# TRUST AMONGST REFUGEES IN RESETTLEMENT SETTINGS: A SYSTEMATIC SCOPING REVIEW AND THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE LITERATURE

Authors and affiliations:

Ryan Essex - Institute for Lifecourse Development, The University of Greenwich

Erika Kalocsanyiova - Institute for Lifecourse Development, The University of Greenwich

Nataliya Rumyantseva - Institute for Lifecourse Development and The Centre for Research on Employment and Work (CREW), The University of Greenwich.

Jill Jameson - Institute for Lifecourse Development, The University of Greenwich

Corresponding author:

Ryan Essex (r.w.essex@gre.ac.uk) a

The University of Greenwich

The University of Greenwich

Old Royal Naval College, Park Row,

Greenwich

London SE10 9LS

Abstract

Trust is of particular relevance to refugee populations, given the adverse, often protracted and liminal nature of the refugee journey. What trust means, how it shapes and is shaped by this journey is crucially important for this population group and it can vary substantially. The extent, range and nature of research activity in this area is limited, this article therefore reports on a systematic scoping review that explored trust amongst refugees and asylum seekers in resettlement settings. Studies were included if they were primary research and explored trust amongst refugees and asylum seekers in a resettlement context and excluded if trust was not a major focus of the study (i.e., a number of studies were excluded that explored related concepts, such as social capital), if the study did not identify participants as refugees or asylum seekers or the study examined trust in a transitory setting. Following the application of inclusion and exclusion criteria, 24 studies remained, which were reviewed and analysed. 16 studies used qualitative methods, six used quantitative methods and one used mixed methods. Trust was presented as fundamentally relational, taking shape between and within refugees, asylum seekers and others. Trust was also presented as temporal and contextual, across refugee journeys, hardships experienced, and resettlement. A major theme was the fundamental need in resettlement for a restoration of lost or damaged trust.


**Key words:** trust, trust and refugees, refugee resettlement, trust and migration, scoping review, systematic scoping review, thematic analysis

## Introduction

Trust is indispensable for human life and society. Without trust, life would be chaotic and unpredictable (Luhmann, 2018), we would be "suspicious of the friends we turn to for companionship, fearful of the specialists we must depend upon for vital services and information, and even distrustful of the food we must consume to nourish life" (Worchel, 1979). Trust helps us overcome this potential chaos, allowing us to act with some hope of certainty about others' behaviours and acting without fear of negative outcomes (Behnia, 2007).

Trust is of particular relevance to refugee populations, given the adverse, often protracted and liminal nature of the refugee journey. What trust means, how it shapes and is shaped by this journey, can vary substantially. When fleeing violence or persecution it may not be clear who or what to trust: some may be betrayed and distrust may serve as a means to survive. Many will have suffered at the hands of the state: even by definition, "refugees… fear rather than trust their home government" (Muecke, 1995). When fleeing, security, safety and certainty will remain threatened. Some may have little choice but cautiously to risk trusting those who would otherwise be untrustworthy. Many will take dangerous journeys to safety, while others will spend protracted periods in camps, where they continue to face unsafe and uncertain conditions.

If resettled, refugees then face a range of challenges upon resettlement; navigating a new culture and language, new systems and institutions. Many will face ongoing difficulties within their own community and discrimination from society more generally and at the hands of government policy. How this trajectory plays out,

however, will vary substantially between individuals, the countries from which they have fled and the country in which they hope to find safety.

Trust can be broadly described as an "accepted vulnerability to another's possible but not expected ill will (or lack of good will)" (Baier, 1986). In other words, trust is one's willingness to be vulnerable to others, based on the expectation that one will not be harmed or exploited. While the ways in which trust is defined is subject to ongoing debate, all conceptualisations have a number of similarities. Trust is fundamentally relational and, as noted by Hall, Dugan, Zheng, and Mishra (2001), almost all conceptualisations stress the "optimistic acceptance of a vulnerable situation". Related concepts are similarly important. Distrust is also commonly used alongside trust: however, distrust is not simply a lack of trust. We can, after all, not know whether to trust or distrust someone if we know too little about them. Distrust requires us to expect that someone will not fulfill their commitments. Furthermore, both trust and distrust relate to the idea of trustworthiness, that is, deciding who (or what) to trust is essentially, "the challenge of working out who is trustworthy" (Hawley, 2012, p. 4).

In short, the importance of trust, more generally and in particular for refugee and asylum seeker populations, cannot be overstated. Given its critical role in resettlement, and the diversity of experience of refugees and asylum seekers, this article reviews the literature related to trust in refugee resettlement. The overarching aim of this systematic scoping review is therefore to synthesise and analyse the empirical literature on trust amongst refugees and asylum seekers in resettlement settings. More specifically, this review has two related aims: 1) to explore the nature and scope of the literature, identifying its strengths and shortcomings and 2) to explore major themes related to

trust in resettlement; what it means to refugees and asylum seekers and how it shapes and is shaped by displacement, transition and resettlement.

## Methods

*Design*

Given the above aims, a systematic scoping review was utilised to examine the extent, range and nature of research activity and to identify gaps in the existing literature on trust amongst refugees in resettlement (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). This involved the following steps: 1) identification of area of interest 2) systematic literature search 3) data extraction 4) data synthesis and write-up. This review follows a data-based convergent synthesis design. That is, both qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods studies were identified in a single search, integrated throughout analysis, synthesis and presentation (Noyes et al., 2019). Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) and enhancing transparency in reporting the synthesis of qualitative research (ENTREQ) reporting guidelines have been followed (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, Altman, & Group, 2009; Tong, Flemming, McInnes, Oliver, & Craig, 2012)

*Search methods*

Nine reference databases were searched. Academic Search Premier, Medline, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, PsycInfo, CINAHL, PsycArticles, Scopus, Humanities International Complete and Web of Science. This review was part of a larger search that sought to explore trust and migration more generally. Preliminary search terms were developed to reflect a number of the core concepts: these related to the population of interest (migrants, refugees and asylum seekers) and the concept of trust (trust, mistrust, distrust, trustworthiness). The final search terms used were

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(refugee or asylum seeker or displaced or migrant or immigrant) AND (trust or mistrust or distrust or trustworthiness). The final search was carried out in February 2020. Results were compiled, duplicates and articles from non-peer reviewed sources were removed. After an initial review of the titles and abstracts of results, those that were obviously irrelevant articles were removed: 157 articles remained and were assessed against the following inclusion/exclusion criteria.

