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No Safe Place for Refugees: A Comparative Analysis of Afghan Refugees' Insecurities in the United States and Türkiye

By

CETIN OZDEMIR
DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Sociology

in the

OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

of the

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

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Abstract

Drawing on 83 interviews supplemented by ethnographic observations between 2020 and 2022, this dissertation contributes to discussions of refugee insecurity and precarity by exploring how Afghan refugees experience a shift from physical insecurity in Afghanistan to legal, economic, and social insecurity in the United States and Türkiye. Grounded in the human security framework, it examines the political, economic, and cultural structures that undermine refugees' human security. Although refugees flee war and persecution in search of safety, they often encounter new forms of insecurity in host societies, including legal insecurity, labor precarity, and social exclusion driven by xenophobia and intolerance. Gender is one way to see how economic, political, and social insecurities cause rifts in their lives. I use R.W. Connell's theory of gender relations and link it with the notions of precarious masculinity and masculinity crisis to explore this process among Afghan men through the lens of hegemonic masculinity undermined by migration and settlement. By analyzing the United States and Türkiye, I argue that refugee insecurity is not limited to the country of origin but is also (re)produced in destination contexts, taking distinctive yet overlapping forms across different contexts. I found that in the United States, Afghan refugees, despite legal inclusion, face economic and social exclusions due to skills downgrading, along with economic precarity, and intolerance and suspicion as Muslim immigrants. In Türkiye, Afghan refugees are politically insecure due to their legal statuses, namely undocumented and international protection statuses, and endure severe precariousness along with obstacles in accessing work permits and social exclusion due to their ethnic identities. These insecurities, particularly legal and economic, have far-reaching effects on Afghan men in both countries, who face challenges to fulfill their provider roles, a significant aspect of their masculinity. Thus, this study highlights how structural forces enable or

restrict economic comfort, self-fulfillment, and a sense of belonging among refugees. It also informs rights-based policies to address discrimination and inequality faced by Afghan refugees in both countries.

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Bibliography

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Andam, 39 years old and a married man with three children, studied Economics at Kabul University in Afghanistan and graduated in 2003. He then began working in the customs department of the Ministry of Finance, where he served as a team leader, implementing a computerized system to process goods and to collect customs duty. Following this position, in 2009, he joined the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in Kabul, where he spent two years supporting the export of agricultural products, including fresh and dried fruits, to other countries. He quit this job and moved to Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, to pursue a master's degree. Then, he returned to Kabul and rejoined USAID, where he worked till 2016.

Andam's employment in USAID led him to face a Taliban threat, which resulted in him and his family deciding to leave their home country to find a safer environment for himself and his family, including his children, who could study without danger. In January 2015, he applied for the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV), granted to Afghan nationals who work with the U.S. Army, organizations, or companies in Afghanistan, where they face threats and are physically insecure. After receiving his SIV in 2016, Andam contacted officials at the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Kabul to arrange his flight, including purchasing the flight tickets, which would be reimbursed to IOM later. After a long, exhausting trip, Andam and his family arrived in the United States in 2016.

Andam chose to resettle in the greater Sacramento area, leveraging his social networks, especially a friend living there. Upon arrival, he encountered difficulties in securing an apartment. He found one through his friend's assistant, but Andam required a cosigner because he lacked a job and a credit history. He and his friend contacted his resettlement agency, the

International Rescue Committee, to request a cosigner, but they declined. Subsequently, his friend reached out to another acquaintance with sufficient income who was willing to cosign. With this agreement, Andam was able to rent the apartment and move in immediately, but he had nothing. He then bought a bike for $20 or $30 and began biking to stores.

Andam and other newcomers qualify for "welcome money," federal government funds through resettlement agencies. After arriving in the United States, he requested that his agency pay him this money. However, instead, the agency purchased staff, such as household items, which displeased him because he disliked their choices. As a result, he ceased communicating with his case manager and refused to sign the necessary resettlement documents, although he eventually did. After receiving his license in two months, he began driving for Lyft to meet his family's expenses, including rent and bills. This situation was shocking because he worked in various roles in the Ministry of Economics and USAID in Afghanistan. However, in the United States, he became a Lyft driver. After working in this role for eight months, he found another job as a trainer at Apple through a different company that subcontracted to Apple, a change that reduced his pay. He earned minimum wage and had a temporary contract, which did not provide him with any benefits, such as insurance.

After remaining unemployed for a while, Andam and one of his friends launched a car dealership. When Covid happened in 2019, he stopped working and received unemployment benefits for 6 months. He then found another job as an operations specialist in a retirement company and worked there for six months. Finally, he had been working at a non-governmental organization for five months when I interviewed him. This job offered improved working conditions, including a higher income, but a specific project, meaning he had to find another job when it ended.

In addition to economic insecurity and precarity, Andam also experienced some other issues in the United States because of his country of origin, which was often associated with Islam. For example, while working as an Uber or Lyft driver, he was frequently told by his passengers to return to Afghanistan. He also encountered difficulties while working at Apple, where his work schedule often conflicted with his prayer times, leaving him dissatisfied. In contrast, he was more satisfied and happier in his last position at a Muslim-American non-governmental organization, where he was given designated times to pray.

Murtaza, a 34-year-old married man, farmed and shepherded in Afghanistan. He identified himself as a Hazara and a Caferi. Murtaza fell in love with a Hazara Afghan woman, who would be forced to marry a Pashtun man by her uncle owing money to him. Murtaza managed to marry, but they had to leave their countries because of threats they received from his wife's uncle. Moreover, their ethnic and sectarian background contributed to their decision to leave their home countries because he told me Hazara Afghans, because of their sub-identities, have constantly become a direct target for the Taliban or other illegal armed groups in Afghanistan, which created physical insecurity for them.

Murtaza and his wife migrated to Iran, but his wife's uncle still threatened to kill them. They were also "illegal" in Iran, meaning they did not have an identity card. After living in Iran for a couple of years, they migrated to Türkiye in 2016, where they would be more secure both physically and legally. They walked 11 hours and sometimes rented a horse and car during their journey from Iran to Türkiye. After they crossed the border without inspection, they traveled to Ankara province to register with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which then resettled them in Trabzon under international protection status (IPS). IPS protected Murtaza and his wife from deportation by the Turkish authorities and enabled them to

access education and healthcare services. However, it also restricted their freedom of movement, confining them to Trabzon, as they were required to obtain permission from the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management (PDMM) before travelling outside of Trabzon.

In Trabzon, Murtaza worked in agriculture, picking tea and hazelnuts, and in construction, both sectors with unstable schedules that offer seasonal jobs without contracts or benefits. He earned minimum wage, though he believes he should earn more as a skilled worker, and these jobs required considerable effort. He worked long hours but was not paid fairly, resulting in the constant exploitation of his labor. He also had difficulty meeting his family's expenses, especially amid high inflation in Türkiye. However, Murtaza had to work to survive. In addition to economic insecurity and precarity, Murtaza highlighted social insecurity and intolerance he encountered in Türkiye. Murtaza told me that members of the host society often accused him of stealing or taking jobs, being a burden on the state because they think he receives assistance from the state, and of increasing rents.

As Andam and Murtaza's experiences show, this dissertation study examines a range of insecurities that Afghan refugees face and navigate in the United States and Türkiye. Scholars of immigration on assimilation or social integration have examined how immigrants fit into the mainstream culture of host societies. To answer this question, theories of straight-line assimilation argued that immigrants and their descendants ultimately join the mainstream culture and incorporate it into social and political processes (R. Alba and Nee 2003; Gordon 1964; Park 1926). Unlike straight-assimilation theories, some other scholars have postulated that immigrants' assimilation is segmented and depends on race, human capital, social networks, and legal status to understand if immigrants move "downward mobility" into racialized poverty or "upward mobility" into the middle-class (Portes and Zhou 1993; Rumbaut and Portes 2001).

However, the recent literature on immigration has abandoned the classic assimilation theories, addressing straight-line assimilation and whether immigrants join the (White) mainstream culture or different segments of the host society (Gowayed 2022a:127).

In today's political and social environments, immigrants experience insecurity and precariousness before and after migration, including during their resettlement. The existing literature has highlighted how immigrants experience host societies and the extent to which they provide opportunities for economic and emotional comfort, self-realization, and belonging (Dreby 2006; García 2019a; Gowayed 2022b; Maghbouleh 2017). In this context, Neda Maghbouleh (2017) examined second-generation Iranian Americans in the United States to explore whiteness and its related logic of exclusion for them, meaning whiteness can be granted, revoked, or mismatched in the law and on the ground. Maghbouleh (2017) claimed that Iranian Americans also experience discrimination due to Islamophobia, resulting in obscuring the racial valence of harassment. Angela S. García (2019) studied how undocumented immigrants in the United States are affected by state and local immigration measures. García hypothesized that state and local immigration laws facilitate immigrants' integration, whereas restrictive measures obscure it. Joanna Dreby (2006) studied Mexican transnational parents' experiences in the United States to explore the emotional consequences of parents living apart from their children in Mexico. All these studies have paid particular attention to human experiences to show that inequalities in destination countries shape immigrants' racial relations, legal status, and social capital, not just determinants of their trajectories (Gowayed 2022a:127–28).

This dissertation employs a human security perspective to explore the experiences of Afghan refugees before, during, and after resettlement in the United States and Türkiye, comparing five main categories: Physical, political/legal, economic, social, and gender-related insecurities or

relations. In academic discourse, the concept of security has primarily been discussed within the frameworks of national and public security, which focus on issues such as border control, migratory pressures, terrorism, and perceived threats to culture, economic stability, and physical safety (Campani 2016; Karyotis 2016). Consequently, human security has received little attention in political discourse and academic research on refugees (Campani 2016; Freedman 2018; Karyotis 2016). Human security emphasizes security from the perspective of individuals, rather than how states typically understand it within the realm of national security. This distinction between human security and national security highlights a bottom-up versus top-down approach to security. The bottom-up approach to security reflects human security, as it examines security within broader human conditions beyond traditional security concerns (Koser 2016:75). This approach amplifies refugees' voices and agency in addressing these insecurities as they rebuild their well-being and prosperity (Wessells 2021).

Security is contextual and embedded in social structures, caused by states. Structural change in legal, political, and economic institutions is of equal importance to the redefinition of social norms in the creation and maintenance of security (Hampson 2004). Security must be understood as a process that constantly changes across contexts; thus, it is not static (Uvin 2004). Structural causes and changes may exacerbate poverty, increase individuals' vulnerability to economic shocks, and expose them to social exclusion, discrimination, and daily assaults on their dignity (Hoogensen and Stuvøy 2006; Uvin 2004). Therefore, the human security approach should address individuals' or communities' economic conditions, political structures, and cultural practices that may discriminate against them on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, or gender (Vietti and Scribner 2013a:21).

Drawing on the human security approach, this dissertation study focuses on the immigration experiences of Afghan refugees through different aspects of their migration, i.e., the insecurities they face in their home countries and emigration to live free from their fears and provide their families a better life, the difficulties they experience during their migration, the processes of their resettlement in the United States and Türkiye, and the economic hardships and social exclusion they face in these countries. I first ask: how do Afghan refugee men experience a shift from physical insecurity in Afghanistan to legal, economic, and social insecurity in the United States and Türkiye? Second, how do these experiences vary between the United States, where Afghan refugees face political/legal inclusion but economic and social insecurity, and Türkiye, where they encounter political/legal exclusion alongside economic and social insecurity? In addition to these two questions, I inquire how these insecurities, particularly legal and economic, faced by Afghan refugee men in these two countries, shape their gender relations, including their sense of masculinity in the household and community. By analyzing the United States and Türkiye, I argue that refugee insecurity is not limited to the country of origin but is also (re)produced in destination contexts, taking distinctive yet overlapping forms across different contexts.

