Typically, the total number of genuine person-to-person interactions is limited to around 150' (in Collier, 2013: 42). Taken together, these two studies show both the interconnectedness existing between individuals within society as well as the inherent limitations in the number of interpersonal connections an individual can effectively maintain.

Notably, Dunbar's observations remain pertinent in a digital context. Although it is arguable that technologies, especially the development of the Internet, have had a significant impact on our interpersonal relationships, the correlation between social networks and online social networking sites is mutual as 'technological means (...) entail the re-constituting of social ties and the re-drawing of social boundaries' (Licoppe and Smoreda, 2005: 317). Nevertheless, despite the high number of connections or 'friends' that people can have on Facebook, in reality, the maximum size of a person's network remains around 150 people because 'there is a general relationship between the size of the brain's neocortex and the size of the average social group' (Dunbar, 2011: 81).

The rise of social networking sites like Facebook has undoubtedly contributed to a growing interest in social connections, particularly within the framework of social network analysis tied to Putnam's (2000) work on social capital (Scott, 2017). The concept of social capital finds its foundational theorists in Bourdieu and Coleman

(Häuberer, 2011). Bourdieu (1986: 248) defines social capital as 'the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition'. In contrast, Coleman (1988) views social capital as a 'public good,' shifting the focus from the benefits that social capital provides solely to the rich and powerful elite, as emphasised by Bourdieu, to the potential advantages it can offer to disadvantaged groups (Field, 2004). Furthermore, Coleman (1988) distinguishes social capital from other forms of capital, such as human, financial and economic forms, which primarily benefit the individuals who own them.

Human capital, as described by Becker (1993: 11), encompasses 'activities that influence future monetary and psychic income by increasing the resources in people', including 'schooling, on-the-job training, medical care, migration, and searching for information about prices and incomes'. While an increase in social capital can result in a growth of human capital and vice versa, social capital is less visible than human capital as it is not personified in individuals' skills and knowledge but rather in their social relationships (Coleman, 1988). Financial capital, in contrast, is more tangible and measurable by the monetary wealth a person owns. Bourdieu's research (in Granovetter, 2018) on the role of social and human capital in students' achievements suggests that differences are observable not only in monetary investments made by parents (financial capital) to secure children's education but also in cultural capital investments. Bourdieu (1986: 18) argues that cultural capital can present in three different states: objectified, institutionalised and embodied; with the latter being the most crucial as accumulating embodied cultural capital 'implies a labor (sic) of inculcation and assimilation, costs time, time which must be invested personally by the

investor'. More importantly, the embodied cultural capital, identifiable in individuals' 'habitus', is shaped by the social environment, influencing how we see the world based on our social position (Shilling, 2003: 129), and thus is strictly linked to the concept of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). On the other hand, Putnam (1995: 664-665) argues that social capital, defined as 'features of social life - networks, norms, and trust - that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives', has a positive impact on the whole society rather than just on individuals or groups.

Putnam (2000) further distinguishes between two types of social capital: bonding and bridging. Bonding capital encompasses homogenous networks, such as relationships between people sharing some ethnicity, reinforcing exclusive identities, while bridging capital includes more heterogeneous groups (Putnam, 2000). Drawing on Granovetter's work (1973), Putnam (2000 in Torezani et al., 2008: 137) associates bonding capital with strong ties, aiding individuals in 'getting by', and bridging capital with weak ties, which support people in 'getting ahead' by 'achieving material success and upward social mobility'. A third type of social capital, linking social capital, was introduced by Szreter and Woolcock (2004: 655) to refer to 'relationships between people who are interacting across explicit, formal or institutionalized power or authority gradients in society'. While bridging social capital connects individuals with similar status and power, linking social capital extends across 'vertical' power disparities, emphasising that the quality and depth of connections with institutional representatives significantly impact individuals' welfare and well-being.

The increasing recognition of the potential benefits of social networks for both individuals and collectives, coupled with advancements in technology facilitating the synthesis of diverse social science data, has prompted the widespread use of social

network analysis across various fields. Social network analysis has been employed to track and find solutions to different problems, including unemployment (Calvó-Armengol and Jackson, 2004), poverty (McCabe et al., 2013), criminality (Faust and Tita, 2019) and migration (Cheong et al., 2007; Cheung and Phillimore, 2013). In medical studies, the analysis of social networks has been a valuable tool for understanding and limiting the spread of diseases and illnesses such as AIDS (Klov Dahl, 1985) and obesity (Bahr et al., 2009). More recently, network-based approaches have been employed in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and to find solutions to problems of loneliness and depression emerging from states' imposition of rules limiting people's social contacts (Block et al., 2020; Karaivanov, 2020). Results from these studies showed that the emergence of multiple solidarity groups during the COVID-19 pandemic (Chevée, 2021) created social networks at a community level, which have been crucial for 'the protection of the public, especially that of disadvantaged groups and high-risk workers' (Wan et al., 2020: 5).

Despite the proliferation of social network studies across various fields, which collectively contribute to enriching our understanding of how networks operate, we often fail to understand 'that the rapidly unfolding science of networks is uncovering phenomena that are far more exciting and revealing than the casual use of the word network could ever convey' (Barabási, 2002: 7). Social networks have a profound impact on most aspects of our lives, shaping how we think but also how we behave (Pescosolido, 2007). Some of the studies discussed in this section highlight that individuals' behaviours cannot be exclusively analysed as the result of rational choice, but an individual's sociability and the network within which people act must be taken into account. 'Individuals are neither puppets of the social structure nor purely rational,

calculating individuals. Individuals are “sociosyncratic”, both acting and reacting to the social networks in their environment’ (Elder, 1998 and Pescosolido, 1992 in Pescosolido 2007: 210). The primary challenge in social network studies stems from the fact that network effects can be subtle and not easily detected (Watts, 2004), as changes within a network can occur without altering its fundamental structure (Barabási, 2002 in MacKay, 2005). This complexity arises from the intricate and dynamic nature of networks.

Finally, to delve into the complexity of social networks, it is essential to provide a clear definition of the concept. Terms such as social networks, social relationships and social support are often used interchangeably in sociological studies and various other disciplines that investigate interactions amongst individuals (Vonneilich, 2022). In contrast to the social support perspective, where studies focus on ‘the quality or quantity of a person’s social ties’, the social network approach moves away from an individual-level focus and examines the role played by relationships (Smith and Christakis, 2008: 407). The term ‘social network’ encompasses not only the composition of social connections, such as the number of social relationships, but also their functional aspects (Ashida and Schafer, 2018), such as the availability of resources within a network and an individual’s capacity to access these resources (Vonneilich, 2022). The network perspective emphasises the intermediate level of social interactions amongst individuals (meso-level), while also acknowledging the importance of understanding individual actions (micro-level) and considering the broader social context and conditions (macro-level) (Klärner et al., 2022). A social network can then be defined as ‘a set of nodes (e.g., people) connected by a set of ties (e.g., relations of some sort)’ (Wellman, 1981 in Stokes, 1983: 142).

Having provided a brief history of social network analysis and its application across several disciplines, I delve into the literature on social networks within migration studies in the following section.

### **3.2 Social networks and Migration Studies**

Over the last 50 years, there has been a growing interest in social networks in migration studies as they are recognised as a valuable tool for understanding migration processes (Boyd, 1989). In early research, the role of social networks has been employed to explain why people migrate, with significant attention to migrants' networks of family and friends. Analysing the migration of Southern Italian people to America between 1885-1914, MacDonald and MacDonald (1964) claim that social relationships with people who had already emigrated facilitated the arrival of other migrants and their families, creating what the authors called 'chain migration'. The decision to migrate was then impacted by the flow of information that prospective immigrants received through their networks (MacDonald and MacDonald, 1964). 'Chain migration' has further been linked to the term 'anchor' and to the concept of 'diaspora'. The immigrants already present in a country are, for those who decide to migrate and especially for their family members, an anchor, who can provide help to settle into the host country. Although the literature has often denied the distinction between networks of friends and networks of relatives, both types of social networks are widely recognised as powerful in influencing decisions to migrate or not (Ritchey, 1976). Having relatives and friends in one's current location can serve as a deterrent to migration, while the absence of these connections can also encourage migration (Ritchey, 1976).

The migration trajectories of forced migrants are also significantly influenced by social networks. For instance, refugees in countries of first asylum may be reluctant to relocate to avoid disruptions within their social networks (Betts et al., 2020). Social connections provide vital information about policies and opportunities in potential destination areas (Griffiths et al., 2005; FitzGerald and Arar, 2018; Anyanzu and Dewet-Billings, 2022), with refugees tending to rely on information from trusted relationships when deciding where to migrate (Carlson et al., 2018; Dekker et al., 2018). The presence of family members and relatives as well as co-ethnic networks are thus recognised as playing a pivotal role in shaping refugee migration patterns (Najem and Faour, 2018; Rhoden, 2018).

Additionally, studies on migrants' social networks point out that networks not only play a vital role in migration decisions, but also a fundamental role in the settlement processes. The presence of these anchors shows 'the existence of an ongoing settlement process whereby migrants are progressively drawn into settled life abroad, a process that is (...) unaffected by the structural factors that originally led to the migration' (Massey, 1987: 1399). Therefore, irrespective of the reasons behind migration, social networks function as a crucial mechanism for migrants to establish themselves in a new country. For instance, Anderson (1974), analysing the lives of Portuguese immigrants in Toronto during 1969, finds that people did not just move to Canada because of the presence of family and friends, but they also used these relationships to access opportunities such as finding a job. Social networks are thus fundamental 'components and determinants of the migration process' (Meyer, 2001: 94).

The positive impact of social networks on refugees' settlement processes is also widely recognised, particularly in relation to economic outcomes and emotional well-being (Stevens, 2016; Greene et al., 2023). However, a significant body of research in this domain stems from studies conducted in high-income countries (Van Uden and Jongerden, 2021), predominantly focusing on relationships established by refugees after their migration (Scott, 2011; Borgatti et al., 2014). This focus leads to a gap in understanding the roles played by social relationships formed by refugees during prolonged periods of displacement, which can be crucial in navigating formal settlement processes and mitigating integration challenges in third countries (Palmgren, 2017; Kingsbury et al., 2018).

More recent studies on social networks in migration studies have been heavily shaped by the works of Granovetter (1973) and Putnam (2000, 2007). As mentioned in the previous section, Granovetter's (1973) theory of strength-of-weak-ties highlights the importance of acquaintance relationships rather than strong ties in providing people with benefits such as diversity of information. Such theorisation has led to the assumption that demographic diversity within social networks is more desirable than homogeneity, as bridging together people with different types of experience and knowledge is believed not only to produce a wide range of different information, but also to increase 'a group's capacity for creativity and effective action' (Reagans and Zuckerman, 2001: 512). Strongly linked to the debate on what types of social connections can bring more advantages to individuals and collectively, is Putnam's (2000, 2007) differentiation between relationships among similar individuals as bonding social capital and those among heterogeneous people as bridging social capital.

In numerous migration studies, the distinction between bonding/strong and bridging/weak connections has mainly been explored in terms of national and ethnic criteria, with bonding/strong networks characterised by ethnically or nationally homogeneous people and bridging/weak networks by ethnically and nationally diverse individuals (Yu, 2019; Lan, 2011). However, in recent years, there has been criticism of this approach, and some authors advocate shifting the focus of migration studies away from categorising social networks based on national and ethnic attributes to placing greater emphasis on the exchange of information and resources within these relationships (Ryan et al., 2008; Ryan, 2011). In the following section, I explore the criticisms directed at the social capital approach to social networks and binary classifications based only on national and ethnic criteria (such as bonding/bridging and weak/strong ties), elucidating how adopting a social networks approach can offer more advantages to the study of social relationships, particularly within the realm of migration studies.

### ***3.2.1 Rethinking social networks in Migration Studies***

The social capital approach to social networks has shaped a wide range of studies in social sciences (Pescosolido, 2007). In the previous section, I mentioned how the concept of social capital and the linked distinction between bonding and bridging has led several authors to explore social connections according to national and ethnic criteria, often comparing the composition of migrants' networks with those of non-migrants. For instance, in their studies on people living in the city of Chicago, Popielarz and Cserpes (2018) observed that migrants' networks are more racially/ethnically homogenous than those of the whole population. However, such mainly descriptive studies provide little or no explanation of the process of network formation and

development (Bilecen et al., 2018). This knowledge gap is especially pronounced when considering refugees, whose social networks undergo profound disruption and multiple rebuilds throughout their forced migration, often involving transiting through various places and engaging with diverse individuals in different contexts (Wells, 2011; Curry et al., 2018; Jops et al., 2019). Understanding the dynamics of migrants' and refugees' social networks thus requires delving beyond a simplistic depiction of bonding and bridging connections. Focusing solely on such a dichotomy, while looking at the ethnic and national characteristics within newcomers' networks, risks perpetuating misconceptions that migrants and refugees are resistant to integrating with the broader population and leading to the development of policies based on inaccurate representations of reality.

A compelling illustration of how an unquestioning adoption of the social capital concept, particularly emphasising the differentiation between bonding and bridging capital, can be used to shape policy discourse and result in debatable policies is the 'Cantle Report'. Following riots that occurred in England in 2001, the Home Secretary established a Ministerial Group on Public Order and Community Cohesion, along with a Review Team that produced a report signed by Ted Cantle. In his report, Cantle (2001: 72) adopted the term 'parallel lives' to describe how different ethnic communities live their lives without any contact between them, concluding that fostering community cohesion is necessary to 'encourage black and minority ethnic organisations to twin with mainstream organisations'.

Another UK Government report on social integration was produced by Louise Casey in 2016, reaffirming the lack of community cohesion, especially in areas with a high number of migrants, and the necessity of activities to promote integration through the

teaching of English language, British values and law (Casey, 2016). The underlying assumption seems to be in line with Putnam's claim that bridging capital, embedded in relationships amongst people of different communities, could facilitate integration as it 'can generate broader identities and reciprocity, whereas bonding social capital bolsters our narrower selves' (Putnam, 2000: 23). The Green Paper, 'Integrated Communities Strategy' (HM Government, 2018d: 12), indeed stresses the importance of 'meaningful social mixing' to increase trust and reduce prejudice between groups and, ultimately, to achieve integration.

It must be noted that in policy debates and implementations, such as the policies mentioned above, there is a significant focus on encouraging migrants and ethnic minorities to integrate and develop social relationships with members of the host community, often perceived as the dominant ethnic group, namely white British (Phillimore, 2021). The government's 'emphasis on the need for ethnic minorities, rather than the majority population, to bridge ethnic differences' reinforces the notion of integration as a unilateral process, where responsibility is not evenly distributed amongst all community members (Wessendorf, 2014: 6).

However, there is no statistical evidence that supports the view that ethnic minorities choose deliberately not to integrate, but rather 'it is the majority White populations that are the most isolated and least engaged with communities other than their own' (Finney and Simpson, 2009: 111). Indeed, research conducted in the UK suggests that 'British people', rather than migrants, are less inclined to mix (Wessendorf and Phillimore, 2019). In certain areas characterised by high demographic diversity, it is further noted that 'migrants are building relationships with the majority', but this majority does not

actually match the idea presented in policy discourse of a well-defined prevailing white British population (Wessendorf and Phillimore, 2019: 135).

In the world we live in today, there is a substantial and increasing diversity amongst social groups as well as between individuals *within* social groups, as Vertovec (2007) points out in his seminal work, where he adopts for the first time the word 'super-diversity'. Given such 'super-diversity', we should move away from a binary classification of social connections based upon ethnic/national differences amongst social groups, and 'we should consider how the assorted origins and experiences of migrants condition social relations with non-migrant Britons and with each other' (Vertovec, 2007: 1029).

Policy and practical discourses on social cohesion also do not take into account the precarious socio-economic situations in which migrants often find themselves and how their positions in the community impact their social relationships (Wessendorf, 2020). For instance, the reports by Cattle and Casey overlook the socio-economic disparities prevalent in these communities (McGhee, 2003) and divert attention 'from the fundamentally class-divided nature of society' (Levitas, 1998 in McGhee, 2003: 393). As suggested by McCabe et al. (2013: 18), people may be unable to use their social connections even if they 'are aware of the existence and potential of social networks, [because] they may lack the necessary contacts, time and resources' and they may be subjected to racism and/or prejudice. Government-proposed strategies focus on social exclusion as an issue as opposed to poverty; such a distinction contributes to framing exclusion as a condition rather than a process and 'presupposes that there is nothing inherently wrong with contemporary society as long as it is made more inclusive through government policies' (Fairclough, 2000: 65). In a study on Chin refugee

women in Delhi, Jops et al. (2019) highlight that while the presence of a social network provided initial support post-displacement, it was insufficient in addressing challenges such as poverty, discrimination and gender-based violence.

Moreover, categories of 'good' and 'bad' social capital are politically constructed on an ideological identity that separates 'we' from 'others', and 'policy initiatives seem to be based on the belief that community cohesion can be built by imposing a "majority" agenda on the "minority" communities' (Cheong et al., 2007: 42). Community and identity are politically constructed and employed to develop policies that not only underestimate the realities in which people live, but also blame minorities for the lack of community cohesion. Consequently, such policies overlook the shared responsibilities of all stakeholders — national and local governments, members of host communities and newcomers — to collectively foster integration processes (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019).

Additionally, the development and utilisation of social networks to access information among refugees and asylum seekers are heavily influenced by the causes of displacement and the specific contexts in which they interact (Arar, 2016; Palmgren, 2017). Refugees may strategically choose to hide their cultural identities to foster relationships within diverse ethnic communities or choose to connect exclusively with individuals from similar backgrounds due to insecurities linked to their status (Nam and Hong, 2023). For instance, Arar (2016) revealed that due to insecurities tied to their legal status, the absence of work permits and fears of repatriation to Iraq, Iraqi refugees in Jordan strategically refrain from forming social relationships, especially with individuals from their own ethnic group, preferring instead to rely on support from NGOs. Similarly, Campion (2018) suggests that refugees' approaches to forming social

relationships are primarily influenced by safety concerns rather than the potential for accessing opportunities like employment.

Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of migrants' social networks requires a more inclusive and nuanced approach that takes into account the multifaceted dynamics of migrants' and refugees' lives and the broader societal context in which social interactions and integration processes take place (Boyd, 1989).

### ***3.2.2 Shifting the focus on resources***

In the previous section, I discussed the advantages of utilising a social network analysis approach to understand the intricacies of network dynamics. I showed how scholars and government personnel have often produced incomplete and sometimes inaccurate analyses of migrants' social networks, producing oversimplified categorisations of social relationships. In this section, I delve into some studies that are leading a shift in paradigm towards a more complex analysis of the social networks of migrants and refugees.

Adopting an embeddedness approach, more focused on the characteristics of the networks, rather than the nature of the groups' members, an increasing number of studies on migration are showing the importance of different types of networks. Such studies have highlighted the importance of bonding/close connections, rather than just bridging/open connections, advancing the idea that 'close-knit groups, relationships of kinship, friendship and ethnicity can form dense networks of solidarity, cooperation and communal sanctions that enhance economic efficiency' producing positives consequences (Meagher, 2005: 220). In line with previous studies focused on diaspora and the concept of anchors previously mentioned (see MacDonald and MacDonald,

1964; Massey, 1987; Meyer, 2001), bonding connections can also help migrants find employment and housing opportunities (Flint and Robinson, 2008).

In relation to refugees, given the forced nature of migration, with the often traumatic experience of displacement disrupting their pre-existing social networks, and increasing challenges in developing new social relationships, it is often suggested that refugees could benefit from close types of social networks (Echterhoff et al., 2020), especially because they provide resources improving their mental health and wellbeing (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019). A more recent study on North Korean refugee women in South Korea, for instance, found that the presence of bonding connections can alleviate trauma and reduce suicide risks (Nam and Hong, 2023). Bonding relationships can also serve as the sole resource upon which refugees rely to establish bridging connections (Suter, 2021). Observers further noted that the adoption of policies, such as dispersal, where refugees and asylum seekers are placed in locations where they cannot find same-ethnic networks, has a negative impact on their settlement processes (Bhattacharyya et al., 2020). Similarly, an evaluation of CS in the UK shows that sponsored refugees are likely to feel isolated when they are resettled in places where they have no contact with ethnically similar people or no services (such as a mosque and halal shops for Muslim people) (Hassan and Phillimore, 2020).

Nevertheless, the existence of bonding connections can also yield adverse effects, as evidenced by studies that extend beyond the emphasis on migration and minority communities. Inside strong communities, network pressure can either force individuals to conform to the norms shared by the group or force them to leave (Gilchrist, 2019). For instance, individuals within a criminal organisation tend to adhere to the norms dictated by their network rather than conforming to broader social norms (Gilchrist,

2019). Consequently, 'closed community networks are associated with parochialism, fragmentation and communal violence' (Meagher, 2005: 221). However, like bonding, bridging connections are also not always beneficial, as is often assumed by policy debates (see previous section). For instance, bridging connections among criminal organisations, such as between the Italian and the Russian Mafia, would represent a problem rather than a benefit for social communities (Etzioni, 2001)

In migration studies, bonding connections are found to contribute to a phenomenon labelled 'ghettoization' (Ryan and Mulholland, 2014; Weinar and Klekowski Von Koppenfels, 2020), wherein refugees become isolated from the mainstream population (Gilhooly and Lee, 2017; Dagnelie et al., 2019; Bankston and Zhou, 2021). Some research also points out that the presence of family members appears to limit migrants' ability to build connections within the host community (Ohlendorf, 2015; Leszczensky, 2018). Refugees who lack familial ties in their settlement countries are more likely to form at least one intimate relationship with a non-relative and to have more connections with individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds (Sauer and Kraus, 2022). The problem is that scholars have often underestimated individuals' efforts and obligations as well as the necessity to have material and psychological resources in developing and maintaining social ties (Riley and Eckenrode, 1986; Hyun-soo Kim, 2016). Consequently, the negative effects of social networks, such as perpetuating disadvantages for individuals with limited connections, have often been disregarded, particularly concerning forced migrants (Arar, 2016; Van Uden and Jongerden, 2021). Assuming that migrants have automatic and valuable access to bonding communities underestimates the challenges migrants may face when settling in a new country (Ryan et al., 2008). More attention is thus needed to explore refugees' social networks,

considering that they could have a limited number of available resources which they can mobilise to develop social networks (Lamba and Krahn, 2003). For instance, the example offered by Wissink and Mazzucato (2018) on the changes in social networks that occurred to irregular migrants on the move shows how kin relationships can become a burden and forced migrants can feel the need to cut their family ties in order to deal with the challenges they face. Wellman and Wortley's (1990: 568) study reaches a similar conclusion, arguing that some people voluntarily 'avoid burdening network members with requests for support for fear of overstressing ties'.

Therefore, it must not be assumed that refugees tend to avoid maintaining and establishing relationships for fear of losing their few available resources; instead, they use their resources strategically 'to develop social networks which may form important buffers against migratory stress and aid access to resources that can further integration' (Phillimore et al., 2018: 216). Refugees, for instance, prioritising security over employment opportunities may be more inclined to develop relationships within co-ethnic groups, potentially accepting lower-quality jobs with limited chances for skill improvement (Campion, 2018). However, despite these compromises, being part of such networks provides vital social support, benefiting the mental and physical well-being of refugees adept at adapting to their career challenges (Campion, 2018). This perspective emphasises refugees as active agents in developing their social networks and highlights the importance of refugees' 'distinctive life histories, reasons for escape, and personal goals and needs' (Lamba and Krahn, 2003: 336). Social networks not only emerge from but also mould specific identities by promoting behaviours deemed appropriate within each network, wherein unique identity traits carry importance and give rise to corresponding expectations (Van Uden and Jongerden, 2021).

'Feelings of belonging do not result from mere group membership but rather from the *centrality* and *internalization* of one's group identity' (Echterhoff, 2020: 41). The analysis of social networks allows the recognition of both 'potential and actual migrants' places or positions in the matrix of multiple social and symbolic ties, and the content of ties connecting people who do not exist in singular forms' (Faist, 2000: 58). For example, the emerging of refugee community organisations in areas in which asylum-seekers are dispersed was found more impacted by the condition of struggle and exclusion experienced by asylum-seekers 'rather than the longer-term settlement needs of refugees' (Zetter et al., 2005: 176). As an individual migrates, his/her social network also moves and is transformed by interactions with new people, creating new categories with which people identify (Tilly, 1991). Therefore, in exploring the social networks more attention must be paid to the complex intersectionality of refugees' identities, including their ethnicity, gender, language, socioeconomic status and migration experiences (Karam et al., 2020). Not only individuals' ability to act, but also the perception that people have of themselves are shaped by the social *environment*, which is seen as a network of social connections that can either provide opportunities or impose limitations on people's actions (Klärner et al., 2022). Besides, each individual is part of multiple social groups and memberships in the groups are, in turn, shaped by different times and places (Barnes, 1954).

When it comes to forced migrants, it is crucial to pay special attention to these two aspects: time and place. The complexity arises not only from the dynamic nature of interactions and migration but also from the forced nature of migration. Traumatic experiences, which refugees frequently encounter, can result in a distortion of their time perspective, which, in turn, can hinder their ability to socialise (Walg et al., 2020).

According to Beiser and Hyman (1997: 1000), refugees are more prone 'to dissociate past, present, and future and to avoid past cognitions' as a coping strategy for adapting to post-migration life and reducing the risk of mental health issues. Therefore, refugees' 'experiences of time differentiate them from others around them, including people who share the same physical space' (Griffiths, 2014: 2004). Consequently, refugees' sense of belonging is a dynamic concept 'that lies at the intersection of different places and ideas of home' (Boer, 2015: 502).

An embeddedness approach, while valuable for understanding elements of belonging, can lead to an oversight of the broader structural contexts within which interactions occur (Phillimore, 2021). It is essential to recognise that refugees not only play a significant role in establishing and maintaining their social networks, but also that external factors shape these networks. Technology and social media platforms, for example, can create virtual spaces for socialisation, helping refugees maintain relationships with relatives and friends in their country of origin and develop connections and resources within the host country (Alencar, 2018). However, refugees' choices, such as where to engage in social interactions, are further shaped by factors such as resources and communication infrastructures (Wissink and Mazzucato, 2018), the host government's policies and practices and the perceptions of the host population (Nah, 2010; Alencar, 2018). For instance, forced migrants are often unable to choose their living location as, in many European countries, they are dispersed to areas on a no-choice basis. Resettled refugees, such as CS and VPRS refugees, also do not choose the location where they live but are placed near the community sponsorship groups' members or the local authority that offered to sponsor them.

Social ties cannot be imposed on people, but they emerge and are cultivated upon the reality in which members of the communities participate (Portes and Landolt, 2000). Governments 'cannot force people to like each other, fall in love, or enjoy time in each other's company – and then go the extra mile in terms of trust and regard', but they 'can bring people together, and ensure that the conditions exist for instrumental cooperation' (Field, 2004: 133). However, so far, little attention has been paid to these conditions, misrepresenting social relationships as occurring outside individuals' life contexts (Cheong et al., 2007). The lack of these studies indicates that a positive correlation between the presence of a social network and the benefits it can provide has often been assumed rather than investigated within its complexity (Rook, 1984). Studies based on the distinction between bonding and bridging are also inconclusive on what types of social networks can be more beneficial, as both types of connections can have advantages and disadvantages (Phillimore et al., 2022). However, there is now a shared understanding that different types of social networks can be beneficial, especially for refugees in the early stage of their integration processes (Cheung and Phillimore, 2013; 2014).

Applying a social network approach within this study, I aim to overcome some of the shortfalls presented in these two last sections, providing a more nuanced analysis of social network dynamics shaped by two different resettlement policies with a view to understanding network impacts on integration processes. However, delving into such exploration also necessitates a reflection on the concept of integration, a topic I explore in the next chapter.

### 3.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I reviewed some of the key literature on social networks, with an emphasis on migration studies, particularly in the context of forced migration. I underscored how networks influence migration decisions, settlement processes and integration into new societies. I highlighted critiques linked to the traditional social capital approach and its emphasis on bonding and bridging, explaining how policies based on such concepts often fail to understand the complexity of social interactions.

Three main aspects have emerged which inform this study:

- The formation and development of social networks are contingent upon multiple factors, arising from interactions at both the contextual and individual levels. Hence, a classification of networks solely based on ethnic and national attributes is insufficient to capture this complexity.
- Mere possession of a social network does not guarantee automatic access to resources. Therefore, it is essential to distinguish between the types of social connections and the resources that can potentially be exchanged within these connections.
- It cannot be assumed that the mere presence of social connections amongst individuals and groups generates solely positive outcomes; the negative effects of social networks must also be considered.

In discussing the different theories and approaches employed for the study of social networks, I stressed the benefits of social network analysis. As a meso-level theory, social network analysis links both macro-level theories of international migration, focused on structural factors beyond migration, and micro-level theories, based on individual decision-making, which alone are insufficient to explain and understand

migration (Faist, 2000). Adopting a social network analysis approach further allows us to pay more attention to the resource exchanges through social relationships, rather than solely describing individuals' attributes within a network. This distinction between types of relationships and resources is fundamental for understanding the extent to which CS, bringing together refugees and members of the host community, can be advantageous compared to the experiences of VPRS refugees.

As the benefits of social networks are often associated with integration outcomes, in the subsequent chapter, I examine the concept of integration and the relationship between social networks and the processes of integration.

## **CHAPTER 4: INTEGRATION, SOCIAL NETWORKS AND RESETTLEMENT POLICY**

The previous chapter provides a historical perspective on the significance of social networks, specifically within the context of forced migration. I underscore how social connections play a pivotal role in shaping the experiences of migrants and refugees, often serving as valuable resources to facilitate aspects of resettlement, including employment. However, it is essential to acknowledge that possessing a network can also entail disadvantages that may impede the processes of adapting to a new country. In this chapter, I examine the concept of integration and several models that help us understand integration processes. I then focus on the importance of social networks in the integration of resettled refugees, particularly within the context of the CS and VPRS resettlement schemes. Finally, I present a conceptual framework that serves as a comprehensive tool for analysing and interpreting the dynamics of refugee integration, with a specific emphasis on the role of social networks and the distinctions between the CS and VPRS resettlement programmes.

### **4.1 Conceptualising integration**

Integration, particularly in the context of migration, has been a continuous subject of debate dating back to the 1930s, with recent discussions focusing specifically on refugees (Threadgold and Court, 2005; Phillimore, 2021). However, despite extensive discourse, a shared definition of integration remains elusive (Threadgold and Court, 2005), as ‘meanings vary from country to country, change over time, and depend on the interests, values and perspectives of the people concerned’ (Castles et al., 2002: 112).

Historically, the discussions around integration primarily centred around assimilation, a process seeking to assimilate newcomers into a dominant cultural majority (Gordon, 1964), with the implied expectation that they abandon their native culture, language and traditions (Castles et al., 2022). In the 1990s, perspectives on assimilation underwent various transformations (Scholten et al., 2022). In his seminal work, the psychologist Berry (1997) distinguished integration from assimilation, recognising them as distinct outcomes (alongside separation and marginalisation), shaped by the level of interaction among different cultural groups. While assimilation involves adopting the dominant culture at the expense of one's original culture, integration occurs through a balance between preserving both personal and others' cultures (Berry, 1997). Separation involves avoiding interaction with the dominant culture, while marginalisation results from the absence of interaction and rejection by both the original and dominant cultures (Berry, 1997).

Critiques of Berry's work point out that the acculturation outcomes he describes do not reflect complex reality. For instance, when looking at marginalism 'the likelihood that a person will develop a cultural sense of self without drawing on either the heritage or receiving cultural contexts is likely low' (Schwartz et al., 2010: 4). Furthermore, comprehending the dynamics stemming from interactions among individuals from diverse cultures requires acknowledging the role played by factors at the individual level, such as language knowledge, the country of origin, gender, ethnicity, but also the context in which interactions take place (Schwartz et al., 2010).

Moreover, integration, linked to assimilation, has often been viewed 'as a unidirectional journey undertaken by immigrants — largely of cultural adaptation — into a culturally homogenous majority society' (Spencer, 2022: 220). The responsibility for integration

has traditionally fallen on the newcomers rather than acknowledging the host society's role (Spencer, 1997). However, a shift in theoretical discourse began in the 1950s, acknowledging the host community's importance in aiding the integration processes (Phillimore, 2021). Highlighting that integration processes depend on the interaction between immigrants and the host society, Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas (2016) further stress that the host society, particularly its institutions and responses to newcomers, holds significantly more power and influence than the immigrants themselves due to disparities in resources and authority. This power imbalance can hinder integration efforts, as noted by Ljujic et al.'s (2012) study on Roma people and by Kende et al. (2021: 391), who state that 'a prejudiced majority group can obstruct the integration efforts of the minority group'. Therefore, individuals cannot always choose the preferred acculturation strategies, but the pathway to follow can be imposed on them 'if perhaps the dominant population is reluctant to engage with new arrivals, or if policies are not in place to support integration, and institutions do not adapt to meet their needs' (Phillimore, 2011a: 580). Regarding education, for example, many countries lack policies to support the integration of refugees into higher education (Morrice, 2022). The traditional perception of integration solely as assimilation fails to consider its evolving nature within immigrant communities and the broader society, disregarding the complex dynamics and structural inequalities that impact integration outcomes (Spencer, 2022). Berry's acculturation model (1997) similarly falls short in comprehending how the integration environment's structure, including the presence or absence of socioeconomic opportunities, shapes the integration processes (Van Hieu, 2008).

While in policy terms, integration has been acknowledged as ‘a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents’ (Council of the European Union, 2004: 19), practical strategies still often concentrate on assisting migrants to integrate, with significant emphasis placed on measuring integration through employment, education, health and income outcomes (Grzymala-Kazłowska and Phillimore, 2018; Phillimore, 2021). Criticism has been directed at some migration studies for relying on limited empirical research and prioritising practical outcomes, which fail to capture the intricate complexity of integration processes (Fyvie et al., 2003; Spencer and Cooper, 2006; Grzymala-Kazłowska, 2015; Cheung and Phillimore, 2017). Often, these studies assume that integration is a linear process ‘along which the minority group is supposed to change almost completely while the majority culture is thought to remain the same’ (Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016: 12). By defining integration as ‘the process of becoming an accepted part of society’, Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas (2016: 14) stress the ongoing nature of integration processes rather than a fixed outcome with predetermined standards of acceptance, as often assumed by normative models.

With numerous scholars acknowledging the limitations of assimilation and integration, efforts have been made to address some of the primary criticisms. For instance, Bourhis et al. (1997) expanded on Berry's work by developing the Interactive Acculturation Model, which considers the role of state policies alongside newcomers. However, this model still presupposes the existence of a 'dominant culture' into which individuals are expected to integrate (Van Hieu, 2008; Phillimore, 2021). The complexities of integration are exacerbated by the prevalent ambiguity in discussions

regarding '*what* exactly refugees are expected to *integrate into* and *how*' (Threadgold and Court, 2005: 5).

As discussed previously in relationship to social networks, the diversification of population, *super-diversity*, has a transformative power not only on the demographic characteristics of the population, but also on the ways people live and interact (Vertovec, 2007). A binary framework based on national/ethnic criteria is thus unable to capture both network complexity and integration processes (Grzymala-Kazłowska and Phillimore, 2018). 'In a multicultural society marked by differences in culture, religion, class and social behaviour there cannot be just one mode of integration' (Castles et al., 2002: 114).

Additionally, traditional concepts of integration presuppose the permanent settlement of newcomers in a new country (Grzymala-Kazłowska and Phillimore, 2018). However, contemporary global migration patterns involve 'mixed migratory flows,' encompassing diverse reasons for migration and displaying a complex nature within the movement of people (Van Hear, 2009), contributing to 'a transformative "diversification of diversity"' (Vertovec, 2007: 1025). Urry (2000) emphasises that the intricate interconnections among diverse forms of movement, networks and intersecting diversities necessitate recognising 'society' as dynamic, comprising segmented entities with fluid and evolving boundaries. Integration efforts need to account for the evolving landscape where migrants often engage in spaces lacking a clear majority or, facilitated by technology, interact in settings without distinct physical boundaries (Grzymala-Kazłowska and Phillimore, 2018). Refugees' pre-migration experiences and individual characteristics must also be considered, because variations in education, age and gender have distinct impacts on integration processes, such as refugees' resources in acquiring

language skills, consequently influencing various aspects of their integration, including in domains like employment (Morrice et al., 2021). Government policies, adopting a one-size-fits-all model to support integration processes, neglect to account for these unique needs and backgrounds, resulting in inadequate support for certain individuals (Morrice, 2007).

Despite the extensive array of issues associated with the concept of integration, which extend beyond those mentioned earlier, it remains a pivotal idea shaping public policies and practical methodologies (Vertovec, 2020). Bommès (2012) underscores that the acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for various societal roles is crucial for migrants to access resources and opportunities. Disregarding integration overlooks its pivotal role in facilitating active participation across diverse facets of society, while opting for alternative terms raises uncertainties about effectively addressing identified criticisms and issues tied to the concept (Spencer, 2022). However, there is a more widespread consensus to view integration as:

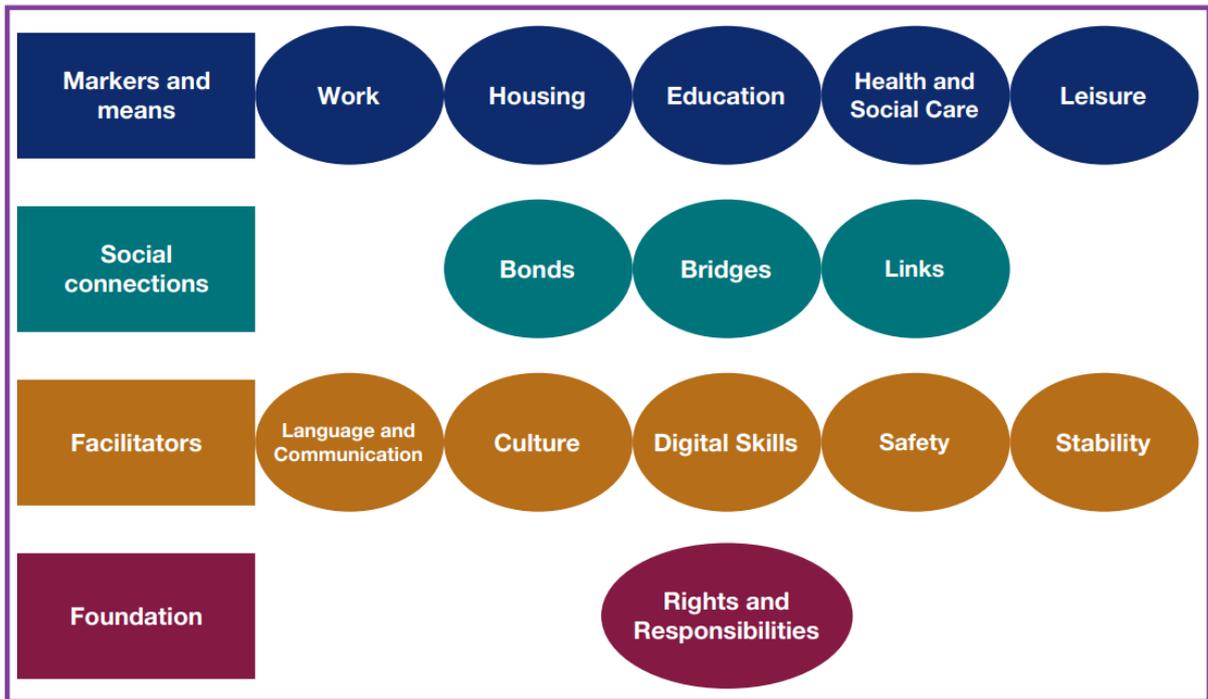
- Multi-dimensional, as it does not relate exclusively to the capacity and willingness of the newcomers and the whole population to adapt, but it also depends on ‘the economic, social, cultural, civil and political life of the country’ and individuals’ personal perceptions (ECRE, 1999 in Schibel et al., 2002: 4)
- Multi-directional, ‘involving adjustments by everyone in society’ and therefore, the responsibility is also shared amongst all the actors involved (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019: 11)

Recognising the multi-dimensionality and multi-directionality of integration processes and the role played by all the actors, both as individuals and as groups, means taking

into account the role of context rather than thinking about integration only in terms of an individual's outcomes (Phillimore, 2021).

To understand how successful integration is constructed, Ager and Strang (2008) developed a conceptual framework which was recently updated by the Home Office (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019). The latest Indicators of Integration (IoI) include four core headings and '14 key domains that evidence suggests are of central importance to integration' (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019: 15) (Figure 2). The framework highlights the importance of social connections, which is one of the main headings, and differentiates three types of social relations: bonds, relationships amongst homogeneous people; bridges, social relations between heterogeneous individuals; and links, connections between individuals and institutions (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019). The framework's authors recognise the importance of different types of social relationships, such as bonding and bridging, for integration processes, but state that the mere presence of social connections does not automatically result in accessing and owning resources (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019).

**Figure 2: Indicators of Integration (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019: 15)**

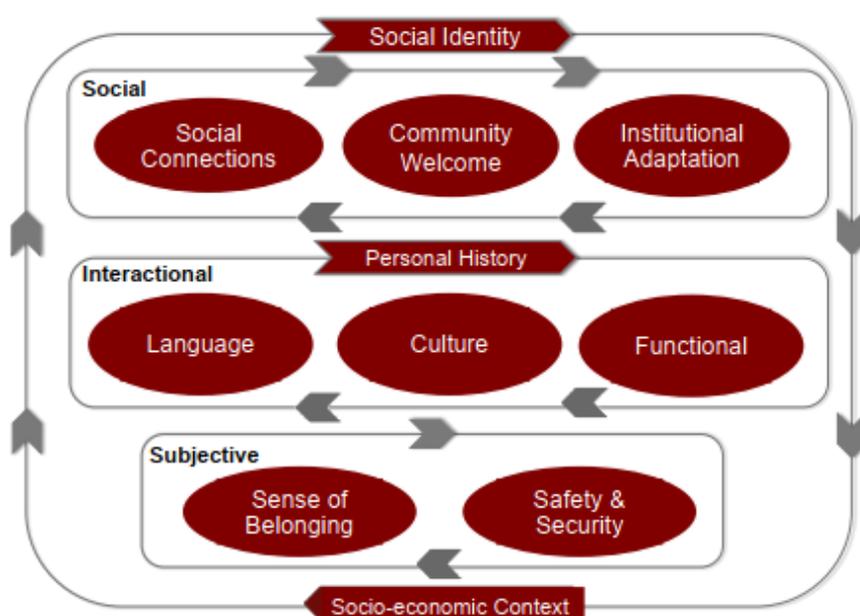


As observed by others, the assumption that heterogeneous relationships with the hosting community speed up the processes of integration and assimilation does not correspond to a proven cause-effect reaction; and bonding ties do not necessarily limit integration (Verdery et al., 2018; Vacca et al., 2018). Although social networks are recognised to play a pivotal role in integration, there are also some studies showing how social networks, including bridging and bonding types, can have negative consequences, as discussed in the previous chapter. With regards to resettled refugees, for instance, in the late 1950s, local people were disappointed because Hungarian refugees did not show as much appreciation as expected; resettled refugees were then marginalised and considered ‘undeserving’ of support (Taylor, 2016).

Recognising the crucial role of social networks in integration, the question arises: how can we assess whether social relationships lead to successful integration outcomes,

taking into account the context in which social interactions occur (Phillimore, 2021), and how ‘changes at one level can support changes at other levels’ (Hynie, 2018: 267)? For this purpose, a useful model is the Holistic Integration Model developed by Hynie et al. (2016), who reorganised some of the elements of Ager and Strang’s integration framework (2008) into three interconnected levels (Figure 3). One individual-level includes ‘subjective’ elements such as a sense of belonging and safety and security, while the other individual-level refers to more ‘objective’ features such as language, culture and access to health, housing, employment and education (‘functional integration’). The last level, instead, considers the social context, including the social connections, the ‘community welcome’, such as the host population’s perceptions towards refugees, and the ‘institutional adaptation’, such as the policies and practices adopted by the host state’s institutions and its representatives.

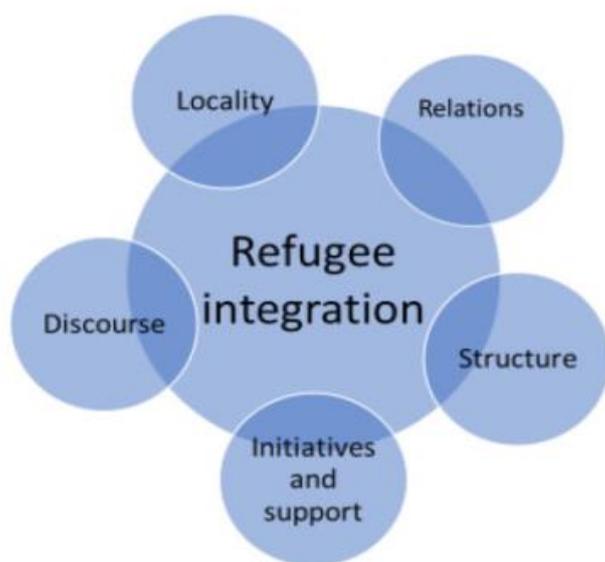
**Figure 3: Hynie et al.’s (2016: 38) Holistic Integration Model**



Another model that offers the opportunity to capture the multi-dimensionality and the multi-directionality of the integration processes is the Refugee-Integration-Opportunity

Structures, which identifies five *opportunity structures*, described as ‘sets of resources, arrangements and pathways that can facilitate or block integration through mechanisms such as inclusion, racism and xenophobia, policy and practice’ (Phillimore, 2021: 7) (Figure 4). These opportunity structures encompass *locality*, including all the resources embedded in the place where a refugee lives; media and political *discourse* which impact hosting society’s perceptions; *relations* that refugees develop at local and national levels; *structure* of the immigration system and its policies that shape the refugees’ life; and *initiatives and support* provided by local and national programmes such as CS (Phillimore, 2021).

**Figure 4: Phillimore’s (2021: 7) Refugee-Integration-Opportunity Structures**



However, despite the development of models helpful in capturing the multi-dimensionality and multi-directionality of integration processes, empirical studies adopting such models are limited, especially concerning forced migrants (Phillimore, 2021). More attention has been given to exploring integration by focusing on limited and more functional outcomes (Grzymala-Kazlowska and Phillimore, 2018). In the

following sections, I demonstrate how, by exploring different domains of integration, often individually, findings from these studies have underscored the role of social networks and highlighted the interconnections between various factors at the individual and contextual level in shaping integration outcomes. It is important to note that, in the upcoming sections, the domain of Rights and Responsibilities, as outlined in the Iol framework (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019), is not addressed separately. This omission is because CS and VPRS refugees are granted Indefinite Leave to Remain (UNHCR, 2023b), unlike the earlier stages of the schemes' implementation when they were granted refugee status. Nevertheless, the consequences of being granted a five-year refugee status instead of a more permanent status are mentioned in connection with other integration domains in the following sections.

## **4.2 Indicators of Integration and Social Networks**

### **4.2.1 Work**

While the literature on employment and migrants is extensive, few studies focus exclusively on refugees as a particular group (Martin et al., 2016). Research on refugee integration highlights the importance of finding a job not only as a means to increase financial resources, but also as a means to develop language and cultural knowledge and establish social relationships (Phillimore and Goodson, 2008a).

In tracing the history of resettlement in Chapter Two, I discussed how, after the Second World War, resettlement programmes such as EVW were also set up to overcome the shortage of workers that many countries faced, with displaced people offered resettlement upon their ability to work. However, this approach ceased in the 1970s when governments had to deal with economic depression and high unemployment rates. During the following years, countries started to develop policies that are still in

place today to limit asylum seekers' access to work, often with the justification that these restrictions would reduce the arrival of undocumented individuals (Bloch and Schuster, 2002). For example, in the early 2000s, the UK revoked the right to work for asylum seekers with the assumption that allowing them to enter the labour market would act as a 'pull factor' for further migration (Phillimore and Goodson, 2008b).

Resettlement policies have also undergone changes. In the same period, Canada, for instance, established distinct categories for refugees — those 'in urgent need for protection' and 'vulnerable' — expediting their resettlement without evaluating their capacity to 'become successfully established in Canada', a criterion mandated for other individuals seeking international protection (Krivenko, 2012: 591-592). Other countries, such as Australia and New Zealand, instead prioritise the resettlement of individuals who are 'job ready', meaning they have a job offer or significant work experience (Hirsch et al., 2019; Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, 2019). These policy decisions have implications for refugees themselves and the support they receive, consequently affecting opportunity structures. For instance, the job readiness criteria limit the possibility of resettlement for women who may not have had access to education and work in their home countries, potentially lacking the skills needed to secure a job (Hirsch et al., 2019).

Additionally, if resettlement policies aim to make refugees self-sufficient, often assuming that securing employment automatically results in successful integration outcomes, individuals assisting refugees in finding employment, such as caseworkers, may pressure refugees to accept low-wage labour, conform and avoid raising issues (Darrow, 2018). Such negative consequences are also highlighted in relation to sponsorship by Kaida et al. (2020), who found that volunteers' desire to see resettled

refugees become independent at the end of the sponsorship agreement may push newcomers to accept jobs which they are not qualified for or interested in, despite the strong desire of CS resettled refugees in the UK to work (Hassan and Phillimore, 2020). Despite the contrasts between the expectations of employment service providers and refugees, Torezani et al. (2008: 146) further argue that 'refugees saw the [employment] services as opportunities to develop their social networks'.

Several authors have highlighted the role of refugees' social networks in relation to employment outcomes. Potocky-Tripodi (2004), for instance, shows that 'Each additional friend in the social network slightly increased the odds of being employed', with refugees who have fewer contacts with their compatriots more likely to find a job than those who socialise primarily with their compatriots. However, there is also evidence demonstrating that having social connections with co-nationals can help refugees access employment (Cheung and Phillimore, 2014). Studies on the Canadian private sponsorship programme confirm Cheung and Phillimore's (2014) finding, observing that social bonds, relationships with people of the same ethnic background, remain sponsored refugees' first source for finding job advice and opportunities (Hyndman and Hynie, 2016; Hanley et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, the literature on sponsorship highlights the positive effects that the relationships between sponsors and refugees can have on employment outcomes. Volunteer networks can facilitate access to the labour market by connecting newcomers directly with potential employers and thereby bypassing standard recruitment processes (Villa, 2020). When compared to GAR, Canadian sponsored refugees appear to have better employment outcomes only in the short term, but this can be explained by the fact that they are more educated and qualified than their

counterparts when they first arrive in the country (Hyndman et al., 2017; Government of Canada, 2016). Both groups of resettled refugees also encounter challenges in having their qualifications and previous experiences recognised (Ritchie, 2018; Phillimore and Reyes, 2020b).

Despite studies emphasising the importance of social networks for refugees in accessing employment, 'an examination of refugees' labour force participation within contexts of constraining and enabling network structures has received scant attention in the literature' (Lamba, 2003: 48). By comparing the social networks that refugees build within the context of two specific resettlement policies in the UK – CS and VPRS - my findings can shed light on the impact that combinations of social relations and support have on their employment opportunities and work quality.