*Search inclusion and exclusion criteria*

Against the below criteria, 22 articles were included from the above search. Reference lists in these articles were explored, and a further 2 articles were included Therefore, 24 articles were included in this review. Papers were included if:

- They were primary research and explored trust amongst refugees and asylum seekers in a resettlement context [1].

- Trust was a major theme that was examined, explored or emerged.

- The article was peer reviewed, available online and published in a credible scholarly source.

Papers were excluded if:

- Trust was not a major focus of the study. For example, a number of studies were excluded that explored related concepts, such as social capital but said little about trust in itself.

- The study sample were not identified as refugees or asylum seekers.

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[1] For these purposes we have used the generally accepted definition that refugees were resettled if they were residing in a state "that has agreed to admit them and ultimately grant them permanent residence" (UNHCR, 2021).

- They examined trust in refugee camps. While camps could be considered resettlement contexts, they are also often vastly different to other settings, presenting unique challenges related to safety, security and trust[2].

*Data extraction*

Data from the included studies was extracted by all authors and categorised according to the country in which the research took place, the study aims and objectives, the research methods/design and sample information, the measurements and analysis used and the main outcomes of the study. All authors examined the articles included for major themes that emerged.

*Data summary and synthesis*

Due to the heterogeneity that emerged in this dataset, across studies and even within similar study methodologies, a meta-analysis or combining of quantitative data for further analysis or a meta-synthesis for qualitative data was not possible. Instead studies were combined to summarise descriptive study characteristics, followed by a thematic analysis (Mays, Pope, & Popay, 2005). This approach identified major and recurring themes and was most appropriate to answer our research questions, given that the majority of studies included were qualitative and because of the depth of discussion related to trust found in these articles.

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[2] We will discuss this further in our limitations below, however we believe there is substantial scope to examine trust across the refugee journey and that trust in resettlement cannot be divorced from experiences pre and during migration. We also acknowledge that refugees and asylum seekers in camps and resettlement settings may face a number of similar challenges and that these will vary substantially depending on a range of contextual factors.

## Results

*Descriptive results*

The majority of studies included in this review were carried out in the UK (7) (Goodall, 2010; Griffiths, 2012; Hynes, 2009, 2017; Majumder, O'Reilly, Karim, & Vostanis, 2015; O'Donnell, Higgins, Chauhan, & Mullen, 2008; Rainbird, 2012) and Australia (5) (Correa-Velez, McMichael, & Conteh, 2014; Lenette, 2015; Nickerson et al., 2019; Renzaho, Polonsky, McQuilten, & Waters, 2013; Renzaho & Polonsky, 2013). Two studies were carried out in Norway (Eide, Lidén, Haugland, Fladstad, & Hauge, 2018; Andreas Vårheim, 2014), Sweden (Björnberg, 2011; Linell & Keselman, 2011) and Uganda (Lyytinen, 2017a), while studies also explored trust in Canada (Kyriakides, McLuhan, Anderson, Bajjali, & Elgendy, 2019), Ireland (Níraghallaigh, 2014), the Netherlands (Feldmann, Bensing, De Ruijter, & Boeije, 2007), and South Korea (Kim & Kim, 2019). Two studies explored trust across a number of countries, including Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey (Melki & Kozman, 2019) and Bosnia and the Netherlands (Mooren & Kleber, 2001). In regard to methodology, 17 studies used qualitative methods, six used quantitative methods and one used mixed methods. The combined sample size of qualitative studies was 545. The combined sample size for the mixed methods study was 141. The combined sample size for the quantitative studies was 6519.

*What is trust?*

While the ways in which trust was conceptualised and the nature of the studies involved varied, trust emerged as a complex, multifaceted concept. Three themes emerged throughout the included articles related to the question of how refugees and asylum seekers conceptualised trust. First, trust was relational. Trust was explored between individuals and institutions and more broadly as a generally social phenomenon.

Second, the relational nature of trust was not static, trust was reconceptualised and renegotiated throughout the migration journey and resettlement. Trust was also therefore dynamic. Third, trust was also shaped by the resettlement context. The studies below took place across a range of countries, in different settings and under a range of different circumstances. These factors (among others) were seen as important in conceptualising what trust meant for refugees and asylum seekers. Below we will summarise the key findings related to the relational, dynamic and context dependent nature of trust.

Trust is "created, negotiated, sustained, confirmed or disconfirmed" (Linell & Keselman, 2011, p. 156) amongst individuals and groups. Almost every study discussed the relational nature of trust and its contextual or situational qualities. Some drew distinctions between who or what was the object of trust. Hynes (2009), for example, suggests that looking at four forms of trust: social, political, institutional and restorative trust, could help begin to delineate the concept. This is an important point, as many of the studies below looked at trust amongst different individuals or institutions. Some focused on inter or intra-group trust (Lenette, 2015), others explored institutional trust more generally (Hynes, 2009), while others examined what could best be described as interpersonal trust, examining trust between General Practitioners (GPs) and refugees, for example (O'Donnell et. al. 2008) or between refugees and their private sponsors in the country of re-settlement (Kyriakides et. al., 2019).

