

East Carolina University

Working with a Refugee Outreach Organization in
Rochester, New York

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Introduction:

To fulfill my master's degree requirements, I participated in an internship with Mary's Place Outreach, a non-governmental organization (NGO) located in Rochester, New York during the summer of 2013. I worked under the supervision of Cara Breslin, the program coordinator for Mary's Place, performing several tasks meant to prepare me for future work in the NGO sector. I completed 140 hours of service beginning June 3, 2013 and ending by August 2, 2013. My main tasks included assisting the program coordinator with identifying New York State ESL Program Certification requirements, teaching an adult ESL class, and employing anthropological research and certification requirements to enhance their existing curriculum if possible. I also tutored school aged-children, engaged with refugees of all ages, and assisted with clerical work as needed. Through these rolls I was able to examine the efficiency of the ESL program, identify many of the challenges confronting volunteers and the administration, and make several recommendations for the enhancement of their ESL program in the future.

I began my internship with several objectives that will help prepare me for future work in NGO's and refugee agencies. First, I wanted to learn how programs are planned, organized, and implemented to target the specific needs of refugee populations located in the Rochester area focusing on English as a Second Language. Second, I would learn how the English as a Second Language (ESL) program currently meets the needs of refugees and what structural or academic changes could be made to enhance the ESL program. Third, I wanted to better understand what challenges teachers must overcome when planning curriculum and teaching ESL classes. Fourth, I wanted to better understand the impact ESL programs have on the lives of refugees. Finally, I wanted to explore how the discipline of anthropology can contribute to the non-governmental organization sector specifically refugee agencies and prepare myself for future work with NGO's.

Literature Review

As defined by the United Nations a refugee is an individual who “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country” (UNHCR, 1951). In 2012, a total of 58,238 refugees were resettled into the United States (Office of Refugee Settlement). Of these refugees, 2,529 were resettled in New York State with 721 resettled in Monroe County, with most residing in the city of Rochester (Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance). Nearly two thirds of these refugees are natives of Burma, Bhutan, and Somalia followed by Iraq, Sudan, Eritrea, and The Democratic Republic of Congo (Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance).

Refugee resettlement is a relatively new program offered by the United States federal government for people of all nationalities facing persecution in their homeland. The refugee program was first developed in the 1940’s to assist Hungarians fleeing to Austria during the Hungarian uprising and led to the passing of the 1948 Displaced Persons Act (Zucker, 1983: 173). This bill was first of its kind to create special accommodations for immigrants seeking to enter the United States as a result of war (Zucker, 1983: 173). The success of this program encouraged congress to again utilize the Displaced Persons Act to allowed Cubans, fleeing the newly established communist government, to resettle in the United States despite the ban on Cuban immigration (Howell, 1982: 119). The largest effort to resettle refugees seeking escape from war however occurred at the end of the Vietnam War to resettle more than 600,000 Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese citizens (Howell, 1982:120). Once brought to the United States, however, little social or economic support was available to help the refugees rebuild their

lives and adjust to a new culture. Refugees were given a small stipend each month to ensure they could access necessary items such as housing and food while churches played the largest role in helping refugees adjust to American society offering financial, housing, and social support to the refugees resettled in their region (Zucker, 1983: 178; Howell, 1982:119). This remained the most available form of social and economic assistance until the passing of the 1980 Refugee Act (Howell, 1982: 119).

The 1980 Refugee Act established the political framework necessary for the admission of refugees, placement of refugees in the United States, and creation of programs to aid with their financial and social adjustment through the Office of Refugee Resettlement (Howell, 1982: 119). It also placed a three year limit to which refugees could receive federal financial assistance to prevent a long term reliance on the government (Zucker, 1983:174). The federal and state governments do continue to rely on non-governmental organizations (NGO's) and outreach groups, such as Mary's Place, to provide services to refugees placed within their location, however, the Office of Refugee Resettlement now offers grants and financial support for the creation and maintenance of refugee agencies and their programs. It is through these NGO's and outreach organizations, rather than through the federal government, that refugees are able to access the services they are entitled to by the terms of their resettlement such as financial assistance, English language classes, and job search assistance.

Due to the often traumatic nature of their resettlement in the United States, refugees face a unique set of challenges once they arrive in the US such as language barriers, discrimination based on race or ethnicity, difficulty in claiming services, and the ability to secure a well-paying job (Warriner, 2007: 344). Governmental departments such as the Office of Refugee Resettlement and the New York State Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance serve to

ensure refugees are provided with the tools resources, and emotional support necessary to navigate and minimize the impact of these challenges on their daily lives. The main goals of the Office Refugee Resettlement, the federal program, are: the rapid integration of refugees into the wider society of the United States and the local region they have been resettled into as well as the achievement of economic independence from all government benefactors (Cannady, 2011:30). To ensure refugees achieve these goals refugee agencies provide specific services such as cultural orientations, English as a Second Language classes, and jobs training classes to help refugees secure an entry level job (Cannady, 2011: 30). Services the government provides to refugees through community run agencies are, however, only temporary and must be completed within the first 30-90 days after the individual has entered the United States (Cannady, 2011:30). These agencies act as representatives of the government to directly work and connect with the refugees providing the services that ensure each individual works to achieve the goals of the federal government. Refugee agencies are typically one of three kind of organization: for-profit Non-governmental organizations (NGO's) that offer services such as English Language classes for a fee, not-for-profit NGO's that offer their services with the financial support of the federal and state governments through grants and subsidies, and community outreach organizations that rely on donations and fund-raisers to offer various services to refugees in their local area

Unlike for-profit organizations and community outreach organizations, agencies that are funded through federal and state grants are bound by the terms of their acceptance to adjust their programs to reflect the goals of the federal government and the individual terms of the grants approved by the government. These agencies are also bound by the regulations mandated by the 1980 Refugee Act such as the time limit placed on receiving services. As a result of the short length of programs such as English Language classes and job training, many refugees are left

without the necessary skills to secure a well-paid job and create a social network to meet their emotional needs (Warriner, 2007: 256). Those community outreach organizations, such as Mary's Place Outreach, that choose not to accept government funds are not bound by the same time constraints as other NGO's who are required to enforce the limits of their services according to the terms of their grant. These organizations are then in a unique position to continue offering their services long after the federal assistance for refugees is complete. Therefore, these organizations are often then the only resource left for refugees to continue learning English and seek support during the job search.

Since the 1980's, the federal government has adopted a prevailing ideology among educators that the best measure of successful integration into American society is the acquisition of English (Tshabangu-Sioko and Caron, 2011: 421). As a result of this ideology, English plays a key role in many resettlement programs personal goals for refugees and thousands of English as a Second Language (ESL) programs have been created to facilitate the learning of English among the adult refugee population. Many refugee outreach organizations offer their own English as a Second Language classes while others are attached to public libraries, public schools, or for-profit businesses. The creation of new schools and their regulation is established by each state as are all public and private schools and it is through the state that these schools apply for federal and state financial aid.

In New York State, to be granted certification for English as a Second Language, schools and organizations must meet several criteria. A formal school must be established with a program director, at least one paid teacher and secretary, and an agent whose job it is to enroll students (Commissioners Regulation: Part 126). Schools are also required to submit a detailed curriculum for each academic level that must be approved by a state committee before the start

of the planned school year (Commissioners Regulation: Part 126). Programs are not required to be certified however, and there are few regulations legally required by the state for uncertified schools or programs (Commissioners Regulation: Part 126). The benefits to certification include being able to apply for state and federal financial aid and being counted as an approved ESL school for refugees seeking greater aid from the government themselves. Since ESL schools are not required to accept federal or state grants to provide services to refugees, like community outreach organizations, those who choose not to accept them are not bound by the 90 day enrollment limit and thus are able to teach refugees for as long as they see fit to do so. English as a Second Language programs for children do not generally receive the same attention by NGO's because children are provided special lessons in English through public schools which are geared towards teaching the child English proficiency.

Non-governmental organizations and community groups first identified the need for adult English and a Second Language programs soon after the first wave of Vietnamese refugees in the 1960's. For this reason, some provisions for adult ESL programs were included in the 1960's Educational Act (Belzer 2, 2006: 110). The lack of regulations on adult education or ESL programs afforded ESL school the freedom to adjust curriculum as necessary, though many programs chose to emphasize teaching the English skills necessary to become self-sufficient (Murray, 2005: 68). In 1998, however, the federal government passed the Workforce Investment Act which provided incentives in the form of financial grants to ESL schools that utilized a curriculum focusing on competency based models in order to teach adult refugees the English skills they would need to gain employment (Murray, 2005: 69). This shift in policy was meant to provide adult refugees with the services they need to ensure they are able to gain employment soon after their arrival and then financial self-sufficiency in accordance to the goals of the Office

of Refugee Resettlement. This policy is also largely based on the ideology that English proficiency is the key to achieving these goals and integrating into American society (Warriner, 2007: 344). As Warriner explains, mainstream American ideology views English proficiency as a reflection of nationalism and patriotism as well as a sense of belonging to the larger American society (2007: 345). By gaining proficiency in English, it is believed adult refugees will gain acceptance by their new community and be able to secure a well-paying job and create new social bonds with their English speaking neighbors

The Workforce Investment Act, while intended to ensure refugees are able to acquire the level of English proficiency necessary to secure a job, has created several challenges within ESL programs. Since the Workforce Investment Act is largely focused on entry level employment rather than ensuring a long term stable career, ESL programs have altered their curriculum to match this vision and ensure continued financial assistance from the government. The most common curriculums utilized by ESL programs are known as competency based and survival English. Competency based curricula emphasizes job related vocabulary and similar topics such as how to fill out forms, call in sick from work, and develop listening skills to take direction (Murray, 2005: 69). Programs that utilize this curriculum also often teach mandatory vocational classes in areas such as carpentry or manufacturing to ensure each individual has work experience prior to searching for a job (Murray, 2005: 69). While this curricula focuses on ensuring refugees are given the tools and knowledge necessary for rapid employment, this curricula and the agencies that utilize it more often promote entry-level low wage jobs and do not adequately prepare students to advance in their job and improve their income or achieve more prestigious forms of employment (Warriner, 2007: 355).

