

**Welcoming the Stranger Among Us:
Exploring American Catholics' Advocacy Work and Community Mobilization for
Refugees and Asylum Seekers at a National and Local Level**

Eleanor Vaughan Langford

Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Groningen

MA Thesis: Religion, Conflict, and Globalization

July 1, 2022

Thesis Supervisor: Manoela Carpenedo Rodrigues

Second Assessor: Joram Tarusarira

Word Count: 21676

Dedication

This work is dedicated to the 100 million courageous individuals forced to leave their homes in the flight of oppressive systems since the start of 2022. May we never tire of giving voice to the grave injustice of your stories. May we direct our sorrow and rage at combatting the cause of your oppression. May we welcome you with peace, generosity, and reverence for your journey to our doors.



*“no one leaves home unless
home is the mouth of a shark”*

Warson Shire

Acknowledgments

This thesis would not have been possible without the support of numerous individuals. Thank you to my advisor, Manoela Carpenedo Rodrigues, for your wisdom, guidance, and patience as I undertook a project of this size for the first time. Your continual support amid my uncertainty was invaluable. I'd especially like to thank everyone in the Western Regional Office for your openness and flexibility as I pursued this project. This research greatly benefited from your willing participation, candor, and trust. Thank you for letting me jump into your work and making me feel like a valuable member of the team. Thank you for the critically important work you do in Western North Carolina – these pages could never do justice to the impact you are making. Lastly, I'd like to thank all of my loved ones who encouraged me throughout this process.

Abstract

Through its affiliate agencies, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops resettles about 30% of the United States' refugees, which is more than any of the other nine US Voluntary Agencies in cooperative agreements for resettlement. Moreover, Catholics have become dedicated, advocates for migrants amidst the rising anti-immigrant rhetoric dominating the media. Taking a mesolevel approach, this thesis analyzes the advocacy efforts of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Charities USA, and the Western Regional Office of Catholic Charities Diocese of Charlotte to explore how Catholics advocate and mobilize support for refugees and asylum seekers at both a national and local level. Applying the concepts of strategic issue framing, administrative advocacy, and cross-sectoral/cross-organizational collaboration, it examines how Catholic theology and values are leveraged, transformed, and appropriated across secular and religiously plural contexts.

Table of Contents

Dedication	2
Acknowledgments	3
Abstract	4
1. Introduction	7
2. Methodological and Theoretical Framework	11
2.1. Mesolevel Analysis	
2.2. Theoretical Framework	
2.2.1. Strategic Issue Framing	
2.2.2. Administrative Advocacy	
2.2.3. Cross-Sectoral and Cross-Organizational Collaborations	
2.3. Ethnography and Semistructured/Unstructured Interviews	
2.4. Discourse Analysis	
2.5. A Word on Terminology	
2.6. Positionality	
3. The American Asylum + Refugee Resettlement System and the Catholic Church	20
3.1. The American Asylum and Refugee Resettlement System	
3.2. Catholic Charities and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops	
3.2.1. Origins	
3.2.2. Organizational Structure	
3.3. Conclusion	
4. Strategic Issue Framing at the National Level	28
4.1. Understanding Catholic Social Teaching	
4.1.1. Scriptural Roots	
4.1.2. The “Trunk” of Church Teachings	
4.1.3. The Seven “Branches” of CST	
4.1.4. Charity, Justice, and Catholic Social Teaching	
4.1.5. A Word on Historical Precedent and Present Inclusivity	
4.2. Discourse Analysis: Strategic Issue Framing at the National Level, 2001-2022	
4.2.1. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops	
4.2.2. Catholic Charities USA	
4.2.3. Catholic Mobilization	
4.2.4. Beyond Catholic Social Teaching	
4.3. Reflections on the Overlapping Consensus of Human Dignity	
4.4. Conclusion	
5. Introduction to the Case Study of Asheville	48
5.1. Background	
5.1.1. Refugee Resettlement at CCDOC	
5.2. A Catholic History of North Carolina	
5.3. Demographics	
5.3.1. Religious Affiliation	

5.3.2.	Race and Immigration	
5.3.3.	Politics	
5.4.	Conclusion	
6.	Strategic Issue Framing, Administrative Advocacy, and Cross-Sectoral + Cross-Organizational Collaborations at the WRO	55
6.1.	Strategic Issue Framing	
6.1.1.	The Solidarity Frame	
6.1.2.	The “Jesus the Refugee” Frame	
6.1.3.	The “Helping” Frame	
6.1.4.	Public Theology	
6.2.	Cross-Sectoral and Cross-Organizational Collaborations	
6.2.1.	Advocacy Collaborations	
6.2.2.	Credibility Collaborations	
6.2.3.	Visibility Collaborations	
6.3.	Administrative Advocacy	
6.4.	Beyond de Graauw	
6.5.	Discussion and Conclusion	
7.	Conclusion	74
7.1.	Discussion of Research Questions	
7.1.1.	History of Public Private Partnerships	
7.1.2.	Catholic Centralization	
7.1.3.	Strategic Issue framing and Overlapping Consensus	
7.2.	Limitations and Opportunities for Further Research	
7.3.	Societal Implications	
8.	Appendix	79
8.1.	Statement of Ethics	
8.2.	Participant Consent Form	
9.	References	83

Chapter 1

Introduction

Following the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan in August of 2021, Christian Nationalists have been some of the loudest voices touting anti-asylum and Islamophobic positions. US politicians have echoed this rhetoric, including Senator Ted Cruz, who cited fear over the accidental importation of terrorists amongst the Afghan refugees and suggested they be brought to a third neutral country instead (Tillman, 2021). Likewise, during his presidency, Donald Trump enacted substantial limitations on immigration and lowered the US refugee intake ceiling to a historic low of 18,000 per year in the fiscal year 2020 (*Fact Sheet*, 2020). This rhetoric is not new, as anti-immigrant sentiment, general xenophobia, and islamophobia have long been a part of the American conversation. Recently, and particularly during the Trump era beginning in 2016, immigration and asylum have taken on a particularly charged quality and dominated the fore of American media and political conversation. Notably, Christians harbor these attitudes more than their non-Christian American counterparts (“A Nation of Immigrants?,” 2019). According to a study conducted by the Public Religion Research Institute in 2019, “white evangelical Protestants and white Catholics are about 2 times more likely than the religiously unaffiliated to support restrictive immigration policies,” including policies around asylum (“A Nation of Immigrants?,” 2019). Further, 67% of white evangelical Protestants view newcomers as a threat to American values, and 50% of white Catholics agree (“A Nation of Immigrants?,” 2019).

Amidst this religious landscape of immigration and asylum attitudes lies the paradoxical reality that five of the nine refugee resettlement agencies in the US are explicitly Christian organizations (Hollenbach, 2020). In particular, the resettlement agencies falling under the

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) resettled 30% of America's 1 million refugees from 1987-2016, which is more refugees than most countries have resettled in total (Hollenbach, 2020). Additionally, Catholics have emerged as some of the most prominent public advocates of pro-refugee and pro-asylum policies both internally and on the political stage.

While plenty of scholars, including Oindrila Roy, Jody C. Baumgartner et al., and Pazit Ben-Nun Bloom et al., have quantitatively examined the general effects of religion on domestic and foreign policy and public opinion, far less attention has been dedicated to the qualitative manner in which religious entities participate in these conversations, particularly the dynamic negotiation of religious ideas in secular politics and public discourse (Roy, 2016; Baumgartner et al., 2008; Ben-Nun Bloom et al., 2015). Furthermore, Catholic contributions are often overlooked in favor of evangelical Protestantism. Indeed, Frank Adloff has noted that "literature on the Catholic Church shows a lack of interest in Catholic's relationship to social policy" (Adloff, 2006). Existing literature is either authored emically by Catholic entities or is largely postulational. For example, researchers Reginald Alva and David Hollenbach suggest that the Catholic Church's imperative to uphold inherent human dignity might be one avenue to find influence in public, pluralistic circles, but a discourse analysis examining how and if this paradigm is used in refugee advocacy and community mobilization is missing from the literature (Alva, 2017; Hollenbach, 2020).

In light of Christian Nationalists being the face of anti-asylum and Islamophobic rhetoric, it is critical, particularly at this juncture in history, to understand how a denomination of the same religion is leveraged to advocate and mobilize support for pro-refugee causes, both at the national and local level in the US. This thesis explores the question, *how do American Catholics advocate and mobilize support for refugees and asylum seekers in secular and religiously plural*

spaces in the US? While Kristen Heyer has explored Catholic's practice of "public theology" in general national politics – looking specifically at the lobbying efforts of national organizations like the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, NETWORK, and Pax Christi USA – I regard advocacy and public mobilization as a multi-level endeavor. While Catholic voices in federal policy are undoubtedly influential, they tell an incomplete story if unaccompanied by grassroots realities. Accordingly, this thesis employs a mesolevel analysis that considers the aggregate efforts of Catholic advocacy for migrants in both a national and local context.

At the national level, I examine Catholic advocacy through the efforts of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA). At this macro level, I aim to elucidate the history and extent of Catholic involvement in refugee and asylee services and the history of Catholic support and advocacy on these issues. I also pay particular attention to the Catholic imperative to uphold human dignity and explore the potential efficacy of this imperative as an advocacy and mobilization tool in public discourse, answering the sub question, *how does Catholic discourse on migration relate to and interact with broader American discourses?* At the local level, I examine the case study of the Western Regional Office of Catholic Charities Diocese of Charlotte in Asheville, North Carolina and analyze how the values and rhetoric of the broader Catholic Church are appropriated and implemented in practice within the organization's advocacy and mobilization efforts for refugees and asylum seekers. Through this analysis, I aim to answer the sub questions: *how are Catholic theology and values leveraged, (re)interpreted, and transformed in the national (US) and grassroots (Asheville, NC) contexts, and how does the local Western Regional Office of Catholic Charities Diocese of Charlotte relate to its national counterparts?* I argue that as a whole, Catholic advocacy and public mobilization efforts are fortified by their history of concomitant

development with the federal government, highly centralized nature, and strategic framing of migrant issues that provide overlapping consensus with relevant stakeholders.

I begin by explicating the methodological and theoretical frameworks employed in this thesis, presenting the theoretical concepts that I used to tabulate Catholic advocacy and public mobilization strategies: strategic issue framing, administrative advocacy, and cross-sectoral/cross-organizational collaboration. Chapter three provides background on the American refugee resettlement system and explores the historical and present Catholic location within this system. This history illuminates the unique public-private partnership Catholic and other faith-based resettlement agencies have with the government and the highly centralized, bureaucratic nature of the USCCB and Catholic Charities USA. In chapter four, I present the theological bases for migration services located in Catholic Social Teaching and explore how these manifest as strategic issue frames in national Catholic advocacy through discourse analysis. I also provide some reflections on how this theological discourse might find purchase within the broader American discourse. Next, I introduce the case study of the Western Regional Office in Asheville, North Carolina in chapter five, presenting key historical and demographic considerations. Chapter six then analyzes Catholic advocacy and public mobilization in the grassroots context, investigating the limits of de Graauw's framework and the various ways broader Catholic discourse is appropriated to speak to the local context through strategic issue framing. Lastly, in chapter 7, I take stock of the research and provide concluding reflections in light of the starting research questions.

Chapter 2

Methodological and Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I lay out the qualitative methodology and theoretical framework followed in this thesis. First, I give an overview and justification of the mesolevel analysis I employ, citing the work of Els de Graauw. Continuing with de Graauw's work, I present three guiding theoretical concepts: strategic issue framing, administrative advocacy, and cross-sectoral and cross-organizational collaborations (de Graauw, 2016). Next, I lay out some more concrete data collection and analysis methods: ethnography, semi-structured/unstructured interviews, and discourse analysis. Lastly, I provide a brief statement on personal research positionality.

Mesolevel Analysis

There are many ways to approach the qualitative study of nonprofit advocacy, but most approaches utilize either a macro or microlevel approach. Many scholars, including Boris & Steuerle (2016), have opted for a macrolevel analysis, looking at how nonprofits fit into the broader national political ecosystem. Scholars who instead use a microlevel approach, including Berry & Arons (2003) and Frasure & Jones-Correa (2010), look at individual nonprofits and their influence within their local contexts. In her book, *Making Immigrant Rights Real*, Els de Graauw argues for the strength of a mesolevel approach that employs both micro and macroanalysis. Looking specifically at nonprofits serving and advocating for the rights of immigrants, de Graauw argues that nonprofits act as intermediaries between *both* local and national political communities, which are vital in facilitating their integration and securing their rights (de Graauw, 2016). Further, she argues that mesoanalysis should look beyond interactions between nonprofits and the local, state, and federal legislature to other key interactions, like the media, other advocacy organizations, community members, and executive and judicial officials

for a more holistic approach (de Graauw, 2016). In this way, nonprofits are viewed not as micro *or* macrolevel actors but as mesolevel actors working in and mediating between *both* micro and macro contexts.

This research applies de Graauw's mesolevel approach to Catholic nonprofit organizations advocating for the rights of refugees and asylees, combining macro and microanalysis for a holistic understanding of Catholic involvement in these issues. At the macrolevel, I examine Catholic participation in national politics through the lobbying, public statements, and advocacy work of Catholic Charities USA and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. At the microlevel, I analyze the local case study of the Western Regional Office (WRO) of Catholic Charities Diocese of Charlotte (CCDOC) in Asheville, North Carolina. Not only does the combination of the micro and macroanalysis provide a thorough understanding of American Catholics' advocacy work and public mobilization on these issues, but the comparison of the micro and macro contexts also lends interesting insight into the adaptation of tactics and the various ways theological justifications are leveraged and transformed in secular and religiously plural spaces.

Theoretical Framework

In addition to the mesolevel approach, this thesis analyzes Catholic advocacy efforts through the lens of three theoretical concepts put forth by de Graauw: strategic issue framing, administrative advocacy, and cross-sectoral and cross-organizational collaborations (de Graauw, 2016). According to de Graauw, these are helpful frameworks for analyzing nonprofit advocacy for migrants outside of typical conceptions of straightforward federal lobbying (de Graauw, 2016). Furthermore, these strategies are important for migrant-serving nonprofits, as they face a myriad of challenges in their advocacy efforts, including limited resources, reliance on

government funding, legal constraints on lobbying due to 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, and quite often, a hostile attitude towards foreigners both locally and nationally (de Graauw, 2016).

Strategic Issue Framing

Issue framing is abundant in politics, the media, and everyday discussion. It refers to the intentional framing of one issue in terms of another, often one that already harbors resonance with the target audience. For example, proponents of anti-immigrant policy often frame the issue of immigration in terms of national security or welfare abuse (de Graauw, 2016; *National Security Threats*, 2018; *Sens. Johnson*, 2022). In this way, immigration comes to incorporate a variety of other meanings and connotations that resonate with the target audience, which the “framer” can then leverage towards anti-immigration policies. Issue framing is employed towards a variety of aims, and many immigrant advocates reframe immigration in terms of civil and human rights—causes that already have significant support and carry meaningful connotations (de Graauw, 2016). In her study of nonprofits in San Francisco, de Graauw notes that organizations used different issue frames depending on the campaign and the stakeholder group targeted, as different frames resonated with different stakeholders (de Graauw, 2016). This is when issue framing becomes *strategic issue framing*. Successful nonprofit advocates recognize the diversity of stakeholders involved and strategically recraft messaging to appeal to these various audiences and their interests.

This thesis applies the concept of strategic issue framing to Catholic advocacy for migrants. It examines the various frames Catholic Charities and the USCCB use to discuss migration issues. As explicitly religious institutions, some of these frames are articulated in theological terms. This thesis analyzes the strategic leveraging and transformation of these frames across various audiences and stakeholders. While de Graauw mainly focused on strategic

issue framing targeted at these external stakeholders, this thesis also examines how migration issues are framed by Catholics towards their own membership in Catholic Social Teaching.

Administrative Advocacy

As 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organizations, Catholic Charities and the USCCB are legally limited in the amount of official lobbying they can conduct of elected officials. However, there is no limit to interaction with non-elected officials who administer and implement federal and state policies affecting refugees and asylees (de Graauw, 2016). The reality is that policies and ordinances—whether from federal, state, or local legislatures—often have broad mandates that give these administrative officials material discretion over their implementation (de Graauw, 2016). De Graauw notes that often, nonprofits administering social services already maintain close contractual relationships with local and state government departments/agencies in order to carry out these services to their clients (de Graauw, 2016). As a result, they often are considered legitimate voices on best practices and can thus influence policy implementation (de Graauw, 2016). This thesis analyzes Catholic Charities and the USCCB’s lobbying of elected officials at the national level. However, when analyzing the microlevel case study of the WRO of CCDOC, it also employs de Graauw’s framework of administrative advocacy. I argue that de Graauw’s definition of administrative advocacy is limiting and that an expanded definition sheds light on other key advocacy and public mobilization methods.

Cross-Sectoral and Cross-Organizational Collaborations

Because nonprofit resources are typically scarce, it is common for nonprofits to partner with other organizations to accomplish their work (de Graauw, 2016). Furthermore, nonprofits benefit from cross-sectoral collaborations with government agencies, not only by establishing strong relationships for effective administrative advocacy but also because they often rely on

government funding for the administration of part or all of their social services (de Graauw, 2016). Sometimes, nonprofits also form coalitions with organizations—like labor unions—that do not have the same restrictions on their political advocacy and can thus speak on behalf of the nonprofit (de Graauw, 2016). De Graauw argues that these cross-sectoral and cross-organizational collaborations are an often overlooked part of nonprofit advocacy efforts.