While in many cases it was helpful to isolate trust in certain interactions or between certain parties, in many studies the distinction between who or what was trusted, and to what extent, was quite difficult to make. This was because, as noted above, trust was

primarily relational and dynamic, that is, shaped by current and past relationships and shifting throughout the resettlement journey. O'Donnell et al. (2008), for example, explored trust amongst refugees and their GPs. This study suggested that while asylum seekers were generally pleased with the healthcare they received in the UK, their past experiences with their health and healthcare systems, and ongoing challenges in resettlement, shaped their expectations and trust in their GP. Similarly, Feldmann, Bensing, De Ruijter, & Boeije (2007) investigated trust in healthcare services and GPs amongst Afghan refugees in the Netherlands and reached similar conclusions. However, they also showed that trust-building processes were not only based on the chain of personal experiences, but also on negative stories circulating in the community. Hynes (2017) discussed interpersonal trust between forcibly displaced women and children and a range of other parties involved in the long journeys of displacement (e.g. traffickers, partners, bystanders, soldiers) as well as institutional trust in relation to the state (in country of origin and in resettlement), linking it to the emergence of a broader social or generalised trust. Interestingly, Goodall (2010) questioned the role of direct personal experience in the emergence of generalised social trust; she considered fairness and equality, hope, autonomy, and personal control as the central components of trust-building instead.

What trust meant between different individuals or groups varied substantially. Some results were unsurprising. Linell and Keselman (2011), for example, examined what could be labelled an interaction that was characterised by 'mutual mistrust', between immigration officials and unaccompanied children seeking asylum. The work of Griffiths (2012) also focused on the place of trust in the asylum system. Based on conversations with 300 asylum seekers in the UK, she found that "deception,

uncertainty and mistrust are as much characteristics of the asylum seekers' perspective of the immigration system as the reverse" (Griffiths, 2012, p. 8). However, trust as it played out between individuals and groups was often far more complex. Both Rainbird (2012) and Lenette (2015) challenged the assumption that refugees and asylum seekers would express greater trust for their in-group, that is, others from their country of origin. Rainbird (2012) explored how a group of asylum seekers in the UK negotiated their identity. Trust underpinned almost all interactions within this group. These were described as paradoxical, on the one hand, having to compete for resources and ultimately, asylum, while, on the other hand, also finding themselves in a situation that left them bound together, which at the same time promoted trust and friendship. Lenette (2015) also paints a complex picture. Exploring trust amongst a number of single refugee mothers, resettled in Australia, this study outlines the complex interplay of inter and intra-group trust, suggesting that the majority of mistrust existed within local communities (as opposed to the broader Australian community) because of the single mothers' marital status. Complicating this picture was the fact that while trusting relationships were established with the broader local community, these were often hampered by a number of community members' exclusionary attitudes. Kyriakides et al. (2019) presented cases where trust was built between incoming refugees and their private Canadian sponsors through pre-arrival communication via social media. Those who developed high levels of trust built their communication around pre-conflict roles and experiences (e.g., working in a particular profession, role in the family) of the refugees, with private sponsors sharing personal information in return and equalising the relationship. In cases where information was limited to procedural matters or no communication took place, trust did not emerge and was not recognised as missing by the refugees. Interestingly, when communication occurred in the context of trust,

information was converted into a 'resettlement knowledge asset', providing valuable resources for the future. Finally, Lyytinen (2017a) utilised the idea of 'communities of trust' to explore trust amongst Congolese refugees living in Kampala, Uganda. Again, her findings are relatively complex, namely that while some communities formed important spaces of protection, community participation did not always signify a strong sense of belonging.

Trust was also dynamic. While some studies examined trust at a point in time or in one interaction (Linell & Keselman, 2011), a number of studies conceptualised and explored trust as existing along a continuum between trust and mistrust and as shifting along a temporal trajectory (Hynes, 2017, Kyriakides et. al. 2019): some did this across the refugee journey (Hynes, 2017), some focused on a digital 'third space' between departure and arrival locations (Kyriakides et. al. 2019), while others did this for periods of time while in resettlement countries (O'Donnell et. al, 2008; Hynes, 2009). Lyytinen (2017b) makes a significant contribution in examining the temporal aspects of trust. She developed an analytical framework which combined the idea of the refugee 'journey' and trust. Drawing on fieldwork with Congolese refugees, living in Kampala, Uganda, she provides a framework to begin to consider the refugee journey, from fleeing danger or persecution, to finding safety and in resettlement. She proposes four elements that allow us to begin to better understand refugee 'journeys of trust': the temporal characteristics, the drivers and contexts, the contents and orientations of 'journeys of trust', and the individual characteristics of the voyagers and their intersectionality. Hynes (2017) similarly examines the idea of trust across the refugee journey amongst women and children, suggesting a continuum between trust and mistrust, while also importantly showing how trust and mistrust exists in parallel with

the liminal nature of the refugee journey between displacement and emplacement. Kyriakides et. al. (2019) developed these ideas further to discuss digital 'third spaces' of communication which bridge (or not) the space or departure with the destination of arrival. While not employing the idea of a 'journey', Feldmann, Bensing, De Ruijter, & Boeije (2007) also showed how past experiences impacted current perceptions of trust, identifying how both positive and negative experiences, past and present, shaped refugees' trust toward their GP. Other studies examined the temporal nature of trust while refugees were in resettlement countries. Eide et al. (2018), for example, explored trust amongst unaccompanied refugee children resettled in Norway, suggesting that upon resettlement, while the children initially distrusted social workers and related institutions, trust developed over time. This was attributed to the extent to which participants began to exert greater agency over their lives and futures. Similarly, Níraghallaigh (2014) suggested an interactive relational nature of mistrust developed amongst unaccompanied minors in Ireland: that is, they were both mistrusting and mistrusted. A number of authors also considered the possibility of a shift away from initial trust to mistrust/disillusionment, owing to unfair treatment by institutions, unemployment, lack of relevant language skills and social networks, and experiences of discrimination (e.g. Vårheim, 2014; Rainbird 2012; Feldman et al., 2007).