I begin with a brief historical background of Afghan refugees' migration to the United States and Türkiye. I then continue with the dynamics behind the emigration of Afghan refugees from Afghanistan, focusing on the different forms of physical insecurity they face in their home countries. Then, I examine structural forces that undermine human security for Afghan refugees in the United States and Türkiye. This part also includes a theoretical/conceptual debate and an analysis of each chapter. Next, I discuss my research design, methods, and data, followed by the outline of chapters.

1.2 A Brief Historical Background of Afghan Refugees' Migration to the United States and Türkiye

Afghan migration to the United States can be categorized into two central waves. The first wave has roots dating back to the 1980s. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan during that period prompted millions of Afghans to migrate to neighboring countries, with some seeking resettlement in Western nations, including the United States. Most Afghan migrants to the United States during this process did so under family reunification policies rather than through refugee programs. The number of Afghans living in the United States was approximately 60,000 after the first wave. 40,000 lived in the San Francisco Bay area (Lindgren and Lipson 2004).

The second wave of Afghan migration to the United States occurred during the U.S. occupation of Afghanistan in 2002. The U.S. State Department introduced the SIV program for Afghan citizens (and Iraqi citizens in Iraq) who had collaborated with the U.S. military or companies in various capacities, such as translators, guards, and embassy staff in Afghanistan (Gatling 2021:54). These SIV holders left due to threats from illegal armed groups, notably the Taliban, owing to their associations with the U.S. military or companies (Chalermkraivuth 2019).

Afghan refugees who are resettled in the United States through programs such as the SIV or the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) can work with the IOM to purchase their airline tickets and arrange their flights. As another option, they can purchase their own tickets and make their own travel arrangements. The flight tickets purchased by the IOM are considered loan tickets. Afghans must reimburse them to the IOM after resettling in the United States. For example, Ali, a 43-year-old married man and an SIV holder, arrived in the United States from Afghanistan under the supervision of the IOM. He explained this process as follows:

> Once I got my U.S. visa, I contacted the IOM, which booked my flight. Then, I met them at one of their local offices in Kabul. They explained all the travel arrangements to us. Then, I

> signed the contract. They paid for our air travel, including how much it would cost, which was six thousand dollars, and we must pay them back. The IOM gave us our tickets. On the travel day, we had a person at the airport in Kabul. He took us to the boarding and check-in. Once we landed in Dubai, another IOM representative waited at the airport to facilitate the immigration process. After that, our next flight was to Hamburg, Germany. We had another IOM representative waiting for us there. Finally, we landed in Chicago, where another IOM representative waited for us. From Chicago, we arrived in Sacramento.

Thus, the IOM played a key role in Ali's travel from Afghanistan to the United States, particularly the greater Sacramento area, where I conducted my fieldwork. The greater Sacramento area has emerged as a destination for Afghan refugees after the 2010s because of their social networks (FitzGerald 2022; FitzGerald and Arar 2018; Koser 1997; Massey et al. 1998; Williams 2006), the presence of an Afghan community, and job opportunities.

Migration of Afghan refugees to Türkiye traces back to the 1980s when the Turkish state resettled approximately 2,000 Afghan families in Tokat, Kırşehir, Sivas, Şanlıurfa, Van, and Hatay provinces (İçduygu and Karadağ 2018). This resettlement was based on their perceived Turkish origin and culture, encompassing Afghan people with diverse sub-identities such as Turkmen, Hazara, and Kyrgyz. The 1934 Law of Settlement legally permitted these Afghans to resettle in Türkiye because they were considered to be of Turkish origin and culture. Over time, Afghan refugees resettled in the provinces migrated to Istanbul, where they became involved in various industries, including leather and textiles. This movement resulted in the relocation of some of their relatives and friends, contributing to the growth of Afghan-origin communities, especially in Istanbul (İçduygu and Karadağ 2018).

From 1983 to the late 1990s, Afghan migratory movements to Türkiye occurred through network migration and mixed flows. Mixed flows represent both asylum seekers and irregular migrants. During this process, a two-tier migratory system emerged: the first tier involved migration between Afghanistan and Türkiye. In contrast, the second involved migration from

Afghanistan to Europe via Türkiye, a transit country. Since the late 1990s, this two-tier migratory system has solidified (İçduygu and Karadağ 2018).

The Syrian civil war in 2011 prompted a sharp increase in the number of Afghan refugees, asylum seekers, and irregular migrants. Due to the Syrian migratory movement, the Turkish state implemented a flexible border policy, which allowed thousands of Syrian refugees to migrate to Europe. Afghan refugees also benefited from this border policy. About 1 million people crossed the border and moved to Europe via Türkiye in 2015. Afghan refugees constituted 25 percent of border crossings (İçduygu and Karadağ 2018). However, Türkiye and the European Union signed an agreement on March 18, 2016, to tighten border crossings for Syrian refugees (Pekşen 2023). In addition to this migratory movement to Europe, Afghan individuals who migrated to Türkiye contributed to the growth of Afghan communities (İçduygu and Karadağ 2018).

In this study, I focus on Afghan refugees' experiences in the provinces of Istanbul and Trabzon in Türkiye. Trabzon is a satellite province where Afghan refugees reside under IPS. They were resettled in Trabzon by the Presidency of Migration Management (PMM) or UNHCR, or chose to resettle. Afghan refugees also live in non-satellite provinces where they are undocumented, lacking legal protection, and not holding an IPS. Istanbul is one of these provinces, which draws them thanks to its social networks, job opportunities, and geographical location, a bridge between Europe and Asia (Ozdemir 2026).

1.3 Physical Insecurity within the Context of Emigration from Afghanistan

In the 1980s, the United Nations aimed to develop a broader, open-ended, and contextual understanding of security that extended beyond military threats and national security to address poverty, deprivation, and economic inequality, thereby promoting individuals' right to live in dignity and peace (The United Nations Development Programme 1994; Vietti and Scribner

2013). In 1994, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) introduced a new approach to security that shifted the focus from nations protecting their security to protecting individuals who experience insecurity in their daily lives through persistent threats of repression, crime, hunger, and disease, as well as sudden and disruptive changes in their lives. Thus, the 1994 UNDP report conceptualized human security as consisting of two elements that may contribute to individuals' migration from their home countries: "freedom from fear" related to threats and conflicts, and "freedom from want," encompassing diseases, economic hardships, poverty, and developmental issues (The United Nations Development Programme 1994; Vietti and Scribner 2013a). These two dimensions are interconnected, and when individuals cannot live free from fear and want, they may be forced to emigrate to search for safety and a more secure life.

Scholarship has discussed that refugee migration occurs due to nation-state-building (Roucek 1939; Stoessinger 1961; Zolberg, Suhrke, and Aguayo 1989), genocide and politicide, that is, the elimination of politically defined groups (Fein 1993; Neumayer 2005; Schmeidl 1997), wars as consequences of foreign interventions, and generalized violence that disregards institutionalized violation of human rights (Schmeidl 1997). However, these studies use refugee statistics collected by the UNHCR and national governments, which rely on a legal rather than a sociological definition of refugee (FitzGerald and Arar 2018). Based on statistics, these studies claim that genocide and politicide lead to refugee migration, using the definition of "persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion" (FitzGerald and Arar 2018:394). Independent surveys avoid this circularity, as they do not select on the dependent variable (FitzGerald and Arar 2018). One study conducted by Bohra-Mishra & Massey (2011) found that low-to-moderate levels of violence during the Maoist

insurgency in Nepal reduced out-migration. However, high levels of violence increased the odds of movement. Another study conducted by Adhikari (2013) aimed to estimate higher risks of migration in Nepal following the outbreak of violence. This study found that the destruction of industry, the loss of crops, land, and homes mediated out-migration. Thus, these studies helped us understand the relationship between violence and out-migration.

Drawing on this approach developed by the UNDP and this literature on refugee migration, in this study, I use the concept of physical insecurity driven by fears of threats and violent attacks that Afghan refugees face in their home countries, which may stem from various factors, including their link with foreign countries and their identities. If Afghan refugees cannot live free from fear, they are compelled to flee their homes. Thus, Chapter 2 argues that the physical insecurity Afghan refugees experience in Afghanistan involves distinct yet similar dynamics, processes, and mechanisms, which drive them to flee their homelands and migrate to the United States and Türkiye. I illustrate these dynamics, processes, and mechanisms through qualitative findings.

Afghan refugees who migrate to the United States face physical insecurity due to threats they receive from the Taliban or other "illegal" armed groups, which view Afghan people who work at the US army, institutions, or companies as spies or infidels (Chalermkraivuth 2019). These threats put their lives at stake, and they migrate to the United States to save their lives. The chapter also highlights the role of sub-identities and their attributes, including ethnic and sectarian dynamics in the emigration of a group of Afghan refugees. In particular, Hazara Afghans holding SIV addressed their affiliation with the United States and their ethnic and Shi'a identity, which led them to feel insecure in Afghanistan due to violence toward Hazara Afghan

people by the Taliban. These insecurities also restrict the everyday life of Afghan refugees, who articulated various issues, such as the inability to travel in the country, as they feel threatened.

Afghan refugees who migrate to Türkiye encounter serious security issues firsthand, such as a bombing attack or kidnapping, which harms their bodies. However, they have similarly expressed their links to foreign nations, particularly the United States or the Afghan government, which created risks and dangers in their lives that significantly influenced their decision to leave Afghanistan. I should note that Türkiye does not implement a special visa for Afghan refugees, stemming from their affiliation with the Turkish embassy, army, or companies in Afghanistan. Similarly, sub-identities and their attributes, including ethnic and sectarian dynamics, play a significant role in emigration from Afghanistan, which means Hazara and Uzbek Afghans may emphasize their sub-identities as a source of violence and threats they face in their home countries. These insecurities restrict their economic and social conditions, contributing to their flight.

1.4 Structural Forces Creating Human Insecurity in Destination Countries

1.4.1 Legal Insecurity

Immigration scholarship has considered legal status as a 'master status', similar to race, gender, and social class (Gee and Ford 2011; Massey 2007, 2012; Menjívar 2011; Waters and Gerstein Pineau 2016:148). Legal status may constrain labor market opportunities and employment and limit access to public and social services in Europe and the United States (Calavita 2005; Hall, Greenman, and Farkas 2010; Massey and Gentsch 2014; Takei, Saenz, and Jing Li 2009). Thus, I conceptualize legal insecurity as linked to the political structures that shape immigrants' life chances across a range of economic and social activities, with a degree of intensity in host countries.

More specifically, undocumented status erodes immigrant well-being by denying their rights, threatening detention and deportation, and excluding immigrants from formal institutions (Waters and Gerstein Pineau 2016). In Europe, undocumented status is often associated with poverty and food insecurity (Brannen and O'Connell 2022) as well as various barriers, including documentation requirements for accessing education (Damery 2023; Kadir et al. 2019; Moravcová 2024). Additionally, it negatively impacts health by increasing the risk of mental health issues and contributing to high morbidity and mortality rates (Alemi, Montgomery, and Stempel 2018; Kuehne, Huschke, and Bullinger 2015; Larchanché 2012). In the United States, young undocumented students notice their illegal status after finishing high school because they shift from one institution – primary and secondary public education, which does not restrict access based on legal status, to another – higher education or the labor market, which does (Dreby 2012; Gleeson and Gonzales 2012; Gonzales 2011).