ESL programs are also well known for utilizing a curriculum known as Survival English, which emphasizes learning skills essential for functioning in the US society (Murray, 2005: 69). This curriculum, while meant to give refugees the skills they need to perform basic daily tasks and secure rapid employment, also results in the further marginalization of refugees by ignoring their lived experience in favor of teaching white middle-class values (Buttaro, 2001: 55). “What is labeled reality in the language classroom may not in fact be reality, but rather a construed idealistic portrayal” of adult refugee life and their rapid integration into American society (Buttaro, 2001:55). Failure to address the difficult circumstances refugees face such as communication issues, the inability to create social connections with English speaking neighbors, and the inability to advance in the workforce because of a lack of English proficiency, invalidates their experiences and places a high value on the American middle-class “values, culture, and financial status” perpetuated through ESL curriculum (Buttaro, 2001:55).

With the ideological emphasis on English proficiency as the key to becoming a member of American society, Erickson identified the phenomena of teachers crafting ‘worthy citizens’ when teaching adult refugees English as a Second Language as one of the hidden agendas of curricula (2012: 167). This idea was developed in the 1970’s to mean “an individual’s responsibility to decrease her burden on the state, especially the welfare state” (Erickson, 2012: 167). Ideally this would include “social citizenship” or accessing education and welfare and “economic citizenship” which create a “relationship between an individual, employment, and consumerism” (Erickson, 2012: 167). While this discourse provides a theoretical structure for refugees to become self-sufficient and embrace the American ideology of independence, “refugees... are marginalized in the discourse of citizenship that stress economic self-sufficiency and paid labor” as a result of their inadequate English skills and lack of previous education,

preventing them from being fully accepted as worthy citizens (Erickson, 2012: 167). Therefore, although the prevailing ideology views learning English as the key to gaining membership to American society, because adult refugees are not taught proficient oral or literary English in favor of job related vocabulary and vocational skills, refugees are forced into low-wage employment with little hope of advancement resulting in marginalization from the wider American society (Warriner, 2007: 355). Furthermore, without easy access to the education and social support necessary to perform daily functions in American society refugees are denied the ability to acquire the knowledge and skills to achieve the status of worthy citizen and gain membership improving their perceived social status among Americans.

Refugees are often excluded from membership in American society when people view them as outsiders who are less worthy than native-born citizens. Paradoxically, however, such exclusion can also be reinforced through understaffed and underfunded ESL programs which focus their lessons on competency-based curricula. The competency-based curriculum is often chosen because of the belief that it will help refugees find employment, but this program of study is also very limited and often means that refugees do not gain literacy skills or the ability to succeed in the language. Ultimately, this limits their further integration into the larger society. The poor quality of education available to adult refugees often results in some choosing to repeat a program multiple times in the hopes that they will gradually improve their English skills (Tshabangu-Sioko and Caron, 2011: 421). A more common result of the poor quality of ESL programs is the continued dependence of refugees on interpreters to communicate with English speakers and the federal government to provide financial assistance when unable to secure a job (Tshabangu-Sioko and Caron, 2011: 421).

Although there are many adverse effects of adult refugee education as a result of past legislation and society's attitude towards refugees, resettlement programs and refugee agencies do play a vital role in aiding refugee adult and children adjust to their new environment. Refugees are taught common American cultural norms, how to access assistance from the federal and state governments, and given stipends for food and housing (Cannady, 2011: 30). Without this assistance most refugees, forced to leave their belonging and wealth as they fled their native country, would not have the resources, language skills, or jobs training necessary to integrate into American society after their resettlement.

Recently, a growing number of anthropologists have shifted their focus from refugee adjustment to research on the agencies that provide the vital services necessary for their integration into American society. This research has begun to recognize the many political, financial, and structural challenges these organizations face when trying to balance the demands of the federal and state government and the needs of the refugees they serve. Arguably, nearly all challenges faced by refugee and resettlement agencies are the result of the two driving forces of the resettlement process; the goals provided by the federal government which all organizations receiving federal and state financial assistance must meet and the lack of funds allocated to non-governmental organizations. These factors result in the dependency of agencies on unqualified volunteers to staff their programs, including ESL programs, due to limited funding for the recruitment and training of staff as well as miscommunication between teachers and students about the goals of the program projected through the mandated curriculum.

Wu and Cater define a volunteer is "a person who performs a service by free choice" (2002: 17). Many volunteers at refugee agencies are assigned to be tutors in English as a Second Language programs to provide one-on-one assistance with adult refugees while others may be

teachers of a class or staff different programs to provide other essential services. It is important to note that when surveyed in the 1980's "about half [of the refugee organizations surveyed] used volunteers in school-based programs, while nearly all of the community-based programs used volunteers" to staff their programs (Wu and Carter, 2002:17). Similarly, a more recent study by the US Department of Education found that in 2000, "nationally, 42% of instructional staff in programs that receive federal funding is volunteer (Belzer, 2006: 112). These volunteers play a critical role in how refugee clients come to understand American society and culture. It is well established by anthropologists and educators alike that volunteers and others who interact with newly arrived refugees consciously and unconsciously transmit their individual ideologies and behaviors to the refugees they teach (Erickson, 2012: 167). With time refugees begin to accept and internalize these values believing they reflect the wider American ideology rather than those of the individual volunteer. Despite the impact volunteers have on how refugees view American ideology and lifestyle, volunteers are rarely given training to teach them how to interact with refugees and are rarely held accountable by the organization to monitor their time, behavior, and interactions with refugees (Erickson, 2012: 174).

In a study of two social service organizations in Fargo, North Dakota, Erickson found that due to the lack of accountability measures enforced by the organizations, volunteers consciously and unconsciously influence how refugees understand American life and citizenship (2012:167). Erickson volunteered at Lutheran Social Services and the Giving+Learning Program between 2007 and 2008, during which she conducted participant observation and dozens of interviews with staff, volunteers, and refugees while tutoring English and performing various jobs for staff (Erickson, 2012:168-169). While volunteers were required to report the time they spent working with refugees and pass rigorous background checks, they were not required to

document their interactions with refugees (Erickson, 2012:169). Neither program provided volunteers with training to ensure they could properly perform their designated tasks while both rely heavily on young adults from local universities and the elderly living in housing communities to staff their programs (Erickson, 2012:169). This lack of accountability to staff allowed volunteers the freedom to impart to their clients the values and behaviors which they felt were important in a worthy American citizen and also reinforce or dismiss power relations. While some volunteers like Mary Jane challenged dominant cultural norms like gender rolls others “demonstrated fear, racism, and prejudice against refugees, as well as a strong sense of paternalism” (Erickson, 2012: 171). Gordon for example, “demonstrated... a need to ‘teach’ refugees rather than collaborate with or learn from them” and incorporated practical lessons in his interactions with clients such as how to dress, how to use a bank, and to sit in chairs rather than on the floor (Erickson, 2012: 174).

While the ideologies and values introduced and reinforced by volunteers is often a benign transference of daily practices, speech patterns, and dress, when considering the importance of teachers in the lives of refugees, this phenomena has the potential to indoctrinate ideologies and values that have a negative impact on an adults self-image. Because teachers specifically are typically expected to serve as role models by their students, volunteers working as tutors or teachers inherently hold a position of power and can greatly influence their student’s self-confidence and desire to integrate into American society. By monitoring the teacher-student relationship through accountability measures like time logs and supervision, refugee agencies are better able to address any potentially harmful relationships and better prepare the student to integrate into American society.

If volunteers hold a negative opinion of refugees as a result of their immigration status, ethnicity, or religion, refugees may then experience what Morrice (2012) describes as a process of “informal moral education” (2012:16). This informal moral education occurs when refugees internalize a negative view of themselves as a result of popular discourse or when confronted with an ideology that views them as negative by a person who holds a position of power. To combat this unbalanced relationship and transference of negative ideologies, many refugee agencies have established training programs for volunteer teachers and tutors. The goal of these programs are usually to prepare volunteers to teach adult refugees who have has little education as well as teach them how to create “an environment that fosters self-esteem and an interest in learning” (Buttaro, 2001:53). Without the funding to hire qualified teachers however, programs must find ways to train their volunteers how to effectively teach material and foster confidence in their students in hopes that program completion will result in student’s successful achievement of independence.

Ideally, volunteer training programs provide cultural information about the background of the program’s typical students, establish clear teaching goals for each class, and instruct volunteers in the methods with which to achieve these goals. Despite their good intention however, the literature suggests such training programs are more often than not ineffective in making volunteers feel prepared. Perry and Heart (2012) examined four organizations in a southeastern US city “that provide most of the ESL and illiteracy education to local refugees” to identify “local educators’ perceptions of their preparation to teach refugees” (Perry, 2012:110-112). Two programs, Literacy Action and Grassroots Literacy, rely on volunteers and offered an average of thirteen hours of training; one, RR, utilizes volunteers but offered no training; and another, Meadowbrook Community College, hires trained instructors and offered time for professional

development (Perry and Heart, 2012: 112). The authors found that despite training or a background in teaching, all respondents felt unprepared to teach adult English learners “particularly when these learners were refugees with limited prior schooling and/or limited literacy skills” (Perry and Heart, 2012: 119). Problems reported by the volunteers included the short length of the training program, the need for guidance in how to use the methods taught to them, and the lack of materials in the form of lesson plans and a clear curriculum guidelines. They also felt the need for greater access to mentors and other teachers to exchange strategies and suggestions (Perry and Heart, 2012: 118-119). Although such attitudes may be a common experience as volunteers transition from being students themselves to becoming teachers, the resulting anxieties may influence how teachers view their students and the methods they choose to utilize in the classroom.

Although the anxiety of new volunteers may seem a trivial matter to the administrators dealing with underfunded programs, recent literature suggests that the level of engagement and perceived motivation of teachers by students greatly influences the desire of students to learn. In a 2011 study of 280 students at three ESL levels studying at an English Language center adjoined to Bond University, Matsumoto found that beginning students were greatly influenced by their teachers desire to teach and while this influence diminished with time, teachers motivation remained influential in students motivation to learn (2011: 41-48). Teacher personality was found to be the most important motivating factor for students to attend class at the elementary level because of their inability to communicate with a shared language and their heavy reliance on non-verbal cues from their teacher (Matsumoto:2011: 44). While the importance of the teacher’s personality declines as a student’s level of English proficiency

improves, intermediate and advanced students still rate teacher motivation as an important factor in their own desire to learn (Matsumoto: 2011: 45).