The relational and dynamic nature of trust in refugee resettlement cannot be understood without taking the refugee journey into context. The studies analysed here were carried out in a range of different countries, which offered vastly different resettlement experiences. Those who participated in these studies also had vastly different experiences and expectations. Níraghallaigh (2014), for example, suggests that trust (and mistrust) was embedded in the social contexts from which asylum seekers have

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come and was exacerbated by the social contexts in which they are now living. O'Donnell et. al. (2008) draw comparisons between, on the one hand, refugees' construction of trust in GP services in the UK on the basis of their experiences pre-arrival and the level of medical resources in the UK and, on the other, trust in GP services in their countries of displacement. Throughout all studies, trust is contrasted and complemented by a range of other phenomena that are also critical in resettlement, for example, integration and agency (Eide et al., 2018), ontological security (Hynes, 2009) and a range of social processes, such as social recognition, social identity and social capital (Björnberg, 2011). Almost all of the papers conceptualised mistrust as a survival mechanism, that is, throughout the refugee journey, many had learnt not to trust as a means to avoid being persecuted or exploited, and this often continued into resettlement (Hynes, 2017).

There was also a recurring theme of restoration. That is, trust was something that has been damaged or destroyed and that upon resettlement it was something that needed to be re-established. How all of this occurs, however, was also dependent on the resettlement context. That is, policies in resettlement countries were seen to substantially impact the temporal trajectory of trust and to set the bounds regarding how trust is approached between individuals and groups. For example, Hynes (2009) suggests that the UK's policy of compulsory dispersal[3] for asylum seekers impedes the restoration of trust at a very early stage of resettlement, which in turn has a range of negative implications for resettlement in the short and longer term.

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[3] The broad aims of this policy were to redistribute asylum seekers receiving state support around the UK to prevent their concentration in the south-east of England.

This inevitably begins to overlap with the next major research question below. However, it is first worth commenting on how the quantitative studies included in this review conceptualised trust. The quantitative studies stand in contrast to the qualitative studies reported above. In conceptualising trust, many utilised scales which had single or a small number of questions used to measure trust. While giving little insight into the question of what trust is for refugees and asylum seekers, these studies shed more light on the second question below, namely in quantifying how trust shaped and was shaped by resettlement.

*The impact of trust on resettlement and resettlement on trust*
All studies in this review saw trust as critically important in resettlement as a whole or at some point in the resettlement process. Most broadly, trust shaped a range of phenomena critical in resettlement and is in turn shaped by the resettlement process itself. The literature is again complex, and it is often difficult to pin down specific elements of the resettlement process that either damage or build trust. As is consistent with our discussion above, there is a degree of overlap below, namely many of the elements identified that impact on trust are also most fundamentally relational, dynamic and context dependent. A small number of studies below identified a number of pre-migratory experiences that impacted trust in resettlement. The majority of the studies, however, focused on trust in resettlement settings, along with the individual interpersonal sociocultural and institutional factors that shaped and were shaped by trust. Finally, there were at least four studies that explored trust as it related to very specific events in resettlement, trust and blood donation, trust as it related to the media and trust after a natural disaster. These studies will be discussed below.

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A range of pre-migration experiences shaped trust. The studies suggest trauma and exposure to war were significant in shaping trust amongst refugees in resettlement and that this impacted participants' fundamental outlook on the world. Mooren and Kleber (2001), for example, found that in comparison to a group of Dutch students, Bosnian refugees were less optimistic, expressing less trust in others and in authorities. Furthermore, intrusive recollections were positively related to feelings of distrust and negatively associated with the perception of the world as meaningful. Past experiences also shaped trust in far more subtle ways. O'Donnell et al. (2008) and Feldmann, Bensing, De Ruijter, & Boeije (2007) highlighted how participants' past experiences of healthcare shaped their expectations and perceptions of trust in relation to GPs. Kim and Kim (2019) found that North Korean refugees, resettled in South Korea, who previously traded goods in markets in North Korea, had higher trust in people more generally. Kyriakides et al. (2019) suggest that, amongst refugees being resettled in Canada, pre-arrival contact with sponsors facilitated trust between refugees and sponsors and facilitated the process of resettlement more generally.

Upon resettlement, a number of factors were identified as being critically important in shaping trust. Níraghallaigh (2014) explicitly set out to explore predictors of distrust amongst unaccompanied minors resettled in Ireland. As well as identifying past experiences that were important in shaping mistrust in resettlement, this study found further issues more closely related to resettlement itself; including being mistrusted by others. That is, a number of participants felt suspicion from the Irish public and institutions; unfamiliarity with people in Ireland; and concerns about truth telling, that is, for some of the participants, lying occurred because of a lack of trust: for example, they felt unable to tell their true reasons for leaving their countries of origin because of

fears of repercussions. For others, however, mistrust was caused by the truth not being told, that is, if a participant was perceived to be lying or secretive about the truth, he or she was not trusted, and so, in return, he or she had difficulties trusting and becoming close to others. Björnberg (2011) similarly found that amongst asylum seekers resettled in Sweden, many felt themselves to be outsiders and had few opportunities for building social networks. Many kept a low profile and did not risk trusting people: what was called a 'wait and see' strategy. The relational nature of trust in resettlement was also quite complex, for example, high reliance on family increased the pressure to protect family members and, for children, ambiguous interdependency was often a burden, including having to suppress their needs of emotional support from mothers or friends. Lyytinen (2017a) found that amongst Congolese refugees living in Kampala, Uganda, shared beliefs and attitudes brought refugees together and acted as reinforcing factors in community building. However, this was not always the case, with participation in activities not guaranteeing a sense of belonging. This study also suggested that inter-community mistrust also strengthens intra-community trust. Nickerson et al. (2019) quantified some of these findings, suggesting that among refugees resettled in Australia, lower levels of trust predicted lower levels of engagement with the 'host' community, but not refugees' own communities. There was also a relationship between trust and mental health symptoms, with those who had worse symptoms generally exhibiting less trust. The two studies that examined trust between refugee patients and their GPs revealed relatively specific factors that impacted trust. Feldmann et al. (2007), for example, emphasised the importance of the affective elements of GP appointments, including the perceived interest from the GP and their friendliness. O'Donnell et al. (2008) similarly suggests that continuity of care and perceptions about the GP listening and caring about the patient were important. The use of a computer in consultations

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was found to have a negative impact on trust, as did approaching the appointment in a patient-centred fashion, with many participants expecting the GP to take control of the consultation. Beyond these largely interpersonal factors, sociocultural factors were also found to impact trust. Lenette (2015) suggested that gender and culture both played a role in shaping trust and, for a number of refugee women who were parents, resettled in Australia, identifying the fact that while they relied heavily on local communities for support in the early stages of development, distrust was a particular issue within their immediate community of those who shared a similar background; many isolated women felt they were excluded or stigmatised within their local communities because of their marital status. Finally, Hynes (2017) introduces the concept of 'cultural and ideological somersaults' to highlight how some refugees asserted agency, turning traumatic experiences into valuable survival tools and reframing these experiences upon resettlement.