Additionally, immigrants can hold a liminal status in a variety of countries, including the United States, Türkiye, Colombia, Israel, Sudan, or Belgium, where they experience temporary, uncertain, and conditional legal statuses (Barak-Bianco and Raijman 2025; Burciaga and Malone 2021; Cebulko 2014; Del Real 2022; Hamilton, Patler, and Savinar 2021; Menjívar 2006; Müller 2025; Ozdemir 2026; Rincón 2017; Roth 2019; Waerniers and Hustinx 2020, 2020). Cecilia Menjívar (2006) used liminal legality to describe Central Americans' temporary legal status in the United States, an 'in-between status' that is neither undocumented nor documented but may include characteristics of both. Liminal legality encompasses the ambiguity and vulnerability that Central American immigrants, such as El Salvadorans, experience as a result of Temporary Protection Status. In the US context, liminal legality has uncertain and contingent impacts on economic integration (Burciaga and Malone 2021; Cebulko 2014; Hamilton et al. 2021; Roth

2019). In the Israeli context, Anda Barak-Bianco and Rebeca Raijman (2025) examined the labor market experiences of Sudanese asylum seekers and refugees with liminal legal statuses, focusing on employment patterns, wages, and abusive employment conditions. They found significant disparities between these two groups based on their legal status. Moreover, the scholarship has examined how the temporality and uncertainty of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) programme have diminished potential educational impacts on immigrants' lives (Burciaga and Malone 2021; Hamilton et al. 2021).

Drawing on this body of literature, Chapter 3 examines the legal situations faced by Afghan refugees in the United States and Türkiye. In the United States, they are legally protected through visa programs, while in Türkiye, they lack legal protection. In this study, Afghan refugees migrated to the United States mainly through the SIV program, which was granted to them by the United States in 2009 because of their employment with the U.S. military and companies for at least two years in Afghanistan.[1] Since then, through January 2026, about 160,000 SIVs have been issued to Afghans, including roughly 50,000 with principal applicants and the rest with their family members (Bruno 2025; U.S. Department of State 2026). The program requires various documents, one of the most important being a reference letter from their supervisor. Afghan refugees whose applications are approved can bring their family to the United States, including their wives and children under 18, if married.

In this study, I have also interviewed a small number of Afghan refugees who resettled in the United States through the USRAP, a federal interagency initiative responsible for identifying, vetting, and resettling qualified refugees living in a second country rather than their home country. The USRAP works with UNHCR to identify individuals who are the most at risk

[1] The SIV was also granted to Iraqi nationals on January 6, 2006 who were employed by or on behalf of the U.S. government in Iraq on or after March 20, 2003 (Bruno 2025).

globally and refer them to the USRAP for third-country resettlement in the United States (Refugee Admissions n.d.). The SIV and USRAP programs are not related to one another. Afghan refugees resettled through these two programs can obtain a green card, typically within three months of arrival, and have a pathway to U.S. citizenship. SIV holders often chose to resettle in the greater Sacramento area, while refugees admitted through the USRAP with UNHCR partnership were assigned to Sacramento by U.S. officials. Over 20,000 Afghan SIV holders, excluding their family members, were resettled in Sacramento County from 2016 through 2024, the highest number among the US counties (Reese 2026). The city of Sacramento alone hosts more than 10,000 Afghan immigrants (Abramsky 2024).[2]

In 2025, the USRAP admitted 38,102 refugees, and 7,597 were from Afghanistan as a country of origin (the second largest among countries). 7,214 were resettled in California (the largest among U.S. states). In 2024, the USRAP admitted 100,034 refugees, and 14,708 were from Afghanistan as a country of origin (the second largest among countries). 7,597 were resettled in California (the second-largest U.S. state). In 2023, the USRAP admitted 60,014 refugees, and 6,594 were from Afghanistan as a country of origin (the third largest among countries). 3,846 were resettled in California (the third-largest U.S. state) (Refugee Council USA 2026).[3]

Overall, Afghan refugees I interviewed in the United States are legally protected because they arrived with visas through refugee programs, are eligible for official resettlement, and qualify for U.S. residency and citizenship.

However, Afghan refugees are vulnerable in Türkiye across the legal arena due to their insecure statuses. According to the UNHCR Türkiye Fact Sheet report published in January 2026, the number of Afghan asylum seekers and Afghan refugees was 58,406 and 9,872,

[2] However, we do not know how many SIV and USRAP holders are living in the city of Sacramento.
[3] There are no numbers on how many Afghans were resettled in the greater Sacramento area, through the USRAP.

respectively (UNHCR 2026). Meanwhile, these numbers are going down. For example, according to the UNHCR 2023 report, these numbers were approximately 126,000 and 13,000 (UNHCR 2023). Many Afghan refugees in Türkiye flee the conflict in Afghanistan but do not qualify for formal refugee status, stemming from a geographical limitation to the 1952 Geneva Convention that the Turkish state implements for refugees coming outside Europe (İçduygu and Karadağ 2018:490). Afghan individuals, as non-Europeans, qualify for conditional refugee or subsidiary protection status under the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP) of April 2013 (Spahl and Österle 2019a:2). Türkiye utilizes conditional refugee status to differentiate treatment between refugees from European and non-European countries, in accordance with the 1951 Refugee Convention. Subsidiary protection status refers to individuals who do not qualify for refugee or conditional refugee status.

Afghan refugees arriving in Türkiye travel to Ankara, where they register with the PMM, which resettles them to satellite provinces, including Trabzon. After resettlement, Afghans register with the PDMM, which coordinates and monitors their activities. International protection applicants must reside in a satellite province and fulfil administrative obligations, such as reporting to authorities (Güler 2020a:9; Karadağ and Sert 2023:453). According to the PMM, the number of Afghan refugees with IPS was 3,472 in 2025, 5,550 in 2024, 13,068 in 2023, and 19,400 in 2022 (PMM 2025) (International Protection). The PMM's data do not include the number of IPS applicants and the number of conditional refugee or subsidiary protection statuses under IPS from previous years.

Afghan refugees, as international protection applicants, receive a provisional identity certificate, which they use until the date of their interviews conducted by the PDMM (LFIP: Article 27) (Güler 2020a:6). After the interview, the Turkish authorities issue an International

Protection Applicant Identity Document, valid for six months and extendable. This document serves as a substitute for a residence permit (LFIP: Article 76/1 and 76/4) (Güler 2020a:6). When an IPS is granted to Afghan refugees through conditional refugee or subsidiary protection statutes, the Turkish authorities issue an identity document that also serves as a substitute for a residence permit. This document has a validity of three years and is subject to a three-year renewal until IPS is terminated or cancelled (LFIP: Article 83) (Güler 2020a:6; PMM n.d.) (International Protection "Documents").

Afghan refugees become eligible for a work permit after six months of international protection applications (LFIP: Article 89/4a). Conditional refugee beneficiaries hold work permits for 1–3 years (International Labour Force Law 'ILFL': Article 10/1 and 10/2) (Güler 2020a:8). Employers must apply to the Ministry of Labor for a work permit, including information on job descriptions, qualifications, and justifications for hiring Afghan individuals. Employers must also employ five Turkish nationals for each non-citizen (Ertorer 2021:2580–2581). IPS applicants and conditional refugees may apply for independent work permits to establish businesses or be exempted from seasonal agricultural or animal husbandry jobs (Güler 2020a:8).

Türkiye provides all international protection applicants and beneficiaries with a valid Turkish ID card, allowing them access to public education, public healthcare services (In 2019, access to healthcare became limited to one year after registration for IPS), and public relief and assistance (LFIP: Article 22) (Asylum Information Database 2024; Güler 2020a:6).

The UNHCR resettles Afghan refugees with conditional refugee status under IPS in a third country (UNHCR n.d.-a) (Registration and Refugee Status Determination "RSD" with UNHCR). However, this is another lengthy and uncertain process. The third country may reject applications

(Sarı and Dinçer 2017:66). If Afghan individuals do not qualify for resettlement, their IPS will continue in Türkiye, and their rights, obligations, and access to assistance and services remain unaffected (UNHCR n.d.-b) (Resettlement). Consequently, Afghan refugees have no clear long-term prospects in Türkiye (Spahl and Österle 2019a).

However, Afghan refugees also live in non-satellite provinces, such as Istanbul, where they are undocumented and lack legal protection, as they do not hold an IPS. There are no numbers about how many undocumented Afghans live in Istanbul, but their numbers are a lot. My data show that several Afghan refugees residing in Istanbul attempted to register for IPS in satellite provinces but failed to do so. Since Afghan refugees hold an undocumented status in Istanbul, they lack an identity card, which allows them to access services like health and education. They can also face deportation. Overall, IPS grants some rights to Afghan refugees, including work authorization and access to social services. However, it also imposes constraints on their geographic mobility and produces uncertainty about their futures, as they are considered temporary in Türkiye (Ozdemir 2026).

1.4.2 Economic Insecurity

Economic insecurity is another form of insecurity I discuss in this dissertation, drawing on the experiences of Afghan refugees in the United States and Türkiye. Pierre Bourdieu (1998) defined the concept of "precarite" as a condition of insecure labor and relations. The literature on precarity has focused on labor conditions (Millar 2017) and addressed insecure, low-wage, nonstandard, high-risk, and flexible employment that has emerged with the rise of neoliberal labor markets (Castel 2003; Fudge and Owens 2006; Kalleberg 2011; Vosko 2006). This scholarship primarily focused on changing labor relations among workers in northern industrial societies, showing how jobs have become unstable and have not provided state benefits or

upward mobility. Structural forces, including liberalized trade, erosion of social citizenship, attacks on labor unions, and decreases in social spending and labor protections, have affected these changes in the labor market (Ertorer 2021).

Drawing on this body of literature, Guy Standing (2011, 2014) explained the concept of the "precariat," an emerging social class facing employment insecurity and instability, with limited opportunities for upward mobility. He (2014) described three elements of the precariat: relations of production, relations of distribution, and relations to the state. The relations of production characterize flexible labor contracts, temporary jobs, casual labor/part-timers, and intermittent employment agencies. Individuals lack an occupational identity because they are unable to use their educational qualifications. They are forced to seek employment below their qualifications and experience frustration with their status. Relations of distribution represent another aspect of the precariat, whereby these individuals cannot access non-wage benefits, including pensions, paid holidays, and health coverage. The last element of the precariat pertains to distinct relationships with the state, as individuals in the precariat forfeit the rights typically granted to citizens and lack civil, cultural, political, social, and economic rights. However, the scholarship has criticized Standing's approach for placing different types of labor insecurity in the same subject position and for simplifying precarious experiences across time, place, and social positions (Neilson and Rossiter 2008; Scully 2016).

To understand how refugees and asylum seekers experience precarity, the scholarship uses the term hyper-precarity to explain how migration regimes and asylum policies shape access to fundamental rights, such as work permits, and asylum seekers and refugees face extreme labor market exploitation or the inability to access material or non-material resources due to the lack of rights (Ertorer 2021; Lewis and Waite 2015). In Great Britain, asylum seekers and refugees

experience hyper-precarity because of multi-dimensional vulnerabilities, which include limited English skills, non-recognition or no proof of qualifications held in other countries, a reluctance to hire migrants who lack work experience or references in Great Britain, a lack of the right to work during the asylum application process, and discrimination (Lewis et al. 2015). In Türkiye, Syrian refugees under Temporary Protection Status (TPS) participate in the informal labor market without work permits and encounter concurrent exploitation of labor, including low wages, irregular or non-payment of wages, payment discrimination despite equal work, and de-qualification (Ertorer 2021; Şenses 2016a). Afghan refugees can also be exploited due to their undocumented status, which makes them an invisible labor force in the informal sector with payments lower than the minimum wage (Karadag 2021).