Another clear consequence of federal learning objectives on adult refugee ESL education is miscommunication of learning goals between teachers and students. As the federal government's goal for refugee resettlement is for adult refugees to rapidly gain independence by learning Basic English and securing a job, many refugees' personal learning goals are often overlooked by ESL programs. Goals such as learning English to make friends or help children with homework may never be addressed by government approved curricula leaving students frustrated and unmotivated to attend class. Schalge and Soga (2004) conducted a study to identify reasons for student absenteeism at an ESL program at a community center in southern Minnesota. The authors conducted participant observation with students and teachers in the four educational levels of Roosevelt's program between January and May (Schalge and Soga, 2008: 153). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with students, teacher, and administrators "regarding their experiences with and expectations of the ESL program sampling students from those who experienced the most absenteeism to better understand why they were so absent (Schalge and Soga, 2008: 153-154). They found the two main reasons for absenteeism to be different expectations for the structure and content of the class between students and teachers as well as the excessively flexible curriculum, which lead to "divergent perspectives of teachers, students, and program administrators" (Schalge and Soga, 2008:151-156).

Conflict between student and teacher expectations for class format and conduct was found to be a key factor in student absenteeism (Schalge, and Soga, 2008: 158). Formal education in the Western tradition takes the 'communicative approach' based on active learning through small group activities and games while countries who have not adopted the Western

educational tradition typically utilize the ‘teacher centered approach’ emphasizing teachers as authoritative experts who instruct students with vocabulary lists and grammar (Schalge and Soga, 2008:158). As a result, many refugees become frustrated when there is disconnect between what they expect to experience in the classroom and how their American teacher has been trained to teach. In this study students identified becoming frustrated when they did not receive adequate help during class. The slow pace of the curriculum, moreover, resulted in boredom and a decreased motivation to attend (Schalge and Soga, 2008: 155). Teachers, on the other hand, believed their students stopped attending classes due to outside factors such as medical engagements, conflicts with jobs, and lack of child care (Schalge and Soga, 2008: 155). Schalge and Soga explained this discrepancy is likely caused by teachers and administrators “reluctance to critically assess their curricula and teaching styles” (Schalge and Soga, 2008: 156).

The second issue identified by Schalge and Soga that factors into miscommunication between students and teachers is the excessively fluid curricula utilized by many ESL programs. As a result of the federal governments funding policy which is based on annual total attendance, Roosevelt like many other ESL programs adopted an open-door policy which increases their annual total attendance (Schalge and Soga, 2008: 156). Under this policy students may enroll at any time during the year and join existing classes that fit their current English proficiency level. While this policy maximizes the number of students who attend each year, the stream of students coming and going at all times through the year makes it difficult for teachers to establish a structured curriculum with specific objectives for students (Schalge and Soga, 2008: 156). A fluid curriculum allows teachers to adjust their methods and activities to meet the needs of current and new students much easier than a utilizing a structured curriculum which would require the creation of new classes each time a new influx of students arrived.

The result of this fluidity on the students, however, can be very negative as many students in Schalge and Soga's study cited confusion about subject matter taught and miscommunication between students and teachers over the purpose of the program (2008: 157-158). When asked what they have learned in the last year, students were unable to identify clear topics and complained that they did not understand how certain class activities were supposed to prepare them for employment (Schalge and Soga, 2008: 158-159). If teachers are not trained to clearly communicate to their students how the activities and learning topics relate to the students' personal objectives, students will be less motivated to continue attending ESL classes and formally improving their English language skills. Clear communication also requires that teachers have an understanding of their students' objectives and learning goals so that they do not rely solely on the goals provided by their organization or the refugee resettlement program.

Anthropologists and educators have extensively documented that while the refugee resettlement programs require organizations to adhere to a specific set of learning goals and outcomes, the personal goals of refugees are often very different. While the government and the ESL programs they fund emphasize teaching students to become financially independent by preparing them for low-wage employment, refugees often cite more social reasons for their attendance that are often overlooked by ESL programs. The desire to help children with homework is often noted as well as making friends with their English speaking neighbors and co-workers, gaining independence by not requiring an interpreter and seeking further education are common reasons for attending ESL lessons (Lambert, 2008, Buttaro, 2001:51).

In her study to develop and pilot a new survey to better understand adult refugee students, Lambert began by interviewing fourteen "adult immigrants' enrolled in [two] community and workplace-based ESL programs" (Lambert, 2008: 163-164). The semi-structured interviews

focused on “their goals and definitions of success in learning English, views of themselves as ESL learners and users, and beliefs about successful ESL learning” (Lambert, 2008: 164). These interviews were then used to create a 68-item questionnaire which was administered to 35 adult ESL learners at community-based and workplace ESL programs (Lambert, 2008: 164). The students interviewed reported a variety of short and long term goals for learning English; these included the desire of refugees to be able to talk with their children’s teachers, to be informed about local and global news, to get better jobs, to make friends, and to learn more about American people and culture (Lambert, 2008: 166). Lambert also found that students reported that the ability to secure a good job, to do everything in English, to no longer make mistakes speaking English, or to have others view them as native speakers as the key identifiers of successful language acquisition(Lambert, 2008: 168). Participants also indicated they had a high degree of anxiety about using their English skills with Americans or native speakers for fear of rejection or ridicule (Lambert, 2008: 169-170).

It is often assumed that the recognition of differences between the goals of teachers and students is enough to prompt change but often explicit actions are required.to increase the chance of English being acquired in the time frame allotted by the government. In her study of 8 Hispanic women residing in the Bronx, New York, Buttaro (2001) recommends ESL programs establish common goals between teachers and students before program initiation. She argues that “adults learn best and remain in programs longest when they participate in establishing their own educational goals” (Buttaro, 2001: 56). Therefore, programs that are more attuned to the motivations and learning goals of their students are more likely to retain students long term increasing the chance students will achieve a level of English proficiency necessary to

successfully integrate themselves into American society and gain financial and social independence.

Much of the literature reviewed highlight problems with ESL programs. Less attention has been devoted to uncovering practices that are effective in helping refugees acquire English skills. Wu and Carter's study of a community ESL program in Princeton, New Jersey, is one exception to this deficit. They studied the YWCA in Princeton, which utilizes a large number of volunteers to staff their services and interact with ESL students (Wu and Carter, 2000: 16). To assess the preparation of volunteers at YWCA Princeton, Wu and Cater conducted a survey with 78 volunteers (2000: 17). They found that while the program does not offer specialized training for their volunteers, volunteers' prior educational experience helps them feel prepared to work effectively with refugees (Wu and Carter, 2000: 17). This program requires all volunteers to hold a bachelor's degree, are carefully screened for compatibility with the program, and are then placed with a student or class best suited to their skills (Wu and Cater, 2000: 17). As a result of the program's recruitment policy and the feeling among volunteers of a sense of inclusion, the majority of volunteers are well-educated women who remain in service for a long period of time, with one quarter having worked at the organization for three or more years (Wu and Carter, 2000: 17). Volunteers are often well traveled and come from a variety of educational fields and the many are teachers or have teaching experience (Wu and Carter, 2000: 18). There are also a large number of volunteers who are English as a Second Language learners themselves and "are very dedicated because they've been through it all before" (Wu and Carter, 2000: 18). This exceptional number of well-educated volunteers is a direct result of the organizations careful screening of candidates prior to volunteering (Wu and Carter, 2000: 17). Their research suggests that careful attention to screening criteria can improve the quality of volunteers.

On the other hand, while most programs offer an average of 13 hours of training for new recruits,” less than half the respondents working for the YWCA in Princeton attended training sessions before they started volunteering (Wu and Carter, 2000: 18). Instead, volunteers choose to attend workshops offered each year that ranged in topics from cultural material related to their students’ backgrounds or techniques to improve teaching methods and better connect with students (Wu and Carter, 2000: 18). What appears most effective in creating a successful learning and teaching environment however, is the program’s commitment to including volunteers in the structure and maintenance of the program as a whole (Wu and Carter, 2000: 18). Wu and Carter suggest that through supervision of volunteers by staff, volunteers are able to and feel comfortable sharing both their frustrations and ideas for improvement with the administration (Wu and Carter, 2000: 18). Therefore, what may be most important in creating a positive environment for volunteers and students is “making them [volunteers] feel important and valued while maximizing their abilities by using them in small groups as well as one-on-one tutoring” (Wu and Carter, 2000: 18). In this way, volunteers will not feel overwhelmed by having to teach an entire class and have the support and flexibility to make changes to their personal methods to better meet their students’ needs as they see fit.

Wu and Carter specifically recommend that ESL programs encourage professionalism and appoint directors who can balance independence with close relationships with volunteers and staff, supervise volunteers and screen potential candidates to ensure their motivations to teach, match volunteers with students, create a friendly atmosphere ”where volunteers feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, and provide flexible scheduling options to volunteers to ensure a long term commitment (Wu and Carter, 2000: 19). Their research demonstrates that an understanding of student motivations to learn English, the creation of an organized timeline, and the careful

screening volunteers prior to their contact with students, can enable ESL programs to provide students with a sense of ownership over their education and greatly increase the likelihood of their long-term involvement in English lessons. For many community based organizations like Mary's place, however, these objectives cannot be undertaken without additional funding and certification regulations as well more effective curricula being provided by the Office of Refugee Resettlement or by equivalent state agencies.

History and Services

Mary's Place Outreach is a non-profit organization that aims to provide the goods and services necessary to improve the quality of refugee's resettlement process to the Rochester area. No state or federal aid is accepted by Mary's Place due to the legal constraints placed on distribution of services and no member of staff or volunteer receives financial incentives to participate in the workings of Mary's Place. Mary's Place is run solely on the goodwill of beneficiaries and small donations to financially support the organization as well as individuals who volunteer their time to organize and implement all current programs. Volunteers are drawn from throughout the city of Rochester and beyond including members of the Maplewood/Edgerton community, high school and college students performing their service requirement, as well as interns from out of state Universities. The organization is overseen by the director, Kathy LeBue and the Board of Directors with assistance from the assistant director, Cara Breslin.