In addition to the above individual, interpersonal and sociocultural factors, a number of authors identified broader policy and institutional factors that shaped trust. Trust amongst unaccompanied minors resettled in Norway was influenced in part by their care institution requirements, rules and regulations (Eide et al., 2018). Occasionally, distrust in broader institutions was misattributed. Majumder et al. (2015), for example, found that amongst a number of unaccompanied refugee minors resettled in the UK there was a general mistrust of healthcare services. Many saw health professionals as representatives of the state and were fearful of deportation. Rainbird (2012), who examined trust amongst a group of asylum seekers resettled in the UK, suggested that while the relationship between asylum seekers was complex, distrust was common, as they had to compete for immigration status and resources. This 'competition' could be

seen as a direct result of the UK's asylum policy. Hynes (2009) suggests the UK's compulsory dispersal policy hindered trust and had more general implications on resettlement. In saying this, a number of institutions were seen as facilitating trust. Björnberg (2011), for example, also suggests that while trust could be negatively impacted if institutions applied rules that were opaque or inconsistent, schools, churches, voluntary organisations and health care institutions were generally trusted and played an important role in building trust and wellbeing. Vårheim (2014) found that among refugees enrolled in library programmes, participants became more trusting of libraries as institutions and of library patrons and users. However, this did not generalise into social trust outside of the library setting. In saying this, however, institutional trust that refugees developed on arrival may erode over time, particularly if these institutions are "unable or unwilling to support them for an extended period of time" (Lyytinen, 2017b). Vårheim (2014) similarly found that:

> … [the fact that] former students are less trusting towards strangers, compared with current students, is perhaps worrying in terms of the integration of immigrants in Norwegian society. The lowered trust could, however, be the result of the wearing off of the 'honeymoon effect' indicating that the trust patterns of newcomers are unstable, and that they need some time in the host country before core attitudes such as social trust are stabilized (p. 66).

A number of other studies examined trust as it related to relatively specific elements of resettlement. Amongst a larger study of Syrian refugees, Melki and Kozman (2019) found that trust in media sources predicted whether participants followed that media source, while, perhaps unsurprisingly, and consistent with the broader literature in this

area, this study perhaps has lessons for communication in resettlement more generally. In two papers, Renzaho et al. (2013) and Renzaho & Polonsky (2013) found that 'medical mistrust' was not associated with acculturation, but was related to perceived discrimination. Mistrust was also not associated with knowledge about blood donation or those who had donated blood, while discrimination was. Finally, a study that is relatively unique amongst all those above examined how a natural disaster impacted trust. Correa-Velez et al. (2014) examined trust amongst refugees in Australia, after exposure to the 2011 Queensland floods. The results of this study suggest that participants with higher levels of flood exposure were significantly more likely to report greater levels of trust both towards and from their neighbours, the wider Australian community, and the media, and they were also more likely to believe that most people can be trusted.

## Discussion

Amongst studies that explore trust amongst refugees in resettlement contexts, trust is presented in these studies as fundamentally relational, occurring between and within refugees and asylum seekers and other individuals, groups and entities. Trust is also presented as having a temporal aspect, across the refugee journey as a whole and throughout resettlement. In examining the relational and temporal elements of trust, context is needed, as trust cannot be viewed in isolation of the broader hardships often faced throughout the journey and after arrival in resettlement countries. A major theme throughout the above articles was one of restoration, that is, amongst refugees and asylum seekers, trust had been lost or in some way damaged and that it was fundamental to re-establish this in resettlement. In addition to a range of past experiences, numerous factors were seen as important in the restoration of trust in resettlement. Generally,

supportive individuals and institutions were seen as important foundations. However, a one-size fits all approach cannot be assumed. Individual actions of otherwise trustworthy individuals were revealed to erode trust, while potentially traumatic and uncontrollable circumstances, like the floods in Queensland, were revealed to build trust.

Collectively, the literature included in this review has several strengths and shortcomings. In relation to strengths, the literature presented above provides a detailed and nuanced picture of trust, a relatively complex concept. The literature begins to shed light on how trust is shaped throughout the refugee journey and in resettlement. Importantly, we can begin to draw conclusions about 'how' trust is built in resettlement settings. In saying this, there is substantial scope for future research to build on the shortcomings of this literature and issues that have been overlooked. First, there are few studies that explore trust in resettlement across the refugee journey or in resettlement itself over the longer term, that is, from the time that refugees arrive, well into resettlement. Expanding the scope of such research, however, particularly related to trust, will not be easy, and this review itself focused only on resettlement settings, largely for practical reasons. The concept of the refugee 'journey' itself has been long discussed (BenEzer & Zetter, 2015; Lyytinen, 2017b) and, furthermore, given the vastly different circumstances facing refugees across the world today, it may be that any findings across the refugee journey are simply not generalisable. This is not a problem in itself and again perhaps speaks to the complex and dynamic nature of trust. In saying this, there are a number of further directions in which we see future research having a particular impact. Second, there is scope to explore the impact of pre-migration experiences on trust. For example, those surviving war may have

significantly different experiences from those surviving human trafficking. Third, individual factors deserve greater attention. While a number of studies explored the experiences of unaccompanied minors, only one applied a gendered lens to explore the experiences of single refugee women. Further research should consider the merits of such an approach and the need to explore research with other vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, LGBTQI individuals or those with a disability. Fourth, there is substantial scope to examine how trust relates to other concepts critical in resettlement; hope, acculturation, isolation and integration are a few examples. Fifth, trust is context dependent (see. Castree, 2005, Simandan, 2019 and Withers, 2018). There is substantial scope to further explore factors that facilitate or erode trust. These factors could be dependent on individual differences, cultural and linguistic differences, pre-migration experiences and the post-migration structures to support resettlement, among other factors. Sixth, care and greater depth of insight is needed, particularly with quantitative research related to how trust is conceptualised. The qualitative literature stands in contrast, painting a nuanced and detailed picture of trust. Many of the quantitative studies included here appeared to take these subtleties for granted. Finally, there is a need for greater engagement with the literature on resettlement more generally.