Additionally, research shows that professional and skilled immigrants often suffer from de-skilling, underutilization of their skills, and non-recognition of their foreign credentials in Canada (Bauder 2003; Grant et al. 2015; Grant and Nadin 2007; Li and Li 2013; Reitz 2001). These immigrants are unable to find employment in the upper segments of the labor market because regulatory institutions actively exclude them (Bauder 2003). Harald Bauder (2003) explained this exclusion through Bourdieu's cultural capital and his interpretation of the educational system as a site of social reproduction, suggesting that immigrant labor is segmented through institutionalized processes of cultural distinction. Peter R. Grant and Shevaun Nadin (2007) conducted a general social-psychological analysis of the reactions of immigrants facing credentialing problems in Canada. They found that immigrants lose their self-respect and express negative emotions, including stress, sadness, and discouragement, as well as anger, resentment, and bitterness. The biggest negative psychological impact on them happens when they perceive that Canadian employers and professional bodies discriminate against them. Another study

asserted that immigrants experiencing credential problems and obtaining underqualified jobs are more likely to engage in collective protest actions for this injustice in Canada (Grant et al. 2015).

In addition to these studies, research also focused on the relationship between human capital, including skills and work experience acquired abroad, and employment earnings among immigrants in Canada (Li and Li 2013; Reitz 2001). Peter S. Li and Eva Xiaoling Li (2003) found that immigrants who have brought high levels of human capital to Canada have surpassed those of the native-born but underperformed in earnings due to other unexplained returns. Reitz (2001) found that underutilization of immigrant skills is significant in earnings, but less so than unequal pay within occupations.

These multi-dimensional insecurities and precarious status are also related to unfree labor relations that asylum seekers, refugees, and migrant workers can face. Unfree labor refers to the lack of freedom to enter into an alternative employment relationship or to exit the current one, despite the unfavorable aspects of the work, such as harshness, degradation, and danger, and its violation of labor or human rights (Morgan and Olsen 2009). Freedom or the lack of freedom in the labor market signifies whether a person can control their labor market conditions to escape severe economic exploitation (Cruz 2018; Davidson 2010; O'Neill 2022). Unfree labor relations are considered an 'adverse incorporation' due to labor and immigration regimes (Lewis et al. 2015). The degree of freedom may depend on precarious legal work/residency status and lead to a wider precarization in someone's life. To secure cash to meet fundamental needs, asylum seekers and refugees enter the labor market without having the power to negotiate employment terms. These jobs are typically short-term, irregular, low-paid, and require long working hours (Ertorer 2021). The employers take advantage of the legal status of asylum seekers and refugees by imposing exploitative labor practices, including making them work prolonged hours, creating

abusive conditions, and withholding their payments, along with threatening them with reporting to authorities (Lewis and Waite 2015).

Drawing on this body of literature, Chapter 4 argues that Afghan refugees face hyper-precarity in both the United States and Türkiye, caused by multiple forms of insecurity and vulnerability. Afghan refugees with SIV lose their class status after moving to the United States, meaning they cannot transfer their education, professional experiences, skills, certifications, and training, significant aspects of their human capital (Bauder 2003; Lipson and Omidian 1997:116; Magagnini 2017, 2018; Portes and Rumbaut 2014; Rostami-Povey 2007:251; Sanders and Nee 1996). Thus, they take jobs below their education and skill levels. Those Afghans work in entry-level or menial jobs, which they call "survival jobs." They are eligible for an evaluation of their credentials by U.S. authorities, which can help them cope with hyper-precarity in the United States, as recognition of their educational and occupational credentials can help them find better employment in line with their skills. However, they often face trouble getting their degrees recognized by U.S. officials due to a rigorous, time-consuming process. Afghan refugees also lack resources on how to begin and maintain this process.

After moving to the United States, Afghan refugees often end up in low-wage jobs that lead to significant economic precarity because of temporary positions and wages at or just above minimum wage (Şenses 2016a; Standing 2011, 2014). They often find work at Apple through a subcontractor, performing roles such as assembling and cleaning cell phones that do not require skills. This employment lasts for one year. Afghan workers can reapply to Apple, but they must wait three months. Apple does not offer benefits because of the temporary contracts. Therefore, there are two important things to consider about working at Apple with precarity. First, subcontracting lowers wages because Apple does not directly hire Afghans. Second, contracts

are temporary because Apple does not want to provide benefits. It is also easier for them to replace labor, as most positions at Apple do not require skills and credentials. As we think of the number of Afghans in Sacramento, refugees provide disposable labor to Apple.

The loss of class status and precarious employment contribute to the deprivation experienced by newly arrived Afghan refugees, as reflected in their expressions of feeling undervalued, disappointed, and frustrated (Grant et al. 2015; Grant and Nadin 2007). However, this study also highlights that Afghan refugees can cope with hyper-precarity by pursuing higher education to enhance their skills and earn academic credentials, as well as seeking financially stable employment aligned with their expertise. This is thanks to their legal status, which allows them to cope with hyper-precarity. Thus, I claim that although the United States reproduces inequality among incoming Afghan refugees by failing to recognize their human capital (Gowayed 2022b), Afghans are active agents and may benefit from opportunities, such as a college education in the long term, thanks to their secure legal status.

In Türkiye, Afghan refugees mainly face hyper-precarity due to issues in accessing work permits, labor market conditions, including unfree labor relations, and a lack of social protections. Their insecure legal status plays a significant role in these insecurities. The undocumented Afghan refugees I interviewed in Istanbul were employed in various sectors, including textile, restaurant, construction, and car washing. Most of them worked in textiles, predominantly in the Zeytinburnu district, which they often refer to as "Little Afghanistan." While Trabzon offers employment prospects for Afghans in the textile sector, the opportunities are not as abundant as those in Istanbul. Trabzon offers seasonal employment opportunities in agriculture, animal husbandry, and construction. I interviewed Afghan refugees who collected scraps and worked in a furniture shop and bakery. These jobs, which lack contracts, often pay

minimum wages and provide no benefits such as health insurance. In addition to these precarious conditions, Afghan refugees often faced hyper-precarity, as their work involves long hours and pays them less than the minimum wage. They may also struggle to receive their pay or face delayed payments. These jobs can also be irregular and seasonal, and refugees report that they are very demanding and require significant effort. Economic insecurity adversely affects Afghan refugees' livelihoods in Türkiye, making it difficult to cover living expenses, rents, and bills.

A key difference I observed is that Afghan refugees with international protection in Trabzon are eligible for independent work permits, allowing them to start their own businesses, mostly small shops. Nine Afghans established businesses in Trabzon through the independent work permits. Seven of them were small-shop owners, selling food and beverages, and operating a tailoring shop. Two people were textile business owners. Shop owners are not subject to labor market precarity, including unfair labor practices, and can set their own employment conditions. Thus, independent work permits mitigate economic precarity among shop owners who complain about only high taxes and inflationary conditions in Türkiye. One way Afghan refugees cope with this economic precarity in Türkiye is through help from the Turkish state, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and UNHCR, which provide them with financial and food assistance. However, this assistance is considered insufficient, and their legal status is key to accessing it.

1.4.3 Social Insecurity

Chapter 5 examines social insecurity among Afghan refugees in the United States and Türkiye. The members of host societies or communities may view and approach refugees with suspicion and mistrust, perceiving them as a threat to their economic prosperity, social stability, and/or cultural identity (Merheb and Loughna 2006). Refugees can experience xenophobia and

intolerance in host societies. Refugees can be welcomed warmly by local communities. However, in time, if they put pressure on the housing market, social services, and environment, and if they stay longer than expected, this welcoming environment can lose momentum. Consequently, they can experience exclusionary behaviors by members of the host community (Merheb and Loughna 2006). Irresponsible news media and the manipulation of refugees' issues by politicians can exacerbate xenophobia and intolerance, which can lead refugees to experience social exclusion and discrimination.

Social exclusion refers to a multidimensional disadvantage that limits individuals' and groups' participation in major social processes and opportunities, including access to housing, citizenship, employment, and adequate living standards (Barry and Hallett 1998). Scholarship has also shown that individuals may experience social exclusion in various forms, including labor market exclusion, economic exclusion (such as poverty), social isolation, geographic or spatial exclusion, and exclusion from institutional processes and systems (Babacan and Babacan 2013; Young 1999). Social exclusion can occur on various axes, such as race, gender, class, ethnicity, and religion, as well as across cultures and abilities (Babacan and Babacan 2013). Quantitative studies on social exclusion in the immigration context in Türkiye have focused on various aspects of it (Arlı, Aksoy, and Yenilmez 2026; Karakaya et al. 2024). One study examined factors such as Turkish language proficiency, length of residence, employment status, life satisfaction, and negative self-esteem that affected Afghan immigrants' perceptions of social exclusion (Karakaya et al. 2024). The other study analyzed subjective psychological experiences of Syrian refugees, including feelings of loneliness, social disconnection, and diminished life satisfaction (Arlı et al. 2026). Lastly, a qualitative study focused on the coping strategies of

refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Sudan living in Konya province in Türkiye, with ethnic categorization and exclusion policies of the local population (Tunç and Güllüpınar 2024).

In line with this body of literature, Chapter 5 examines how Afghan refugees experience and navigate social insecurity and exclusion in everyday life, including at work and school in the United States and Türkiye. The chapter argues that Afghan refugees experience differing forms of social insecurity and exclusion in these countries, which are shaped by structural forces, including policies towards refugees. More specifically, Afghan refugees experience social insecurity and exclusion through Islamophobia in the United States due to their Muslim backgrounds and xenophobia and intolerance in Türkiye, stemming from their ethnic backgrounds.

In the United States, Afghan refugees experience social insecurity and exclusion through Islamophobia within the socio-cultural landscape of the country. Afghans often express sentiments, such as threats, suspicion, and intolerance that they face due to their Muslim identities (Acevedo and Chaudhary 2015; Chaudhary et al. 2020; Rostami-Povey 2007). The term Islamophobia has two main definitions in the literature. The first definition emphasized it as a socially produced form of racism, which is a racial project, where people experience violence, discrimination, and hate speech (Allen and Jørgen 2002; Considine 2017; Love 2017; Maghbouleh 2017, 2017; Ramberg 2005). The second definition took it up within the context of a phobia emerging from fear and dislike that targets the religion of Islam, thereby having detrimental effects on Muslims and their communities (Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia 1997; Diène 2007; Organisation of Islamic Cooperation 2008; Wright 2016). Drawing on the findings of this study, my definition of Islamophobia combines these two central definitions. I see Islamophobia as a form of social insecurity and exclusion that Afghan refugees

face in their everyday lives through hate speech, intolerance, discrimination, and suspicion due to their Muslim identities. Therefore, my departure point is social insecurity and exclusion as a form of human security approach, rather than a form of racism.