This thesis investigates the various cross-sectoral and cross-organizational collaborations that the WRO forms in advancement of their migrant advocacy efforts. While de Graauw focused on collaboration with organizations that bolster legislative lobbying, my research also considers cross-sectoral and cross-organizational collaborations that strengthen public mobilization, public support, and community consciousness. By strategically partnering with organizations that have established community ties and influence, Catholic organizations can further extend their advocacy efforts, particularly in majority-Protestant contexts like Asheville, which harbors lingering skepticism towards Catholics.

Ethnography and Semi-Structured/Unstructured Interviews

I conducted participant-observation ethnographic research at the WRO of CCDOC from March 2022 - May 2022 while I served as a full-time intern for the office and lived with a fellow staff member. Participant-observation ethnography refers to qualitative research through direct observation during prolonged participation in a particular community (Silverman, 2016). As an intern, I worked closely with the WRO staff and assisted with many aspects of the organization, including management of weekly and bi-monthly food distribution events, community outreach/relations, refugee resettlement services, survey building and data entry, capacity building, case management, and the general day-to-day operations of this community-based nonprofit. As a result, I was able to gain a comprehensive view of how the WRO mobilizes

community support and advocates for refugees and asylees in its sphere of influence and how it relates to the broader network of Catholic organizations (CCUSA and the USCCB).

Throughout this internship and ethnographic research, I was able to conduct impromptu, unstructured interviews with the WRO staff and volunteers. These happened sporadically throughout the workday as I assisted and worked alongside staff and volunteers. I also conducted three semi-structured interviews with key staff members throughout my time at the WRO.¹ These interviews served to “fill in the gaps” and provide more context to observations I made during my research. While I could observe much of the WRO’s normal activities during my two months, the interviews also allowed me to inquire about activities that happened outside of my tenure. Giving primacy to ethnographic work and supplementing with interviews follows the example of Courtney Bender in her study of religion in a New York non-profit, *God’s Love We Deliver*. Bender argues that when studying religious language, “interviews alone cannot assess how or whether respondents use the very scripts and stories they tell us in other settings, or when they decide to do so” (Bender, 2003). As I explore *how* Catholics advocate for migrants in part by looking at strategic issue framing, direct observation of these frames and the leveraging of theology is essential.

Discourse Analysis

A large part of this thesis explores Catholic advocacy efforts via discourse analysis. According to Marianne Jørgensen & Louise J. Phillips, a discourse is a “particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Critically, these ways of talking are not a neutral reflection of the object of the discourse but are

¹ All WRO staff were made aware of my research aims and gave their informed consent. All names have been removed to protect anonymity. A sample participant consent form and full statement of ethics is attached in the Appendix.

an agent of their transformative reproduction (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Approaches to and methods of discourse analysis are numerous, but the approach in this thesis falls in line with Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's discourse theory. According to this theory, discourse is the constructor of meaning in the social world, and because language is malleable, discourse and its resulting meanings are likewise malleable (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). In this way, different discourses representing different understandings of social reality are constantly in conversation or discursive struggle with one another and are transformed in the process (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002).

With Laclau and Mouffe's theory in mind, this thesis examines Catholic discourse on migration issues and analyzes *how* language is used to achieve its aims. Discourse in this context includes public position statements, congressional testimony, written communication, observed conversation, public speech, and interview testimony. I explore the social reality constructed by this discourse and how it interacts with other ongoing discourses in the US. Primarily, I pay particular attention to the ways the Catholic discourse changes and transforms within different contexts and through interaction with different discourses. Not surprisingly, the Catholic discourse on migration is based in theology—or, in terms of discourse theory, a social reality that includes the corporeality of God. However, they advocate for refugees and asylees in many spaces that are based in a different social reality that does not view theological appeals as legitimate. The interplay of Catholic discourse in these spaces of secular and religiously pluralistic discourse is highlighted in this thesis. This analysis also helps uncover the various *strategic issue frames* employed.

A Word on Terminology

As I examine the interaction of Catholic Charities, a faith-based organization, in secular spaces, it's important to clarify what is meant by "secular." The precise delineation between secular and religious is a debated topic both in academia and public discourse. José Casanova has defined the secular as a "central modern category— theological-philosophical, legal-political, and cultural-anthropological— to construct, codify, grasp, and experience a realm or reality differentiated from 'the religious'" (Casanova, 2011). Correspondingly, I use secular in this thesis to refer to spaces that are perceived as differentiated from the religious and that typically demand participants engage in scripts and actions that are likewise not religious. Whether a space like the American government is actually devoid of religious values and rhetoric is another matter and outside the scope of this thesis, but what is pertinent is the public perception that generally, it *is* a secular space.

Positionality

I came to this research as an American student concerned with the growing refugee crisis in the world. When I began my proposal, the US military had pulled out of Afghanistan, creating a power vacuum that resulted in the subsequent displacement of 700,000 people (*Afghanistan Humanitarian Crisis*, n.d.). Several weeks into my research, Russia invaded Ukraine, forcibly displacing over three million people (*Ukraine Refugee Situation*, n.d.). American responses to these crises have been mixed, particularly to the former. Islamophobia and general xenophobia find firm ground in the public discourse, with some evangelicals and Christian nationalists voicing some of the strongest opposition to migrants. With an evangelical background, I find myself interested in the counter-narrative that I have until now been unfamiliar with—Catholic

actors in staunch support of migrants. Moreover, I am interested in *how* they conduct this advocacy and interact with the broader discourse on migration in the US.

Though this thesis is not about my personal views, the aforementioned motivations, my own background, and beliefs inevitably played a part in my ethnographic experience. This sort of recognition and reflexivity is important in ethnographic research to condition the resulting knowledge claims (Lichterman, 2015). While I came to Catholic Charities excited about the beliefs propelling Catholics towards migrant empowerment, there was nonetheless the nagging reality of a myriad of other Catholic beliefs that I disavowed. The dichotomy of fiercely battling for the marginalized migrant and simultaneously supporting stances that marginalize women and queer individuals put me in constant inner oscillation between passion and disillusionment.

Though these were hard to reconcile at times, I quickly learned that this was a common sentiment among those that do not share the Catholic faith. John Carr, the former Executive Director of the USCCB's Department of Justice, Peace, and Human Development, once referred to Catholics as "politically homeless," holding what can be considered highly progressive views at once with those that align with the far-right (Heyer, 2006). I witnessed this political homelessness serve as an unexpected strength for Catholics, as they can find common ground across various ideological borders. This was evident even in the diversity of religious affiliations and political ideologies even amongst the WRO's staff. Catholicism seems to hold apparent dichotomies in well-balanced tension and maintains a refreshing openness to difference. As the WRO displayed comfortability with the discomfort of difference, I, too, seek to balance dichotomies in the following pages with the same honesty and openness afforded to me.

Chapter 3

The American Asylum + Refugee Resettlement System and the Catholic Church

This chapter sheds light on the process of refugee resettlement and asylum services in the US and how Catholics fit into this system historically and presently. First, it presents a brief history of the unique private-public partnership characterizing the resettlement system since the early 1900s, including pivotal legislation institutionalizing this relationship. Next, it provides an overview of the various public and private agencies involved in the admissions, funding, and case management of asylum seekers and refugees. The chapter then shifts gears to illuminate the formation of the centralized Catholic social services network, which was born out of the resettlement needs of Catholic immigrants during the mid-1800s. This section looks specifically at the historical trajectories, structure, and function of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Catholic Charities USA, which are key players in the resettlement process and conduct a great deal of lobbying and advocacy work on behalf of refugees and asylum seekers.

The American Asylum and Refugee Resettlement System

The American asylum and refugee resettlement system is characterized by a dynamic private-public partnership that is unique among other sectors in the country (Brown & Scribner, 2014). The process is bifurcated, with initial admissions and funding administered by the federal government and the bulk of subsequent resettlement services provided by private NGOs (Nawyn, 2006). However, each of these entities relies on each other, forming a symbiotic partnership.

This public-private system was first formed after WWII in response to the thousands of resulting displaced persons (Brown & Scribner, 2014). In the years that followed, the US handled refugees and asylum seekers in an unstandardized, case-by-case fashion, relying on

NGOs for flexible and voluntary support when requested (Brown & Scribner, 2014). Eventually, the US legislature passed the Refugee Act of 1980, which standardized the refugee and asylee admissions process and institutionalized the public-private partnership, clearly delineating the roles of federal and voluntary non-governmental agencies (Brown & Scribner, 2014). The Act also codified definitions of asylum and refugee consistent with the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1951:

any person who is outside any country of such person's nationality or, in the case of a person having no nationality, is outside any country in which such person last habitually resided, and who is unable or unwilling to return to, and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of, that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion (The U.S. National Archives, 1980).

Asylees meet this legal definition but do not enter the US with refugee status. Rather, they come to the US of their own accord and subsequently apply for a grant of asylum, which permits them to remain in the US and to be eligible for the Office of Refugee Resettlement's (ORR) services (*Who We Serve - Asylees*, 2019). Since the Refugee Act of 1980, the US has resettled over three million refugees and asylees (*History*, 2021; *Individuals Granted Asylum*, 2018).

The Federal role in asylum and refugee resettlement begins with admissions. Before October 1 each year, the President consults with Congress to set a refugee ceiling for the following fiscal year (*Fact Sheet*, 2020b). Grants of Asylum are not given such a ceiling.² Refugees are typically referred to the US by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), who makes the initial determination of refugee status (*Fact Sheet*, 2020b). Then, the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP)—administered by the

² In the fiscal year 2021, former President Donald Trump lowered the refugee ceiling to 15,000, a historic low since the Refugee act of 1980 (*Annual Refugee Ceilings*, 2022). For the fiscal year 2022, President Biden has raised the ceiling to 125,000 ("Proposed Refugee Admissions," 2021).

Department of Homeland Security (DHS)—conducts a lengthy screening and vetting process that lasts an average of nearly two years (*Fact Sheet, 2020b*).³ Depending on the type of asylum applied for, grants of asylum are given by a DHS/U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Asylum Office or the Immigration Court of the Executive Office of Immigration Review (EOIR) of the U.S. Department of Justice (*Who We Serve - Asylees, 2019*). The asylum application process can take anywhere from 6 months to several years and these wait times have been heavily impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic (*Fact Sheet, 2020a*).

Once approved, both asylees and refugees are eligible for resettlement and other forms of assistance. Prior to refugees' arrival in the US, resettlement location is determined by the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in partnership with one of their nine Voluntary Agencies (VOLAGs) (*Fact Sheet, 2020b*). VOLAGS are national organizations that any US non-profit agencies sponsoring refugee resettlement must be affiliated with (Nawyn, 2006). They contract directly with the State Department to resettle a certain number of refugees, which each VOLAG distributes amongst its local affiliate offices (Nawyn, 2006). Six of the nine VOLAGs are faith-based, including the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), which resettles more than any of the other 8 VOLAGs – approximately 30% (Hollenbach, 2020; *Migrants, n.d.*). Once assigned, local offices begin securing housing and basic necessities in advance of refugees' arrival (*Fact Sheet, 2020b*).

Federal funding for refugees comes from two main streams: the State Department's Reception and Placement (R&P) Program and transitional assistance programs via the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) (Brown & Scribner, 2014). The R&P provides a one-time sum—

³ This vetting process has become increasingly stringent over the last two decades in the wake of the September 2011 terrorist attacks in New York (Barkdull et al., 2012).

most recently \$2,225 per refugee—directly to the VOLAG to cover expenses during the refugee’s first 90 days in the country (“Reception and Placement,” n.d.). The VOLAG is expected to supplement this grant with in-kind and private donations to provide arrival reception, basic needs assistance for a minimum of 30 days, community orientation, referrals to social services, and case management for 90-180 days (Patrick, 2004). After the first 90 days, the ORR provides any further financial assistance. Asylees are only eligible for funding and assistance from the ORR (*Fact Sheet*, 2020a). While the R&P provides for the immediate needs of refugees upon arrival, the ORR focuses on transitional assistance, helping *both* refugees and asylees to integrate and become self-sufficient (*Resettlement Services*, 2022).⁴ VOLAGs assist refugees and asylees in accessing the various services they are eligible for.

In this way, the public and private sectors heavily rely on one another for successful resettlement. As it relates to faith based VOLAGs like the USCCB, this institutionalized partnership creates a unique dynamic in which faith organizations are intimately involved and connected in otherwise secular spaces (Nawyn, 2006). While this partnership has been largely successful, it is not without its flaws. Primarily, more and more financial strain is placed on VOLAGs as federal funding has not kept up with the cost of living (Brown & Scribner, 2014). Additionally, VOLAGs have long requested more information sharing from government agencies conducting refugee and asylee screening—including medical and mental health considerations—so that they can be better prepared to best serve these individuals (Brown & Scribner, 2014). Nevertheless, the relationship between faith-based resettlement VOLAGs and the Federal government remains a more highly interconnected and fortified partnership than is seen with other faith-based NGOs administering social services (Nawyn, 2006). This is due in

⁴ This funding includes limited direct cash assistance, medical assistance, and vocational and language training (*Resettlement Services*, 2022).

part to the way that government agencies and faith-based resettlement agencies organically developed in tandem during the 1900s (Nawyn, 2006).

Catholic Charities and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Though the Refugee Act of 1980 institutionalized the partnership of Catholics with the federal government in refugee and asylee resettlement services, Catholics have been involved in these issues as early as the 1840s. In fact, Catholic social institutions arose primarily out of concern for the mistreatment of Catholic immigrants in the 19th century and to assist in their resettlement and community integration.

Origins

An institutionalized approach to Catholic social service provision was instigated by mass immigration to the US in the mid-19th century (Degeneffe, 2003). The rapid growth in the Catholic immigrant population was met with Protestant antagonism and marginalization (Degeneffe, 2003). As a result, Catholics were overall of a lower socioeconomic status and in need of various social welfare assistance (Adloff, 2006). Not only were immigrant Catholics in need of social and integration services, but the organizations providing aid were often Protestant with an explicitly proselytizing aim (Adloff, 2006). To meet their communities' needs and to safeguard Catholics from Protestant influence, Catholics began organizing immigrant integration services, Catholic education, and Catholic health care at the local diocesan level (Adloff, 2006). As David Hollenbach asserts, both self-interest and necessity underlie the creation of the American Catholic Church's fortified social service institutional structure, which still supports the integration of newcomers today (Hollenbach, 2020).

By 1880, these services were primarily administered at the diocesan level (Adloff, 2006). Because there was no national structure, each diocese remained highly autonomous and localized

(Adloff, 2006). By 1900, the Catholic Church supported over 800 charitable institutions and had over 1 million children enrolled in Catholic education (Adloff, 2006). Nonetheless, the socio-cultural and economic gap between first and second-generation Catholic immigrants and Protestants remained (Degeneffe, 2003). In response to the rapid growth of their charitable institutions and their continued marginalization, the Catholic Church sought more centralization to better coordinate, guide, and direct their efforts and cultivate political representation of their interests (Adloff, 2006; Degeneffe, 2003). In 1910, the first National Conference of Catholic Charities (NCCC) was convened at Catholic University (Degeneffe, 2003). The goal of this first conference was to connect the otherwise isolated Catholic social welfare providers and to better address the “social, political, and industrial causes of poverty” (Degeneffe, 2003). In 1986, the NCCC was renamed Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA), serving as the national organizing body for 167 local Catholic Charities offices across the country (*Our History*, n.d.).

Just a few years after the first convening of the NCCC, the American Catholic bishops established the National Catholic War Council (NCWC) in 1917 to provide spiritual care and recreational services to soldiers during WWI and coordinate Catholic war efforts (*About Us*, n.d.-a). Frank Adloff also notes that such national organizing of efforts further strengthened governmental and political contacts and provided Catholics with the opportunity to demonstrate patriotism on the national stage (Adloff, 2006). This strong governmental interaction and alignment with national issues during WWI laid the groundwork for influential Catholic lobbying and advocacy work for decades to come (Adloff, 2006). Following the end of the war, the NCWC became the National Catholic Welfare Council, seeking to continue Catholic coordination and involvement in various social issues. In 1966, the NCWC split into the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) and the United States Catholic Conference (USCC),

focusing on internal and external affairs, respectively (*About Us*, n.d.-a). Then in 2001, the NCCB and USCC were consolidated to form the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) (*About Us*, n.d.-a). Today, the USCCB acts as the coordinator and promoter of all Catholic religious, charitable, and social welfare activities in the US, including that of Catholic Charities.

Organizational Structure

The highly structured and centralized nature of the USCCB and Catholic Charities make them uniquely well-positioned to offer resettlement services and advocate for pro-refugee and asylum policies compared other faith-based organizations (FBOs). Unlike other FBOs, the Catholic Church has far more influence over its social service organizations, and resources are mobilized and allocated in a streamlined fashion (Degeneffe, 2003). Furthermore, the centralization of these organizations allows for established positions as influential, unified advocates for refugees, asylees, and various other causes in the public and political sphere (c.f. Degeneffe, 2003).

As the overarching organization for Catholic activity in the US, the USCCB is comprised of primarily American bishops and a staff of more than 350 priests and laypersons, who together operate eighteen different committees and six administrative offices covering a wide variety of internal and external mandates (Heyer, 2006; *Offices*, 2022). The Migration Committee is dedicated to issues of immigration, refugees, and asylum and contains both the Office of Migration Policy and Public Affairs—focused on publishing reports and position papers, lobbying, and congressional testimony—and the Office of Resettlement Services—the office responsible for collaborating with the State Department and diocesan resettlement agencies like Catholic Charities to place refugees (*Migration Policy*, 2022; *Offices*, 2022; *Resettlement*

Services, 2022). As a tax-exempt, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, the USCCB cannot by law participate in a “substantial amount” of lobbying (Griffin, 2015). However, in its annual reports, the USCCB has historically not differentiated between its lobbying and advocacy budget, so it is difficult to quantify how much lobbying they are doing (Griffin, 2015). Nonetheless, their yearly budget for advocacy and lobbying is over 15 million dollars and the budget for migration and refugee services is over 50 million dollars (*Financial Reporting*, 2020).