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Tables and Figures

Figure 1. PRISMA 2009 Flow Diagram

Records identified through database searching (terms: refugee or asylum seeker or displaced or migrant or immigrant) AND (trust or mistrust or distrust or trustworthiness
(n = 157 )

Additional records identified through other sources
(n = 2)

Records screened using Inclusion criteria (primary research which explored trust, trust was a major theme that was examined, explored or emerged, peer reviewed). Exclusion criteria (trust was not a major focus of the study, sample were not identified as refugees or asylum seekers, trust was explored in refugee camps).
(n = 159)

Records excluded
(n = 134)

Not assessed manuscripts because of unobtainable full-texts
(n = 1)

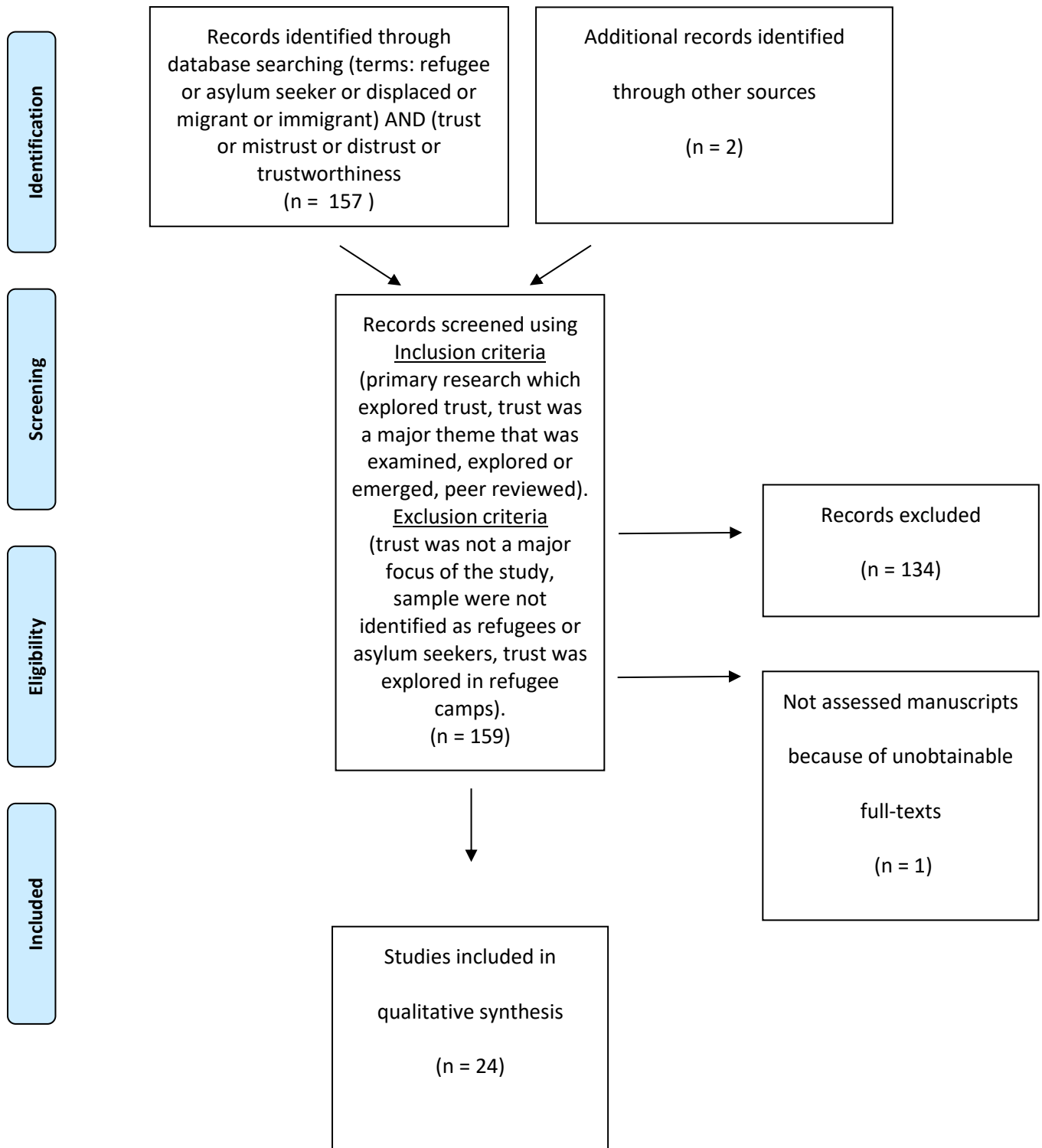Studies included in qualitative synthesis
(n = 24)