The scholarship also discussed that Islamophobia is a structural issue in the United States and is spread by law and perpetuated by policy that fluidly communicates harmful stereotypes, prejudices, and misrepresentations about Muslims (Alimahomed-Wilson 2020; Beydoun 2018; Elsheikh, Sisemore, and Ramirez Lee 2017). Then, these endorse popular views and misconceptions, as well as motivate and inspire hate and violence towards Muslims (Beydoun 2018). For example, in 2015, the majority of US governors issued statements that barred Syrian refugees from resettling in their states, because they stated that terrorists could enter the United States as a refugee and pose a danger to the safety of the American public (Beydoun 2018; Elsheikh et al. 2017). I must note that the state of California accepted Syrians with conditions. Thus, Syrian refugees are stigmatized as dangerous and considered a security issue, which in turn encouraged xenophobic policies and attitudes at local, state, and federal levels in the United States (Elsheikh et al. 2017). As another example, the Trump administration passed the Muslim ban in 2017, which affected Muslim immigrants and their families. This ban emboldened an Islamophobic vision that linked Muslim identity with suspicion of terrorism (Beydoun 2018).

Drawing on this line of literature, Chapter 5 examines Afghan refugees' everyday experiences of Islamophobia as a form of social insecurity and exclusion in the United States. In particular, Afghan women who wear hijab may experience hate speech from the members of the host community, as hijab is often considered a marker of Islam. Afghan women also expressed concern that their daughters are vulnerable to Islamophobic behaviors in schools because they wear hijabs. Islamophobia can also emerge as a suspicion toward Afghan individuals. These

Islamophobic incidents may lead incoming Afghans, especially children, to isolate themselves from the members of the host society.

In Türkiye, Afghan refugees encounter social insecurity and exclusion because of their ethnic identities within the country's socioeconomic landscape (Tunç and Güllüpınar 2024). This is due to the 1934 Settlement Law that was enacted to establish the legal criteria for immigration and settlement in Türkiye, facilitating the migration and integration of people of "Turkish origin and culture" as migrants or refugees, while preventing the entry of others who do not meet these criteria (İçduygu and Karadağ 2018). 1006 families comprising 4163 Turkmen, Hazara, Uzbek, and Kyrgyz family members from Afghanistan, settled in the provinces of Tokat, Kırşehir, Sivas, Şanlıurfa, Van, and Hatay of Türkiye in 1982 and 1983. In fact, these Afghans were not allowed to be resettled in Türkiye as refugees because of their country of origin, Afghanistan, since Türkiye implements a geographical limitation to the 1951 Geneva Convention, not granting refugee status to those coming outside Europe. However, they were resettled under Turkish origin and culture. Thus, ethnic ties may constrain the integration of Afghan refugees into Turkish society due to immigration policies.

My research shows that in Türkiye, Afghan refugees often encounter various narratives from members of the host society, who view them as taking their jobs and receiving economic support from the government. Shop owners also believe that members of the host society avoid shopping in their stores because they are Afghans. These discriminatory practices, stemming from their ethnic identities, also manifest as hate speech in everyday life. Afghan refugees employ different strategies to grapple with social insecurity and exclusion, such as explaining their conditions to members of the host society to raise awareness. Moreover, they emphasize their sub-identities—especially Uzbek Afghans, who associate their Turkic roots with Turkish identity.

1.4.4 Gendered Relations and Insecurity

The concept of human security has been gendered (Hoogensen and Stuvøy 2006). Since gender is about power relations, it informs security theory through relations of dominance and non-dominance in specific contexts. Thus, a "gender-informed approach to human security" emphasizes opening human security to voices from below and paying attention to human actions, including people's resistance to domination and their capabilities (Freedman, Kivilcim, and Özgür Baklacıoğlu 2017; Hoogensen and Stuvøy 2006). Gender analysis emphasizes both the importance of collective identities (such as women and men) and the relationships between and within them (Hoogensen and Stuvøy 2006). One key way we can see human security through a gender lens is immigration, as it is linked to economic, social, and political insecurities and has far-reaching consequences for immigrants' lives (Donato and Gabaccia 2015; Menjívar and Abrego 2012; Portes and Zhou 1993). Gender is a central social category organizing identities, social practices, and institutions, reflecting struggles and accommodations vis-à-vis economic, political, and social insecurities for immigrants (Donato et al. 2006a:13 and 17).

Across Europe, immigrant women encounter insecurity stemming from a lack of independent legal status, their vulnerability to both domestic and institutional violence, and their poor economic conditions without social protection, and issues in accessing health and social security provisions (Freedman 2018). More specifically, women who migrate to Europe through family reunification can find themselves dependent on a male relative for their legal resident status. This dependency poses insecurity and vulnerability for them. For example, French officials often provided migrant women with a visitor card, which prevented them from working legally, as they thought that women would be relying on their husbands or fathers. These women have also been forced to remain in violent or abusive relationships, not to lose their legal status. Moreover,

women who experience gendered forms of persecution, such as forced marriages or female genital mutilation, may encounter difficulties in the assessment of their asylum applications due to a public-private division. This means officials can consider these forms of persecution a consequence of cultural differences. Migrant women can also face economic insecurity regarding their roles in the labor market. They are often employed in unskilled, low-paid, temporary, part-time, or domestic work, or they are unemployed. Lastly, restrictions on health and welfare services and benefits have significantly affected migrant women, who were the main providers of welfare in the family (Freedman 2018).

Migration-related insecurities often imply that men lose some patriarchal privilege-their authoritarian and dominant position in society-and their control over the family due to forced migration (Çarpar and Göktuna Yaylaci 2021). Men experience this conflict, including potentially bigger losses in terms of gendered privilege and power. In particular, men who hold the "middle-class masculinity" positions in their home countries can experience a failure to function as a breadwinner in the household. R.W. Connell's theory of gender relations suggests understanding this process among Afghan men through the lens of hegemonic masculinity undermined by migration and settlement (1987; 1995; 2000; 2005; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Carrigan et al. 1985). According to Connell (1995; 2005), masculinity is not a fixed identity, role, or set of personal traits. Instead, masculinities ‘‘are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:836).” Masculinities constitute embodied practices and reflect cultural values and ideologies; thus, they are not “a stable of knowledge,” but rather, they represent an ongoing “gender project” (Connell 1995:72, 33).

This formulation of masculinity encompasses a significant degree of flexibility; thus, any masculinity constitutes other masculinities (Grindstaff and West 2011:859). Masculinities are unequal and hierarchical. Hegemonic masculinity is the most privileged, legitimate, and protected version of masculinity (Grindstaff and West 2011:859). Connell (1995:77) defined hegemonic masculinity as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women." Hegemonic masculinity is a gender project situated in time and place, representing various intersecting dimensions; thus, it is related to cultures and embodies everyday practices and institutional structures (Grindstaff and West 2011:859).

1.4.4.1 Precarious Masculinity

Masculinities can also be precarious. Anthropologist David D. Gilmore (1991:11) defined precarious manhood as follows: "In particular, there is a constantly recurring notion that real manhood is different from simple anatomical maleness, that it is not a natural condition that comes about spontaneously through biological maturation but rather is a precarious or artificial state that boys must win against powerful odds." Thus, the precarious manhood thesis addresses that manhood is a precarious social status considered elusive and must be earned or achieved, tenuous and impermanent because it can be lost and requires public demonstrations of proof through actions to be confirmed by others (Vandello et al. 2008; Bosson and Vandello 2011; Vandello and Bosson 2013; Wade and Ferree 2019:142). This scholarship has tested the idea of the precariousness of manhood through various studies among young white middle-class U.S. college students.

Individuals view manhood as an achieved status rather than an ascribed status. It is elusive and hard to win. One study asked participants whether the transition from boyhood to manhood or from girlhood to womanhood could be attributed to social factors, such as achieving socially valued goals, or to physical factors, such as puberty (Vandello et al. 2008). Participants attributed the transition from boyhood to manhood more strongly to social than physical factors; thus, they claimed that this is consistent with the idea that manhood must be earned.

Psychological studies have also examined the concept of masculinities, which are tenuous and easily lost, by asking participants about "lost manhood" and "lost womanhood" and drawing from autobiographical narratives, e.g., I used to be a man (woman). Now, I am no longer a man (or woman) (Vandello et al. 2008). When participants interpreted these statements, they often cited social causes, such as losing a job, rather than physical reasons like aging and weakening, to explain the loss of masculinity. Conversely, when interpreting statements about the loss of womanhood, they exhibited the opposite pattern. Moreover, participants found it easier to interpret statements about lost manhood than those about lost womanhood. This suggests that manhood status can be lost more easily than womanhood.

Finally, manhood requires action and public proof because of its social perception rather than a biological one. One study asked men and women to complete open-ended statements, e.g., a real man… or a real woman…(Weaver et al. 2010). Researchers found that people used more action terms, such as driving a truck, to describe a real man than a real woman. Men who experience a gender threat may alleviate this by demonstrating and restoring their manhood through physical aggression, thereby putting an end to their concerns about their gender status (Bosson and Vandello 2011; Jin et al. 2021; Kalish and Kimmel 2010; Vandello et al. 2008).

The precarious manhood thesis also has criticisms; one of the most important is related to threats, which means whether men face threats due to their manhood or social status. Men have greater social status than women and pursue it because of masculine norms. Since masculinity is conflated with status, the question is how to disentangle their distinct effects (Vandello and Bosson 2013).

1.4.4.2 Masculinity Crisis

This literature on precarious masculinity relates to the concept of a masculinity crisis discussed in the 1990s and early 2000s, in which scholarship asked whether men experience a crisis in their masculinities due to the loss of manhood and feminization (Connell 1998; Hearn 1999; Levant 1997; Segal 2006; Whitehead 2007). Ronald F. Levant asserted that the loss of the good provider role is a driving force in the masculinity crisis. Men may exhibit anger and defensiveness if they lack the incentives or the know-how to deal with this collaboratively and appropriately (Levant 1997). Unlike Levant, Stephen M. Whitehead (2007:3) is cautious about viewing masculinity as a crisis because men are not a predictable and homogeneous group. The thesis of masculinity in crisis can be used for a backlash against feminism and women's interests. Instead, Whitehead (2007:3) views men as individuals who are torn apart by contesting pressures and variables regarding class, culture, ethnicity, economics, education, nationhood, and sexuality. Jeff Hearn (1999:164-165) argued that men or certain groups of men face even confrontation, but this does not necessarily mean a stable shift in men's structural power. Some men face a material crisis due to various factors, such as a lack of educational success or a reduction in traditional jobs, which does not closely match an ideological crisis. Segal (2006) does not focus on a general masculinity crisis and believes this discourse arises from men's dominant position. Segal (2006) maintained that as women gain more power, the symbolic

relationship between men's power and women's weakness shakes up; thus, men believe that they face a masculinity crisis. Finally, Connell (2005:84) argued that the term "crisis" implies the destruction or restoration of a system. However, masculinity is not a system but rather a configuration of practice within a system of gender relations. Therefore, we can't speak of the crisis of a configuration. Instead, we might discuss its disruption or transformation (Connell 2005:84).

The migration scholarship has focused on different aspects of the "masculinity crisis" (Affleck et al. 2018; Bartolomei 2010; Bozok and Bozok 2019; Çarpar and Göktuna Yaylaci 2021; Friedman 2017; Haile and Siegmann 2014; Näre 2010; Pease 2009; Pease and Crossley 2009; Scrinzi 2010). A group of studies explores how migrant men employed in typically feminized occupations and domestic work negotiate their gender and masculinities (Bartolomei 2010; Haile and Siegmann 2014; Näre 2010; Scrinzi 2010). Other studies addressed how migrant men can lose their masculinity as they have difficulty performing their breadwinner roles (Pease and Crossley 2009) due to unemployment and low-paid work (Pease 2009). Apart from these studies, the scholarship discussed that the "masculinity crisis" is linked to mental health issues among migrant men who find themselves in "depleted masculinity," which may lead to behavioral and emotional problems (Affleck et al. 2018). Specifically, scholarship highlighted that migrant men may feel feminized due to disempowerment and a diminished sense of their masculine accomplishment as family providers (Friedman 2017), and men may be invisible and quiet in everyday life due to undocumented status (Bozok and Bozok 2019). Lastly, scholarship suggested that not all refugee men experience a "masculinity crisis"; thus, men can adopt different strategies to reaffirm their masculinities, such as being more resistant than women or

emphasizing their breadwinner role through paid employment (Çarpar and Göktuna Yaylaci 2021).