While the USCCB conducts its fair share of lobbying and advocacy, so too does Catholic Charities, though focus is divided between the national CCUSA office and localized Catholic Charities dioceses. CCUSA serves as the policy setter and bridge for the larger Catholic Charities network. Additionally, it focuses efforts on lobbying at the federal level, listing policies “that allow newcomers to contribute to and more fully participate in their new communities” as a top priority (*Immigration Advocacy*, n.d.). Each diocese comprises a regional boundary that typically encompasses a single county or a small collection of districts (Degeneffe, 2003). The Catholic Charities within each diocese is overseen by an executive director, a board of directors, and a bishop (Fieldnotes, 2022). Some dioceses contain multiple offices if they cover a larger geographic area. At this localized level, the main focus is on the administration, funding, and provision of social services in accordance with the procedures, expectations, and bylaws laid out by the national branch (Degeneffe, 2003). Though federal lobbying is officially left to CCUSA and the USCCB, many diocesan Catholic Charities also participate in lobbying at the local and state levels (Degeneffe, 2003). Furthermore, most Catholic Charities dioceses focus heavily on elevating “community consciousness” on marginalized groups of people and the issues that affect them (Degeneffe, 2003). This community consciousness is particularly important for their resettlement work, as Catholic Charities rely on volunteers and in-kind donations to carry it out.

Conclusion

The history of Catholics' concomitant development with the federal government in refugee resettlement is a crucial strength of their advocacy influence. With such a present strong public-private partnership with the government and a highly centralized organizational structure, American Catholics have a unique position in the American advocacy landscape. Their history of professional expertise with refugees and asylum seekers, combined with their established proximity to federal agencies, provides extraordinary purchase for the advocacy offices of the USCCB and CCUSA. In the following chapter, I will explore how these organizations leverage their unique positions to advocate for pro-refugee and pro-asylum policies, specifically looking at how theological principles are expressed in these public spaces.

Chapter 4

Strategic Issue Framing at the National Level

Catholics have carried the history of their marginalization as immigrants with them into their present ethos. Care for the foreigner, the marginalized, and the vulnerable is an institutionalized dogma of an expansive doctrine surrounding social issues. This chapter explores the Catholic Church's present social doctrine, known as Catholic Social Teaching (CST), and the ways it underlies migrant advocacy. I first spend some time understanding CST as a discourse, shedding light on the particular meanings and understandings of social reality it ascribes to. After establishing the theological and eschatological roots behind CST, I perform a discourse analysis on Catholic advocacy at the national level, paying attention to the ways that migrant issues are strategically framed in public statements from 2001-2022 from the USCCB, Catholic Charities, and its joint campaign Justice for Immigrants. Lastly, I provide some reflections on how Catholic discourse interacts with broader American discourses.

Understanding Catholic Social Teaching

The Catholic Church's social mission is based on and ordered around Catholic Social Teaching (CST), sometimes called the Social Doctrine of the Church (*Mission Statement and Core Values*, 2018). Rooted scripture and articulated through USCCB statements, encyclicals, and papal addresses that date back as early as 1891, CST has taken shape over many years to provide Catholics with “wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society” (*Mission Statement and Core Values*, 2018; *Seven Themes*, n.d.). According to the Social Concerns and Advocacy Director of Catholic Charities Diocese of Charlotte, CST can be conceived of through the metaphor of a tree, with biblical scripture as the roots, church teachings as the trunk, and the branches as the seven themes of Catholic Social Teaching (Fieldnotes, 2022).

Scriptural Roots

The primary foundation for the entirety of CST is sourced from Genesis 1:27, in which God created humanity in His own image and likeness making each individual worthy of dignity and respect (*Seven Themes*, n.d.). Due to the likeness of God in each person, humans possess a sacredness akin to God, and mistreatment of any human being is thus sacrilegious (Hollenbach, 2015). This belief in *Imago Dei* as the basis of human dignity is at the heart of much of Catholic social doctrine (Alva, 2017). Another central scriptural basis is the commandment to “love your neighbor as yourself” found in Leviticus (*New International Version Bible*, 2011, Lev. 19:18). Other key foundations focus on caring for the poor, the foreigner, and the marginalized, ensuring the fulfillment of basic needs:

When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and for the foreigner residing among you (New International Version Bible, 2011, Lev. 23:22).

The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sights to the blind, to let the oppressed go free (New International Version Bible, 2011, Luke 4:18-19).

As it pertains to refugees and migrants specifically, Catholics find examples in the stories of the migrant Abraham, the Exodus of enslaved Jews in Egypt, and Jesus' own refugee story (Hollenbach, 2020).

These verses carry special weight to the Catholic tradition, as they believe they will be judged by their acts of good faith – in particular, how they treated the most vulnerable in society (Fieldnotes, 2022). In Matthew 25, for example, Jesus refers to the Day of Judgement, in which God judges His people and determines who has eternal life in heaven and who is sent to eternal punishment. To those condemned to eternal punishment, God says,

Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me (*New International Version Bible, 2011, Matt. 25:42-43*).

Confused, the “cursed” ask God when they saw him in need like this. God responds, “truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me” (*New International Version Bible, 2011, Matt. 25:45*). In this way, scripture not only provides positive theological directives for caring for those in need, but it also provides clear negative eschatological consequences for neglecting the stranger, the poor, and the vulnerable.

The “Trunk” of Church Teachings

These scriptural foundations have been translated through the years to speak to modern contexts through official statements, encyclicals, and papal addresses. The archive of these documents is not a closed entity and continues to grow as the Pope and other bishops continue to provide reflections. As it relates to refugees and asylum seekers, some key foundational documents include St. John Paul II's *Ecclesia in America (The Church in America)*, Blessed Paul

VI's *Populorum Progressio (On the Development of Peoples)*, and "Welcoming the Stranger Among Us" by the former NCCB/USCC. As a whole, these documents mandate care for the foreigner, citing the aforementioned biblical teachings (Pope Paul VI, 1967; John Paul II, 1999; NCCB & USCCB, 2000).

The Seven Branches of CST

Due to the high volume of social doctrine documents spanning over a century, the former National Conference of Catholic Bishops summarized key messages into seven organizing themes or principles, articulated for the first time in 1990 in the document, *A Century of Catholic Teaching: A Common Heritage, A Continuing Challenge*. All Catholic social positions find their footing in at least one of these seven principles.

Life and Dignity of the Human Person. According to the USCCB, this principle is foundational to the preceding six principles and to all of Catholic social tradition (*Seven Themes*, n.d.). This principle views human life as sacred and possessing inherent dignity based on the belief in *Imago Dei*. Several social positions arise from this principle, including the well-known stances of anti-abortion, anti-death penalty, and anti-embryonic stem cell research (*Seven Themes*, n.d.). However, this principle also covers the promotion of effective conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and caring for unjustly displaced peoples.

Call to Family, Community, and Participation. This principle recognizes the social quality of humanity. Accordingly, the lawful and economic organization of society has direct effects on the quality of community, peoples' ability to participate equally, and human dignity (*Seven Themes*, n.d.). The institutions of marriage and the traditional family are seen as particularly important social institutions to uphold (*Seven Themes*, n.d.). Furthermore, everyone should be active participants in shaping this community and have full and equal agency in

shaping their future (Fieldnotes, 2022). In terms of refugees and migrants, forced migration means exclusion from participation in home society, and resettlement in a new country is only just when refugees can actively participate in the community (Hollenbach, 2020).

Rights and Responsibilities. This principle establishes that certain fundamental human rights must be protected to maintain human dignity (*Seven Themes*, n.d.). Simultaneously, these rights necessarily impose responsibilities to ourselves, others, and society at large to ensure that these rights are available to everyone across borders (*Seven Themes*, n.d.).

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable. Based on the numerous examples in biblical scripture, Catholics believe that God cares especially for the poor and vulnerable and that poverty is an affliction to human dignity. Furthermore, Catholics believe that they will be evaluated on Judgment Day based on how they treat the marginalized and are instructed to elevate the needs of the poor and vulnerable in society (*Seven Themes*, n.d.). Those fleeing violence and persecution find themselves in vulnerable and often poor positions.

The Dignity of the Work and the Rights of Workers. The very first encyclical document, Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (On the Condition of Labor) in 1891, writes on this theme as the status of workers in America was changing following the industrial revolution (Pope Leo XIII, 1891). This principle asserts that "the economy must serve the people, not the other way around" (*Seven Themes*, n.d.). Furthermore, work is a way of participating in God's creation (*Seven Themes*, n.d.). As a result, both the dignity of work and the rights of workers are to be protected. This results in Catholic promotion of unions, living wages, and private property ownership (*Seven Themes*, n.d.).

Solidarity. This principle focuses on the oneness of humanity and the shared condition of human dignity, regardless of race, class, ethnicity, national, or ideological differences (*Seven*

Themes, n.d.). It compels Catholics to love their “brothers and sisters” across borders and to work for justice and peace in the face of ever-growing conflict (*Seven Themes*, n.d.). This also means that Catholics are called to walk in the shoes of others, understanding their suffering and struggles, in order to best help them overcome this suffering and realize the fullness of their human dignity (Fieldnotes, 2022).

Care for God’s Creation. This is a more recent addition to the seven themes, appended in the 90s as environmental science uncovered more about the climate crisis. According to this principle, environmental activism and conservation are imperative to respect and steward the earth that God created (*Seven Themes*, n.d.). Moreover, Catholics have a responsibility to protect the dignity of future generations by providing them with a healthy earth (Hollenbach, 2015).

Charity, Justice, and Catholic Social Teaching

The social mission of the Catholic church is to make CST real and tangible in the world (Fieldnotes, 2022). As the charitable arm of the Catholic Church, Catholic Charities is an institutionalized response to this call. In his 2005 Encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, Pope Benedict XVI writes,

The Church’s deepest nature is expressed in her threefold responsibility: of proclaiming the word of God, celebrating the sacraments, and exercising the ministry of charity. These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable. For the Church, charity is not a kind of welfare activity which could equally well be left to others, but is a part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being (Pope Benedict XVI, 2005).

The CCDOC Social Concerns and Advocacy Director described this three-fold calling as a three-legged stool - if you remove the leg of charity, the Church cannot stand (Fieldnotes, 2022).

Further, charity itself is only one “foot” and cannot stand without the accompanying foot of justice (Fieldnotes, 2022). While charity compels Catholics to meet the immediate needs of

others, justice compels them to ameliorate the systems and institutions that caused the needs in the first place. In his 2013 Vatican Address, Pope Francis said,

Charity that leaves the poor person as he is, is not sufficient. True mercy, the mercy God gives to us and teaches us, demands justice, it demands that the poor find the way to be poor no longer (Pope Francis, 2013).

Because charity must be an organized activity aimed at fulfilling the tenants of CST *and* must be accompanied by justice, the Catholic charitable organizations that began arising in the 1800s remain highly systematized and have dedicated advocacy offices to address the problems they see in this charity work (c.f. Pope Francis, 2013).

This paradigm holds true for Catholic involvement with refugees and asylum seekers. Finding a calling to serve migrants from many of the seven tenets of CST, Catholics administer charity by resettling 30% of the country's refugees and providing immigration assistance in many of their offices. The dedicated advocacy offices of the USCCB and Catholic Charities USA supplement these charitable missions with the corresponding foot of justice, as they advocate for the policy and government action to ameliorate oppressive systems for these groups.

A Word on Historical Precedent and Present Inclusivity

As I discuss the empowering potential of CST in migrant advocacy, it is critical to note that this social doctrine has historically been a living tradition. In terms of discourse theory, the Catholic discourse on human dignity is – like all discourse – malleable and has changed symbiotically with Catholic understandings of social realities. Specifically, the articulation of human dignity in terms of ideas like human rights, agency, and equality was not a widely accepted part of Catholic belief until the mid-1900s and not institutionally explicit until the Second Vatican Council in 1968 (Hollenbach, 2015). On the contrary, some pre-WWII Catholic elites leveraged human dignity as justification for the moral necessity of oppression in the form of slavery, torture, and suppression of religious freedom (Hollenbach, 2015). This was largely a

part of a larger defensive strategy against the real or perceived threats of socialist and liberal revolution, as both movements sought to limit the church's power in public society (Hollenbach, 2015). The affiliated momentum toward human rights and freedom of religion thus became a part of a threatening secularizing agenda to be combated (Hollenbach, 2015).

It was not until the mid-20th century that basic human rights and freedom were considered a prerequisite for human dignity (Hollenbach, 2015). Yet, even now, the promises of CST are not fully maintained within Catholic doctrine. Though the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* boasts of human dignity as the foundation of “radical equality” between all people – regardless of race, sex, class, nation, culture, or origin – the Church still officially maintains positions that limit the autonomy and rights of women and the LGBTQ+ community (Hollenbach, 2019; Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2005). It is difficult to maintain an ethic of radical equality when women are not afforded certain leadership positions within the Catholic Church, and queer folk are excluded from the same institutions of marriage and family deemed indispensable by CST.

Discourse Analysis: Strategic Issue Framing at the National Level, 2001-2022

Putting the rocky history of human dignity aside for the moment, I now turn attention to the ways Catholics employ it and the other six themes of CST in their advocacy work for refugees and asylum seekers. Specifically, I view these themes as discourse – representing particular theological and eschatological meaning – and examine how they are being leveraged to strategically frame migrant issues in internal and external messaging. Since the seven themes of CST were not formalized until the 1990s and the current organizational structure of the USCCB not finalized until 2001, discourse analysis will only focus on statements in the last two

decades (2001-2022). I will then provide some reflections on how the Catholic discourse in these issue frames is interacting with other discourses in America.

The USCCB conducts most of its advocacy for migrants through its Migration and Refugee Services Committee. This committee houses the Office of Migration Policy and Public Affairs, which publishes numerous policy position papers and research reports, provides Congressional testimony and Amicus Briefs, and writes direct letters to legislators. The Office of Migration Policy and Public Affairs also runs the Justice for Immigrants Campaign (JFI), in which CCUSA is a participating member (*About Us*, n.d.-b). The primary goal of JFI is to “educate the public, especially the Catholic community, about Church teaching on migration, to create political will for...immigration reform, and advocate” for these reforms and policies consistent with Church teaching (*About Us*, n.d.-b). CCUSA also writes direct letters to congress advocating for pro-refugee and asylum policies and publishes policy papers. Often, CCUSA and the USCCB produce their work jointly. On rare occasions, these organizations collaborate with other Catholic organizations and advocacy groups, but John Carr – former executive director of the USCCB's Department of Justice, Peace, and Human Development – noted that federal lobbying is often more powerful when a target office receives many letters from many prominent religious leaders on a particular issue than to receive one cosigned letter (Heyer, 2006). Moreover, as large national organizations, CCUSA and the USCCB have enough resources and influence that precludes the need for coalition work that exists at the local level, which will be seen in the analysis of the Western Regional Office case study (Heyer, 2006). Though CCUSA and the USCCB are aligned on their advocacy objectives, the way they strategically frame these issues differs slightly.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Compared to Catholic Charities USA, the USCCB and its JFI campaign tend to be more actively theological in language, employing a wider array of CST themes to frame migrant issues in secular spaces. This follows a broader trend in USCCB advocacy identified by Kristen E. Heyer in her book *Prophetic and Public: The Social Witness of US Catholicism*. When Heyer asked the then Vice President of Social Policy in 2003, Sharon Daly, “about translating Catholic identity into more accessible modes amid the pluralism of the legislature and secular policy debates, Daly responded that ‘there are plenty of other people to be accessible!’” (Heyer, 2006). Furthermore, Daly believed that plenty of other advocacy organizations can and will provide secular perspectives, but the USCCB offers the unique contribution of the moral perspective (Heyer, 2006). Since this interview in 2003, this theological bent of the USCCB in migrant advocacy has remained relatively true. For example, in 2014 Congressional Testimony given by the then Chairman of the USCCB Committee on Migration, Bishop Eusebio Elizondo quotes numerous foundational CST passages from Matthew and Deuteronomy and asserts that,

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph were refugees in the Middle East and faced some of the same fear, uncertainty, and dislocation as the millions of Syrians imperiled by this crisis face today (*The Ongoing Syrian Refugee Crisis*, 2014).

More recently, however, religious language in congressional letters and congressional testimony increasingly shows up as appeals to the specific themes of CST rather than direct scripture and biblical stories, as is found in more internally focused advocacy like pastoral letters and the Justice for Immigrants Campaign. These documents/campaigns are often even more explicitly theological as they are aimed at the Catholic community specifically.

One theme of Catholic Social Teaching that is used as an issue frame relatively often in USCCB advocacy is the framing of migrant issues in terms of the moral obligation to protect the

poor and vulnerable in society. For example, in a 2017 letter to the House Committee on the Judiciary, the then Chairman of the USCCB Committee on Migration wrote in opposition to a proposed Act that would limit access to asylum. He asserts,

H.R. 391 unacceptably limits protection for vulnerable migrants fleeing persecution... How we respond to individuals and families seeking protection is a test of our moral character. In the words of Pope Francis, we must “not tire of courageously living the Gospel, which calls you to recognize and welcome the Lord Jesus among the smallest and most vulnerable” (Vásquez, 2017).