#### **4.2.2 Housing**

The provision of housing for resettled refugees is unquestionably a critical consideration for policymakers involved in resettlement. Firstly, having adequate accommodation is a fundamental aspect of 'the right to a standard of living', as stipulated by article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN General Assembly, 1948) and article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UN General Assembly, 1966). The 1951 Refugee Convention further states that:

As regards housing, the Contracting States, in so far as the matter is regulated by laws or regulations or is subject to the control of public authorities, shall accord to refugees lawfully staying in their territory treatment as favourable as possible and, in any event, not less favourable than that accorded to aliens generally in the same circumstances (UNHCR, 1951: 24).

It is worth noting that during the drafting of the Refugee Convention, the UK raised concerns about including the housing provision, due to the country's shortage of accommodation and the government's limited authority to ensure access to suitable housing (UNHCR, 1990). Given the scarcity of affordable housing, particularly social housing, accommodation has become a visible point of contention in public discourses on migration, with concerns raised by the white British population that housing allocation systems favour migrants at their expense, despite no evidence supporting such claims (Rutter and Latorre, 2009). In addition to the shortage of housing, which remains a significant challenge today, there are further issues in the UK and other countries which limit refugees' access to adequate accommodation. Some of the recognised problems include the high costs of renting privately, landlords' discrimination, and legal and administrative requirements that individuals with international protection often cannot fulfil (Mouzourakis et al., 2019). These obstacles can leave displaced people, who may already have their need for protection legally recognised, homeless or at risk of homelessness.

It is arguable that even if obligations and laws exist to guarantee refugees' access to housing, their implementation and everyday practices often hinder the realisation of this right (Bolzoni et al., 2015). Furthermore, having a home should not be simplistically interpreted as merely the physical presence of a roof over the head, but the accommodation's suitability, location, length of permanency, cleanliness and quality are also essential factors that impact refugees' ability to feel integrated (Phillimore and Goodson, 2008a).

Numerous studies provide evidence that social networks can assist refugees in finding accommodation (Sherrell and Immigrant Services Society of Surrey, 2009; Adam et

al., 2019). Nevertheless, the impact of social connections on refugee resettlement can have both positive and negative consequences, even when relationships are formed amongst individuals from the same country of origin (Ives et al., 2014). Therefore, it is essential to explore not only the nature of refugees' social connections but also the type of support these networks provide, as current resettlement policies adopt different approaches based on contrasting assumptions about the role of refugees' social networks. For example, Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and Finland employ a dispersal strategy, resettling refugees in areas with a low concentration of individuals from refugees' ethnic backgrounds, encouraging connections between refugees and diverse members of the host community (social bridges) (Bhattacharyya et al., 2020), while aiming to prevent overwhelming any single area with the responsibility of supporting refugees (Politowski and McGuinness, 2016). In contrast, Canada prefers to place refugees in proximity to each other, emphasising interactions within homogenous groups (social bonds) (Bhattacharyya et al., 2020). In the UK, refugees resettled through CS and VPRS are placed close to the local authority or to the community group responsible for supporting them. The Home Office's guidelines state that refugees resettled through VPRS need to be provided with an 'affordable and sustainable' accommodation for at least a year (Home Office, 2020a: 20). The impossibility of finding the required housing has led many local authorities to drop their initial offer to welcome refugees (Bolt, 2018). Some councils explicitly clarify that their participation in VPRS depends on the condition of not displacing local residents from social housing, and therefore, they rely on the private rental sector to accommodate refugees (Hammersmith and Fulham Refugees Welcome, n.d.). Community sponsorship groups, as well as local authorities, also try

to identify private landlords willing to rent a property at the LHA rate, but they also need to ensure that the tenancy agreement for the resettled family lasts for at least two years. In some cases, volunteering groups top up refugees' housing benefit payments if the allowance does not cover the entire rental cost (Fratzke and Dorst, 2019).

Nevertheless, studies conducted in Canada on both sponsored refugees and GAR show that despite resettlement policies prescribing that housing assistance is provided to refugees, resettled individuals can still face homelessness especially in the initial period (St Arnault and Merali, 2019). Homelessness may result from the lack of support or inadequate assistance from the responsible sponsor or caseworker (St Arnault and Merali, 2019). For instance, people supporting refugees with housing 'knew little of newcomers' experiences once in housing and of how their transnational migration realities might be intersecting with their housing experiences' (Ives et al., 2014: 9). Several studies have observed that sponsored refugees placed in rural areas can benefit from the presence of close-knit community networks (Haugen, 2019; ICMC Europe and Caritas, 2019; Villa, 2020). However, the absence of communities sharing the same ethnic background, often encountered in rural areas, can lead to refugees experiencing feelings of isolation and loneliness (Phillimore et al., 2020). Therefore, further longitudinal and comparative studies are required to comprehensively evaluate the actual influence of social connections and the support extended by these networks on the housing access opportunities of resettled refugees.

#### **4.2.3 Education**

Education is universally acknowledged as a 'public good' by the UN Human Rights Council Resolution (UN Human Rights Council, 2016: 3) and as a human right in various international agreements, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

(UN General Assembly, 1948) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UN General Assembly, 1966).

Concerning displaced people, the provision of quality education has only recently gained prominence in many Western countries, coinciding with what has been referred to as the 'refugee crisis,' marked by a significant influx of refugee children (Pastoor, 2016). Given the diverse nature of displaced people, integrating them into a new education system necessitates considering multiple factors, including their experiences before migration (Cerna, 2019). Amongst the challenges refugees, especially children, face when accessing education in host countries, language acquisition is a significant issue (Cerna, 2019). In addition to having their prior qualifications recognised, refugees also encounter difficulties in obtaining information about the new country's education system (Ritchie, 2018).

Furthermore, the previous learning experiences of displaced individuals are often disrupted, and the trauma associated with their past can affect their ability to engage in studies (Pastoor, 2016). Even when hosting countries acknowledge these issues and provide de facto access to education for many refugees, their needs are frequently inadequately supported, while 'schools often under-estimate the abilities and potential of many young refugees and asylum seekers and do not see higher education as a viable option for them' (Stevenson and Willott, 2007: 683).

In the UK, the two resettlement schemes, VPRS and CS, include the provision of language teaching for at least 8 hours per week for one year for each newcomer (HM Government, 2018b; Home Office, 2020a). Local authorities can claim additional funding for the provision of English courses and education both for resettled adults and children as well as for covering childcare costs, since lack of childcare can hinder

refugees' access to ESOL training (Home Office, 2020a). Research shows that as sponsorship groups often recognise ESOL classes as not sufficient or adequate, they tend to organise tailored and one-to-one sessions for sponsored refugees (Phillimore and Reyes, 2020b; Fratzke and Dorst, 2019). Additionally, community groups in the UK also establish contacts with local schools before the arrival of the family and collaborate with teachers to create appropriate materials that can facilitate refugee children's learning (Phillimore and Reyes, 2020c). These findings support the idea that both family social networks and informal social connections can assist refugees in accessing information about educational opportunities (Gold, 1993; Wells, 2011). However, it is also emphasised that networks can have negative consequences; for example, strong family social connections can deter refugee women from pursuing education (Lamba and Krahn, 2003).

Nevertheless, it can be argued that possessing a network can influence an individual's decision to engage in formal training and also creates 'powerful and effective opportunities for informal learning' (Field, 2005 in Morrice, 2007: 162). According to Morrice (2007: 158), rather than 'deliver a narrow and prescriptive curriculum which assumes refugees come to the UK with few or no skills and qualifications which can be nurtured and built upon', government policies should focus more on informal learning opportunities that bring together refugees and members of the whole population as they provide opportunities to build social and cultural capital. The comparative analysis of the social networks and support that resettled refugees received through CS and VPRS can help validate Morrice's claim, providing evidence of what facilitates and hinders refugees' education.

Furthermore, several studies confirm that ‘education is possibly one of the factors with the strongest influence on network diversification’, with highly educated people having broader and more varied social connections than less educated people (Dahinden, 2011: 51). Although a study conducted in the UK does not find that highly educated refugees have more social connections, these refugees are more inclined to access resources using their networks (Cheung and Phillimore, 2013). Therefore, when comparing the social connections of resettled refugees, it is important to consider individual characteristics, such as the level of education, as they can shape social connections and access to resources embedded in social networks and, ultimately, the processes of integration.

#### **4.2.4 Health and Social Care**

The right to health, like housing, is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN General Assembly, 1948) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UN General Assembly, 1966). Importantly:

Health is seen not merely as the absence of illness or disease but rather as a means for everyday life in which people realize aspirations, satisfy needs and adapt and cope with their personal environment in order to achieve physical, social and mental wellbeing (World Health Organization, 2018: vi).

Therefore, all individuals should have access to medical care, regardless of their immigration status (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2019). Nevertheless, several barriers hinder people’s access to healthcare, with specific groups, such as forced migrants, facing particular disadvantages (Baeten et al., 2018). In the UK, identified obstacles for newcomers include limited language and health system knowledge, poverty, and lack of cultural awareness amongst medical staff (Johnson,

2006 in Gidley and Jayaweera, 2010). Forced migrants may suffer from physical illnesses like anyone else, but due to their experiences, they are more prone to psychological and mental health conditions (Burnett and Ndovi, 2018). Additionally, 'psychological distress results not only from migration and challenging experiences but also from the social circumstances in the UK such as social support, housing and employment' and therefore, these factors need to be taken seriously into account to support refugees' health (Palmer and Ward, 2007: 210).

The role of social networks is particularly linked to refugees' health. Evidence shows that, albeit some communities see mental issues as a stigma, strong social connections with members of the same ethnic background and with sponsorship members can encourage refugees to seek help (HM Government, 2018c; Kim et al., 2021). Studies on refugee resettlement in Canada further reveal that although sponsored refugees and GAR face similar barriers when accessing health systems (Woodgate et al., 2017), sponsored individuals are more likely to have their healthcare needs recognised and assessed compared to those assisted by case workers (Oda et al. 2019).

Refugees resettled in the UK are subjected to a health screening by IOM, which then provides some information to the local authorities and sponsorship groups (UNHCR, 2018b). However, the data collected by IOM does not seem to be sufficiently detailed to advise sponsors on how to support refugee health issues (Bolt, 2018). Once in the UK, people resettled through VPRS and CS are then helped with GP registration and accessing healthcare specialists (HM Government, 2018b; Home Office, 2020a). Despite some challenges, such as finding Arabic-speaking counsellors, the CS group's presence was found crucial in helping refugees navigate the UK's health system, with

volunteers investing significant effort in connecting with specialists and accompanying newcomers to medical appointments (Phillimore et al., 2020). The presence of a social network can further facilitate refugees' access to healthcare when services are not directly available (Villa, 2020). 'Improving human health requires both the entitlement to appropriate "material" needs and the capability to benefit from it, which is so often mediated through social relationships' (Szreter and Woolcock; 2004: 662).

Refugees' well-being is also influenced negatively by the lack of contact with family members (Cheung and Phillimore, 2013; Campbell et al., 2018). The impossibility of being reunited with their relatives has distressing consequences for refugees and limits their ability to integrate (Phillimore et al., 2020). Unlike the Canadian sponsorship programme, CS in the UK does not allow sponsors to 'name' the refugees that they would like to resettle, reducing the possibilities for family reunification. The lack of contact with relatives significantly affects women, although the prevalence of female volunteers in sponsorship groups can reduce their loneliness, offering more opportunities to socialise compared to male refugees (Phillimore et al., 2020). Loneliness is particularly experienced by refugees living in less diverse and rural areas, despite the contacts that refugees establish with volunteers (Phillimore et al., 2020).

In conclusion, it can be argued that 'social connections are important aspects of a refugee's lived experience and that seeking to understand their structure and composition can be useful in crafting sound programs and policies' that better support refugees' health (Kingsbury, 2017). However, attention is also needed regarding the type of support such networks provide and the context that can facilitate or hinder the development of social connections.

#### **4.2.5 Leisure**

Leisure activities were not present in Ager and Strang's integration framework (2008). However, their significance has been recognised in the more recent Iol, which states that:

Leisure activities can help individuals learn more about the culture of a country or local area, and can provide opportunities to establish social connections, practice language skills and improve overall individual health and wellbeing (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019: 38).

In migration studies, research on leisure shows that the benefits of leisure activities are multiple, such as helping newcomers deal with the loss of social networks (Stack and Iwasaki, 2009). By engaging in leisure activities, refugees can establish social relationships that can potentially increase their social and cultural capital (Long et al., 2014). However, migrants are less involved in recreational activities compared to the host population (Horolets, 2012). Some of the obstacles refugees face in participating in leisure activities include a poor understanding of the language, limited economic means, discrimination and time constraints due to their focus on settling in a new country and achieving independence within a short timeframe (Horolets, 2012; Murad and Versey, 2021).

Amongst resettled refugees, places of worship and schools seem to play a pivotal role in their development of social connections and engagement in leisure activities (Hurly, 2019; Murad and Versey, 2021; GRSI, 2020). Some countries, such as Australia and Canada, have created specific programmes that offer resettled refugees the opportunity to socialise and learn new skills, such as driving and sewing (Fozdar and Banki, 2017; GRSI, 2020). The Home Office's (2020) guidelines for local authorities

interested in resettling refugees through VPRS only mention that informal language training can be provided through leisure activities, but no specific recommendations are offered on how to encourage refugees' participation in recreational events. Research on CS, instead, reveals that sponsoring groups provide resettled individuals with opportunities to engage in recreational activities, such as walking in parks or in city centres, which are highly valued by newcomers (Hassan and Phillimore, 2020). A study conducted on Glasgow Football Club, a team that includes displaced people, Scottish nationals and other immigrants, further identifies a positive correlation between sports and the development of social networks and capital, facilitating integration as 'where the team provides an international social space in which participants feel "at home" due to its diversity' (Booth et al., 2014: 8). Having the opportunities to establish social connections during leisure activities is 'important not only to gain social benefits through the act of socialising, but to also help them [refugees] overcome the challenge of learning about new culture' (Stack and Iwasaki, 2009: 251). It is therefore important to explore how resettlement programmes facilitate or hinder the refugees' participation in leisure activities and the development of social connections through these activities (Murad and Versey, 2021), and consequently, integration processes.

#### **4.2.6 Language**

Since the beginning of the 2000s and with the development of the *Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU*, the knowledge of the hosting country's language has become mandatory for migrants (Neureiter, 2019). Countries such as France, Germany, Greece, Italy and the United Kingdom enforced more stringent language and civic education standards for migrants, although these criteria

differed significantly among countries in terms of intensity, implementation stages and consequences for non-adherence (Neureiter, 2019: 2780).

The guidance for sponsors and local authorities participating in CS and VPRS includes provisions for both formal and informal language training for resettled refugees (Home Office, 2020a; HM Government, 2018b). Formal training refers to ESOL classes, which 'are funded by central government and are free to all resettled refugees' during the initial twelve months in the UK (Morrice et al., 2021: 2). Informal language training, on the other hand, is not provided by qualified teachers and does not follow a specific curriculum (Home Office, 2020a).

Bach and Carroll-Seguin (1986: 387) 'suspect that the most important reason why English language proficiency is considered so essential to refugees' progress is that it is one of the few background characteristics or skills that a resettlement program can influence'. Nevertheless, Bach and Carroll-Seguin (1986) further recognise that knowing the host country's language does not affect all refugees in the same way. For instance, if we look at the advantages of language proficiency and the possibility of finding employment, other factors can affect refugees' employment outcomes, such as 'the availability and organization of local social networks and the conditions of the local labor [sic] market' (Bach and Carroll-Seguin, 1986: 402). At the same time, while strongly limiting their employment choices, the lack of language proficiency does not entirely exclude refugees from obtaining a job (Tollefson, 1985).

Therefore, it is arguable that language 'ability [is] a necessary but not sufficient condition for social and cultural assimilation' (Akresh et al., 2014: 207). The interconnection between language proficiency and other factors, such as social networks, should be recognised. Social connections, rather than knowledge of the

English language, can be, for instance, more relevant in helping refugees obtain a permanent job, but such employment opportunities are likely to be low-skilled (Cheung and Phillimore, 2014). However, language competency plays a crucial role in developing a broad social network (Cheung and Phillimore, 2014). Refugees with a higher number of contacts from the host country also have more 'opportunities to practice and refine their English-language skills and to increase the range of knowledge and other skills required to interact successfully in mainstream society' (Lamba and Krahn, 2003: 347).

The relationship between language competence and social interaction is thus two-way, but also interrelated with other factors of the integration processes. For example, confirming the positive correlation between refugees' language proficiency and their host interpersonal relationships, Cheah et al. (2011) also find that language competence positively impacts refugees' usage of the hosting country's media, their perception of fitting in a new culture and their mental health. Furthermore, knowing the language of the host country does not prevent refugees from establishing relationships with people from the same ethnic background (Cheah et al., 2011).

While the importance of acquiring the language of the host country is widely recognised, not all newcomers have equal access to language training. This disparity is often due to the limitations 'of local resettlement agencies, community resources, and knowledge of refugees' specific needs' (Ives, 2007). Additionally, the language training provided to refugees is often limited to a low level and therefore, 'it is questionable how ASRs [asylum seekers and refugees] in the UK will achieve their goals to communicate, gain work or access higher education when higher-level provision is so restricted' (Phillimore, 2011b: 326). Establishing social relationships

with members of the hosting population can be a solution. However, an in-depth study of the level of support social networks provide is necessary to understand the extent of networks' benefits in a specific socio-economic context and in relation to the personal characteristics of refugees.

#### **4.2.7 Culture**

Within the culture domain, the Home Office's IoI encompass knowledge of both 'practical information for daily living (e.g., regarding transport, utilities, benefits) as well as customs and social expectations' (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019: 46). Penninx and Garcés-Mascreñas (2016: 15) state that the cultural dimension is challenging to measure because it relies on the subjective *perceptions and practices* of both newcomers and hosting society, influencing the categorisation of 'what is defined as different' (us vs them) at multiple levels and with diverse consequences. Additionally, culture is dynamic and cannot be reduced to a fixed homogeneous set of values and rules; this applies to both migrants and the whole population (Entzinger and Biezeveld, 2003). Despite the ambiguity surrounding the *cultural dimension of migrant integration*, it is 'considered as key to the effectiveness of the whole of integration' (Goñda et al., 2021: 244). In everyday life, culture represents a shared understanding that enables people to interact; it is what infuses meaning into social contacts (Blommaert, 2015). The absence of cultural knowledge can limit migrants' access to services and information (Bronstein, 2019). Additionally, understanding the culture of the hosting country can be especially challenging for refugees, who 'have adapted their functional culture to ahistorical and sometimes dysfunctional systems, often as dependents in refugee camps and displaced communities' (Brady, 2019: 23). Adjustments to changing norms, particularly in gender roles, can further create tensions within refugee

families, as some members embrace these changes while others find it challenging to reconcile traditional values with their new environment's expectations (Habash and Omata, 2023).

Refugees resettled through VPRS and CS receive 10 hours of cultural orientation sessions provided by IOM before they arrive in the UK (UNHCR, 2018b). However, an evaluation of CS found that both refugees and sponsors felt that they did not receive sufficient and adequate training and information about each other's culture (Phillimore et al., 2020). Under VPRS, refugees and other stakeholders, such as local authorities, expressed similar concerns, noting that the information provided to refugees was too basic and broad to adequately inform them about the area where they were being resettled and what to expect in the UK (Bolt, 2018). IOM further argues that the pre-arrival cultural orientation sessions are inadequate in preparing refugees for what they should expect in the UK as 'a 2-day cultural orientation workshop delivered 2 weeks prior to departure appeared to be a case of "too little, too late", especially as refugees were arriving in the UK with little or no English' (Bolt, 2018: 8). Despite these expressed challenges, the Home Office refused to extend the duration of pre-arrival cultural orientation training, wrongly arguing that there is a lack of evidence that longer sessions would facilitate refugee integration (Bolt, 2018). Studies conducted in several countries have demonstrated how cultural orientation workshops can help manage the expectations of refugees and the hosting population, ultimately benefiting integration processes (Collyer et al., 2018; GRSI, 2020; Villa, 2020). There is also evidence suggesting that refugees supported by sponsors of the same ethnicity are more likely to receive culturally adequate assistance, which can aid them in areas like finding employment (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001 in Kaida et al., 2020). Therefore, refugees

resettled in rural areas, where the presence of individuals from the same ethnic background is limited, may find it more challenging to overcome cultural barriers (Cronkrite et al., 2016).

Social connections have indeed proven valuable in overcoming cultural barriers, but it is essential to recognise that other factors, such as the socio-economic context and the availability of public and personal resources, also play a significant role in shaping the multidimensionality of integration processes (Vatanparast et al., 2020). Despite the evident importance of culture in the integration of refugees, most existing studies have primarily concentrated on cultural training programmes designed to aid refugees and sponsors, with less attention to the effect 'of concrete policy initiatives in the field of immigration and integration' (Bertram et al., 2020: 255). An evaluation of CS in the UK, for instance, found that volunteers, especially in less diverse areas, appreciated learning about different cultures from refugees, while refugees valued the volunteers' efforts in understanding their culture and relied on them to navigate life in the UK (Phillimore et al., 2020).

In analysing how social connections and support impact refugees resettled through different resettlement programmes, the culture of both the hosting population and newcomers cannot be dismissed, as 'Socialization within each culture shaped meanings of social support, expectations of informal and formal support, and support seeking strategies' (Stewart et al., 2008: 150). Examining the interplay between the cultural dimension, resettlement policies and individual factors is crucial in understanding how refugees establish social connections and the extent of support they receive from their social networks (Stewart et al., 2008).

#### **4.2.8 Digital skills**

Digital skills were newly incorporated into the latest Home Office integration framework to acknowledge the profound impact of technological development on the way people communicate (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019). This shift is particularly significant given the rapid growth of digital technology, accelerated further by the COVID-19 pandemic, as digital skills are increasingly regarded as essential for everyday life, work, education and entertainment (van Deursen and van Dijk, 2014). However, our understanding of how digital skills relate to refugees remains limited (Stiller and Trkulja, 2018). Even the CS and VPRS guidelines fail to address how local authorities and volunteers should assist refugees in developing these digital competencies (Home Office, 2020a; HM Government, 2018c). Equipping refugees with the ability to access online services and maintain connections with family and friends abroad is of paramount importance, especially as many newcomers, particularly women and older individuals, arrive in the UK without these digital skills (Hassan and Phillimore, 2020).

Beyond the basic availability of digital tools, such as Wi-Fi and laptops, several barriers hinder refugees from effectively utilising digital services. Language, for instance, presents a significant challenge, as the terminologies used in digital apps and websites may be unfamiliar to refugees, even after translation, making navigation difficult (Sabie and Ahmed, 2019). Additionally, socio-economic and cultural differences can affect refugees' awareness of available digital services and their confidence in using them (Sabie and Ahmed, 2019). Developing digital skills is not solely about accessing services; it also plays a crucial role in retaining and building social networks, which, in turn, can mitigate refugee isolation (Pachner et al., 2021). A study in Australia demonstrated 'that one of primary uses of the internet was for social networking' (Alam

and Imran, 2015: 356). The Internet has become a valuable alternative to the lack of language and cultural resources, offering newcomers the opportunity to acquire information in their native language and maintain social connections with family and friends abroad (Yoon, 2017). Maintaining transnational connections is crucial for refugees who cannot reunite with their families due to the limited and strict policies governing family reunification, which encompass bureaucratic challenges, financial barriers, long waiting periods, limited access to support and narrow definitions of family (Phillimore et al., 2023).

Despite the digital advancements and the growing recognition of the importance of digital skills, the digital divide remains wide (van Deursen and van Dijk, 2014). The digital divide became even more evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when many services transitioned to online delivery from in-person (McMullin, 2021). While some organisations working with refugees have noted certain benefits from online service delivery, new challenges related to accessing online services, along with social and cultural obstacles, have emerged (McMullin, 2021). Possessing digital skills can significantly enhance refugees' social inclusion, but digital inclusion is inherently linked to various socio-economic, cultural, and individual factors, including age and gender (Alam and Imran, 2015).

#### **4.2.9 Safety**

The Home Office's IoI emphasise the key role of safety in establishing the 'foundation to forming relationships with people and society, enabling progress through education and/or employment and participating in leisure pursuits' (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019: 50). This sense of safety extends beyond the absence of physical and verbal abuse and

encompasses perceptions of an area as potentially 'threatening', influencing refugees' overall feeling of safety (Ager and Strang, 2008: 184).

Sponsors and local authorities engaged in resettling refugees through CS and VPRS are required to have a safeguarding policy, ensure that individuals supporting newcomers have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, securely manage personal and sensitive information, and establish complaint mechanisms for refugees to raise concerns (HM Government, 2018c; Home Office, 2020a). CS volunteers also need to establish contacts with the local police to verify the safety of the areas where resettled families are accommodated (HM Government, 2018c). While sponsored refugees have reported feeling safe due to the support provided by their sponsors, some newcomers have expressed fear and insecurity, often rooted in their pre-arrival experiences and the limited duration of their refugee status, which lasts for five years (Hassan and Phillimore, 2020).

Various studies have underscored the importance of trustful relationships with neighbours in enhancing people's sense of safety, even in disadvantaged contexts (Allik and Kearns, 2017). However, it is important to note that the mere presence of a broad social network does not automatically translate into an increased sense of safety (Furr et al., 2005). To address refugees' perception of safety, it is crucial to consider their experiences both before and after resettlement (Stathopoulou et al., 2019). While numerous studies have shed light on the prevalence of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder amongst refugees and asylum-seekers linked to their pre-settlement experience (Silove et al., 1997), recent research has unveiled the profound impact of post-migration experiences on refugee well-being and safety. These experiences encompass a range of factors, including substandard living conditions and a pervasive

sense of instability (Stathopoulou et al., 2019). Even when refugees are granted refugee status, they may still experience harassment and discrimination, which not only diminish their sense of safety but also discourage them from building relationships with the host population (Phillimore, 2011a).

Moreover, individuals' characteristics, such as gender or age, and external factors, including living in a deprived neighbourhood, can intensify people's feelings of insecurity (Allik and Kearns, 2017). Refugees may also be reluctant to raise safety concerns if they fear negative repercussions (Kosny et al., 2020). Kosny et al. (2020: 821) reveal that securing employment through same-ethnic social networks may further complicate the process of raising workplace issues as this can be perceived as 'socially awkward and culturally inappropriate in some instances'. To ensure safety in the workplace, both employers and refugees must receive adequate resources and training tailored to factors such as gender, age and race (Kosny et al., 2020). Conversely, factors that positively influence refugees' perceptions of safety include a high degree of received support, the proximity of other refugees and family members (Furr et al., 2005), and an increased duration of residence in the host country (Lichtenstein and Puma, 2019).

In summary, there is a relationship between social connections and the perception of safety (Furr et al., 2005). However, gaining a comprehensive understanding of how social relationships contribute to refugees' feelings of safety necessitates adopting a holistic approach that recognises the intricate interplay of multiple factors influencing the integration processes.

#### **4.2.10 Stability**

'A stable routine in their work, education, living circumstances and access to services' is essential for individuals to develop a sense of stability, which, in turn, enables them to establish social relationships (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019: 52). Numerous studies have demonstrated that the creation of social networks can provide resettled refugees with emotional and material stability (Simich, 2003: 581), also improving their mental health (Beiser and Wickrama, 2004).

Despite the widely recognised importance of stability in integration processes, few studies have delved into how resettlement programmes ensure refugees' stability. Even the guidelines for CS and VPRS, while prescribing essential and material services that sponsors and local authorities must provide to refugees, do not explicitly mention stability as an outcome to achieve. Refugees' stability is associated with 'safety, stable employment and financial security, language proficiency, education of the system, and access to medical and mental health services' (Interiano-Shiverdecker et al., 2020: 55). Housing is a particularly critical aspect of stability. Miraftab (2000: 56) reveals how refugees, in addition to facing issues shared with voluntary migrants, such as landlord discrimination and limited knowledge of the housing system, also encounter more acute problems related to their social and financial situation, which render them 'very dependent upon public housing and non-governmental services'. Research conducted in Canada indicates that housing instability is higher for GAR than for sponsored resettled refugees (Wayland, 2007). National and local policies, language and cultural diversity, economic factors, the hosting population's attitude, and refugees' personal experiences before resettlement all contribute to refugees' stability or instability in the housing context (Oudshoorn et al., 2020), as well as in other aspects of the integration processes.

Of particular relevance to this study, 'residential stability is identified as one of the most important requirements for the development and maintenance of dense social networks' (Halpern, 2005 in Fleischmann et al., 2011: 398). Baxter (2018) demonstrates that by providing newcomers with housing and employment assistance, access to services, and cultural orientation, resettlement agencies in the United States address some of the basic needs of refugees. However, she further finds that more critical to the integration processes and newcomers' stability are the relationships built between volunteers and refugees (Baxter, 2018). This finding is seemingly confirmed by a study comparing UK-sponsored and government-assisted resettled refugees, which argues that trustworthy relationships increase newcomers' stability, and 'the support from the host community creates more trust than the support received from the state or outsourced NGOs' (Alraie et al., 2018: 13).

The example provided concerning stability and housing is just another piece of evidence illustrating the multi-dimensionality and multi-directionality of the integration processes. While social connections and refugees' stability are interconnected, it is also necessary to link them to the support that refugees receive in the specific context in which they live, taking into account their personal experiences.

### **4.3 Conceptual framework**

Tracing the history of social networks in Chapter Three, I underscored the paucity of studies examining the development and role of social connections within the context of forced migration. While the conceptualisation of networks dates back to the mid-20th century, limited attention has been given to refugees' social connections and their transformative potential in the resettlement processes despite a number of social

network scholars stressing their importance (i.e., Tilly, 1991; Wissink and Mazzucato, 2018).

In this chapter, I further delved into the role of social networks within the context of integration, presenting several integration models that recognise the pivotal role of social connections (i.e., Ager and Strang, 2008; Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019; Hynie et al., 2016; Phillimore, 2021). However, with the exception of Ager and Strang's framework (2008), these models have rarely been applied in studies focusing on resettled refugees, particularly in a comparative approach distinguishing refugees' networks based on the type of resettlement policy they fall under. Existing studies often categorise relationships along ethnic and national lines, failing to provide sufficient evidence for claims that policymakers make regarding the benefits of bridging over bonding connections in facilitating integration. With this study, I aim to address these knowledge gaps by comparing the social networks of refugees resettled in the UK under CS and VPRS and the influence of these networks on integration processes.

Central to my conceptual framework is the distinction between social relationships and resources. Policies and programmes such as CS have been developed based on the assumption that bridging social connections, rather than bonding, can facilitate integration. However, existing academic studies do not provide enough evidence to support this claim, with limited empirical studies exploring refugee-sponsor relationships outside Canada. Additionally, Canadian studies further noted that the relationships between sponsors and refugees could also have a negative impact on integration processes in some instances (Beiser, 2003; Haugen et al., 2020), while other studies observed that crucial resources could also be provided by co-ethnic groups (Hanley et al., 2018; Hynie et al., 2019). It is important to note that different

kinds of social connections create multiple pathways, which can then lead refugees to access resources (Phillimore, 2012). I thus distinguish between connections, as the number and the nature of an individual's social relationships, and support, as the resources that can be obtained through the possession of a social network (Smith and Christakis, 2008). I further conceptualised social networks as an intermediate level (meso-level) influenced by factors at the individual (micro-level) and contextual (macro-level) levels (Faist, 2000; Klärner et al., 2022).

At the individual level, I take into account socio-demographic and migration factors. When analysing the literature on integration, it becomes evident that individual characteristics play a pivotal role in shaping how individuals respond and adapt within their social networks. Individual characteristics, such as gender, age, region of origin, and length of residence, alongside personality traits like time perspectives and perceptions of forced migration and its associated challenges, reflect the complex interplay between the individual and the broader social context (Hynie et al., 2016; Echterhoff et al., 2020). Analysing the experience of resettled refugees in Canada, Lamba (2003: 46), in fact, points out that socio-demographic and migration characteristics influence refugees' ability to obtain determinate integration outcomes, encompassing the development of social relationships. A comparison between the outcomes generated by two resettlement schemes, such as CS and VPRS, cannot exist if it is not first recognised that refugees are not a homogenous group and socio-demographic differences exist both *within* and *between* the two groups of resettled refugees (Hynie et al., 2019) and the effects of migration on resettlement processes (McMichael and Manderson in Almohamed et al., 2017).

At the macro-level, I consider the role of resettlement policies. As argued by Moreno (1937), the ability to form social connections is influenced not only by individuals' actions but also by the context of social interactions. Resettlement policies play a crucial role in shaping this context, affecting the level of support and resources available to refugees. It is important to note that resettlement policies, such as CS and VPRS, often preclude refugees from choosing their resettlement locations. Consequently, the development of social connections becomes contingent on whether the chosen location offers a diverse and supportive community environment.

Additionally, in smaller communities, refugees may encounter difficulties in accessing the opportunities needed to address their essential requirements, including guidance from knowledgeable locals to facilitate their settlement in the new country (Bose, 2018). Furthermore, the work of Alencar (2018) illustrates how policies can extend their influence on virtual spaces of interaction, for instance, impacting refugees' opportunities to engage with social media. The role of resettlement policies thus includes its influence on the diversity of resettlement locations and virtual places of interaction, as well as the support provided by sponsors in specific schemes. Essentially, resettlement policies define the environment and opportunities within which refugees establish their social networks as well as shaping the support available for integration.

Subsequently, I examine how relationships (their quality and quantity) and support gained by relationships shape integration processes. Integration is multi-dimensional and multi-directional, in which *relations* and *initiatives & support* are two fundamental sets of opportunities to aid refugees' integration processes (Phillimore, 2021). The effects that these two sets of opportunities have on integration are measured by

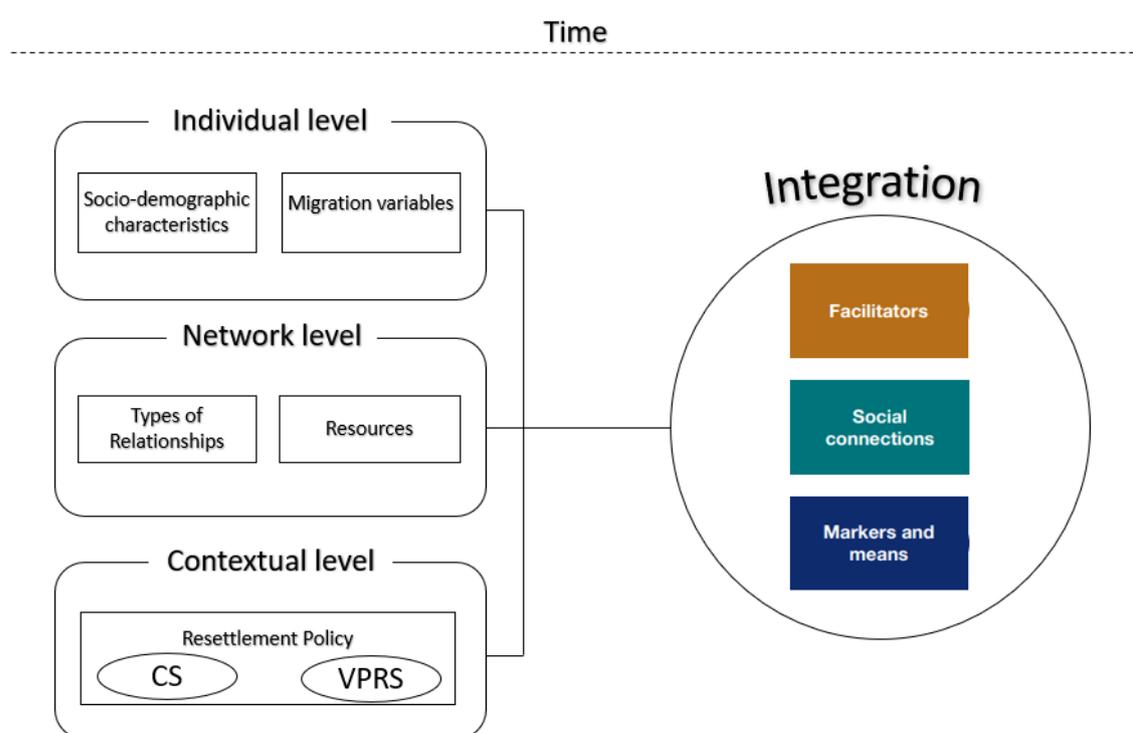
readapting Ndofor-Tah et al.'s framework (2019). Rather than focusing on each indicator of integration individually as a gauge of integration outcomes, my conceptual framework focuses on the interrelationships between the social connection domain and the indicators present in the Makers and Means and Facilitators domains. This three-part framework aids in organising the complex processes of integration, fostering a comprehensive understanding by considering both elements enabling integration and the tangible outcomes, while acknowledging the critical role of social connections in these processes. I reorganise the domains of integration, focusing first on 'facilitators', namely language, culture, digital skills, safety and stability, as through the literature review, they emerged as key aspects that held at the individual's level can facilitate social interactions. I subsequently look at social networks' impact on integration's 'markers and means', which represent the more 'public face' of integration (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019: 16). The reorganisation of different domains does not aim to offer an alternative to the Iol framework presented by Ndofor-Tah et al. (2019), but it aims to underscore the relationships between social connections and other indicators.

The interrelationships between elements comprising this conceptual framework are dynamic, with time recognised as shaping both individual and contextual factors and, thus, social interactions (Barnes, 1954). This temporal dimension gains enhanced significance within the framework due to the unique temporal perceptions and experiences that emerge from the forced migration experienced by refugees (Griffiths, 2014; Boer, 2015; Walg et al., 2020).

In summary, this conceptual framework (Figure 5) provides a comprehensive lens through which to examine and understand the complex dynamics of refugee integration. With this framework, I recognise the role of resettlement policies and

individual characteristics in shaping social networks, distinguish between social connections and resources, and highlight the intricate intersectionality of relationships and support in the context of integration. By taking into account these aspects together, I seek to address key questions surrounding the formation of social networks, the influence of diverse factors, the role of resources within social connections and the multifaceted nature of the integration processes.

**Figure 5: Conceptual framework**



Having presented the conceptual framework, I introduce the adopted methodology for this research in the next chapter.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, in this chapter, I explored the complex concept of integration, with a specific emphasis on the pivotal role social networks play. I presented various models

and frameworks highlighting the multi-dimensional and multi-directional nature inherent in integration processes.

By concentrating on the domains outlined in the Home Office's Iol framework (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019), I emphasised the crucial role of social networks in integration in relation to resettled refugees. I further highlighted that the traditional categorisation of social connections into bonding and bridging, based on national/ethnic criteria, falls short in capturing the complexity of integration processes, particularly within the context of super-diversity. Moreover, the mere existence of social networks does not automatically ensure positive outcomes, as refugees may encounter obstacles such as racism, prejudice and a lack of essential resources. The impact of social connections on refugees' integration is thus intricately linked to, and influenced by, various factors, including the individual's personal experiences and the context in which social connections develop.

In the concluding section of this chapter, I introduced the conceptual framework serving as the analytical tool for comparing the social networks of refugees resettled through CS and VPRS. I aim to bridge existing knowledge gaps by examining the interplay between resettlement policies, individual characteristics, types of social relations and access to resources. In the framework, I acknowledged the intricate dynamics of social networks shaped by factors at multiple levels, and underscored the importance of distinguishing between relationships and network resources to understand the social network's effect on integration processes. Moving forward, in the next chapter, I present the methodology employed in this study to compare the social networks of refugees resettled through CS and VPRS.

## **CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY**

As explained in the literature review (Chapter Three), social network analysis is particularly suitable for understanding the complexity of the integration processes, allowing us to distinguish between relations and the available/exchanged resources within a network (Boyd, 1989; Faist, 2000). However, such an approach is underused in migration studies, especially concerning forced migrants and resettled refugees (Klvaňová, 2010). By adopting social network analysis to compare the social networks of VPRS and CS refugees, social networks (including types of relations and resources) are considered as emerging at an intermediate level between individual and contextual factors, such as resettlement policy (Faist, 2000; Klärner et al., 2022). In this study, I employ various social network analysis tools to capture information about the structure of social networks, as well as the types of relations and resources exchanged within these networks.

In this chapter, I explain the methodology employed in this study, beginning with an overview of social network analysis, the chosen design and the tools selected to collect and analyse data, along with the motivations for these choices. Ethical considerations as well as methodological challenges and limitations are subsequently discussed, elucidating the strategies adopted to mitigate them. Finally, following the description of the participant sample, in the last section I detail how the collected data were analysed.

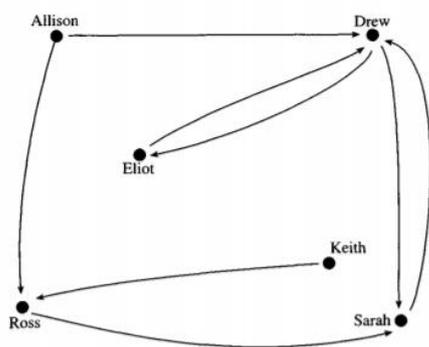
### **5.1 A social network analysis: selection of approach**

In this study, I adopted a mixed-methods approach within the framework of social network analysis, prioritising qualitative data over quantitative data.

Social network analysis is ‘a methodological and conceptual toolbox for the measurement, systematic description, and analysis of relational structures’ (Caiani,

2014: 368), providing the theoretical foundation for this research. Building on the pioneering work of Moreno (1934), the founder of sociometry and developer of sociograms for visually representing social relationships, I integrated network visualisations into its mixed-methods paradigm. 'A sociogram is a picture in which people (or more generally, any social units) are represented as points in two-dimensional space, and relationships among pairs of people are represented by lines linking the corresponding points' (Wasserman and Faust, 1994: 11-12). A simple sociogram is illustrated in Figure 6.

**Figure 6: A sociogram (Wasserman and Faust, 1994: 74)**



Since the introduction of sociograms, the combination of visual representations with mathematical models has become integral to social network studies (Wasserman and Faust, 1994). The introduction of computers marked another pivotal moment in social network analysis, allowing the analysis of vast amounts of data (Freeman, 2011). Despite social network analysts historically favouring a quantitative approach, recent years have witnessed a growing number of authors advocating for a mixed-methods approach (D'Angelo et al., 2016).

Crossley (2010) states that quantitative analysis is important for comprehensively capturing relationships within a network, helping to collect and present complex data in a simplified way. However, he cautions that a solely quantitative approach is

inadequate for understanding the dynamism and nuanced meanings embedded in social relationships (Crossley, 2010). Thus, Crossley (2010:1) advocates for the integration of qualitative and quantitative research techniques, asserting that 'each [approach] brings something different and something important to the fore, adding strength where otherwise there would be weakness'. Domínguez and Hollstein (2014) extend this perspective, noting that mixed methods are valuable for both describing and interpreting networks, and understanding the outcomes and impacts of network changes. In migration studies, mixed methods are instrumental in overcoming the challenges of capturing the dynamic nature of migrants' networks as they develop relationships over time and space (Ryan and D'Angelo, 2018).

According to Hollstein (2014: 5), a mixed methods study must satisfy three requirements:

- (1) First, the studies make use of qualitative as well as quantitative *data*. (...)
- (2) Second, both qualitative and quantitative *strategies of data analysis* are applied.
- (3) And, finally, at [*sic*] least one stage of the research process, there must be some form of *integration* of either data, or of data analysis or of results.

Qualitative and quantitative data, presenting information about the network's structure, relationships, and interactions, can take the form of numbers or text (Hollstein, 2014: 9). The choice between qualitative and quantitative analysis depends on the study's objectives; qualitative analysis helps understand meanings and interpretations, while quantitative analysis provides mathematical descriptions of a network's structure and operation (Hollstein, 2014). The main differences in mixed methods designs lie in the timeline of data collection and analysis, the period of data collection and analysis, the

importance given to each set of data and how data are integrated (Ivankova and Creswell, 2009).

In alignment with my primary goal of comprehending how refugees' social connections influence integration processes, emphasis is placed on qualitative data. However, even within a predominantly qualitative framework, the inclusion of quantitative data enriches this study. Quantitative data gathered encompasses socio-demographic details of participants and individuals within their social networks, along with numerical representations elucidating the network's structure. Both sets of data are collected simultaneously during interviews with participants, using a combination of closed and open questions. This concurrent data collection 'allows both sets of results to be interpreted together to provide a richer and more comprehensive response to the research question' (Saunders et al., 2019: 182). The selection of this design is further motivated by pragmatic considerations, given its cost-effectiveness compared to designs where qualitative and quantitative components are equally important (Hollstein, 2014).

The subsequent section examines the philosophical underpinnings of this methodology, explaining why a pragmatic approach best aligns with my research objectives.

## **5.2 Research philosophy**

'The term research philosophy refers to a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge' (Saunders et al., 2019: 130). Reflecting on research philosophy helps researchers to think about research methods and select those most appropriate for their study (Easterby-Smith et al., 1997 in Crossan, 2003). This section does not aim to delve into an exhaustive discussion of various research philosophies.

Instead, it offers a brief overview, emphasising pragmatism as the guiding philosophy informing my methodological choices.

Saunders et al. (2019) identify several research philosophies based on different ontological assumptions regarding the nature of reality and epistemological assumptions concerning what constitutes acceptable knowledge. Positivism perceives reality as objective, existing independently of human actors, and therefore favours a 'strictly scientific empiricist method designed to yield pure data and facts uninfluenced by human interpretation or bias' (Saunders et al., 2019: 144). Positivist researchers often adopt a quantitative approach, driven by objective criteria, in an attempt to find universal laws to justify human behaviours (Crossan, 2003).

In contrast, interpretivism is grounded in the idea that reality cannot exist independently of human actors because what is experienced as reality depends on the meanings attributed to social phenomena. Interpretivists dismiss the possibility of universal laws to explain human behaviours: 'As different people of different cultural backgrounds, under different circumstances and at different times make different meanings, and so create and experience different social realities' (Saunders et al., 2019: 149). Interpretivists tend to prefer qualitative research methods over quantitative ones as they seek to understand meanings rather than causality.

Critical realism combines some aspects of positivism and interpretivism. In a critical realist approach, reality is viewed as independent, as claimed by positivists, but not directly observable because 'what we experience is "the empirical", in other words sensations, which are some of the manifestations of the things in the real world, rather than the actual things' (Saunders et al., 2019: 147). Critical realists often adopt mixed methods, as do pragmatists (Creswell and Clark, 2011).

Pragmatism goes beyond the distinction between subjectivism and objectivism, asserting that what matters are the practical consequences that abstract concepts can have in determinate contexts (Saunders et al., 2019). Accepting the complexity of reality, 'for a pragmatist, research starts with a problem, and aims to contribute practical solutions that inform future practice' (Saunders et al., 2019: 151). A prominent figure in pragmatism, Dewey, contends that studying the world as objective or subjective alone results in a partial knowledge of reality (Biesta, 2010). Dewey argues that what we learn about the world is only one of the possible types of knowledge generated by one of the multiple adoptable approaches, 'so that we always need to judge our knowledge claims pragmatically' according to the research methods used (Biesta, 2010: 113). Therefore, pragmatic researchers should select the methodology that best enables them to answer their research questions (Cohen et al., 2018).

A pragmatic approach, without specific ontological, epistemological or axiological constraints (Creswell and Clark, 2018), is the most appropriate for this study because it acknowledges the dynamic nature of social phenomena, such as social networks and integration processes (Elkjaer and Simpson, 2011). Additionally, pragmatism offers a balanced viewpoint, merging subjective experiences and objective elements (Handema et al., 2023), which proves valuable in comprehending social networks as an intermediary level shaped by both individual and contextual factors (see Section 4.3). Moreover, pragmatic research emphasises generating practical knowledge (Wicks and Freeman, 1998), aligning with my aim of producing evidence that aids policymakers, sponsors and refugees in enhancing opportunities within the integration processes. Finally, pragmatism aligns with mixed methods research, enabling the integration of quantitative and qualitative data (da Silva et al., 2018). As the previous

sections explained, a mixed methods approach offers the greatest promise for the study of social networks and for answering the research questions set out below:

1. What kind of social networks do refugees resettled through CS and VPRS build?  
In what ways do refugees' social networks differ according to the resettlement scheme that they are part of?
2. What is the relationship between the different types of social connections and the resources accessible through these connections?
3. How do the combination and/or the absence of social networks and resources accessed through established social connections shape refugees' integration?

Before presenting the selected methodology and methods, the following sections clarify the study's unit of analysis and observation.

### **5.3 Unit of analysis and unit of observation**

The unit of analysis in this study, that is to say, the study's subject, is individual refugees resettled in England through CS and VPRS. The choice to focus on individuals is driven by a combination of pragmatic considerations and reflections on the unit of observation, namely the social network.

From a pragmatic point of view, the option to consider entire families as the unit of analysis was available, given that both resettlement schemes prioritise the arrival of refugee families over single individuals. While opting for families might have speeded up data collection by allowing simultaneous data gathering from multiple participants, this approach posed significant drawbacks. Firstly, the potential for bias arises when not all family members participate, introducing a risk of measurement error, especially when utilising methods better suited for individuals rather than groups (Uphold and Strickland, 1989). Furthermore, the conceptual framework presented in Chapter Four

highlights the role of individuals' characteristics in shaping social connections as well as impacting integration. Analysing families as a unit of analysis, rather than individuals, would limit the consideration of individual variables such as gender and age, which can vary amongst family members. Consequently, the exploration of refugee families as the unit of analysis was dismissed in favour of focusing on individuals.

The choice of individuals as the unit of analysis is also substantiated by considerations specific to the analysis of social networks, which serve as the unit of observation in this study. Social network studies often concentrate either on the whole network or the egocentric network (also called personal network). Whole network analysis concerns the 'sets of interrelated objects or actors that are regarded for analytical purposes as bounded social collectives', posing a challenge in defining network boundaries (Marsden, 2005: 8). Studying a group's network requires the identification of a finite set of individuals recognised as belonging to a more or less *bounded group* (Wasserman and Faust, 1994), a concept that is not without ambiguity (Marsden, 2005).

An alternative to the whole network approach is to focus on egocentric networks, representing 'the networks of individual actors who are in most cases the only source of information about their networks' (Hollstein, 2014: 9). Egocentric networks are particularly suitable for my study, not only for overcoming challenges related to the identification of a network's boundaries, but also for providing insights into the support individuals can obtain from their social relationships (Wasserman and Faust, 1994), around integration processes, a primary objective of this study. Egocentric networks consist of two main features: the *ego*, the central point of interest, which in this case is

represented by the resettled refugee, and the *alters*, referring to the individuals with whom the ego has relationships (Wasserman and Faust, 1994).