Founder and director Kathy LeBue established Mary's Place Outreach on January 24th, 2009 in Rochester, New York. Prior to opening, Ms LeBue, fueled by her ministry, hoped to

volunteer her time improving relations between the community of Rochester and the Catholic Church. She chose to focus her efforts on refugees when, in the winter of 2008, she observed newly arrived refugees in her community lacking proper winter gear and clothing (Articles). Working with co-founders Sharon and Bill Swartz and Father John Loncle she contacted established refugee agencies in the area to learn more about the unique needs of the growing refugee population and collected donations of winter coats and boots to distribute (Articles). The Cathedral Community, the local Catholic community group, provided housing in an abandoned rectory of the Holy Rosary Church and volunteers were recruited from local Catholic and interfaith parishioners (Articles). They spread word about their organization throughout the community and three weeks after opening refugees began to arrive (Articles). In 2013, Mary's Place moved into the restored Holy Rosary Church allowing Ms. LeBue to expand services and programs to better meet the needs of refugee adults and children from all over the city of Rochester. The mission of Mary's Places Outreach "is to reach out in love, hope, and service to refugees of all faiths and nationalities, especially those in the Maplewood/Edgerton neighborhood" (Mary's Place). To achieve this, Mary's Place has established several programs open to all refugees aimed at alleviating any unnecessary financial, social, or legal burdens that face refugees as they adjust to their new community.

Currently Mary's Place Outreach runs several programs aimed at providing a safe environment for refugees to relax, promoting education among all age groups, and distributing needed food and goods. Programs are offered throughout the day with adult programs early in the afternoon and children's programs beginning after school. Adult programs include translation services, caseworker advocacy, application assistance, English as a Second Language classes, and food and clothing distribution. Children's programs vary depending on the school year and

include tutoring, after school care, fieldtrips to local museums and cultural sites, and summer camp. Mary's Place Outreach opens its doors to clients five days a week beginning at noon. It is not uncommon however, to find ten to thirty refugees waiting outside an hour before to exchange hand made goods, discuss familial or work problems, or play games. For adults and children, Mary's Place has become a social environment that allows them to reconnect with friends, seek counsel from friends and family, and feel comfortable expressing their culture. The most popular services at Mary's Place are caseworker advocacy and distribution of food and goods.

Caseworkers take on several roles at Mary's Place such as advocate, teacher, and mediator for adult refugees. There are currently three caseworkers available for consultations and one caseworker dedicated to assisting refugees applying for green cards. Nearly all of these volunteers have been drawn from a local Baptist Church and have few or no educational credentials to act as social workers. The lack of credentials can become problematic when addressing medical or legal issues but are otherwise not an impediment for daily services at Mary's Place.

To gain access to caseworkers, a sign up sheet is available at the front of the building and seating is offered in two locations. Service hours begin each day at noon and last four hours with each caseworker typically seeing between ten and fifty clients. Common tasks caseworkers assist with include reading and explaining mail, teaching clients how to pay bills, locating an affordable place of residence, and helping adults and teens search for jobs. While refugees are provided information about daily life in the US through mandatory cultural orientations, many refugees find themselves unprepared to navigate the bureaucracies that dictate the American lifestyle. Therefore, in addition to assisting with refugee's daily needs, caseworkers also act as advocate and mediator when legal and medical issues arise.

As refugees fleeing a dangerous environment, many adults and children arrive in the United States with serious health concerns. To ensure refugees are healthy, the federal government requires all refugees are tested for specific illnesses (Immigrant Health CDC). These tests may result in the immediate treatment of an illness such as Tuberculosis or may require more long-term intensive care such as diagnosis with cancer or diabetes. Language and cultural barriers may prevent refugees from understanding the necessity of the treatments or how to administer the proper medications. Although hospitals are required to have translators available to communicate all necessary information, refugees may be embarrassed to interact with a stranger (Lambert, 2008:166). Many facing these concerns choose to seek assistance at Mary's Place where caseworkers act as a medical advocate to gather all necessary information on behalf of their client. Translators employed or interning at Mary's Place are then used to communicate any complicated information and allow refugees to ask questions they otherwise would not be able to communicate. Most importantly, caseworkers help their clients feel secure in their understanding of their medical issues and ensure clients understand the severity and requirements of their conditions.

Similarly, caseworkers may also act as mediator between clients or between a client and an American to clarify misunderstandings or problem solve issues. Situations requiring this role may include disputes between friends or issues with landlords and utilities. In these moments caseworkers may simply listen to both sides and encourage clients talk through their problems or if dealing with landlords, advocate on behalf of their client and establish measures to solve the issue.

Donation service is another popular program offered by Mary's Place and occurs two days a week. Food is distributed on Tuesdays and clothing and household goods are distributed

Thursdays. Food, clothing, and household goods are accepted weekdays and brought directly to Mary's Place by community members. Household goods are the most common type of donation from community members and can include baby cribs, chairs and tables, and clothes. These goods are then sorted through prior to donations to pull out pieces that may be needed by a specific family. Priority goes to newly arrived refugees who have spoken to the director about their needs and large families. Distribution takes place at the front of the church, in what was the narthex, separating it from the quieter activities inside Mary's Place.

Mary's Place also works with other non-profits in the city of Rochester to collect foodstuffs and less common household items. Mary's Place receives a large percentage of their food donations from FoodLink Inc., a local food bank that collects unwanted goods from grocery stores and individuals. FoodLink Inc. then redistributes the food to non-profit organizations such as Mary's Place, throughout the county to ensure those who are in the most need have access to necessary food items. Mary's Place typically receives sandwich bread well as every day canned and boxed goods, fresh fruits and vegetables, and sweet treats or snacks for children. What is not taken by refugees is then either placed in storage for the next distribution or given to large families. Foods not commonly eaten by refugee clients but still provided by Foodlink or other donations, such as bread, is made available to the surrounding community after distribution and placed outside. In this way, and others, Mary's Place also strives to meet the growing needs of the local community of the Maplewood/Edgerton neighborhoods and bridge the social gap between refugees and local Americans.

As caseworkers and donations can attract anywhere from twenty to seventy clients each day, the English as a Second Language program was created to minimize congestion in the available waiting areas. The English as a Second Language (ESL) program was first established

in 2011 and consisted of a single class of adults who were interested in improving their English skills. By the start of my internship in 2013, the ESL program was split into two classes and run entirely by long-term volunteers. A long-term volunteer means anyone who volunteers consistently for more than two weeks and has become committed to the success of Mary's Place's mission. Short-term volunteers, typically school aged children or college students, are also utilized in ESL classes to provide one-on-one assistance to students and facilitate learning activities. Classes take place every afternoon between 12:30 and 1:50 with a short break to relax. Attendance is voluntary but strongly encouraged by the director and assistant director to ensure refugees have privacy during their meetings with caseworkers and keep the noise level down. As the program is still in its infancy, the structure of the program is very informal and affords a high level of freedom to both the teachers and students during class. The current goal of the adult ESL class is to give students a basic understanding of English so they are able to enroll in certified programs that will teach them advanced reading and speaking skills.

Since Mary's Place is a new organization, staff members and volunteers are in the process of establishing a curriculum and process of evaluation for students. The current curriculum is based on recommendations made in "Survival English: English Conversations" by Lee Monsteller and Bobbi Paul. Teachers are also encouraged to report any alterations they believe should be made as they discover the material is either too difficult or too basic for students. This means that although there is an established lesson plan for each class, staff members are able to alter everything from the structure of the class to the style of teaching as they see necessary. New volunteers also participate in a small training course in which they observe a current ESL teacher and participate in their class to learn how others choose to communicate and organize the class.

Classes are broken up into two levels: beginner and intermediate. The Beginner class is the largest with anywhere from 15 to 30 students consistently attending each day. Students also ranged in age from about nineteen to fifty-five and students represent several ethnicities such as Karen, Karenni, Bhutanese with some from the Central African Republic. Materials covered in this class include an introduction to writing and reading and basic vocabulary relating to emotions, body parts, and occupations. The class is focused on the needs of beginner students; however, several advanced students chose to remain in this class to be with family or friends. During my internship, the beginner class was taught by two volunteers, a Work Experience Program (WEP) worker who had taught for nearly a year, and a retired elementary special needs teacher. The class is located in the back of the building and has only two large tables for students to sit. A small white board and large calendar is used to provide visual aids and the teachers frequently utilize flashcards and props to enhance communication and understanding.

The intermediate class is held in a separate more enclosed location. The number of students in attendance ranged anywhere from five to thirty and ranged in age from seventeen to 68. Students in this class are primarily Bhutanese, Karen, and Karenni. Prior to my internship, two long-term volunteers taught this class and alternated days of teaching. Previous volunteers chose to draw on a wide range of material including; expanded vocabulary words, prepositions and conjunctions, and American history lessons. During my internship, these lessons also included encouraging students to generate their own sentences and teaching lessons on common American behaviors. To facilitate learning, a large white board was at the front of the room and paper and pencils were provided to all students who did not bring their own. Worksheets were utilized to communicate new vocabulary and students copied words and phrases from the board onto their provided notebook to study on their own.

As attendance at the ESL classes has been steadily growing over the last two years, the assistant director has become interested in seeking state certification for the program. By achieving certification of the ESL program at Mary's Place, the administration will be able to seek funding and support for materials, curricula, and experienced staff. This will enhance the current program by ensuring teachers are better equipped to meet the unique learning needs of adult refugees. This will in turn help refugees secure a long-term job and create greater social ties to the larger Rochester community.