In this instance, protecting refugees and asylum seekers are framed as obligations to protect the vulnerable in theological terms to a secular audience. However, this frame is also employed in non-theological terms. For example, in an April 26, 2021 letter to Congress as they considered the fiscal year 2022 budget, the Chairman of the USCCB Committee on Migration frames protecting refugees and asylum seekers as the duty of wealthy countries to protect the poor:

The Catholic Church acknowledges the right of nations to control their borders and the responsibility of governments to protect the people within their borders. At the same time, we believe that those rights and responsibilities should be exercised in a manner that is consistent with the moral obligation to protect the humanitarian needs of migrants and refugees. Wealthier nations have a greater obligation to accommodate those needs and can do so in a manner that does not jeopardize the safety or well-being of their citizens (Dorsonville, 2021).

Here, the preferential option for the poor framing is combined with a different theme of CST that frames protecting refugees as under the purview of government rights and responsibility. This frame appears in USCCB advocacy as a way to maneuver the delicate balance of boarder control and protecting the human rights and dignity of non-US citizens.

USCCB advocacy also employs the frame of solidarity, typically when addressing migrants directly or when the target audience includes the Catholic community. For example, in a joint pastoral letter called “Strangers No Longer Together on the Journey of Hope” in 2003, the USCCB and the *Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano* call both the Mexican and American

governments and Catholic communities to stand in solidarity with migrants. Speaking directly to migrants, they frame advocacy as an act of solidarity,

We stand in solidarity with you, our migrant brothers and sisters, and we will continue to advocate on your behalf for just and fair migration policies (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Inc. and Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano, 2003).

They implore both governments to “work toward a globalization of solidarity,” and to their Catholic community, they insist that,

Faith in the presence of Christ in the migrant leads to a conversion of mind and heart, which leads to a renewed spirit of communion and to the building of structures of solidarity to accompany the migrant (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Inc. and Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano, 2003).

Here, there is a double framing that resonates with the Catholic community. Not only are migrant issues framed as a matter of solidarity – a tenant of CST – but solidarity is framed as a natural outcome of true faith. According to Catholic Social Teaching, solidarity requires a degree of empathy and understanding of the struggles facing the marginalized (Fieldnotes, 2022). As a result, many appeals to solidarity are accompanied by personalized stories of the plight of refugees and asylum seekers. For example, in this same letter focused on solidarity, the bishops write,

Jose Luis Hernandez Aguirre tried desperately to find work in the maquiladora plants⁵ near Mexicali but was unable to do so. With a wife and two children, ages one and seven, Jose needed to find a job that would put food on the table. A smuggler told him of the high-paying jobs across the border and offered, for \$1,000, to take him there. Joined by his brother Jaime and several others, the group headed for the United States with hope. After one day, brother Jaime called and reported to the family and Jose's sister, Sonia, that Jose was lost. Jaime could not make the trek in the desert, but Jose wanted to continue on the journey. He had to find a job for his family. Four days later, Jose's body was found in the desert. His sister Sonia borrowed a truck to retrieve Jose's remains. Upon her return, she encountered another group of migrants heading to the United

⁵ A maquiladora is a low-cost factory owned by a foreign company located throughout Latin American, but typically near the Mexico-US border. Foreign companies benefit from the importations of raw materials and machinery tariff-free and duty free. Maquiladoras have been criticized for the exploitation of their labor force (*Maquiladora*, 2021).

States. "Why do you want to risk your lives like this?" she implored. "Come and look at my brother in his coffin" (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Inc. and Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano, 2003).

The difficult details of this story add color to readers' understanding of migrants' suffering and bolster the weight of the solidarity frame.

Most commonly, however, the USCCB frames migrant issues as a matter of human dignity. This holds true across intended audiences. Even if other issue frames are employed, human dignity is still typically used as the foundational basis for those frames. For example, in the aforementioned pastoral letter, "Strangers No Longer Together on the Journey of Hope," which heavily employs an issue frame of solidarity, human dignity is leveraged in equal frequency. As a reason for solidarity with migrants through advocacy, the bishops assert that,

regardless of their legal status, migrants, like all persons, possess inherent human dignity that should be respected (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Inc. and Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano, 2003).

In addition to statements inundated with explicit theological appeals like "Strangers No Longer Together on the Journey of Hope," the issue frame of human dignity is often used as a closing statement in congressional testimony and congressional letters that are otherwise void of religious language. For example, in a 2016 joint letter from the USCCB and the Catholic Immigration Network to the Secretary of Homeland security, DHS deportation practices are framed as an assault on human dignity:

Believing that we are all made in the image of God, we recognize the God-given dignity of every person. These actions, which force people to live in fear and terror and separate families, deny the dignity of the human spirit. We cannot support such actions and urge you to reject future enforcement efforts of this kind (Elizondo & Vann, 2016).

As the last few sentences in a letter that otherwise relies on natural law-argumentation and data, human dignity is often employed by the USCCB in this manner in statements targeted at a more secular audience.

Catholic Charities USA

Despite some variation, the USCCB often overtly uses theological appeals and CST themes as issue frames. Catholic Charities USA, on the other hand, includes less religious language in their position papers and congressional letters. Typically, the issue frame of human dignity appears as the sole theological reference in these letters, though subtle references to the protection of the family unit are also employed from time to time. This can be seen clearly in the following 2018 congressional letter in which Sister Markham petitions senators to vote on legislation that would help undocumented youth in America:

We urge you to work for a compassionate solution, which protects human dignity, defends the family, and fosters a more just and compassionate community (Markham, 2018).

Though the family is a part of one of the seven themes of CST, appeals to the family by CCUSA are not typically expressed in terms of CST and are only used when discussing familial immigration policies. Human dignity demonstrates a greater breadth as an issue frame in CCUSA's advocacy work. Though often expressed without its theological basis, CCUSA sometimes does employ *Imago Dei* when framing migrant issues in terms of human dignity, like in this 2021 statement following the reimplementation of the "Remain in Mexico" program:

CCUSA affirms the inherent dignity bestowed by God on every human person, including immigrants and refugees, no matter the circumstances that compel a person to begin a new life in one of the communities it serves ("*Remain in Mexico*" Program, 2021).

Here, CCUSA frames the program's prevention of migration as a perversion of immigrants' and refugees' human dignity.

Catholic Mobilization

Both CCUSA and the USCCB mobilize the Catholic community towards political advocacy, providing comprehensive advocacy resources. CCUSA has a generalized community "Action Center" on its website that allows individuals to send an automated message to their

representatives on several issues, including comprehensive immigration reform. They urge Catholics to send these messages by framing it as an act of solidarity and providing a “voice for the most vulnerable and marginalized members of society” (*Action Center*, n.d.). The USCCB mobilizes the Catholic community to advocate for migrants through its JFI campaign, which provides educational resources on immigration reform and comprehensive talking points for legislative advocacy with congresspeople. These resources encourage and explain how to build effective relationships with legislators and remind their constituency to be overt in their Catholic perspective, which aligns with the USCCB’s public theology penchant (*Congressional Advocacy*, n.d.). The talking points frame this perspective in terms of human dignity and remind Catholics that “the Church’s solidarity and service related to migrants and refugees stems from the belief that every human person is created in the image and likeness of God” (*Talking Points on Immigration Reform*, 2021).

Beyond Catholic Social Teaching

In addition to the issue frames discussed, there are several notable themes in the USCCB and CCUSA’s advocacy that fall outside the seven themes of Catholic Social Teaching. One of these is a high focus on charity and justice. This is a tenant of CST but not one of the official seven themes. Moreover, it is not used as an issue frame, but it does guide advocacy focus. This primarily shows up as a push to investigate and alleviate the root causes of forced migration. In a joint 2018 statement, the USCCB and CCUSA write,

we strongly advocate for continued U.S. investments to address the underlying causes of violence and lack of opportunity in Central America...that cause people to flee their countries in search of protection (Public Affairs Office, 2018).

This urging is echoed in many statements from both agencies. Another theme in USCCB and CCUSA advocacy is the emphasis on both the US and the Catholic Church’s history of immigration. In some ways, this is an appeal to solidarity, as the history of immigration is a

shared history. In a 2005 Policy Paper, for example, CCUSA reminds readers that the Catholic Church “has been correctly called an immigrant Church in an immigrant nation” and contends that “today’s anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies suggest that many U.S. citizens have forgotten their heritage” (*Justice for Newcomers*, 2005).

In a 2003 interview, John Carr was quoted as saying, “faith is not a substitute for facts or data” (qtd. Heyer 2006). This sentiment is reflected in both the USCCB and CCUSA’s advocacy work, which both make heavy use of data and statistics to back up their petitions regardless of audience. The USCCB conducts a significant amount of research on refugee and asylum issues and has published 12 “Fact-Finding” mission reports since 2009, shedding light on various refugee crises and migration patterns across the globe. They often reference these findings in congressional testimony. In a similar vein, CCUSA often appeals to its network’s long history of involvement and professional expertise with refugees and asylum seekers in the country to lend credence to its advocacy. For example, in a 2017 letter to the then-Secretary of Homeland Security, President and CEO of Catholic Charities, Sister Donna Markham, states that,

Catholic Charities USA is a national organization representing the 177 Diocesan Catholic Charities agencies and affiliated ministries operating over 2,500 sites across the United States and the US territories. We serve over 8 million vulnerable people each year. Last year Catholic Charities provided care for over 600,000 migrants (Markham, 2017).

The assertion of this expertise lends credibility to her ensuing observations of the damaging effects of family separation policies. Notably, it relies on the individual accomplishments of grassroots Catholic Charities, bringing the grassroots context into national advocacy.

Reflections on the Overlapping Consensus of Human Dignity

The common thread of human dignity is clear throughout Catholic advocacy efforts for migrants. Though other themes of CST are also employed as issue frames, human dignity is the most consistent in both external, secular spaces and internally to Catholic audiences. This could

be a natural outcome of its primacy in CST, but through the lens of de Graauw's strategic issue framing, it could also be viewed as strategic. Both David Hollenbach and Reginald Alva have suggested that the tenant of human dignity has particular potential to find resonance and influence in the public dialogue because of its ability to be affirmed on secular grounds (Alva, 2017; Hollenbach, 2015, 2020). Indeed, American justices and politicians often leverage human dignity as an issue frame in their own work. In terms of discourse theory, this proposition is interesting because it represents the tactful intersection of two discourses representing different constructed social realities. While Catholics understand human dignity from the implications of *Imago Dei*, human dignity in the secular political sphere carries meaning based instead on the moorings of reason, natural law, or other non-explicitly theological meanings. Yet, as if in a Venn diagram, human dignity provides a space for the comfortable overlap of two different social realities.

John Rawls has referred to this space as "overlapping consensus," in which two different normative belief systems with different metaphysical understandings find common currency in a particular conception of justice (Rawls, 2005). Though each group affirms the particular conception of justice with disparate moral tenants – and might even give public reasoning that is different from the internal rationale – there is consensus on the tenant itself (Rawls, 2005). An interesting facet of overlapping consensus is the simultaneous sense of shared currency in the conception of justice *and* the potential for disconnect and misunderstanding between participating social realities. In other words, though shared language is used that creates a sense of solidarity for productive collaboration, each discourse constructs the tangible meaning of that language in a particular way that may not align. This is easily seen in the disparate discourses on human dignity in Catholicism and the American legal and political systems.

Unlike many other countries that codified human dignity into their legal systems following WWII and the United Nations Charter of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in 1948 – which heavily relies on the concept of human dignity and has profoundly shaped the global discourse on human rights – the US does not have human dignity written into its institutional fabric (Alva, 2017; Snead, 2015). However, as scholar Carter Snead notes, it has become a part of the legal and political discourse as a rhetorical invocation to “bolster the normative force of other recognized juridical concepts” (Snead, 2015). Or in the context of this discussion, human dignity is used as a strategic issue frame to meet political and legal aims (c.f. de Graauw 2016). For example, in criminal law and procedure, the Constitutional Fifth Amendment protects the normative idea of freedom, as it protects citizens from self-incrimination and government coercion (Snead, 2015). In the seminal *Miranda v. Arizona* decision, the Supreme Court ruled that as a part of this freedom, citizens must be advised of their rights preceding custodial interrogation, including the right to remain silent (Snead, 2015). In making this decision, they appealed to human dignity, claiming that the foundation for freedom from government coercion “is the respect a government - state or federal - must accord to the dignity and integrity of its citizens” (*Miranda v. Arizona*, 1996). Furthermore, any atmosphere of intimidation or coercion is “destructive of human dignity” (*Miranda v. Arizona*, 1996). In this way, human dignity is invoked to strategically frame the issue of freedom with the intention of strengthening its weight. This sort of strategic issue framing is seen in many other Supreme Court decisions, including in Fourth Amendment issues of privacy and Eighth Amendment issues of cruel and unusual punishment (Snead, 2015). It has also been widely invoked by politicians, lawmakers, and justices alike on civil rights and anti-discrimination issues, serving as a grounding principle for the tenant of equality (Snead, 2015). Policy for the disabled, the

elderly, global health, and bio-ethical considerations have likewise leveraged human dignity in the public discourse (Snead, 2015). In each case, human dignity is understood as an intrinsic and irrevocable quality of human existence in much the same way that it is used by Catholics, but for different reasons.

However, because the overlapping consensus of secular and Catholic discourses on human dignity comes from their own systems of meaning and understanding, there are many instances in which the concept is leveraged for opposing aims. For example, many politicians have argued that human dignity for a woman must include her individual agency and freedom to make decisions about her own pregnancy without the state's intrusion (Snead, 2015). On the other hand, Catholics leverage human dignity to protect the fetus's life (*Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities*, 2001). In this way, the same tenant of justice is used to support opposing positions. As another example, Catholics believe euthanasia or physician-assisted suicide is “an offense against the dignity of the human person” (*Euthanasia Statement*, 1991). Yet, those in favor invoke the idea of dignity as part and parcel of the autonomy to make intimate existential decisions (Snead, 2015). Evidently, overlapping consensus can provide a space where parties from different comprehensive normative belief systems can agree on the tenant of human dignity – that all are born with it regardless of any marker and that all are deserving of treatment and circumstances that are equal to this reality – and yet, the respective understanding of what precisely this means in the tangible world is deeply shaped by the disparate discourses that created the principle of human dignity in the first place.

Whether or not human dignity is always understood in the same way by Catholics and their advocacy audiences, the leveraging of human dignity in American secular public discourse lends some credence to Hollenbach and Alva's suggestion. Strategic issue framing relies on the

resonance of the framing issue with the target audience in order to leverage that resonance with another issue. Framing court decisions and public policy in terms of human dignity signify that justices, lawmakers, and politicians believe that human dignity carries resonant weight. Certainly, the USCCB and CCUSA's other CST issue frames are not used as widely or concordantly in the secular political and legal discourse. Obligations to society's poor are a major dividing line between republicans and democrats. Moreover, the duty to protect the "least of these" might carry eschatological weight for Catholics, but not in secular circles. The spirit of solidarity is likewise difficult to leverage in a country that has consistently been described as "more divided than ever," which is perhaps why it is employed more in internal, Catholic messaging than in secular spaces (Yang, 2020). Additionally, as the US debates the rights of trans folk and just overturned the nearly 50-year tenure of women's rights to control their own pregnancy, Catholic discourse on "rights and responsibilities" finds uncertain ground. Human dignity seems to have the highest faculty for overlapping consensus in American discourse.

Conclusion

Catholics' extensive centralized social doctrine serves as a strong internal foundation for their charitable and advocacy efforts, as CST compels them to this action in clear eschatological terms. The tenants of CST show up as issue frames throughout their work, with the thread of human dignity having particular prominence in migrant advocacy. The focus on human dignity may be a result of its prominence in Catholic Social Teaching, but it also provides a strategic overlap with the broader American legal and political discourses. Whether intentional or inadvertent, this overlapping consensus provides a common currency of discussion when advocating in the public sphere that has the potential to strengthen its effectiveness. In the following chapters, I will explore how the discourse of the national USCCB and Catholic

Charities USA are utilized, transformed, and repurposed at a micro-level in Asheville, North Carolina.

Chapter 5

Introduction to the Case Study of Asheville

Situated amongst the Blue Ridge Mountains with a vibrant music and culinary scene, Asheville, NC is a popular tourist destination and home to the Western Regional Office (WRO) of Catholic Charities Diocese of Charlotte (CCDOC). During my research, the WRO served as a local case study for Catholic advocacy work for refugees and asylees. This chapter introduces the WRO and the historical, political, and sociocultural landscape in which it operates and which influences its resettlement work.

Background

The state of North Carolina is split into two dioceses. The Diocese of Raleigh contains the eastern half of the state, while the Diocese of Charlotte comprises the 46 western counties. Within the Diocese, there are six Catholic Charities Offices located in Charlotte, Lenoir, Winston-Salem, Greensboro, Murphy, and Asheville. The office in Asheville is referred to as the Western Regional Office of the Catholic Charities Diocese of Charlotte and serves the 12 western-most counties of North Carolina. Executive leadership and administration for the diocesan offices are housed in the flagship Charlotte office.

The WRO comprises seven full-time staff: the Region Director, Case Management Coordinator, Business Operations Assistant/Volunteer Coordinator, Mental Health Counselor, Refugee Resettlement Case Coordinator, and Refugee Case Aide. Additionally, there is one part-time Refugee Case Aid and an AmeriCorps Vista. Together, this staff provides bilingual mental health counseling, case management, a weekly food pantry, two monthly community markets,

diaper and toiletry ministries, refugee resettlement, burial assistance, and other forms of direct assistance. In 2021 alone, the WRO served 626 individuals with bilingual mental health counseling services, provided burial assistance to 31 families, provided 81 families with holiday support assistance, distributed 91,390 pounds of food and 2,171 pounds of non-food items (diapers, toiletries, etc.) to 2,407 individuals, provided financial assistance to 66 households, and resettled 34 refugees.