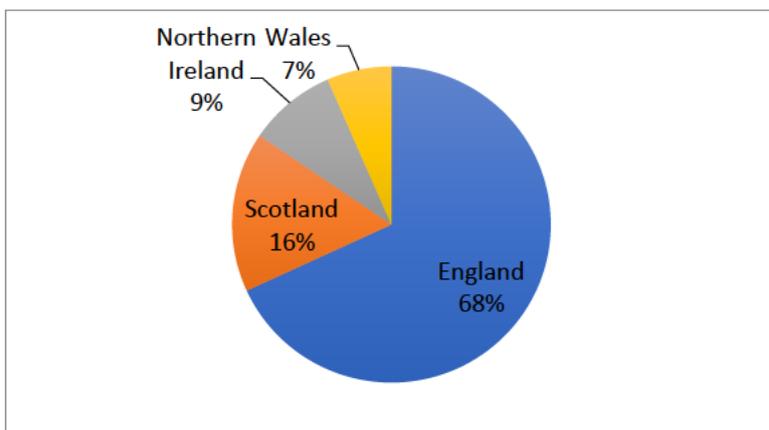
In the next section, I explain in more detail the selection process of participants for this study, starting with a description of the whole population of VPRS and CS resettled refugees and providing further justifications for adopting an egocentric approach.

## **5.4 Recruiting participants**

### **5.4.1 Population**

From the launch of VPRS in March 2014 until February 2021, a total of 20,319 refugees were resettled in the UK, including 484 sponsored by CS groups (Home Office, 2021b). Additionally, 38 refugees from VCRS were welcomed by community sponsorship groups during the same period (Home Office, 2021b). Due to administrative differences between England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, and the impact of these different contexts on refugees' social network development, in this study, I focused exclusively on refugees who were resettled in England. This choice was reinforced by the fact that over half of total VPRS refugees were resettled in England (Figure 7), with more than 1,000 in London (Home Office, 2021c). The majority of CS groups were also located in England (Reset, 2021c) (Figure 8).

**Figure 7: Percentage of VPRS resettled refugees by country<sup>1</sup> (Home Office, 2021c)**



**Figure 8: Map of the CS groups in the UK<sup>2</sup> (Reset, 2021c)**



<sup>1</sup> It must be noted that Figure 7 only shows the percentage of VPRS resettled refugees by country based on the total number of VPRS refugees resettled in the UK, but it does not contextualise these figures in relation to the population sizes of the respective countries.

<sup>2</sup> The map includes CS groups who are at different stages of the process of resettlement, with some groups who have already resettled a refugee family and others who are in the process of applying for sponsoring a family.

The Home Office did not collect separate data on CS before 2021, when the new Global Resettlement Scheme was launched, combining VPRS, VCRS and the Gateway Protection Programme. Before 2021, sponsored refugees were counted as part of VPRS or VCRS. According to the Home Office (2021b) statistics, more than 90% of VPRS, VCRS and CS resettled refugees were Syrians.

In the following section, I explain the rationale and methodology employed for selecting the sample for this study from this whole population described.

#### ***5.4.2 Sampling strategy***

In this study, a non-probability sampling strategy limited participation to VPRS and CS refugees resettled in England (Cohen et al., 2018). As mentioned in the previous section, this decision stemmed from the need to mitigate the potential impact on my findings of varying policy contexts and hosting populations' attitudes toward refugees across the UK's different regions. Furthermore, with a larger population of VPRS and CS refugees in England compared to other parts of the UK, participant recruitment was anticipated to be more feasible in England than in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, where the number of VPRS and CS newcomers was lower.

Additionally, invitations to participate in the study were extended only to refugees who arrived before March 2020. This timeframe was chosen because the COVID-19 pandemic, which unfolded subsequently, imposed unprecedented restrictions on social interactions, potentially influencing the development of refugees' social networks. Investigating the specific challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic was outside the scope of this study, although some findings highlight the effect of the

pandemic on social relationships. Moreover, due to additional ethical considerations associated with interviewing children, only adult refugees were invited to participate. Despite adopting a convenience sample approach to ease participant recruitment, the study's sample shares at least some demographic characteristics with the broader population of VPRS and CS refugees resettled in the UK, with the majority being Arabic-speaking Syrians and of Muslim faith at the time of writing. This similarity, although limited to some demographic traits, helped reduce the probability of bias in the results (Saunders et al., 2019).

In the following section, I explain the strategy employed for recruiting participants.

#### ***5.4.3 Recruitment strategy***

The recruitment process for VPRS refugees involved collaboration with Community Support Managers and local authority councillors who participated in the resettlement programme welcoming refugees before 2020 in specific boroughs. A list of these boroughs was available online and free to access through the Government website, facilitating identification. By exploring identified boroughs' websites, I found contact details for Community Support Managers and councillors, whom I approached asking to share an invitation to participate in the study amongst the VPRS resettled refugees they supported. If refugees expressed consent to share their contact details, I approached them to explain the nature of the project and participation requirements, answering eventual questions from these potential participants. Once refugees agreed to participate, they were given a participant information form, and after they had read it and asked questions where needed, were requested to sign a consent form. Approaching Community Support Managers and councillors was complemented by collaborations with charities like the Refugee Council and Refugee Action, which were

engaged to disseminate invitations to participate amongst their contacts. Social media platforms, such as Twitter and WhatsApp, were also used to circulate invitations to participate in the study (a copy of the posters used to recruit participants on social media platforms is provided in Appendix 1).

CS refugees were recruited through initial contacts with CS groups in England, identified through available online information on the Sponsor Refugees and Reset charities' websites. Given the active presence of most CS groups on social media, these channels were also utilised to reach out to potential participants. Drawing on personal involvement in CS as the chair of a local group and as an ambassador for the charity Sponsor Refugees, I also employed my personal connections to approach sponsorship groups. CS groups approached were asked to share the study's participation invitation with sponsored refugees. This personal approach was preferred, considering the challenges in accessing resettled refugees, particularly in identifying refugees resettled under a specific scheme. However, my strategy might have excluded refugees whose sponsors did not have a direct link with me or with one of the organisations sharing the study's invitation. Following the establishment of initial contact, CS refugees were provided with a participant information form, given the opportunity to ask questions about the study and asked to sign a consent form.

All VPRS and CS refugees interested in participation were provided with an information sheet and a consent form in English and Arabic. Participants were offered the possibility to have a telephone interpreter during the interview. As a token of appreciation for their time, refugees who participated in the study were given a £10 Love2shop shopping voucher, as I explain in more detail in Section 5.6., presenting ethical considerations, while in the next section, I focus on data collection.

## 5.5 Data collection

VPRS and CS resettled refugees who agreed to participate in this study were invited to attend an in-person interview. Throughout the interview, data were gathered using various techniques, including a name generator supported by a visual tool, a *question-wise* format of a name interpreter, open and closed questions, and field notes. The following sections provide a detailed exploration of each data collection method, with a concluding section presenting an overview of the tools employed and the type of data collected.

### 5.5.1 Name generator

The study of an egocentric network generally includes two types of investigations: the identification of individuals (alters) connected to the ego (the participant) through *name generators* and the collection of information about alters and their relationships facilitated by *name interpreters* (Burt, 1984 in Marsden, 2005). *Name generators* require individuals to list either a single individual or a group of people present in their networks, responding to specific researcher questions.

Four main approaches are commonly employed in the study of personal networks using name generators (van der Poel, 1993):

1. The *interaction approach* focuses on identifying alters (connections) a person is in contact with during a limited period.
2. The *role relation approach* concerns an individual's relationships with people holding specific social roles, such as friends, neighbours, and family members.
3. The *affective approach* examines the subjective role a relationship holds for a person, such as identifying close or most important ties.

4. The *exchange approach* is based on the exchange of support that an individual can obtain through social ties.

In this study, the affective approach was selected to identify people within participants' networks, with the other approaches also employed to gather more comprehensive information. The exchange approach might have been more directly aligned with the study's focus on resources available to resettled refugees within their network, as this is 'pre-eminently suitable for delineating the personal support network' (van der Poel, 1993: 52). However, the exchange approach could exclude the identification of 'potentially supportive relationships in which no recent supportive interactions have occurred' (van der Poel, 1993: 52), such as refugees' connections with family members abroad. These connections, while they might not actively provide tangible support, can contribute to the refugees' overall well-being. Additionally, in this study, I also take into account the distinction between potential and actual resources exchanged, recognising that the mere presence of a network does not guarantee access to resources.

To address the limitations of the exchange approach and ensure a more accurate representation of refugees' social networks, respondents were asked to identify individuals who could provide support in response to hypothetical questions. For instance, refugees were asked about whom they would approach for help with accommodation issues, as opposed to who had assisted them in the past. According to van der Poel (1993), hypothetical questions reduce the likelihood that participants would only mention recent or actively supportive individuals, enabling the investigation of the potential presence of supportive individuals within the network.

The exchange approach complemented the affective approach employed by asking participants to list people in their network whom they considered close. Although the

concept of closeness can be ambiguous, it can serve as a measure of the strength of network relationships, helping to identify 'strong' and 'weak' ties as theorised by Granovetter (1973 in Marin and Hampton, 2007).

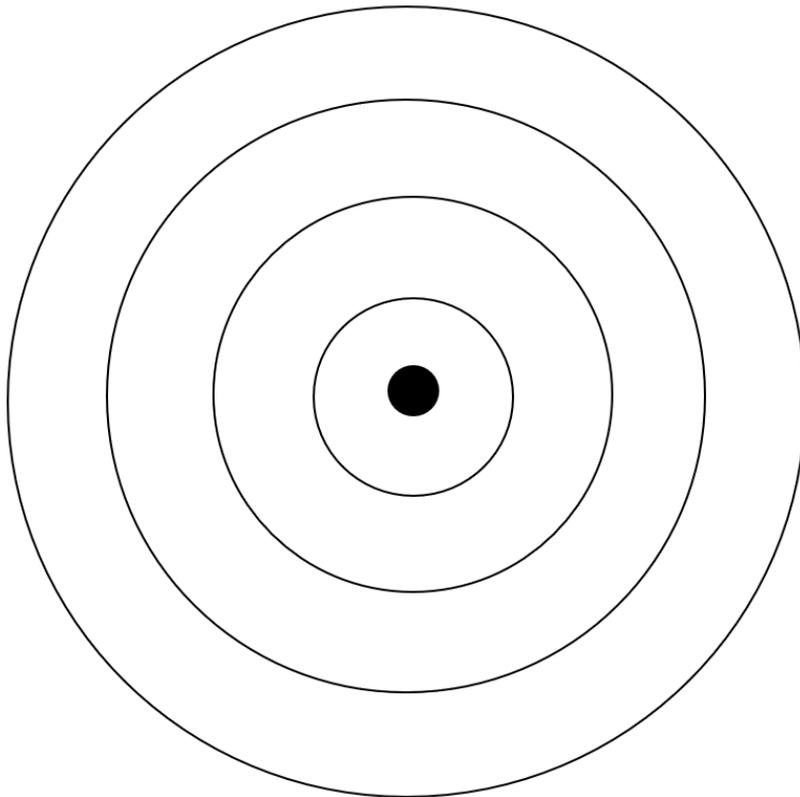
The name generator was used alongside the visual tool described in the next section to obtain a comprehensive picture of the individual's social network.

### **5.5.2 Visual tool**

In conjunction with the name generator, a visually aided data collection tool was incorporated to produce a visual representation of the network during interviews with participants. A network's visual representation 'is a useful means for providing reliability checks on certain network measures such as interpersonal closeness' and can facilitate a discussion between respondents and researcher (Hogan et al., 2007: 119). Moreover, the incorporation of a visual tool proves especially valuable in mitigating potential language barriers, a significant consideration in a study involving refugees.

For this study, Hogan et al.'s (2007) version of the widely recognised visualisation tool called 'target' was employed. The target tool is characterised by 'a series of concentric circles (with ego [participant] in the middle)' (Crossley et al., 2015: 60) (Figure 9).

**Figure 9: The target tool**



Hogan et al.'s (2007) version, which produces participant-aided sociograms, was chosen because it allows for real-time visualisation of the network during data collection, proving to be less time-consuming than traditional name generators. Importantly, this method encouraged active participation from respondents, who enjoyed visually representing their social networks (Hogan et al., 2007).

The visual representation of participants' networks was constructed through the following phases:

1. The distinction between 'less close'<sup>3</sup> and 'very close' people was explained to participants, using slightly modified definitions from Hogan et al. (2007)<sup>4</sup>.

*Very close:* People with whom you speak about important things, with whom you speak/text often, or who help you if you need.

*Less close:* People you are less likely to speak about important things, with whom you do not speak/text often, or are less likely to help you if you need.

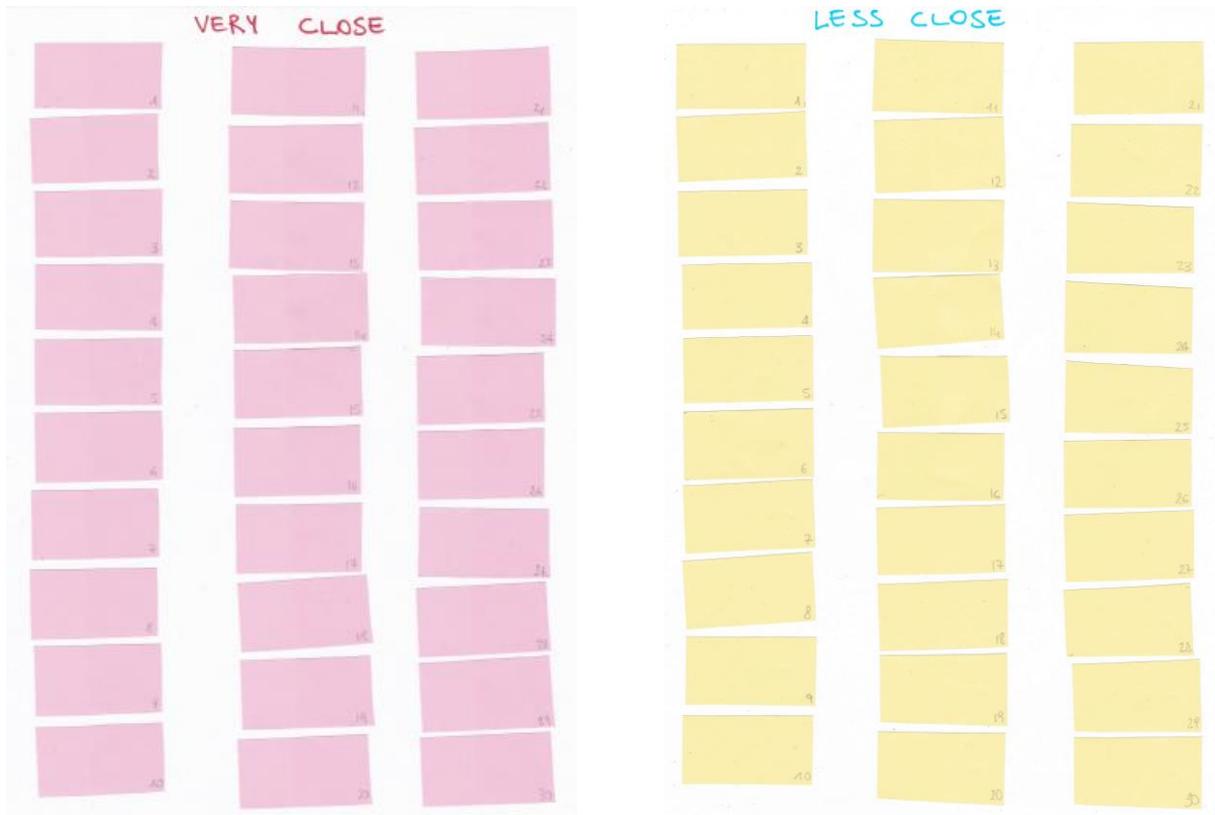
2. Participants were then required to write down the names of people they recalled as 'very close' and 'less close' on Post-it page markers placed on two sheets of paper (Figure 10) that I provided. The Post-it page markers were of two colours to distinguish 'very close' from 'less close' people, and each Post-it page marker was numbered to document the order in which each connection was recalled.

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<sup>3</sup> Hogan et al. (2007) asked participants to distinguish between 'somewhat close' alters and 'very close' alters. However, in a study on students' social networks, Plotnick and Hiltz (2006) found that students struggled to differentiate between 'somewhat close' and 'very close' alters and therefore they adopted the label 'Less Close or Casual Friends' instead of 'somewhat close'. Anticipating that refugees would find difficulties with what 'somewhat close' means, I asked them to name 'very close' and 'less close' people.

<sup>4</sup> The decision to edit Hogan et al.'s (2007) definitions of 'somewhat close' and 'very close' was mainly motivated by Hogan et al.'s reflection on their work. The authors stated that a clearer definition of 'somewhat close' would enhance the methodology. Additionally, I offered participants a simplified explanation of 'very close', using vocabulary that refugees were more likely to be familiar with.

**Figure 10: Example of the template used to generate names**



3. After listing all connections, I read each name and participants classified them based on given roles: '(1) immediate family (...), (2) other relatives, (3) neighbors [*sic*], (4) people you currently work/go to school with, (5) people you only know online, (6) people from organizations (bowling, club, church, team [Community sponsorship group, charities, supporting local authority], (7) friends not included above, (8) other'<sup>5</sup> (Hogan et al., 2007: 125).
4. Subsequently, participants were provided with a sheet of paper with four concentric circles representing levels of closeness. They were instructed to place

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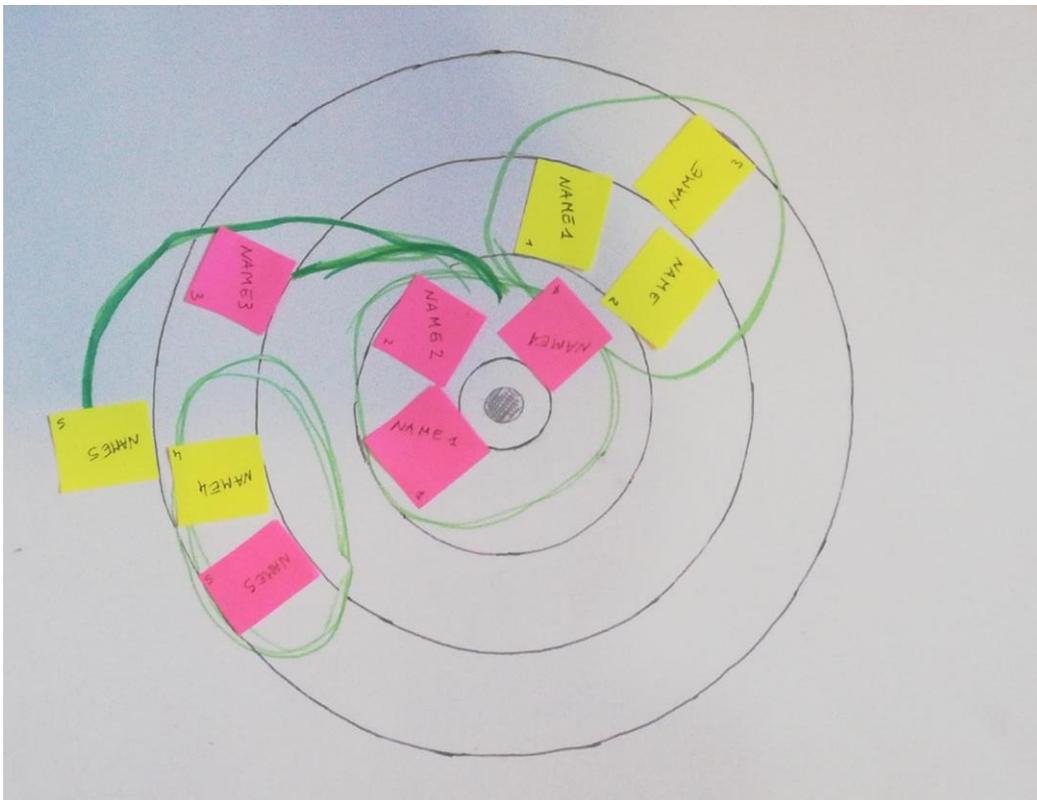
<sup>5</sup> Participants were asked to specify their relationship with the people included in the 'other' category.

each Post-it page marker containing an alter's name on one of the four lines of the concentric circles, collocating connections who know each other closely.

5. Once all the connections were placed on the target sheet, participants circled individuals in the network who were close to each other, identifying cliques, and drew lines between two people in the network who were close.

An example of the final sociogram produced is presented in Figure 11.

**Figure 11: Example of final sociogram produced during the interview**



### **5.5.3 Name interpreter**

As previously discussed in Section 5.5.1, another tool commonly used in egocentric network studies is the *name interpreter*. This tool allows the gathering of information about the characteristics of individuals within the network (alters' characteristics), data regarding the relationships between the participant and other individuals (ego-alter

relationships) as well as information on the relationships between different individuals within the network (alter-alter ties) (Marsden, 1990).

Two critical considerations arise when using name interpreters. Firstly, there is a need to address the quality of the data: can individuals report accurate information about their connections? Several studies on social networks indicate higher data accuracy when participants are asked about their connections' observable characteristics, such as gender and the number of children, rather than less tangible traits, such as attitudes or beliefs (Marsden, 1990; White and Watkins, 2000). Discrepancies between what individuals report about their connections and what their connections claim can be attributed to individuals' desire to positively describe acquaintances, or to misinformation, especially when a relationship between two people is not sufficiently close (White and Watkins, 2000). To mitigate this limitation, participants in this study were specifically questioned only about the socio-demographic characteristics of people within their network (Table 2).

Another consideration in using name interpreters pertains to participants' potential fatigue in providing information about each connection within their network. In many social network studies, participants are asked the same set of questions for each person named through the name generator tool, a technique known as the *alter-wise* format. However, this approach can lead to participant fatigue, resulting in dropout rates due to the perceived time-consuming nature of the study (White and Watkins, 2000; Vehovar et al., 2008). To address this risk, I adopted an alternative approach: the *question-wise* version of name interpreters. After participants listed all the 'very close' and 'less close' names, they were asked questions related to all the people within their network. Compared to the alter-wise format, the question-wise design,

‘which is not as common, produces a smaller percentage of item-nonresponse and drop-out rates’ (Vehovar et al., 2008: 220). The questions put to participants to gather information about their connections were informed by the Community Life Survey commissioned annually by the UK Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (2021) since 2012, aimed at understanding community members’ behaviours and attitudes. A sample of the questions participants were asked to gather information about the people within their network is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Sample of questions for name interpreter**

How many people are in the same age group as you?
How many people are the same sex as you?
How many people speak your first language?
How many people have the same religion as you?
How many people have the same nationality as you?
How many people have British nationality?
How many people live in the same area as you?
How many people have the same level of education as you?

#### **5.5.4 Interviews**

The name generator, the participant-aided sociogram and the name interpreter were employed during semi-structured interviews with participants. This approach aligns with the widely adopted combination of qualitative interviews and name generators in studies exploring egocentric networks (Crossley et al., 2015). For instance, Ali et al. (2022) employed name generators for in-depth interviews with sponsored and GAR subjects in Toronto to explore their social networks, the nature of their social relationships and the impact of these social relationships on settlement processes. Other studies, such as those conducted by Hanley et al. (2018) and Hynie et al. (2019),

focusing on resettled refugees' social networks and integration outcomes, further combined data collected through surveys with face-to-face interviews and focus groups.

A combination of open and closed questions was employed to enhance the efficiency of data collection and ensure comparability. Closed questions, akin to those found in questionnaires, allowed the collection of comparable and objective data, and reduced the interview duration, alleviating participants' burden (Hollstein, 2011; Saunders et al., 2019). These questions were used to gather information on:

*Participants' individual characteristics*, encompassing age, gender, religion, native language, ethnicity, pre-migration employment, civil status, number of children under 18, and level of education (Hynie et al., 2019). Additionally, I gathered information on participants' current employment status, the time spent in the UK and in the same area, any educational training they were currently attending, the time they waited to be resettled and the country where they stayed before resettlement.

*Facilitators of Integration (Fol)*. Participants were asked to self-assess, rating on a scale from 1 to 5, their English language level, knowledge of British culture, digital skills, and the extent to which they felt safe and stable (limitations linked to self-reporting are discussed in Section 8.3).

As explained in Chapter Four, individual characteristics and Fol are interconnected with the development of social connections and shape integration processes. Collecting data on these two aspects is essential to understanding refugees' social networks and generating a robust comparison between the extent of network impact on VPRS and CS refugees' integration.

On the other hand, the inclusion of open questions allowed for an exploration of resources within participants' social networks and the nature of relationships with specific individuals. Allowing respondents to provide open answers provided valuable insights into the subjective meaning participants attribute to relationships, shedding light on why specific individuals were considered very close or less close.

#### **5.5.5 Field notes**

Alongside interviews, field notes were made to capture participants' comments, behaviours and interactions observed during the fieldwork (Lune and Berg, 2016). Observations are 'probably the oldest of all network data gathering approaches', but they have rarely been used for studying egocentric networks (Crossley et al., 2015: 63). Observations on personal networks are often combined with other data collection techniques, such as interviews and secondary sources, and consist in shadowing participants in their daily routine to understand how social interactions vary according to circumstances (Crossley et al., 2015). Observations can be further valuable in identifying discrepancies between what participants say and how they act (Conti and Doreian, 2010). The restrictions imposed on face-to-face interactions by the COVID-19 pandemic limited the feasibility of data collection through direct observations of participants' daily lives over time. Despite these limitations, I was still able to collect a limited amount of field notes, both before and after the interviews, to supplement the data collected through the other approaches employed.

Various challenges affect the reliability and validity of data gathered through observations. One such challenge arises from potential misinterpretation or misunderstanding of phenomena and events due to the observer's unfamiliarity with the participants' environment and culture (Saunders et al., 2019). This limitation was

partially mitigated by my familiarity with Arab culture, acquired through my experience working with refugees in the UK. Moreover, the interpreter's assistance enhanced my understanding of Arab culture and clarified meanings. Interactions between the researcher and participants can also introduce biases, particularly concerning the validity of collected network data (D'Angelo and Ryan, 2021), which I explore further in Section 8.3. However, as noted by Monahan and Fisher (2010 in Saunders et al., 2019: 398), 'all research methods can have researcher effects that may lead to bias', and thus, observations might not be inherently more susceptible to bias than other approaches.

Given the selective nature of field notes, where researchers prioritise essential information for the study while excluding other details (Emerson et al., 2001), I employed a template to ensure consistency in the recorded information for each interview. This template, completed before and after each interview, comprised two primary sections along with an additional section for annotating additional comments (a copy of the template is provided in Appendix 2). One section detailed the time and location of the interviews, while also providing insights into the participants' living environments. I gathered these insights by walking through the areas where participants resided, noting details such as transportation availability, the presence of mosques, Arab food shops and observable population traits. Understanding the context of interactions was pivotal in comprehending social network development and integration processes. The other section of the template included notes about the interview, recording behaviours and comments that might not have been captured in the recorded interviews, helping to clarify participant meaning (Phillippi and Lauderdale, 2018) and supplementing data collected during the interviews.

Furthermore, field notes were instrumental in documenting participants' nonverbal communication and my reflections. Nonverbal communication data encompassed observations related to respondents' postures, moments of silence, changes in tone of voice and behaviours related to the interviewer-interviewee relationship (Denham and Onwuegbuzie, 2013). The collection of nonverbal communication data and its analysis intensified descriptions and interpretations, uncovering implicit meanings and providing in-depth understandings (Denham and Onwuegbuzie, 2013). Reflective notes on the interview process were also beneficial in identifying opportunities for enhancing the adopted interview techniques and approach (Phillippi and Lauderdale, 2018).

#### ***5.5.6 Piloting***

The study underwent a piloting phase to 'test the questions and to gain some practice in interviewing' (Majid et al., 2017). Two pilot interviews were conducted employing the tools and techniques explained in the previous sections. These interviews lasted less than 90 minutes each and were not recorded. The adjustments made post-piloting are detailed in the next sections, followed by critical reflections on lessons learned during this phase.

The tools employed for data collection necessitated substantial preparation, including materials like Post-it page markers, a large sheet with four concentric circles and coloured markers. The first pilot interview served primarily to ensure the availability and adequacy of the materials, and was conducted with a male migrant in the UK. Feedback received during this session, particularly concerning language use and question order, led to two significant changes before the second pilot interview.

The first adjustment concerns Stage 3 of the development of the social network's visual representation (participant-aided sociogram). During this stage, the participant was provided with eight categories to classify the people within his network according to specific social roles (see Section 5.5.2). Initially, the first of these categories was labelled 'immediate family outside the house' (Hogan et al., 2007: 125). The participant raised concerns that this categorisation excluded family members such as parents and siblings living with refugees. Therefore, to streamline and clarify the classification, the term 'immediate family outside the house' was replaced by the more straightforward term 'immediate family'.

The second change involved the order of the questions aimed at gathering information about the socio-demographic characteristics of people within the network, the *question-wise* format of the name interpreter. In the initial pilot interview, these questions were posed after the participant had already placed the Post-it page markers with the names of his connections on the sheet with the four concentric circles. Having already constructed the sociogram of his network, with connections scattered across the concentric circles, the participant encountered difficulty in identifying all the individuals in their network and clarifying, for instance, the number of people with similar characteristics such as gender and age. The participant pointed out that it would have been easier for him to answer the questions when the Post-it page markers were on the name generator template (Figure 10), where names were arranged in columns, providing a more precise visualisation of who was included in the network. I shared the participant's concern as it was also challenging for me to ensure that no connections were omitted, given the tangled disposition of the Post-it page markers on the paper with the target.

Changing the question order proved to be successful during the second pilot interview, as the participant easily responded to all the questions related to people in his network by reviewing each name on the Post-it page markers before they were placed in the target tool.

The second pilot interview was conducted with a sponsored refugee who has been living in the UK for over two years. Due to financial constraints, I was unable to pilot the interview with the presence of an interpreter. The absence of an interpreter was significant as it posed challenges in accurately communicating nuanced meanings and expressions, as it became evident when the participant encountered language barriers and resorted to Google Translator for assistance. I reflect more on the role of the interpreter and on the challenges of conducting interviews with individuals who speak English as a second language in Section 5.7.2.

During this piloting interview, when presented with sheets of paper containing Post-it page markers to record the very close and less close connections, the participant initially hesitated, expressing discomfort in sharing information about people he knew. In response, I suggested using nicknames and said that he had no obligation to provide information he did not feel comfortable sharing. Recognising that having approximately 30 Post-it page markers for each sheet could be intimidating, I reassured the participant that he did not need to fill in all the available spaces. This affirmation made him feel more comfortable.

As the interview progressed, his initial hesitation disappeared, and he freely discussed his relationships with people in his network. At the end of the interview, the participant mentioned that the questions were clear, the language used was easy to understand, and he enjoyed constructing his social network. Despite the interview lasting for more

than an hour, he also remarked that the time passed quickly. Additionally, the participant offered to connect with more resettled refugees he knows who might be interested in participating in the study.

### **5.5.7 Conclusion**

In the above sections, I presented the methods employed for data collection, elucidating techniques and approaches used. In Table 3, I provide an overview of the tools utilised and the data each tool aimed to gather during fieldwork.

**Table 3: Overview of the adopted tools and collected data**

Interview	
Name generators with Participant-aided Sociogram, Hogan et al.'s (2007) version of the 'target' tool.	Structure of the individual's networks, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• number of people in the network</li> <li>• level of closeness between the participant and people within the network</li> <li>• type of relationships between the participant and people within the network (ego-alter ties)</li> <li>• relationships between people within the network (alter-alter ties)</li> </ul>
Closed questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual socio-demographic and migration variables (e.g., age, gender, level of education, time spent in the UK)</li> <li>• Self-assessed level of Iol's facilitators (English language, culture, digital skills, safety and stability) on a scale from 1 to 5</li> <li>• Socio-demographic information on the people included in participants' networks</li> <li>• Potentially available resources in the participant's network</li> </ul>

Open questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meaning that participants attribute to relationships</li> <li>• In-depth understanding of the nature of relationships between participants and people within their network and the resources available through the network</li> </ul>
Field notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Context in which the participant interacts</li> <li>• Implicit meanings</li> <li>• Improvements for the techniques and approaches used to collect data</li> </ul>

Before presenting how data were subsequently analysed, the following section reflects on some of the challenges, limitations and ethical considerations that emerged from implementing the methodology presented in this chapter.

### **5.6 Ethical considerations**

As mentioned in Section 5.4.3, participants were provided with a consent form and an information sheet written in English and Arabic. These documents outlined the study's objectives, the expectations from participants upon agreement to participate, the advantages and potential drawbacks of participation, and the measures taken to ensure confidentiality. The consent form and the information sheet also highlighted that participation was entirely voluntary and participants had 30 days after undertaking the interview to withdraw from the study, with their data erased within 24 hours upon withdrawal (see Appendix 3, 4, 5, 6).

Before beginning the interviews, I also verbally explained the information reported in the information sheet and the consent form. If refugees required the services of an interpreter, the content of these documents was clarified in Arabic to ensure

comprehension. Time was allocated for participants to address any additional queries or concerns they might have had. Participants were further reminded that their participation was entirely voluntary; they could decide to pause or stop the interview at any time and they were not obligated to provide information or respond to questions if they felt uncomfortable. Consent to audio-recording the interviews and take pictures of the participants' sociograms developed during the interview was asked in writing through the consent form and verbally.

Data were stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and following the University of Birmingham's policies. Photographs of participants' sociograms were only used for data analysis purposes, with the personal names of participants' social connections removed when data were imported into the Gephi software. The photographs, the interview transcriptions and recorded audio as well as the documents, including field notes and consent forms, were stored separately.

In safeguarding participants' confidentiality, a code system was created, replacing participants' names with nicknames. The coding document containing essential participant details like name, phone number and postcode was stored separately from all other collected data. This separation facilitated the prompt deletion of a participant's data in case of withdrawal from the study. To enhance participants' confidentiality further, pseudonyms were employed in reporting their quotes, substituting the real names of individuals mentioned by participants.

At the conclusion of each interview, a supplementary information sheet in English and Arabic was provided to participants, reiterating the 30-day withdrawal option and including contacts of organisations offering mental health counselling and support services for refugees settling in the UK. Participants further received a £10 Love2shop

shopping voucher as a sign of appreciation for their dedicated time in the study. Information on how to spend the voucher was detailed in the information sheet, including an online link listing 20,000 stores across the UK that accepted the voucher (see Appendix 7, 8).

Compensations for participation in research studies necessitate ethical considerations, particularly when involving individuals living on benefits, as this can create an obligation to participate (Head, 2009). To mitigate this possibility, participants were informed that they could retain the voucher even if they chose to withdraw from the study. This assurance was explicitly detailed in the information sheet distributed to participants prior to the start of the interviews. The decision to thank participants with a voucher rather than cash was justified by the possibility that cash compensation could have affected participants' benefits, counting as a payment for their participation rather than a sign of appreciation (Mann et al., 2017).

Additionally, precautions were taken to mitigate COVID-19 risks, given the high number of cases during data collection. Before and after meeting participants, I made sure to wash my hands or use sanitiser. I further checked and adhered to the latest recommendations and rules provided by the government and local authorities to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

To ensure my safety during interviews held at participants' preferred times and locations, I consistently informed a close relative about my schedule and travel plans before commencing fieldwork and at the conclusion of each interview. As a CS sponsor and through prior experience aiding refugees, I was trained to handle exposure to distressing situations and stories related to forced migration. Additionally, I had access

to counselling services for additional support. However, since with this study, I focused on gathering information about refugees' social networks rather than their personal experiences of forced migration, the likelihood of exposure to distress for both participants and myself was limited.

## **5.7 Challenges and limitations of the methodology**

This section reflects on the challenges and limitations encountered in adopting the above-described methodology, starting from participants' recruitment. Issues more concerned with data analysis are instead described in the next section.

While some issues were more strictly associated with the investigation of social networks, some others were specific to this study. The subsequent sub-sections explain in more detail the expected and unexpected issues I came across while implementing this methodology and the strategies adopted to mitigate these challenges.

### ***5.7.1 Recruiting participants***

Full ethical approval for this study was obtained from the University of Birmingham in December 2021. The active participant recruitment started in January 2022 to avoid potential oversight during the winter holidays, considering reduced email activity.

Despite my anticipations and precautions, the rise in COVID-19 cases, mainly due to the Omicron variant, resulted in a general reluctance amongst people to engage in face-to-face interactions. Unfortunately, my contraction of COVID-19 in January further delayed the initiation of data collection by a few weeks.

When the participant recruitment started, several other expected and unexpected challenges emerged. Foreseen challenges included potential reluctance from organisations and CS groups to share client contacts, often due to safeguarding

policies in place. However, while most organisations were willing to circulate the study invitation through their social channels, some CS groups were also reluctant to share the invitation with sponsored refugees. Contrary to my expectations, recruiting VPRS refugees was less challenging than recruiting CS participants. There was an erroneous anticipation that my established connections with CS groups would have facilitated the recruitment of sponsored refugees. Some sponsors and refugees whom I reached out to also expressed research fatigue, having already participated in other studies on CS. Furthermore, a couple of sponsored refugees did not agree to participate due to negative experiences caused by previous interviewers not respecting their confidentiality and privacy.

On the other hand, the recruitment of VPRS refugees was easier than expected, perhaps because they received fewer interview requests compared to CS refugees. Consequently, they were less likely to experience research fatigue and were more keen to participate. Moreover, by March 2021, the number of resettled VPRS refugees stood at 20,319, significantly higher than the 522 sponsored refugees, indicating a larger population within the VPRS group compared to CS refugees, which might have facilitated the recruitment process (Home Office, 2021b). Additionally, sponsored refugees' reliance on volunteers could potentially lead to a scenario where the information about participation opportunities might not be effectively communicated to sponsored refugees, making the recruitment of CS participants more difficult. Overall, it was still effective for the recruiting process of both CS and VPRS refugees that participants were first informed about the study by someone they know personally, such as a volunteer or a caseworker, and in some cases by other participants.

### ***5.7.2 Interviewing speakers of English as a second language***

Recognising that some refugees may not have English language skills, or feel more confident speaking in their native language, participants were given the option to have an interpreter during the interview. In 10 of the 17 interviews conducted, an interpreter was employed to translate from English to Arabic and vice versa. To ensure participants' confidentiality, the employed interpreter was required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Working with an interpreter when conducting qualitative studies can lead to some validity threats, especially when the interpreter has no experience in research projects or the researcher is not aware of the participants' culture (Kapborg and Bertero, 2002). In this study, strategies to mitigate these challenges were planned in advance.

Firstly, the interpreter had experience translating for research projects and had previously participated as an interpreter for a study on CS. Additionally, the interpreter was briefed about the study's scope before being involved in the interviews and was provided with detailed information, both orally and in writing, about the methodology employed and the questions that participants would be asked. The risk that I interpreted the answers without taking into account the participants' culture was mitigated by my experience of working with Arab refugees, especially with sponsored refugees. Moreover, I studied Modern Standard Arabic the year before starting the interviews. Although I have not reached a good level of language proficiency in Arabic, I have learned some sentences and words that helped me establish a relationship with participants and superficially understand the Arabic communications between refugees and the interpreter.

After each interview, a separate conversation was held with the interpreter to ensure that there were no issues raised during the translation that I did not capture. However, it was not entirely possible to exclude the risk that some information was not accurately translated from English to Arabic and vice versa. Due to funds and time limitations, the Arabic segments of the recorded interview were not transcribed and translated.

The interpreter was not physically present in the room while I interviewed participants; instead, the interpreter was connected via phone. While there is limited literature on the use of telephone interpreting in social research, using phone interpreters can have some advantages (Locatis et al., 2010; Sawrikar, 2015). Firstly, telephone interpreting can be less time-consuming and less expensive as the interpreter does not need to commute. Furthermore, when using interpreter assistance during interviews, the interpreter's experience and training appear to be more crucial than the method used for delivering the interpretation (Bragason, 2011).

Having a trained interpreter in this study facilitated my understanding of changes in participants' tone and the meanings of certain Arabic terms that lack a corresponding word in English. It is noteworthy that, on one occasion, the interpreting was handled by a participant's friend, whom I had interviewed before. Although conducting an interview with a participant's friend present is not ideal due to potential distortions in answers and biases in translation (Kapborg and Bertero, 2002), the friend's presence did contribute to the participant feeling more confident in meeting me and participating in the study.

While overall, employing a trained interpreter proved beneficial in connecting with interviewees and understanding more about Arabic culture, the main challenge identified in conducting interviews with speakers of English as a second language was

not the presence but rather the absence of an interpreter on some specific occasions. In interviews with three participants who opted not to have an interpreter, challenges arose from their limited proficiency in English, particularly in understanding certain words and questions. Despite attempting to simplify language, explaining concepts like culture, stability and safety proved challenging at times. These language-related issues were, in most cases, addressed using Google Translate.

### ***5.7.3 Interviewing family members together***

Another essential methodological aspect that requires attention and reflection is conducting interviews with members of the same family together. Amongst the participants, 12 were married couples and two were a mother-daughter pair. When couples were approached, they were initially interviewed at the same time, and their answers were recorded separately. At this stage, questions encompassed aspects like age, religion, language, country of origin, education level, number of children, employment, time before resettlement, and arrival in the UK. Additionally, participant couples were simultaneously asked to rate their knowledge of the English language, English culture, ability to use digital devices, and how safe and stable they felt.

Subsequently, each participant was provided with two sheets with Post-it notes to write down their very close and less close connections. Moving forward, individual interviews were conducted with each member of the couple. While interviewing each participant separately, the other member of the couple often remained in the same room, occasionally contributing to the conversation. There were instances where spouses compared their answers or collaborated to recall people within their networks. Conducting part of the interview with both family members offered advantages: it saved time by avoiding the repetition of questions, particularly those related to shared socio-

demographic characteristics. Additionally, observing the partner's interview, the other participant was familiarised with the tool used to create a visual network representation, streamlining the process.

Joint interviews enriched the conversation, with one partner occasionally enhancing or clarifying the other's responses, 'providing richer, more detailed and validated accounts than those generated by interviews with individuals' (Valentine, 1999: 68). Joint interviews also provided insights into the couple's relationship dynamics and gender-role attitudes, often revealing that women took the lead in conversations. However, in two instances, the partner's involvement risked overshadowing the other participant's voice, though such occurrences were limited. On just one occasion, a participant was encouraged to let his partner respond to the questions, with the assurance that a thorough exploration of his perspective would occur during his subsequent individual interview.

The main disadvantage of having couples as participants is that, despite conducting separate investigations into their social networks, 'the presence of both partners may inhibit disclosure and limit sharing in a way that could result in constrained and partial data' (Zarhin, 2018: 848). However, the risk was low since the research topic and questions were not highly sensitive.

I did not initially plan to interview family members together. As I clarified in Section 5.3, the unit of analysis of this study is individual resettled refugees. In participatory research, Banks et al. (2013) highlight that researchers often encounter evolving dynamics influenced by participants' contributions, experiences and interactions, necessitating flexibility in adapting the study's initial plans. Similarly, in this study, the decision to slightly readapt my initial plan of interviewing participants separately

emerged as a consequence of being approached by family members who wanted to participate. Additionally, I was also concerned about time constraints or burdens that might arise from separate interviews for each family member. In the next section, I further reflect on my positionality in the research environment.

#### ***5.7.4 Reflecting on positionality***

As highlighted by Banks et al. (2013: 274), 'all researchers need to reflect critically on their positionality and power in the research process'.

Leveraging my personal connections established as a CS sponsor within a pioneering no-faith-based sponsoring group in the UK, I initially sought to recruit participants. However, while this approach did not yield the anticipated success, as discussed in Section 5.7.1, it is essential to acknowledge that some refugees familiar with me through these sponsoring groups did agree to participate in the study.

On one occasion, I met a sponsored refugee with whom I had a prior direct connection due to my volunteer work as a sponsor, which led to the development of a personal relationship. During this encounter, I provided this person with the study's information sheet and consent form, outlining the research's purpose and confidentiality measures. However, the refugee expressed strong concerns about potential information disclosure and declined to sign the consent form. Despite this, he still expressed a willingness to participate as a gesture of reciprocating the assistance I had provided in the past.

Acknowledging the inherent power imbalance in our relationships, both as sponsor–refugee and as researcher–participant, I made the decision not to conduct the interview. Primarily, my decision not to proceed with the interview was rooted in ethical considerations. I firmly believed that ensuring voluntary participation and establishing

trust in safeguarding confidentiality were paramount. Any hesitation or lack of confidence in maintaining confidentiality could potentially influence the participant's openness, potentially leading to biased data collection. Moreover, I felt that proceeding with the interview could risk altering the dynamics of our established rapport, potentially impacting the trust and comfort that had been cultivated before I started planning to conduct this study.

My previous role as a CS group leader presented both advantages and potential biases in interactions with participants. On one hand, my experience as a sponsor provided me with a nuanced understanding of the challenges and needs of both refugees and volunteers in supporting families, enabling me to empathise with participants' experiences. Moreover, my familiarity with CS might have facilitated refugees' trust and willingness to engage in the study and share their experiences. However, there was a risk that my reliance on past experiences might have led to assumptions potentially biasing my interactions and influencing the study's outcomes. Writing down my reflections on the field notes template (see Section 5.5.5) while conducting interviews was instrumental in allowing me to reflect on the delicate balance of managing my dual roles as both a researcher and a sponsor. Additionally, being a CS group leader might have positioned me as an authority figure among participants, potentially influencing interview dynamics. This circumstance could have led refugees to feel obliged to participate while feeling constrained in expressing themselves fully. Recognising the potential influence of my CS experience, I emphasised to participants that their involvement was entirely voluntary and they had no obligation to answer any questions they were uncomfortable with. During interviews, I was also vigilant to identify any signs of distress or discomfort I might have caused to participants, aiming

to alleviate these situations by pausing the interview or refraining from asking further questions if I noticed participants were unwilling to provide additional information on a specific topic. Additionally, having a debrief session with the interpreter after an interview helped me reflect on my interview approach and identify areas for improvement to ensure participants' comfort in sharing their experiences. The guidance and support of other experts in conducting research with refugees, including my supervisors, also played a crucial role in helping me navigate the intricate power dynamics throughout the research process.

The complex dynamic of power imbalance was evident on various occasions during interviews. While kindly welcoming me into their homes, participants often offered food or beverages. This gesture, while appreciated, stirred a sense of unease within me. I was concerned that accepting these acts of kindness might compromise my commitment to maintaining professional boundaries as a researcher. Nevertheless, in conducting research in a cross-cultural context, sharing food is recognised as an effective approach for developing positive relationships between the researcher and participants (Liamputtong Rice, 2000 in Liamputtong, 2008), as I also experienced when accepting the food that participants offered.

I further felt that ethical considerations limited my ability to use my knowledge of the way CS and VPRS programmes operate to address issues participants shared during the interview. I did not report refugees' concerns to individuals who were supporting them, such as caseworkers or volunteers, because of the risk of breaching the confidentiality of the information provided. However, I provided participants with my insights and shared information about their resettlement programmes, such as policy

guidelines explaining what they were entitled to, which could help them advocate for their rights and address their needs.

Moreover, while most participants expressed their enjoyment in participating in the study as a means of meeting new people and hosting gatherings, this, in turn, left me with conflicting feelings, sensing potential exploitation and struggling to balance my roles as a researcher and a compassionate individual. My concerns were also deeply intertwined with my personal experiences as a migrant in the UK. My experiences of settling in new countries on several occasions provided me with insight into the emotions and challenges expressed by participants. While my voluntary relocation to a new country where my rights closely mirrored those of the host population differed significantly from forced migration, listening to refugees' difficulties in rebuilding social networks and fostering friendships brought back memories of the loneliness and feeling misunderstood that I experienced, especially during the first years in the UK. While trying to avoid explicitly sharing my experiences with the aim of leaving space for participants to express themselves, I shared practices and perspectives that aided my own integration, hoping they might prove beneficial to mitigate participants' challenges.

Furthermore, I was aware of cultural differences between myself and the participants. While I tried to mitigate these differences, drawing from my prior experiences interacting with Arab individuals and my training as a volunteer and researcher, I occasionally worried about inadvertently causing offence or discomfort. For instance, I was cautioned to avoid scheduling interviews during Ramadan, respecting the fasting period. However, some participants agreed to meet during this time and even offered me food while they were fasting. This situation prompted an internal dilemma about

whether to accept the food or refuse it, risking offending participants' generosity. Reflecting on my previous experiences, I decided that open communication was the most appropriate approach. Therefore, I expressed my concerns to the participants and respected their responses. However, I remained mindful that their reply might have been influenced by politeness rather than a direct expression of their true thoughts. Additional reflections on my positionality and power imbalance are discussed in Section 8.3, where I highlight the limitations related to the collection of network data.

#### ***5.7.5 Defining the boundaries of a social network***

Defining the boundaries of a social network poses a significant challenge, particularly in qualitative studies where individuals have autonomy in deciding the inclusions and exclusions of people in their network (Heath et al., 2009). Prior to listing individuals in their networks, participants were provided with definitions of close and less close connections, as outlined in Section 5.5.2. However, this definition might have led to the exclusion of certain connections, particularly weak ties. This approach facilitated a deeper understanding of how participants interpreted the concept of closeness and the criteria influencing their including of some connections as very or less close. Notably, participants tended to omit friends and relatives residing abroad. Once questioned why family members abroad were omitted, some participants said they thought I was only interested in learning about their relationships in the UK. Therefore, in the following interviews, I highlighted to participants that they could include all their connections regardless of their location. Close family members, such as spouses or children, were also frequently omitted by participants and not included in their network.

Upon recognising such exclusions, participants were further asked to explain their choices, with a reminder that they could add more connections to their network at any

point during the interview. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that the sociograms produced by participants may not reflect their whole social network. The potential for 'missing data' is a limitation that in social network analysis cannot be entirely removed, but in this study, it was mitigated by employing 'the same explicit and structured name generator techniques (...) to ensure that each network is generated by the same method' (Heath et al., 2009: 657-658).

#### **5.7.6 Practical challenges**

Preparing all interview materials (the target tool, the sheets with Post-it notes) was time-consuming. Ensuring that all tools and sheets were available and ready took approximately one hour for each interview. The extended preparation time was caused by the need to cut each tag note from larger Post-it notes to obtain the needed size to fit the sheets. Additionally, a practical issue arose with the placement of the Post-it notes on the paper with the four concentric circles: for participants writing names in Arabic, from right to left, positioning the notes, which had adhesive on the left side, on the target tool proved challenging. This challenge could have been mitigated before starting the interviews by involving someone from the participants' culture to review the materials to mitigate barriers associated with the cross-cultural research context and ensure greater cultural sensitivity (Liamputtong, 2008).

Hogan et al. (2007) recommended using a large table during interviews due to the substantial size of the target tool sheet, such as a dining table. In this study, I gave participants the freedom to choose their interview setting. The sofa, coffee table or floor seatings were occasionally used to hold the material provided to build participants' social networks. Despite instances where the selected space was less than ideal, this approach cultivated an informal atmosphere during interviews, contributing to the

establishment of a closer and more intimate relationship as the participants and I sat in proximity around the research tools. Additionally, I recognised the cultural significance of floor seating among some people of the Muslim faith. Therefore, my decision to conduct the interviews in this seating arrangement was also driven by a commitment to fostering cultural sensitivity by respecting and understanding participants' cultures (Liamputtong, 2008).