1.4.4.3 Migrant Men's Approach toward Women's Paid Employment

The notions of precarious masculinity and the masculinity crisis relate to whether men see themselves as the only providers and how they view women's paid work. The loss of masculinity is tied to a cultural erosion experienced by men in their patriarchal positions after forced migration. Migrant men may view their wives' paid employment as a threat to their masculine identity, even if they remain unemployed (Pease 2009). In this way, migrant men reconstruct their cultural position by opposing women's paid work to preserve patriarchal culture (Çarpar and Göktuna Yaylaci 2021). However, the scholarship also suggested that migrant men's attitudes toward migrant women's paid employment may be diverse. In her study on gender relations among Central American women in the United States, Cecilia Menjivar (1999:114-115) argued that while some men are opposed to their wives' paid employment, as it can potentially reduce household services, some other men view the financial contribution as valuable, as it enables the family to survive (Yalim and Critelli 2023) and helps them send remittances to relatives in their home countries. Still, different men may have mixed feelings about their wives' paid employment, as this situation represents more than simply a chance to earn money, and because of the difficulty in assessing the advantages and disadvantages for men.

In line with this literature, Chapter 6 discusses how Afghan gender ideals portray men as breadwinners and protectors responsible for their families' security (Bozok and Bozok 2019; Echavez, Mosawi, and Pilongo 2016; Monsutti 2007). The loss of gendered power that Afghan men face after refugee migration may differ between Türkiye and the United States due to the varying contexts and specific insecurities they encounter in each destination. Their male

vulnerability prompts them to reshape their gender roles in these countries. In the United States, men lose economic and social status, while in Türkiye, they lose their legal status. I argue that Afghan refugee men experience and perceive these insecurities through a sense of losing their manhood and through social practices within household and community relationships, which manifest differently in the United States and Türkiye because of the distinct insecurities Afghan men face in each location.

Chapter 6 discusses how masculinities are precarious and can be lost after forced migration when refugee men face obstacles in fulfilling their provider roles within the family. I illustrate this by focusing on the experiences of Afghan refugee men in the United States and Türkiye. Additionally, I address that a group of Afghan men, especially in Türkiye, lose their sense of manhood entirely and face a masculinity crisis, which stems from their age and health conditions that hinder their ability to work. Therefore, insecurity leads to a crisis for these men who express negative sentiments and must rely on other family members, including their wives and children, and/or assistance from the state or non-governmental organizations to survive, especially in Türkiye. I connect this discussion to whether Afghan men see themselves as the sole providers and their responses to women's paid employment.

In the United States, Afghan men embody precarious masculinities, meaning they lose their manhood as they encounter difficulties in fulfilling their provider roles in the family. Economic hardship plays a significant role in this. Moreover, a loss of class status accompanies economic insecurity. Afghan men often report losing their class status after migrating to the United States. They often regain their sense of manhood, along with their class status, by working excessively and/or pursuing college degrees to improve their job prospects, aiming to become better providers and to restore their status. Moreover, men culturally reclaim their manhood by

participating in third spaces, where they socialize and form solidarity with other Afghan men. Afghan men support women's paid employment to contribute financially to the family because it is challenging for them to be the sole providers covering household expenses. However, Afghan men also oppose their wives' entry-level paid jobs, believing those jobs will not offer better future opportunities. My data shows that Afghan women also face various obstacles to working outside the home, such as limited English proficiency and childcare responsibilities.

In Türkiye, Afghan men face similar challenges to their counterparts in the United States regarding precarious masculinity, as they struggle to fulfill their provider roles. However, they experience these difficulties more intensely in Türkiye due to their insecure legal status, which limits their ability to seek better employment. Men also endure extreme exploitation of their labor, which can negatively impact their families' ability to be providers. Therefore, they find it harder to regain their masculinity. Chapter 6 highlights that Afghan men may struggle to secure employment due to their age and health issues. They are unable to reclaim their manhood and face a masculinity crisis as a result of unemployment. They possess fragile masculinity because they perceive themselves as inadequate men. Moreover, men are unable to reclaim their sense of masculinity by participating in third spaces, where they socialize with other Afghan men and build solidarity. Finally, Afghan men often support women's participation in the workforce, and many women take up entry-level jobs because of severe economic precarity. As a result, men have less authority to negotiate women's participation in paid employment.

Overall, my research reveals that insecurities, particularly economic and legal, are deeply intertwined with how Afghan men construct their masculinity, making it difficult to separate their sense of manhood from their economic and legal circumstances, including their class status.

1.5 Research Design, Methods, and Data

I designed a comparative study, conducting interviews with 38 Afghans in the greater Sacramento area of the United States, including Sacramento, Elk Grove, and West Sacramento, and with 45 Afghans in the provinces of Istanbul and Trabzon in Türkiye between 2020 and 2022. In my interviews, I focused on physical, legal, social, and economic insecurities as well as gender relations. During the research process, I discovered new categorizations or conceptualizations through a mutual dialogue (Luker 2009:124–27). My interviews are supplemented by ethnographic observations of Afghan refugees' public spaces. I observed the lives of Afghan men to explore their behaviors and their actions within the social context. This observation was based on their community relations, such as their religious participation in masjids/mosques.

I conducted my fieldwork in Sacramento, which has a large Afghan community. Afghan refugees chose to be resettled in Sacramento because of their social networks and community ties. The affordable cost of living and job opportunities were additional pull factors. In Türkiye, legal status, combined with my social networks for accessing Afghan refugees, played a significant role in conducting my fieldwork in Istanbul and Trabzon. I first conducted my fieldwork in Istanbul, specifically in the Zeytinburnu district, where undocumented Afghan refugees lived thanks to their social networks, community ties, and employment opportunities. I then extended my field research to Trabzon, a satellite province where Afghan refugees have settled under IPS. My social networks also played a key role in extending my fieldwork to Trabzon through a Hazara Afghan man, the director of the Hazara Afghan NGO there, who invited me. The tables below provide a breakdown of participants' legal status in the United States and Türkiye:

Table 1: The United States	
The Greater Sacramento Area	
SIV holders	30
USRAP holders	4
A refugee program (neither SIV or UNHCR)	1
Not available	3

Presented with xmind

In the United States, thirty incoming Afghan refugees (out of thirty-eight) were SIV holders. Four Afghans relocated to the United States through the USRAP. One Afghan also arrived in the United States as a refugee, but her program was not specific. There is no information about the three Afghans.

Table 2: Türkiye	
Istanbul Province	
Undocumented status	12
IPS (One Afghan man registered for IPS in Yalova province but illegally lived in Istanbul thanks to job opportunities. The other person was an IPS holder in Bingöl province but moved to Istanbul and maintained his IPS through his social networks in the Afghan community, having relations with the Ministry of the Interior)	2
Student visa	4
Residence permit	4
Turkish citizen	2

Presented with xmind

Table 3: Türkiye	
Trabzon Province	
Conditional refugee status under IPS	4
IPS	14
Humanitarian residence permit (The PDMM cancelled an Afghan man's conditional refugee status under IPS, due to not residing in Trabzon)	1
Student visa	1
Turkish citizen	1

Presented with xmind

In Türkiye, 12 Afghans were undocumented, while 20 Afghans held an IPS. A small number of respondents had different forms of more secure legal status, including student visas (n = 4 in Istanbul; n = 1 in Trabzon), residence permit (n = 4 in Istanbul), and citizenship (n = 2 in Istanbul; n = 1 in Trabzon). Although I focus on the two most relevant categories of analysis – IPS and undocumented refugees – I drew on the interviews with refugees with more secure statuses to inform my analysis, recognizing that all immigrants fall somewhere along a documentation status continuum (DSC), with undocumented immigrants at one end and citizens at the other (Joseph 2025). Policy creates these statuses and shapes the relative power, rights, and benefits of each status. Drawing on the DSC, to better situate the particularities of IPS versus undocumented status, I examined interviews that fell outside IPS, on the other side of the continuum from undocumented immigrants.

I used purposive sampling because the sampling process in qualitative research is for a theoretical meaning rather than technical requirements (Marvasti 2004; Small 2011). I aimed to use this sampling method to select specific study units that would provide the most relevant and rich data. I used snowball sampling to select new data collection units via existing ones, provided that the snowballing is purposeful (Yin 2011:88–89). I established rapport with respondents to build relationships that were grounded in mutual trust and obligation. I showed my interest in their cultures, explained the goal of my research to them, and had self-presentation styles (Marvasti 2004:47–50).

More specifically, I accessed Afghan refugees in the United States and Türkiye through NGOs and my social networks (Marvasti 2004:46). In the United States, I contacted resettlement agencies in Sacramento and posted messages in the UC Davis Afghan Student Association Facebook group. In Türkiye, I collaborated with two NGOs, one managed by Uzbek Afghans

and the other by a Hazara Afghan man, in Trabzon, to access Afghan refugees. These NGOs provided economic, social, and legal support for Afghan refugees. I conducted interviews at their facilities as well as in cafés, participants' homes, and shops.

In the United States, some participants asked me about Turkish and Muslim identities because I am from Türkiye. In some situations, my Turkish identity facilitated mutual engagement around specific topics. For instance, we discussed the presence of the Turkish army in Afghanistan in a positive light. We also interacted with each other in line with Islam, through common religious concepts such as "Namaz" (in English, "prayer"). In Türkiye, both being a Turkish citizen and a student in the United States have shaped my interactions with Afghan refugees. The Afghan people were interested in talking to me when I told them I was coming from the United States to conduct this project.

Afghan refugees are a heterogeneous group, defined by ethnicity, class, and sect, as well as urban versus rural origins (Lipson and Omidian 1993:72). Afghan refugees identify themselves with Pashtun, Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara, Sadat, and Kızılbaş ethnicities (Yollin and Writer 2002). Their sectarian identities can be Sunni or Shia. They can also have working-class, middle-class, or upper-class backgrounds. I included different backgrounds of Afghan refugees in my study to explore how they experience these insecurities as well as their gender relations in their new environments.

The majority of participants in my research were men. In the United States, I interviewed 31 Afghan men and 7 Afghan women, while in Türkiye, I interviewed 39 Afghan men and 6 Afghan women. The number of women involved in this research was limited due to my gender identity as a male researcher. I included these Afghan women to provide nuanced insights from their perspectives. I did not analyze gender as a separate category. The participants' ages ranged

from eighteen to sixty-nine during the interviews. In the United States, the vast majority of Afghan people were married and had children, while in Türkiye, half of the interviewees were married and had children.

In the United States, 19 SIV holders hold a BA degree. Two Afghans dropped out of the university. Five SIV holders held a high school degree (one of these persons was a woman whose husband was an SIV holder). There is no information about the three SIV holders (one person arrived in the United States as a minor whose father was an SIV holder). In Türkiye, only six Afghans held a university degree from Afghanistan. Two Afghans withdrew from university. The remaining Afghans possessed high school degrees or less, including those who were unschooled.