Refugee Resettlement at CCDOC

The WRO and the Charlotte office are the only two offices in the Diocese of Charlotte that do refugee resettlement (Fieldnotes, 2022). Since 1975, the Diocese has resettled nearly 15,000 refugees (WNC History at Smith-McDowell House Museum, 2022). Before this past year, the WRO was exclusively resettling refugees with family ties in the area (*The Role of U.S. Ties*, n.d.; WNC History at Smith-McDowell House Museum, 2022). These family ties support VOLAGs in resettlement and assist in the refugees' transition and integration into the community (*The Role of U.S. Ties*, n.d.). Most often, these refugees came through the Lautenberg Program, established in 1989 to help threatened religious minorities in the former Soviet Union come to the US (WNC History at Smith-McDowell House Museum, 2022). In December of 2021, the WRO became a "sub-office" for refugee resettlement. This designation increased resettlement funding, expanded the resettlement staff, and allows the WRO to extend its resettlement services beyond family tie cases.

Following the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan in late 2021, the WRO received word that it would begin receiving Afghan evacuees without family ties (WNC History at Smith-McDowell House Museum, 2022). On October 3, 2021, the WRO received its first of 42 Afghan evacuees (WNC History at Smith-McDowell House Museum, 2022). Notably, most Afghans

entering the US during this time did not enter with official refugee status but with Humanitarian Parole, as outlined in President Biden's Operation Allies Welcome (*Operation Allies Welcome*, 2021). Typically granted on a case-by-case basis, this status has been used in mass like this only a few times in recent history when traditional refugee channels are too slow (Danilo Zak, 2021). Usually, those granted humanitarian parole are not eligible for refugee support services, but in this case, emergency legislation was passed to allow access through the Afghan Placement and Assistance (APA) Program (*Operation Allies Welcome*, 2021).⁶

A Catholic History of North Carolina

Though the WRO is celebrating its 50th anniversary after its founding in 1982, it is relatively young in North Carolina's history. Catholicism in North Carolina spans back nearly two centuries (Catholic News Herald, Diocese of Charlotte, 2022). Throughout the early 1800s, the Catholic population grew in North Carolina as Irish Catholics began to immigrate in large numbers to work on the ever-expanding railroads and goldmines (Catholic News Herald, Diocese of Charlotte, 2022). In line with the national trend of proliferating "by-Catholics, for Catholics" institutions in response to immigrant marginalization in the late 1800s, Benedictine monks and a group of nuns called the Sisters of Mercy began founding Catholic schools, parishes, and hospitals across the state (Catholic News Herald, Diocese of Charlotte, 2022; Degeneffe, 2003). From 1880 to 1920, the Catholic population in North Carolina tripled to over 8000 people (Catholic News Herald, Diocese of Charlotte, 2022). In response to this growth, Pope Pius XI made a 1924 declaration that the state of North Carolina be made into its own

⁶ Unlike those processed through traditional refugee channels, Afghans with humanitarian parole are only granted this status for up to two years and do not have a clear pathway to residency or citizenship (Fieldnotes, 2022). After one year in the US, those with humanitarian parole can apply for asylum, but approval of this application is not guaranteed. In fact, the rejection rate in the WRO's district is 99% (Fieldnotes, 2022).

diocese: the Diocese of Raleigh, led by Bishop William J. Hafey (Catholic News Herald, Diocese of Charlotte, 2022). In response to the continued marginalization of Catholics, the then Bishop of the Diocese of Raleigh, Vincent S. Waters, founded the Bureau of Catholic Charities in 1948 to provide social services in Raleigh (*Our History*, 2014). One year later (1949), an office was also opened in Charlotte (*Our History*, 2014). In 1962, the agency's name was changed to Catholic Social Services Inc., matching a larger national trend in Catholic charitable organizations' branding (*Our History*, 2014).

By 1971, the Catholic population in North Carolina had reached 60,000 (Catholic News Herald, Diocese of Charlotte, 2022). Pope Paul VI issued a Papal Bol formally splitting North Carolina into the Diocese of Charlotte and the Diocese of Raleigh in 1972 (Catholic News Herald, Diocese of Charlotte, 2022). Shortly thereafter, Bishop Michael Begley, son of Irish immigrants, was ordained as the first bishop of the Diocese of Charlotte (Catholic News Herald, Diocese of Charlotte, 2022). As the former Catholic Social Services office in Charlotte was a part of the Diocese of Raleigh, an official Catholic Social Services of the Diocese of Charlotte was founded one year later in 1973, led by three trinitarian sisters of the Blessed Trinity (*Our History*, 2014). In 1982, the WRO in Asheville opened its doors, followed by offices in Winston Salem in 1983, Greensboro in 1994⁷, Murphy in 1999, and Lenoir in 2020.

Catholic Social Services of the Diocese of Charlotte would eventually become a part of the broader network of Catholic Charities USA, established in 1986 (*Our History*, n.d.). In 2013, then and current Bishop Peter J. Jugis renamed the agency yet again to Catholic Charities Diocese of Charlotte (*Our History*, 2014). This again followed a national renaming trend to focus on the “Church’s long history of charitable outreach to the poor, vulnerable, and those in need of

⁷ This is an approximate date - there is record of the Greensboro office being open in 1994, but it is possible it was open sooner. No exact record could be found.

services” (*Our History*, 2014). Still under Bishop Jugis, the present-day Diocese of Charlotte contains a Catholic population of over 500,000 people in 92 parishes and 15 schools (Catholic News Herald, Diocese of Charlotte, 2022).

Demographics

The City of Asheville sits within Buncombe County, home to over 261,000 people (*Buncombe County*, 2019). Asheville, the wider Buncombe County, and surrounding counties in its service area provide a dynamic context for the WRO’s refugee resettlement efforts.

Religious Affiliation

Although the 2020 US Religion Census, which provides religious demographic information by county, is yet to be published, the 2010 US Religion Census reports that Catholics account for approximately 4% of Buncombe County (Clifford Grammich et al., 2010). Protestants are by and large the majority in Buncombe at around 45% of the population, and those identifying with a non-Christian religion account for 2% (Clifford Grammich et al., 2010). Just under half of Buncombe County does not identify with any religion (Clifford Grammich et al., 2010). Accounting for any slight demographic changes in the last decade, Buncombe County tends to be less religious overall when compared to North Carolina at large, with 66% of North Carolinians identifying as Protestant, 9% as Catholic, 3% as a non-Christian faith, and 20% not reporting an affiliation with any religion (*Religious Landscape*, 2022). With 22% of the US as Catholic, North Carolina – and Buncombe County in particular – is home to a significantly smaller population of Catholics (*The 2020 Census*, 2021).

As it relates to the interaction of the WRO within its community, these religious demographics create interesting dynamics. Within its immediate county, the WRO not only represents a religious minority in an area that has historically marginalized Catholics but also

represents religion in general in an area that is particularly unreligious. This means that the WRO's community outreach is often occurring in secular spaces. Extending outwards to the other 12 westernmost counties in North Carolina that it serves, the WRO is operating in an area even more Protestant than the general US population. These varying contexts and perceived understanding of commonality and difference impact the WRO's strategic issue framing and when advocating for migrants in different contexts.

Race and Immigration

Compared to both the US and North Carolina, Buncombe County is less racially diverse. At 86% White, 7% Hispanic, 6% Black, and 1% Asian, Buncombe County does not reflect the overall American demographics: 76% White, 18% Hispanic, 13% Black, and 6% Asian (*Buncombe County*, 2019; *U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts*, 2022). North Carolina at large is 70% White, 22% Black, 10% Hispanic, and 3% Asian (*U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts*, 2022). Furthermore, only 6% of Buncombe County are immigrants, which is lower than that of both North Carolina (8%) and the US (13%) (*Buncombe County*, 2019). Though the rate of immigration has increased by 1 percent in the last five years, Buncombe County remains more homogenous than its state and country (*Buncombe County*, 2019). When considering the task of refugee resettlement, this homogeneity certainly plays a role in community reception and the resources available, like language services, established religious institutions, local ex-pat networks, and perhaps even general cultural competency of relevant stakeholders.

Politics

The political landscape of Buncombe County and North Carolina is complex. Since 2008, Buncombe County has voted for the Democratic candidate in every Presidential election, including the most recent 2020 Presidential election (*Buncombe County*, 2019). Aside from

Jackson County in the 2008 Presidential election, Buncombe County was the only county to vote this way in the 12 westernmost counties that the WRO serves (*Buncombe County*, 2019). When examining the individual precincts within Buncombe County, a diverse tapestry of blue (democratic) and red (republican) voting behavior emerges. The city of Asheville has the highest concentration of blue voters - as high as 91% in some precincts (*Election Contest Details*, n.d.). However, many other precincts – particularly those on the more rural fringe of the County – are 70% red (*Election Contest Details*, n.d.). Because the city of Asheville accounts for 35% of Buncombe County’s population, this urban area's voting behavior usually determines the County's outcome in Presidential elections, yet these views are not indicative of the County at large.

Even though Buncombe County votes blue in presidential elections, it is currently represented in the federal legislature by Republican Senator Thom Tillis and Republican Representative Madison Cawthorne (*Buncombe County*, 2019). However, the County also has a history of electing democratic congressmen (*Buncombe County*, 2019). Likewise, in the last 13 election cycles, 11 Republican Presidential candidates have won the state (Guillory, 2020). Yet, in those same 13 elections, North Carolinians elected a Democratic State Governor (Guillory, 2020). Professor at the UNC Hussman School of Journalism and Media, Ferrel Guillory, describes North Carolina’s history of “electing both arch-conservatives and moderate progressives” in the same election cycle as the “state’s political paradox” (Guillory, 2020). He writes,

North Carolina is the product of competing coalitions, each resulting from powerful streams of cultural, economic, and ideological attitudes. One stream flows out of rural, small-town culture, now incorporating conservative Christianity as well as the limited-government and economic libertarianism of the Tea Party. The other stream draws from a strong tradition of public-private partnership on behalf of economic growth and educational advancement (Guillory, 2020).

As the current refugee resettlement system relies on public-private partnerships, voting behavior in North Carolina is significant. This behavior becomes even more pertinent when considering the xenophobic rhetoric and anti-immigrant positions of much of the Republican party in the last two election cycles. Not only does voting behavior directly affect immigration and asylum policy, but it could also serve as an indicator of attitudes towards immigrants and refugees. The WRO's service area contains a diverse area of contradicting political views situated in a larger state political paradox (c.f. Guillory, 2020).

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the history of Catholics and Catholic Charitable institutions in North Carolina and provided an overview of key demographics of the Western Regional Office's service area. This diverse array of demographic factors influences how the WRO conducts advocacy and public mobilization efforts. The following chapter explores the ways that the WRO appropriates the rhetoric of broader Catholic institutions, like the USCCB and CCUSA to fit its context.

Chapter 6

Strategic Issue Framing, Administrative Advocacy, and Cross-Sectoral/Cross-Organizational Collaborations at the WRO

As a member agency of Catholic Charities USA and a VOLAG of the USCCB, the Western Regional Office of Catholic Charities Diocese of Charlotte mirrors the rhetoric, social concerns, and theology of these larger, overarching organizations. However, as a community-based organization, the WRO's advocacy efforts are focused primarily on mobilizing its own community to resettle its refugee clients in the Asheville area, rather than on federal lobbying. As a result, the WRO translates the rhetoric and tactics of its parent organizations to fit its own

context. This chapter examines how the WRO advocates and mobilizes the public for refugees and asylees in Asheville through three lenses. First, I give an overview of the strategic issue frames used to justify their work both internally and externally, paying attention to the transformation of these frames from the national context. Next, I look at how these frames show up in the WRO's work using de Graauw's concepts of administrative advocacy and cross-sectoral/cross-organizational collaboration. Finally, I provide some reflections on how the adapted discourse and tactics at the WRO coincide with the discourse, values, and context of its community.

Strategic Issue Framing

As the national organizing bodies of Catholic activities and charitable institutions, CCUSA and the USCCB demonstrate an explicit leveraging of Catholic Social Teaching and Catholic theology as they conduct federal lobbying and national advocacy. Though there are some differences between CCUSA and the USCCB in terms of theology in secular spaces, both organizations frequently frame migration issues in terms of human dignity across contexts. While this frame is present at the WRO, it is leveraged less as a justification for refugee resettlement work and more as a metric for its delivery of services as staff consistently discussed the most *dignified* way to serve clients. When dignity was leveraged to frame refugee resettlement, there was typically more of an emphasis on the *shared* quality of human dignity, causing the frame to lean more towards solidarity than dignity itself.

From an official standpoint, when I asked the Diocese's Social Concerns & Advocacy Director – who “leads agency efforts in sharing Catholic Social Teaching and the Catholic Church's call to promote and protect human life and dignity” – where care for migrants found its footing, he pointed to the tenets of solidarity and a preferential option for the poor and vulnerable

(*Agency Leadership*, 2022; *Fieldnotes*, 2022). In practice, the WRO leverages issue frames that find their footing in these two tenets of CST but that are translated into less explicitly Catholic language. I will first identify and review these issue frames and then explore how they surfaced in the WRO's administrative advocacy and cross-sectoral/cross-organizational collaborations.

The Solidarity Frame

With its roots in Catholic Social Teaching's sixth theme, "solidarity," the use of this frame at the WRO appeared as an appeal to fundamentally shared qualities between the migrant and the target audience. Unlike the verbatim use of solidarity at the national level, framing refugee resettlement in terms of solidarity at the WRO was more subtle. For example, the Region Director often referred to "shared humanity," and multiple staff appealed to the idea that if given different circumstances, any one of them could be a refugee (*Fieldnotes*, 2022). Similarly, as was seen at the national level, staff sometimes referenced the history of American immigration by advising that all of us have migration in our ancestry. These sorts of appeals sought to lessen the perceived distance between refugees and community members and increase buy-in by instilling a sense of commonality. Like at the national level, the WRO often supplemented this theme with personalized and detailed accounts of migrants' hardships which bolster compassion.

The "Jesus the Refugee" Frame

As also referenced from time to time at the national level, this frame leverages the biblical story of Jesus and his parents fleeing persecution in his early life. Typically, this was employed in settings with an assumed common faith in the figure of Jesus as it required the target audience to have adequate familiarity with New Testament bible stories. For example, a newsletter with a primarily Catholic audience asserts,

The Church is ever mindful that Jesus Christ himself was a refugee, that as a child, he had to flee with his parents from his native land in order to escape persecution. In every age, therefore, the Church feels called to help refugees (Saint John Paul II qtd. *Community Spirit*, 2021).

When directed at Catholic audiences, in particular, this frame carries a specific eschatological weight. The story of Last Judgment in Matthew 25:31-46 reminds followers that their treatment of Jesus as embodied in the “least of these” determines how they will be judged after death.

The “Helping” Frame

This was one of the most commonly used frames in both secular and Catholic spaces. As an interpretation or translation of CST’s tenant of the option for the poor and vulnerable, this frame puts the WRO’s efforts into its simplest terms: helping people in need. When I asked the Region Director about his most effective mobilization strategy, he said, “when you remind people that these are humans with needs, an educated, thoughtful, kind...person with a properly formed conscience, [will] get why we do what we do at Catholic Charities” (Staff Interview, 2022). Across numerous contexts, I often heard the Region Director say, “you don’t have to be Catholic to work here; you don’t have to be Catholic to be served by us; we just help people in need” (Fieldnotes, 2022). In a similar way that the human dignity frame provides overlapping consensus at the national level, the helping frame seemed to be leveraged in a similar manner - to break down faith divides and focus on an inscrutable and widely agreeable mission: to help people in need. Like the solidarity frame, framing refugee resettlement in terms of helping was typically bolstered by detailed descriptions of migrants’ needs and hardships.

Public Theology

The WRO trended more towards CCUSA regarding its use of theology in the public sphere. Board meetings, fundraisers, and certain meetings with an assumed majority Catholic attendance started with prayers and were laden with Catholic verbiage. The inside of the building was likewise filled with crucifixes and iconography. However, this imagery was reduced in

external messaging in religiously plural or secular spaces. While CCUSA made direct appeals to CST, the WRO instead often relied on translated versions of these tenants discussed above. I will now look at how these issue frames appeared in the WRO's messaging as it maneuvered different contexts in western North Carolina.

Cross-Sectoral and Cross-Organizational Collaborations

Unlike the larger national organizations of the USCCB and Catholic Charities USA, collaboration is fundamental at the WRO. With a small staff and limited resources, the WRO relies on cross-sectoral and cross-organizational collaborations for most of its programs, and refugee resettlement is no exception. While these collaborations typically serve the primary purpose of accomplishing a direct service, certain collaborations have the ulterior effect of public mobilization or elevating community consciousness. De Graauw focused primarily on nonprofit coalition building with other nonprofits and labor unions for the purpose of political advocacy. However, I argue that the WRO engages in a more extensive variety of collaborations outside of her framework that serve to bolster the organization's visibility and credibility to better mobilize resources and volunteers for refugees and asylum seekers.