### 5.8 Sample

This section delves into the demographic details of the study participants, shedding light on the characteristics of the 23 resettled refugees who participated in this study. Amongst them, 10 were sponsored refugees and 13 entered the UK under VPRS. A local community sponsorship group also supported three VPRS refugees and their data were analysed separately as 'VPRS+CS'. Out of the total participants, 14 were female (6 CS, 6 VPRS, and 2 VPRS+CS), and nine were male (4 CS, 4 VPRS, and 1 VPRS+CS). Twenty participants were from Syria, while the remaining three were from Iraq (1 CS and 2 VPRS). All participants were Arabic-speaking Muslims. In Table 4 below, I provide a breakdown of the participants based on resettlement programme, gender and country of origin.

**Table 4: Participants' gender and country of origin**

		CS	VPRS	VPRS+CS	Total
Syria	M	4	3	1	8
	F	5	5	2	12
Iraq	M	0	1	0	1
	F	1	1	0	2
Total	M	4	4	1	9
	F	6	6	2	14

The participants were aged between 18 and 50 years old, with an average age of 35.30 years old for CS (SD=8.04), 39.80 years old for VPRS (SD=7.99) and 32.33 years old for VPRS+CS (SD=12.50). In terms of marital status, 19 participants were married, three were single (one for each resettlement scheme category), and one was a sponsored widow. All married participants had at least two children, with seven (2 CS and 5 VPRS) having up to four children. The children's ages ranged from 1 to 20 years old, with the children's average age of 9.64 years old for CS (SD=3.57), 11.06 years old for VPRS (SD=2.16) and 13.66 years old for VPRS+CS (SD=0).

In their country of origin, 12 participants (5 CS, 6 VPRS and 1 VPRS+CS) had jobs. Three participants, one from each of the three groups (CS, VPRS and VPRS+CS), were below the working age when they fled from their country of origin.

In terms of educational backgrounds, organised according to the Syrian and Iraqi educational systems (Education.stateuniversity.com, 2022; IRFAD, 2022), nine participants attended up to primary school – five of those were CS refugees. Seven respondents pursued education at an intermediate level, including five VPRS refugees, and six attended secondary and university education. Of those with a university qualification, two were CS refugees and one was a VPRS refugee. Just one sponsored participant had no education at all.

**Table 5: Participants' educational backgrounds**

		CS	VPRS	VPRS+CS	Total
Education	No education	1	0	0	1
	Primary	5	1	3	9
	Intermediate	2	5	0	7
	Secondary	0	3	0	3
	University	2	1	0	3

On average, CS participants waited for 6.3 years ( $SD=1.82$ ) to be resettled in the UK, while VPRS and VPRS+CS waited for 5.4 ( $SD= 1.07$ ) and 5 ( $SD=0$ ) years, respectively. Thirteen refugees were resettled from Jordan (6 CS, 4 VPRS and 3 VPRS+CS), five from Lebanon (3 CS and 2 VPRS) and two VPRS refugees were resettled from Turkey. For three participants, the information about their waiting country is not available.

Since only refugees resettled before the COVID-19 pandemic (March 2020) were interviewed, all participants had spent at least 2.3 years in the UK at the time of the interview. As CS volunteers are required to support refugees for one year and provide accommodation for two years, the sponsorship agreement had formally ended at the time of the interview, meaning the sponsoring groups had no obligation to maintain relationships with the sponsored families.

The mean time since refugees arrived in the UK was 3.67 years for CS ( $SD= 9.38$ ), 3.5 for VPRS ( $SD=11.1$ ) and VPRS+CS ( $SD=0$ ). The average time spent in the same location was 3.45 ( $SD=15.63$ ), 3.03 ( $SD=4.8$ ) and 3.5 ( $SD=0$ ) for CS, VPRS and VPRS+CS refugees, respectively. The slight difference between the means of time spent in the UK and the time spent in the same place indicates that participants generally stayed in the same location where they were first housed.

Almost all participants lived in a house, except for one CS and two VPRS refugees who lived in a flat and four participants (2 CS and 2 VPRS) for whom housing information was not available as they were not interviewed in their accommodation. Looking at how the local authority districts where refugees were living were classified by the Government Statistical Service (DEFRA Rural Statistics, 2017), nine out of ten CS refugees were in predominantly rural areas or urban areas with significant rural

presence. Six VPRS participants were situated in predominantly urban settings, defined as areas where at least 74% of the population resides in urban areas (such as cities or towns) (DEFRA Rural Statistics, 2017; Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, 2021). Four VPRS participants were in areas classified as urban with significant rural influence, characterised by having 26% to 49% of residents living in rural areas (such as hamlets, dwellings, villages and hub towns) (DEFRA Rural Statistics, 2017; Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, 2021). The VPRS refugees who were also supported by a CS group were instead in a predominantly rural area, defined as areas where at least 50% of the population lives in rural areas or rural-related hub towns (DEFRA Rural Statistics, 2017).

Looking at the levels of ethnic diversity, five CS refugees and the three VPRS refugees who were also assisted by a CS group, were living in less diverse areas where the percentage of ethnic minorities was less than 2% of the overall population according to the 2021 census for England and Wales (Office for National Statistics, 2022). The majority of VPRS refugees (8 out of 10) were in places where the ethnic minorities percentage was higher than 16.6%.

At the time of the interview, 17 participants were not employed. Of the four employed CS refugees (of whom three were women), one was working as a kitchen porter, one as a tailor and another participant was employed in a charity, supporting other refugees. The male sponsored refugee worked with tractors. The two male refugees resettled through VPRS were a van driver and a factory worker. When they were interviewed, five of the 23 participants did not attend English classes. Of those attending ESOL courses, one VPRS was at the pre-entry level, while the majority were at the Entry 3 level – two participants for each resettlement group. Two young

participants aged 20 and 18 years old (1 VPRS and 1 VPRS+CS) were enrolled in a college course.

Having provided details about the participant sample, the following section describes how the collected data were analysed.

### **5.9 Data analysis**

As explained in the previous sections, during face-to-face interviews, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected employing several tools. This section outlines how these data were analysed.

The first step of data analysis consisted of transcribing each interview. As briefly mentioned before, due to resource limitations, interviews conducted with an interpreter were only transcribed in English, excluding the Arabic content. Data were subsequently derived from these transcriptions and photographs of participants' sociograms developed during the interviews.

Quantitative data were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet and categorised into four groups: participants' socio-demographic and migration variables, self-rated FoI of integration, data related to the structure of social networks and information about the places where participants were living. Variables such as participants' first language and religion were omitted, as all respondents identified as native Arabic speakers of the Muslim faith. Data concerning participants' educational backgrounds were organised according to the Syrian and Iraqi educational systems, encompassing six years of primary education (commencing at age six), three years of intermediate school, and three years of secondary education, followed by university studies (Education.stateuniversity.com, 2022; IRFAD, 2022).

As explained in Section 5.5.4, data related to Fol were gathered by having participants rate, on a scale from 1 to 5, their proficiency in the English language and understanding of British culture, their ability to use digital devices and access information through the internet, and their perceptions of overall safety and stability. To facilitate comparison, the obtained data were converted to a 10-point scale, accommodating responses such as 2-3, 4.5, or almost 5. A new variable – Fol – was subsequently created by computing the self-assessed variable for each Facilitator of Integration.

These quantitative data were supplemented with information related to places where refugees were living. Participants' postcodes were utilised to determine whether their local authority district fell into the categories of Predominantly Rural, Urban with Significant Rural, or Predominantly Urban, as per the classifications provided by the Government Statistical Service (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, 2021). Data regarding the ethnic diversity of the areas where refugees lived were captured as a continuous variable, representing the percentage of individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds in relation to the entire population of England and Wales. This information was sourced from the 2021 census (Office for National Statistics, 2022).

Table 6 provides a detailed account of all these quantitative data, along with their corresponding codes.

**Table 6: Variables and code**

<i>Participants' social-demographic characteristics and migration variables: collected through closed questions</i>	
Resettlement scheme	1=CS 2=VPRS 3=VPRS+CS

Gender	0=Male 1=Female
Age	Continuous variable
Country of Origin	1=Syria 2=Iraq
Marital Status	1=Married 2=Single 3=Widow
Number of children	Continuous variable
Age of children	Continuous variable
Job back home	1=yes 2=no
Education	0=No education 1=Primary 2=Intermediate 3=Secondary 4=University
Waiting time before being resettled (in years)	Continuous variable
Waiting country	1=Jordan 2=Lebanon 3=Turkey
Time in the UK since resettled (in months)	Continuous variable
Time in the same UK area (in months)	Continuous variable
Job at the present	0=No 1=Yes
Educational training attended at the present	0=ESOL pre-entry 1=ESOL entry 1 2=ESOL entry 2 3=ESOL entry 3 4=ESOL level 1

	5=College (no ESOL)
<i>Self-rated Facilitators of Integration</i>	
Knowledge of the English language	Ordinal Variable from 1 to 10
Knowledge of British culture	Ordinal Variable from 1 to 10
Digital Skills	Ordinal Variable from 1 to 10
Safety	Ordinal Variable from 1 to 10
Stability	Ordinal Variable from 1 to 10
<i>Social Networks' data</i>	
Number of connections listed as Very Close	Continuous variable
Number of connections listed as Less Close	Continuous variable
Total Number of connections (Very Close + Less Close)	Continuous variable
Connections identified as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediate family members</li> <li>• Other relatives</li> <li>• Neighbours</li> <li>• People participants currently work/go to school with</li> <li>• People participants only know online</li> <li>• People from organisations</li> <li>• Friends not included above</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>	Continuous variables
Connections with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participant's same age</li> <li>• Participant's same sex</li> <li>• Participant's same first language</li> <li>• Participant's same religion</li> <li>• Participant's same nationality</li> </ul>	Continuous variable

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British nationality individuals</li> <li>• Individuals living in the participant's same area</li> <li>• Participant's same level of education</li> </ul>	
Information about participants' living area	
Participants' living areas classified according to the Government Statistical Service (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, 2021).	1= Predominantly Rural 2=Urban with Significant Rural 3= Predominantly Urban
Level of ethnic diversity (percentage of the ethnic minority population compared to the entire population of England and Wales)	Continuous variable

Coded data were subsequently entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used in triangulation with other qualitative data collected through the interviews and field notes. It is acknowledged that the sample size (23) and the use of a convenience sample (as explained in Section 5.4.2) impose limitations on the extent of quantitative analysis and generalisations. These concerns are also inherent in social network analysis, where representativeness and inferential statistics have limitations (Hollstein, 2014). A sample size of 23 participants (10 CS and 13 VPRS refugees) might not have been sufficient to detect statistically significant differences between VPRS and CS refugees and correlations between variables, potentially resulting in Type II errors (Baguley, 2004). At the same time, the small sample might also have led to Type I errors, where even if statistical significance was observed, there was a risk that the results may have been due to chance rather than reflecting the actual effects (Leppink et al., 2016).

Therefore, caution should be employed in interpreting the statistical results, recognising the potential for both false negative and false positive outcomes. The triangulation of the diverse qualitative and quantitative data employed in this study helped mitigate this limitation. However, the statistics presented should be interpreted as descriptive rather than as generalisations (Amrhein et al., 2019).

Qualitative data were instead analysed using a systematic thematic analysis approach to identify patterns (Braun and Clarke, 2006). An in-depth reading of each transcribed interview facilitated familiarity with the data, constituting the first stage of thematic analysis before identifying codes and organising them into themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Data was then coded manually, writing down for each interview features 'that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon' (Boyatzis, 1998: 63). Subsequently, codes were organised under six identified themes: relationships' attributes, factors that impact network building capacity, characteristics of individuals within the network able to offer support, support exchanged, the effects of social network and support exchanged, and markers and means.

To review the themes and ensure that they were suitable for the collected data – phase four of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) – the interview transcriptions were uploaded into the Nvivo software and nodes were created for each of the six identified themes. The data collected for each participant were then organised according to the main nodes/themes and subcategories, codes identified manually and grouped under a theme. At this stage, an additional theme called 'others' was created to include data that were not initially coded. To define and name themes – phase five of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) - the Nvivo data organised under each theme and sub-theme were exported to a Word table, creating a row for each participant. In the

Word table, the key approach involved not just paraphrasing the data's content, but rather elucidating the aspects that were deemed significant and explaining the reasons behind their importance (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Because of the comparative approach of this study, another Word table with three columns was created: one for participants resettled through CS, one for VPRS and the last one for VPRS participants also supported by a CS group (VPRS+CS). Coded data were grouped vertically according to each resettlement group and horizontally according to themes and sub-themes. At this stage, a narrative was developed with three main themes responding to this study's primary research questions. The first theme related to the type of social relationships participants described and what impacted their ability to develop a social network. The second theme related to the availability and exchange of resources in social networks, while the last one referred to the impact of social relationships and resources on integration.

Field notes, collected through a template as explained in Section 5.5.5, were also analysed using thematic analysis. Due to the smaller amount of data compared to that collected through interviews, the notes were directly coded using the Nvivo software. Two main themes were identified: one, including observations of the places where participants were living, and one, capturing information not recorded during the interviews, including non-verbal communications and reflective thoughts.

Finally, collected network data were uploaded into Gephi, one of the most popular social network analysis and visualisation softwares (Apostolato, 2013). Gephi's main strengths stem from being open-source and benefiting from community support, which fosters its usage and accessibility. The software offers 21 distinct layout algorithms aimed at tailoring visualisations to suit individual network characteristics, facilitating a

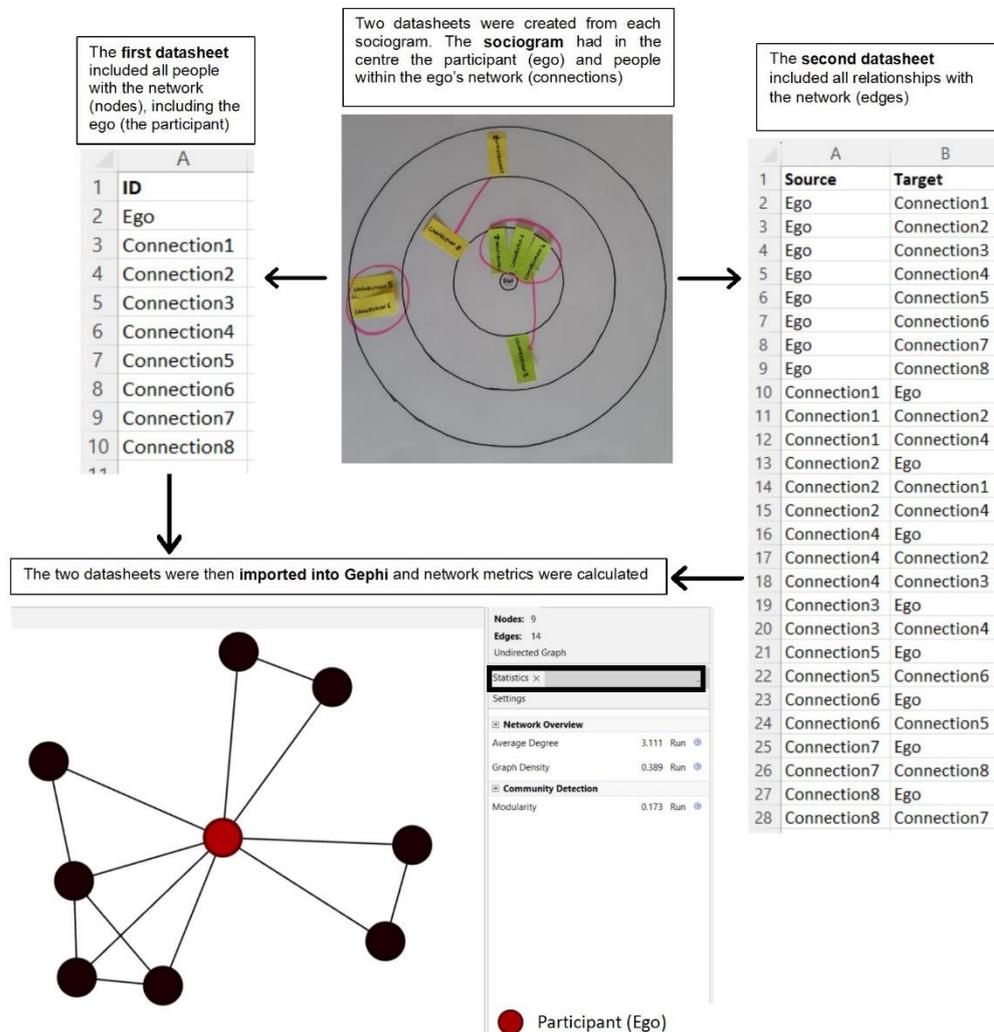
deeper understanding of network structures (Khokhar, 2015). For this study, the Yifan Hu layout was chosen for its capability to accurately represent network structures, bringing together strongly linked connections in close proximity (Shokoohi, 2023; Palmer, 2016).

To prepare data for Gephi, the visual sociograms created during the interviews were analysed. This analysis led to the creation of two distinct datasheets for each participant. One datasheet included information about people within the network (nodes), while the other contained details about the relationships (edges) between these individuals (Figure 12). All relationships were considered undirected and unweighted, meaning they lacked a specific direction and their strengths or importance were not considered (Askar et al., 2021). The decision to consider all relationships as undirected and unweighted stems from the nature of the data collection method employed, egocentric network analysis (see Section 5.3). In this approach, information was solely collected from refugees (egos) without gathering data from their connections (alters) in the networks. As a result, the lack of specific direction and the equal weighting of relationships reflect the focus on participant perspectives and the absence of detailed information about the strengths or importance of connections from the alters' viewpoints. It must be noted that two CS participants included a large number of connections, exceeding 60, rendering their sociograms less suitable for conversion into a matrix. The Excel datasheets created were subsequently imported into Gephi as comma-separated values (CSV) files, enabling the software to generate a visual representation of participants' networks. Gephi also enables the editing of network graphs, such as adjusting the colours and sizes of specific nodes (individuals within the network) (Khokhar, 2015). I employed graph manipulation to emphasise the

presence of refugees within their network by changing their node's colour, aiding visualisation.

Once network data were imported into Gephi, the 'Statistics' section on the right side of the software interface enabled the selection and calculation of various metrics. These metrics help in exploring and understanding the properties and characteristics of the network under analysis. Since not all metrics are suitable for studying egocentric or personal networks (Ferreira, 2013), only specific statistics were executed, including average degree, density and clustering. These statistics aimed to identify the presence of groups or cliques and determine the degree of connection between individuals within participants' networks (see Section 6.4).

**Figure 12: Example of how data were imported and analysed into Gephi**



### 5.10 Conclusion

To compare the social networks of refugees resettled through VPRS and CS, I employed social network analysis as a framework to capture information about refugees' types of relations and resources exchanged within these networks. In this chapter, I explained why I adopted a mixed-methods approach that prioritises qualitative data and employed social network analysis tools to gain a comprehensive understanding of participants' social networks. Respondents were asked to identify individuals who could provide support in response to hypothetical questions, which

enabled the investigation of the potential presence of supportive individuals within the network. I further described how the name generator was used alongside a visual data collection tool, namely a participant-aided sociogram, enabling the production of a visual representation of the network during interviews. After addressing ethical considerations, I discussed the methodological challenges and limitations as well as the strategies adopted to address these constraints. In the next chapter, I present the findings derived from employing this methodology.

## **CHAPTER 6: THE COMPOSITION OF REFUGEES' SOCIAL NETWORKS**

In this chapter, I explore the comparison and analysis of social networks amongst CS refugees, supported by groups of volunteers, and VPRS refugees, assisted by local authorities. My primary objective is to uncover how the resettlement scheme influences the composition of refugees' social networks and whether sponsorship programmes, such as CS, contribute to fostering broader connections within the host community.

The presentation of findings begins with an exploration of the size and composition of refugees' social networks, examining the socio-demographic characteristics of individuals within these networks, known as 'alters'. A comparative analysis unfolds, considering CS and VPRS refugees, along with a distinct group, VPRS+CS, representing VPRS refugees also supported by a CS group of volunteers. Subsequently, the social networks of these three participant groups are compared by looking at the social roles of individuals within these networks.

Furthermore, I provide a comparative analysis of participants' network structures, employing network metrics and visualisations facilitated by the Gephi software. In the subsequent sections, I shift focus to the nature of refugees' social relationships, emphasising the types of support exchanged within these relationships. Through an examination of network sizes, compositions and dynamics, I offer a comprehensive comparative analysis of the social networks developed by CS and VPRS refugees. In the subsequent chapter, I then explore how these distinct social networks, characterised by different types of relationships and resources, shape the integration processes of resettled refugees.

## **6.1 Size of participants' social networks**

In this section, I analyse and compare the number of social connections (alters) refugees had within their networks, including the number of connections with people they classified as very close and less close. Very close connections involve individuals with whom participants talk more often, discuss important matters and are more likely to receive help. Less close connections, on the other hand, include individuals with whom participants talk less, discuss less important matters and receive less help.

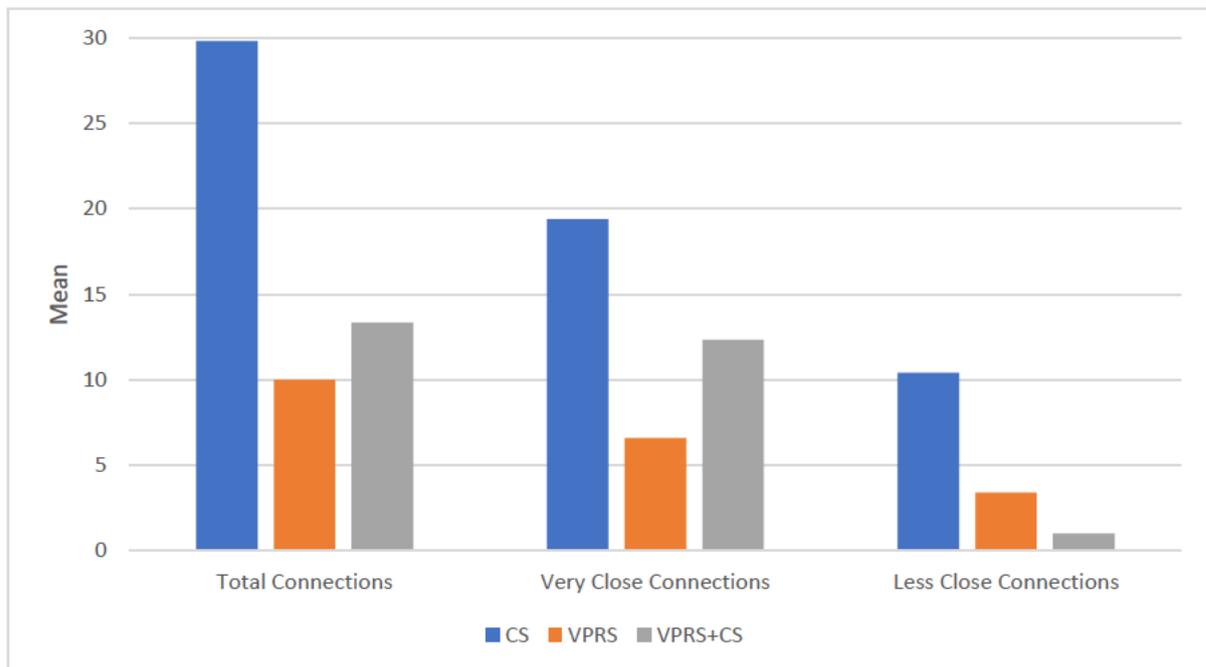
The average number of participants' social connections was 19.04 (SD=22.92), ranging between 5 and 106 relationships. The mean for connections listed as very close in the networks was 12.91 (SD=17.2), and for those less close, it was 6.13 (SD=6.6). It must be noted that two CS participants, Basima and Ramadan, recorded an unusually large number of connections in their social network - 70 and 106, respectively. These instances stand out as exceptional cases (outliers) when compared to the size of other participants' networks. Excluding them, the social networks' size for the remaining participants ranges between 5 and 29 connections. Nevertheless, Basima and Ramadan's cases represented genuinely exceptional values, not resulting from measurement or data entry errors. Basima and Ramadan were a married couple highly active in their community and outside, supporting other refugees, having experience in hospitality work and promoting CS at different levels. Additionally, during the interview, Ramadan requested additional sheets to write down the names of people he did not like; these people were classified as less close connections. Therefore, Basima and Ramadan's cases were included in the analysis. To ensure robustness, statistical tests were conducted both with and without considering the outlier values, assessing whether the differences in results could lead

to disparate outcomes. Non-parametric tests were applied when data distribution deviated from normality, regardless of the presence or absence of outliers.

Comparing refugees' social networks according to resettlement schemes, I observed that the average number of connections in a network, including the number of very close and less close relationships, was higher for CS refugees than for VPRS refugees, while VPRS refugees also assisted by a CS group (VPRS+CS) had, on average, a higher number of relationships – both very and less close – than participants supported by only local authorities, but lower when compared to CS respondents. The variation in network sizes amongst CS, VPRS, and VPRS+CS is illustrated in Figure 13.

Upon visual inspection, the distributions of the number of relationships for CS and VPRS refugees appeared similar. A Mann-Whitney U test was run to examine if there were significant differences in the size of social networks between CS and VPRS refugees. The test analysed the median size of social networks, revealing statistically significant distinctions between refugees sponsored by CS groups and those supported by local authorities, with  $U=15$  and  $p=0.007$  (Dineen and Blakesley, 1973). Furthermore, independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare the number of very close and less close connections for CS and VPRS participants. I found that VPRS refugees had statistically significantly fewer less close connections in their network than CS refugees –  $t(10.12)=2.674$ ,  $p=0.023$ . However, there was no significant difference in the mean number of very close connections between VPRS and CS participants.

**Figure 13: Comparison of social networks' size**



Therefore, it is evident that CS refugees tend to have broader networks, encompassing both very close and less close connections, in comparison to VPRS refugees.

Further exploration of participants' social networks considered potential relationships between the participants' number of social connections and various socio-demographic factors. Statistical analyses were conducted on factors such as gender, age, country of origin, marital status, number of children, employment and level of education in the country of origin, time waited before being resettled, the country where participants stayed before arriving in the UK, time spent in the UK, time spent in the same area, number of people in the household, current employment status and their ESOL level. Amongst these factors, the only variable demonstrating a statistically significant, moderately positive correlation with the participants' number of social connections was the time spent in the same area, with  $r_s=.577$  and  $p=.004$  (Laerd Statistics, 2018).

Conversely, no statistical significance was found between the size of refugees' social networks and the characteristics of the areas where they resided, such as predominantly rural, urban with significant rural or predominantly urban (according to DEFRA Rural Statistics, 2017) as well as the level of ethnic diversity in local authority districts where refugees lived as per the census in 2021 (Office for National Statistics, 2022).

## **6.2 Composition of participants' social networks**

Having examined the size of participants' social networks, the analysis shifts towards exploring the attributes of their connections, focusing on the socio-demographic characteristics of individuals categorised as very close and less close within refugees' networks.

The quantitative analysis (Figure 14) showed that, on average, participants had more connections with individuals of the same gender and residing in the same areas. Connections of the same age and level of education yielded the lowest means, indicating that participants had fewer relationships with individuals who shared both their age and educational background. Notably, participants, especially CS refugees, had connections with individuals who were generally older and more educated. The average age of participants was 36.87 years, with 73.9% having an intermediate or lower level of education, suggesting a relatively younger and less educated demographic. Respondents who had the highest number of connections with individuals of the same educational level were often highly educated, holding a university degree.

While walking through the predominantly rural areas where most CS refugees and the three VPRS+CS refugees lived, gathering information about the participants' living

areas, I observed that the majority of people I encountered were elderly. Fatima's words supported my observations:

*All her neighbours are old age and the majority of the time they're inside their houses. They're indoors* (Fatima, VPRS+CS, female, via interpreter).

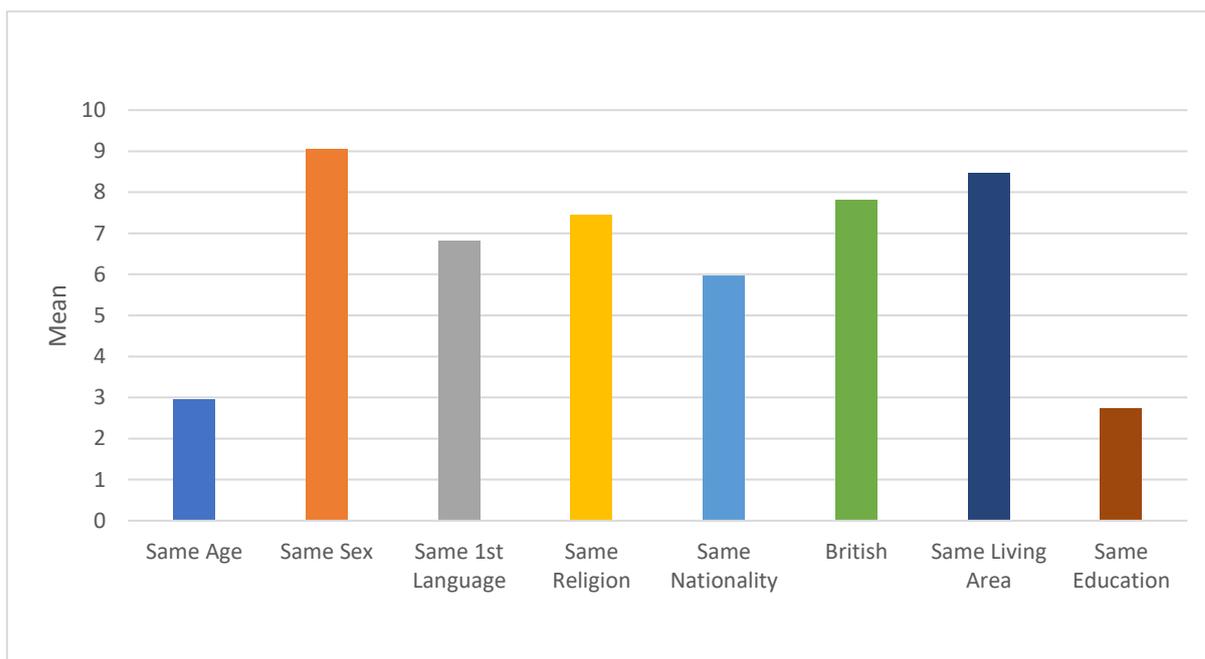
For Fatima, residing in an area where most people were older than her hindered her ability to establish relationships with individuals living close to her. However, age differences did not emerge as an issue when relationships were already established. For instance, Rasha, a VPRS refugee in her 30s, spoke about two very close individuals whom she met through organisations, saying:

*Age doesn't make a difference and Laura and Sally are now 60s* (Rasha, VPRS, female, via interpreter).

Maja, a CS refugee, also expressed increased confidence in receiving needed support from older British volunteers in her group, perceiving age as a sign of experience.

*I still take advice from them [CS volunteers]. They are older than me. They have experience. They are British there* (Maja, CS, female).

**Figure 14: Characteristics of the people within participants' networks**



Interestingly, the average number of British connections (7.82) was close to relationships with individuals sharing the same religion (7.45), Muslim. A difference in the way participants talked about their social relationships in terms of being British or Arab was observed, particularly when explicitly asked about the number of British connections, revealing complexities in defining Britishness. For instance, during interviews, CS refugees often referred to volunteers in CS groups as British. However, when directly asked, 'How many people in your network are British?' diverse responses emerged. Muriel said that everyone in her network was British, except three Syrian friends, while her husband added:

*But no British, British, different, there are British, but some people different country, but they are British (Yassin, CS, male).*

Khaled was unsure about who in his network was British, mentioning only two from his CS group, while Maja stated that one person in her CS group was French, although

both Khaled and Maja consistently referred to sponsors in their network as British throughout their interviews.

By contrast, VPRS refugees initially portrayed people in their network as non-British. However, when asked, 'How many people in your network are British?' some individuals were classified as British because participants said they had British citizenship. For instance, Ismail presented his neighbours as one being Moroccan, one Iraqi, one Iranian, one Somalian and one Lebanese. When I asked Ismail if his neighbours have lived in the UK for a long time, he specified that some of them arrived as children and were then raised in the UK, but he did not state they were British. Only about 10 minutes later during the interview, when I explicitly asked Ismail how many people in his network were British, he promptly replied: '*all of them*'. Subsequently, Ismail corrected himself, specifying '*Six [had] British passports*', while another neighbour was in the process of applying for British citizenship. When I pointed out to Ismail that he had not initially mentioned that his connections were British citizens, while he had also expressed feeling a strong cultural connection with them, he replied:

*They [neighbours] are similar cultures, but they're also different. (...) you know that they are Arab and British at the same time. (...) They remain, they still carry their Middle Eastern culture (Ismail, VPRS, male, via interpreter).*

It appears that Ismail associated being British primarily with some specific physical characteristics, such as being white. For instance, when I asked if his caseworker was British, Ismail replied '*No, a Black*', while his wife, Mira, corrected him, saying that the caseworker was British with African origins.

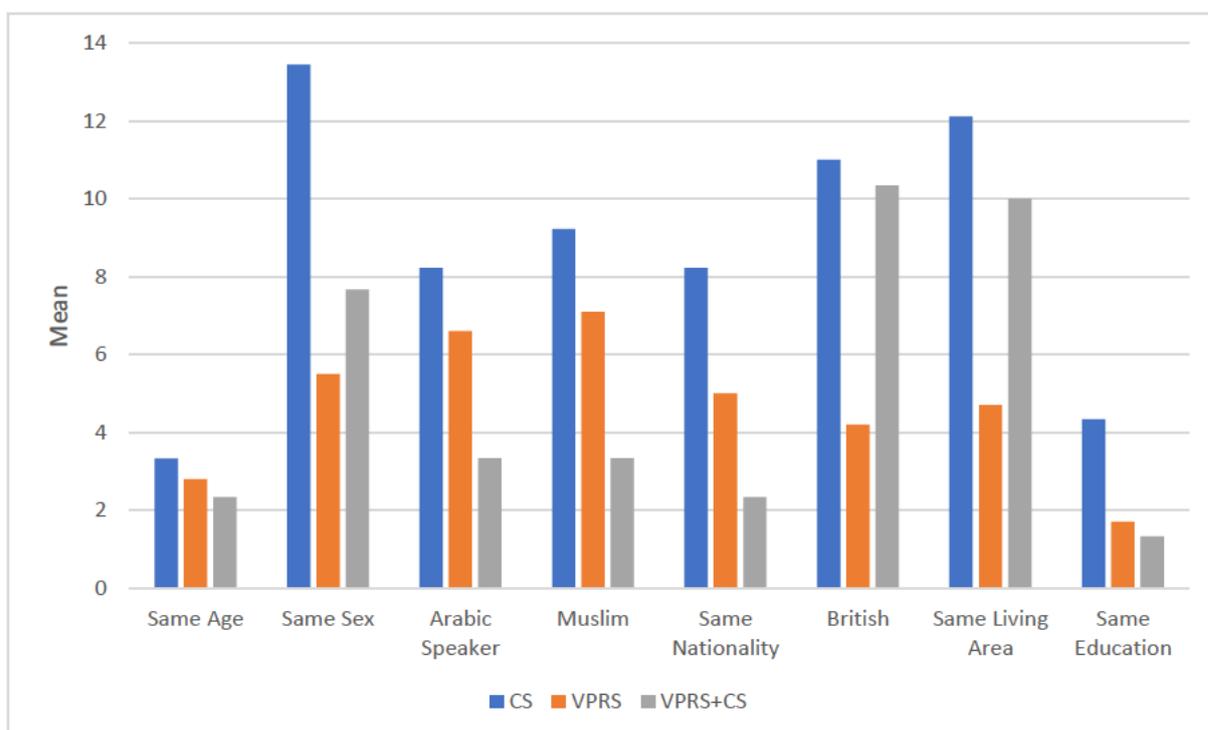
In addition to the different ways of presenting people within their networks as British or Arab, nuances in defining British individuals also emerged when participants were directly asked how many people in their network were British. Lena, for instance, answered that six of her 13 connections were British, but when asked about the origins of the remaining individuals in her network, she mentioned that one person was from Scotland. We then agreed that the Scottish person could be included as British. Additional questions and participants' comments thus helped to clarify what being British meant for refugees and organise their responses consistently. For example, individuals whom participants identified as having another nationality in addition to British were counted as British.

When comparing the differences in the characteristics of individuals within VPRS and CS refugees' networks, it emerged that CS and VPRS+CS respondents had more relationships with people classified as British and individuals living in the same area. In contrast, VPRS refugees had higher means for connections sharing the same language and religion, indicating more social connections with Arabic-speaking Muslims. The means for connections with individuals with participants' same education and same ages remained the lowest for all three groups. Figure 15 shows the difference in connection characteristics between VPRS and CS refugees.

An independent t-test confirmed significant differences in the number of connections CS and VPRS refugees had with individuals living in their same area,  $t(17)=2.519$ ,  $p=0.022$ . Additionally, a Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in the number of British connections between CS and VPRS participants. Through visual inspection, I first assessed that the distributions of numbers of British connections for the two groups were similar. I then found that the

median number of relationships with British individuals was statistically significantly different between VPRS and CS refugees,  $U = 18, p = 0.028$  (Laerd Statistics, 2015). On the other hand, the differences in the number of connections with participants' same age, gender, first language, religion, nationality and education between VPRS and CS refugees were not statistically significant. It could be argued that through CS, refugees had more opportunities to build relationships with people perceived to be British in their local area than local authority-supported refugees. These findings are discussed in more detail in Chapter Eight.

**Figure 15: Comparison of connections' characteristics between CS and VPRS.**



The comparison of connections' characteristics between CS and VPRS refugees not only reveals that sponsored participants had more British people in their networks, but also more individuals speaking Arabic, of Muslim faith and having their same nationality than local authority-supported refugees. Difficulties in establishing

relationships with individuals from their same country of origin were raised by both groups of participants and were rooted in past experiences linked to the war and displacement. These experiences also impacted younger refugees in their 20s, who explained:

*I believe they [British people] are actually more welcoming having you as a friend more than the Syrian ones. But I think the reason behind this is the war, the war that happened in my country. When the war started, every family stayed together in one house. So imagine like you have a small house. I wonder what happened. People leave the house and I come with you in the same house for few months. Like you fight a lot, even if you stay with your family you fight a lot, you're going to fight with your mother, like. But these families in a small house with a war or the pressure, and they fight with each other that's caused them to be, to be away (Janna, VPRS, female).*

*Arab people make problem to each other. (...) They are really racist about us. About Syrian people. When they want something they will, they call me come Syrian guy not come Khaled Syrian guy. Are you talking about? I am like you and if you go back for a few years, Syria, Lebanon was for Syria. It's our country. So what do you mean come Syrian guy? (Khaled, CS, male).*

These past experiences appear to have led refugees to mistrust people, particularly individuals from their country and refugees. However, I also observed that, compared to VPRS, CS participants were more likely to regain confidence in connecting with other minority groups because of the resources and opportunities gained through their social network, as I subsequently show in Section 7.3. Knowing that they could count

on the support offered by their social relationships, CS refugees felt less threatened by the fact that people could take advantage of them and limit their resources. As Maja explained:

*They [refugees] don't like to make you very closer, everybody is still scared from Arabic. Every Arabic people scare from Arabic, especially refugees. But they are not refugees. They think 'oh maybe they will come one day ask about health we can't help it like that (Maja, CS, female).*

Despite feeling unable to help other refugees, Maja was comfortable enough to establish relationships with other displaced Arabs. For instance, she explained that she asked her sponsorship group to introduce her to other refugees she knew were resettled in the area, but these refugees refused to meet her. By contrast, VPRS participants were more likely to express mistrust in people from their same nationality and fear that others could take advantage of them. Omar, for instance, stated that this lack of trust reduced his ability to establish relationships:

*The first thing is that he doesn't trust anybody. Even if there's somebody Syrian, someone Syrian like him, he can't trust them. It's hard to trust them (Omar, VPRS, male, via interpreter).*

Yousef also added:

*It's difficult to find somebody and you say this my friend. This day is now difficult. Sometime they make you friends for your car. Or for money or for anything he needs from you (Yousef, VPRS, male).*

The fear that someone could take advantage of them, especially people in their same situation or other minority communities with few resources, expressed by VPRS participants, was almost entirely absent in sponsored refugees and contributed to the differences in the composition of social networks between sponsored and local authority-supported refugees.

However, despite the difference in the participants' social network composition, with CS refugees having more British people amongst their relationships, both groups of respondents highlighted the importance of connecting with British people to improve their English language skills and increase their knowledge of British culture.

*She would like to have more British friends so they could support her with her language and so that these British friends can support her with understanding the culture here (Mariah, VPRS, female, via interpreter).*

Nevertheless, CS and VPRS refugees also valued relationships with Arabs to retain their native language and aspects of their own culture.

*She preferred to be in contact with both them, the English and Arabic people just to keep the language. (...) she said to keep the Arabic fresh and to learn more English (Yara, CS, female, via interpreter).*

A couple of participants further emphasised that maintaining contact with individuals sharing their traditions and language was beneficial for their children in preserving a connection with their culture. When I asked Naya why it was important for her to have Syrian friends, she replied:

*Because to keep the traditional together and questions together because we are same. Same traditional, same questions, same language. And the kids played together to know how we lived, how we lived in Syria (Naya, VPRS, female).*

The willingness of both groups of refugees to form connections with British and Arab individuals suggests that differences in the composition of participants' social connections are more influenced by external factors than individual preferences. For instance, the proximity of CS refugees to their sponsors may account for the higher number of social relationships sponsored participants had with individuals living in their same area compared to VPRS refugees. Additionally, Jamil's explanation for lacking Arabic-speaking friends highlighted how factors such as work commitments limited his social interactions outside of specific contexts, like college.

*There's a lot of people that speak Arabic from Syria at the college, but he only sees them at college, nothing outside. (...) The issue is that they usually work. These people all have jobs and the only days that they have free, two days a week, they come to the college (Jamil, CS, male, via interpreter).*

However, structural factors alone could not entirely explain all the differences in the composition of social networks between VPRS and CS refugees. While CS might have facilitated sponsored refugees' development of relationships with British people living in their same area, it must be noted that CS refugees had, on average, also more relationships with people speaking Arabic, of Muslim faith and having their same nationality compared to VPRS refugees. This difference emerged despite sponsored refugees living in areas where the levels of ethnic diversity were low (in five cases, the

level of ethnic diversity was below 2% and just in two higher than 5.1%). In contrast, despite living in areas with ethnic diversity levels above 16.6%, almost all VPRS refugees had fewer relationships with Arabic speakers and individuals of the Muslim faith compared to CS refugees. In summary, the analysis sheds light on the nuanced composition of refugees' social networks, influenced by factors at the contextual level, such as resettlement policy, and at the individual level, such as age, education and past experiences. An in-depth discussion of these findings is presented in Chapter Eight.

### **6.3 Differences in the type of relationships**

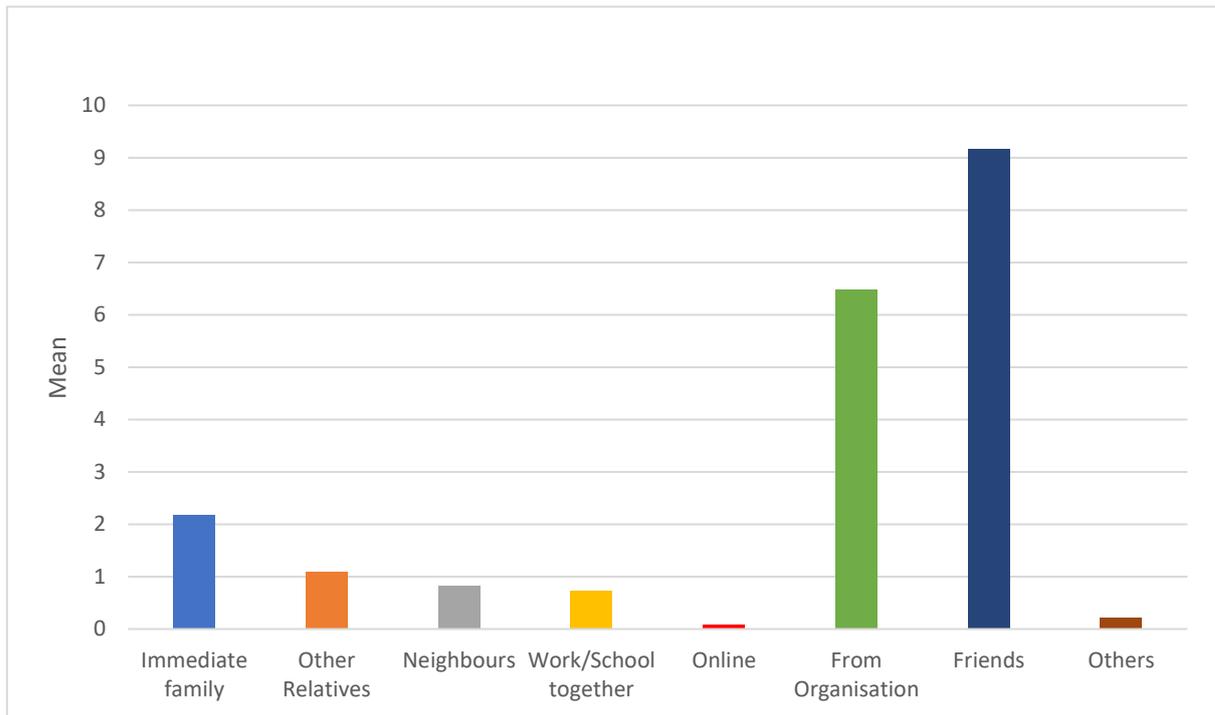
During the interview, participants were asked to categorise the types of relationships they had with each individual listed as part of their network. Refugees were provided with eight categories – (1) immediate family, (2) other relatives, (3) neighbours, (4) people you currently work/go to school with, (5) people you only know online, (6) people from organisations, (7) friends not included above, (8) other. Each individual in the network could belong to more than one category. Open-ended questions during the interviews further allowed exploration of how participants decided to classify connections within these provided categories.

Amongst their 'immediate family', participants included members of their family of origin, such as parents and siblings, as well as family formed through marriage, such as the spouse and children. While under the category 'other relatives', refugees included individuals such as cousins, uncles/aunts and in-laws. Almost all CS refugees categorised some individuals both as friends and as people from organisations, part of the sponsorship group. In contrast, only in four cases did the VPRS participants categorise the council's interpreter and individuals from charitable organisations as

friends. Notably, these four VPRS refugees were resettled by the same local authority and supported by the same volunteers. More sponsored participants than those supported by local authorities added other refugees living in their same area as friends. Beyond family friends and individuals from organisations, participants often formed connections with friends at school, including the college they attended or their children's school. Only four participants (2 VPRS and 2 CS refugees) included connections in category 8 – 'other'. In two cases, these friends were individuals living in the refugees' country of origin or transit. On the other two occasions, these additional connections were established by chance in the UK, for instance, at the mosque or during their previous attendance at college.

Overall, the participants had, on average, more individuals in their network classified as friends ( $M=9.17$ ,  $SD=18.130$ ) and people from organisations ( $M=6.48$ ,  $SD=5.68$ ) compared to the other six social role categories. The results also showed that participants had few people in their networks they met online (Figure 16).

**Figure 16: Types of participants' relationships**

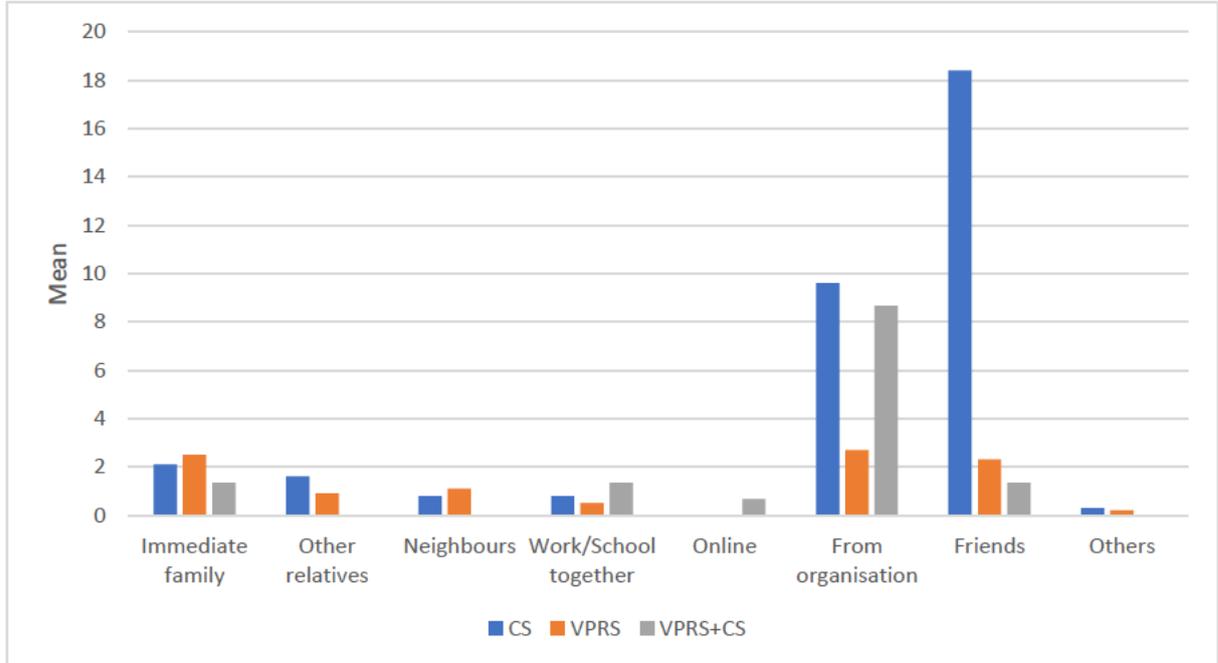


In comparing the entire networks of VPRS and CS refugees, the prevalence of friends remained highest in the networks of sponsored refugees ( $M=18.40$ ,  $SD=25.048$ ). At the same time, local authority-supported refugees had a higher average of people from organisations ( $M=2.70$ ,  $SD=2.541$ ), as shown in Figure 17. This difference in the type of relationships between VPRS and CS refugees' networks persisted when analysing only the composition of very close relationships (Figure 18), with CS refugees predominantly having friends and VPRS participants having more people from organisations. Regarding less close connections, both VPRS and CS refugees had, on average, more individuals classified as friends (Figure 19).