Prior to arriving in the United States, refugees from Bhutan and Myanmar have experienced a varying degree of education that greatly influences their ability to learn English in a classroom setting after resettlement. Refugees from Bhutan are ethnic Nepali who fled to Nepal in the early and mid-1990's after the Bhutanese government revoked their ability to apply for citizenship. The 1985 Citizen Act and the One-Nation-One People policy adopted in 1989 effectively excluded ethnic Nepali from public school opportunities (Walcott, 2011: 257, Brown, 2001: 130). After a violent protest in southern Bhutan, many ethnic Nepali fled to neighboring Nepal to seek refuge from the increasing persecution.

Nepal has seven refugee camps established to contain Bhutanese refugees (Brown, 2001: 124). In 2012, these camps contained about 100,000 refugees of which 56,710 are Bhutanese refugees (Brown, 2001:124, UNHCR, 2013). Of the Bhutanese refugees, about half are under the age of 18 and require some form of schooling (Brown, 2001: 128). Schools were created for children and young adults soon after arrival in Nepal by the Bhutanese Refugee Education Coordinating Center and later taken over by Carits, an international non-profit, which implements the program and the UNHCR which provides administrative support (Brown, 2001: 128). There are nine schools spread throughout the camps that offer primary and secondary

school to 40,204 enrolled students (Brown, 2001:130). These schools are recognized by the government of Nepal and the curriculum follows a mixture of the Bhutanese and Nepali schooling system (Brown, 2001: 131). English is taught as a core class in primary school with optional English classes available in Secondary school (Brown, 2001: 131). This indicates that children who attend camp schools should arrive in the United States with a basic understanding of the English language. The same is not always true for older adults who were denied the same level of education in Bhutan and these adults may struggle to learn English after their arrival to the United States.

Similar educational opportunities exist for refugees who have fled Myanmar to Thailand. Since the 1960's, the Burmese government has been actively persecuting ethnic Karen, Karenni, and Shan (Oh, 2010: 2). In 1984, individuals from these ethnicities began fleeing Myanmar for neighboring Thailand in response to growing government aggression and established nine refugee camps throughout the last two decades (Oh, 2008:590). It is estimated that about 154,000 people currently reside in the refugee camps and "at least 1.5 million are dispersed along the border areas" (Blanchard, 2010:1). Refugees in Thailand are not given legal status by the Thai government, are secluded within the camps, and prevented from accessing legal work or Thai education (Blanchard, 2010:1).

Schooling is offered to children in all camps and is organized either by the Karen Education Department or the Karenni Education Department (Oh, 2008: 590). Implementation and funding is assisted by outside NGO's but little guidance is offered by the UNHCR (Oh, 2008: 590). In 2010, there were 81 schools distributed throughout the nine camps with primary, secondary, vocational, and adult programs available to all refugees and staffed entirely by camp residents (Oh, 2010:2). These schools are estimated to meet the needs of about 34,000 students

(Oh, 2010: 2). As the government of Myanmar only offers education in the Burmese language most ethnic minorities such as the Karen, Karenni, and Shan are excluded from education or forced to learn Burmese (Oh, 2008: 593). For many children, schools organized by the Karen Education Department or the Karenni Education Department is their first exposure to formal education.

While camp schools are available to all refugee children, access to education continues to be a struggle for ethnic groups that not strongly represented in the camps. The majority of classes are taught in Pwo Karen, Karenni, or Burmese and may exclude Shaw Karen or Shan students who have difficulty learning a new language after enrollment (Oh, 2008: 607). English is taught to children and adults throughout school or special adult programs, however unlike the Bhutanese refugee camps, refugees in Thai camps are expected to pay between US \$1.20-3.70 for school each year (Oh, 2010:8). This fee is meant to cover the cost of paper, pencils, and printing workbooks (Oh, 2010: 8). This fee can be extremely burdensome on families that are not able to seek work through legal routes leading parents to either keep some children out of school or seek illegal means of income to meet this requirement (Oh, 2010:8). Therefore, while education is widely available to Karen and Karenni children the financial requirements and language barriers may prevent many children from attending school or continuing their education (Oh, 2010:9, Oh, 2008: 607). This indicates the degree of educational background can vary significantly among refugees from Myanmar and can make transitioning into English language programs in the United States difficult for some.

Mary's Place also offers several programs for children after school and at the completion of donations and ESL classes. Due to the proximity of Mary's Place to several local schools and many refugees' homes, many children walk to the building after school while others are bused to

Mary's Place by volunteers. Children's programs include after school tutoring with an emphasis on literacy and math, a weekly art and music therapy session run by volunteers from Nazareth College, and weekly fieldtrips to local museums and landmarks. Summer programs also organized by volunteers from Nazareth College, are aimed at keeping school aged children occupied and interested in learning. Pre-school classes are also offered for children between the ages of 3 and 5. These classes are available to all parents who are attending ESL classes or waiting to see a caseworker.

Mary's Place Outreach offers several programs and services to both children and adults with the hope of alleviating some of the many challenges that arise during the resettlement process. All these programs, from adult ESL classes to food donations, have been carefully chosen to provide refugees with the tools and support they need to effectively adjust to their new community and create a nurturing environment. With the support and knowledge they gain from services at Mary's Place Outreach, refugees in the Rochester area will continue to thrive, contributing to the community and successfully adapting to the American lifestyle.

My Role at Mary's Place

The internship contract I negotiated with Mary's Place specified that my responsibilities would include:

- To observe ESL classes and talk with teachers to learn current methods employed by volunteers
- To teach ESL to adults and children on both class and individual basis

- To research requirements for New York State certification of ESL classes and if possible suggest ways that the current programs could be modified to meet certification requirements
- To contact certified programs to discuss areas of improvement
- To assist with tutoring children and tracking the progress of math and reading levels
- To assist with planning children's activities and fieldtrips and clerical work as needed including Green Card applications
- If possible, to interview staff and volunteers about the perceived challenges involved with meeting the needs of refugees as well as barriers faced by refugees as they adjust to life in Rochester
- If possible, to talk with refugee parents and children about their perceptions of the need for ESL programs and their satisfaction with current programs offered at Mary's Place

Because my focus was to examine and participate in their newly established English as a Second Language program, my supervisor asked that I perform two roles that would allow me to participate in every level of this program. My primary role was as an ESL teacher for the adult intermediate class, which provided me with the opportunity to both observe the ESL classes and access students, materials, and volunteers. As part of my teaching role, I was also expected to identify issues within the current structure of the ESL program and implement any changes that would enhance the ability of volunteer instructors to meet students' needs. My supervisor also assigned me to research the legal process required for Mary's Place to obtain state certification for their adult English as a Second Language Program. Finally, I assisted with other daily tasks as needed such as tutoring children after school, occupying children with games, and organizing donated material. While my daily tasks were numerous they provided me with the unique opportunity to observe and become involved with all aspects of Mary's Place Outreach and the

services the staff provides. As a result, I was better able to understand how my anthropological knowledge and skills can be applied to similar organizations.

While I had not originally intended to become directly involved with the ESL program at Mary's Place, my role as an ESL teacher proved vital to observing the many subtle layers of the intermediate ESL class. My main goals for my observations was to learn how the ESL program at Mary's Place meets the needs of its students as well as to identify any structural changes that could be made to enhance the effectiveness of the program. I relied heavily on participant observation and discussions with other volunteers to learn the basic functions of the ESL program as well as how to become an effective teacher. I was assigned to teach the intermediate ESL class four days a week in conjunction with another intern, a senior studying Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL) at Liberty University. Classes were a hour and a half each day with a short ten-minute break after the first 50 minutes. Students ranged in age from 17 to 68 and had a wide range of knowledge of the English language. Some students were beginners who joined the intermediate class to be with friends or family while others had already graduated from formal ESL programs and had a clear grasp of conversational English. The number of students in attendance during my internship ranged anywhere from seven to thirty

Approximately 80% of students in the intermediate class were ethnic Nepali from Bhutan. The remaining students were ethnic Karen, Karenni, or Burmese from Myanmar. Despite the large number of refugees served by Mary's Place originating from African nations, only one man from the Central African Republic attended any intermediate classes. On an average day at least three languages were represented among students: Nepali, Karen, and Karenni. As few volunteers, including myself, spoke these languages, translators were used to act as mediators during class, opening communication between students and teachers. Two

translators were assigned to assist my class: Eh Paw, a refugee from Myanmar who speaks English, Burmese, and Karen, and Tela, a refugee from Bhutan who speaks English and Nepalese.

As the ESL program is only two years old, few guidelines have been established to determine the goals and methods that regulate the selection of class materials, appropriate teaching methods, or curriculum. Participant observation as well as discussions with staff and volunteers proved crucial to gathering information I needed to identify the workings of the ESL program as well as the individual needs and desires of its students.

My daily tasks as an adult ESL teacher began by planning the day's lesson and weekly goals with the assistance of my co-worker. Together we organized all available teaching material, identified previous topics covered by other volunteers in the past by talking with students and staff, and researched learning activities and different methods of teaching to better meet the needs of our students. We began our experience by teaching together at the front of the classroom taking turns talking; however, I quickly identified the need to engage students individually to ensure everyone was able to understand the day's material. After this observation, we took turns teaching throughout the lesson as the other teacher assisted students individually by helping with writing assignments, clarifying material, and keeping student's attention on the lesson. While this individual assistance was meant to improve students' learning experiences, it also gave me the opportunity to better understand each refugee's perspective on the ESL class and his/her motivation to learn English. To better understand what material was most effective at the intermediate level, I also extensively researched other anthropologists' and educators' experiences teaching refugees. This material included new vocabulary, grammar, and lessons on sentence construction. Through this research and the observations I made during class, my co-

worker and I had students of different ethnicities sit together to encourage further use of English and introduced games to keep students attention. During this time I also had two occasions to observe another volunteer teach my class providing me with further information of the structure of the ESL program and volunteers' roles as teachers.

As I learned more about the administrative structure of the ESL program, I realized that I needed more information about the role of volunteers in the process. I spoke with six volunteers, including the director and assistant director, three volunteer teachers, and two caseworkers. I focused our conversations to learn about their goals for the ESL program, their motivations for volunteering, and their experiences performing their own role at Mary's Place. Through these discussions, several volunteers also chose to share their opinion of problematic administrative issues they had experience din the past, such as lack of administrative support and a lack of materials. Much of the information I gathered during these discussions was used to help guide my choice in teaching material and methods, as well as to better understand the workings of Mary's Place and the ESL program.