Advocacy Collaborations

De Graauw notes that nonprofits often collaborate with organizations that can amplify their advocacy efforts (de Graauw, 2016). This is certainly the case with the WRO. One such collaboration is with the state chapter of the national organization We Welcome. As a Christian organization, We Welcome recognizes the biblical theme of welcome and “seeks to create a culture of welcome together from our tables at home to the halls of Congress” (*Join the Welcome Movement*, n.d.). At a local level, We Welcome works to combat the growing anti-migrant narrative amongst American evangelicals with education and the promotion of migrant services

as a basic tenet of the Christian faith (Fieldwork, 2022). As they then mobilize the Christian community to advocate for refugees and asylum seekers, We Welcome has simultaneously been able to advocate for the needs of the WRO's Afghan clients in their networks. For example, at the end of my time at the WRO, the refugee resettlement team organized a furniture drive to prepare for incoming refugees. We Welcome disseminated these details on its social media and other communication channels (Fieldwork, 2022).

Because of their focus on political advocacy, We Welcome can also connect the WRO to advocacy opportunities. For example, a contact at We Welcome connected the WRO with Refugee Council USA (RCUSA) Advocacy Days at the beginning of May. RCUSA is a "diverse coalition advocating for just and humane laws and policies, and the promotion of dialogue and communication among government, civil society, and those who need protection and welcome" (*About | Mission*, 2019). RCUSA's membership includes 29 US-based NGOs, ranging from national resettlement agencies like the International Rescue Committee to grassroots organizers. During the Advocacy Days campaign, RCUSA organized virtual meetings with elected officials across the country to allow those connected to refugees and asylum seekers to advocate for their needs. Through her connection at We Welcome, the WRO's Case Management Coordinator was invited to speak at two of these meetings with the staff of North Carolina Representative Dan Bishop and Senator Tom Tillis.

Both meetings were led by a refugee case manager from Church World Services and included advocates from various sectors including public education, higher education, case management, international development, and nonprofits. During these meetings, each person had a chance to share their connection to refugee resettlement work and provide compelling insight into the plight of refugees in the US. As the only instance of direct political advocacy I

witnessed, it was interesting to pay attention to how migrant issues were framed in this secular space. During the meeting with Representative Bishop, the Case Management Coordinator began her allotted time by framing the plight of refugees in terms of solidarity:

I'd like to begin with the fact that we all share the leveling united connection that we are all humans that are extended dignity, that are extended worth...All of our refugees [and] all of the evacuees did not choose to be refugees; they did not choose to be evacuees. That could be any of us at any time (Fieldnotes, 2022).

In this instance, human dignity is referenced, but the focus is on its shared, "leveling" nature. Further, the often prevalent "othering" of refugees is removed with the reminder that the degrees of separations between refugees and American citizens are slight. Like at the national level, this solidarity frame is bolstered by detailed accounts of refugees' hardships. Lamenting the blame-shifting response that she had received from representatives' offices in the past, the Case Management Coordinator said,

When I sit in the car with my Afghan client whose arm is mangled because they were shot by the Taliban and their bloodwork is coming back with traces of lead from the bullet, it ends up coming across as very tone-deaf when we spend our time saying "they should have done it this way, this way, this way," when what's really cool is that we can put things into place *now* that can help folks in need (Fieldnotes, 2022).

She also told the story of a recent client who had previously fled Honduras due to domestic violence but ended up living on the streets of Mexico for eight months because of the ramifications of Title 42 (Fieldnotes, 2022). Both congressmen have actively supported Title 42 and much of former President Trump's anti-refugee, anti-asylum policies. In the second call with Senator Tillis' office, the Case Management Coordinator echoed many of the same sentiments but also leveraged the issue frame of Jesus as a refugee. She said,

Welcome is not something that is debatable for us when it comes to being believers. I come from the Christian faith. Jesus himself was a refugee (Fieldnotes, 2022).

While this meeting would have been considered a secular space, many on the call represented Christian organizations and Senator Tillis is a practicing Catholic. Thus, framing care for migrants and refugees in these terms undoubtedly carried weight.

After each participant shared their testimony, the group made several detailed advocacy requests, including rebuilding and strengthening the US Refugee Admissions Program and protecting refugees fleeing hostilities in Afghanistan and Ukraine. This was an excellent advocacy opportunity for the WRO that allowed the amplification of advocacy requests through collaboration with other respected organizations across sectors. Moreover, this cross-sectoral collaboration was made possible through a cross-organizational collaboration with We Welcome.

Credibility Collaborations

In addition to collaborations that amplified advocacy efforts, the WRO also benefited from cross-organizational collaborations that inadvertently bolstered its credibility in the community. In my very first conversations with the Region Director about the WRO's efforts, he told me that trust, credibility, and reputation are incredibly important for the WRO's efficacy (Fieldnotes, 2022). Because the reliance on community goodwill is woven into the fabric of the American refugee resettlement system, community relations are essential as the WRO advocates for refugees' needs and mobilizes volunteers and financial and in-kind donations. Partnerships with certain well-known and trusted organizations can reflect well on the WRO. One such organization is MANNA Foodbank, with whom the WRO partners for its weekly and monthly food distribution events. As a well-known and loved organization in the Asheville area, MANNA strengthens the credibility of the WRO. The Region Director told me he frequently mentions key partnerships like this because it often builds trust and opens doors for other individual or organizational partnerships (Fieldnotes, 2022). I saw this firsthand at a Chamber of

Commerce meeting when an individual unfamiliar with Catholic Charities asked the Region Director about his work. As he described the food distribution events, she exclaimed, “oh, I love MANNA!” and he then went on to describe the opportunities for involvement at the WRO, including refugee resettlement (Fieldnotes, 2022).

In this way, a cross-organizational collaboration for an unrelated program bolstered the efficacy of the WRO in advocating for migrants’ needs. Interestingly, instead of leveraging a CST-based issue frame, this example leverages the reputation of an established, secular organization. This is reminiscent of CCUSA’s leveraging of its network’s professional history and credibility at the national level. However, at a grassroots level, leveraging the broader Catholic Charities network is not as relevant when focusing on localized community work. Furthermore, the WRO’s refugee resettlement team only began to expand this year, becoming an official sub-office in December and growing its full-time staff. While the WRO certainly has a strong history of service, leveraging credible partnerships is a beneficial tactic – particularly the leveraging of secular organizations like MANNA in secular spaces that might harbor any lingering skepticism towards Catholics.

Visibility Collaborations

While collaborations with other nonprofit organizations in Asheville like MANNA are a necessary part of the WRO’s day-to-day operations, the WRO also actively seeks out collaboration in other sectors outside the scope of its programmatic work. For example, as a representative of Catholic Charities, the Region Director is a member of both the Asheville Chamber of Commerce and the Fletcher Area Business Association. Both associations provide a space for primarily secular for-profit organizations to network, promote their businesses, and put on events and initiatives in the community. Through its promotion of members, the Chamber of

Commerce promises that “customers are 57% more likely to think positively of your local reputation” (*Membership Information*, 2022). Not only does membership boost community visibility in this formalized way, but it also provides an opportunity for the WRO to connect with companies and individuals who are interested in donating resources, whether through a personal/company tax-deductible donation or volunteer opportunities. Indeed, the Region Director told me that through attending the Chamber of Commerce’s weekly Professional Networking Group, he had gained company sponsorship for the WRO’s yearly “Spirit of Hope” fundraising event, individual financial donors, and material donations in the form of clothing, beds, and other household items (Fieldnotes 2022).

The Region Director’s participation in these groups also acts as a form of “free PR,” as these influential business leaders share their support of Catholic Charities and relay its needs by word of mouth (Fieldnotes, 2022). “You can be the best non-profit in the world,” the Region Director told me, “...but if nobody knows you exist, there is funding that needs to happen, and your impact can only [be] to a certain point” (Staff Interview, 2022). In this way, the Region Director’s networking efforts and active participation in membership service initiatives – like FABA’s Snack Pack Program for local schools – serve not only to mobilize resources in a resource-dense space but also to mobilize the general public (Fieldnotes, 2022).

As I attended several of these networking events with the Region Director, I observed the consistent use of framing WRO’s efforts as “helping” (Fieldnotes, 2022). His signature line was,

We’re Catholic Charities, the charitable arm of the Catholic Church. That being said, you don’t have to be Catholic to work here; you don’t have to be Catholic to be served by us. We just help people in need (Fieldnotes 2022).

When I asked the Region Director about his interactions at FABA and the Chamber of commerce, he remarked that most people in the for-profit world cared just as much about “helping” as those in the non-profit; the “help just showed up differently (Fieldnotes, 2022). This

was evident in the way that other members of the networking events self-described their work - those in the wellness field hoped to help people feel like their best selves, those in real estate promised to help find your perfect home, and those in finance wanted to help alleviate debt and secure a financially sound future. In this way, “helping” provides overlapping consensus in these spaces, or at least commonly agreed upon aspirations.

Administrative Advocacy

In her study of immigrant-serving nonprofits, de Graauw notes that non-profits often focus advocacy efforts on non-elected local government administrators who have discretion in implementing federal and state laws (de Graauw, 2016). At first glance, this is not a part of the WRO’s activity. However, if the definition of administrative advocacy is extended to advocacy with non-governmental administrators and those involved in the *administration of services* to refugees, then several clear examples emerge.

During a board meeting one afternoon, a board member asked the Region Director how his relationships were forming with the local Catholic priests. As a relatively new Director, developing these relationships is key to mobilizing financial, in-kind, and volunteer support for the WRO. The Region Director mentioned that though some relationships were still in the making, he had made good connections with some of the parish administrators at various churches. When I asked him about this later, he laughed and joked that sometimes, the parish administrators are the ones “running the church” (Staff Interview, 2022). While some priests are excellent priests, he explained, not everyone is likewise adept at administration, programming, or finances (Staff Interview, 2022). As a result, the parish administrators can fill in these gaps and significantly influence the direction of the church's finances, partnerships, and efforts. While the priest makes the larger decisions, the parish administrators often have much power over the

details. This makes relationships with these administrators extremely valuable. In about 5 of 20 churches that the WRO is connected with, the Region director interfaces most directly with the parish administrators and focuses efforts on fostering these relationships to rely on when needs arise (Staff Interview, 2022).

The WRO staff also looks to build strong relationships with individuals at the agencies involved in providing services in the first months of resettlement. This includes the local government agencies like Buncombe County Health, Human Services, Buncombe County Division of Social Services, and Buncombe County Schools, as well as private entities providing health services, like Western North Carolina Community Health Services (WNCCHS) and Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC). The purpose of these relationships is not to influence policy implementation but to advocate for the smoothest, most dignified delivery of necessary services possible. In the case of government-mandated medical screenings and immunizations, for example, the Case Management Coordinator recalled that “we had meetings with WNCCHS, with MAHEC, with Buncombe County Health and Human Services, to see how we could make this process easier” for refugee clients (Staff Interview, 2022). The WRO advocated for things like adequate interpretation services and stacked scheduling for families. The Case Management Coordinator viewed these relationships as some of the most important to foster, as service providers directly affect refugees’ experience (Staff Interview, 2022).

As I accompanied her to evacuees’ medical appointments, I noticed her care in building these relationships with everyone, including the woman doing temperature screenings before entrance who greeted us with friendly familiarity (Fieldnotes, 2022). “Buy-in is important from *everyone*,” the Case Management Coordinator told me, and I could see the real-time effects of the relationships she had fostered to create a friendly, smooth, and culturally competent

experience for the evacuee. In many ways, these relationships served as a silent form of advocacy.

Both of these examples of administrative advocacy rely on the fostering of personal relationships. Unlike the national organizations of the USCCB and Catholic Charities USA, effective advocacy at the community level requires a tailored approach both to the community and its individual stakeholders. These personal relationships are important not just for administrative advocacy, but for many other essential parts of the WRO's efforts, like the forming of cross-sectoral and cross-organizational collaborations and even volunteer retention.

Beyond De Graauw

Because de Graauw's study examined non-faith-based nonprofits, her analysis leaves out a key feature of FBO advocacy: strong ties to faith institutions. As a Catholic agency, the WRO's ties to local Catholic churches are particularly salient. As mentioned, the Region Director put effort into developing strong relationships with local churches to secure donations and volunteers, whether through speaking engagements at local masses or direct relationships with parish administrators or priests. However, a large part of mobilizing the local Catholic population is done passively through the tenets of Catholic Social Teaching. Because CST compels Catholics to Charity, volunteering and donation are already normative for many Catholics and do not require the same amount of mobilization as the general public. As the charitable arm of the Catholic Church, Catholic Charities becomes a facile beneficiary. Consequently, though the WRO does the advocacy and collaborative work already discussed, a lot of its volunteer base and donations have arisen organically by virtue of being connected to the Catholic Church. Moreover, while ties to faith institutions are a strength for many FBOs, not all FBOs act as the sole representative of their respective constituencies because not all faith

denominations are as centralized as Catholicism (Nelson, 2021). In his study of ten major FBO's advocacy work, Paul Nelson notes that FBOs like "World Concern, Food for the Poor, World Hope International, and many others all compete for support from" American Evangelicals (Nelson, 2021). Because of the centralized nature of Catholic organizations, the WRO is *the* charitable origination in the area for the entire Catholic constituency and does not need to compete like organizations with loose Evangelical ties.

This is not to say that all Catholics are supportive of the WRO's work. In fact, some churches in the area actively do not support the WRO's resettlement efforts (Fieldnotes, 2022). Considering the overall homogeneity of Asheville, this is not too surprising in light of national data showing that 59% of white Catholics describe refugees as a burden on local communities ("A Nation of Immigrants?," 2019). The Region Director reported that in the course of his job, he spends time "educating Catholics on what Jesus actually taught when he said, 'love thy neighbor' and 'care for those in need'" (Staff Interview, 2022). Despite the lack of support from some Catholics, the WRO has overall found an eager volunteer base in its Catholic community.

The focus on education also goes beyond the Catholic community. While the Catholic nature of the WRO strengthens its ability - passively or actively - to mobilize volunteers and resources, it also becomes a hindrance in an area where Catholics are a minority and is overall more secular than the rest of the country. Many of the staff reported that they spend a fair amount of time on (re)education, both about the nature of Catholic Charities and the nature of refugee resettlement in Western North Carolina. The Volunteer Coordinator told me,

Because we are called Catholic Charities, people a lot of times tie us with the Catholic Church, and then their logic path takes them to things the Catholic Church has stood for, things the Catholic Church has said... Sometimes, it's the assumed reputation or assumed association with the Catholic Church that gives people pause, especially in this political climate (Staff Interview, 2022).

For those in the liberal center of Asheville, Catholicism often gets wound up in the narrative of conservative xenophobia. Speaking from his experience, the Region Director said, “there is a generalization that if you're Catholic or Christian, then you are conservative, you're a Republican, you want to build a wall, and you hate people that aren't white” (Staff Interview, 2022). While the WRO has to work to counter these narratives in the liberal heart of Asheville, in other more conservative parts of the region that are in fact swept up in sentiments of xenophobia, the WRO must also educate on the realities of migration and debunk misplaced fears. This dual education is a critical piece of the WRO's advocacy and public mobilization efforts. Paul Nelson notes that education is a common theme amongst NGOs in general, but for FBOs, “it is also a means to encourage members to donate and to engage in advocacy and other activities” (Nelson, 2021). A clear example of this is seen in the WRO's application to become a sub-office.

Just before the Afghan evacuation, the WRO submitted an application to the government to become a “sub-office,” which was approved later that year, allowing the WRO to expand its resettlement services beyond family tie cases. As a part of this application, the WRO spent several months in the community obtaining the required letters of support from a wide array of stakeholders, including law enforcement, local government agencies, for-profits, and nonprofits. Once again, because community support and partnerships are essential to resettlement success, the government requires a mobilized community of support before approving applications. When I asked the Region Director if mobilizing this support required much advocacy work, he replied, “advocacy is a great word; education is an even better word” (Staff Interview, 2022). This education was twofold. On the one hand, non-Catholic stakeholders were skeptical about the Catholic nature of Catholic Charities. The Region Director told me,

I frame my job in a very different way... I am not defending the Catholic Church, the Catholic faith, or Catholic Charities. I'm here to educate people about it...the education piece comes in where I get to say, 'that's why I love working for the Catholic Church because it's not like that [xenophobic] – we have an immigration program, we have a refugee resettlement program, we've had these programs for a long time (Staff Interview, 2022).

On the other hand, some people in the community and surrounding areas had concerns about foreigners in their community. They asked questions about safety, if the evacuees would pay taxes, or if they would have jobs (Staff Interview, 2022). The WRO provided educational materials to key stakeholders on the lengthy process of refugee vetting and about the services it would provide to refugees to ensure their success in the community, stating that “in time, refugees become small business owners, engaged voters, and active participants in creating a rich and diverse community” (Fieldnotes, 2022). Education also focused on the WRO's history of refugee resettlement and the resulting refugee population already in Asheville that most people were unaware of. To this point, the Region Director commented:

Asheville is a very white place in my experience, so diversity might hide in pockets or live in a different pocket of town than people might go in, and it's really just educating people on yes, this exists, yes, it's been going on for quite some time (Staff Interview, 2022).

Lastly, education centered primarily on the hardships and needs of refugees because “once people are educated on that piece, they typically get on board because Asheville is a very accepting place overall” (Staff Interview, 2022). Ultimately, all of these education efforts served to raise community consciousness and contribute to the community's sense of “shared humanity” and desire to “help,” which the Region Director views as the “uniting force that really made this whole thing work” (Staff Interview, 2022).

In this way, education has served as an important advocacy and public mobilization tool for the WRO. This education is tailored to the specific concerns and awareness levels of its community. Through this education, the WRO is able to raise community consciousness on

migrant issues, create a sense of solidarity through showing migrants as an existing part of the community, and mobilize stakeholders to “help” alleviate migrants’ needs.