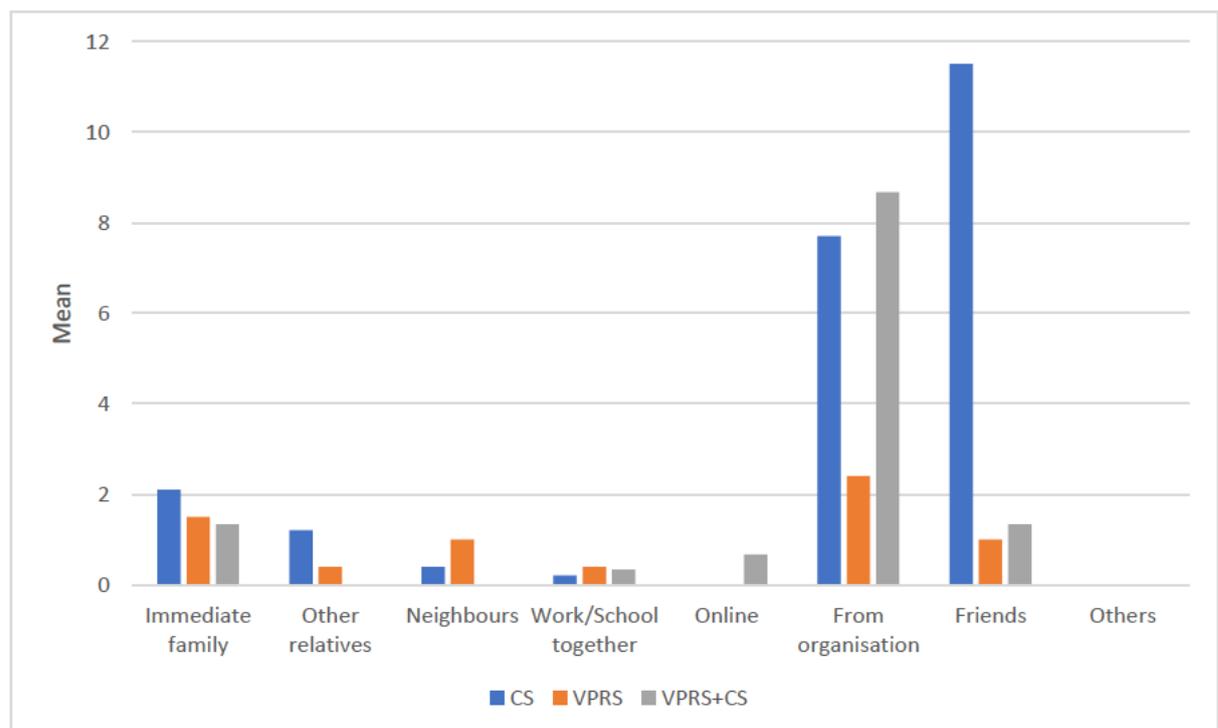
On the whole, VPRS refugees, on average, had fewer people from organisations in their network compared to CS participants. This difference was statistically significant,  $t(18)=3.579$ ,  $p=0.002$ . A Mann-Whitney U test was also conducted to assess differences in friends' numbers between VPRS and CS refugees, finding that the

median number of friends was statistically significantly higher in CS participants,  $U=16$ ,  $z=p=.009$  (Dineen and Blakesley, 1973).

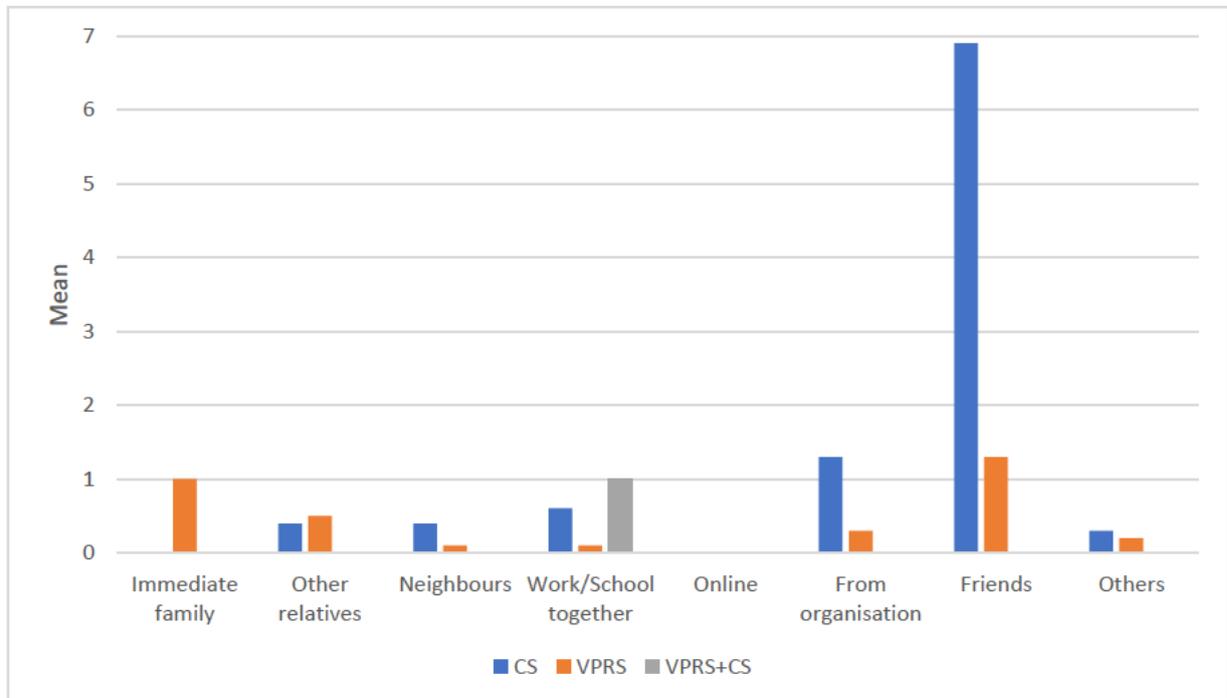
**Figure 17: Differences in the type of relationships between CS and VPRS**



**Figure 18: Differences in the type of relationships within 'close people' between CS and VPRS**



**Figure 19: Differences in the type of relationships within ‘less close people’ between CS and VPRS**



#### 6.4 The global structure of the networks

Previous sections described the differences between VPRS and CS participants’ social networks, focusing on the perspective of the refugees (egos). This section instead looks at the global structure of the refugees’ webs of connections by exploring the relationships (edges) between all the different actors (nodes) in the networks. Using the Gephi software, visual representations of participants’ networks and density, average degree, and clustering were calculated to analyse the global structure.

It is important to note that two CS refugees, Ramadan and Basima, were excluded from this analysis due to their unusually extensive connections, as explained in Section 5.9.

Density measures the extent of connections amongst actors in a network by dividing the number of identified social relationships by the potential connections within the network (Scott, 1991). Higher density indicates more interconnectedness amongst people (Halgin and Borgatti, 2012). For instance, in a network of 5 people, if all are connected to each other, the total number of existing relationships (edges) would be 20 and density would be equal to 1 (20/20). Dense networks facilitate information flow due to increased connections (Haythornthwaite, 1996), yet they may also foster redundancy and limit access to new resources (Burt, 1992). The average degree, instead, indicates the average number of social relationships each person has within a network.

Overall, CS refugees had an average degree of 7.18, implying that each individual in sponsored participants' networks was, on average, connected to about seven others. In contrast, VPRS refugees showed a lower average degree, standing at 4.59 (or 6.48 when also including VPRS participants supported by a CS group). Density was also higher, on average, in sponsored refugees' networks ( $M=0.54$ ) compared to those supported solely by the local authority ( $M=0.48$ ). These data thus revealed a higher level of interconnection amongst individuals within CS refugees' networks, while those within VPRS refugees' networks tended to have fewer connections between each other.

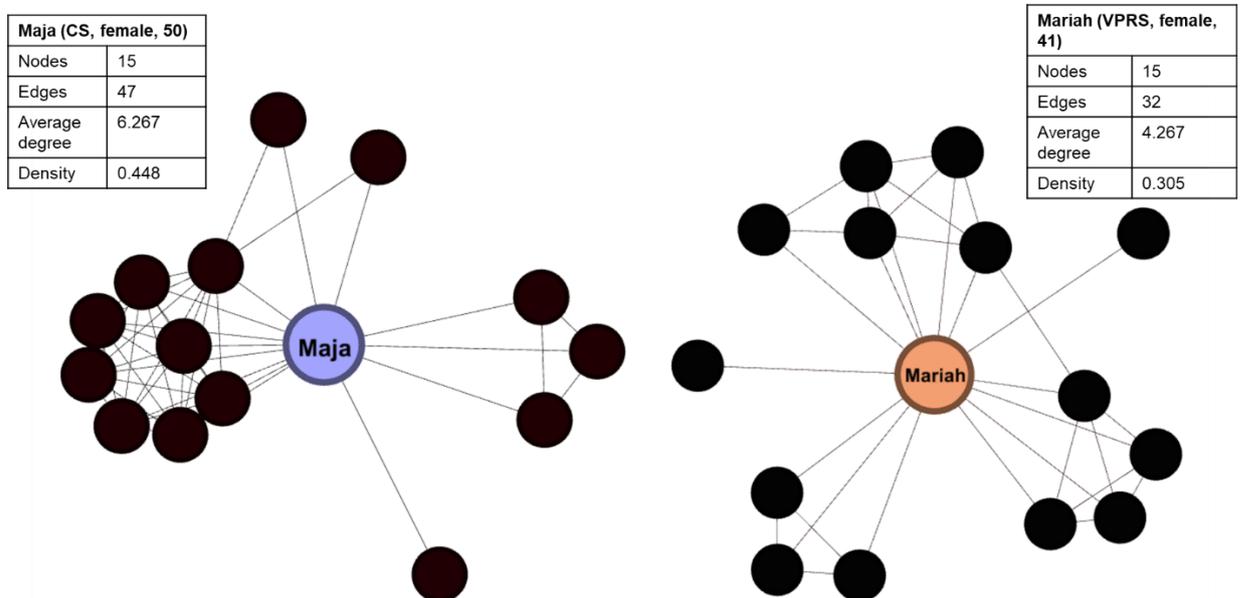
However, as density and average degree vary based on network size, it is recommended to compare networks of the same size (Stokman, 2001). Therefore, in this section, I outline a comparison of density and average degree between VPRS and CS participants with equal network sizes.

When comparing the networks of Maja (CS) and Mariah (VPRS), both comprising 15 connections (Figure 20), I observed that both density and average degree were higher in Maja's network, indicating greater interconnectedness compared to Mariah's.

Mariah's network encompassed individuals fulfilling various roles, such as relatives, friends from her children's school, and volunteers from organisations. However, Mariah's network was less dense because these individuals were not interconnected. In contrast, Maja's network, primarily consisting of people from her CS groups, displayed higher interconnectedness, although including Arab friends unconnected to sponsors, as Maja explained:

*My British friends they don't know my Arabic friends. They just heard about them from me (Maja, CS, female).*

**Figure 20: Maja (CS) and Mariah's (VPRS) networks**

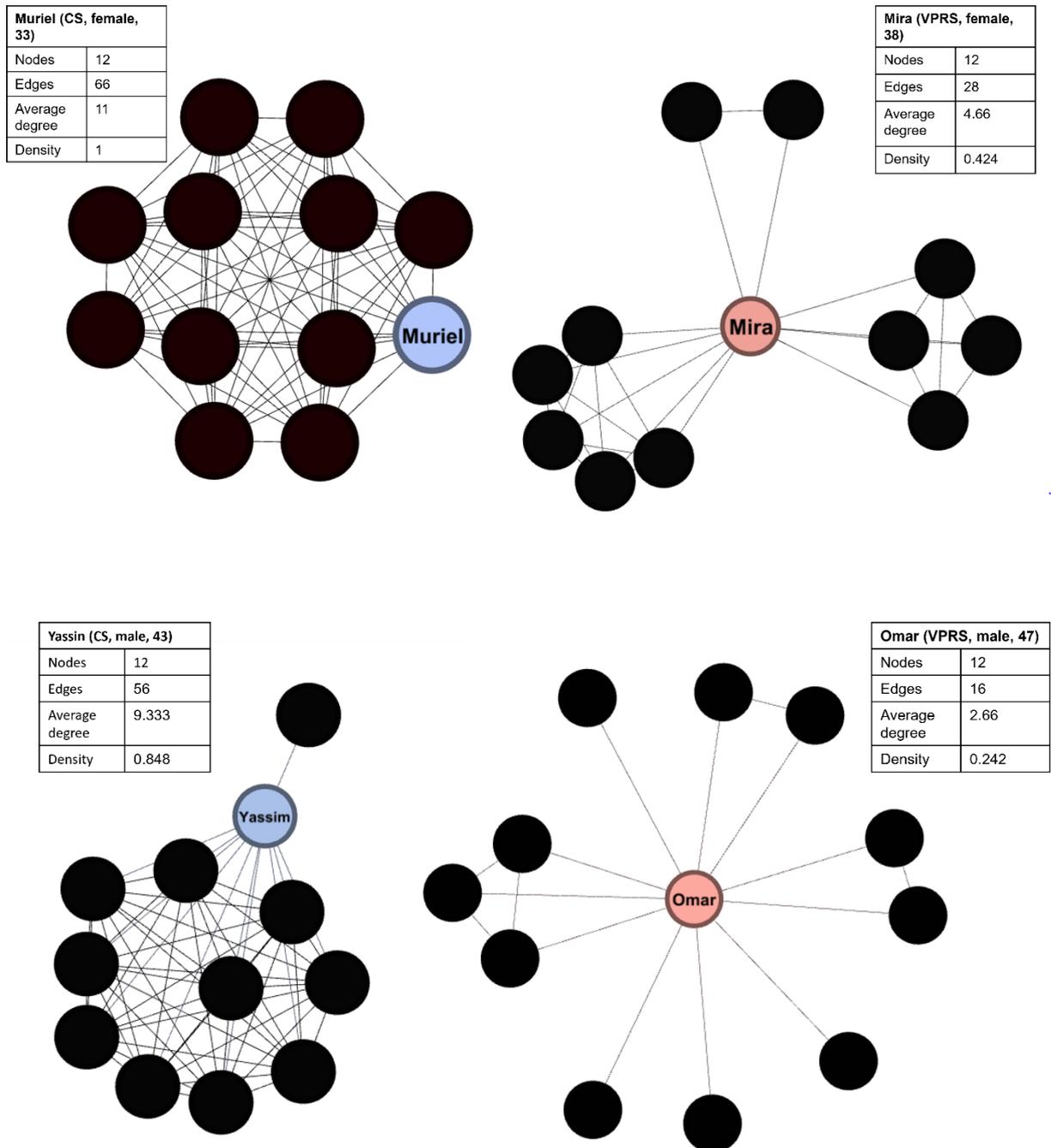


The disparities in density and average degrees were more pronounced when comparing the networks of Muriel and Yassin, a CS couple, against two VPRS

participants, Mira and Omar (Figure 21). Muriel's network showed a density of 1, indicating that every person was directly connected to all the others. Mira's network comprised family members, neighbours and a couple of individuals from organisations, but there were no relationships amongst these different sets of people, resulting in a less dense network.

Muriel and Yassin's network displayed heightened density due to their inclusion of primarily individuals from their CS group, along with refugees supported by the same sponsors. On the other side, Omar's (VPRS) network emerged as the least dense, where individuals, on average, were linked to only 2.66 other people. Encompassing individuals from the local authorities and various friends met in Syria and the UK, Omar's network lacked interconnections.

**Figure 21: Networks of Muriel and Yassin (CS) and Mira and Omar (VPRS)**

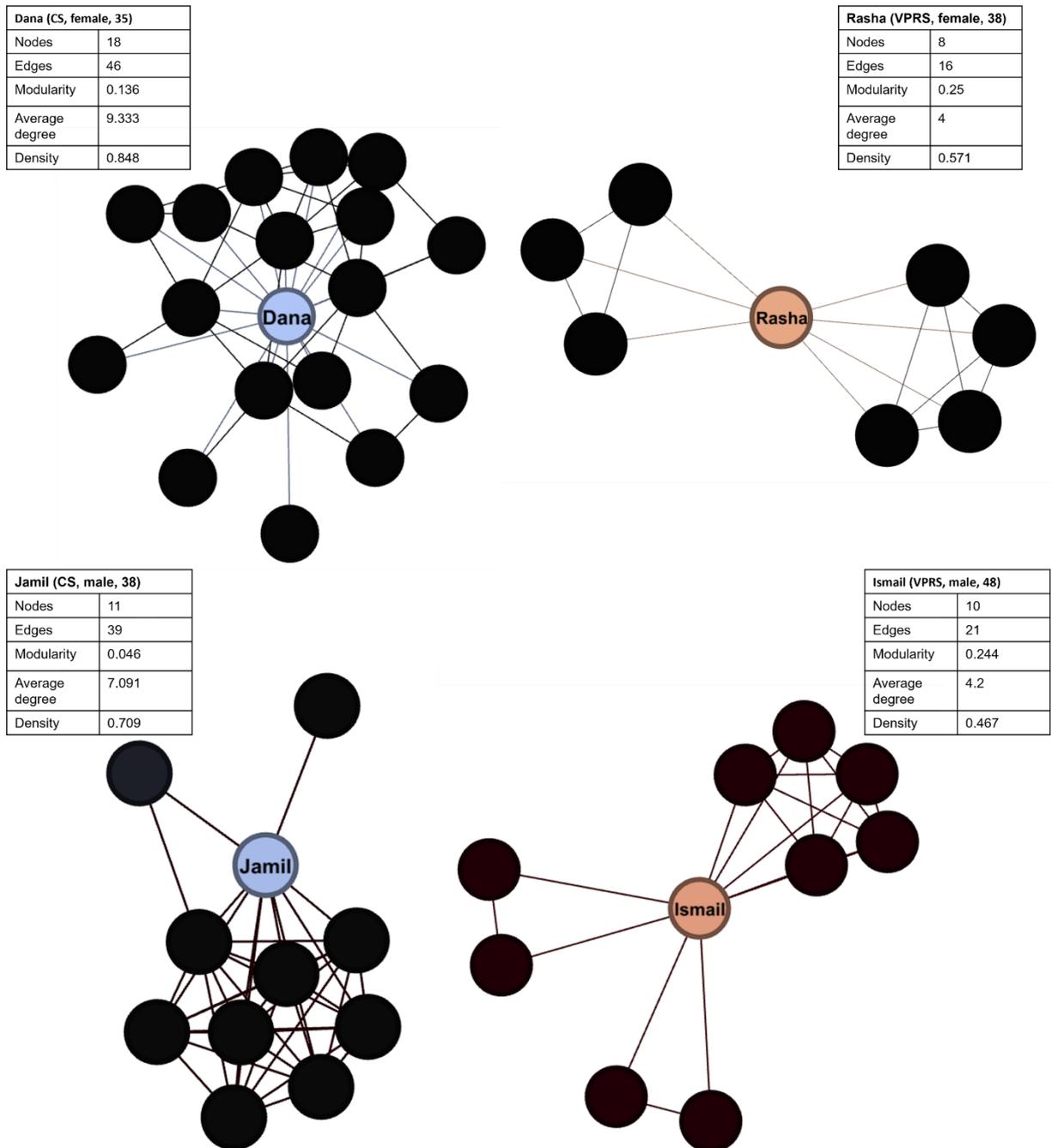


The other measure considered to analyse the global structure of participants' social networks was clustering, which is the division of the network in communities. The Gephi software uses modularity to identify communities within a network (Blondel et al., 2008). A modularity value higher than 0.3 indicates strong cohesion within identified

communities (Ferreira, 2013). In calculating the modularity, a coefficient equal to 1 was used, and the relationship weight (whether very close or less close) was excluded, meaning that it was not taken into account if the relationships between two nodes were very close or less close. On average, CS refugees' networks had a modularity of 0.12, while VPRS participants exhibited 0.23 or 0.22 when including VPRS refugees supported by a CS group. The different modularity results indicated that VPRS refugees' networks were more fragmented compared to those of sponsored refugees. Graphical representations of two women participants, Dana (CS) and Rasha (VPRS), and two male participants, Jamil (CS) and Ismail (VPRS), further underscored these differences (Figure 22). In Dana and Jamil's networks, clear community clusters were not identifiable. Dana's network comprised individuals covering multiple social roles — neighbours, co-workers, and friends — which led to overlaps and connections between different groups. This interconnectedness created close-knit clusters within her network.

By contrast, Rasha (VPRS) and Ismail (VPRS) had more fragmented networks with distinct groups of interconnected individuals but lacked connections between these different groups. Rasha's network showed two distinct groups — a trio of friends from her child's school on one side and a support group from the local authority on the other. Similarly, Ismail's network displayed three separate clusters — neighbours, local authority supporters, and family members — yet, these groups had no relationships between them. This lack of interconnections made their networks less dense and more divided compared to those of sponsored refugees like Jamil. Jamil's network mainly consisted of sponsors but also included friends he met through them, resulting in a more joined structure.

**Figure 22: Networks of Dana and Jamil (CS) and Rasha and Ismail (VPRS)**



### 6.5 Differences in the nature of relationships: helping and caring

In the previous sections, I presented the global structure of participants' social networks. In Sections 6.3 and 6.4, I then explored the differences in the social

relationship types between VPRS and CS refugees, looking at socio-demographic characteristics and social roles of people within participants' social networks. In this section, instead, I compare participants' social networks in accordance with the importance refugees attributed to their relationships with individuals in their network. Specifically, I explore how VPRS and CS refugees described the nature of their social connections, highlighting the resources provided by these relationships. By 'nature of the relationship', I mean the characteristics and qualities used to define connections. CS and VPRS participants said that they had individuals in their social networks who provided practical help during their settlement processes. Community sponsorship volunteers for sponsored refugees and caseworkers and volunteers for VPRS refugees were, for instance, frequently mentioned as being close because of the support they offered. However, participants not only stressed the importance of having people capable of providing assistance but also highlighted how social relationships were fundamental for their emotional well-being and healing from traumatic experiences. For instance, spending leisure time with others became a coping mechanism for refugees, aiding their mental health by diverting their focus from problems and past negative experiences.

*I can't stay at home because for my mental health, as you know, I met a lot of problems before I came here, so I need to forget. It is not good for me to stay. I will remember everything. It is not good for me (Maja, CS, female).*

Refugees expressed a willingness to develop relationships that could offer emotional support, which are here labelled as caring relationships. Omar, a VPRS refugee, used the Arabic phrase 'يهون عليك الغم', translatable into meaning 'someone who can ease a

state of mournfulness', to describe the type of close relationships he was looking for.

Omar added:

*If he feels the person in front of him cares about him, shows signs that he cares about his pain, cares about his issues, then he will be friends with them (Omar, VPRS, male, via interpreter).*

The lack of connections who could provide him with emotional support was underlined more than once by Omar during the interview, although he mentioned that his caseworker provided him with practical help. VPRS refugees like Omar emphasised the difference between individuals who cared about them (caring relationships) and those who provided practical help (helpful relationships), pointing out that their relationships were more exclusively based on the provision of practical support offered by client-provider connections (for instance, relationships with the caseworker). VPRS refugees, thus, were more likely to lack caring relationships that offered emotional support. In contrast, amongst CS refugees, the differentiation between caring and helpful relationships was less distinct. Their social networks were broader, encompassing individuals described as providing both practical and emotional support, a characteristic lacking in VPRS networks. For CS refugees, the help received from close connections, primarily CS volunteers, was perceived as unconditional, part of a caring relationship rather than a client-provider relationship.

*They [CS volunteers] are always trying to help me first before anything. And they choose the good thing for me and they keep me like in safe (Khaled, CS, male).*

Feelings of loneliness, instead, emerged when VPRS refugees discussed their social relationships. More than half of the VPRS participants mentioned that even their connections with individuals classified as very close in their network were not extended beyond the provision of practical support, as seen in their relationships with caseworkers or volunteers. Notably, two VPRS participants wanted to write down their own names amongst their very close network's connections. Mariah said:

*I want to first write my name because I helped myself the most in this country*  
(Mariah, VPRS female).

There was a prevailing sentiment amongst VPRS participants that some individuals within their network offered them help only as part of a job obligation, rather than a genuine interest in their well-being.

*The refugee (...) if he finds somebody to help you for English. He [a volunteer] will come here (...). After we finish, will go, it's no friend. He does come here for work. If volunteer or any other it is come here for work. (...) Yeah, he come here. And will stay one hour exactly. He will stay one hour exactly to make what he has [to do] (...) he come for work, is not come for help* (Yousef, VPRS, male).

In the quoted passage, when Yousef mentioned that the volunteer who came to his house to support him with English language acquisition did '*not come for help*', he was referring to a lack of emotional support rather than practical assistance. Yousef felt that the person helping did not genuinely care about him. Therefore, the expression of caring was deemed essential to build a close relationship that provides refugees with the needed emotional support.

*If he feels the person in front of him cares about him, shows signs that he cares about his pain, cares about his issues, then he will be friends with them (Omar, VPRS, male, via interpreter).*

Therefore, while all respondents acknowledged having some people in their network who could offer practical support (helping relationships), VPRS refugees were less likely to have caring relationships compared to CS refugees. Additionally, sponsored participants not only said they had more people who cared about them, but they also built these caring connections with a broader range of individuals, including people outside the sponsorship group. It is also possible to argue that the differences in resettlement policies under which participants entered the UK played a key role in the variations between the number of caring relationships established by CS and VPRS refugees. Most sponsored refugees, for instance, mentioned that they established caring relationships through their CS group, as volunteers also introduced sponsored refugees to their own social connections.

*It's easy through the community sponsorship. They can be introduced as my group, but they added [more connections]. They introduced me to the other, them friends. And I become really good friend with them friend more than them (Dana, CS, female).*

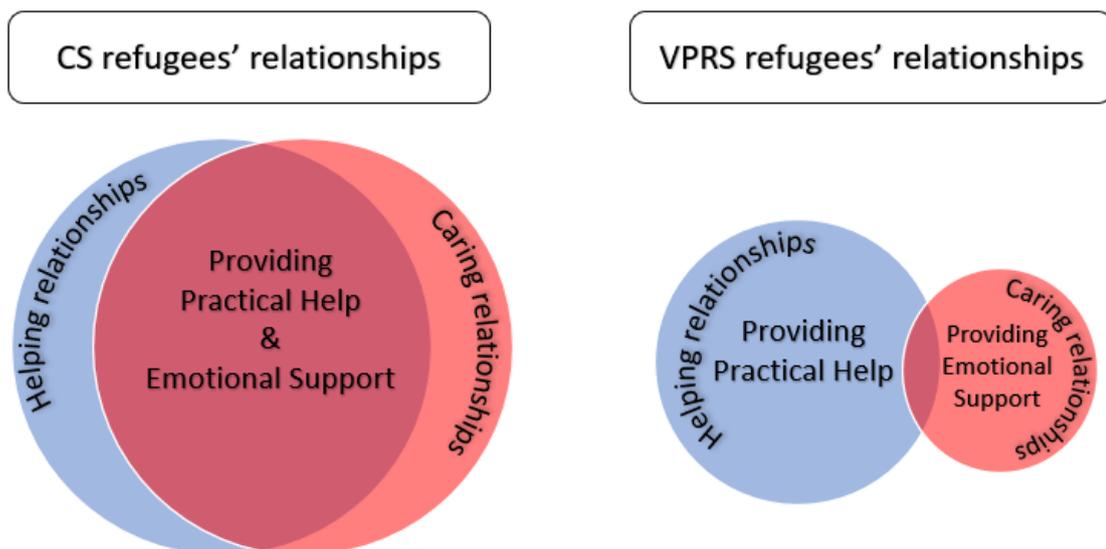
To conclude, in exploring how the nature of refugees' social networks and the resources exchanged through social connections differ according to the resettlement scheme they are part of, it is possible to observe that:

- Both VPRS and CS participants stated they had, to some extent, some helping relationships providing them with practical support.

- Amongst CS refugees, these helping relationships were more likely to be characterised also as caring, providing emotional support. Therefore, in sponsored participants' social networks, caring and helping relations tended to overlap.
- Compared to CS participants, VPRS refugees could count on support from fewer people, as their networks were, on average, smaller than CS refugees, with a notable lack of individuals providing emotional support.

The differences in the balance between caring (providing emotional support) and helping relationships (providing practical support) between CS and VPRS refugees is illustrated in Figure 23, showing a greater overlap in CS refugees' networks and a more net distinction in VPRS refugees' networks.

**Figure 23: VPRS and CS participants' helping (blue) and caring (red) relationships**



In Chapter Eight, I provide a detailed discussion of the findings from this section and other differences in network size and composition highlighted in previous sections. In the upcoming section, I shift the focus to caring relationships. Compared to CS refugees, VPRS participants were less likely to have these types of connections, which I labelled as caring, and thus receive emotional support.

### ***6.5.1 Caring relationships***

The previous section showed that CS refugees had more caring relationships offering them emotional support compared to VPRS participants, who often expressed feelings of loneliness due to the lack of someone caring about them. Focusing on what contributed to the development or absence of these caring relationships, this section also sheds light on the extent to which differences between CS and VPRS refugees' social networks are attributable to the two different resettlement policies.

Caring relationships emerged characterised by two features, as revealed in the findings presented in the sections below: frequency of contacts and sharing.

#### *Frequency of contacts*

For both VPRS and CS refugees, the closeness of relationships was directly proportional to the frequency of contacts over time, suggesting that those offering emotional support were often the individuals with whom participants interacted more regularly. However, the passage of time emerged as having different effects on the social relationships of the two groups of resettled refugees, limiting or increasing the opportunities to develop caring relationships.

A more negative impact of the time passing on the VPRS participants' relationships was found. For instance, when local authority-supported refugees talked about their connections with the caseworker, they pointed out that the frequency of contact has

decreased over time. Although they understood it as part of their caseworkers' job and did not resent it, the decrease in contacts generated more instability in their social networks and reduced the number of people VPRS refugees felt they could rely on.

Rasha and Omar, a VPRS family, noted:

*He [Omar] still supports them now. However, it's not frequent if they [Rasha and Omar] have faced any serious issue or they have anything, anything they need to ask him [caseworker] which is set on a serious level. Then they turned to him. However, he has become very less frequent, so the first two years had a frequent relationship and now it's very it's got less (Rasha and Omar, VPRS family, via interpreter).*

In contrast, CS refugees were more likely to have maintained constant contact with people they had known since their arrival in the country, building caring relationships with them. Speaking of his close relationships with some CS volunteers, Jamil mentioned that:

*We were in contact with them [CS volunteers] almost daily and they always come over to their house. They always check on them. And they have a really good relationship with them (Jamil, CS, male).*

VPRS refugees, more than CS refugees, reported that the lack of in-person or virtual contacts had not allowed them to develop close relationships. Local authority-supported participants often mentioned people they knew as part of their networks but only encountered them in specific contexts and periods, such as at college during term time.

For instance, Janna explained that she did not ask her college friend, listed as very close, to spend some free time together because:

*That friend only meet her during midterm in College. (...) But when I go home for holiday or for weekends, I've tried to contact her, but she replied very short like she doesn't want to talk so yeah (...) You are not that real friends (Janna, VPRS, female).*

It is crucial to note that CS refugees' close relationships, characterised by a high frequency of contacts, were not only with some members of the sponsorship groups but also with other refugees or people sharing their same language. These relationships were often facilitated by volunteers or organisations introducing sponsored refugees to other resettled families in the area.

Additionally, the frequency of contact appeared to overcome challenges such as the language barrier, helping CS refugees develop close relationships with some volunteers despite a low level of English communication skills. For instance, Lena, who rated her knowledge of the English language as 1.5 on a scale from 1 to 5, said that two people from her sponsorship group were closer than others because of the frequency of contact.

*They make it a point every Friday to come and visit her together, both of them. So it's always the three of them (Lena, CS, female, via interpreter).*

VPRS respondents mentioned the lack of contacts over time as an obstacle not only to the strengthening of their relationships but also to the preservation of their connections with family members and relatives. Ismail and Mira (VPRS), for instance,

felt closer to their neighbours than their siblings or parents because of the high frequency of contact with individuals living in the same building.

*He speaks to them [his sister and brother] once a week and they've naturally sort of distance. 'cause just a natural distancing. Uh, because they've moved away from the country and then they moved to England so they're not as close as the others where people on the with on the pink paper [neighbours]. He said that sometimes he sees them even twice a day (Ismail, VPRS, male, via interpreter).*

However, a significant difference between CS and VPRS refugees' relationships was observed in how the two groups described and talked about their connections. In pointing out that the regularity with which they were in contact with some individuals had also decreased and they had not met or spoken with some people constantly, VPRS refugees expressed a sort of sadness. This negative feeling can also be deduced, for instance, from the words employed by Rasha (VPRS), who highlighted that just one person of the four people listed as very close to her could be considered a friend, other than an organisation supporter, because that person did not 'abandon' her during the almost four years Rasha had spent in the UK. Arguably, VPRS participants mentioned more often than CS refugees that some people in their networks only helped or were in contact with them for a short period. By contrast, sponsored refugees proudly remarked how they have been in touch with some people regularly since their arrival in the UK and how this had positively contributed to strengthening some relationships. Maja, for example, highlighted that she considers

some of her sponsors very close because, even during their holidays, they maintain communication with her through WhatsApp, showing they care about her.

*Because they are close, not just talking. I know everything about their lives. One day he was travelling before Corona and they told me we are not here for five years but still you can send WhatsApp. They tell me everything about their lives and their daughters (Maja, CS, female).*

However, the high frequency of contact cannot be considered a sufficient condition for developing caring relationships. Mira, for instance, also mentioned that her caseworker was always available for her, even during holidays.

*She's my support worker. She's very helpful and even when she had the, she has holiday, she gave us a number. I don't know for who, she said if you want anything for emergency you can contact with this number (Mira, VPRS, female).*

Although both Maja and Mira had frequent contact with the caseworker and a CS volunteer, respectively, they had developed different types of relationships.

For local authority-supported participants, their interactions with caseworkers remained informal and predominantly centred on a client-provider relationship, heavily reliant on the provision of practical assistance (helping relationships). In contrast, CS had cultivated deeper connections with individuals they consistently interact with, primarily CS volunteers. In addition to the frequency of contact, another factor was found to contribute to the development of caring relationships: the level of shared intimacy, discussed in the next section.

## *Sharing*

When participants were questioned about the factors influencing their perception of someone as close, factors beyond the frequency of contact were often cited, with sharing being a recurrent theme. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the concept of sharing carried distinct connotations for VPRS and CS participants.

CS refugees often emphasised intimate and emotional sharing, while VPRS refugees tended to focus on shared daily life events outside their homes, such as walks in the park, dinners or birthday celebrations. The lack of intimate sharing was perceived as problematic by VPRS refugees, contributing to feelings of isolation, as they did not feel the people in their networks were as close as they would have liked.

Both VPRS and CS participants perceived being invited into someone's house as a gesture that created intimacy and could strengthen a relationship. However, I found that sponsored refugees had been more successful in developing such connections in comparison to VPRS refugees. These connections were regarded as caring relationships grounded in shared intimacy. Talking about these close connections, Lena and Basima, for instance, said:

*These people [very close CS volunteers] they come to her home. She goes to their home and they meet with each other. She considers herself, she's built friendships with them (Lena, CS, female, via interpreter).*

*They are Syrian friends, will they come and sleep here or I go and sleep there, sleep over between us. And my kids, they like their kids a lot and they play together. We cry together sometimes. But the others is just friends. We will eat*

*together. We will have coffee. We will sit and talk. And advise each other, but nothing else (Basima, CS, female).*

By contrast, VPRS participants were more likely to mention they have not developed close relationships because of the lack of shared intimacy with people in their networks, who, for instance, did not invite them to their houses.

*These people that she mentioned they all come to her house but she does not leave her house and go to their house (...) she's saying but nobody invites her over but they all come over (...) she meets them at the park, but she doesn't go over to their house. She doesn't feel like a social. Then she goes. She's invited, but she just meets them in the parks (Mariah, VPRS, female, via interpreter).*

*We don't have a friend. We don't have a relationship in the sense that we don't go to each other house and they haven't introduced them to their kids (Rasha and Omar, VPRS family, via interpreter).*

In describing their caring relationships, sponsored refugees further highlighted the sharing was reciprocated. Reciprocity (discussed in more detail in Section 7.3.3) emerged not only through invitations to each other's houses, but also through intimate sharing with individuals in CS refugees' networks opening up to sponsored refugees about personal aspects of their lives. Maja, for instance, said that she felt closer to some of the CS volunteers because they told her everything about their life and their daughter. In contrast, Maja felt that her relationships with other refugee friends were less close due to the lack of such intimate sharing, which she attributed to refugees avoiding discussing personal stories out of concerns regarding potential risks or dangers that might arise if sensitive information about their pasts were disclosed.

It must be noted that CS refugees developed relationships with a high level of shared intimacy with a wide range of people, from volunteers to other refugees and even with individuals they met outside the CS group. Meanwhile, in most cases, VPRS refugees did not develop close relationships based on emotional sharing, nor with people who share their same language, nationality or religion present in their networks.

When participants referred to 'people like us', they indicated the way they perceived themselves. Instead of merely associating themselves with specific cultural or national identities (Arab or Syrian), they portrayed a more intricate sense of self. Their identity was a blend of various aspects, including their status as refugees, newcomers to a place, learners seeking healing or growth, and also encompassed roles they played as women, educated individuals, and parents. Participants' self-perception played an essential role in developing close relationships based on sharing. A clear example was provided by Mira, an Iraqi VPRS participant, who stated that one of her close friends was a woman living in her building. When exploring the relationship between Mira and her neighbour friend, it became apparent that despite both being Iraqi, they had linguistic and religious differences. Unlike Mira, her close friend neither spoke Arabic nor followed the Islamic faith but was Christian. Nevertheless, Mira said she felt a strong connection to her neighbour, primarily due to their shared English language skills, which helped to improve Mira's English. Education emerged as another significant factor in strengthening their relationship. Mira, who was highly educated, emphasised that having the same level of education played a crucial role in making her feel closer to her friend. In contrast, Mira felt less close to other friends who could speak Arabic and were Muslims but differed in education level. Therefore, the close relationship between the two women was also built on the participant identifying herself

with her friend as an educated Iraqi woman. Another participant, Maja, who also held a university degree, stated her preference for social relationships with 'educated people', highlighting that sharing the same religion with connections was less important to her. This preference was linked to how Maja perceived herself and the attitudes she attributed to other Muslim people towards her, saying:

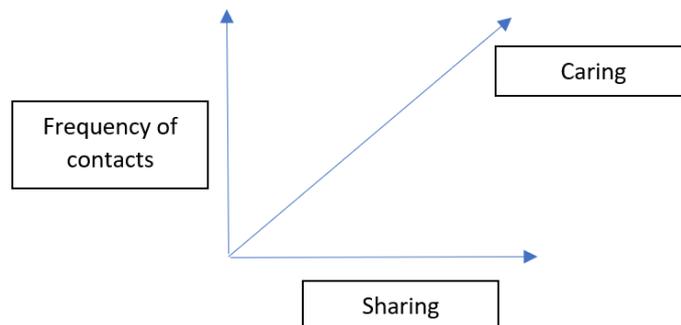
*I'm open lady, I'm not like other Muslims very strict. I'm open and I'm very social. (...) We couldn't make any friends with Pakistan because I am Muslim, but I don't put a hijab. They don't like [to] make me or my daughter friends. So we are happy with just Europe and British people. It is okay (Maja, CS, female).*

Compared to CS refugees, the ways VPRS participants perceived themselves, including as refugees, appeared to be more negative and reduced their development of social connections, particularly relationships with a high level of shared intimacy. On the other hand, the self-perception of sponsored refugees appeared to be not only more positive but also improved, thanks to the presence of caring relationships, which provided them with confidence and comfortability, as explained subsequently. This difference in self-perception was observable when participants spoke about other refugees in their network and their relationships with them. From CS participants' experience, being a refugee did not emerge as a problem in the development of close relationships with other refugees. Close refugee-refugee relationships were, indeed, present in their network. Some VPRS participants, instead, pointed out they preferred avoiding connections with other refugees and aimed to develop relationships with 'different' people, specifically those who were not refugees.

*Because that Syrian family she knows and came with them, and they're in the same sort of situation, living condition and situation is on. However, the four ladies on the yellow paper [less close people], they are new friends. People that live here and are different (Rasha, VPRS, female).*

Before delving into the analysis of how the presence or absence of caring relationships, as well as helping relationships, affects the integration processes of VPRS and CS refugees, it can be concluded that a high frequency of contact and a high level of intimate sharing contribute to the strengthening of social relationships. This dynamic results in the formation of caring relationships, as illustrated in Figure 24.

**Figure 24: Factors impacting the development of caring relationships**



The distinct approaches of the CS and VPRS schemes impact the frequency of contacts, the nature of sharing, and, ultimately, the quality of relationships developed by refugees during their resettlement journey. These findings underscore the importance of resettlement policies in shaping social networks and caring relationships amongst refugees.

## 6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented differences in CS and VPRS refugees' social networks. The examination encompassed factors such as the network's size, the characteristics and social roles of refugees' connections and the overall structure of participants' social networks. I found that sponsored refugees, in contrast to local authority-supported refugees, had a broader array of social connections, both amongst those considered very close and less close. Notably, VPRS refugees had a higher number of social connections with Arabic speakers and individuals of the Muslim faith compared to those identified as British nationals, while the networks of sponsored refugees prominently included individuals perceived as British. However, comparing the two groups, CS participants demonstrated more extensive social relationships, spanning British nationals, Arabic speakers, people of Muslim faith and those of the same nationality, in contrast to VPRS refugees.

The exploration of the social roles of individuals in refugees' social networks underscored that sponsored participants tended to have more social connections with friends. In contrast, VPRS refugees were more likely to have relationships primarily with people from organisations, especially amongst their very close connections (people with whom refugees interacted more frequently, shared important things and were more likely to receive help from). While the presence of individuals from organisations remained notable also for CS refugees, their very close and less close relationships were predominantly with individuals regarded as friends.

Exploring the global structure of refugees' networks through the Gephi software, I further found that CS participants tend to have more dense and interconnected

networks. By contrast, VPRS refugees' networks were often more fragmented, with few connections between the individuals within the network.

A key difference in the nature of social connections linked to the support they provide was also found between VPRS and CS refugees' social networks. Respondents supported by local authorities described a distinct division within their social relationships, differentiating between individuals who offered emotional support (caring relationships) and those who primarily provided practical help (helping relationships). While both groups highlighted the importance of caring relationships for emotional support and reducing negative feelings, VPRS refugees often lacked these relations. Meanwhile, CS respondents more frequently pointed to the presence of caring relationships within their networks, and notably, these caring relationships often overlapped with helping relationships. This finding thus suggests that individuals within the networks of sponsored refugees often provided both emotional and practical support. It is important to emphasise that in this study, a careful distinction is made between the resources potentially available through social networks and the actual exchanges that facilitate or hinder integration. These findings are grounded in refugees' perceptions of their relationships and what they believe these connections can offer. In the subsequent chapter, instead, I delve into a more thorough analysis of what is actually exchanged through caring and helping relationships and examine their effects on VPRS and CS refugees' integration processes.

Finally, in the last section of this chapter, I focused on caring relationships, elucidating some of the dynamics that contribute to the development of these relationships: the high frequency of contact and shared intimacy. CS refugees, benefiting from continuous contact with established connections, were more successful in nurturing

and deepening these relationships over time. The stability and constancy of these contacts contributed to a sense of emotional support and strengthened connections. On the other hand, VPRS participants faced challenges as the frequency of contact with people in their network decreased over time. The diminishing interactions with caseworkers and other network members impacted the stability of relationships, leading to feelings of isolation and a reduced sense of support. Sharing, as a dimension of caring relationships, was also multifaceted. CS refugees engaged in intimate and emotional sharing within their network connections, developing stronger relationships. In contrast, the lack of intimate sharing with their social connections contributed to creating a perceived distance between VPRS refugees and their relationships.

These findings underscore the importance of resettlement policies in shaping social networks and caring relationships amongst refugees. The distinct approaches of the CS and VPRS schemes impact differences in social networks, including the frequency of contacts, the nature of sharing and ultimately, the quality of relationships developed by refugees during their resettlement journey.

Given these contrasts, in the next chapter, I delve into how these differences impact participants' integration processes, examining what resources are actually exchanged through social relationships.

## **CHAPTER 7: SOCIAL NETWORKS' IMPACT ON VPRS AND CS REFUGEES' INTEGRATION PROCESSES**

In the previous chapter, I set out substantial differences in the size and composition of social networks between refugees resettled through VPRS and CS. I noted that compared to VPRS refugees, sponsored participants generally had wider and more diversified social networks, including more connections with both British individuals and others of the same nationality. The networks' structure of VPRS and CS refugees also differed, with local authority-supported participants having more fragmented and less dense networks than sponsored refugees.

CS participants further described their relationships as both helping and caring, providing practical and emotional assistance. In contrast, VPRS refugees not only had smaller social networks but also drew a clear distinction between helping and caring relationships, reporting a considerable lack of connections providing emotional support.

However, it is argued that the mere presence of relationships and potential resources within networks did not necessarily equate to access to resources (including emotional and practical support) (Phillimore, 2012 in Strang et al., 2018), as explained in the literature review in Chapter Three. Participants also confirmed this assumption. For instance, VPRS refugees Salim and Fatima, whom a sponsoring group also supported, mentioned that their decision about whom to seek help from depended on the issue's importance and urgency. Salim illustrated this by explaining that he would consult his caseworker for serious matters like educational registration, while less formal issues, such as school appointments, would prompt him to approach volunteers.

*If he has a question that is more serious, such as about register registering courses and registering for education, he will ask his caseworker at the Council. However, if he's got a question about an appointment at his children school or a query about anything to do with his children school, which is sort of informal. He will ask the volunteers (Salim, VPRS+CS, male, via interpreter).*

Participants' perceptions of important issues varied, influencing their decisions on seeking assistance independently of the presence or absence of potential helpers in their network. Contrary to Salim, Rasha, for example, said she preferred seeking information about college courses and enrollment from less close friends rather than her caseworker.

*Anything about education because she feels that these questions are not difficult, complicated and important, and so she thinks that you know if I want to ask something about where colleges or where are courses. It's not a difficult or serious matter. Therefore, it goes to people that are less close (Rasha, VPRS, female, via interpreter).*

Additionally, the role participants attributed to individuals in their network influenced their support-seeking decisions. In addition to considering the issues' importance, Salim added that he relied on his caseworker for employment-related matters, considering them within the caseworker's responsibilities rather than the responsibility of volunteers.

*The reason why he doesn't ask for volunteers for things such as employment is because the caseworkers and the Council have specific people that help them with their money matters, with work, with some serious things like this, and so*

*he doesn't find the need to ask the volunteers when there are caseworkers and council workers that do such job (Salim, VPRS+CS, male, via interpreter).*

Furthermore, participants' confidence and comfort in seeking support played a role in accessing available resources. Basima explained that when she first arrived in the UK, she felt hesitant to ask her sponsoring group questions. She did not want to bother the CS group by repeating inquiries about information she had already received with the help of an interpreter. However, she had difficulty fully understanding the information. Therefore, Basima mentioned that at that time, she preferred to direct her questions to her Arabic-speaking connections rather than approach her sponsors. Ramadan, Basima's husband, also recounted an instance when he chose not to seek support from CS volunteers when he intended to purchase a car. He believed involving the volunteers would be too onerous in terms of time commitment as he perceived sponsors as busy individuals. Instead, Ramadan sought assistance from an Arabic-speaking individual he met at the mosque, who facilitated the car purchase within a day. However, Ramadan later regretted his decision, as the acquired car turned out to be in an unacceptable condition for driving. With time passing, Basima and Ramadan, like most sponsored participants, then developed closer relationships with their sponsors, with increased confidence and comfort in seeking support from them. As mentioned in the previous chapter and explained in more detail in the following sessions, compared to VPRS refugees, CS participants also exhibited a higher level of confidence in connecting with other minority groups, resulting in the development of more ethnically diverse networks. In contrast, VPRS participants expressed mistrust toward individuals of their nationality and feared exploitation, particularly from those in similar situations or minority communities with limited resources.

These findings suggest that refugees' perceptions, comfort levels in seeking support from various individuals within their networks and the roles attributed to individuals within those networks influence their decisions on seeking assistance; challenging the assumption that having a network automatically guarantees access to support.

Therefore, having highlighted the network differences between VPRS and CS refugees, I shift the focus to analyse and compare the actual resources exchanged via social networks, exploring their impact on integration processes. In this chapter, I examine the extent of support received by VPRS and CS refugees through their social networks and examine how the combination of different social connections, along with the presence or absence of some types of relationships and accessed resources, shapes integration processes.

### **7.1 Facilitators of integration**

Earlier discussions in this thesis highlighted that Fol, encompassing language, culture, digital skills, safety and stability, play a dual role in shaping and being shaped by refugees' social relationships. Building on the findings presented in the previous chapter, showing that compared to VPRS participants, CS refugees had more diverse social connections capable of providing practical and emotional support, this section explores the correlation between these differences in VPRS and CS refugees' social networks and Fol.

Data on Fol were collected through participant self-ratings on a scale from 1 to 5, covering their knowledge of the English language, familiarity with British culture, digital skills, and feelings of safety and stability. The data were converted to a 10-point scale to facilitate comparison and a new variable – Fol – was created by combining data related to each self-assessed facilitator, as explained in Section 5.9.

The overall mean score of FoI was 6.9 (SD=1.36), indicating that participants generally perceived themselves as possessing an adequate level of key factors for their integration.

The analysis further indicated that the mean of the FoI variable was higher for CS refugees (7.21 and SD=1.35) and VPRS+CS (7.1 and SD=1.04), both supported by a community sponsorship group, compared to refugees solely assisted by local authorities. However, the mean difference between the FoI variable for VPRS and CS refugees was not statistically significant ( $t(18)=1.057$ ,  $p=0.305$ ).

It must be noted that participants' self-ratings might be influenced by subjectivity and perceptions, potentially affected by my presence and, in some instances, by the presence of other participants during the interviews, such as the spouse. However, since interviews were conducted face-to-face, I had the opportunity to ask additional questions to delve into the reasons behind participants' responses. Furthermore, through observations, I could gather supplementary information that, when analysed in conjunction with other collected data, helped mitigate the potential biases related to self-reporting and offered a more comprehensive understanding of participants' language skills, familiarity with British culture, digital skills, and feelings of safety and stability.

The following sections thus present data on each Facilitator of Integration, drawing on self-reported questionnaires, my observations and additional findings that emerged during the interviews with participants.

### **7.1.1 English language**

In terms of knowledge of the English language, CS refugees, on average, rated slightly higher (M=5.8, SD=2.04) than VPRS refugees (M=4.4, SD=2.06). However, both

groups perceived their English language skills as insufficient. I further observed that both VPRS and CS participants with higher education levels tended to rate their English knowledge similarly or lower than less educated participants despite demonstrating better English proficiency during the interviews. For instance, Mira (VPRS) and Maja (CS), two women with a university degree who could effectively communicate in English and did not need an interpreter during the interview, rated their knowledge of the English language as 6 out of 10. Yousef (VPRS) and Yassin (CS), two men who did not attend secondary education, also said that their English knowledge was sufficient (6 out of 10), but they had some difficulty expressing themselves in English and requested the help of their wives to translate words from Arabic to English during the interview.

Sponsored refugees, in particular, also made a distinction between their ability to understand and speak English. Even when participants indicated understanding English and provided a high rating for their knowledge of the English language, some mentioned challenges in expressing themselves as desired, particularly in situations like visiting the GP. For instance, Fatima, who rated her English proficiency at 8 out of 10, relied on translation for accessing health-care.

*She's sort of goes online, uses Google to write down her symptoms, and then she tries to learn, memorise what her symptoms as she could speak to the doctor, and sometimes she asks support from her daughter to translate for her. (...) For legal matters, for important health matters, she needs translation because these are important information. She can't just rely on the basic research she does. She needs an interpreter all the time (Fatima, VPRS+CS, female, via interpreter).*

Furthermore, when refugees, especially those under sponsorship, assessed their proficiency in English, they often compared their current level with the proficiency they had when they first arrived, which, in most cases, was almost absent.