Table 1. Summary of studies included in this review

| Author | Year | Country | Aims and Objectives | Sample - (population of immigrants & sample size) | Methods/design | Measurement/analysis | Outcomes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bjornberg | 2011 | Sweden | This paper is dedicated to analysing the social integration of asylum-seekers and how they cope with adversity during their wait for a permit of stay. | Asylum seeker (adults n = 18 and children n = 17) | Qualitative - interviews with parents and children | Thematic analysis | A lack of trust more generally emerged as a common theme. The authors concluded that this impacted on the ability build social capital. |
| Correa-Velez, et. al. | 2014 | Australia | This study examined levels of social trust among men from refugee backgrounds after the 2011 Queensland floods | Refugees (n = 141) | Mixed methods, cross sectional survey (n = 141) and focus groups (n = 25) | Trust items adapted from the Social Capital Community Benchmark survey (Kennedy School of Government 2000) | Participants with higher levels of flood exposure were significantly more likely to report greater levels of trust both towards and from their neighbours, the wider Australian community, and the media, and they were also more likely to believe that most people can be trusted |
| Eide, et. al. | 2018 | Norway | This study examined the experiences of unaccompanied refugee minors resettling in Norway | Unaccompanied refugee adolescents (n = 9) | Qualitative, interviews | Thematic analysis | Participants struggled to overcome the tensions of being in-between what they could take for granted in the past and an indeterminate future. Participants developed capacity to assess trustworthiness of people and institutions, and they exerted more agency in developing new relationships. |
| Feldmann, et. al. | 2007 | Netherlands | This study explored experiences of healthcare and the relationship between the refugee-patients and their general practitioners. | Refugees (n = 36) | Qualitative, semi-structured interviews | Narrative analysis | Four different types of narrative were identified: 'primary trust', 'secondary trust', 'primary disillusionment', 'secondary disillusionment'. Building trust was identified as a recurring and important issues. |
| Goodall | 2010 | UK | The paper uses trust theory to investigate relationships between host communities and new arrivals. | New arrivals, including asylum seekers (n=17) | Multiple qualitative methodologies, including semi-structured interviews | Not stated | Personal autonomy, a sense of control over one's own life, hope and equality are central components for the promotion of generalised social trust. |
| Griffiths | 2012 | UK | The paper explores how asylum applicants in the UK experience, understand, and explain the bureaucracy they are embedded in. | Asylum seeker (n=300) | Qualitative, fieldwork | Anthropological analysis | An institutional emphasis on truthfulness exists alongside a culture of disbelief. Deception and mistrust are as much characteristics of the asylum seekers' perspective of the asylum system as the reverse. |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hynes | 2017 | UK | This paper explored the lives of forcibly displaced women and children, including women and children who have become refugees or have experienced 'trafficking', specifically around the issues of trust and mistrust. | Refugees (n = not stated) | Multiple qualitative methodologies, drawing on past research which included participant observation, informal interviews, focus groups and reflections on practice | Grounded theory | Themes of trust – social, political, institutional and restorative trust – experienced during displacement are explored. Trust and mistrust are seen as strategies for survival until safe spaces are found wherein trust can begin to be restored. |
| Hynes | 2009 | UK | This study investigated the issue of trust, or mistrust, specifically in relation to single adult asylum seekers and asylum seeker families compulsorily dispersed across England. | Asylum seekers (n = 48) | Qualitative - 24 in depth interviews, 4 joint interviews and 3 focus groups | Grounded theory | During dispersal, asylum seekers were able to restore some social trust but very little trust in institutions or political processes was restored. Furthermore punitive aspects of the asylum support system have a negative impact on the longer term resettlement process or official 'integration' of those awarded refugee status |
| Kim & Kim | 2019 | South Korea | This study investigated the effects of North Korean refugees' informal market activities on their trust while living in South Korea | Refugees (n = 485) | Quantitative, longitudinal survey | Survey, researcher developed | North Korean refugees who previously traded goods in markets in North Korea had higher trust in people more generally, but that this did not impact trust in other North Korean refugees, suggesting little evidence of in-group favouritism. |
| Kyriakides, et. al. | 2019 | Canada | This study explores the resettlement effects of pre-arrival contact on the interactional dynamics between private sponsors and privately sponsored Syrian refugees | Refugees (n = 204) | Qualitative, interviews | Grounded theory | Those who had regular pre-arrival contact via digital applications such as Facebook, Skype, and WhatsApp reported more positive, "successful" resettlement experiences than those who had not. |
| Lenette | 2015 | Australia | This study explored the post-migration experiences of four women raising children alone in Brisbane, Australia, outlining how the presence of mistrust could at times create difficult resettlement challenges. | Refugees (n = 4) | Qualitative, ethnographic approach incorporating observation, interviews, photo-voice and digital storytelling | Thematic analysis | All participants encountered trust and mistrust intra- and inter-group, the findings indicate a stronger emphasis on how the dynamics within local communities were a bigger source of mistrust, and thus clearly impacted on the women's well-being more significantly. A key implication that informs nuanced understandings of refugee experiences in resettlement is that women raising children alone and whom their community as well as broader society did not fully trust could face significant hardships. |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Linell & Keselman | 2012 | Sweden | This study analyses how trust and distrust are displayed through discursive mechanism in investigative interviews that caseworkers of the Swedish Migration Board conducted with Russian adolescents seeking asylum. | Adolescent asylum seekers (n = 26) | Qualitative – detailed turn-by-turn analysis of audio-recorded hearings | Discourse analysis | There is a mutual distrust between both parties. Two sides of trust and distrust are apparent: formal and content aspects. The other major conclusion was methodological, namely that discourse studies may only be able to explore short-term (situated) distrust. |
| Lyytinen | 2017 | Uganda | This study explored the notions of 'community' and 'trust' with regard to Congolese refugees living in the city Kampala, Uganda. | Refugees (n = 74), refugee community leaders (n = 18) | Qualitative, semi structured interviews, focus groups, diaries and observation | Discourse analysis | Certain communities identified by the refugees form an important informal 'space of protection' for them. Participation in community activities does not, however, automatically signify a strong sense of belonging. Shared beliefs and attitudes bring refugees together and act as reinforcing factors in community building. Inter community mistrust also strengthens intra-community trust. |
| Lyytinen | 2017 | Uganda | This study presents a novel analytical framework to examine refugees' journeys to exile from the perspective of 'trust'. | Refugees (n = 74), | Qualitative, semi structured interviews, focus groups, diaries and observation | Discourse analysis | This framework consists of the temporal characteristics, the drivers and contexts, and the contents and orientations of 'journeys of trust', and the characteristics of the voyagers and their intersectionality. |
| Majumder et. al. | 2015 | UK | This study explored the views and perceptions that unaccompanied minors hold about mental health and metnal health services. | Refugees (n = 15) | Qualitative, semi structured interviews | Thematic analysis | Many participants held negative attitudes toward mental health and had a lack of trust in services. This could be explained by their descriptions of their experiences within their home country of psychiatric care, their experiences of being a refugee/asylum-seeker or cultural differences. |
| Melki & Kozman | 2019 | Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey | This study examined the media needs and trust of four groups of Syrians: non-displaced, internally displaced, externally displaced living inside refugee camps, and externally displaced living outside refugee camps. dependency and selective exposure during the war | Refugees (n = 1820) | Quantitative - Cross sectional survey | European Social Survey | Trust significantly predicted following that media source, we should interpret the results with caution because we were only able to run the predictive test on the top two most followed TV stations. |