My other task at Mary's Place was to research the legal process of New York state certification of adult English as a Second Language programs (ESL) in New York State. I completed most of this work outside of my internship hours so as not to interfere with my opportunities for observation and teaching. I began by searching both the Internet and academic articles to identify which New York State agency regulates the maintenance and formation of adult ESL programs. Through this research I identified the state department that controls the establishment of ESL schools and cultivated a contact for Mary's Place to utilize as they prepare their application in the future. I then documented the requirements for state certification and

created a document highlighting the steps that the staff at Mary's Place would need to follow to apply for certification.

Although my overall goal for this internship was to observe the administrative structure of Mary's Place Outreach and the ESL program, my designated roles as teacher and researcher allowed me unique access to nearly every level of the nonprofit's operation.. I was able to combine the legal research I located for state certification with the observations I made and collected from others during my work as a teacher to create a report for my supervisor about the ESL program. The report focused on the legal provision required for state certification of the ESL program and included several recommendations for improvements that can be made to the volunteer ESL teacher preparation. I included recommendations that reflected my own observations as well as those that were gathered during my informal interviews and personal research of other anthropologists and educators experiences working with refugee and adult immigrant populations.

Findings:

While working at Mary's Place Outreach, I performed several key roles that allowed me to explore the inner workings of the organization and meet my internship goals. Prior to beginning my internship, I had anticipated concentrating my efforts on observation, identifying the structure and function of the administration. After negotiating my contract however, I was presented with the opportunity to work directly with the staff and clients of Mary's Place to assist with English language services and policy research. Through these programs I was able to practice my skills in participant observation and informal interviewing. This experience helped improve my understanding how to utilize anthropology outside of academia while also

increasing my understanding the daily challenges faced by refugee agencies and the clients they serve.

I worked directly with the Assistant Director of Mary's Place in the process of researching how to certify the adult ESL program. She helped me locate information and report my findings enabling me to observe and learn about how she functions in her role. Specifically, I observed the process by which she plans and presents project ideas to the Director and Board of Directors.

My experience working as an adult ESL teacher provided me with valuable insight into the challenges agencies and adult refugees confront during the resettlement process. Another intern who specialized in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL) and I worked together to teach. This allowed me to split my class time between direct teaching, working one-on-one with students, and observing student/teacher interactions. This approach allowed me the flexibility to practice my teaching skills while also gaining first-hand knowledge of the challenges adult refugees face when learning English. Furthermore, this role also provided me with unique access to the administration and other long-term volunteers that may otherwise had been difficult to achieve.

Challenges In Administration:

As a teacher, I worked directly the administration of Mary's Place, other teaching volunteers, and refugees to identify the ultimate goals of the ESL program as well as the best way in which to fulfill them. Through this role, I was granted immediate trust by refugees who relied on my eagerness to share my knowledge of the English language as well as respect by other teaching volunteers and staff. Furthermore, as a new volunteer, experienced teachers sought a mentoring relationship with both my fellow intern and me. Over time many experienced

teachers displayed a desire to share their experiences with me and regularly offered suggestions for lesson plans as well as potential administrative alterations they believe would improve the program. By encouraging teachers and staff to share their views of the ESL program, while also participating in the implementation of the program, I identified several key challenges the program commonly confronts.

Volunteer teachers are presented with several obstacles during their tenure at Mary's Place Outreach. These obstacles strongly reflect those presented in the literature and should not be considered unique to the ESL program at Mary's Place. The first obstacle teachers confront is a lack of a structured and obligatory training program. Training sessions can serve an important and often necessary role in the implementation of ESL programs where new volunteers learn the goals and objectives of the program. These sessions also allow volunteers to become acquainted with the curriculum utilized by the program, observe or participate in classes to learn common teaching methods, and perhaps more importantly, provide teachers with the confidence they need to be effective in the classroom (Perry, 2012: 117). Although not absolutely necessary for the success of the ESL program, such training is often considered beneficial and can help smooth the transition of new teachers into the classroom.

Like the other teachers I worked with, prior to beginning my teaching I was not provided with any training or an informative session. Although I was reassured prior to beginning my internship I would have a few days to acquaint myself with my class and observe other teachers, when I arrived unforeseen circumstances required my co-worker and I to begin teaching immediately. I was given the opportunity to observe the beginner class for about half of their lesson before I was approached by the teacher and asked to take over. Although I was able to continue the class with ease, the abrupt change in teachers had an obvious effect on the students

who no longer engaged as freely. One Bhutanese male student who consistently offered answers to the teacher told me he did not know the answer to the same questions and many students felt free to talk among themselves as the lesson continued. The following day, my co-worker and I took charge of the intermediate class having had no prior experience. It was another full day before I was able to connect with the original teacher to seek advice.

The omission of an obligatory teacher-training program while not wholly detrimental is an indication of larger challenges confronted by teachers on a daily basis. These challenges include the lack of a set curriculum, access to minimal teaching materials, and an open door attendance policy. Although none of these challenges alone have prevented teachers from providing a quality education, I found as suggested in the literature, these factors do contribute to the teachers' lack of a sense of security. Many teachers I spoke with expressed frustration with the administration of Mary's Place citing the lack of curriculum and high turnover rate among students as the source of their distress. While teachers presented their difficulties as a result of external factors, I believe the inexperience of teaching volunteers also plays a key role in the challenges these volunteers face.

Teachers arrive at Mary's Place with a wide array of teaching experience. While three of the four regular teachers have experience teaching in various capacities, none of the volunteers had prior training to prepare them for teaching adults with minimal English skills. At the time of my internship one volunteer was a retired special needs teacher, one a university professor, another was a retired elementary school teacher, while another was a Workers Experience Program (WEP) volunteer. Without the guidance found in teacher training programs and curricula, teachers are left to decide course content based on personal research and experience. Mary's Place does provide access to a large range of ESL workbook, worksheets, and other

teaching materials; however, without a clear curriculum or assessment schedule it remains unclear when it is appropriate to introduce new topics and materials. These frustrations were expressed to me on more than one occasion, some in a very public forum, by three of the volunteers as they expressed their struggles not only with creating effective lesson plans but also difficulty connecting their plans with the broader goals of the ESL program.

The open door policy unofficially adopted by Mary's Place further exacerbates teachers' frustrations and can have serious consequences for the class. As the ESL program was created to provide adults with a constructive activity to participate in as they wait to see caseworkers, the open door policy allows the flexibility necessary for this arrangement. As a result of this policy, attendance in the intermediate class can fluctuate between five and thirty-five students, some of whom have few English skills while others are nearly fluent. The beginner class also has a high turnover rate with some students learning to write for the first time and others already able to converse in Basic English. Teaching such a wide range of students with no prior indication of attendance can make choosing effective lesson plans very difficult. One beginner teacher's coping strategy for this uncertainty was to teach the same few lessons each week in the hopes that repetition would assist the regular students and new students would be exposed to necessary basic vocabulary. She focused her lessons on fruits and vegetable vocabulary, writing names and dates, and learning the days of the week.

In the intermediate class, my co-worker and I chose to expect our students would attend class each day and would return with their worksheets. When new students arrived they were caught up as much as necessary and provided the material they needed to participate. This policy allowed my co-worker and I to introduce several new topics during our internship and vary material regularly. This practice also allowed us to begin using several new methods of learning

such as games, compositions, and conversations that were difficult to incorporate when we catered to infrequent students. Although my internship was too short to identify if this practice contributed to the high retention rate among my students, on average 12 returning students, the topics and activities we were able to introduced kept students engaged and fostered a nurturing atmosphere where students felt comfortable participating.

While the ESL program is confronted with several structural limitations, the administration, teachers, and volunteers are dedicated to ensuring students receive a quality education that contributes to their independence and growth. With the two main goals of the program in mind, to assist student in gaining independence and give students the language skills they need to enter a certified program, teachers strive to locate material, advice, and activities that will prepare students to seek jobs and enter adult learning programs. Regardless of the limitations the ESL program unintentionally places upon its teachers, teachers and staff continuously discover ways to improve their effectiveness and strive to ensure students receive an education that will prepare them for the future.

ESL Program Successes:

Regardless of the difficulties faced by volunteers and staff, student participants regard the adult ESL program at Mary's Place very favorably and volunteers enjoy devoting their time to assist the program and work with students. Students are largely eager to attend and are often express gratitude for the teacher's dedication. During my observations, I recognized the positive atmosphere of the ESL program could be widely attributed to the encouragement and support of the administration for teachers and short-term volunteers. This support in turn garners trust and motivation for teachers to explore new ways to connect with their students and provide effective lessons. Furthermore, with the voluntary nature of the program, many students appear to feel

ownership of their education, which in turn encourages students to invest in learning. It is through these factors Mary's Place is able to provide a quality education and create an encouraging and supportive environment in which to learn. It will be important to try and retain this positive atmosphere when future changes are introduced into the program.

Although the ESL program was first created to keep clients busy while waiting to see caseworkers, it has since grown with the goal of equipping students with the necessary tools to become independent citizens. These tools include a working knowledge of conversational English, vocabulary necessary for the workplace, and foundational skills in reading and writing that will allow students to enroll in a certified program and advance their knowledge. To meet these goals, the director and assistant director place great trust in the teachers who volunteer their time and act as mentors for them. As the assistant director played a critical role in the creation of the ESL program, she has a firm understanding of student's needs as well as the potentials of the program. She and the director provide teachers with the emotional support necessary to garner self-confidence among volunteers by listening to their concerns and encouraging feedback of the program. If changes recommended by volunteers are feasible, such as the purchase of specific books or materials, the administration strives to meet them. The administration also regularly checks in with teachers after classes to ensure students and staff members are satisfied and seek their opinion about new ideas or issues. These practices combine to create an atmosphere of encouragement and trust where teachers feel ownership of their classes and strive to ensure they are providing the best education possible.