I recorded all of my interviews to prevent information from fading from my memory and to capture the nuances of the conversations (Marvasti 2004:54–56). I received approval from the UC Davis Institutional Review Board (IRB) twice, on March 20, 2020, and on November 27, 2021.[4] My research was exempt from requiring a signed consent form because signatures might remind Afghan refugees of imprisonment and torture experiences in Afghanistan (Omidian and Ahearn 2000; Smith 2009:64). I obtained verbal consent from participants and provided them with information outlining the purpose and risks of the research (Boellstorff et al. 2012:156–57). I used pseudonyms while transcribing the interviews and writing this dissertation to maintain their anonymity. Additionally, accessing, especially undocumented Afghan refugees through gatekeepers and conducting interviews in locations such as NGOs in Türkiye was crucial to avoid putting their lives at risk.

[4] IRB IDs are respectively as follows: 1544543-2 and 1835064-1.

I transcribed interviews using Sonix. I coded interviews and observational data using the MAQXDA program (Qualitative Data Analysis software) to identify recurring patterns and topics, thereby making the analysis more rigorous and flexible and enhancing reliability and construct validity (Deterding and Waters 2018). I developed codes in line with the research question and the existing conceptual framework. I employed a deductive approach, aiming to understand the experiences of Afghan individuals. I created new codes or used existing ones in relevant sections of the transcripts. Then, I developed themes and classified them to create memos through an analytical review of theoretical, conceptual, and methodological debates (Tannenbaum 2007:110–11).

I conducted the interviews in English in the United States and in Turkish and utilized interpreters from NGOs for Afghan individuals who did not speak Turkish in Türkiye. Interviews lasted between 30 minutes and three hours and 30 minutes. Since I began conducting interviews during the Covid 19 lockdown in 2020 in the United States, fourteen of them were Zoom interviews, thirteen of them were phone interviews, and the rest were in-person interviews. In Türkiye, I conducted forty-three in-person interviews and 2 phone interviews. After the interviews and observations, I wrote memos of my interactions with respondents and connected them to the existing theories or conceptual frameworks.

Additionally, my positionality played a significant role in conducting this research. The inequality and discrimination I have experienced in the United States as an international scholar from Türkiye, and in Türkiye because of my Alevi identity, have influenced me to develop empathy for Afghan refugees and bring the data. In the United States, my F-1 legal status had detrimental effects on my access to resources and opportunities. For example, my legal status was a significant barrier to finding a job in academia in the United States due to sponsorship

issues for international students. I also experienced Islamophobia in everyday life because of my country of origin, although I was not a religious person. In Türkiye, the Alevi people are a disadvantaged faith group that faces discrimination and barriers to equal opportunities through limited access to resources. Due to religious prejudices, they experience institutional discrimination in both academic and non-academic settings, such as in government. I experienced discrimination, particularly in my application for government jobs. Thus, all these insecurities and exclusions I experienced in my life have shaped my research in collecting and analyzing data.

1.6 Outline of Chapters

Chapter 2 focuses on the migration of Afghan refugees to the United States and Türkiye, driven by physical insecurity, including threats and violence in Afghanistan. It also explores the dynamics, processes, and mechanisms that drive Afghans to flee their home countries. The first part of Chapter 2 examines Afghan refugees' associations with the US military or companies in Afghanistan, which led them to flee their homes to save their lives. This part also highlights the role of sub-identities and their attributes in the Afghans' flight. In particular, Hazara Afghans holding SIV cite their affiliation with the US military or companies and their identities as sources of violence toward them by the Taliban. The second part of the chapter documents serious security threats faced firsthand by Afghan refugees who migrated to Türkiye. It also discusses security issues experienced during their journey from Afghanistan to Türkiye via Mexico. It emphasizes sub-identities as sources of violence and the threats they experience in Afghanistan.

Chapter 3 discusses legal contexts, focusing on the experiences of Afghan refugees in the United States and Türkiye. The first part of Chapter 3 focuses on the resettlement experiences of

Afghan refugees, including the dynamics behind their resettlement in the greater Sacramento area and how they adjusted to and navigated their new environments. The second part of the chapter highlights the legal insecurity faced by Afghans in Türkiye, where they often hold undocumented and international protection statuses. This part describes the dynamics behind their residency in Istanbul and their resettlement in Trabzon.

Chapter 4 focuses on Afghan refugee men's labor market incorporation in the United States and Türkiye, discussing multidimensional insecurities and vulnerabilities that create hyper-precarity. The first part of the chapter examines the loss of class status among Afghans who face challenges transferring their human capital, including credentials and skills, and encounter precarious labor conditions after migrating to the United States. It then analyzes the frustration and deprivation that Afghans experience due to a downgrade in their status and deskilling, accompanied by economic precarity. It also discusses different coping mechanisms for hyper-precarity. The second part of Chapter 4 documents multidimensional insecurities through insecure legal statuses, difficulties obtaining work authorizations, and economic precarity in the labor market, where they experience extreme exploitation of their labor, including unfree labor relations in Türkiye. It then analyzes the meanings ascribed to these jobs and how they affect their lives in Türkiye. Following this, it addresses the experiences of a group of Afghan refugees in Trabzon who are shop owners and do not face hyper-precarity, including unfree labor relations, as they are not employed in the labor market. However, shop owners face economic insecurity due to high taxes and inflation in the country. It then analyzes coping mechanisms for hyper-precarity in Türkiye.

Chapter 5 examines social insecurity and exclusion that Afghan refugees experience and navigate in their lives, including in schools in the United States and Türkiye. The first part of

Chapter 5 focuses on Islamophobia that Afghans face through hate speech, intolerance, and suspicion due to their Muslim identities within the socio-cultural landscape of the United States. In particular, Afghan women and their daughters who wear a hijab express their experiences with hate speech and suspicion. The second part of Chapter 5 highlights xenophobia, intolerance, hate speech, and discrimination that they encounter due to their ethnic identities within the country's socioeconomic landscape. It then analyzes the different strategies that Afghan refugees use to grapple with these insecurities and exclusions.

Chapter 6 examines how structural insecurities, especially legal and economic, shape Afghan men's sense of masculinity within household and community relationships. It then links these dynamics to how Afghan men approach women's paid employment in the United States and Türkiye. The first part of Chapter 6 examines the loss of masculinity in the US context, focusing on Afghan men's experiences as family providers. It then highlights how these men regain their manhood through various strategies, including seeking better employment to fulfill their provider roles. These men also participate in third spaces, such as soccer tournaments, where they interact with other men and build solidarity to reclaim their manhood. Finally, it documents Afghan men's responses to women's paid employment, including the challenges women encounter in working outside of their homes. The second part of Chapter 6 explores the loss of masculinity, focusing on the experiences of a group of Afghan refugee men facing a masculinity crisis due to the intersection of their legal status, age, and health conditions in Türkiye. It then discusses how Afghan men reclaim their manhood, though they face challenges in doing so because of legal and economic insecurities. Finally, it analyzes their responses toward women's paid employment.

Chapter 2: Physical Insecurity within the Context of Emigration from Afghanistan

2.1 Introduction

Like many Afghans, Ali arrived in the United States through the SIV, which is granted to Afghan refugees who worked with the US Army, embassy, companies, and organizations in Afghanistan. After receiving his medical degree, Ali worked at a rural hospital, earning a monthly salary of just $50, which was inadequate to support his family. As a result, he quit his job and returned to Kabul, working for the US Embassy as a protocol assistant to secure a better income. In this job, he organized events and meetings for US ambassadors and key American visitors, including presidents, senators, members of Congress, and military leaders. His position often exposed him to the media, leading to threats from groups like the Taliban, who opposed the US presence and the Afghan government. He remarked, “They were viewing my role as a spy. That’s why I started receiving threats, warning me to stop working for the Americans and quit my job; otherwise, they would kill me or kidnap my family or children.” Eventually, Ali resigned from the embassy and started a business focusing on public health projects, which he regarded as a “very successful business,” and secured contracts with the US government. Because of this continued connection to the United States through these contracts, he still felt threatened, which prompted him to apply for the SIV. He moved to the United States in April 2014.

This chapter focuses on the physical insecurities that undermine human security experienced by Afghan refugees, forcing them to flee their home countries to seek safety. Specifically, human security comprises two central elements: “freedom from fear,” which includes threats from war, conflict, and state-sponsored violence, and “freedom from want,” e.g., disease, economic hardship, poverty, and developmental issues (The United Nations Development Programme 1994). These two terms are interlinked and constitute the basis of human security; as a result,

forced migration can occur if they are not provided for individuals to live free from their fears and/or wants (Vietti and Scribner 2013b).

Different factors drive refugee migration, including nation-state building (Roucek 1939; Stoessinger 1961; Zolberg et al. 1989), genocide and politicide (Fein 1993; Neumayer 2005; Schmeidl 1997), foreign interventions, and generalized violence (Schmeidl 1997). However, these studies are based on refugee statistics collected by the UNHCR and national governments, which use a legal rather than a sociological definition of refugee (FitzGerald and Arar 2018). Thus, independent surveys avoid this circularity, as they do not select on the dependent variable (FitzGerald and Arar 2018). Several studies conducted in Nepal aimed to understand the relationship between violence and out-migration (Adhikari 2013; Bohra-Mishra and Massey 2011). They examined the degree to which violence affects out-migration (Bohra-Mishra and Massey 2011) and the various dynamics that mediate flight from the home country (Adhikari 2013).

Drawing on the human security approach and this body of literature, I use the concept of physical insecurity driven by fears of threats and violent attacks that Afghan refugees face in their home countries, which may stem from various factors, including their connections with foreign countries and identities. If Afghan refugees cannot live free from fear, they are compelled to flee their homes in search of safety. These factors generate physical insecurities and negatively impact economic and social conditions in Afghanistan, significantly contributing to their decisions to migrate from their countries to seek relief for their needs.

The Chapter argues that physical insecurity involves distinct but similar processes and dynamics that lead Afghan refugees to flee their homelands for safety. Afghan refugees migrate to the United States to save their lives, which are at stake due to their affiliation with the U.S.

Army or associated companies, exposing them to threats from the Taliban and other armed groups. This affiliation arises from various jobs, such as interpreters for the American military, companies, or organizations. Additionally, this study highlights that sub-identities and their attributes play a crucial role in the emigration of Afghan refugees. Notably, Hazara Afghans are identified as the most vulnerable group in this research, facing direct violent attacks in Afghanistan due to their ethnic and sectarian axes. As a result, Hazara Afghans encounter threats and violence arising from both their connection to the United States and their sub-identities, a situation I refer to as the double insecurity they endure in their home country. Lastly, these insecurities confine the everyday activities of Afghan refugees with SIV, contributing to their flight from their home countries.

Afghan refugees who migrate to Türkiye face not only threats but also serious security challenges, including violent attacks and kidnapping firsthand, which harm their bodies, stemming from different reasons. Thus, it is different than the United States in this context. However, they have similarly expressed their links to foreign nations, particularly the United States or the Afghan government, which created an unsafe environment for them and significantly influenced their decision to leave Afghanistan. Meanwhile, I should note that Türkiye does not offer a specific visa, such as an SIV, for Afghan refugees based on their affiliation with the Turkish embassy, army, or companies in Afghanistan. Moreover, similar to the situation in the United States, “minorities” such as Hazara and Uzbek Afghans have reported violent assaults they encountered in Afghanistan, which contributed to their emigration. Hazara Afghans, in particular, have experienced "double insecurity" in Türkiye as well due to their ties to the Afghan government or foreign countries and their specific ethnic and sectarian axes. These

unfavorable security conditions affect especially their economic conditions in Afghanistan, which in turn contribute to their flight.