Discussion and Conclusion

The Western Regional Office of Catholic Charities Diocese of Charlotte wields a lot of tactics in its efforts to advocate and mobilize the public in support of refugees, including administrative advocacy, cross-sectoral/cross-organizational collaborations, and strategic issue framing. Though de Graauw’s concepts are useful for analyzing the WRO’s advocacy efforts for refugees, they are by no means comprehensive, particularly when analyzing FBOs. As a faith-based organization, the WRO’s ties to the centralized Catholic Church play a significant role in its work, as do its education efforts. De Graauw’s framework does not account for these key elements.

Compared to the USCCB and CCUSA, the WRO demonstrates a tailored approach to its community, building personal relationships with key stakeholders, educating to the knowledge gaps and fears of the community, and creatively appropriating Catholic Social Teaching to speak to religiously plural contexts. While the USCCB and CCUSA rely more on direct theological appeals and the issue frame of human dignity, the WRO frames migrant issues mostly in terms of solidarity and “helping,” which finds its base in the CST’s tenant of option for the poor and vulnerable. While human dignity might be a part of the legal-political discourse, it is not often a part of the colloquial discourse. Solidarity and helping, on the other hand, are values easily accessible by a tight community.

While solidarity might not find purchase at the national level – as national unity feels obscure in the “more divided than ever” climate – solidarity at the community level is much more easily accessible. Indeed, recent studies show that 59% of Americans feel an attachment to

and connection with their local communities, while national pride is at an all-time low, with only 21% of Americans feeling “very proud” of their country (Megan Brenan, 2020; Parker et al., 2018). Moreover, 90% of Americans believe the country is divided, and 60% feel pessimistic about being able to solve the country’s problems amidst these divisions (Heltzel & Laurin, 2020). However, at the community level, only 22% of Americans say their neighbors share their political views, but still, 58% say they would feel comfortable giving these same neighbors a spare set of keys to their house (Parker et al., 2018). Evidently, more trust and connection exist at the community level than at the national level. So, even in the so-called political paradox of Western North Carolina’s disparate political views, appeals to solidarity and a sense of shared humanity find a much stronger foothold than at the national level.

Similarly, the translation of Catholics’ belief in the preferential option for the poor and vulnerable into a simple ethos of “helping” seems to provide overlapping consensus with its religiously plural community. The Volunteer Coordinator told me,

Even if you’re not Catholic, I think there are people who relate to its [Catholic Charities’] messages. Especially when I have a chance to talk to people, and I tell them that we are just here to help people, to be kind to people, and to make things a little easier for them in this community (Staff Interview, 2022).

The mission of helping was evident in the community that is nearly equal parts Protestant and religiously unaffiliated. As I sat at the front desk and answered phone calls from time to time during my internship, people often inquired about donations and volunteer opportunities. These people often said things along the lines of “I’m not Catholic, but I just want to help” (Fieldnotes, 2022). For the religiously unaffiliated, secular part of the community, “helping” provides overlapping consensus as a value that can be affirmed in secular terms. For the Protestant portion of the community, helping the needy and vulnerable speaks to an existing Protestant discourse derived from the same scriptures as CST. Since Protestants do not believe in salvation by works

but by faith, they may not feel the same eschatological weight as Catholics do from biblical mandates to help the vulnerable, but they still affirm its importance (Lane, 2006). The importance of this mandate for Protestants is evident in the mission statement of the humanitarian arm of the National Association of Evangelicals, World Relief, which also has local offices in North Carolina: “empower the local church to serve the most vulnerable” (“About Us,” n.d.-c). In this way, framing refugee resettlement as helping those in need can provide consensus for both the secular and Protestant portions of Asheville.

In pursuit of “helping,” stakeholders from many organizations and sectors collaborated with the WRO in support of refugees: law enforcement, local government, for-profits, non-profits, and even other non-Catholic churches. While de Graauw asserts that cross-sectoral and cross-organizational collaborations are quite common amongst nonprofits, recent research suggests that FBOs are far less likely to engage in cross-sectoral and cross-organizational collaborations than secular nonprofits (Fu et al., 2021). One hypothesis is that the faith tenants of FBOs are not always compatible with secular organizations’ practices or values (Fu et al., 2021). Interestingly, the WRO trends more towards the secular nonprofits described by de Graauw than that of other FBOs, as it engages in numerous partnerships across a variety of programs. Plausibly, the translation of Catholic Social Teaching into more secular frames like “helping” and “solidarity” and the (re)education efforts of the WRO avoid this incompatibility and allow for more cross-sectoral and cross-organizational collaborations.

The WRO’s appropriation and translation of broader Catholic values demonstrate a tailoring of national tactics to a micro-community focus. This is seen not only in the leveraging of issue frames but also in collaborations with community-respected organizations, relationships with key administrators, and even in the Region Directors' choice to include pictures of real staff

and volunteers in quarterly newsletters rather than stock images as other neighboring offices do (Fieldnotes, 2022). In order to speak to its community, the WRO must be an outward-facing organization, adapting national rhetoric and tactics to its particular context.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

This thesis has examined American Catholic's advocacy and public mobilization efforts for refugees and asylum seekers through the analysis of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Charities USA, and the Western Regional Office of Catholic Charities Diocese of Charlotte. Primarily, I sought to qualitatively answer *how American Catholics advocate and mobilize support for refugees and asylum seekers in secular and religiously pluralistic spaces in the US*. Taking a mesolevel approach, I first explored the history of CCUSA and the USCCB in light of the American refugee resettlement system and performed a subsequent discourse analysis on both agencies' advocacy efforts at the national level, paying attention to how issues were strategically framed in terms of Catholic Social Teaching. Viewing these frames as discourse, I provided reflections on *how the Catholic discourse on migration interacts with the border American discourses*. Next, I analyzed the case study of the Western Regional Office in Asheville, North Carolina, using Els de Graauw's three theoretical lenses: strategic issue framing, administrative advocacy, and cross-sectoral/cross-organizational collaborations. I considered *how the WRO relates to its national counterparts and how Catholic theology and values were leveraged, (re)interpreted, and transformed from the national to the grassroots context*.

Discussion of Research Questions

Catholics demonstrate strong advocacy and public mobilization efforts at both the national and local levels that are specialized to fit these respective contexts. At the national level, Catholics focus efforts primarily on federal advocacy for migrants, submitting amicus briefs, providing congressional testimony, and writing policy position letters. At the local level in Asheville, the Western Regional Office of Catholic Charities Diocese of Charlotte is focused less on advocating for public policy and more on community consciousness raising and advocacy that mobilizes support from its community in order best serve its clients. To this end, the WRO engages in numerous cross-sectoral and cross-organizational collaborations that bolster its own advocacy efforts, increase its visibility in the community, and improves its credibility. The staff of the WRO also engage in administrative advocacy, forming personal relationships with key stakeholders, and a high degree of education efforts both to its Catholic constituency and its surrounding community. Both the local and national organizations form a symbiotic relationship. The national organizations set the values, policy, tones of Catholic advocacy, which the local WRO in turn translates and appropriates to best mobilize the necessary support for effective resettlement. The efficacy of this resettlement in local contexts across the country then contributes to national organizations' abilities to leverage Catholics' professional expertise and achievement. Taken together, I have argued that Catholic advocacy is fortified by its history of concomitant development with the federal government, highly centralized nature, and strategic framing of migrant issues that provide overlapping consensus with relevant stakeholders.

History of Public-Private Partnerships

Catholics benefit from their history of concomitant development with the federal government and their resulting demonstrated professional expertise with refugee resettlement

and immigration services. The refugee resettlement system relies on a fortified public-private partnership that began organically in the early 1900s and has since been codified. This institutionalized relationship provides a natural platform for Catholic resettlement agencies and lends a unique opportunity for the legitimacy of the religious in an otherwise secular space. Moreover, the resulting history of professional expertise positions Catholics as savant voices in the advocacy sphere.

Catholic Centralization

At both the national and local level, Catholic efficacy in the advocacy space is strengthened by Catholic institutions' highly centralized nature, both in terms of bureaucracy and theology. This centralization allows for the streamlining of resources and focus for dedicated federal advocacy offices at the USCCB and Catholic Charities USA. At the local level, this centralization gives the WRO uncompetitive access to its Catholic constituency. In both contexts, centralization also provides clear, consistent messaging through the doctrine of Catholic Social Teaching. Though Catholic Social Teaching is tailored and translated to fit varying contexts, it provides a strong moral, eschatological foundation and justification for Catholic efforts on behalf of refugees and asylum seekers. It also cultivates a mobilized Catholic base of volunteers, donors, and political advocates. At the community level, this is particularly important because so much of refugee resettlement relies on community assistance.

Strategic Issue Framing and Overlapping Consensus

While Catholic organizations leverage Catholic Social Teaching internally to advocate for migrants, CST also provides overlapping consensus with various other discourses in the US. Across contexts, Catholic agencies strategically frame migrant issues. At the national level, the USCCB and CCUSA most commonly frame migrant issues in terms of human dignity. These

national organizations tend to employ a public theology more often than the WRO, human dignity still provides a common currency of discourse in the secular legal and political discourse. While human dignity is employed by politicians and justices, it is not as common in colloquial everyday language. Thus, the WRO employs other issue frames like “solidarity” and “helping” that do find overlapping consensus in a community setting. These frames are a creative appropriation of CST themes in more secular terms. In both milieus, strategically framing migrant issues across contexts using tenants of CST allows Catholic institutions to find common ground in secular and religiously plural spaces.

Limitations and Opportunities for Further Research

This thesis has explored the qualitative nature of Catholic advocacy, which has yielded important insight into their work that has historically been largely overlooked. However, whether public-private partnerships, Catholic centralization, and the leveraging of the overlapping consensus has made Catholics exceptionally successful in their advocacy work is difficult to conclusively say with this qualitative data alone. It bears mentioning, for example, that the US has not undergone comprehensive immigration reform since 1990, a move that Catholics have consistently advocated for decades. However, that does not mean that they have not made headway on smaller initiatives and policies. The reflections in this thesis provide a springboard for future quantitative research to uncover the tangible impact Catholics have made on federal policy or community consciousness and attitudes across stakeholder groups at the local level. While this research has suggested successful interfaith/cross-sectoral dialogue and advocacy approaches, qualitative research could confirm this efficacy. Future research could also conduct a comparative analysis with other faith based VOLAGS like Church World Service, Hebrew

Immigrant Aid Society, and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services to ascertain distinctive features of Catholic advocacy and its relative efficacy and influence.

Societal Implications

Despite limitations, this research harbors important societal contributions. Amidst the rising prevalence of xenophobic rhetoric in American politics that seem to dominate the conversation, this research has provided nuance and insight into the counteracting voices of Catholics. Increasingly, the notion of postsecularism is gaining more traction in the social sciences as a way to describe the increased emergence of religion in the public sphere (Mavelli & Petito, 2012). Whether or not the US is or is heading towards postsecularism, religion is certainly a continued force in American politics, with the Religious Right gaining significant prominence since 2016. This research provides insight into one religious entities' participation in secular and religiously plural spaces and the dynamic interaction of religious ideas in secular politics and public discourse. Moreover, it suggests the ability of the religious and the secular to find overlapping consensus and collaboratively work towards common objectives. In this moment of politically active religious groups, understanding the ingredients of effective collaboration is critical.

Appendix

Statement of Ethics

As a researcher committed to ethical conduct and out of appreciation for the generous access afforded to me by Catholic Charities, this research will scrupulously adhere to the *principles of care* as outlined by Tom Boellstorff et al. (2012). In all cases, I will seek to *minimize harm* and afford dignity and respect to participants and institutions under my study.

This research will not make use of *deception*. All participants in the Western Regional Office of the Catholic Charities Diocese of Charlotte will be made privy to the goals and scope of my research and will thereafter be able to give their *informed consent* or lack thereof, which will be respected accordingly. Participants will be made aware of their *right to withdraw* consent and stop the interview, survey, or observation at any time. All data obtained through interviews or observation will be *anonymized* and kept *confidential* between me, my thesis supervisor, and my secondary assessor. The interest of this research as it relates to Catholic Charities is at the community and organizational level, not at the individual level, so all personally identifying information will be removed from the interview transcripts and analytical discussion. Prior to conducting interviews, consent to record will be obtained. These recordings will be kept in a password-protected folder and deleted after anonymized transcripts are produced.

The aim of this research is not to make normative or evaluative judgments about the content of the theological or moral tenants relevant to this topic but to understand the complex relationships of religious institutions in public endeavors. As such, this research intends to minimize any significant *institutional harm* and avoid normative language where applicable in the analytical discussion, as this is outside the scope of this thesis. Nonetheless, this research will

strive to produce an *accurate portrayal* of the participants, organizations, and communities in focus and provide critical analysis when relevant.

As I will simultaneously serve as an intern for Catholic Charities while conducting research, I will ensure that clear lines are drawn between research and work when possible.

Further, I will strive to produce the highest quality of work in my duties as an intern to provide benefit to the Asheville office and community I am immersed in.



Participant Consent Form

Research Statement

This semi-structured interview will serve as qualitative data to inform my master's thesis research for the Religion, Conflict, and Globalization track in the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Groningen. This thesis seeks to explore and understand American Catholics' advocacy work and community mobilization efforts on issues of forced migration and asylum and the national and local levels. The Western Regional Office (WRO) of Catholic Charities Diocese of Charlotte serves as the local level case study. The purpose of these interviews is to obtain insight into the refugee resettlement process in Asheville, as well as the WRO's relationship with local churches, local organizations, the surrounding community, and the broader network of Catholic Charities (diocesan and national) and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Importantly, the aim of this research *is not* to make normative or evaluative judgments about the content of the theological or moral tenants relevant to this topic, but to understand the complex relationships of religious institutions in public endeavors.

Interview Procedure

Interviews will be conducted in person or via video conferencing as needed. All interviews will be recorded and saved to a password-protected mobile phone for future transcription. Once transcribed and anonymized, audio recordings will be permanently deleted. If requested, participants may view copies of transcriptions to ensure their words have been presented as intended. Prior to the start of the interview, participants will be briefed on the purpose of the interview, procedural notes, and the ethical considerations outlined below, including their right to withdrawal.

Ethics Statement

As a researcher committed to ethical conduct and out of appreciation for the generous access afforded to me by Catholic Charities, this research will scrupulously adhere to the *principles of care* as outlined by Tom Boellstorff et al. (2012). In all cases, I will seek to *minimize harm* and afford dignity and respect to participants and institutions under my study.

This research will not make use of *deception*. All participants will be informed of the goals and scope of this research and will thereafter be able to give their *informed consent* or lack thereof, which will be respected accordingly. Participants will be made aware of their *right to withdraw* consent and stop the interview at any time. All data will be *anonymized* and kept *confidential* between me, my thesis supervisor, and my secondary assessor. The interest of this research as it relates to Catholic Charities is at the community and organizational level, not at the individual level, so all personally identifying information will be removed from the interview

transcripts and analytical discussion. Finally, this research will strive to produce an *accurate portrayal* of the participants, organizations, and communities in focus.

Participant Acknowledgement

By agreeing to participate in this interview, I agree and acknowledge that:

- I have received satisfactory information about the purpose and goals of this research and what it requires of me as a participant.
- This interview will be recorded and kept in a password-protected folder until it is transcribed, anonymized, and subsequently deleted.
- The anonymity of participants who are already operating as head figures in their organizations and have public online profiles, cannot be fully guaranteed by virtue of this public presence.
- My participation in this interview is voluntary and free of coercion.
- I am free not to answer any question that I do not wish to without penalty.
- I am free to withdraw from this interview at any time without penalty. Should I withdraw consent at any point, this form will be shredded.

I have read and understood the contents of this form and had all of my questions answered. I hereby have given my informed consent to participate in this interview.

Participant:

Signature:

Date:

Researcher: Eleanor V. Langford

Signature:

Date:

Supervising Lecturer: Manoela Carpenedo-Rodrigues

References

- A Nation of Immigrants? Diverging Perceptions of Immigrants Increasingly Marking Partisan Divides. (2019, March 12). *PRRI*. <https://www.prrri.org/research/a-nation-of-immigrants-diverging-perceptions-of-immigrants-increasingly-marking-partisan-divides/>
- About | Mission*. (2019, September 10). Refugee Council USA. <https://rcusa.org/about/>
- About Us*. (n.d.-a). United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Retrieved February 28, 2022, from <https://www.usccb.org/about>
- About Us*. (n.d.-b). Justice for Immigrants. Retrieved June 11, 2022, from <https://justiceforimmigrants.org/home/about-us/>
- About Us. (n.d.-c). *World Relief*. Retrieved June 26, 2022, from <https://worldrelief.org/about/>
- Action Center*. (n.d.). Catholic Charities USA. Retrieved June 13, 2022, from <https://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/our-vision-and-ministry/advocacy/action-center/>
- Adloff, F. (2006). Religion and Social-political Action: The Catholic Church, Catholic Charities, and the American Welfare State. *International Review of Sociology*, 16(1), 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03906700500485416>
- Afghanistan Humanitarian Crisis*. (n.d.). USA for UNHCR | The UN Refugee Agency. Retrieved March 19, 2022, from <https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/afghanistan/>
- Agency Leadership*. (2022). Catholic Charities Diocese of Charlotte. <https://ccdoc.org/agency-leadership>
- Alva, R. (2017). The Catholic Church’s perspective of human dignity as the basis of dialogue with the secular world. *STJ | Stellenbosch Theological Journal*, 3(2). <https://doi.org/10.17570/stj.2017.v3n2.a10>
- Barkdull, C., Weber, B., Swart, A., & Phillips, A. (2012). The Changing Context of Refugee

- Resettlement Policy and Programs in the United States. *Journal of International Social Issues*, 1, 13.
- Bender, C. (2003). *Heaven's Kitchen: Living Religion at God's Love We Deliver*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Berry, J. M., & Arons, D. F. (2003). *A Voice for Nonprofits*. Brookings Institution Press.
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/rug/detail.action?docID=3004367>
- Boris, E., & Steuerle, C. E. (2016). *Nonprofits and Government: Collaboration and Conflict* (Third). Rowman Littlefield.
- Brown, A., & Scribner, T. (2014). Unfulfilled Promises, Future Possibilities: The Refugee Resettlement System in the United States. *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 20.
- Buncombe County, NC. (2019). Data USA. <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/buncombe-county-nc>
- Casanova, J. (2011). The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms. In *Rethinking Secularism* (pp. 54–91). Oxford University Press, Incorporated.
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/rug/detail.action?docID=746637>
- Catholic Charities USA Disappointed by Reimplementation of the “Remain in Mexico” Program*. (2021, December 6). Catholic Charities USA.
https://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/press_release/catholic-charities-usa-disappointed-by-reimplementation-of-the-remain-in-mexico-program/
- Catholic News Herald, Diocese of Charlotte. (2022, April 12). *History of the Diocese of Charlotte, N.C.* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7W7FY8FOMQ0>
- Clifford Grammich, Kirk Hadaway, Richard Housea, Dale E. Jones, Alexei Krindatch, Richie Stanley, & Richard H. Taylor. (2010). *County Membership Report: Buncombe County*. The Association of Religion Data Archives.