*I arrived here with no English, I started it from letters. (...) I can do lots of things now by myself: going to the doctor, meetings in the college or school (Maja, CS, female).*

The case of Salim and Fatima, a VPRS married couple also supported by a sponsorship group, was particularly interesting. Salim rated his English language proficiency at 4 out of 10. Fatima explained that her husband had taken up work in a warehouse with the hope of interacting more with British people and improving his English. However, in Salim's workplace, most colleagues were from Romania and primarily spoke Romanian. Notably, Fatima appeared more confident in expressing herself in English than her husband. Still, she clarified that her English skills did not improve as much as she anticipated. Fatima attributed this lack of progress to the insufficient hours of English classes provided by the council and volunteers, which fell short of the minimum eight hours required under the agreement between local authorities and the Home Office (Home Office, 2020a). In Fatima's words:

*Her real issues, she says, is not coming through the Council or the Community sponsorship. Her real issue is the low hours of English she receives. (...) because they [the caseworker and volunteers] encourage her to be independent and to book appointments on her own to find a job, they encourage her to do these things. However, they don't understand that the one hour [of English*

*class] she receives from the council and the one hour from the volunteers isn't enough* (Fatima, VPRS+CS, female, via interpreter).

In an effort to enhance her English further, Fatima contacted her son's head teacher to inquire about volunteering at the school. With a positive response, she proceeded to apply for DBS. As of the interview, Fatima was awaiting the start of her volunteering activities at her son's school.

### **7.1.2 British culture**

Concerning knowledge of British culture, CS refugees exhibited a higher mean rating (M=6.45, SD=3.25) than VPRS refugees (M=5, SD=2.16), as well as the three VPRS participants supported by a community sponsorship group (M=4.16, SD=1.89). Nearly half of the sponsored refugees expressed their appreciation for British culture, illustrating positive sentiments. For instance, Maja said: '*Very good culture. I really like British culture*'. Similarly, Ramadan stated '*I love this culture*', referring to British culture. Even when participants acknowledged their limited knowledge of British culture, they shared positive comments, associating culture with their experiences in local interactions and the community. For instance, Omar and his wife Rasha said:

*We know some about, not a lot really, but in general (...). Most of the people we met really, they are very good people* (Omar, CS, male).

On the other hand, a few VPRS refugees expressed a desire to have more British friends to deepen their understanding of the culture, as explained in Section 6.3.

### **7.1.3 Digital skills**

For digital skills and the ability to access information online, both VPRS and CS refugees had an identical mean rating of 4.9 out of 10 (SD=3.28 for CS and SD=3.41

for VPRS). Young participants, aged between 18 and 21 years old, and those with a university degree (2 CS and 1 VPRS) tended to have higher digital skill ratings. About half of the refugees in both groups explained that they had received some kind of support in learning to use digital devices and accessing online information. Rasha and Omar, a couple supported by local authorities, said:

*They both have weak level of using electronics and to reach information on the Internet, and she [Rasha] said that there are people that support them, using electronics and reaching the Internet (Rasha and Omar, VPRS, via interpret).*

Maja, Muriel and Yassin also recounted that the sponsoring group had brought them a laptop. However, for most refugees, language barriers and low English proficiency emerged as primary challenges in utilising digital devices and accessing online information.

*At college they have computer sessions. However, they are all in English. Before when she used a PC or electronic devices, they work in Arabic, so she was able to use them. However, now she's sort of struggling. It's not as easy as before (Mariah, VPRS, female, via interpreter).*

Participants further mentioned that in their country of origin, they were not used to digital devices and had difficulties, for instance, remembering email and passwords. As Basima explained:

*I didn't have like a phone with everything until I came here. And in Jordan I used to have just a normal one with just phone. And Ramadan [husband] was not interested as well with the phone. Only when we came here we found the e-mail*

*address is really important here. As in Syria we change it every couple of minutes, here don't. You have to remember the password, you remember the e-mail, you remember everything, yeah, and everybody is asking you about it as well. You have to. You have to remember it and your phone number as well. I can't ...both of us not very good. Because we never used (Basima, CS, female).*

Basima's husband, Ramadan (CS), and Yousef, a local authority-supported participant, used the internet and digital devices for work purposes. However, Ramadan expressed a lack of confidence in his digital skills, despite his ability to navigate social media apps such as WhatsApp, Facebook and TikTok.

#### **7.1.4 Safety**

Both groups of refugees reported feeling very safe, with sponsored refugees (M=9.3, SD=1.63) feeling slightly safer than VPRS refugees (M=8.8, SD=1.39). The difference in feelings of safety emerged as associated with the types of areas where participants lived. For instance, Ismail, a local authority-supported refugee living in a predominantly urban context with a level of ethnic diversity above 30%, expressed concerns about safety due to theft and knife crime rates in his neighbourhood. Another VPRS participant, Mariah, living in a predominantly urban area with a high level of ethnic diversity (25.8 %), also raised concerns about the safety of her children, citing negative experiences such as bullying and fights at school.

#### **7.1.5 Stability**

The mean for the levels of stability was consistent for both VPRS and CS refugees (M=9.6, SD=0.84), with stability being the highest-rated Facilitator of Integration amongst the five for both groups of participants. Just two participants, Yousef (VPRS),

living in an area classified as urban with significant rural presence and an ethnic diversity level of 3%, and Ramadan (CS), residing in a predominantly rural area with low ethnic diversity (1.1%), stated that they could not feel completely stable because of employment-related difficulties. For example, Yousef, despite having secured a job, said:

*We like this city. Maybe this city no work, [it is] difficult to find work here. Maybe we changed to London, I don't know because we need a place that has work. Yeah, but just for work (Yousef, VPRS, male).*

In response to the question 'how stable do you feel?', Mariah and Faris both gave a rating of 10 out of 10. However, they expressed concerns about accommodation during the interview, mentioning housing instability. For instance, when I inquired if they had any additional comments towards the end of our conversation, Mariah and Faris shared remarks about their housing concerns.

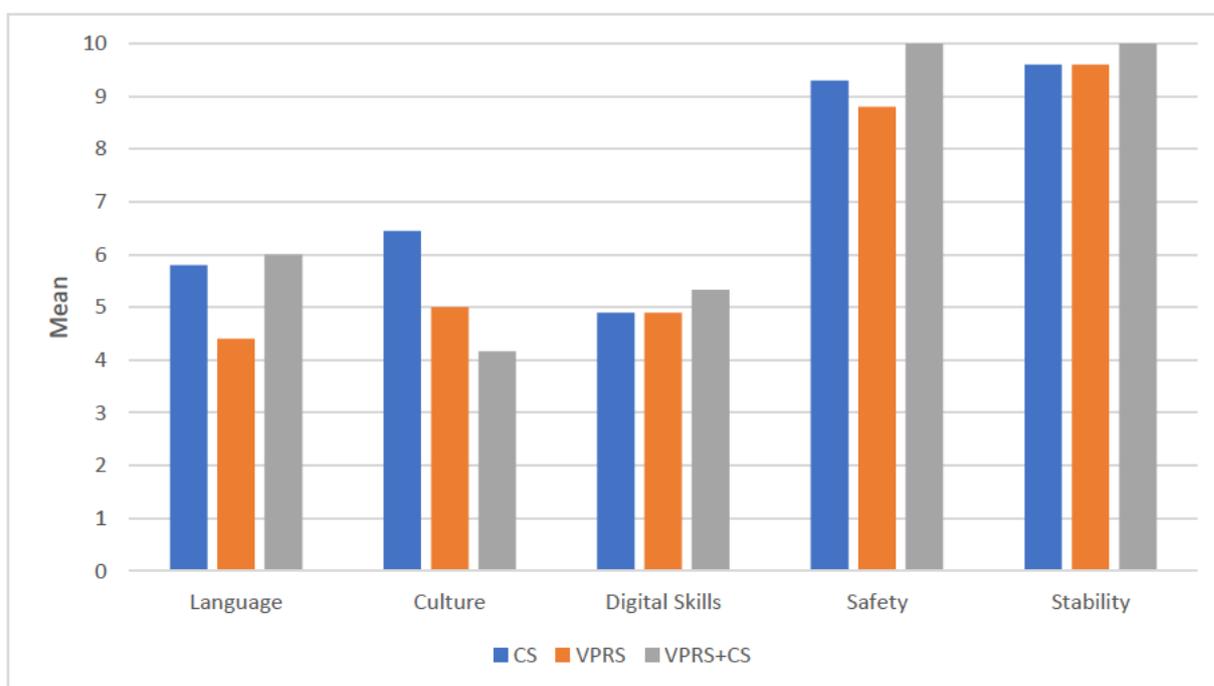
*They just concerned about their accommodation, which ends [soon]. The gentleman is worried because his children schools are close to this house and they're worried that if they uprooted somewhere else, they're just worried about their children schooling, new place again. That's the main issue (Mariah and Faris, VPRS family, via interpreter).*

### **7.1.6 Conclusion**

Analysing data on participants' FoI in the above sections, I uncovered nuanced insights into the integration experiences of refugees, comparing VPRS and CS refugees. The variances in the means of the five self-rated FoI discussed are illustrated in Figure 25. It is crucial to note that these mean differences were not statistically significant.

However, when combined with qualitative data gathered during interviews and my observations, these findings offer a more comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences.

**Figure 25: Differences in the Facilitators of Integration**



The next section shifts the focus to Markers and Means of Integration.

## 7.2 Markers and Means

In investigating the support available and exchanged through their social networks, participants were questioned about whom they would approach for assistance in issues related to different domains of integration. These domains, grouped under the heading Markers and Means of the lol framework, encompass Work, Housing, Education, Health & Social Care and Leisure (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019). The methodology involved posing hypothetical questions, where participants were asked whom they would approach for help in imaginary situations connected to the Markers and Means domains of lol, rather than being asked to solely provide examples about

who helped them in the past. This approach aimed to uncover potential support beyond the practical assistance already received. In the subsequent sections, I provide an in-depth exploration of participants' responses within each domain, with a more extensive discussion of these findings mentioned above presented in Chapter Eight.

### **7.2.1 Housing**

Concerning accommodation, VPRS refugees often mentioned their caseworkers as individuals able to assist them with housing, given the caseworkers' responsibility for aiding VPRS refugees and their professional connections with housing providers. In contrast, CS participants more commonly identified those helping them with accommodation as friends. The assistance sponsored refugees received was not solely based on a client-provider relationship but also stemmed from detailed knowledge about their needs as friends. For example, Basima (CS) mentioned individuals she would approach for housing-related questions, emphasising their roles as volunteers, experts, and friends intimately familiar with her family's needs:

*[If I have questions about accommodation, I would go to] James, because he's very friendly with us as Ramadan [husband] said he's his dad and Ella because she's friend and she was looking after us when we came. And she knows everything about the house and uh, about benefits and everything. And if anything we don't understand she will go to have yeah and ask her about it, but the main thing if anything broke in in the house or anything we go to James (Basima, CS, female).*

During interviews, CS refugees spontaneously shared examples of past experiences where these helpful individuals provided practical support, leading to a tangible

exchange of resources rather than merely a hypothetical scenario. Maja, referring to a CS volunteer, explained:

*She helped me when I moved because her husband was a lawyer and he is my guarantor. Because, you know, when I made contract...I am in Universal Credit. Yeah, I'm taking benefit from government. Yeah, so nobody can agree make contract. Universal Credit, but because her husband is my guarantor (Maja, CS, female).*

While all CS refugees identified friends with housing expertise, some VPRS participants, like Yousef, said they have nobody in their network capable of assisting with housing:

*No one help you for this. This if you have any problem for the house, no one will help you. (...) That's what I see now (Yousef, VPRS, male).*

Furthermore, despite having people in their networks, including caseworkers, attempting to help them with housing-related issues, some VPRS participants, such as Mariah, expressed ongoing problems with accommodation:

*She said that we do not know where we will move to or where we will be accommodated in a month or two months. However, the two names [people from organisations] she has mentioned are supporting her this transition (Mariah, VPRS, female, via interpreter).*

It could be argued that, in terms of housing assistance, the nature of relationships amongst sponsored refugees may yield better outcomes compared to VPRS relationships built mainly with individuals 'in charge' but lacking personal connections.

However, the context in which refugees reside, CS participants in predominantly rural or VPRS participants in predominantly urban areas, could also play a role in shaping housing outcomes. The subsequent section delves into employment.

### **7.2.2 Employment**

When asked about whom they would approach for employment-related questions, all CS refugees consistently indicated people from their community sponsorship group, often described as friends. Conversely, VPRS participants' responses were diverse, encompassing family members, volunteers and individuals from organisations, such as teachers. Caseworkers were rarely cited as the primary individuals to approach for work-related inquiries amongst local authority-supported refugees. Four VPRS participants noted they would turn to their interpreters, provided by the council. On two occasions, respondents expressed having no one to approach for help with employment. Importantly, in terms of employment, the nature of participants' relationships with potential helpers did not necessarily require a caring connection. Both groups emphasised seeking assistance from individuals with knowledge in the employment domain. However, in VPRS networks, connections were often perceived by participants as lacking the necessary knowledge to assist them in securing a job compared to CS refugees. For instance, Janna (VPRS), when asked about seeking employment help amongst her network's connections, stated:

*Nobody. Because to be honest, they ask me, I don't ask them because I have more knowledge, more than them (Janna, VPRS, female).*

Analysing whether the presence of individuals considered capable of helping translated into actual support and its impact on participants' employment outcomes, it

was noticeable that almost all CS refugees were involved in some type of work. In contrast, only two VPRS participants, Salim and Yousef, were employed, with Salim also benefiting from the support of a CS group. Notably, some sponsored refugees, despite indicating having people in their network to ask for help, said they faced difficulties in actually receiving the needed support. For example, Yassin said:

*Ah, for my job. If I want to ask, I ask, but they can't help me. (...) If they can, they will help but they can't because my work different than their work or they don't know anybody I want because building work, yeah, different (Yassin, CS, male).*

In Yassin's case, the lack of individuals with knowledge about his specific employment sector led him to accept a job that did not align with his previous experience. He found this job through contacts outside the CS group because, as he said, even the Jobcentre was unable to assist him. Therefore, while sponsored refugees had individuals in their network described as capable of helping, some still felt they did not receive the necessary support to access the jobs they desired. Nonetheless, they valued having people to approach for guidance. Ramadan expressed his confusion about business procedures and employment laws, emphasising the importance of asking for advice:

*Still, I'm confused with the business. What I have to do later? I do not understand the law yet, like the Jobcentre and what I have to do and I'm hearing from other people. (...) Best you go there and you ask. I'm saying I don't understand quite yet (Ramadan, CS, male).*

In conclusion, regarding employment, CS refugees were more likely than VPRS participants to indicate having individuals in their network from whom to seek help.

Both groups considered individuals capable of helping based on their knowledge rather than relying on caring relationships. However, even though more CS refugees were employed compared to local authority-supported refugees, not all of them felt they received the necessary support to access the work they wanted.

### **7.2.3 Education**

In examining participants' integration outcomes, it is important to highlight that when questioned about whom they would approach for education-related issues, refugees primarily referred to matters concerning their children's education and their own ESOL courses. Consequently, education was interpreted more narrowly than in the Home Office's Iol framework, specifically as 'access to, and progress within, the education system' (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019). Amongst CS participants, only Dana had successfully passed the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and attended a course unrelated to ESOL or numeracy. However, this course did not align with the topic or the level of the university degree she had earned in her home country. Maja (CS) and Mira (VPRS), the other two participants with university degrees, attended ESOL courses.

CS refugees were more inclined to identify volunteers from their community sponsorship groups as individuals capable of providing assistance with education. In contrast, VPRS respondents often mentioned their teachers and, in a few instances, people from organisations, less frequently citing their caseworker. Teachers were less prevalent in CS refugees' networks compared to VPRS refugees, partially because some sponsored participants no longer attended language classes. This distinction could be attributed to the context where CS refugees were placed, primarily in rural areas, limiting their access to colleges compared to predominantly urban areas where

VPRS refugees were resettled. For instance, Ramadan and Basima, a CS couple in a rural area, explained that their sponsoring group had arranged for an English teacher to visit their house and provide English lessons when they first arrived, as college opportunities were limited.

Like Ramadan and Basima, other sponsored refugees provided several examples where someone from their social network, mainly CS volunteers, offered educational support.

*He [CS volunteer] put this teacher for us when we came here and he puts mathematics teacher for my daughter and he registered me in college and he so he took me. Just spoke to teacher and he registered my daughter in school when we came. Everything, everything, everything (Maja, CS, female).*

On the other hand, no VPRS refugee reported past events where individuals in their network had assisted them with their education. Mariah, for instance, noted challenges even when she sought help:

*She said the reason why she doesn't ask anybody for support in education currently is because she believes that education and the language is something she needs to work on independently, and she said that, uh, before she used to go to the job centre and ask them to register them at colleges and they found a lot of difficulties when asking support in terms of college and education. And it was very, very difficult for them to find a place at a college. (...) She said that the jobcentre does support them, but it is. It is them themselves who actually go and find a place and register and chase the situation (Mariah, VPRS, female, via interpreter).*

In this case, Mariah said she had to rely on herself for educational matters due to the lack of assistance from her network. In contrast, two CS participants, Khaled and Dana, expressed confidence in finding answers about education independently, but acknowledged having people they could consult if needed.

*First I will, I will searching Internet, same websites or Internet, then I will ask somebody from the, like around the, I mean the closer to me [CS volunteers]. I'll ask somebody and see. Sometimes I also ask them for an opinion or discuss something about my study, my education, because it's not easy to get the right way. Yeah, and I have no experience about life in UK. I was in Middle East. Which is something. It's so different, it's really different, everything different. I can't compare and that's why I always need help, even if it's a small help (Khaled, CS, male).*

Despite the presence of individuals who could offer help in both groups, the help received did not significantly impact individuals' education access or outcomes. Some participants felt that the support received did not align with their expectations, as in the case of Jamil, a CS refugee. Jamil shared that while he received assistance with his education, including enrolment in an ESOL college course and additional language classes organised by his sponsors, he perceived that his progress did not meet his expectations. Jamil expressed concerns about limited opportunities for practical application of language skills and found the English taught in class did not help him in everyday life conversations.

*What he studies in college he doesn't implement or he doesn't practise it outside of college with them – the people at the church – When he meets the people at*

*the church, they try to have small conversations with him, but it's very different to what he's studying in college (Jamil, CS, male, via interpreter).*

Taira, an eighteen-year-old VPRS refugee also supported by a CS group, successfully passed her GCSE. Despite her academic achievements, Taira believed that additional support, such as extra time during exams, could have further benefited her. She viewed her successes as an opportunity to contribute to the community that welcomed her and expressed a desire to pursue a career as a police officer.

Although the presence of potential resources did not consistently lead to an exchange of support resulting in desired educational outcomes, having CS volunteers in their network appeared to provide sponsored refugees with an additional source of support in seeking effective solutions related to education.

*This woman, I don't speak to her every day, but so also when I have problem with my son, because my oldest son, he has difficult learning and this woman and this and this, they helping us to, uh, to, uh, to have more support at school (Muriel, CS, female).*

To conclude, sponsored refugees were more likely to report past experiences of receiving education help compared to VPRS participants. Sponsored refugees had a wider array of contacts who could provide informal advice as friends, while local authority-supported refugees mainly mentioned people from organisations as potential sources of help. However, no significant difference on education outcomes was observed between the two groups.

#### **7.2.4 Health and social care**

In the realm of health and social care, a notable distinction between CS and VPRS participants emerged. Most sponsored refugees were able to identify individuals in their network with specific medical knowledge, including doctors, nurses and dentists; who were often CS volunteers assisting with health and social care issues since the refugees' arrival. In contrast, VPRS participants were more likely to turn to their caseworker or directly consult the GP in the absence of such specialised individuals within their social networks.

*GP or hospital because they [people in his network] are no doctors (Yousef, VPRS, male).*

However, despite the presence of people with medical knowledge, both CS and VPRS refugees expressed difficulties in obtaining the necessary help for health and social care. GPs, in particular, were perceived as not providing adequate support. For instance, Khaled, a CS male, mentioned his struggles despite having people in his network with medical knowledge, saying:

*For my health, I will ask nobody. Because I did or I asked a lot, I tried to get help and many people still help me, but. Like yeah, I give up about my health so I don't. (...) They [CS volunteers] can help me, but they can't in the same time because they are not a doctor. And I knew one doctor from their community sponsorship. For me she did. She helped me? I can't say not. But she didn't she did nothing (Khaled, CS, male).*

Mariah, a VPRS participant, further highlighted how her health issues had negatively affected her ability to form social connections.

*I have many health complications and I in the past I used to ask for support for my health complications from the GP. However, the GP has not supported me. Therefore I have lost hope in seeking support for my health. (...) She just said that another factor that reduces my ability to make friends and connections is that she has a health complication and a health issue, which doesn't give her their energy (Mariah, VPRS, female, via interpreter).*

In summary, while the inclusion of individuals with medical knowledge in the networks of sponsored refugees represents an advantage because it offered an additional layer of support that was lacking for VPRS refugees, both CS and VPRS participants felt that they did not receive satisfactory support from healthcare providers, such as GPs.

#### **7.2.5 Leisure time**

In analysing the outcomes in the leisure domain of integration, a notable difference emerged between VPRS and CS refugees. While most participants from both groups identified at least a few individuals they could potentially spend leisure time with, VPRS refugees indicated a lower number of such connections compared to CS refugees.

Additionally, four local authority-supported refugees mentioned family members, either in the UK or abroad, when asked about potential leisure companions. In contrast, Mariah said she spent her leisure time alone, citing limited resources such as transportation, money and time as barriers to enjoying recreational activities. Mariah explained her situation, stating:

*I do not have many contacts to or social relationships and that I can contact for leisure. And the reason is nobody invites her to their house, and there are places of leisure, but they are far, and they're very expensive. She cannot afford to go*

*out for leisure and when she wants to spend time for leisure, she spends her leisure time with her children also she goes to very local and very close parks around her and that's the only sort of form of leisure she has (Mariah, VPRS, female, via interpreter).*

On the other hand, sponsored refugees predominantly identified people they met through their CS group when considering leisure time companions. However, it is noteworthy that the mere presence of these connections did not necessarily result in sponsored refugees being completely satisfied with their social lives or the availability of leisure companions. For instance, a couple of CS refugees, despite having several people in their networks whom they considered close, expressed feelings of loneliness. Similarly, Khaled, a young man in his 20s, had 17 social connections (6 very close and 11 less close), but he said that these individuals were all older than him, except for one. When asked about whom he would spend some leisure time with, Khaled mentioned having only one friend. Jamil, another CS male refugee, reported challenges similar to those expressed by VPRS respondents, including feelings of loneliness despite having a network of CS volunteers. Notably, most of the individuals he included in his networks, primarily sponsors, were women. Jamil said he only occasionally spent some leisure time with a male friend, included as a less close connection, who happened to be the husband of a CS volunteer.

*He usually he spends his time alone. (...) Sometimes they go out, he goes out with this man on a walk. They walk together. Uh, but the majority of the time he works, he's at work, this man (Jamil, CS, male, via interpreter).*

Through groups, sponsored participants appeared to be better positioned to overcome challenges hindering their ability to enjoy leisure time in company. Volunteers emerged as playing a crucial role by introducing sponsored refugees to their wider social networks, often organising social events. These opportunities facilitated sponsored refugees in enjoying leisure time together and expanding their social connections. In contrast, VPRS refugees lacked such facilitators, making it challenging for them to spend free time in company and develop relationships. The presence of caring individuals in the social networks of CS refugees also contributed significantly to their ability to engage in leisure activities, while VPRS refugees often felt more isolated. Nonetheless, both groups said they faced some challenges that restricted their leisure time, generating feelings of isolation.

### **7.3 The impact of social networks on integration processes**

Looking at the Home Office's lol (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019), the preceding sections have examined the intricate dynamics of social relationships, exploring the interplay of caring and helping interactions, and the subsequent exchange of emotional and practical support. However, beyond the Home Office's lol domains, I found additional implications linked to the presence or absence of social connections and the resources exchanged within them. In the sections below, I delve into these identified implications, highlighting the impact of the significant disparity in the presence of caring relationships between VPRS and CS refugees, as elucidated in Chapter Six.

#### ***7.3.1 Feeling comfortable and confident***

The notable contrast in the experiences of CS and VPRS refugees became apparent through the lens of caring relationships within their social networks.

For sponsored participants, the presence of individuals described as caring translated into a pervasive sense of confidence and comfort. Nearly all sponsored refugees expressed positive feelings when spending time with friends or engaging in conversations - a departure from the limited positive sentiments reported by a few VPRS refugees. The key factor influencing this disparity was the composition of social networks, particularly the presence (absence) of caring relationships within sponsored (VPRS) refugees' networks. Sponsored refugees often expressed feeling a sense of comfort and confidence when interacting with volunteers from their CS groups, whom they often saw as caring figures. As Khaled explained:

*When I speak to them [CS volunteers], I feel comfortable. I don't feel I am in a like dangerous hand or they will talk to somebody else about what I say to them*  
(Khaled, CS, male).

Moreover, sponsored refugees often spoke of a mix of volunteers and Arab people with whom they felt comfortable. As highlighted in Section 6.3, sponsored refugees tended to have more people of the same nationality in their network compared to VPRS participants. This mixed composition of CS networks may be linked to the confidence that sponsored refugees gained through their caring relationships. This newfound confidence might have encouraged them to connect with individuals of the same nationality, despite the underlying fears associated with the reasons for leaving their home country. This sense of fear was reported by both sponsored and VPRS refugees.

*There are many reasons why Arabs don't mix here, and it's not to do with her, it's another issue that she doesn't want to mention. (...) There's an issue with*

*the Syrian community here, and she doesn't want to get involved (Mariah, VPRS, female, via interpreter).*

*I have a secret story when I came here, just the Home Office knows my stories and. Especially Iraqi people, I don't like (...). Because you have to tell them about your family in Iraq and maybe one, you know, who are you? And I had already problems, why I am here (Maja, CS, female).*

Maja's situation illustrates the delicate balance of caution and comfort. Despite Maja mentioning her daughter's advice against meeting new people, myself included, she found reassurance in connecting with others. This sense of comfort may have stemmed from the supportive environment nurtured by her caring relationships with CS volunteers, whom Maja mentioned consulting regularly. Seeking advice from close connections within her CS group, Maja, for instance, said she had received reassurance about the safety of our meeting and thus agreed to participate in this study.

*They [CS volunteers] say it's safe to see Gabriella yeah. Because to be honest with you, I asked them everything. I still love them and they are more responsible. I ask them, this is okay? (Maja, CS, female).*

As reported by participants, having someone perceived as caring and capable of providing emotional support was crucial in bolstering their confidence to share intimacy, consequently strengthening these caring relationships. As Dana explained:

*It's just like such as a feeling if you are feeling relief with somebody when you are talking with. Maybe encourage you to speak more to meet him more and*

*have like really good building relationship and comes stronger, stronger, more specific personality (Dana, CS, female).*

The ability to communicate also emerged as another pivotal factor in fostering comfort and confidence within social relationships. For instance, Yousef, a VPRS participant, said he struggled to build connections at his children's school due to his lack of English language skills:

*For me because I don't. I can't speak everything because I'm afraid if I would go I would speak with anyone. Hello, how are you? After I would stop. What I say I don't know. Yeah, this problem, the language problem (Yousef, VPRS, male).*

Language barriers affected positive feelings and hindered communication for CS refugees as well, highlighting the significance of overcoming language challenges.

*When I came here first time (...) I can't speak. Yeah, because I'm sad inside. It's still sad from, from prison, so when we came here I don't speak English and people not speak Arabic. People come in just sit and I'm looking at them. They look at me. So I'm crying (Ramadan, CS, male).*

However, the ability to communicate might have been influenced not just by having English language skills but also by the confidence that participants developed through their caring relationships. Notably, although both VPRS and CS participants rated their knowledge of the English language as insufficient (as explained in Section 7.1.1), only two CS participants requested an interpreter for their interviews. In contrast, most VPRS refugees felt more at ease being interviewed in Arabic, suggesting that

sponsored refugees might have more confidence in speaking English than those supported by local authorities. Caring relationships may have helped CS refugees overcome concerns related to language barriers, as Yara explained:

*The language is really important to make everything clear. You can speak easily and easy to contact, but sometimes she finds that English people. They are really close to her heart. More than other Arabic people, it's like a bit complicated* (Yara, CS, female, via interpreter).

Moreover, compared to VPRS participants, CS refugees expressed pride in their ability to manage various aspects of their lives without seeking assistance, including matters related to education and housing. This confidence in resolving issues independently, reported by sponsored refugees, might also have stemmed from both the practical help received in the past and the emotional support provided by caring relationships.

*I'm doing lots of things by myself. As you know, I am responsible about my home. I'm doing everything by myself now. No, last year or before last year, every time I'm called Sandra [CS volunteer]* (Maja, CS, female).

In contrast, VPRS refugees, when confronted with challenges without seeking support, did not report the same levels of confidence as sponsored refugees. VPRS participants further described more negative feelings of being left alone to find solutions and opportunities.

In essence, the presence of supportive relationships within networks of sponsored refugees appeared to have fostered greater comfort and confidence compared to VPRS refugees, potentially resulting in enhancements in communication abilities and an increased sense of independence. Collectively, these elements might contribute to

steering sponsored refugees towards a more positive resettlement experience compared to VPRS refugees.

### **7.3.2 Receiving community**

The differences in the size and nature of social networks between CS and VPRS refugees extend to their interactions with the wider receiving community, suggesting potential differences in experiences and impacts on integration processes.

CS participants reported how the relationships established with some local community members provided these individuals with insights into refugees' culture and traditions. Basima and her husband, for instance, shared aspects of their culture, such as Ramadan, with people outside their CS group, who did not have any Arab or Muslim background. This exchange of cultural practices, as illustrated by Basima, fostered a sense of connection:

*We become friends and in Ramadan they will come and have breakfast with us and they fast, Grace fast with us one month of Ramadan and her dad did once (Basima, CS, female).*

Similarly, Lena, another sponsored refugee, mentioned how English-speaking volunteers from her CS group, whom she considered close friends, were also trying to learn Arabic. This reciprocal exchange of language and cultural understanding was not reported amongst VPRS participants. Only in one instance, a local authority-supported family mentioned their neighbours' interest in learning about their culture. However, it must be noted that these neighbours also had an Arab background, even if most had British citizenship.

Members of the receiving community supporting CS refugees not only learnt more about refugees' culture and traditions, but they also had to confront some British systems, such as the welfare system. While assisting with benefits, sponsored refugees noted that volunteers encountered challenges in comprehending the intricacies of the British welfare system, including the Job Centre. It is possible that helping refugees in navigating the welfare system may have led to some members of the receiving community gaining a greater awareness of the challenges faced by refugees and individuals relying on benefits. This awareness potentially led a group of volunteers, who had already sponsored a refugee family through CS, supporting Salima, Fatima and Taira, the three VPRS+CS refugees who participated in this study. In contrast to VPRS, sponsored refugees reported positive shifts in their interactions with the wider community, expressing more favourable comments about local people, often referred to as British. However, both VPRS and CS refugees acknowledged the existence of negative attitudes toward refugees and Arab people, acting as barriers to developing social relationships with the broader community. Khaled, a CS male refugee, highlighted the challenges arising from negative stereotypes:

*They think in a bad way about us, especially our Arab people. Yeah, you know, in the entire world Arab people Muslim people is not good. (...) I know most of them good but when someone go in the street and kill people. So this is make a big difference for other people when you say so or look Muslim what they do. Yeah, here and there are refugees or something. You know people talking a lot. So maybe this is the problem. And a lot of faking news about us. So it makes people a little bit scared (Khaled, CS, male).*

Despite these challenges, the presence of caring individuals, notably CS volunteers, within the social networks of CS refugees might have created a sense of welcome and acceptance within the wider community, with most sponsored participants even mentioning an absence of racism in their interactions. Maja, reflecting on British culture and people, said: *'No racists at all. Lots of people helped me'*. In one example provided by Ramadan, some people in his CS group intervened directly to heal the harm a lady in their local community caused him. The intervention of the volunteers then had a positive impact on Ramadan's experience with the broader community, as he recounted:

*It make me sick for two months, three months. So I tell other friend what she said. So they try to make and she's come here say sorry and I don't know you, your story. I love everything here (Ramadan, CS, male).*

### **7.3.3 Reciprocity**

Broader social networks that offered both practical and emotional support appeared to have had an additional positive influence on the integration processes of sponsored refugees, potentially enhancing their capacity for reciprocal support. While examples of reciprocity were almost absent in the conversations with VPRS refugees, these instances frequently emerged when talking with CS participants. Sponsored refugees reported a notable willingness and ability to give back, not only to their supportive connections – like CS volunteers – but also to the wider community, including strangers.

However, the form of reciprocity varied amongst CS refugees, depending on the nature of relationships and the support received. As explained in previous sections, CS

participants frequently highlighted the extensive aid provided by sponsors, ranging from practical assistance like housing and educational help to emotional support. The comprehensive nature of sponsors' assistance was often emphasised by nearly all CS participants, saying that CS volunteers helped them with 'everything'.

*Those people [CS volunteers] have us for everything here (Yassin, CS, male).*

*They [CS volunteers] helped him out with everything. And since arriving here, they've been with him every step of his journey here (Jamil, CS, male).*

However, reciprocating this extensive support provided by sponsors demanded resources often unavailable to refugees. Despite lacking these resources, sponsored refugees found ways to reciprocate, predominantly through the exchange of time and intimacy, described in Section 6.5. The value of time and intimacy should not be underestimated. Participants often acknowledged that their busy lives, filled with commitments like college, household responsibilities and childcare, limited the amount of time they could dedicate to cultivate relationships, as Mariah and Dana pointed out:

*She thinks that perhaps what has made her social life sort of limited is that she goes to college and college is long hours and when she is at home, she has work to do at home and when the weekend comes, she has to look after the children. So it's this kind of long hours at college and looking after the children that has reduced and limited her time to build friendships and connections (Mariah, VPRS, female, via interpreter).*

*Because everyone is busy and I start to be busy as them [some people in her network] so I didn't see them too much (Dana, CS, female).*

For refugees, time was, thus, a precious resource, and its exchange can be seen as a sign of reciprocating the support received. Participants like Maja, for instance, allocated their time strategically, focusing more on their personal progress rather than expanding their social networks. However, it must be noted that Maja reported also feeling satisfied with her social connections and the resources received from her social network, which included her mother, eight people part of her CS group, her teacher, a person she met at college and four Arab refugees who were living in her area. Apart from her mother, Maja considered all the people in her network friends, providing her valuable practical and emotional support.

*That's all my friends, I don't have more because I don't like make lots of friends for nothing. Again, for nothing like no for nothing, no, just like. Lots of friends taking time. And I need time to improve myself. (...) So I don't like to make lots of friends. These are enough to me (Maja, CS, female).*

Sharing intimacy also emerged as a significant means through which refugees reciprocate the support they receive, built on trust. Both VPRS and sponsored participants expressed difficulties in trusting others, a sentiment deeply linked to their past experiences and the reasons for fleeing their home countries, as illustrated by Ramadan's story. In Syria, he found out that one of the people who imprisoned and tortured him was his childhood neighbour. Such an experience led Ramadan to wonder about the nature of the people he met.

*My neighbour, I know him from school (...) And when they took me to prison, Free Army and Al-Qaeda, it was him with them, so that make me like very, very*

*big surprise. Like, why? And this make me, make me think when I meet people, is all the people the same? (Ramadan, CS, male)*

Despite the difficulties faced in trusting people, sponsored refugees were more able to develop trusting relationships, particularly with some CS volunteers, offering their trust and time to reciprocate the support received, compared to VPRS refugees. However, acts of reciprocity were not solely limited to CS volunteers, but they extended to other social connections within the sponsored refugees' community. Basima, for instance, provided emotional assistance to a friend in a care home, alleviating her loneliness.

*We go to the home care [care home] with the kids and we play that with the old lady. And we invited one of them to here last Sunday. She was good. She came from Scotland and she didn't have any children here. They all there and they didn't visit her for so long and she missed them and missed like a family and we go and visit her sometimes and we invite her to here last Sunday and the kids they loved. They called the aunty (Basima, CS, female).*

As explained in Section 6.2, unlike VPRS, CS participants were also more able to build relationships with other refugees, offering them emotional support. Lena and Maja, for instance, said they had close relationships with other Arab refugees living in their area, engaging in daily conversations and providing emotional assistance as these friends shared their problems.

*This and this, they are Arabic, everyday [I speak with them]. She, because she's sick. Some time, one time, sometime twice [speak with her] (Lena, CS, female).*

*Because we speak each other every day. Including her problems with husband (Maja, CS, female).*

The support CS refugees extended to their network was not exclusively emotional, but also practical. Interestingly, a few participants explained how they helped others by reaching out to their social connections. Lena, for instance, created a bridge between her friends from college and a lady she met at her son's school, who wanted to practice her Arabic language skills.

*This lady (...) Lena knows from her son's school (...) would like to get to know people that speak Arabic so she can strengthen her language. (...) So Lena introduced her friends from college to the lady from [her son] school (Lena, CS, female, via interpreter).*

The development of caring and helpful relationships, along with the support received through these connections, appeared to have a positive impact on sponsored refugees, enabling them to assist other newcomers in their community and potentially expand their social network. In the example below, Dana shared how she aided a woman, who later became her friend, in settling into the area.

*I'm not English to settle here as the other, but yeah, and it's my in. Yeah, in my experience I feel. She has really bad situation, I feel really sad. Yeah so I help her. (...) And then I helped her to find a job and she started to work (...) I told her look go to the shop, next to the shop there is this house empty they would like to rent. Ask the woman who's working in the shop. And she did it and she got the house (Dana, CS, female).*

Basima and Ramadan, a CS couple, also provided several examples of offering help to strangers. Using their Arabic language skills, Ramadan, for instance, volunteered as a translator at the Jobcentre, while Basima assisted women during their childbirth.

*She's [Basima] going to help lots of women. They've gone, they have babies. They don't speak English, she helping to translate with the doctor. She did maybe five or six babies (Ramadan, CS, male).*

While CS refugees presented several examples of reciprocating the support they received by helping individuals within their networks and their community, as shown in the above instances, similar acts of reciprocity rarely emerged in the conversations with VPRS refugees. Only Salim, Fatima, and Taira, who were also assisted by a CS group, reported experiences similar to those of CS refugees.

#### **7.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I illustrated how the differences in the size and composition of social networks between VPRS and CS refugees might have influenced integration outcomes and processes. In the analysis, I distinguished between the presence of people able to help and the actual exchanges of resources, recognising that merely having resources in a social network may not guarantee automatic access to them.

In the initial sections of this chapter, I focused on FoI, namely refugees' knowledge of the English language, British culture, digital skills, how stable and safe they felt. The findings showed that both CS and VPRS refugees rated, on average, their knowledge of the English language and their digital skills as insufficient, despite sponsored refugees having more British individuals in their network and reporting assistance in learning to use digital devices as well as having laptops bought by their sponsorship

group. There was, instead, a net difference in the knowledge of British culture between the two resettled groups, with CS refugees reporting a stronger grasp of British culture compared to local authority-supported refugees. Overall, both VPRS and CS participants said they felt highly stable and safe.

Subsequently, I focused on the domains under the heading Markers and Means of the Home Office's IoI framework (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019). CS refugees reported better accommodation-related outcomes than VPRS participants, saying that individuals in their network were able to assist with housing issues. However, it must also be noted that there was a substantial divergence in the living locations of the two groups. Sponsored participants resided in predominantly rural areas, while VPRS refugees were situated in predominantly urban contexts, potentially contributing to the differences in accommodation-related outcomes. Additionally, compared to VPRS refugees, sponsored refugees were more likely to identify supportive individuals in their network regarding employment-related matters. Nevertheless, participants still felt they did not receive adequate employment support. Both VPRS and CS refugees expressed concerns about accessing necessary health and social care assistance. However, the presence of individuals with health-related knowledge and caring connections appeared to potentially offer sponsored refugees more extensive support compared to VPRS refugees. CS participants also reported better leisure-related outcomes as their sponsoring groups alleviated some challenges hindering refugees' ability to engage in leisure activities, such as financial, time and transportation constraints.

Despite sponsored refugees having broader networks than VPRS respondents, CS participants mentioned instances where they did not always receive the necessary

support. Nonetheless, social connections appeared to create significant differences in the integration experiences between the two groups. The presence of individuals providing sponsored refugees not just practical help, but also emotional support appeared to have additional implications, potentially positively influencing the integration processes of CS participants.

Unlike VPRS refugees, sponsored respondents appeared to feel more at ease and confident, possibly due to the emotional and practical support they received through their social networks. These positive feelings appeared to extend to sponsored refugees' interactions with members of the wider community (people not directly involved in CS), which might have aided multidirectional integration. The more positive interactional experiences might also have enhanced sponsored refugees' ability to reciprocate the support received and give back to the community that welcomed them. In contrast, VPRS refugees, with fewer social connections and less caring relationships, appeared to lack these positive outcomes.

In the upcoming chapter, I delve deeper into these presented findings as well as those outlined in the previous chapter, exploring their implications further.

## **CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION**

In this chapter, I present an in-depth analysis of the data gathered in this study, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of the results and their implications within the context of existing literature on community sponsorship, government-led resettlement programmes, refugees' social networks, embedded resources and integration processes. I begin by outlining my findings and subsequently, I address the three objectives outlined in Chapter One Section 1.3, concluding with a discussion of the study's limitations.

### **8.1 Overview of the findings**

Adopting a mixed-methods approach and employing social network analysis with visualisation tools, I conducted a comparative analysis of the social relationships of refugees resettled in England through CS and VPRS. I aimed to understand how the combinations of social connections and associated support impacted integration processes. My findings revealed that sponsored refugees had broader and more diversified social networks than local authority-assisted refugees. This network diversity encompassed the socio-demographic characteristics and social roles of individuals within VPRS and CS refugees' networks as well as the amount and the types of resources these connections provided.

While VPRS refugees had social connections predominantly with Arabic speakers and individuals of the Muslim faith, CS participants had more relationships with British people. Interestingly, compared to VPRS respondents, sponsored refugees also had more connections with Arabic speakers, individuals of the Muslim faith and their same nationality. I further explored the social roles of individuals within refugees' social

networks, finding that CS refugees had more connections with friends, while VPRS refugees had more relationships with people from organisations.

Moreover, analysing the global structure of the networks through the Gephi software, I noticed that individuals in the sponsored refugees' networks tended to be closely connected to each other, often forming a closely interconnected web of relationships despite their network being more ethnically diverse. On the other hand, the social networks of VPRS refugees had a more segmented structure, divided into tight-knit groups and limited connections between these groups, despite being more ethnically homogenous networks.

I also encountered differences in the quality of social connections (such as level of closeness, trust, shared intimacy and frequency of contacts) and the resources embedded in these relationships. Compared to VPRS refugees, sponsored refugees had developed more connections described as caring relationships, characterised by a high level of shared intimacy and frequency of contacts, thereby offering emotional support in addition to practical help. Describing their networks, VPRS refugees, instead, highlighted a more apparent distinction between helping relationships, offering practical help, and a notably limited number of caring relationships, providing emotional support.

Subsequently, using the Home Office's lol framework, I investigated how differences in social networks between VPRS and CS refugees impacted integration outcomes and processes. Sponsored refugees felt they had a higher understanding of the English language and were more familiar with British culture compared to VPRS refugees. However, both groups considered their English language proficiency and digital skills insufficient. CS refugees also reported better accommodation-related

outcomes than VPRS refugees. However, it should be noted that most CS participants, except two, resided in areas classified as predominantly rural by the Government Statistical Service (DEFRA Rural Statistics, 2017), while local authority-sponsored refugees were situated in predominantly urban environments, highlighting the impact of context on integration processes and outcomes. Additionally, compared to VPRS refugees, sponsored respondents were more likely to indicate that people in their network could help with employment, education, health and social care assistance. However, refugees from both groups expressed concerns about accessing jobs and having adequate health assistance. Taking also into account refugees' educational level in their country of origin, I further found that none of the participants in both groups had their previous qualifications recognised, or made progress in the UK's educational system.

Comparing integration outcomes by looking exclusively at structural and cultural aspects, I identified little difference between VPRS and CS refugees' integration outcomes despite having diverse networks (types of relationships and resources). Both groups of participants further expressed feeling safe and stable when I asked them to rate their level of stability and safety amongst the other IOL's FOI. However, through in-depth interviews, I found that social connections significantly influenced refugees' integration processes, with VPRS and CS participants reporting notable differences in their experiences. The presence of individuals who provide both practical and emotional support to sponsored refugees (caring and helping connections) had additional positive effects that potentially improved their integration processes, which were not seen in the experiences of VPRS respondents. Sponsored respondents, unlike VPRS refugees, reported developing greater confidence and comfort due to the

presence of caring connections providing emotional support. Such positive feelings appeared to enable them to engage in more social interactions compared to VPRS refugees, developing relationships beyond their CS group. The development of connections between sponsored refugees and members of their wider community not directly involved in sponsorship could potentially contribute to facilitating integration as multidirectional. However, further research is needed to investigate the perspective of individuals from the wider community. Sponsored refugees further expressed an increased willingness and ability to reciprocate the support received. Examples of reciprocity were less evident in VPRS refugees' experience.

In the following sections of this chapter, I provide a detailed discussion of these findings within the context of existing literature, addressing the three research questions that shaped my study:

1. How do the social networks of refugees resettled through CS and VPRS differ?
2. What is the relationship between different types of social connections and the resources accessible through these connections for refugees?
3. How does the combination and/or absence of social networks and resources accessed through established social connections shape refugees' integration?

## **8.2 Exploring the research questions: a comprehensive examination of the findings**

### ***8.2.1 How do the social networks of refugees resettled through CS and VPRS differ?***

Based on the findings presented in Chapter Six, I observed substantial differences between VPRS and CS refugees' social networks. Specifically, through sponsorships,

refugees are more likely to develop extensive and diverse social networks compared to local authority-assisted refugees.

In comparing the social networks of VPRS and CS participants, social networks were conceptualised as intermediary-level shaped by individual factors, such as socio-demographic and migration characteristics, and contextual factors like resettlement policy across time (Section 4.3). Notably, resettlement policy emerged as a crucial determinant shaping the diverse social networks developed by VPRS and CS refugees.

At the individual level, participants shared several socio-demographic characteristics, such as language and religion. However, I observed notable distinctions in the socio-demographic composition between the networks of VPRS and CS refugees. CS refugees had more relationships with British people, attributable to the presence of sponsors, but also with co-ethnic people (sharing the same nationality, language and religion) compared to VPRS refugees. On the other hand, VPRS respondents were predominantly connected with people speaking Arabic and of the Muslim faith, with fewer connections to individuals described as British. Moreover, CS refugees had a notably higher number of both close and less close connections than VPRS refugees, with the difference in social network size between the two groups being statistically significant. These findings support the argument put forth by proponents of sponsorship programmes that the nature of sponsorship, with its heavy reliance on volunteers and intensive support for refugee families, allows refugees to cultivate a wider range of social relationships than refugees resettled through government-led programmes (Reset, 2021a). However, the challenges that participants encountered in identifying British people within their networks must also be noted. Several

connections held dual citizenship or did not fit the stereotypical characteristics typically associated with being British, such as whiteness, suggesting that clear distinctions between minority and majority ethnic groups in networks do not align with reality (Grzymala-Kazłowska and Phillimore, 2018; Wessendorf and Phillimore, 2019).

Interestingly, differences in the social-demographic composition of social networks between VPRS and CS refugees emerged, despite refugees having similar preferences regarding the types of social relationships they wanted to build. Individual preferences play a significant role in the formation of social relationships, as observed in various studies (Small, 2017; Bahulkar et al., 2017; Wissink and Mazzucato, 2018). Both groups of participants preferred to develop social networks with individuals sharing their language, nationality and religion, as well as with individuals from the ethnic majority in the UK. Participants highlighted how relationships with the former group would help them retain and practice their culture, while relationships with British people could support them in learning about the new language and culture of the hosting country. This finding speaks to the idea of integration as a balance between retaining one's culture while learning a new culture (Berry, 1997), showing how refugees' willingness to integrate is reflected in their networking preferences. Contrary to policymakers' assumptions about minority groups' reluctance to integrate (see Cattle, 2001; Casey, 2016), my findings further support evidence showing that refugees do not choose to avoid developing social connections with the majority ethnic community (Finney and Simpson, 2009; Wessendorf and Phillimore, 2019).

However, it must be noted that both groups of participants expressed some reluctance and caution in developing relationships with minority ethnic groups, especially with people from the same nationality, fearing potential threats to their lives due to the

reasons they sought refuge, as highlighted by UNHCR (2021b). As in Espinoza et al.'s study (2023), refugees in this study, indeed, highlighted a lack of trust towards co-nationals generated by negative experiences both before being resettled and in the UK, along with concerns about potential judgment regarding their lifestyle from individuals within the same ethnic group. These findings also confirm that forced migration has 'a long term effect on social relations even after the resettlement' (McMichael and Manderson in Almohamed et al., 2017: 59), impacting refugees' development of social networks. In supporting refugees' social network development, sponsors and supportive organisations should thus pay more attention to refugees' preferences, consulting them before introducing them to others, particularly individuals from the same nationality as fellow refugees (Phillimore et al., 2020).

While much attention in refugee and migrant studies has focused on criteria such as nationality and ethnicity to explore social relationships (Ryan and Dahinden, 2021), my social network approach transcended these classifications, recognising refugees as a heterogeneous group (Taha, 2019). Employing participant-aided sociograms allowed me to investigate the dynamics of network formation, understand participants' perceptions of their relationships and identify the factors shaping the nature of these social connections (Hogan et al., 2007; Ryan et al., 2014; Ryan and D'Angelo, 2018). Through such an approach, I unveiled how the principle of homophily, wherein individuals tend to build close relationships with people similar to them (Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1954), plays a key role in network formation. However, my findings align with Ryan's argument (2011: 721) that the identification of 'similar others' or individuals "like us" is more complex and nuanced than may first appear'. Other factors, such as education level, rather than solely ethnicity and nationality, emerged as a common

basis for the development of relationships among refugees (Ryan, 2011). Notably, refugees with higher education tended to establish more connections with individuals sharing a similar educational background, unveiling participants' preference for developing connections with highly educated people 'like them'. This finding could be extended beyond participants in this study, underscoring the significant role of education in network development (Dahinden, 2011) and suggesting that rare attributes within a network, rather than common ones, might hold a more significant influence on relationships' development (Rivera et al., 2010). As Blau (1974 in Rivera et al., 2010) points out, individuals can share some similarities, but differ in certain other aspects; thus, stating that connections follow the principle of homophily or heterophily might oversimplify relationships' dynamics.