With the support of the administration, teachers often choose to draw upon their past teaching experiences for creative solutions to the challenges that plague the program. As many of the teacher's frustrations stem from the lack of curriculum to guide their lessons, teachers at

Mary's Place are highly motivated to seek new ways to provide effective lessons. To fill the void caused by the lack of curriculum, one volunteer dedicated several hours each week searching for new worksheets and activities online. As many of the worksheets and guidebooks available on the market and at Mary's Place are geared towards children, she found it difficult to locate appropriate materials for adults. She explained to me it is her hope to gather enough material so Mary's Place could tailor its own curriculum specific for the needs of the program.

In contrast two other volunteers have created creative ways to meet their student's needs. To better understand her student's grasp of previous lessons, one intermediate teacher has chosen to create her own assessment exams. This teacher focuses on one or two lessons such as grammar and vocabulary for several weeks and when she feels it is time to introduce new concepts she creates an assessment similar to ones she once used as a special needs teacher. I had the fortune to observe these assessments on two occasions. As students who struggle in class rely on their friends and family to help them, this teacher chose to remove each student from class individually. For each assessment she created a worksheet with fill in the blank sentences. As intermediate students are still learning to read complete sentences, she read the sentence aloud for the student and had the student fill in the blank with the proper vocabulary word. Many students appeared nervous about the assessment and only about five students were able to supply the correct words without directed prompting. This provided the teacher with a clear idea of what she needed to continue emphasizing in class and allowed her to track each student's progress.

Similarly, a beginner teacher's solution for the lack of teaching materials was to supply herself with visual aids from her previous job as an elementary teacher. This teacher found herself overwhelmed with the high turnover rate in the beginner class and found focusing her lessons on the same material provided consistency to returning students. This system also

ensured new or infrequent students learned the material she thought was necessary for basic survival in the United States. To assist in these lessons she used plastic fruits and vegetables she told me she purchased for her job. She also invested in buying new flashcards for the alphabet and household objects specifically for her lessons at Mary's Place. Despite having invested her personal funds into the material she used, she was willing to lend these materials to others and provided suggestions to volunteers and staff for locating affordable materials.

The adult and children's ESL program also benefits from the respect and gratitude from community members who recognize the hard work done at Mary's Place. Donations of books and school materials are collected by schools, churches, and children each year and are an invaluable service to the ESL program. During my internship, a retiring teacher at a local public school chose to donate her classroom materials to Mary's Place and included everything from crafts material to calendars and writing implements.

Although the challenges presented to volunteers at Mary's Place may often cause frustration and confusion, volunteers and staff consistently rise to provide the best education possible. With the support and encouragement of staff, volunteers have the confidence necessary to explore their communication style and methods and have become highly motivated to seek out new services and locate resources that are otherwise unavailable to improve their lessons and keep students engaged. With continued support, teacher's self-confidence and knowledge will continue to grow and positively impact not only their teaching abilities but also students' interest and attitudes towards the classes themselves.

Student Motivations and Perspective:

The ESL program serves a diverse range of purposes for the students it serves. Adult students, many with small children and jobs, have several motivations for attending ESL classes at Mary's Place. These have an important impact on student's ability to attend class, their desire

to learn certain material, and their willingness to participate in everyday classroom activities. It is also important to recognize how administrative challenges impact student motivations and perspectives on the ESL program. By understanding student motivations for attending as well as their perspective of the ESL program, teachers are better able to adjust their lessons to meet their student's needs.

From my observations, it appears the most prominent role the ESL program serves for its students is as a social space for friends and family. Each day adults arrive at Mary's Place and immediately seek out familiar faces. Some arrive as early as an hour before opening to meet outside and exchange news and eat lunch. These activities continue throughout the day with Mary's Place providing a safe and nurturing environment for refugees to engage with other members of their cultures. On more than one occasion I observed students exchanging goods and food during class time while others would wait for a break to seek out friends who had arrived late. Sometimes these actions would result in an embarrassed apology for disrupting class; however, it appeared these events were commonplace enough for other students to ignore. For several adult women with young children, class at Mary's Place was the only time each week they had to meet with friends and exchange goods with others. Therefore, Mary's Place offers not only essential schooling but also a social environment in which adults and children can feel secure meeting their emotional and family needs.

As time at Mary's Place is limited to only a few hours a day, these social behaviors have extended into the classroom. During my observations of the beginner class, I noticed approximately five Bhutanese women were much more advanced than their classmates and spent much of class time speaking softly at the end of the table. When I asked my supervisor why they had not been moved to the intermediate class I was told these women had already taken a

certified course offered by the city school district multiple times. They chose to remain in the beginner class to be with friends and family and resisted any attempt to coax them to join the intermediate class. While at first I interpreted their behavior as disruptive, I realized these women served an important addition to the beginner class. The way the class chose to divide itself left newly arrived women attending on their own at their end of the table. While the teacher tried to devote extra attention to these women and ensure they got up to speed, it was often difficult to do in a large class. The five advanced women took it upon themselves to assist the new women as well as their friends, providing answers and helping the new women learn to write.

Although many students choose to attend the ESL classes for fun, other students attended class out of obligation either to their larger social group or the staff at Mary's Place. Not long after my arrival, I noticed the Burmese students self-segregated at the back of the classroom and did not engage in daily lessons. They appeared to be extremely shy and did not want to interact with Bhutanese students or the teachers. I noticed during my lessons, however, that the students copied their lessons in both English and their native languages. This indicated they were already educated and literate in their native languages. When I inquired about these students with my supervisor, I was told that they did not attend classes because they want to learn but because a refugee community leader of Mary's Place told them had to come. The element of coercion likely hindered their willingness to participate and their comfort level in the classroom.

This example led me to begin asking my students what they want to learn in class in order to find inspiration for future lessons. The majority of responses included "get a job" from two Bhutanese men and "make friends" from a Karen woman. These responses reflect the

literature on student's motivations; however, due to the language barrier I was not able to speak in depth with them about their motivations.

Greater insight came during an informal interview with a volunteer who is also a Karen refugee. While she is not a student at Mary's Place, this women's struggle may represent the difficulties that many young women have adjusting to life in the United States. She explained to me one of the many reasons she wanted to come to the United States was to go to school and get an education. She attended school in the Thai refugee camps where she advanced to become an English teacher for other adults. She wanted to continue her education but was unable to while in the refugee camps, as there is little opportunity for refugees to seek access to university education in Thailand. Since arriving in the United States, however, she is in her second year of an associate's degree in social work.

This staff member also described her difficulty as a mother of several young children who had already begun to assimilate into American culture. She explained when her children were young she could portray her command of English as fluent and superior; however, as her children have grown and entered school they have surpassed her knowledge. She has found it difficult to maintain her authority over the children as they have begun to notice their knowledge exceeds her own and she is no longer comfortable assisting them with their schoolwork. She wants to improve her English and general education so she is able to be comfortable parenting American children and regain her parental authority.

Recognizing student motivations for attending the ESL program is crucial for understanding their varying expectations for lessons and outcomes. Only by recognizing how student goals relate to and conflict with the administration that positive changes can be made in the curriculum and the lessons devised by teachers. For example, when my co-worker and I

learned students studied English so they could make more friends, we introduced a weekly lesson on “things Americans say and do.” We included greetings, phrases, and behaviors commonly found in the Rochester area and had students participate by giving their partner high-fives, fist pounds, and thumbs-up and down. While these lessons did not necessarily meet the goals of the ESL program, they matched student interests and motivations for attending and kept students engaged during lessons geared towards workplace knowledge by breaking up the monotony.

While students often utilized the ESL program as a social space, there appeared to be a mix of perceptions on the use and effectiveness of the ESL program. Due to the program’s open-door policy, students generally embraced the voluntary nature of the program and attended classes as they desired. To accommodate for this policy, teachers had to extend their lessons for several days to ensure that students kept up and teachers had to accept that many might not learn the material each day. As a result, I found many students choose not to invest much time or energy in classroom activities if they knew they would be unable or unwilling to attend regularly.

As I spent about seven weeks working with my students, I was able to speak with several of them about their perceptions of the ESL program and their lessons. Overall students had a positive impression of the program and appeared generally pleased with their progress. One advanced Bhutanese student, however, expressed his dissatisfaction on several occasions. During my internship, he was enrolled in a certified ESL program through the city and attended secondary lessons at the local library. He attended classes at Mary’s Place regularly as well and participated in every activity. On one occasion he told me that he liked using classes at Mary’s Place for practice and he only occasionally learned new things. He also told me, “teachers here not always very good.” Despite my gentle questioning outside of class several days later, he was

never willing to elaborate on this statement. As this student did not feel able to learn new things in my class he chose to spend much of his time reading children's history and government books and participated only during group activities or when he was called on to assist me.

While it was easy to identify students' general attitudes towards class through their behaviors and expressions, it was difficult to gather helpful feedback. Students were generally unwilling to share their true thoughts about class or any topic related to Mary's Place typically appearing embarrassed to have been asked. Therefore, my best source for identifying student perceptions of the ESL program as well as my own class came from staff members who work closely with students outside the classroom. Both translators who assisted my class would routinely interject if they believed students did not enjoy a lesson or did not like a particular activity. While these contributions were incredibly helpful, the greatest insight I gained came during lunch with a caseworker halfway through my internship.

The caseworker informed me she was very pleased with my co-worker and I and heard very positive feedback from students after class. Like the other staff member I spoke with she also speaks Karen and has gained the trust of clients during her many years working at Mary's Place. She was the first person to recognize my class attendance rate had soared from about twelve students to as many as 30 in a matter of weeks and said students were always in good spirits after class. According to her, students liked that my co-worker and I were energetic and used competitive games and activities to communicate new material. With her feedback in mind, I created an attendance list to track the number of students who attended each day, and my co-worker and I began to experiment with more hands-on and group activities to engage students and track their comprehension of current and previous lessons. These included individual compositions emphasizing the current grammar lesson, group-level competitions like charades

utilizing new vocabulary, and speed racing games to track student's basic skills like writing and listening.

By understanding the motivations to attend the ESL program as well as student perceptions of the effectiveness of its teachers, teachers are better able to match their lesson plans to student needs and goals. Teachers may find by recognizing each student's true reason for attending they can make more informed decisions about what lessons to include and how to conduct their class to ensure students are engaged and invested in their learning. Such recognition then may help reduce frustrations regarding the lack of curriculum as teachers can draw upon the wealth of motivations and interests to guide their decisions.