| Author | Year | Country | Study Description | Sample | Methodology | Analysis/Measure | Findings |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mooren & Kleber | 2001 | Bosnia and the Netherlands | This study explored the connection between the psychological sequelae of stressful events (e.g., war, migration, asylum procedures) and the individual sense of trust, distrust, and meaningfulness of the world and life amongst Bosnian people. | Refuees (Bosnian refuees in the Neterlands, n = 366, citizens of Bosnia n = 128 and Bosnian clients of a mental health project n = 1,886) | Quantitative - Causal comparative design | Impact of Event Scale (Horowitz et. al., 1979), The World Assumption Scale (Janoff-Bulman, 1989), Life Orientation Test (Scheier & Carverm 1985), Meaning of War Scale (researcher developed). | Intrusive recollections and avoidant tendencies were associated with higher levels of distrust and negatively related to optimism and perceptions of the world as meaningful. Optimistic attitudes, perceptions of the world as benevolent and meaningful and of oneself as worthy are associated with feelings of trust and self-confidence |
| Nickerson, et. al. | 2019 | Australia | This study examined the impact of interpersonal trust and psychological symptoms on community engagement in refugees. | Refugees (n = 1894) | Quantitative - Causal comparative design | Building a New Life in Australia study | High levels of depression symptoms were associated with lower subsequent engagement with refugees' own communities. In contrast, low levels of interpersonal trust were associated with lower engagement with the host community over the same timeframe. |
| Níraghallaigh | 2014 | Ireland | This study explores the concept of mistrust amongst refugee populations by drawing on qualitative interviews with unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors living in the Republic of Ireland. | Asylum seekers (unaccompanied children, n = 32) | Qualitative, observations, in-dept interviews | Thematic analysis | Most of the participants in this study their trust had been either destroyed or severely damaged, largely because of the social contexts from which they had come and by the social contexts in which they were now living. |
| O'Donnell, et. al. | 2008 | UK | This study explored how migrants' previous knowledge and experience of health care influences their current expectations of health care in a system relying on clinical generalists performing a gatekeeping role. | Asylum seekers (n = 52) | Qualitative, semi-structured interviews and focus groups | Grounded theory | Asylum seekers had previous experience of a diverse range of healthcare systems, most of which were characterised by a lack of GPs and direct access to hospital-based specialists. Interviewees spoke of a lack of confidence and trust in their GP, influenced by their view that GPs are too generalist but also by other issues such as GPs' lack of human touch and their reliance on computers. |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rainbird | 2012 | UK | This study explores the complexity of interactions between asylum seekers in East Anglia as they negotiate the shared experience of place, the British immigration system, and a common and competitive goal of attaining refugee status. | Asylum seekers (n = 37) | Qualitative, observations, in-depth interviews | Speech act analysis | Interactions between asylum seekers are complex and paradoxical. As asylum seekers seek to differentiate themselves from the collective asylum seeker identity, they always do so from within the collective. The responses of distrust or collaboration and the vacillation between the two, as well as between similarity and differentiation, are strategic processes that asylum seekers use to negotiate such interactions and rework their identities. |
| Renzaho & Polonsky | 2013 | Australia | This study examined whether perceived discrimination, the level of acculturation, and medical mistrust were associated with knowledge about blood donation processes and blood donation status | Immigrants (n = 425, of which, n = 317 were refugees) | Quantitative, cross sectional survey | Knowledge about blood donation and blood donation status scales (researcher developed), medical mistrust scale (LaVeist, et. al., 2000), discrimination scales (Phinney et al., 1998 and Verkuyten, 1998), Vancouver Index of Acculturation scale (Ryder, et.al., 2000) | Medical mistrust and perceived discrimination were not associated with knowledge about blood donation |
| Renzaho, et. al. | 2013 | Australia | The study examined the effect of broader socio-demographic factors, acculturation, and discrimination on medical mistrust among 425 African migrants living in Victoria and South Australia, Australia. | Immigrants, n = 425 (of which, n = 317 were refugees) | Quantitative - Cross sectional survey | Medical mistrust scale (LaVeist, Nickerson & Bowie, 2000), Discrimination scales (Phinney et al., 1998 and Verkuyten, 1998), Vancouver Index of Acculturation scale | After adjusting for socio-demographic factors, low medical mistrust scores (i.e.,more trusting of the system) were associated with refugee and family reunion, migration status, being Christian, and living in rural or village areas prior to migration. Medical mistrust did not vary by the type of acculturation, but was positively related to perceived personal and societal discrimination. |
| Vårheim | 2014 | Norway | This research explores whether public library programmes can generate trust among refugee populations. | Refugees and asylum seekers (n = 8) | Qualitative, in depth, unstructured interviews | Not stated | Library programmes can play an important part in facilitating and speeding up trust-creating processes, making integration less traumatic, although trust in unknown people (generalized trust) remains low, before, during, and after the completion of the programmes. |