Moreover, I acknowledge the complexity of multiple identities shaping refugees' experience (Taha, 2019; Karam et al., 2020), recognising that categories such as level of education, gender, age, legal status can acquire different meanings depending on the social, cultural and historical context (Kirschner, 2015). In their experience of forced migration, refugees have to deal with the loss of their social and cultural structure as well as their self-identity, referred to by Eisenbruch (1991) as 'cultural bereavement'. At the same time, settling in a new country prompts refugees to engage in identity renegotiation, reflecting on and making sense of their self-identity in the context of their new environment, leading to the adoption of different strategies for the development of social networks (Torok and Ball, 2021). One crucial aspect that emerged from my study is the influence of refugees' perceptions of self and others in shaping social relationships and feelings of belonging (Wessendorf, 2010). I found that sponsored refugees reported possessing a more positive and empowering self-identification

compared to that expressed by VPRS participants. The strengthened sense of self might contribute to CS refugees' ability to engage and establish relationships within their new community. Interestingly, CS refugees also perceived the 'refugee' label more positively compared to VPRS refugees, affecting their ability to connect with other refugees. These results align with those of Kyriakides et al. (2018, 2019a), who also found that sponsored refugees could develop more trustworthy social connections when they were able to reaffirm their pre-conflict identity and move away from a narrative that portrays refugees solely as victims. In contrast, VPRS refugees were less inclined to develop relationships with other refugees, having a more negative perception associated with the identity of 'being a refugee'. My findings emphasise the significance of individual narratives and perceptions in shaping social connections amongst refugees, illustrating that merely sharing refugee status is insufficient as a basis for building social relationships, particularly when 'policies and programmes activate resentment and insecurity' (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2016: 27).

Although sponsorship could have positively enabled refugees to reaffirm their identities and forge relationships beyond shared ethnicity and nationality, I noticed how resettlement policies still impose some constraints on refugees' ability to develop their social networks. In exploring the socio-demographic characteristics of individuals within refugees' networks, I noted that participants, especially CS refugees, were connected with individuals who were generally older and more educated than themselves. This finding appeared correlated with the resettlement policy, given that participants in this study were typically younger and less formally educated compared to the typical CS volunteers - middle-class women over 50 years old (Phillimore et al., 2020). Although age differences were not perceived as problematic within established

relationships, the prevalence of older individuals in refugees' living areas posed challenges in forming new connections. For instance, participants mentioned that as older people tended to spend more time indoors, opportunities for social interaction were limited. Gender differences also emerged as factors shaping refugees' social network. Specifically, women participants mentioned that the responsibility of caring for young children limited their ability to develop relationships, given their restricted time outside the home. Nevertheless, the attendance of children in schools has emerged as an avenue for building connections with other parents. Additionally, the prevalence of women among CS volunteers (Phillimore et al., 2020) might explain why some sponsored male refugees reported feelings of isolation despite having a wide network, primarily comprising volunteers. This finding echoes the experiences shared by other CS male refugees in previous studies, highlighting their difficulties in establishing relationships with women volunteers (Hassan and Phillimore, 2020).

Social networks, as outlined by Kleinbaum (2018), are not solely the result of individual choices, but are also shaped by the opportunities available including 'the extent to which a receiving society is open and welcoming to refugees' (Phillimore, 2021: 10). Attitudes toward refugees may vary between rural and urban areas due to differences in ethnic diversity and demographic roles, impacting social interactions (Crawley et al., 2019). Exploring whether participants were resettled in predominantly rural or urban areas as well as the level of ethnic diversity in these locations, I found no statistically significant relationship between these variables and the size of their social networks. However, to validate and strengthen these conclusions, further studies on a larger sample are necessary. It would be beneficial to include refugees who were resettled not only in England, but also in the wider UK and Europe. A larger sample would offer

more data points, increasing the statistical power and enabling more robust and generalisable findings. By encompassing a more diverse range of resettlement contexts and populations, researchers can obtain a comprehensive understanding of how context can impact resettled refugees' social connections. My results should be interpreted with caution, not only because the sample size made it challenging to establish a meaningful relationship between the variables, but also due to the limitations and complexities involved in defining rural and urban areas (Pateman, 2011). In this study, I used a classification by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) from 2011, which only looks at the number of people living in an area to determine if it is rural or urban, while it does not consider financial factors, policies or how the land is used. As a result, some refugees may be living in a local authority that DEFRA considered urban, but they actually belong to the population living in the rural part of the broader area within that local authority. Similarly, some refugees may live in a local authority's district that DEFRA classified as rural, but they are considered part of the population living in the urban part of the same area within the local authority. Although the distinction between rural and urban areas is not always clear-cut and there can be a mix of both types of populations within a single local authority, classifications such as those offered by DEFRA can still be helpful to have some insights into places' differences (Pateman, 2011), shedding some light on the areas where refugees lived.

Although the level of ethnic diversity and whether the resettlement area was rural or urban was found to have no statistically significant impact on the size difference between the social networks of CS and VPRS refugees, I still observed some variations in the composition of their social networks. Specifically, sponsored refugees living in

predominantly rural and less diverse areas (with ethnic minorities' proportion of the whole population of England and Wales below 2%) had more ethnically diverse social networks compared to local authority-supported refugees in predominantly urban and more diverse areas. Previous research has suggested that refugees in less diverse and rural areas may experience more isolation due to a lack of ethnic and cultural diversity (El-Bialy and Mulay, 2015; Hynie, 2018; Lam, 2019). Similarly, CS refugees in less diverse areas in the UK have been found to experience loneliness due to limited opportunities to socialise with people from their ethnic backgrounds (Phillimore et al., 2020). The majority of EU countries, including the UK, implement dispersal policies to avoid a concentration of ethnic groups in specific areas (Bruno, 2018), assuming that a lack of co-ethnic relationships (bonding relationships) facilitates refugees' integration processes (Larsen, 2011 in Bhattacharyya et al., 2020). However, when comparing social networks' composition of sponsored and local authority-supported refugees, I found that CS refugees predominantly living in rural and less diverse areas had not only more social connections with British people, but also more relationships with co-ethnic people (sharing the same nationality, language and religion) than VPRS refugees living in more urban and diverse areas. My findings not only reinforce what was observed by Agrawal and Sangapala (2021) that through sponsorship programmes, refugees are more likely to develop relationships with the wider community, but also suggest that the lack of physical proximity to ethnic minorities had a minor impact on refugees' ability to build relationships with co-ethnic groups.

The role of physical proximity in shaping the development of social relationships has been highlighted by several scholars (Small and Adler, 2019), suggesting that geographically close people are more likely to build and maintain social connections

(Rivera et al., 2010). It could be argued that the physical proximity of the sponsoring group's members to the CS refugees may offer them more opportunities to develop relationships. Considering also that the majority of CS participants in this study were resettled in predominantly rural areas, where previous research indicated a higher involvement of community members in supporting refugees compared to urban areas (Haugen, 2019; ICMC Europe and Caritas, 2019), it may not be surprising that sponsored refugees were able to develop more relationships compared to VPRS refugees. The lack of physical proximity may also explain why some participants classified family members living abroad as 'less close people', showing the negative impact that distance can have on social relationships (Rivera et al., 2010).

The idea of physical proximity also directs the focus to locations where interactions occur, such as schools and workplaces (Rivera et al., 2010). Although participants did not have many connections with individuals currently attending educational training or workplaces with them, as almost all apart from four were not employed, they did indicate colleges and especially children's schools as places where they met friends. This finding supports other research showing that schools, alongside religious centres, are essential places for the development of refugees' social ties (Hurly, 2019; Murad and Versey, 2021; GRSI, 2020). More recent studies on sponsorship programmes in Europe also emphasise the significance of children's schools as places for socialisation, especially when school staff are trained and have experience in teaching children with a migration background (Guaglianone, 2023; Cabrol, 2023; Pinyol-Jiménez, 2023; Vine et al., 2023; Kennis, 2023). Very few refugees had online relationships with people in their network, which may be associated with the low level of digital skills as self-assessed by study participants. However, participants who were

more familiar with using social media utilised these platforms to connect not only with people within the wider local community but also with individuals living abroad. The result aligns with evaluations conducted on CS in the UK and Germany, where social media was identified as a source of information and socialisation for refugees (Phillimore et al., 2020; Mahjoub, 2023).

However, physical proximity alone is insufficient to comprehend the development of social relationships and explain why CS refugees built wider and more diversified social networks than VPRS refugees. Firstly, it should be noted that overall, both groups of participants had a low level of connections with individuals they met at work or college. Secondly, despite the physical proximity, VPRS refugees had a notably low number of connections with people living in their same area. I suggest that physical proximity alone may not be a decisive or sufficient factor in determining the development of refugees' social relationships, especially in explaining why sponsored refugees had more ethnically diversified networks although living in predominantly rural and less ethnically diverse areas than VPRS refugees.

A more influential factor I found in shaping refugees' social networks, at least the networks' size, is time. I observed a moderate positive correlation between social network size and time spent in the same area, which suggests that refugees who have been in the same place for a longer time are more likely to have established social connections. The finding is consistent with previous research indicating that refugees expand their social network as they spend more time in the host country (Cheung and Phillimore, 2013). The result further highlights the importance of placement practices providing refugees with long-term stability in the area where they are resettled. Misplacement can result in secondary migration, which may have adverse effects on

the integration processes (Mata, 2017), including refugees' ability to establish and sustain social relationships.

However, I further found that the passing of time affected VPRS and CS relationships in different ways. Specifically, I observed that while the interactions between VPRS refugees and people from organisations, such as caseworkers, tended to become more occasional over time, CS refugees often maintained constant contact with some volunteers. Exploring the experience of sponsors, several authors indicated that the decision to keep in touch with the sponsored family even after the end of the sponsorship agreement depends on the acknowledgement that 12 months were not sufficient for refugees to achieve complete independence, which is often associated with financial self-sufficiency (Lenard, 2019; Phillimore et al., 2020; Macklin et al., 2020). Additionally, previous studies also highlighted the significant role played by emotions, such as the feeling of love and care for the sponsored family, which goes beyond the prescribed roles and responsibilities outlined in the sponsorship agreement, allowing the refugee-sponsor relationship to continue developing even after the end of the sponsorship period (Phillimore et al., 2020; Macklin et al., 2020). Therefore, my findings suggest that more attention should be given to resources exchanged through relationships to understand how they develop over time, with resettlement emerging as a key factor in shaping refugees' social networks.

The effects of the different resettlement policies, VPRS and CS, also emerged when analysing and visualising refugees' social networks through the Gephi software. Refugees sponsored through CS exhibited densely interconnected networks, often creating close-knit groups of interconnected individuals. In contrast, VPRS participants had fragmented networks comprising distinct communities characterised by dense

internal relationships *within* each community and fewer connections *between* these separate communities. These findings align with the analysis of social role differences, indicating that VPRS refugees' networks encompassed a mixture of individuals from organisations, family members and friends, while sponsored refugees' networks predominantly consisted of friends, primarily met through their CS group. The tightly connected networks of sponsored refugees, where individuals were closely interconnected, can be attributed to the presence of a supportive network of interconnected sponsors supporting refugee families. The results can further suggest the argument that CS programmes can increase the strength of connections within the groups of volunteers, leading to the development of closer-knit communities as they work together to support the sponsored refugees (Amnesty International, 2018). Notably, the interconnected sponsors' networks were also the result of sponsors' active role in mediating relationships between refugees and members of the wider community, people not directly involved in sponsorship. Supporting other studies, I found that sponsors often introduced refugees to their own social networks and organised events and activities to facilitate socialisation, including with other Arabic-speaking people living in the area (Stansbury, 2021). Furthermore, it is essential to note that both VPRS and CS refugees may have had pre-existing relationships with friends and family members. I also observed that sponsored participants had included in their network fewer immediate family members compared to VPRS refugees, suggesting that sponsored participants had developed more connections beyond their immediate family members once they had been resettled. However, such findings should also be interpreted with caution, considering the challenges in defining the boundaries of a social network, as explained in Section 5.7.5. Additionally, it should be

noted that the study's context might have influenced the way participants presented their social network (D'Angelo and Ryan, 2021), possibly leading CS refugees to highlight their relationships with sponsors over other connections, a point I discuss further in this chapter.

While noting that the two resettlement policies, VPRS and CS, generate substantially different social networks between local authority-assisted and sponsored refugees, it further emerged how social relationships cannot be fully understood and explained by adopting a binary classification of social connections based on ethnic or national differences amongst people (Ryan, 2011; Wessendorf and Phillimore, 2019). Ethnically diverse networks (bridging) are often associated with a more fragmented and less interconnected network structure, assuming a low level of trust between out-group and in-group members (Putnam, 2007). Conversely, it is suggested that more ethnically homogeneous connections (bonding) form close-knit networks (Meagher, 2005). However, my findings reveal the opposite, with CS refugees having more ethnically diverse but more interconnected networks than VPRS refugees with more ethnically homogeneous connections. These findings support Reagans and Zuckerman's (2001) observations that the absence of demographic differences does not automatically translate into more cohesive communities, or vice versa. I showed how, considering network diversity and its global structure separately, it is possible to have networks 'characterized by dense relations and for such relations to cross demographic boundaries' (Reagans and Zuckerman, 2001: 503).

Having discussed the differences between VPRS and CS refugees' social networks, underscoring the influence of resettlement policies, I now shift the focus to the

resources embedded in the distinct types of relationships built by the two groups of participants by addressing my second research question in the next section.

### ***8.2.2 What is the relationship between different types of social connections and the resources accessible to refugees through these connections?***

Different types of network structures can have advantages or disadvantages, for instance, in the production of resources. Coleman (1988; 1990) argues that interconnected networks, similar to those more frequently observed amongst sponsored refugees, enhance social capital by facilitating information sharing and fostering higher levels of trust. However, authors such as Granovetter (1973) and Burt (1995) emphasise the importance of having relationships with more diverse groups (bridging as opposed to bonding relationships amongst similar people) in order to avoid redundant information and increase the diversity of opinions and behaviours. The problem is that previous studies often focused on classifying social relationships by looking at national/ethnic criteria (Ryan and Dahinden, 2021). I demonstrated how a social network approach helps to provide a more nuanced understanding of social relationships, unveiling differences between VPRS and CS refugees' social networks, which encompass socio-demographic characteristics of individuals within participants' networks as well as the networks' structure. According to Reagans and Zuckerman (2001), the type of networks developed by sponsored refugees, which were more ethnically diverse but also had a more interconnected structure, could be more advantageous as they bring together the benefits of bonding relationships – trust and social cohesion – and bridging relationships – diversity of resources. Going beyond a social-demographic description of the type of relationships built by participants and paying more attention to the resources embedded in refugees' networks, my findings

support Reagans and Zuckerman's observation (2001). Specifically, I found that, as sponsored refugees were able to develop wider and more diversified social networks, compared to VPRS refugees, they had more available resources: practical assistance and, especially, emotional support. Distinguishing between types of relationships and resources, I further found that the main difference between CS and VPRS refugees' social connections and the level of resources available was not linked to the social-demographic characteristic of the individuals within the networks. Rather, the differences related to characteristics and qualities that define the nature of connections, such as level of closeness, trust, shared intimacy and frequency of contacts.

CS refugees had a majority of friendship-like relationships, mainly with volunteers from their CS group, while VPRS participants had more client-provider relationships with people from organisations, such as their caseworker, and connections with family members. Similar results emerged from studies exploring the experience of sponsored refugees resettled not only in the UK (Phillimore et al., 2020), but also in Spain (Pinyol-Jiménez, 2023), Ireland (Vine et al., 2023), Italy (Guaglianone, 2023) and France (Delaplace and Chobotva, 2018; Cabrol, 2023), where participants highlighted the friendship developed with volunteers. However, previous evaluations of CS also noted that when roles and responsibilities are unclear, and sponsors lack sufficient training, they may encounter challenges in developing friendships with the sponsored refugees, such as difficulties in determining the appropriate level of support they should provide, whether as friends or as sponsoring groups (Phillimore et al., 2020). Additionally, some authors argue that there is an inherent power imbalance concerning sponsors and newcomers (Macklin et al., 2020; De Vries, 2021 in Refugee Hub, 2021). Such an

imbalance can be reinforced if refugees are economically dependent on CS groups and if sponsors embrace a paternalistic approach by making decisions on behalf of the refugees (Haugen et al., 2020; Ali et al., 2022). At the same time, the relationships between refugees and caseworkers are also characterised by an imbalance of power (Dykstra, 2016).

The role of power dynamics in shaping social relationships has often been underestimated (Navarro, 2002; Cheong et al., 2007). However, the development of friendship requires a sense of equal power balance between the individuals involved (Thompson et al., 2015). My findings suggest that the presence of sponsors provided sponsored refugees with 'unique opportunities to learn how one is seen by a caring and equal other' (Bukowski and Sippola, 2005: 92), with social connections positively impacting CS refugees' emotional well-being (Cheung and Phillimore, 2013). When describing their relationships with sponsors, for instance, CS refugees emphasised the sense of being cared for by people in their network, which was often missing for VPRS participants despite being researched. Arguably, this emotional component in relationships leads to a renegotiation of the power dynamic (Balaam, 2015), with volunteers offering support to help refugees navigate and balance power dynamics (Campbell, 2016), as the development of friendship requires reciprocity and a sense of equality (Thompson et al., 2015). On the other hand, professional connections often lack the emotional bond present in friendships and are typically characterised by occasional interactions (Butler and Matook, 2015). The significance of regular interactions for the longevity of relationships has been acknowledged by scholars such as Mollenhorst et al. (2014). Additionally, Granovetter (1973) highlights how the frequency of contact can strengthen relationships. My findings support these

observations, unveiling that a high frequency of contact often characterised the friendships developed by sponsored refugees, while VPRS participants indicated the lack of frequent contact over time as a reason why relationships did not strengthen further.

In addition to the frequency of contact, I noticed differences in the level of shared intimacy within the social connections of VPRS and CS refugees. High levels of shared intimacy often characterised sponsored refugees' relationships, while participants supported by local authorities felt that their social connections were less intimate. Sharing, defined as 'the act and process of distributing what is ours to others for their use and/or the act and process of receiving or taking something from others for our use' (Belk, 2007: 126), is constitutive of social relations (John, 2013). Consistent with previous scholarship suggesting that the exchange of feelings and emotions relies on trust and reciprocity (John, 2013), my observations revealed that CS refugees were more likely to have fostered trusting and reciprocal relationships compared to VPRS refugees.

Reciprocity and trustworthiness in social relationships are seen as components of social capital; particularly, high levels of trust and reciprocity are associated with bonding social connections – relationships amongst homogeneous groups – which contribute to the development of cohesive communities (Paxton, 1999; Putnam, 2007). However, I observed that CS refugees, who had relationships with a more diverse ethnic group of people, also had more trustful and reciprocal connections compared to VPRS refugees, who instead had a prevalence of bonding relationships. Rather than nationality and ethnicity, I noted that a key determinant of varying levels of shared intimacy in VPRS and CS relationships was the participants' perception of their

interaction connections. Building intimacy is an 'interpersonal process' that necessitates a responsive interlocutor when one shares one's emotions (Reis and Patrick, 1996; Reis and Shaver, 1988). Unlike VPRS refugees, CS participants more frequently said they felt understood and cared for by the people with whom they interacted. This sense they expressed of being cared for and understood, combined with their perception of equality in the relationship, appears to play a crucial role in fostering relationships with a high level of intimacy (Reis and Shaver, 1988).

Fostering more friendship-like connections and having more substantial emotional support attached, sponsored refugees tended to access better emotional support than VPRS refugees relying on professional relationships. However, I further noted that when it comes to practical assistance, compared to VPRS participants, CS refugees were also able to provide more examples of how their CS group offered them tailored assistance to overcome specific challenges, for example relating to housing issues and children's education. The findings further suggest that CS refugees received more personalised support from their sponsor group compared to VPRS refugees, who relied on formal support from professionals in their networks. These results align with the argument that CS volunteers can provide both ad hoc assistance and emotional aid to refugees (Fratzke and Dorst, 2019).

I use the concepts of helpful and caring relationships to differentiate between relationships capable of providing practical assistance (e.g., professional relationships) and relationships offering emotional support (e.g., friendships). Observing that CS refugees had a wider number of caring relationships compared to VPRS refugees, I suggest sponsorship programmes can enhance refugees' opportunities and create more favourable conditions for developing caring relationships, offering them

emotional support in addition to practical assistance. However, it is crucial to examine how these different social relations and the presence or absence of resources shape integration processes, as not all social connections positively impact individuals' experiences (Portes, 1998). Specifically, what impact does the presence (or absence) of emotional support in CS (or VPRS) have on integration?

### ***8.2.3 How does the combination and/or absence of social networks and resources accessed through established social connections shape refugees' integration in the UK?***

Acknowledging that despite the availability of resources within their networks, several factors may hinder refugees' ability to access them (Ryan et al., 2008; Phillimore, 2012; Wissink and Mazzucato, 2018), and that not all social networks and resources exchanged through them lead to positive outcomes (Portes, 1998), I aimed to explore how the combination or absence of different types of social relationships and the resources embedded in them shape resettled refugees' integration processes.

To analyse social networks' effects on integration processes, I also considered refugees' social-demographic and migration differences, as well as contextual information related to the areas in which they resided. Integration outcomes between CS and VPRS refugees were first measured by examining IOL domains: FoI and Means and Markers (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019). In the following sections, while discussing the VPRS and CS refugees' differences related to FoI, I also reflect on the limitation of self-reporting (discussed in more detail in Section 8.3 of this chapter) and how this may impact results. To reiterate, refugees were asked to self-rate on a scale from 1 to 5 their knowledge of English language, British culture, digital skills and ability to access information through the internet, and how stable and safe they feel.

Lamba and Krahn (2003) suggest that as more relationships are built with the hosting community's members, resettled refugees have more opportunities to improve their language skills. At first glance, my findings appear not to support this argument, as both VPRS and CS refugees considered their level of English knowledge to be insufficient. However, upon considering socio-demographic variations, I noted that CS refugees self-reported a slightly higher level of English proficiency despite, on average, having lower educational attainment than VPRS refugees. In addition, I observed that refugees' self-assessment of their knowledge of the English language varied depending on their level of education. Refugees with a higher level of education tended to underrate their language skills compared to respondents with a lower level of education. Such differences may be explained by the fact that highly educated refugees might have been exposed to academic English during their education, focusing more on grammar and formal language rather than everyday conversational English. As a result, highly educated refugees may have higher expectations of their language proficiency due to their educational background, leading them to be more self-critical and less confident about their progress. As one highly educated participant pointed out, her challenge was more about expressing herself in English rather than understanding the language, which she considered easier due to her educational background. Additionally, in self-rating their English language knowledge, participants also compared their language proficiency to when they first arrived in the country. Participants without a pre-resettled knowledge of English may have viewed their progress more positively compared to refugees who already had a language background. It is important to consider that self-rating is also influenced by what is perceived as socially desirable (Krumpal, 2013). The presence of social relationships

with native English speakers may also have led some participants, particularly CS refugees who had a wider number of connections with 'British' people compared to VPRS respondents, to underrate their level of knowledge. Through their social contacts, sponsored refugees may have interacted with people who were more proficient in English than them, potentially leading them to feel less confident in their own language skills. Considering these multiple factors that may have affected refugees' self-assessment of their knowledge of English, I also relied on data collected through in-depth interviews and observations to explore the differences in language proficiency between CS and VPRS participants. I then noted that sponsored refugees' higher self-assessed knowledge of the English language compared to VPRS participants might also be linked to increased self-confidence in expressing themselves in English compared to the local authority-supported refugees. This difference became apparent as the majority of sponsored refugees did not require an interpreter to participate in this study, unlike the VPRS participants. However, the choice to use an interpreter might reflect participants' personal preferences or circumstances, potentially affecting the comparison of language skills and confidence levels between the two groups in expressing themselves in English. Several studies have highlighted the positive impact of language acquisition on refugees' well-being (Cheah et al., 2011; Cheung and Phillimore, 2013; Ćatibušić et al., 2021), acknowledging that mental health issues can hinder their ability to focus on language learning (Rodgers and Porter, 2020; Phillimore et al., 2020). However, limited research has explored how an improved sense of well-being can positively influence refugees' language learning journey. I suggest that the emotional support received by CS refugees through their social connections may have contributed to their confidence in speaking English. In contrast,

the lack of caring relationships and, thus, emotional support may have negatively impacted the well-being of VPRS refugees, potentially hindering their ability to communicate in English.

CS refugees reported having more knowledge of English culture than VPRS refugees, who expressed the desire to have more British friends to enable them to learn about the culture. Additionally, sponsored refugees were more likely to express positive views about British culture. Previous studies indicated that the cultural training provided to refugees before resettlement does not provide sufficient and appropriate information about the host country (Bolt, 2018; Phillimore et al., 2020). Similar inadequacies in cultural training have been observed in studies conducted outside the UK, exemplified by the case of sponsored refugees who believed they were being resettled in Portugal but were placed in the Spanish city of Portugalete, highlighting the lack of clear and accurate information provided to refugees (Share Network, 2022a). However, social connections have the potential to facilitate the process of cultural learning, as suggested by Hassan and Phillimore (2020). The data I collected appears to support this argument as sponsored refugees, who had a larger number of connections with members of the hosting community, rated their knowledge of British culture higher compared to VPRS refugees, who had more social relationships with individuals who shared their language, religion and nationality. Even in this case, the limitation of self-reporting should be taken into account as CS refugees may overrate their British cultural knowledge as a way to acknowledge and appreciate the efforts of sponsors, who often provided them with information about life in the UK (Phillimore et al., 2020). Despite this caution in interpreting data, it remains evident that sponsored

refugees had more exposure to and interaction within the major ethnic communities in the UK, likely enhancing their opportunities to learn about British culture.

I also found that participants' digital skills were generally low amongst both VPRS and CS refugees, despite the fact that in both groups, respondents reported having received varying levels of support. For VPRS participants, this digital assistance was provided in a more formal context, such as through lessons at college or through their relationships with caseworkers who, in some cases, helped them to access information through the internet. CS refugees, on the other hand, received more additional support beyond formal digital skills lessons, including personalised assistance at home from volunteers who helped them navigate the internet and provided them with digital devices as gifts, even if they expressed low confidence in using them without assistance. The use of social media apps, such as WhatsApp and Instagram, was, instead, more diffused amongst participants, aligning with previous research that emphasises the importance of the internet in enabling refugees to maintain and foster social connections (Alam and Imran, 2015; Yoon, 2017). Compared to social media apps, which are also available in several languages, websites and online services operated by UK Government agencies or institutions were something entirely new for refugees, often requiring navigating complex language and bureaucratic systems that can be challenging for individuals who are not fluent in English or who have limited digital literacy (Sabie and Ahmed, 2019). Age also played a significant role, with younger participants being more likely to have higher digital skills. In comparison, older participants often expressed unfamiliarity with accessing information through digital devices, indicating low language proficiency as a significant challenge for improving their digital skills. The result also reflects a trend observed in the wider UK population,

where younger age groups show a higher prevalence of internet usage, while older age groups, particularly those aged 65 years and above, tend to use the internet less frequently or not at all, leading to a significant digital divide between different age cohorts (Office for National Statistics, 2019). This finding underscores the importance of having additional digital literacy with tailored sessions for specific population groups, such as older refugees, as digital skills can help to access information as well as increase socialisation opportunities, with positive effects on the refugees' well-being (Pachner et al., 2021). The importance of digital skills became even more evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, as most activities and services shifted from face-to-face interactions to online platforms to avoid the virus spreading. However, neither the VPRS nor the CS resettlement policies specify how refugees should be supported in improving these skills (HM Government, 2018c; Home Office, 2020a). Although compared to VPRS refugees, sponsored participants reported having wider access to digital devices and more tailored support to access information through the internet, their digital literacy was still inadequate to guarantee they could fully benefit from the available resources and opportunities in the digital landscape. The results suggest that digital inclusion not only requires the availability of digital devices (e.g., the possession of a computer) and access to their use (e.g., digital skills and motivations), but also adequate support enabling refugees to gain valuable resources such as information and knowledge (Ragnedda and Ruiu, 2017).

When asked to self-rate, both groups of participants reported high levels of stability and safety. However, also in this case, it is essential to consider the limitations of self-rating as the results might have been influenced by refugees providing responses they believed were desirable rather than freely expressing their true feelings (Demetriou et

al., 2015). Participants may have reported high stability and safety due to concerns that negative answers could have repercussions on their resettlement processes or be interpreted as ingratitude towards the efforts of volunteers and caseworkers or their opportunity to be resettled. A more in-depth analysis of the data collected through interviews and observations revealed significant insights into the factors influencing refugees' feelings of stability and safety. Many refugees associated their sense of stability and safety with the prospect of providing a better life for their children, including access to essential services, such as medical care, and the opportunity for their children to receive an education. Moreover, the findings aligned with previous studies (specifically Ager and Strang, 2008) highlighting the importance of feeling at peace in their living environment, particularly when refugees experienced kindness and understanding from the local community. These positive interactions with the host community might have contributed to participants' perceptions of safety and stability. Sponsored refugees, in particular, expressed experiencing a profound sense of safety, often crediting it to the presence of their social connections, notably CS volunteers. This volunteer support appeared to have provided them with an additional layer of protection, making them feel less vulnerable to exploitation or suffering. On the other side, some VPRS refugees residing in predominantly urban areas expressed concerns about their safety in their living environment, correlating with previous studies demonstrating that the places in which refugees live can contribute to feelings of insecurity (Allik and Kearns, 2017) and significantly impact integration processes (Phillimore, 2021). Instances of instability were occasionally associated with employment, as refugees expressed concerns about job prospects due to difficulties in understanding the employment system, for instance, regulations about being self-

employed and accessing employment opportunities. In two cases amongst VPRS refugees, participants reported feeling unstable due to their housing situation.

Previous studies have identified housing as a significant factor contributing to refugees' sense of instability (Miraftab, 2000), with feelings of instability negatively impacting refugees' well-being (Stathopoulou et al., 2019). In this study, sponsored refugees reported better accommodation outcomes compared to VPRS refugees, despite both groups having identified someone in their network who could provide housing assistance. Sponsored refugees were more likely to rely on and receive help from individuals within their CS group, who were often identified as friends. On the other hand, VPRS refugees more commonly indicated their caseworker as the person to contact in case of housing issues, but they provided fewer examples outlining the support they had received than CS refugees. These findings reflect Canadian studies' finding that housing instability was higher amongst GAR than sponsored refugees (Wayland, 2007). However, it should be noted that sponsored refugees in this study were living in predominantly rural areas compared to VPRS refugees. The literature on resettlement and housing provides some insight into the challenges and opportunities that rural and urban areas can offer to refugees in terms of accommodation. Compared to urban areas, Patuzzi et al. (2020) suggest that rural areas may have a greater housing availability, while some authors highlight the often poor conditions and inadequacy of housing in urban areas (Westerby et al., n.d.; Gilhooly and Lee, 2017). Indeed, it is important to consider both the national and local contexts when examining housing outcomes in rural and urban areas, as they can lead to varying results and not always clear advantages or disadvantages in either setting. The UK, for instance, has been grappling with a well-recognised issue of housing shortage and affordability

(Watling and Breach, 2023), which extends to rural areas as well. Factors like land use restrictions and regulations, low wages and the presence of non-local buyers have contributed to the compromise of housing affordability in rural regions (Gallent, 2023). However, the context's impact on refugees' housing outcomes might have depended more on the extent of support received in the different areas. Compared to VPRS refugees in urban areas who lacked an interconnected network, sponsored refugees had tight-knit networks, which is often available in rural areas where people tend to be more interconnected to each other, and refugees are more able to receive tailored support (El-Bialy and Mulay, 2015; Drolet and Moorthi, 2018; Bose, 2021) and potentially more likely to overcome challenges related to housing.

In terms of employment, sponsored refugees often sought support from their friends within the CS group as their initial source of assistance. On the other hand, VPRS refugees were less inclined to rely on their caseworkers and instead turned to their friends when facing employment-related challenges. A couple of refugees supported by local authorities reported having no one in their network to seek employment help from. Comparatively, CS refugees were more likely to be employed, even if some held part-time or volunteering positions, with volunteers, in most instances, having facilitated access to those opportunities by introducing refugees to potential employers. These findings align with studies by Hyndman et al. (2017) and Kaida et al. (2020), which indicate that sponsored refugees are more likely to find employment in the short term compared to GAR. It is essential to highlight that none of the participants from both groups felt that state institutions, such as the Jobcentre, could offer them the necessary support to secure employment. This lack of confidence in official channels was evident, as some refugees had attempted to seek job opportunities through these

institutions but did not find them to be effective or helpful. The inadequacy of the Jobcentre in supporting refugees in finding suitable jobs has been highlighted by several authors, who have pointed out the resource constraints in which statutory organisations operate and their focus on providing short-term employment rather than matching refugees with jobs that align with their qualifications and aspirations (Phillimore and Goodson, 2006). By contrast, social networks are recognised as a key resource for job-seekers as well as for employers, which enable efficient and targeted job searches, leading to better candidate matches and improved hiring outcomes (Meyer, 2013). Even if they do not provide direct access to job opportunities, social relationships can provide emotional support to cope with challenges encountered during the job search process (such as stress, rejections and low self-esteem) and promote job-seekers' well-being and resilience (Ferreira et al., 2023). However, despite these differences in employment outcomes and the presence of potential sources of network support, both VPRS and CS refugees in this study felt that they did not receive adequate assistance to secure jobs that matched their previous qualifications and experience. The findings corroborate McCabe et al.'s (2013: 05) argument that relying solely on social networks is inadequate for ensuring favourable employment outcomes, particularly for individuals in poverty who may lack 'connections into influential, predominantly white, mainstream society'. Social connections often aid overcoming poverty, but even when such connections are present, opportunities can still be restricted due to, for instance, discrimination and negative racial stereotypes (McCabe et al., 2013). Indeed, even if refugees, especially sponsored refugees, had relationships with white highly educated British people, they were unable to have their previous qualifications and experience recognised, which

could enhance their opportunities to find a suitable job. This finding aligns with studies on the Canadian sponsorship programmes (Ritchie, 2018; Kaida et al., 2020) and is not unexpected given that in the UK, there is almost no system for recognising refugees' qualifications and previous experience in order to get them into employment, often leading refugees to accept low-skill jobs that do not match their skills and aspirations (Phillimore and Goodson, 2006). Difficulties in finding a job matching pre-migration experience related to both highly educated sponsored refugees, but also refugees who had different levels of qualifications, despite the presence of CS groups supporting them. In the reported case of Yassin, who was working in a job unrelated to his previous experience, he sought support outside the volunteer group, perceiving their lack of expertise in his field, with the aim of finding a skill-oriented role similar to his past job back home.

When comparing the educational outcomes of VPRS and CS refugees, I observed that sponsored refugees were more likely to rely on their sponsor friends for accessing information and support about education. In contrast, VPRS refugees reported seeking assistance from their college teachers or people from organisations. Compared to VPRS, sponsored participants also provided more examples of receiving educational help from their networks. However, given the absence of a UK system of 're-orientation or accreditation of prior experience or learning' (Phillimore and Goodson, 2008b: 40), predictably, none of the participants had their previous qualifications recognised or were progressing in the UK's educational system. Therefore, in discussing education, refugees often referred to English language learning opportunities and schooling for their children. Sponsored participants, particularly those residing in predominantly rural areas, were less likely to be enrolled in language classes offered by colleges compared

to VPRS refugees. Research on sponsorship programmes in Europe has highlighted the difficulties refugees face in accessing the education system in rural areas (Tardis, 2019). However, I also found that sponsors were able to compensate for the lack of educational services by providing refugees with ad-hoc learning opportunities, as previous studies on sponsorships have also noted (Phillimore and Reyes, 2020b; Fratzke and Dorst, 2019). Nevertheless, my results underscore the inadequacy of the education system in providing ad-hoc support for refugees and ensuring the recognition of their qualifications (Stevenson and Willott, 2007).

In my findings, CS refugees' networks more often included individuals with knowledge of the health systems, such as doctors, nurses and dentists from their sponsoring group. In contrast, VPRS refugees lacked such connections and relied more on their caseworker and GP for health assistance. However, these social relationship differences did not consistently translate into refugees receiving the health support needed. In Canada, both privately sponsored and GAR face similar challenges in accessing the health system, including expensive healthcare and medical staff who may not fully understand their cultural needs (Woodgate et al., 2017). Nevertheless, sponsored refugees had a higher chance of having their healthcare needs recognised and assessed compared to GAR, which might be attributed to the fact that sponsored refugees generally had less complex medical needs (Oda et al., 2019). Such a difference in health needs between VPRS and CS refugees is likely to be narrow as both groups are selected according to the vulnerability criteria. It is further observable that the high levels of dissatisfaction with the health care system and social care that I uncovered align with the sentiments of the broader UK population. In 2023, only 29% of the population reported feeling satisfied with the National Health Service (NHS), and

a mere 14% expressed satisfaction with social care services (Morris et al., 2023). However, consistent with previous results (Cheung and Phillimore, 2013), I also noted that the presence of a more extensive social network comprising individuals who cared about them may be connected to better health outcomes for sponsored refugees, particularly regarding their mental health. This finding is important considering that unlike VPRS participants, sponsored refugees resided in less diverse and predominantly rural areas, where they are more likely to experience feelings of loneliness due to the lack of co-ethnic groups (Phillimore et al., 2020).

The last Indicator of Integration's domain I considered was leisure. Sponsored refugees reported having a broader range of individuals with whom they would spend their free time, while VPRS participants had more limited options, often engaging in leisure activities with family members or, in one case, alone. Consistent with previous research (Hassan and Phillimore, 2020), through CS, refugees may have more opportunities to enjoy their leisure time as sponsors organised recreational activities for them. However, despite the wider presence of social connections and the support provided by sponsors, some sponsored refugees, similar to VPRS refugees, expressed some feelings of loneliness, as also emerged from a previous CS evaluation (Hassan and Phillimore, 2020). I suggest that CS sponsors can mitigate some of the challenges that refugees face when enjoying leisure time, but some barriers, such as the lack of time, money and transportation, remain. Engagement in recreational activities is recognised as being strongly dependent on income (Bittman, 2002; Passias et al., 2017). Despite having social networks, refugees are still highly likely to face exclusion from participating in leisure activities, similar to the most economically disadvantaged groups in England, who are found across all socio-economic categories

to be less involved in physical activity and volunteering (Sport England, 2023). In the UK, people with low incomes are also more likely to spend their weekends working rather than having leisure time, compared to individuals with higher incomes (Office for National Statistics, 2017).

Thus far, the evidence provided by my study showed that despite having a wider and more diversified network compared to VPRS refugees, CS refugees still face some difficulties in achieving better integration outcomes when integration is measured in each of the Home Office's IoI domains separately. When participants were asked to self-rate their English language and digital skills, as well as their levels of stability and safety, sponsored refugees reported similar levels to those of VPRS refugees. With no available means to have their previous qualifications recognised, none of the highly educated participants was able to return to their previous careers. Even refugees with lower skills and qualifications had difficulties finding jobs matching their vocation and pre-migration experience, although more CS respondents were employed than VPRS refugees. The NHS was found inadequate to respond to the needs of both groups of participants. Similar barriers were identified by VPRS and CS refugees, hindering their ability to enjoy leisure time. Given these outcomes, it appears that social networks alone are not sufficient to enable sponsored refugees to overcome structural barriers and fulfil their potential, as pointed out by other studies exploring the role of volunteers in supporting refugees resettled through VPRS (Madziva and Thondhlana, 2017). However, social networks were still found to play a role in shaping integration outcomes. I argue that the importance of social connections is underestimated if we fail to acknowledge that integration depends on the specific context, encompasses several factors (multi-dimensional) and involves several actors (multi-directional) who

have a shared responsibility (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019). Therefore, the different domains of integration cannot be considered separately and without taking into account several interconnected multiple factors (Fyvie et al., 2003; Cheung and Phillimore, 2017).

Analysing the social networks' effects on integration, with a particular focus on the resources exchanged through the network and taking into account both the context where refugees were living and their socio-demographic characteristics, I unveil substantial differences between CS and VPRS refugees' integration processes, depending on the combination and/or absence of social networks and resources accessed through established social connections. Specifically, the presence of caring relationships, providing sponsored refugees with emotional support, was reported to impact CS participants' integration processes more positively compared to VPRS refugees who reported a lack of such connections. I identified three main consequences depending on such networks' differences.

First, sponsored refugees reported feeling more confident and comfortable than VPRS participants because of the presence of caring relationships and the exchange of emotional support through them. CS refugees expressed greater confidence in their ability to build their social network by engaging with a wider diversified group of people than VPRS refugees. For instance, although both groups approached building relationships with co-nationals and fellow refugees cautiously, sponsored refugees demonstrated a greater inclination to overcome these concerns and extend trust to others. The results support previous research suggesting that confidence is shaped by, and shapes, social connections, with individuals with high self-esteem experiencing positive enhancements in their social relationships (Harris and Orth, 2020). Having a wider and diversified network can be interpreted as both a consequence and a cause

of the increased confidence in CS refugees. As discussed in the previous section, sponsored participants might also have leaned towards a more positive perception of 'being a refugee' compared to VPRS refugees in this study. Building relationships based on commonalities rather than 'being a refugee', refugees have the possibility to renegotiate their lost identity, but they can also strategically decide to engage with it in order to assert their position within society (Piacentini, 2008; 2012). The existence of caring relationships and emotional support can enable refugees to embrace and identify themselves confidently as refugees (Hek, 2005: 157), as reported by CS refugees. The evidence also reflects Kyriakides et al.'s (2019a) observations that the development of trustworthy relationships between sponsors and refugees can help to reaffirm the sponsored refugees' self-worth and pre-conflict status, thereby contributing to increased resettlement success. The presence of caring relationships also appears to have a positive impact on sponsored refugees' confidence in communicating in English compared to VPRS refugees. For instance, despite both groups reporting having insufficient knowledge of the English language, most CS participants did not request an interpreter during their interviews, suggesting they might have felt more confident in expressing themselves in English than VPRS refugees, almost all of whom asked for an interpreter to participate in this study. The positive correlation between self-confidence and learning a new language is supported by previous studies (Tunçel, 2015), concluding that 'the more confident the learners are, the greater communicative competence they will achieve and the better psychological adjustment and cross-cultural adaptation they experience' (Xu, 2011: 246-247). The results are also consistent with Tip et al.'s (2019) findings, showing a positive correlation between language outcomes and well-being mediated by social relationships between refugees

and members of the wider community. Both CS and VPRS participants acknowledge the language barrier as a significant obstacle to accessing integration opportunities, such as finding employment and forming social relationships, particularly with members of the broader ethnic majority. However, sponsored refugees who felt more confident also reported feeling more comfortable sharing intimacy with others, potentially increasing the opportunities to develop social relationships and ultimately access more resources.

Second, I observed that the differences between VPRS and CS social networks also appear to impact their interactions with the wider receiving community, people not directly involved in sponsorships. Unlike VPRS participants, sponsored refugees reported establishing more relationships with local community members beyond their immediate CS group, which appeared to lead to increased cultural exchange and opportunities for knowledge-sharing. For instance, CS participants reported that some members of the major ethnic group started fasting during Ramadan or learning Arabic, possibly influenced by the relationships they built with sponsored refugees. The experiences shared by the participants shed light on the varying degrees of engagement between CS and VPRS refugees with the local community and how this interaction might impact integration as depending 'upon everyone taking responsibility' (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019:7). I suggest that CS integration processes are more likely to be dynamic multi-directional processes where members of the CS and the wider community engage in more sharing of their culture with newcomers while learning about a new culture. The results speak to the potential sponsorship programmes' transformative power in creating more welcoming communities, with knowledge about refugee issues increasing amongst community members through encounters with

sponsored newcomers, as pointed out by some authors (Valcárcel Silvela, 2019; Bond, 2021). However, limitations to the positive effects of the relationships between volunteers and sponsored refugees might also exist. For instance, while volunteers may develop feelings of care for the sponsored refugees, this may not lead to positive attitudes towards other refugees and migrants (Macklin et al., 2020). A positive engagement of community members can also be missing if CS groups break down when they are not well-trained to support refugees in their resettlement processes and adopt a paternalistic approach, which can lead to refugees being perceived as ungrateful (Lenard, 2016; European Commission, 2018; Haugen et al., 2020). Despite these challenges, sponsorship programmes may offer potential for the development of a more equal society, increasing community members' knowledge about the challenges faced by people in vulnerable circumstances (Tempesta, 2019). Sponsored participants, for instance, said that by connecting with them, sponsors had to learn more about the British system, such as the welfare system. The difficulties in accessing the welfare system due to volunteers' limited experience in living with limited means were further noted by Phillimore et al. (2020), who showed that sponsors had to search for additional help in some cases. More awareness about the welfare system and the struggle of living with limited means could bring people to advocate for more equity and support, not only for refugees but for the wider community (More in Common, 2017; Environics Institute for Survey Research, 2018).

While I do not have sufficient evidence to say that CS had a positive impact on the attitude of community members towards refugees, sponsored refugees who were living in predominantly rural and less diverse areas, where racism and hostility might be more prevalent due to the lack of ethnic diversity (El-Bialy and Mulay, 2015; Lam, 2019),

reported having a positive experience in their interactions with community members. Hosting community attitudes play a crucial role in shaping the integration processes, impacting refugees' ability to feel stable and their well-being (Bradby et al., 2019, 2020; Oudshoorn et al., 2020), as participants reported. While the perception of negative attitudes towards them appears to be an obstacle to the development of refugees' social connections, the more positive attitudes shown by people in the networks of CS refugees might have promoted a sense of well-being, as refugees reported feeling more at ease than VPRS refugees.

Finally, the third positive impact of extensive social networks, comprising individuals capable of providing practical assistance and emotional support, on sponsored refugees' integration processes was the reported increase in their capacity to reciprocate support. In contrast, reciprocity was rarely observed amongst the conversations with VPRS refugees, apart from VPRS refugees also supported by a CS group, suggesting that the presence of a volunteers' network might have a key role in fostering reciprocal relationships. In migration studies, there is a growing agreement that reciprocal relationships, based on trust, can facilitate integration, with positive effects on the well-being of refugees (Phillimore et al., 2018; Strang and Quinn, 2021). My findings support this observation, showing how, through reciprocal relationships, sponsored refugees appeared to regain some security and self-esteem, potentially contributing to a positive impact on their integration processes (Phillimore et al., 2018; Kyriakides et al., 2019a,b). Reciprocating the support received by sponsors through the sharing of time and trust, two essential resources for refugees (Murad and Versey, 2021; Essex et al., 2022), CS refugees appeared to hold a more empowered position as 'the act of giving is a practice of expressing regained agency' (Phillimore et al.,

2018: 228). The resources exchanged through their social relationships, particularly the positive feelings of care and support fostered by friendship connections between sponsors and refugees, might have facilitated sponsored refugees in regaining their agency and engaging in more reciprocal interactions beyond their CS group. Compared to VPRS participants, sponsored refugees indeed reported having developed more caring relationships with individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds, including sponsors, but also other refugees.

As previously mentioned, both VPRS and CS participants reported being cautious about trusting people due to their experience and reasons for fleeing their country. Previous studies highlight how mistrust is a legitimate coping mechanism employed strategically by individuals, such as refugees, to safeguard themselves and their security in response to perceived threats or risks, drawing from past experiences of trauma, displacement or discrimination (Jasinski, 2011 in Kyriakides et al., 2019b; Griffith et al., 2021). I suggest that (mis)trust depends not only on refugees' previous experiences, but is also shaped by resettlement programmes, as argued by other authors (Essex et al., 2022), and the types of relationships these programmes facilitate. As pointed out by Putnam (1995), as our connections deepen with individuals, our inclination to trust them increases, and this mutual trust reinforces the strength of those connections. With the regained trust setting the basis for exchanging resources even with strangers – informal reciprocity – (Phillimore et al., 2018), compared to VPRS refugees, sponsored participants were more likely to offer their support even to unknown community members. The resources sponsored refugees said they exchanged were both emotional, providing company to alleviate feelings of loneliness in others, as well as practical, such as knowledge sharing. These findings

suggest that sponsored refugees might have acquired more resources than VPRS refugees to reciprocate, not solely due to the time spent in the UK, but because of the relationships they built. The examples of reciprocity to strangers provided by CS participants might be interpreted 'as a marker of progress in their integration processes and a mechanism to regain identity' (Phillimore et al., 2018: 227), which instead was not observed in VPRS refugees' experience.

At the same time, the lack of reciprocity, especially amongst VPRS refugees, may be related to negative feelings such as low self-esteem (Phillimore et al., 2018). For instance, I reported the example of a sponsored refugee who said that she did not have to invest resources to build new relationships as she was already satisfied with the support (both practical and emotional) received by her network. Therefore, the lack of investing time and trust in building relationships might not necessarily have stemmed from scarcity of resources, but could have been a strategy that refugees employed to deal with their integration processes and improve their well-being, as Phillimore et al. (2018) suggested. As noted in Mayblin et al.'s (2020) study on asylum seekers in the UK, having friends with whom to exchange resources is not solely about gaining more or better material resources, but it holds significant importance in producing positive feelings which can help asylum seekers to survive. I support the view that refugees 'use different resource exchange strategies to develop social networks which may form important buffers against migratory stress and aid access to resources that can further integration' (Phillimore et al., 2018: 216).

To conclude, my findings highlight the added value of sponsorship, with volunteers providing valuable emotional support, which is often lacking for local authority-supported refugees (Fratzke and Dorst, 2019). However, as Fratzke and Dorst (2019:

3) suggest, sponsors' support should be *complementary* to the assistance provided by caseworkers, as 'high-quality and professional social services and well-funded social support networks remain critical to integration efforts'. Similarly, evaluations conducted on sponsorship programmes in Europe underscore the significance of a clear framework that defines the responsibilities and roles of both private and public actors involved in supporting sponsored refugees, noting that the long-term sustainability of sponsorship requires government funding to ensure refugees' access to services, alleviate volunteers' financial burden and allow sponsors to concentrate on providing socio-cultural and emotional support to refugees (Reyes and D'Avino, 2023). By working together, public and private actors can address the power imbalances in refugees' relationships and help to overcome challenges faced by refugees in different resettlement models. This collaborative effort between public and private is also crucial for the successful expansion of resettlement programmes, ensuring that the responsibility for refugees' support does not solely shift from the state to private actors (Libal et al., 2022).

### **8.3 Limitations**

While in Chapter Five, Section 5.7, I stated the methodological challenges and limitations that I encountered during data collection and analysis, in this section, I reflect on limitations related to the quality and generalisability of my findings.

In the above sections, I have already mentioned how asking refugees to self-rate their knowledge of the English language, British culture, digital skills, safety and stability could have introduced some bias. Participants may have either overrated or underrated their actual knowledge and perceptions. My presence during the administration of the questionnaires could have contributed to social desirability bias,

with respondents tending to provide inaccurate answers to align with social expectations (Demetriou et al., 2015). However, arguing that social desirability bias can also be a concern in self-administered questionnaires, Brenner and Delamater (2016) point out that participants' responses can still provide valuable insights into their self-perceptions and the societal norms that shape them. Including the self-rated questionnaire in face-to-face interviews with refugees allowed me to ask additional questions and make observations to contextualise further and validate their self-reported data, while mitigating limitations associated with self-reporting.