- <https://thearda.com/rcms2010/rcms2010a.asp?U=37021&T=county&Y=2010&S=Name>
Community Spirit: A Newsletter from Catholic Charities Diocese of Charlotte. (2021).
- Congressional Advocacy: Planning Your Virtual Visit*. (n.d.). Justice for Immigrants. Retrieved June 13, 2022, from https://justiceforimmigrants.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Congressional-Advocacy_-Planning-Your-Virtual-Visit-.pdf
- Danilo Zak. (2021, August 30). *Explainer: Humanitarian Parole and the Afghan Evacuation*. National Immigration Forum. <https://immigrationforum.org/article/explainer-humanitarian-parole-and-the-afghan-evacuation/>
- de Graauw, E. (2016). *Making Immigrant Rights Real: Nonprofits and the Politics of Integration in San Francisco*. Cornell University Press. <https://doi-org.proxy-ub.rug.nl/10.7591/9781501703492>
- Degeneffe, C. E. (2003). What Is Catholic about Catholic Charities? *Social Work*, 48(3), 374–383. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/48.3.374>
- Dorsonville, M. R. M. E. (2021, April 26). *MRS FY 22 Appropriations Letter*. <https://www.usccb.org/resources/MRS%20FY%202022%20Appropriations%20Letter.pdf>
- Election Contest Details*. (n.d.). North Carolina State Board of Elections. Retrieved June 3, 2022, from https://er.ncsbe.gov/contest_details.html?election_dt=11/08/2016&county_id=11&contest_id=1001
- The Ongoing Syrian Refugee Crisis*, US Senate, 10 (2014) (testimony of Most Reverend Eusebio Elizondo).
- Elizondo, M. R. E., & Vann, M. R. K. W. (2016, January 8). *Letter to Jeh Johnson on Deportations* [Letter]. <https://www.usccb.org/about/migration-policy/bishops->

statements/upload/Letter-to-Jeh-Johnson-on-Deportations.pdf

Euthanasia Statement. (1991, September 12). United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

<https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/end-of-life/euthanasia/statement-on-euthanasia-1991>

Fact Sheet on Operation Allies Welcome. (2021, November 12). Department of Homeland Security. <https://www.dhs.gov/publication/fact-sheet-operation-allies-welcome>

Fact Sheet: U.S. Asylum Process. (2020a). National Immigration Forum.

<https://immigrationforum.org/article/fact-sheet-u-s-asylum-process/>

Fact Sheet: U.S. Refugee Resettlement. (2020b, November 5). National Immigration Forum.

<https://immigrationforum.org/article/fact-sheet-u-s-refugee-resettlement/>

Financial Reporting | USCCB. (2020). United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

<https://www.usccb.org/about/financial-reporting>

Frasure, L. A., & Jones-Correa, M. (2010). The Logic of Institutional Interdependency: The Case of Day Laborer Policy in Suburbia. *Urban Affairs Review*, 45(4), 451–482.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1078087409355640>

Fu, J. S., Cooper, K. R., & Shumate, M. (2021). Do U.S. Faith-Based Social Service Organizations Resist Collaboration? Examining the Role of Religiosity and Operational Capacity in Interorganizational Partnerships. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 50(2), 241–261. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764020952167>

Griffin, L. (2015). The Catholic Bishops vs. The Contraceptive Mandate. *Religions*, 6(4), 1411–1432. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel6041411>

Guillory, F. (2020, October 30). *Perspective | Red state? Blue state? An education state*.

EducationNC. <https://www.ednc.org/perspective-red-state-blue-state-an-education-state/>

- Heltzel, G., & Laurin, K. (2020). Polarization in America: Two possible futures. *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences*, 34, 179–184.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cobeha.2020.03.008>
- Heyer, K. E. (2006). *Prophetic and Public: The Social Witness of U.S. Catholicism* (1st ed.). Georgetown University Press.
<https://www.proquest.com/docview/2132038154/bookReader?accountid=11219&ppg=236>
- History*. (2021, November 12). Office of Refugee Resettlement: An Office of the Administration for Children and Families. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/about/history>
- Hollenbach, D. (2015). Human Dignity in Catholic Thought. In *The Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. (pp. 250–259). Cambridge University Press.
- Hollenbach, D. (2019). Human Rights in Catholic Social Thought: A Living Tradition and Some Urgent Challenges Today. *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 84(3), 259–267.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0021140019849422>
- Hollenbach, D. (2020). Welcoming Refugees and Migrants: Catholic Narratives and the Challenge of Inclusion. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 690(1), 153–167. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716220936608>
- Immigration Advocacy & Refugee Services*. (n.d.). Catholic Charities USA. Retrieved March 10, 2022, from <https://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/our-vision-and-ministry/immigration-refugee-services/>
- John Paul II. (1999, January 22). *Ecclesia in America*. Vatican.
https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-

ii_exh_22011999_ecclesia-in-america.html

Join the Welcome Movement. (n.d.). We Welcome. Retrieved June 17, 2022, from

<https://www.wechoosewelcome.com/>

Jørgensen, M., & Phillips, L. (2002). *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. SAGE

Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849208871>

Justice for Newcomers: A Catholic Call for Solidarity and Reform (p. 36). (2005). [Policy

Paper]. Catholic Charities USA. <https://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Policy-Paper-Justice-for-Immigrants-2005-1.pdf>

Lane, A. N. S. (2006). *Justification by Faith in Catholic-Protestant Dialogue*. A&C Black.

Lichterman, P. (2015). Interpretive reflexivity in ethnography. *Ethnography*, 18.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138115592418>

Maquiladora. (2021, March 12). Corporate Finance Institute.

<https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/knowledge/strategy/maquiladora/>

Markham, S. D. (2017, March 8). *CCUSA Letter to The Honorable John F. Kelly* [Letter].

https://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Letter-to-Sec-Kelly-on-seperation-of-children-and-families_app.pdf

Markham, S. D. (2018, February 12). *CCUSA Dreamers Letter* [Letter].

https://files.catholiccharitiesusa.org/stories/CCUSA-Senate-letter-on-DACA-votes-revised-2.pdf?mtime=20180212175230&_ga=2.253536577.954738035.1654955054-2043006573.1653655735

Mavelli, L., & Petito, F. (2012). The postsecular in International Relations: An overview. *Review*

of International Studies, 38(5), 931–942. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026021051200040X>

Megan Brenan. (2020, June 15). *U.S. National Pride Falls to Record Low*. Gallup.

<https://news.gallup.com/poll/312644/national-pride-falls-record-low.aspx>

Membership Information. (2022). Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce.

<https://www.ashevillechamber.org/get-engaged/become-a-member/>

Migrants, Refugees and Travelers—Migration. (n.d.). United States Conference of Catholic

Bishops. Retrieved February 28, 2022, from

<https://www.usccb.org/committees/migration/migrants-refugees-and-travelers>

Migration Policy | USCCB. (2022). United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

<https://www.usccb.org/committees/migration/migration-policy>

Miranda v. Arizona, 384 U.S. 436 (Supreme Court 1996).

<https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/384/436/>

Mission Statement and Core Values. (2018, July 24). Catholic Charities Diocese of Charlotte.

<https://ccdoc.org/mission-statement-core-values>

National Security Threats—Chain Migration and the Visa Lottery System – The White House.

(2018, February 1). Trump White House.

<https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/articles/national-security-threats-chain-migration-visa-lottery-system/>

Nawyn, S. J. (2006). Faith, Ethnicity, and Culture in Refugee Resettlement. *American*

Behavioral Scientist, 49(11), 1509–1527. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764206288462>

NCCB & USCCB. (2000, November 15). *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in*

Diversity. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

<https://www.usccb.org/committees/pastoral-care-migrants-refugees-travelers/welcoming-stranger-among-us-unity-diversity>

Nelson, P. J. (2021). Encouraging Active Citizen Voices on International Policy? The Record of

- US Faith-Based NGOs. In P. J. Nelson (Ed.), *Religious Voices in the Politics of International Development: Faith-Based NGOs as Non-state Political and Moral Actors* (pp. 71–99). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-68964-3_4
- New International Version Bible. (2011). Bible Gateway.
<https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/new-international-version-niv-bible/>
- Offices|USCCB. (2022). United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.
<https://www.usccb.org/offices>
- Our History*. (2014). Catholic Charities Diocese of Charlotte. <https://www.ccdoc.org/en/about-us/history>
- Our History—Catholic Charities USA*. (n.d.). Catholic Charities USA. Retrieved March 11, 2022, from <https://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/about-us/history/>
- Parker, K., Horowitz, J. M., Brown, A., Fry, R., Cohn, D., & Igielnik, R. (2018). *What Unites and Divides Urban, Suburban and Rural Communities*. Pew Research Center.
<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2018/05/22/americans-satisfaction-with-and-attachment-to-their-communities/>
- Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities*. (2001, November). United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. <https://www.usccb.org/prolife/pastoral-plan-pro-life-activities>
- Patrick, E. (2004, June 1). *The U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program*. Migration Policy Institute.
<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/us-refugee-resettlement-program>
- Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. (2005, April). *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. LA SANTA SEDE.
https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_just

peace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html

Pope Benedict XVI. (2005, December 25). *Deus Caritas Est*.

https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html

Pope Francis. (2013, September 10). *Address of the Holy Father during the visit to the “Astalli Centre”, the Jesuit Refugee Service in Rome*. Jesuit Refugee Service, Rome, Italy.

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/september/documents/papa-francesco_20130910_centro-astalli.html

Pope Leo XIII. (1891, May 15). *Rerum Novarum*. https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html

https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html

Pope Paul VI. (1967, March 26). *Populorum Progressio*. Vatican.

https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html

Public Affairs Office. (2018, October 29). *Chairman of the USCCB Committee on Migration and Presidents of Catholic Relief Services and Catholic Charities USA Issued Statement Urging Humane Action Towards Those Seeking Protection*. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. <https://www.usccb.org/news/2018/chairman-usccb-committee-migration-and-presidents-catholic-relief-services-and-catholic>

<https://www.usccb.org/news/2018/chairman-usccb-committee-migration-and-presidents-catholic-relief-services-and-catholic>

<https://www.usccb.org/news/2018/chairman-usccb-committee-migration-and-presidents-catholic-relief-services-and-catholic>

<https://www.usccb.org/news/2018/chairman-usccb-committee-migration-and-presidents-catholic-relief-services-and-catholic>

<https://www.usccb.org/news/2018/chairman-usccb-committee-migration-and-presidents-catholic-relief-services-and-catholic>

Rawls, J. (2005). *Political Liberalism* (Expanded). Columbia University Press. [https://web-s-](https://web-s-ebscohost-com.proxy-ub.rug.nl/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmx1YmtfXzk0NDk0NF9fQU41?sid=37901391-a75c-4125-a717-4b1d7376403c@redis&vid=0&format=EB&lpid=lp_131&rid=0)

[ebscohost-com.proxy-](https://web-s-ebscohost-com.proxy-ub.rug.nl/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmx1YmtfXzk0NDk0NF9fQU41?sid=37901391-a75c-4125-a717-4b1d7376403c@redis&vid=0&format=EB&lpid=lp_131&rid=0)

[ub.rug.nl/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmx1YmtfXzk0NDk0NF9fQU41?sid=37901391-](https://web-s-ebscohost-com.proxy-ub.rug.nl/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmx1YmtfXzk0NDk0NF9fQU41?sid=37901391-a75c-4125-a717-4b1d7376403c@redis&vid=0&format=EB&lpid=lp_131&rid=0)

[a75c-4125-a717-4b1d7376403c@redis&vid=0&format=EB&lpid=lp_131&rid=0](https://web-s-ebscohost-com.proxy-ub.rug.nl/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmx1YmtfXzk0NDk0NF9fQU41?sid=37901391-a75c-4125-a717-4b1d7376403c@redis&vid=0&format=EB&lpid=lp_131&rid=0)

Reception and Placement. (n.d.). *United States Department of State*. Retrieved February 27,

- 2022, from <https://www.state.gov/refugee-admissions/reception-and-placement/>
Religious Landscape Study—Adults in North Carolina. (2022). Pew Research Center.
<https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/religious-landscape-study/>
- Report to Congress on Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2022. (2021, September 20). *United States Department of State*. <https://www.state.gov/report-to-congress-on-proposed-refugee-admissions-for-fiscal-year-2022/>
- Resettlement Services*. (2022, February 23). Office of Refugee Resettlement | An Office of the Administration for Children & Families. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/refugees>
- Sens. Johnson, Portman Introduce Legislation to Prohibit TSA from Accepting Arrest Warrants as Valid Proof of ID*. (2022, February 4). Ron Johnson Senator from Wisconsin. <https://www.ronjohnson.senate.gov/2022/2/sens-johnson-portman-introduce-legislation-to-prohibit-tsa-from-accepting-arrest-warrants-as-valid-proof-of-id>
- Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching*. (n.d.). The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Retrieved June 6, 2022, from <https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching>
- Silverman, D. (2016). *Qualitative Research*. SAGE.
- Snead, C. (2015). Human Dignity in US Law. In *The Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. (pp. 387–393). Cambridge University Press.
- Table 16. Individuals Granted Asylum Affirmatively Or Defensively: Fiscal Years 1990 To 2016* | *Homeland Security*. (2018, January 8). Homeland Security. <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2016/table16>
- Talking Points on Immigration Reform*. (2021). Justice for Immigrants.

<https://justiceforimmigrants.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Condensed-Talking-Points-On-Immigration-Reform.pdf>

The 2020 Census of American Religion. (2021, July 8). PRRI.

<https://www.ppri.org/research/2020-census-of-american-religion/>

The Role of U.S. Ties in Refugee Resettlement. (n.d.). Settle In. Retrieved June 4, 2022, from

<https://settlein.us/topics/the-role-of-u-s-ties-in-refugee-resettlement/>

The U.S. National Archives. (1980). *The Refugee Act of 1980, Page 1 of 18* [Photo].

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/usnationalarchives/22755449997/>

Ukraine Refugee Situation. (n.d.). Operational Data Portal | UNHCR. Retrieved March 19, 2022,

from <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Inc. and Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano.

(2003, January 22). *Strangers No Longer Together on the Journey of Hope* [Pastoral

Letter]. [https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-](https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/immigration/strangers-no-longer-together-on-the-journey-of-hope)

[dignity/immigration/strangers-no-longer-together-on-the-journey-of-hope](https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/immigration/strangers-no-longer-together-on-the-journey-of-hope)

U.S. Annual Refugee Resettlement Ceilings and Number of Refugees Admitted, 1980-Present.

(2022). Migration Policy Institute. [https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/us-annual-refugee-resettlement-ceilings-and-number-refugees-admitted-united)

[hub/charts/us-annual-refugee-resettlement-ceilings-and-number-refugees-admitted-united](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/us-annual-refugee-resettlement-ceilings-and-number-refugees-admitted-united)

U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: North Carolina; United States. (2022). United States Census

Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/NC,US/PST045221>

Vásquez, M. Rev. J. S. (2017, July 25). *Letter of Opposition on H.R. 391 “Asylum Reform and*

Border Protection Act of 2017.” [https://justiceforimmigrants.org/letters-of-support-and-](https://justiceforimmigrants.org/letters-of-support-and-administrative-requests/usccb-chairman-migration-letter-opposition-h-r-391-asylum-reform-border-protection-act-2017/)

[administrative-requests/usccb-chairman-migration-letter-opposition-h-r-391-asylum-](https://justiceforimmigrants.org/letters-of-support-and-administrative-requests/usccb-chairman-migration-letter-opposition-h-r-391-asylum-reform-border-protection-act-2017/)

[reform-border-protection-act-2017/](https://justiceforimmigrants.org/letters-of-support-and-administrative-requests/usccb-chairman-migration-letter-opposition-h-r-391-asylum-reform-border-protection-act-2017/)

Who We Serve—Asylees. (2019, May 16). Office of Refugee Resettlement: The Administration for Children and Families. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/policy-guidance/who-we-serve-asylees>

WNC History at Smith-McDowell House Museum. (2022, March 9). *WNCHA History Hour: Refugees and Resettlement in WNC*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdrgRp-W3GY>

Yang, J. L. (2020, September 8). Are We More Divided Now Than Ever Before? *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/08/books/review/republic-of-wrath-james-a-morone.html>