New York State ESL Certification Requirements:

The New York State Bureau of Proprietary School Supervision and the New York State Commissioner of Education regulate licensure for all new and certified adult ESL schools. The regulations schools must adhere to and the application process are found in the Commissioners Regulations 126 and the Education Law 101 and include several options for types of schools to create. As a non-profit organization Mary's Place is only required to follow regulations guiding the formation of non-publicly funded ESL schools and cannot charge fees or tuition for their services. Licensure is granted for periods of two years and applications must include all relevant documents and be submitted to the Commissioner of Education. To present this information to my supervisor I created a report detailing the policies and procedures Mary's Place must adhere to be granted licensure of their ESL program.

There are several provisions required by the State of New York for the creation of a non-profit adult ESL school. These include hiring a qualified teacher, hiring an agent to enroll students, and adopting a curriculum to guide daily lessons. The curriculum adopted by Mary's Place may be purchased or created by the organization. The curriculum provided in the

application must be detailed enough so a person observing the class can determine if the submitted content is being adhered to (126.10(2)(b)(2)). It must also include a description of the method of instruction and a minimum number of instructional hours allocated for each lesson (126.10(2)(b)(2)). As Mary's Place has not yet adopted a curriculum, I provided suggestions for possible curricula and assessments that may prove useful. The REEP program is curriculum offered free of charge by the Arlington Education and Employment Program and utilized by their adult ESL school. This curriculum offers lesson plans, worksheets, and a detailed schedule for each lesson. To evaluate student's progress in class, I recommended Mary's Place purchase the BEST Plus assessment. This assessment is nationally recognized and will provide teachers with a clear understanding of their students' grasp of materials.

To meet the requirements of the Commissioners Regulations, Mary's Place may be required to hire a minimum of three individuals to work directly with students and implement the program. Only teachers considered qualified by the State of New York may teach at a licensed adult ESL school. Therefore, Mary's Place will need to hire at least two teachers to maintain their beginner and intermediate classes. Teachers must have a baccalaureate or equivalent degree and have completed either an ESL training program or have one year teaching experience in an ESL program (126.10 (j)(3)(iii)). Similarly, each ESL school must hire an agent who recruits and enrolls students into the program (126.10 (j)(3)(ii)). Agents must be certified by the state before employment begins and the school must accept all responsibility for the actions of the agent (126.12 (b)-(e)).

While the requirements Mary's Place must adhere to secure licensure for their ESL program are extensive, the program and its students may greatly benefit from this certification. By seeking certification Mary's Place will hire qualified and experienced teachers who may be

better able to communicate lessons effectively. The curriculum they adopt will provide students with clear expectations of what they will learn in the program and help students and teacher create achievable learning goals. These policies will enhance the existing program at Mary's Place and help equip students with the language tools they need to reach the goals of the organizations and gain independence.

Recommendations:

While the ESL program is widely successful among students, teachers often remain frustrated and confused when choosing lesson plans and teaching methods. These frustrations stem from larger structural gaps in the ESL program such as the lack of curriculum and guidance with teaching methods as well as limited teacher preparedness. Drawing from my observations of the administration and staff of Mary's Place as well as my own experience teaching, I have made several recommendations that may help enhance the ESL program. These include seeking licensure for the ESL program, adopting an established curriculum, creating a training program for teachers, and establishing a mentoring relationship between senior teachers and new teachers.

Creating a training program for new teachers would give the administration the opportunity to address several of the issues I identified during my observations. During the training program the administration will have the opportunity to communicate the goals of the ESL program with new volunteers and introduce them to existing materials available to them. This will ensure teachers understand the purpose of their class and what outcomes the administration expects to see among students after completion of the program. Furthermore, the training program should include an introduction to other teachers currently working with their

class and as well as to their class's previous work. As both the intermediate and beginner classes are taught by several teachers each week, it is essential teachers communicate with one another about lesson plans, activities, and weekly goals. This will help teachers coordinate their plans and provide students with cohesive and predictable lessons.

Communication between teachers should also play a vital role in the enhancement of the ESL program and can be encouraged through the establishment of a mentoring relationship between new and senior teachers. Teachers can meet a few times a month to discuss any concerns or issues they are having with their classes and share tips and suggestions for lesson plans, activities, and communicating with students. A mentoring relationship will bring teachers closer together and create a sense of belonging and cohesion within the ESL program. It will also provide teachers with an opportunity to vent their frustrations, problem solve with others, and share resources and tools that may be inaccessible to others.

It is also during the training program the administration can introduce teachers to the official curriculum and help teachers become familiar with the process of creating lesson plans and activities. Many current complaints about the ESL program stem from a lack of guidance for lesson plans and teaching styles. Adoption of a standard and established curriculum already tested by other programs will provide teachers with the tools and support they need. This will also ensure students are taught the necessary information they need to meet their personal goals and gain the independence desired by the administration at Mary's Place.

The curriculum I recommended to my supervisor is called REEP ESL Curriculum for Adults. It is provided through the Arlington Education and Employment Program and offers a detailed curriculum as well as instructions on how to create lesson plans and assessments. This

curriculum also provides a list of resources where teachers can find material appropriate for adult students and is free for use with proper credit cited.

A more long-term solution to many of the challenges I observed within the ESL program is to seek state licensure and establish a non-profit adult ESL school within Mary's Place Outreach. As the New York state licensure program requires the creation of an approved curriculum and hiring qualified teachers, many of the structural challenges confronting the ESL program would be resolved. This process would require significant funding, however, and therefore I also recommend Mary's Place consider fundraising to kick start the process or applying for a grant. If the administration does not consider this a feasible process, I then recommend they contact a local licensed adult ESL school and create a partnership. A partnership may afford Mary's Place access to experienced teachers who can mentor those at Mary's Place as well as guidance for the training program and appropriate materials.

The recommendations I have listed are aimed to reduce continued frustrations among teachers as well as enhance the program's effectiveness for students. Each of these recommendations are potentially feasible for the administration to undertake. While new policies may take time to implement, they will ultimately strengthen teacher capabilities and improve student's confidence in the effectiveness of the program.

Conclusion

Skills:

During my internship at Mary's Place Outreach, I have experienced many things that have improved my knowledge of the refugee population and enhanced my anthropological skill set. I have:

- Gained hands-on experience and expanded my knowledge of non-profit organizations,
- Learned the structure of non-profit organizations and how to work with a board of directors,
- Expanded my knowledge about the needs of refugees during the resettlement process,
- Learned how non-profit organizations are able to meet the needs of refugee adults and children,
- Improved my writing and communication skills,
- Applied my cultural understanding to working with refugees and people of diverse backgrounds,
- Learned how to construct a literature review,
- Improved my interview and observation skills,
- Learned how to conduct a class including locating learning material, planning lessons, and keeping students engaged,
- Learned about the challenges adult English as a Second Language programs face in the United States,
- Learned the issues associated with learning English as a Second Language for recent immigrants and refugees.

These experiences and skills have better prepared me for future work in the non-profit sector as well as to work with a diverse range of people. With these skills I am able to conduct a class, communicate with people of all backgrounds, and navigate the political and organizational structure of non-profit organizations. In the future, I hope to continue working with refugee

populations in the United States and abroad to improve living conditions of adults and children and assist in the resettlement process.

A Role for Anthropology

The anthropological perspective is important for programs in the non-profit sector generally as well as work with refugees during the resettlement process in particular. I found many of the unique skills and traits valued in anthropology to be highly applicable to my work as an ESL teacher and researcher at Mary's Place. Three skills in particular, cultural sensitivity, observation, and interview skills, were most helpful in achieving my goals and helping me navigate the structure of Mary's Place Outreach.

Given the diverse range of people involved in non-profit organizations, from administrators, volunteers, and recipients, cultural sensitivity is an imperative characteristic for all participants. Cultural sensitivity is the "general awareness of, and respect for different cultural traditions" (McInnis, 2012: 31). This characteristic is even more important when working with newly arrived immigrants or refugees struggling to adjust to their new environment and finding ways to adapt to the American culture without compromising their own values. Understanding other cultures values, beliefs, and behaviors prepares workers in non-profit organizations for the differences they may see between their own lives and their clients. It is respect for their way of life and emotional support, however, that creates a trusting environment and improves communication between the organization and its beneficiaries. Cultural sensitivity has the power to create a positive atmosphere in which refugees and immigrants feel comfortable and seek. This then improves the organizations reach and ability to serve clients effectively.

Anthropologists are also uniquely suited to work with administrators and board of directors to identify ways to improve or enhance the programs of their organizations.

Anthropologists can utilize the skills of ethnographic research with staff and clients to locate gaps in existing programs. The interpersonal skills developed with these tools help establish rapport and create relationships with these individuals allowing anthropologists better access to gather all relevant information otherwise shielded from administrators. Such information might include grievances on the part of volunteers and the elicitation of client needs not being met by the program. Often people will voice information to a trusted outsider that they would not share with people inside the organization. Because anthropologists employ both the emic and etic point of view, they are uniquely qualified to also help devise workable solutions to the problems identified within organizations.

Anthropological skills and tools are highly adaptive and applicable to work with non-profit organizations and refugees. By utilizing these skills anthropologists have the potential to bridge gaps in communication, identify issues and propose ways to enhance existing programs, and identify needs not currently met by the organization. This broad range of abilities makes anthropology uniquely suited for work with non-profit organizations and immigrants.

Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank Cara Breslin and Kathy LeBue at Mary's Place for allowing me to work with them and learn about their organization. With their support I was welcomed into their organization and given the guidance and tools I needed to grow my confidence, explore my path, and learn what I am capable of. I would also like to thank Dr. Holly Mathews for her guidance during this process. Her support was invaluable while I learned how to create an internship and write an in-depth report. I would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Robert Bunker and

Dr. Linda Wolfe for their assistance in writing my report and the department of anthropology at ECU for giving me this opportunity. Lastly I would like to acknowledge my parents and Dr. Tiffany Rawlings without who's support I would not have completed this experience.

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