Moreover, my presence might have led to some bias related to the collection and validity of social network data. D'Angelo and Ryan (2021) referred to 'the presentation of the networked self' to explain that social network data are not only shaped by respondents' perceptions of their social relationships, but also by how individuals choose to portray them in the context of a research study and in the presence of a researcher. For instance, sponsored refugees, who often learnt about this study through their CS group, might have been more inclined (consciously or unconsciously) to present their social networks so that their relationships with sponsors emerged positively. The use of different social network analysis tools, such as participant-aided sociograms and the software Gephi, might help to address this limitation. Such network techniques, with which people are often unfamiliar, can help uncover network dynamics as participants are encouraged to reflect deeply on their social relationships, rather than just describe them (Borgatti and Molina, 2005 in D'Angelo and Ryan, 2021). My experience as a CS volunteer might have influenced the interpretation of findings, potentially resulting in a more favourable assessment of the CS-related findings compared to those of VPRS refugees. Mindful of these potential biases, I reflected on

my positionality in Section 5.7.4, delineating both the advantages and disadvantages arising from my prior experience and knowledge of CS, and how I attempted to mitigate potential shortcomings. Additionally, integrating diverse types of data, both qualitative and quantitative, and utilising various social network analysis tools might further strengthen my efforts to mitigate this limitation. Despite my efforts to reflect on and address potential biases stemming from my experience, I acknowledge that their influence on the interpretation of findings could persist to some extent.

Additionally, while the results offer valuable insights into the role of social networks in the integration processes of VPRS and CS refugees, they are limited by only including refugees who resettled in England before the COVID-19 pandemic. Recognising the role of specific contexts in shaping social relationships (Moreno, 1937) and integration policy and outcomes (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019), further comparative studies, involving participants from regions beyond England and resettled in different periods, would provide a broader understanding of the topic. It must also be acknowledged that amongst the CS and VPRS resettled refugees, the participants of my study might represent only those with wider social networks and greater resources as they might have been better positioned to learn about my study and participate in it.

Additionally, in this study, I did not investigate the viewpoint of individuals identified as having relationships with CS and VPRS refugees. Comparing how refugees perceive their relationships with the perceptions of the people with whom they interact could provide an in-depth understanding of the nature and development of social relationships and integration processes as multi-directional. Relying exclusively on the interviews with refugees, while I offer valuable insights into their experiences, may have limited the comprehension of how other aspects could influence social networks

and the integration processes. For instance, factors such as social class were not considered because refugees may not have had access to or knowledge about the social class of their acquaintances.

Finally, it must be noted that it was out of the scope of this study to delve into the concept of integration, including exploring its critiques and theoretical conceptualisations. However, in investigating the social networks of resettled refugees, I focused on the experience of participants and discussed findings in relation to the local context as well as trends related to the whole population in the UK. I further reflected on how the development of relationships between newcomers and host society members might have shaped the experience of welcoming communities, although I did not collect evidence from their perspectives. To this extent, I aimed to capture the multi-dimensionality and multi-directionality of integration processes, offering a snapshot of what these processes entail within the confines of this study. While I am still aware that using the term 'integration' carries criticisms, my approach addresses some main critiques, such as the normativity aspects of integration and the objectification of refugees as others, overcoming some limitations related to the concept of integration (Spencer and Charsley, 2021).

To conclude, the limitations mentioned above may affect the generalisability of the findings to other countries and regions as they are based only on the experience of a group of refugees resettled in England at a specific time in their integration processes. However, my results provide valuable insights into the interrelation of social networks and resettlement policy in shaping integration processes.

## **8.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I discussed the results presented in the previous two chapters, answering the research questions that have shaped this study. In the last section, I also highlight some of the study's limitations. Moving forward, in the next chapter, I focus on the findings' implications from an empirical, theoretical and methodological perspective. Suggestions for further research are then provided to address the limitations and gaps in knowledge I highlighted until this point. Finally, in offering concluding remarks, I also state some policy and practice recommendations based on the evidence collected.

## **CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION**

Within this chapter, I outline the empirical, theoretical and methodological implications of my study, showing how my findings contributed to advancing our understanding of social networks, refugee resettlement policies and integration. Additionally, I propose areas for further research to address the gaps or limitations highlighted in the previous chapter. Finally, I offer recommendations for policymakers, organisations and individuals supporting refugees.

### **9.1 Empirical implications**

The empirical implications of this study are multi-fold. Firstly, my observations on the differences between CS and VPRS refugees' social networks support the notion that the presence of volunteers contributes to the expansion of social connections amongst sponsored refugees (Fratzke and Dorst, 2019). The evidence I uncovered demonstrated that CS groups played a crucial role in providing socialising opportunities for refugees, such as introducing them to their own social networks and alleviating barriers, like financial constraints, which could hinder the development of social ties. Furthermore, the relationships established with sponsors positively impacted the well-being of refugees, instilling a sense of confidence in engaging with other community members in social interactions.

The differences in the depth and breadth of CS and VPRS refugees' social networks were also evident when I took into account other context factors, such as the place where participants were resettled. As physical proximity is often associated with forming and maintaining social networks (Rivera et al., 2010), it could be argued that sponsored refugees had a wider social network because, through CS, they were resettled near their sponsorship group. However, physical proximity alone did not

explain the considerably low number of connections that VPRS refugees had with people living close to them. Furthermore, CS refugees were able to develop social connections with a more ethnically diverse group of people despite being resettled in less ethnically diverse places compared to VPRS refugees. Based on my observations, the findings can also be attributed to the enhanced well-being resulting from the presence of volunteers and the assistance they provide, especially the exchange of emotional support. This boost in emotional support contributed to an increase in the self-esteem of sponsored refugees and enabled them to engage in more social connections beyond the physical place of their residence.

I further found that time, a significant factor in shaping individuals' social connections (Radcliffe-Brown, 1940; Barnes, 1954; Granovetter, 1973), particularly in migration studies (Boyd, 1989), had different effects on refugees' social networks varying according to resettlement policy. Relationships between sponsors and volunteers tended to strengthen over time due to shared intimacy and frequent contacts, which enable a rebalancing of power dynamics characterised by trust and understanding. The sponsors' support and assistance fostered a sense of security and empowerment amongst the refugees, enabling them to gradually take on more agency and control in their resettlement processes. On the other hand, the relationships between VPRS refugees and caseworkers, affected by professional boundaries, decreased in contact over time and subsequently in closeness, leaving refugees with feelings of detachment or isolation.

When exploring the impact of refugees' socio-demographic characteristics on the development of social connections, I found that these had a major role in shaping refugees' social connections. I highlighted the complexity of refugee' identities and how

multiple overlapping categories contribute to their sense of similarity or difference when establishing relationships. As I showed in the case of Mira and Maja, their gender (being women) and educational background (highly educated) were more significant in shaping their relationships than their religious affiliation (being of Muslim faith). The minor roles played by national/ethnic criteria in shaping refugees' social connections, compared to other factors such as education and gender, were also evident when analysing refugees' preferences in developing social relationships. Both VPRS and CS refugees expressed a willingness to establish connections with members of the hosting communities and people from their country of origin. Refugees recognised the importance of having diverse social relationships to enhance their integration processes. These findings contradict policy discourses suggesting that certain minority communities, particularly Muslims, choose to live in 'parallel lives' and avoid integrating with the majority population (Cantle, 2001; Casey, 2016).

While my findings indicated that national/ethnic criteria had a minor impact on refugees' development of social connections, the resources exchanged through these networks were of greater significance to the participants when considering the role of these connections in their integration processes. My observations revealed that the primary distinctions in the social networks of CS and VPRS refugees were predominantly related to the availability of emotional support, rather than just practical assistance. Therefore, I categorised participants' social connections into caring relationships, which provide emotional support, and helpful connections, which offer practical assistance. By focusing on the resources exchanged within these networks, I present an alternative approach to understanding refugees' social networks that

moves beyond a binary classification based on ethnicity or nationality and challenges the traditional dichotomy of service provider and client.

Within the networks of sponsored refugees, a significant majority of connections were observed to offer both practical and emotional support. The frequency of interactions and the level of intimacy shared between refugees and some volunteers facilitated the development of caring relationships, where participants felt genuinely cared for and received emotional support. This support, in turn, had a positive impact on their self-esteem and overall well-being. In contrast, refugees resettled through VPRS felt they had limited support to count on, especially in terms of emotional support. The practical help provided by service providers, such as caseworkers, was perceived as part of a job obligation rather than genuine care. As a result, VPRS refugees experienced a lack of tailored practical support and more isolation compared to sponsored refugees. I thus provide evidence that supports the arguments made by promoters of sponsorship programmes, showing that through sponsorship programmes refugees receive more tailored and emotional support compared to those supported by government-led programmes (European Commission, 2018; Fratzke and Dorst, 2019). This empirical finding is particularly significant because it addresses a gap in the existing literature, which predominantly relies on findings from the Canadian PSR, which differs substantially from those developed in the UK and in Europe (Stansbury, 2021).

Employing the Home Office's Iol framework as an analytical tool, I further explored the assumption that sponsored refugees can achieve better integration outcomes compared to government-assisted resettled refugees (European Commission, 2018; Fratzke and Dorst, 2019). To the best of my knowledge, this is the first study comparing the integration processes and outcomes of sponsored and government-assisted

resettled refugees by examining several domains of integration. Previous comparative studies, conducted mainly in Canada, have primarily focused on aspects such as employment (Hyndman and Hynie, 2016; Hyndman et al., 2017; Kaida et al., 2020), housing (Wayland, 2007; St Arnault and Merali, 2019) and health (Woodgate et al., 2017; Oda et al., 2019). The broader literature on resettled refugees is also limited regarding aspects such as digital skills and leisure (Phillimore et al., 2022). By comparing CS and VPRS refugees' experience across multiple domains, I provide a detailed exploration of the nuanced challenges and successes encountered by refugees under these distinct resettlement programmes, but also emphasising the intricate interplay between individual characteristics and contextual factors within integration domains. With the digital skill domain, for instance, I provide evidence showing how different age groups may have distinct needs and challenges, contributing to a more personalised understanding of the factors influencing refugees' success in certain integration domains. At the same time, my findings underscore the significance of taking into account opportunity structures for refugees (Phillimore, 2021), as disparities in outcomes between VPRS and CS refugees were also closely linked to available opportunities, for instance at local level. I further observed how there are structural factors and challenges that volunteers and social networks may not be able to influence directly, impacting the overall integration processes. For example, dissatisfaction with the healthcare system is a challenge that affects both refugees and the broader community and is not solely influenced by social networks.

Nevertheless, my main contribution is shedding light on a crucial aspect of refugee integration that is often overlooked: the role of emotional support provided by social networks. The emotional support sponsored refugees receive from the development of

caring relationships with their sponsors significantly impacts their well-being, self-esteem and ability to cope with challenges they may face during the resettlement processes. This positive impact appears to be cumulative, leading to other positive effects in other integration domains. For instance, emotional support creates a nurturing environment that can encourage refugees to engage in language learning and overcome language barriers, which can ultimately lead to improved language proficiency and integration outcomes. As volunteers act as sources of emotional support, they also become instrumental in mitigating power imbalances that may exist between refugees and other community members. By feeling emotionally supported, refugees reported being able to become more confident in engaging in social relationships. This empowerment can foster a sense of agency and active participation in the integration processes, enhancing refugees' willingness and ability to build reciprocal relationships.

## **9.2 Theoretical implications**

As discussed in Chapter Four, my conceptual framework encompasses several elements enabling me to explore and compare the social networks of VPRS and CS resettled refugees to understand how social relationships and the resources exchanged through them impact integration processes. These elements include, at the contextual level, the different resettlement policies under which refugees are resettled and, at the individual level, socio-demographic and migration variables. While these factors are known to impact social connections and shape integration progress, to the best of my knowledge, no previous studies have incorporated all these elements, especially distinguishing between the types of relationships refugees built and the resources networks provide. The theoretical implications of my findings are multiple.

My primary theoretical contribution is to advance and enrich the understanding of refugees' social networks by providing a more comprehensive analysis. Previous research on social networks in migration studies has predominantly focused on the effects of social relationships, while there has been limited exploration into the composition, structure and dynamicity of refugees' social networks, the resources exchanged within them and how they fit in the broader context, thus 'links with migration processes and outcomes were often assumed rather than empirically investigated' (Bilecen et al., 2018: 2). At the same time, there is narrow understanding of the processes involved in network formation, both in migration studies (Ryan and Mulholland, 2014; Wierzbicki, 2004) and in the broader literature on social networks (Zaheer and Soda, 2009). To address these gaps, I adopted the approach recommended by academic experts in the field (Ryan and Dahinden, 2021) and drew upon social network theories and migration literature to comprehensively analyse refugees' social networks. In network studies, theories on network development can be divided into three strands: one focusing on the individuals' attributes (e.g., homophily and heterophily tendencies), one on mechanisms shaping interactions (such as reciprocity and frequency of interaction) and one highlighting the importance of proximity in creating opportunities to socialise (Rivera et al., 2010). I observed that all of these aspects contribute to varying degrees in shaping the formation and development of participants' social networks. My results support the argument that a comprehensive exploration of social relationships requires incorporating multiple theoretical foundations and considering several variables (Rivera et al., 2010).

The second theoretical contribution of my study is to expand knowledge on the influence of resettlement policy on refugees' social networks. In the context of

migration studies, social network analysis has primarily been used to explore the social relationships of individuals who migrate temporarily or permanently, rather than forced migrants (Ryan et al., 2008; Lubbers et al., 2010; Ryan, 2011). However, in the past decade, with the development of sponsorship programmes in Europe and a renewed focus on resettlement as a durable solution, a limited number of studies have begun exploring the social relationships of resettled refugees, especially sponsored refugees. The majority of existing literature on the topic focuses on Canada. It is important to note that Canadian resettlement and sponsorship programmes differ significantly from those developed in other countries, such as the UK, as discussed in Chapter One. Furthermore, there is a lack of comparative research taking into account both different resettlement programmes and the individual characteristics of resettled refugees (Government of Canada, 2016). These individual characteristics can play a crucial role in 'shaping the boundaries of social networks' (Pescosolido, 2007: 211) and explaining differences in integration outcomes between sponsored refugees and GAR (Lamba, 2003; Hynie et al., 2019; Kaida et al., 2020). To the best of my knowledge, this is the first study to analyse and compare the social networks of refugees resettled through two different programmes, CS and VPRS, while also considering refugees' socio-demographic and migration characteristics. The results contribute to the development of theoretical frameworks in the field.

Previous studies have often categorised relationships based on ethnic/national criteria, drawing on Putnam's distinction between bonding and bridging connections. However, this approach has underestimated the dynamics of social connections and the mechanisms and resources involved in their development (Riley and Eckenrode, 1986; Kivisto, 2005; Hyun-soo Kim, 2016). As pointed out by others, the distinction between

how similar or dissimilar people are according to ethnic variables ‘makes little sense’ (Wessendorf and Phillimore, 2019: 135), especially taking into account the super-diverse context in which we live today where several demographic differences also exist within (hosting population and migrant) groups (Vertovec, 2007). Even in less diverse and rural areas, modern communication technologies have significantly changed how we interact, allowing the development and maintenance of social relationships beyond the physical space where migrants and refugees live (Grzymala-Kazłowska and Phillimore, 2018). Supporting the view that a more comprehensive understanding of refugees’ social networks and their impact on integration can be achieved by moving beyond classifications of social relationships based on ethnic/national criteria (Ryan, 2011), my study contributes to a paradigm shift in migration studies and network theories. By focusing on the resources available and exchanged within social networks, rather than solely on the characteristics of people within them, I shed light on three fundamental aspects of social networks: structure, content and function (Pescosolido, 2007).

Emphasising content and function aspects, researchers have often associated the significance of social networks with the notion of social capital: the resources, support and opportunities that individuals can access through their social relationships (Bourdieu, 1986). Although the concept of social capital is highly debated (see Haynes, 2009), it has been widely acknowledged as a crucial resource for refugees (Lamba and Krahn, 2003). Numerous studies have demonstrated that having a social network empowers refugees to access various opportunities, including employment, housing and health services (see Chapter Four). However, the findings have often underestimated the negative impact that social relationships can generate (Fischer,

2005). Portes (1998), for instance, emphasises that being part of a social network can lead to the imposition of norms and expectations on its members, which may restrict individual freedoms and autonomy, leading to potential strains on the well-being of individuals who feel obligated to support others within their network. The focus on social relationships as sources of resources has, thus, led to the assumption that they are beneficial for people possessing them, overlooking the type of resources exchanged through social networks and their effects (Phillimore, 2012; McCabe et al., 2013). By separately investigating the types of social networks and the resources exchanged within them, my study enriches our understanding of social networks' dynamics within the context of migration and integration.

Finally, I contribute to understanding how different types of social network and resource exchange impact integration. While the positive correlation between social networks and migration outcomes has often been taken for granted (Ryan, 2023), the literature on social networks in migration studies does not provide a clear answer on what types of social networks may be more beneficial for integration (Phillimore et al., 2022). One of the primary challenges in measuring integration is the lack of a shared agreement on what integration means. However, a growing consensus is that integration is multi-dimensional, multi-directional and context-based, with responsibility shared among all the actors (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019). While some authors have focused on developing theoretical frameworks to capture the complexity of integration processes, these frameworks have rarely been implemented in the context of refugee resettlement. Conversely, the majority of studies on sponsored refugees have focused on functional aspects of integration, such as employment, housing, and health (Stansbury, 2021), with limited knowledge of the interconnectedness with other social

aspects and variables (Grzymala-Kazlowska and Phillimore, 2018). With my study, I address these knowledge gaps by adopting a holistic approach to refugee integration and considering a wide range of integration dimensions beyond the traditional focus on functional aspects. Building on the work of Hynie et al. (2016) and Phillimore (2021: 7), my work provides a more nuanced understanding of the intersectionality between social networks and diverse opportunity structures, described as ‘sets of resources, arrangements and pathways that can facilitate or block integration’ at the subjective, intersectional and social levels.

I highlight that by providing emotional support, volunteers contribute to the well-being of refugees, enhancing their subjective well-being and helping them achieve their integration goals. Emotional support can be considered a facilitator of integration, as it interacts with and influences other domains of integration. The presence of caring relationships within social networks is vital for fostering emotional support and, in turn, positively affecting various aspects of refugees’ integration journey. Although emotional support can be challenging to measure objectively, as emotional well-being is highly subjective, it should be recognised as an integration indicator, maybe as a facilitator, because of its transformative effect on power dynamics and integration outcomes.

### **9.3 Methodological implications**

While in Chapter Five I provide a detailed description of the methodology, in this section, I highlight the methodological innovations that my research has incorporated. Since the 1970s, social network analysis has been increasingly recognised as a valuable methodological approach in various disciplines (Scott and Stokman, 2015). However, its application in migration studies has only gained momentum recently. The

publication of Louise Ryan's book, 'Social Networks and Migration', in 2023 indicates the growing interest in exploring social networking within the context of migration. Despite this progress, the focus on social networks in the context of forced migration remains relatively limited. Thus, a significant methodological contribution of my research is the application of social network analysis to the study of resettled refugees. Adopting social network analysis, I was able to analyse refugees' social networks 'in terms of structures of relationships among actors, rather than in terms of categories of actors' (Scott and Carrington, 2011: 6), moving away from binary classifications of social connections.

Social network analysis has a long history of being predominantly quantitative in nature (Heath et al., 2009). Only in the past decades have there been a growing interest and recognition of the benefits of using a mixed methods approach to the study of social networks, as the combination of quantitative data, providing information about the structure, and qualitative data, shedding light on the underlying processes, can provide a more comprehensive understanding (Jack, 2010; Edwards, 2010). This recognition of the potential of mixed methods is also evident in migration studies, where researchers like Ryan and D'Angelo (2018) advocate for the integration of quantitative, qualitative and visual methods. Ryan and D'Angelo (2018) argue these methods enable researchers to obtain richer data and insights while establishing more robust connections between conceptualisations of social networks and methodological frameworks, facilitating a more nuanced and holistic examination of social networks and their dynamics within migration contexts. My study is pioneering as I integrated mixed methods, including visual approaches, to the study of social networks within the context of refugee integration. Through a mixed methods design of social network

analysis, I offered a more comprehensive exploration of the dynamics involved in the development and maintenance of refugees' social relationships by considering individual-level factors, such as refugees' characteristics and preferences, with structural-level factors, such as resettlement policies and local opportunities (Bolíbar, 2016; Ryan and D'Angelo, 2018). This integration of multiple levels of analysis further contributes to capturing the intersectionality of different integration domains (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019; Phillimore, 2021).

Visualising social networks through sociograms also proved to be a valuable methodological tool. I employed two tools to produce refugees' social networks visually. The first was the participant-aided sociograms, which allowed participants to draw their net of social relationships during the interviews, offering an opportunity to discuss and reflect on their connections and unveiling dynamics that may not be captured during in-depth interviews (Hogan et al., 2007). For example, during the research, participants were requested to create two lists of names: one comprising individuals they considered close to them and another featuring those they perceived as less close. Subsequently, the participants were tasked with arranging these names on a sheet of paper with four concentric circles, each circle indicating varying levels of closeness. Surprisingly, some individuals listed as 'less close' were positioned near the centre of the concentric circles, implying a higher degree of closeness, while certain individuals considered 'very close' were placed farther away from the centre, suggesting a lower perceived level of closeness. The participant-aided sociograms thus acted as a prompt to elicit participants' perceptions of their social connections and the relationships within their networks. Involving the active participation of respondents in drawing their social networks, the sociogram can also be an added benefit in studies

with refugees as participatory visual methods can address power imbalances between researchers and participants (Liamputtong, 2007) and can offer a recreational and creative moment, positively impacting the well-being of participants (Hogan et al., 2007; McMorrow and Saksena, 2017).

While acknowledging my position of power as a researcher, utilising participatory visual representations of their social networks provided refugees with greater agency in how they presented their connections. Instead of solely responding to my questions, participants had the opportunity to take more control over the portrayal of their experiences (Vacchelli, 2018). The second tool that I used to visualise and analyse refugees' social networks was the Gephi software, through which I was able to collect quantitative data related to concepts of social network analysis such as density, average degree and clustering. This approach enhances the research's robustness (Robins, 2015) and allows for a deeper exploration of the structural aspects of networks, which may not be fully captured through qualitative methods alone (Ryan et al., 2015). To the best of my knowledge, this is the first study that combines two visual methods to explore the social networks of forced migrants.

#### **9.4 Further research**

In Chapter Eight, I explored the intricacies of social networks and their role in the integration processes of CS and VPRS refugees. I further examined the methodological challenges and limitations encountered during this research, reflecting on the quality and generalisability of my findings. In the previous chapter, I mentioned that a participant sample of 23 refugees restricts the statistical power of the analysis while the use of a convenience sample, exclusively including refugees resettled in the UK before the COVID-19 pandemic, restricts the ability to generalise findings to

broader CS and VPRS refugee populations. Furthermore, the differences in sponsorship and resettlement programmes developed across countries introduce an additional layer of limitation to the generalisability of my findings. The diverse skill sets and knowledge levels among CS volunteers, influencing the degree of support provided to refugees, further suggest that my findings may not be applicable to all sponsored refugees in the UK and other countries. Furthermore, the dynamics within sponsor-refugee and casework-refugee relationships, especially concerning emotional support, can vary significantly. Therefore, it would be inaccurate to presume that specific types of relationships inherently guarantee or lack certain forms of support. Moreover, given the impact of context and individuals' factors in shaping social networks and integration, caution must be exercised in generalising my findings.

While my study has contributed valuable insights, it is further essential to acknowledge that there is still much ground to cover in this field. Firstly, as explained in Chapter Five, the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and time limitations prevented me from conducting a longitudinal study to explore how social networks changed and evolved as refugees spent more time in the host country. The results reflect only the experience of refugees who were resettled before the COVID-19 pandemic began and, thus, had spent at least two years in the UK. Although I was still able to provide some insights into how time passing affects social relationships, the dynamicity of social relationships and the non-linearity of integration processes suggest the need for further longitudinal research. Such studies would capture the evolving nature of social relationships over an extended timeframe, their role in distinct phases of integration processes and their impact over the long term. More emphasis should be placed on exploring refugees'

social networks before resettlement and the role of transnational networks, as they also have an impact on integration processes.

Secondly, cross-comparative studies are needed to gain a comprehensive understanding of social networks in diverse contexts and under varying resettlement programmes. Additionally, it is crucial to investigate different cohorts of refugees due to the unique roles that individuals' characteristics play in shaping their social networks and integration experiences. Furthermore, comparing the social networks of refugees with those of the wider population can reveal valuable patterns and differences that can enhance our understanding of integration processes. These comparative analyses can provide insights into how refugees' social interactions and connections differ from those of the host population, shedding light on potential areas for improvement in integration efforts. Additionally, collecting data on the social networks of members of the host countries can help us understand the preferences and choices of the host population regarding their social interactions with refugees and migrants. By examining the social networks of both refugees and the host population, researchers can identify areas of overlap and divergence, contributing to more effective integration policies and strategies.

Thirdly, at the very early stage of my study, I did not plan to include quantitative data. However, reviewing the literature on network analyses, I came across numerous tools for collecting and analysing quantitative network data employed since sociometric techniques were developed in the 1930s. The tools I included in my study then provide valuable information on some social networks' features, such as density and clustering, which are often overlooked. The potential of quantitative data is often underestimated in migration studies despite its recognition (Phillimore, 2021). I am in alignment with

academics in the field of social studies who advocate for a mixed methods approach to social network analysis (see Ryan and D'Angelo, 2018). I propose that further research in the context of migration studies should actively consider the adoption of a mixed methods approach to gain a deeper understanding of the interrelated dynamics of social networks and migration.

Finally, numerous opportunities for further research exist to explore integration using a holistic and multidisciplinary approach. Further studies should pay more attention to social outcomes, rather than focusing only on functional aspects (Grzymala-Kazłowska and Phillimore, 2018). These studies could shed light on other factors – such as emotions, reciprocity, and social class - affecting the interrelated dynamic between agency and/or the structure, shaping interaction, and integrating opportunities. Additionally, I encourage researchers to apply an intersectional lens to capture how social relationships shape and are shaped by the multiple intersected identities refugees have.

In conclusion, while I made significant contributions to our understanding of refugees' social networks and integration processes, these suggestions for further research underscore the importance of more studies in this field. By embracing longitudinal research, cross-comparative analyses, mixed methods approaches to social network analysis and a holistic multidisciplinary perspective, researchers can contribute to a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the intricate dynamics of social networks and factors that shape integration. This expanded knowledge can inform policies and practices that enhance the lives of refugees and promote social cohesion in host communities.

## 9.5 Closing remarks

The number of displaced people worldwide has exceeded 1% of the global population; for every 74 people, more than one are refugees (UNHCR, 2023a). However, despite this dramatic increase, the annual resettlement rate remains low, with only about 1% of people in need of international protection being resettled each year (UNHCR, 2023a). Additionally, there is a growing development of policies aimed at limiting the arrivals of asylum seekers and migrants in Western countries and creating a hostile environment for them, including challenging and curtailing their right to claim asylum (Labman, 2011).

At the same time, the 21<sup>st</sup> century has witnessed a resurgence of attention and focus on refugee resettlement programmes, with an increasing number of countries offering resettlement places (Labman, 2007; UNHCR, 2013a,b). In 2016, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants definitely reopened the debate around durable solutions for refugees, promoting not only resettlement but including complementary pathways as additional solutions to the existing three (voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement) (Wagner and Katsiaficas, 2021). However, some authors have noted that governments often employ resettlement more as a migration management tool rather than to provide international protection (Milner, 2003). The emphasis on resettlement, while governments deny people's right to claim in-country asylum, creates a hierarchy of refugees' deservingness, where resettled refugees are depicted as the good refugees, more deserving of international protection than asylum seekers and other displaced individuals (Labman, 2011). Despite these criticisms, the potential of resettlement as a solution for refugees is widely recognised, and the global

trends indicate a growing interest in establishing additional pathways, such as CS, which can offer more opportunities to migrate to third countries.

Following GRSI in 2016, the growth of sponsorship programmes has led to an increased involvement of private individuals and organisations in refugee resettlement. Lacking a clear definition, the peculiarity of sponsorship programmes is that responsibilities to welcome and support resettled refugees are shared amongst governments and private/community actors (Share Network, 2022b). The shift of responsibilities from states to citizens can be read as aligning with the neo-liberal states, encouraging the privatisation of resettlement (D'Avino, 2022). Yet, academics also recognise that these new pathways can offer not only safety, but social and economic opportunities, as refugees can rely on social networks to rebuild their lives (Long, 2014). Proponents of sponsorship programmes often argue that interactions with private and community actors can provide refugees with tailored support, facilitating integration processes (Radjenovic, 2021). However, to date, there has been a lack of evidence to assess this assumption, in particular outside Canada, where sponsoring has a well-established and lengthy history. Furthermore, the scarcity of studies that compare the integration outcomes of sponsored refugees with those resettled through government-led resettlement schemes (Stansbury, 2021) creates challenges in identifying the specific ways and the extent to which volunteer-refugee social relationships play a role in shaping integration outcomes.

Through a comparative analysis of resettled refugees via two different programmes, VPRS and CS, I offer both empirical and theoretical contributions to our knowledge of the interrelated dynamics between social networks, policy and integration, as highlighted in previous sections.

In the following section, after briefly reintroducing my findings, I present the practical implications that arise from them and offer a set of recommendations for policymakers, service providers and other stakeholders involved in refugee resettlement efforts.

### ***9.5.1 Recommendations***

My results support the argument that sponsorship programmes, involving private individuals in supporting refugees, enhance newcomers' opportunities to establish vital social connections. The presence of volunteers plays a pivotal role in mitigating some of the challenges refugees face in developing social relationships, such as lack of time, financial resources and language proficiency.

In comparison to refugees assisted only by a caseworker, sponsored refugees are more likely to build an extensive social network, which in turn offers them essential emotional and practical support. This support, particularly the emotional aspect, can have positive effects on integration processes. Specifically, having someone who cares about them and offers tailored support improves the well-being of sponsored refugees, making them more confident and able to reciprocate the support received and engage with the wider host community.

However, in particular functional aspects of integration (e.g., work, education and health), the mere presence of a wide, ethnically diversified and tight-knit social network is insufficient to guarantee significantly different outcomes for sponsored refugees compared to VPRS refugees. Nevertheless, the positive effects of social networks on social aspects of integration processes were multiple and operate at various levels, including in some functional domains of integration.

To further improve the number and quality of durable solutions for refugees within resettlement and sponsorship programmes, I offer the following recommendations based on my findings.

1. Promoting social interaction.

- The Government should continue to support the growth of sponsorship programmes, as evidence shows that through CS refugees can develop more extensive and diverse social networks than VPRS refugees, which can have positive effects on their integration processes.
- Policies and programmes such as VPRS can be improved by providing refugees with more opportunities to socialise and develop a social network, enhancing their integration processes. This outcome can be achieved not only by facilitating moments of interaction between refugees and other community members, but also by removing barriers to leisure activities and socialisation, such as financial constraints and transportation issues.
- Organisations working with refugees and institutions like schools, workplaces and faith groups can play a crucial role in facilitating interactions between newcomers and the hosting community. Such institutions can organise events that bring people together based on shared interests, such as cooking, sewing and playing football.
- Volunteers are also encouraged to support refugees in meeting new people by introducing them to their wider networks and facilitating events or activities for socialisation.

2. Promoting the development of diverse social networks.

- The Government should develop programmes and policies that facilitate relationships between refugees and both the majority ethnic group as well as co-ethnic and co-national groups, recognising the importance of diverse social networks in enhancing refugees' access to resources and aiding in their integration.
- Volunteer groups supporting refugees should be formed by diverse individuals from various age groups, educational backgrounds, and genders. Such diversity of volunteers can significantly enhance refugees' access to diverse forms of support and opportunities.

### 3. Facilitating access to emotional support.

- Programmes and policies should emphasise the development of caring relationships offering refugees emotional support. These relationships significantly impact refugees' emotional well-being and potentially their integration.
- Organisations training sponsors and volunteers should help them to understand and navigate power dynamics within their relationships with refugees. Addressing potential imbalances can positively influence the quality and longevity of these connections, fostering caring relationships.
- Spending time in the same location and having frequent interactions with the same people can help refugees develop social networks and foster friendship relationships providing emotional support. This outcome can be achieved by developing programmes that minimise refugees' secondary migration. For instance, ensuring that the places where refugees are resettled offer employment opportunities matching their

skills and previous experience. Volunteers should also organise regular activities to further facilitate social interaction.

#### 4. Facilitating access to practical and tailored assistance.

- The Government should ensure that programmes supporting refugee integration consider the diverse backgrounds and needs of refugees. Recognising differences based on factors such as age, gender, level of education, and personal experience is crucial, as these contribute to varying effects on the integration processes. For instance, digital literacy programmes should be tailored according to age groups, as elderly people may require additional support compared to young refugees.
- Policy and programmes for refugees should also consider the opportunities available to refugees at the contextual level. Recognising differences, particularly at the local level, is essential for developing effective and tailored interventions. For example, refugees in rural areas had to rely on volunteers' support for language acquisition, as formal English language classes were limited.
- As the lack of language proficiency emerged as a significant barrier to the development of social relationships and integration processes, refugees should have the opportunity to access more hours of formal English language classes. Language class providers should also be aware of refugees' specific needs and the difficulties they may encounter in learning English. Consider adopting a participative approach, involving refugees in the development of the curriculum and objectives during language classes, enabling improvements tailored to their needs.

- The Government and organisations working with refugees should actively promote awareness among service providers, such as Jobcentre staff, about the specific needs of refugees. This outcome can be achieved, for instance, by providing them with access to knowledge and resources (such as interpreting services) to enhance their ability to offer more effective support tailored to refugee requirements.
- The Government should develop a system to recognise refugees' qualifications and previous work experiences to facilitate their access to employment opportunities matching their skills and qualifications acquired before resettlement.
- Local authorities should seek the support of local organisations and community groups to provide additional and more tailored assistance that goes beyond the boundaries within which caseworkers operate. As my findings indicated, the support of a CS group, in addition to caseworker assistance, positively impacted the experience of VPRS refugees compared to those solely supported by a caseworker.

#### 5. Recognise refugees' preferences.

- Acknowledge refugees' preferences in social network development. These preferences often differ from unsupported assumptions that newcomers primarily seek connections within their ethnic community or benefit only from relationships with the diverse ethnic majority population to integrate.

- Policymakers should increase refugee participation in the development and implementation of resettlement policies to address their needs and preferences genuinely.
- Organisations supporting volunteers should provide them with guidance to actively listen to refugees' voices and recognise them as equal partners, avoiding making decisions on their behalf.
- Particularly during the initial period after refugees arrive, sponsoring groups and organisations supporting volunteers should involve more individuals who share the same language as the refugees in order to facilitate communication and allow refugees to express their preferences and needs freely.

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## مطلوب مشاركين



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ابحث عن أشخاص من اللاجئين الذين أعيد توطينهم في المملكة المتحدة.

بالتحديد اللاجئين المدعومين من السلطات المحلية عبر برنامج إعادة توطين الأشخاص المعرضين للخطر (VPRS) أو من خلال مجموعة من المتطوعين عبر برنامج الرعاية المجتمعة (CS).

أبحث عن اللاجئين الذين أعيد توطينهم في إنجلترا قبل شهر آذار 2020 للمشاركة في هذا البحث.

المشاركين سيستلمون قسيمة تسوق بقيمة 10 جنيه إسترليني لكشركم عن المشاركة .  
إذا كنت مهتماً الرجاء التواصل

غابرييلا دافينو

## Participants Needed



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I am exploring the types of people refugees resettled in the UK know.

I am interested in refugees supported by a local authority via the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) or a group of volunteers via the Community Sponsorship scheme (CS).

I am searching for refugees resettled in England before March 2020.

Participants will receive a £10 shopping voucher as a thank you.

If you are interested, please get in touch.

**Gabriella D'Avino**

## **Appendix 2: Field notes template**

**Participant's code number:**

**Date of interview:**

**Notes about location** (e.g. urban/rural; there are more flats/houses around; north/south/west/east England; accessibility of public transports such as buses/train stations/tube; churches/mosques; homogeneous/ heterogeneous population etc.)

**Notes about the interview** (e.g. participant's comments and behaviours, interruptions, changes for future interviews, researcher's thoughts etc.)

**Additional comments**

## Appendix 3: Participant information sheet in English



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# Participant Information Sheet

## Title of project

**The importance of social networks amongst refugees resettled through the Community Sponsorship scheme and the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme in the UK**

## Invitation to take part in the study

You have been invited to take part in this research project led by Gabriella D'Avino from the University of Birmingham. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what will happen during the study.

Please take time to read the following information carefully. If there is anything you do not understand, please feel free to ask Gabriella.

## Purpose of the study

This study wants to understand the types of people refugees resettled in the UK know. The study is interested in refugees resettled supported by volunteers through the Community Sponsorship scheme (CS) and refugees supported by local authorities through the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS).

## Your involvement in the study

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be interviewed by Gabriella D'Avino. An interpreter may help, if needed. The interview will be at the best time for you and will be about 90 minutes. During the interview, you will be asked some information about yourself and the people you know. The interview will be recorded. If you do not want the interview being recorded, the researcher will take notes. Before and after the interview, the researcher will take notes about the location where she will meet you, some comments and behaviours, and things she will notice.

## Voluntary Participation & Withdrawal

You can decide whether or not you wish to take part. You can choose not to take part in the study or not answer some questions without saying why. If you take part and

then change your mind, you can let Gabriella know until 30 days after the interview and your information will be cancelled within 24 hours.

#### Benefits and disadvantages of taking part

During the interview, you can talk about the types of people you know and the help they can offer. Your comments can be helpful for people working with refugees and migrants.

Taking part in the interview will take up some of your time. If you think some questions are too personal and upset you, you can decide not to respond or stop the interview.

#### Sign of appreciation for the time given

To thank you for taking part in this study, you will have a £10 gift voucher. A list of the shops where you can spend your voucher is at <https://www.highstreetvouchers.com/gift/where-to-spend-love2shop-vouchers>. If you attend the interview and then decide you do not want to take part in the study anymore, you can still use your voucher.

#### Confidentiality of what you tell

Your name will be eliminated from the information you give to protect your privacy. If you say anything that you do not want to be in the study, please tell it to Gabriella and she will respect it. The information you give will be saved in a safe place for at least ten years. Only the researcher and her supervisors can enter the information.

#### Results of the study

The results of this study will be used for writing the researcher's PhD thesis at the University of Birmingham. They may also be used for other materials, including conference papers and journal articles.

#### Any concerns

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Gabriella D'Avino. Her emails and phone number are:

[REDACTED]

Telephone: [REDACTED]

You can also contact Gabriella's supervisor, Professor Jenny Phillimore, [REDACTED] or the University of Birmingham Ethics Committee, [REDACTED]

Thank you for taking the time to read this information and your interest in this study.

#### Researcher and contact details

PhD researcher Gabriella D'Avino; School of Social Policy at the University of Birmingham.

Email: [REDACTED]

Telephone: + [REDACTED]

## Appendix 4: Participant information sheet in Arabic



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صفحة المعلومات للمشاركين

عنوان المشروع

أهمية الشبكات الاجتماعية بين اللاجئين الذين أعيد توطينهم عبر برنامج الرعاية المجتمعية وبرنامج إعادة توطين الأشخاص المعرضين للخطر في المملكة المتحدة

دعوة للمشاركة في الدراسة

أنت مدعو للمشاركة في هذا المشروع البحثي بإدارة غابرييلا دافينو من جامعة برمنغهام. قيل أن تقرر فيما إذا تشارك أو لا من المهم أن تفهم لماذا يتم إجراء هذا البحث، وماذا سيحدث خلال هذه الدراسة.

الرجاء خذ الوقت الكافي لتقرأ المعلومات بعناية. في حال وجود أي استفسارات، الرجاء سؤال غابرييلا.

هدف الدراسة

الدراسة تريد أن تفهم نماذج الأشخاص الذين يعرفهم اللاجئين الذين أعيد توطينهم في المملكة المتحدة. الدراسة مهمة باللاجئين الذين أعيد توطينهم بدعم من قبل متطوعين عبر برنامج رعاية المجتمع CS واللاجئين المدعومين من قبل السلطات المحلية عبر برنامج إعادة توطين الأشخاص المعرضين للخطر VPRS

مشاركتك في الدراسة

إذا أنت توافق في أن تشارك في هذه الدراسة، أنت ستكون في مقابلة مع غابرييلا دافينو. يوجد هناك مترجم للمساعدة | عند الحاجة.

المقابلة ستكون في أفضل يناسبك وستكون حوالي 90 دقيقة. خلال المقابلة، سيتم سؤالك عن بعض المعلومات حول نفسك والأشخاص الذين تعرفهم. المقابلة ستكون مسجلة. إذا أنت لا تريد أن تكون المقابلة مسجلة فإن الباحثة ستأخذ ملاحظات فقط دون التسجيل. قبل وبعد المقابلة، الباحثة ستأخذ ملاحظات حول المكان الذي ستقابلك فيه بعض التعليقات، السلوكيات و الأشياء التي ستلاحظها.

## المشاركة الطوعية والانسحاب الطوعي

أنت بإمكانك أن تقرر فيما إذا تتمنى أن تشارك أو لا. لك الحق أن تختار ألا تشارك في الدراسة أو لا تجيب على بعض الأسئلة دون أن تذكر الأسباب. إذا قررت المشاركة ومن ثم قمت بتغيير رأيك، تستطيع أن تدع غابرييلا تعرف لمدة 30 يوم بالمقابلة ومعلوماتك سنلغى خلال 24 ساعة.

## مزايا وعيوب المشاركة

خلال المقابلة، أنت تستطيع أن تتكلم عن نماذج الأشخاص التي تعرفهم والدعم الذين هم يمكن أن يقدموه. تعليقاتك يمكن أن تكون مفيدة للناس الذين يعملون مع اللاجئين والمهاجرين. المشاركة في المقابلة ستأخذ بعض من وقتك. إذا أنت تعتقد أن بعض الأسئلة شخصية جدا ومزعجة لك، أنت تستطيع أن تقرر عدم الرد أن توقف المقابلة.

## علامة تقدير للوقت الممنوح

كشكر لك من أجل المشاركة في هذه الدراسة، سيكون لديك قسيمة هدايا بقيمة 10 جنيهات إسترليني. قائمة بالمحلات التجارية حيث يمكنك إنفاق قسيمتك هي <https://www.highstreetvouchers.com/gift/where-to-spend-love2shop-vouchers>. إذا حضرت المقابلة ثم قررت أنك لا تريد في الدراسة بعد الآن، فلا يزال بإمكانك استخدامك قسيمتك.

## السرية فيما تقوله

سيتم حذف اسمك من المعلومات التي تقدمها لحماية خصوصيتك. إذا قلت أي شيء لا تريد أن تكون في الدراسة، من فضلك قل ذلك غابرييلا وهي ستحترمه. سيتم حفظ المعلومات التي تقدمها في مكان آمن لمدة عشر سنوات على الأقل. يمكن للباحثة ومشرفيها فقط إدخال المعلومات.

## نتائج الدراسة

سيتم استخدام نتائج هذه الدراسة لكتابة أطروحة الدكتوراه للباحث في جامعة برمنغهام. قد تكون أيضا استخدامات لمواد أخرى، بما في ذلك أوراق المؤتمرات ومقالات المجلات.

في حال وجود استفسار أو قلق

إذا أنت لديك أي أسئلة، لا تتردد بالاتصال بغابرييلا دافينو. بريدها الإلكتروني ورقم هاتفها هما:

رقم الهاتف: ٠٧٥٤٦٢٥٤٨١١

يمكنك أيضا الاتصال بمشرف غابرييلا، البروفيسور جيني فيليمور ، ، أو لجنة الأخلاقيات بجامعة برمنغهام ، [ethics@birmingham.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@birmingham.ac.uk).

نشكرك على الوقت الذي قضيته في قراءة هذه المعلومات واهتمامك بهذه الدراسة.

الباحث وبيانات الاتصال

باحثة الدكتوراه غابرييلا، كلية السياسة الاجتماعية بجامعة برمنغهام.

البريد الإلكتروني: [REDACTED]

رقم الهاتف: ٠٧٥٤٦٢٥٤٨١١

## Appendix 5: Consent form in English



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### Consent Form

## **“The importance of social networks amongst refugees resettled through the Community Sponsorship scheme and the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme in the UK”**

Researcher: Gabriella D’Avino

Project Supervisors: Professor Jenny Phillimore and Angus McCabe

Address: University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham UK B15 2TT

Contact Details:

Please complete this paper after reading the participant information sheet, the document explaining you the study. If you have any questions, please contact Gabriella D’Avino. You can have a copy of this document.

#### **I confirm that:**

- I have read this document and the [participant information sheet](#) (the document explaining the study – Version 2021/01 dated 6.12.21) and I understand what this study is about. The researcher answered all my questions about the study.
- I agree to take part in this study voluntarily.
- I understand that if I do not want to take part in the study after the interview, I can contact Gabriella D’Avino up to 30 days after the interview.
- I consent to the use of my personal information for this study.
- I agree with my interview being recorded and used for this study.
- I understand that the researcher will take notes and photos during the interview, and I agree with the use of this material for this study.
- I understand that before and after the interview, the researcher will take notes about the location where she will meet me, some comments and behaviours, and things she will notice. And I agree that the notes will be used for the study.
- I understand that information from my interview will be published as a PhD dissertation and other materials. Information will also be used in presentations, conferences and seminars.

- I understand that the confidentiality of my personal data will be protected.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Name of Participant*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Name of Researcher*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature*

## Appendix 6: Consent form in Arabic



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### نموذج الموافقة

أهمية الشبكات الاجتماعية بين اللاجئين الذين أعيد توطينهم عبر برنامج رعاية المجتمع وبرنامج إعادة توطين الأشخاص المعرضين للخطر في المملكة المتحدة.

الباحثة: غابرييلا دافينو

المشرفون على المشروع: البروفيسور جيني فيليمور وأنجوس مكابي

العنوان: جامعة برمنغهام، إدينباستون، برمنغهام المملكة المتحدة UK B15 2TT

تفاصيل الاتصال: [REDACTED]

٠٧٥٤٦٢٥٤٨١١

يرجى إكمال هذه الورقة بعد قراءة معلومات المشارك، الوثيقة التي تشرح لك الدراسة.

إذا أنت لديك أي أسئلة، الرجاء التواصل مع غابرييلا دافينو. أنت بإمكانك أن تحصل على نسخة عن هذه الوثيقة.

### أؤكد أن:

- لقد قرأت هذه الوثيقة وورقة معلومات المشاركين (الوثيقة التي تشرح الدراسة – الإصدار 2021/10 بتاريخ 6.12.21) وأفهم ما تدور حوله هذه الدراسة. أجابت الباحثة على جميع أسئلتني حول الدراسة.
- أوافق على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة طواعية.
- أفهم أنه إذا لم أرغب في المشاركة في الدراسة بعد المقابلة، فيمكنني الاتصال بغابرييلا دافينو حتى 30 يوم بعد المقابلة.
- أوافق على استخدام معلوماتي الشخصية لهذه الدراسة.
- أوافق على تسجيل مقابلي واستخدامها لهذه الدراسة.
- أفهم أن الباحث سيدونون الملاحظات والصور أثناء المقابلة، وأوافق على استخدام هذه المادة في هذه الدراسة.
- أفهم أن قبل وبعد المقابلة، ستقوم الباحثة بتدوين ملاحظات حول المكان الذي ستقابلني فيه، وبعض التعليقات والسلوكيات، والأشياء التي ستلاحظها وأنا أوافق على استخدام الملاحظات في الدراسة.
- أفهم أن سيتم نشر المعلومات من مقابلي كأطروحة دكتوراه ومواد أخرى. سيتم استخدام المعلومات أيضا في العروض التقديمية والمؤتمرات والندوات
- أفهم أن سرية بياناتي الشخصية ستكون محمية.

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التوقيع

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التاريخ

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اسم المشارك

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التوقيع

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التاريخ

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اسم المشارك

## Appendix 7: Information sheet following the interview (English)



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# Information sheet following the interview

### Title of project

**The importance of social networks amongst refugees resettled through the Community Sponsorship scheme and the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme in the UK**

Researcher: Gabriella D'Avino

Project Supervisors: Professor Jenny Phillimore and Angus McCabe

Address: University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham UK B15 2TT

Contact Details:

Thank you for taking part in this study and for being interviewed as part of this. Now that you have been interviewed, please take some time to read the information in this document.

### What happens next:

Now that the interview is complete, if you change your mind and do not want to take part in the study please contact Gabriella D'Avino within 30 days after the interview.

### If you feel that you have been affected by the interview

Speaking on some personal experiences can be stressful. If you think that you are feeling upset or you need help, you can contact some of these organisations:

## **Refugee Council**

Refugee Council is an organisation that helps refugees. They can help you integrate into the UK, for instance, offering Employment support services and mental health help. You can contact them through their free helpline on: 0808 8010 503. Or you can visit their website at <https://refugeecouncil.org.uk/about-us/contact/>

## **British Red Cross**

The British Red Cross offers different services for refugees, asylum seekers, vulnerable migrants and survivors of trafficking. They can offer house, financial and emotional help. They also help refugees finding missing family members abroad. See their website at <https://www.redcross.org.uk/> or contact them:

Main office:

44 Moorfields, London, EC2Y 9AL

[contactus@redcross.org.uk](mailto:contactus@redcross.org.uk)

0344 871 11 11

## **Refugees Action**

Refugees Action offers help and advice to refugees. They have different services. You can contact them by visiting their website <https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/> or contacting them:

Main office:

179 Royce Road, Manchester, M15 5TJ

**Thank you for taking part in the study and for taking the time to read this document.**



## مجلس اللاجئين

مجلس اللاجئين هو منظمة تساعد اللاجئين. يمكنهم مساعدتك على الاندماج في المملكة المتحدة، على سبيل المثال، تقديم خدمات دعم التوظيف ومساعدة الصحة العقلية. يمكنك الاتصال بهم من خلال خط المساعدة المجاني الخاص بهم على 0808 8010 503. أو تستطيع أن تزور موقعهم في

<https://refugeecouncil.org.uk/about-us/contact/>

## الصليب الأحمر البريطاني

يقدم الصليب الأحمر البريطاني خدمات مختلفة للاجئين، وطالبي اللجوء، والمهاجرين المعرضين للخطر والناجين من الاتجار. يمكنهم تقديم المساعدة المنزلية، والمالية والعاطفية. كما أنها تساعد اللاجئين في العثور على أفراد الأسرة المفقودين في الخارج. انظر موقعهم في <https://www.redcross.org.uk/> أو نواصل معهم :

المكتب الرئيسي:

44 Moorfields, London, EC2Y 9AL

[contactus@redcross.org.uk](mailto:contactus@redcross.org.uk)

0344 871 11 11

## عمل اللاجئين

تقدم حركة اللاجئين المساعدة والنصيحة للاجئين. لديهم خدمات مختلفة. أو الاتصال بهم :  
المكتب الرئيسي:

179 شارع رويس ، مانشستر ، M15 5TJ

شكرا لك على المشاركة و على الوقت الذي قضيته في قراءة هذا المستند .