The US section begins with a discussion of the threats Afghan refugees encounter in Afghanistan, stemming from their affiliation with the United States. Then, the section focuses on specific threats, including unknown emails and phone calls, as well as being followed by strangers. Next, the section focuses on the violent environment in the country as another form of physical insecurity for Afghan refugees who did not face violence but mentioned it as a reason. Then, it examines the role of sub-identities for a group of Afghans in fleeing their home countries. Finally, it addresses how these physical insecurities restrict everyday activities or relations around Afghanistan. The section on Türkiye begins with specific physical insecurities, such as violence experienced by Afghan refugees in Afghanistan. Then, the section discusses affiliation with the Afghan government and foreign countries, especially the United States, playing a role in their emigration from Afghanistan. Next, it illustrates the role of sub-identities in creating human security for a group of Afghan refugees. Finally, it focuses on how these physical insecurities affect economic and social conditions.

2.2 The US's Context

2.2.1 Threats

The scholarship considers Afghanistan a fragile state unable to provide security for its citizens, leading them to flee their homelands and migrate to other countries, including Iran, Pakistan, Türkiye, the United States, and European countries (İçduygu and Karadağ 2018). Ahmet İçduygu and Sibel Karadağ (2018:485) described this situation as "enduring political tensions, lack of security, and the inability of the government to provide essential services for citizens will impede self-reliant development and thereby pose a potential for the displacement of people." This

explanation is pertinent to Afghan refugees in this study who articulated a general security issue in Afghanistan, which they have suffered since the 1980s (Schmeidl 1997). Ebrahim, a Pashtun Afghan aged 42, mentioned this lack of security in Afghanistan in those words:

> Lack of rule of law. People could get killed. Women could get raped. Robbery was everywhere. It has become worse these days—lots of young people are getting killed just for their mobile phones. They have a knife, and they come and say Give me your phone. They have guns. They can kill you. They can shoot you.

Thus, Ebrahim addressed that security conditions have worsened in Afghanistan. Andam, a Pashtun Afghan aged 39, expressed similar sentiments, namely unfavorable security conditions, to Ebrahim: "From my birth time [the 1980s] till today, there has been a war in Afghanistan. When I watched TV every day, there were a hundred fifty-two hundred people who died. Every day, people were killed." Therefore, this quote shows that insecurity in Afghanistan has been a main characteristic of the country for years.

It's essential to address these general insecurities that Afghan refugees experience in Afghanistan because, under these conditions, we can better understand the specific dynamics, processes, and mechanisms behind their migration to the United States (Adhikari 2013; Bohra-Mishra and Massey 2011). One central driving dynamic relates to threats Afghan refugees receive from armed groups, such as the Taliban, because of their affiliation with the US Army, embassy, companies, or organizations where they work in various positions; one of the common ones is that of an interpreter. This link to the United States puts Afghan individuals at greater risk in Afghanistan. Afghan SIV holders have expressed a general sentiment regarding their emigration from Afghanistan: "We moved out of Afghanistan for security purposes. We received a lot of threats over there, which was due to our services to the United States." Thus, threats make up one of the main physical insecurities for Afghan refugees, which play a key role in fleeing their homelands.

Andam is one of the Afghan men who constitutes a great example of facing threats stemming from his employment at a US institution in Afghanistan. Andam studied Economics and worked in the customs department of the Ministry of Finance in Afghanistan for six years, serving as a team leader and implementing World Bank-funded projects through computerized systems to process goods and pay customs duties. Following this job, he joined USAID to export products from Afghanistan. After working for two years at this institution, he relocated to Kyrgyzstan to pursue a master's degree in political science with a scholarship. After completing his degree, he returned to Afghanistan and continued working at USAID. Therefore, his connection to this US institution posed a major security risk to him, given the threats he faced. He shared:

> There was a Taliban threat to Afghans who worked with the US, such as USAID. Therefore, the first reason was the threat. For sure! Otherwise, why would I leave Afghanistan? I had a family, a home, a good job, and good relations with good people, like in the government. I was involved in politics. However, security was the major risk. Also, I thought that if I went to the US, then my kids would at least they would study, and they would be in a safe environment.

Thus, despite the high standard of living conditions in Afghanistan, Andam was forced to flee his homeland in search of safety for himself and his children due to his connection to the United States. He applied for SIV in 2015 and migrated to the United States in 2016.

Overall, this section addressed threats that Afghan refugees face in Afghanistan due to their affiliation with US institutions or organizations, which resulted in their flight from their home countries.

2.2.1.1 Unknown Emails and Phone Calls as well as Being Followed

In this section, I specifically focus on the types of threats Afghan refugees confront in everyday life, including emails from unidentified people, anonymous phone calls, and being followed by strangers, forcing them to leave their home countries (Adhikari 2013; Bohra-Mishra and Massey 2011). These kinds of threats made them insecure in their daily lives, as they were not free from

their fears and thought that those people or groups, such as the Taliban, could harm them due to their link with the United States.

Ebrahim, living in Kabul, studied Medicine and graduated in 2002. After graduation, he had to move out of Kabul to work as a doctor. However, his family urged him not to move to those provinces because of a lack of security. Also, working in different provinces as a doctor was not promising due to limited opportunities for promotion and the difficulty he would face in supporting his family. Thus, he stayed in Kabul and did not practice his profession. Instead, he worked as a consultant at BearingPoint, working with the USAID and Afghan deputies and ministers, although he was not an official government employee. More specifically, he provided consultation on improving policies, laws, and regulations in the economy and trade sectors. In the company, he took on various roles, from team leader to project manager. During this process, he completed a master's degree in business administration, a semi-online program, from an Indian university. He explained, "I was receiving threats through phone calls and emails. I was told not to work with Americans, not to work with the Afghan Government. I was afraid that maybe now a bomb would go off because I used to wear a suit and tie in my car, so people knew that I would work with Americans or the government." Thus, Ebrahim faced a constant threat, which made him fearful that those groups could harm him, stemming from his work relations with the United States and the Afghan government (Vietti and Scribner 2013).

Like Ebrahim, Irfan mentioned threats he received from illegal groups, which led him to flee Afghanistan. Irfan, who is a 42-year-old Hazara Afghan man, studied Computer Science in Afghanistan. While studying, he began working as an interpreter at a private American company, thanks to his good English skills. The company involved security that trained Afghan narcotics police to combat the drug trade. To that end, Irfan helped the company translate conversations

between American instructors and the Afghan police. He preferred to work as an interpreter because of the high demand for English speakers. And this job helped him study and provide for his family. However, after working for this American company, his life began to change for the worse because of the nature of his job. He mentioned: “We were involved in fighting like poppy cultivation, you know, drugs. There were two threats for us, not just the Taliban but also the drug lords, because we were working with the police and the American company. That's why I was cautious. Sometimes, I got weird calls, but I didn't know them.” Despite these threats through phone calls, which made him cautious, Irfan was indecisive about emigrating. He waited about a year to evaluate security conditions to see whether they would improve. He was also studying and was near the completion of his degree. He then decided to drop out of university and emigrate to the United States in 2014 due to the safety of his two children.

My research indicates that not only Afghan men but also Afghan women face these threats, including risks of being harmed and dangers, rendering them more vulnerable. Latifa, a 29-year-old Hazara Afghan woman, attended nursing and medical school and worked as a contractor and a registered nurse at the American Embassy in Kabul for eight years, from 2013 to 2021. She described her job at the embassy as an emergency department where she assisted the embassy employees and individuals injured nearby during bombing attacks. She expressed how it was to work with Americans in Afghanistan:

> Working with Americans meant greater risks for me. When I would go to work every morning, people would look at me, wondering where I was going. Therefore, I did not tell people I was working at the embassy. Working with the US Embassy was like a secret. It was not safe for me to share it with people. Some people liked America, while some people did not like it. Only my family knew that I was working with them.

Since working at the US Embassy posed safety concerns, she did not disclose herself. Although conditions were unfavorable for Latifa in Afghanistan, she did not plan to apply for SIV to

migrate to the United States because she was happy with her job. However, over time, working at the US embassy created greater risks to her life. She continued, “Then, some people were following me. I noticed two people who were following me. Also, I received threats. Then, I changed my mind. It was not safe for me anymore.” She applied for SIV in 2017 and migrated to the United States in 2021.

Overall, this section discussed the dynamics, processes, and mechanisms of threats that drive Afghans to flee their home countries (Adhikari 2013; Bohra-Mishra and Massey 2011).

2.2.2 Violence

Threats were not the only insecurity faced by Afghan refugees, which put their lives at risk in Afghanistan. A group of Afghans drew attention to the violent environment due to their affiliation with the US Army, companies, or organizations. For example, Ebrahim said, “Thousands of Afghans who worked with the US government or military were tortured and killed.” However, this does not mean that Afghan refugees frequently experience physical violence firsthand. Rather, they perceive their situation as dangerous because they believe they could be subjected to violence at any time, creating a constant sense of fear in their lives. Ebrahim maintained, “There was a route that I used to go to my office, and that route would be attacked two or three times a week. Therefore, I was afraid that a bomb could explode.” As another piece of evidence, Asmaan, an Afghan woman whose husband is an SIV holder, highlighted the dangerous environment in Afghanistan, stemming from her husband’s affiliation with the US Army, where he worked as a translator for more than four years. She expressed, “My husband worked in highly dangerous provinces like Kandahar, where there was an ongoing war with the Taliban. He didn’t feel safe. This is why we came here via SIV. It was for people

whose lives were in danger." Thus, war conditions, including violence, put Asmaan's husband's life in danger, which played an important role in fleeing Afghanistan.

Among the Afghan people I interviewed, Sardar was the only person who experienced violence firsthand because of his link to the United States and the Afghan government. After graduating from the English department in Literature, he worked as an operations manager for a newspaper distributed by the US Army from 2007 to 2013. Then, he worked as a translator in the Army from 2015 to 2016. He explained this physical violence, which he still feels the effects of today, on his body as follows: "The Taliban captured me a couple of times. They beat me very hard. I still have pain in my right shoulder whenever the weather gets cold. I'm not able to move it. I remember those beating incidents happened fifteen years ago, but I'm still suffering from the pain." Thus, Serdar expressed his firsthand experience of violence due to his link to the United States, which led him to flee his homeland and migrate to the United States in 2019.

Overall, this section highlights that Afghan refugees refer to a violent environment in Afghanistan, even though they do not often face it firsthand, which also plays a role in their flight from their homeland.

2.2.3 The Role of Ethnicities and Sects within Sub-identities in Fleeing Afghanistan

When I was invited to dinner at a Hazara Afghan man's car repair shop in the greater Sacramento area in a hot summer in 2023, I met a group of Afghans from various ethnic and sectarian backgrounds. During our conversation, we skipped from one topic to another. Regarding sub-identities and their attributes, including ethnicity and sect, a 50-year-old Afghan man, who identified himself as a Pashtun, approached and put his hand on my knee. Then, he told me a bit angrily what had happened, such as the civil war in the 1990s in Afghanistan was due to external powers, which intervened in Afghanistan's domestic affairs, leading to an

ongoing battle that also affected minorities in the country (FitzGerald and Arar 2018). I listened to him cautiously without intervening. After telling me this, he stood up and left the shop.

I wanted to share this anecdote because it's also essential to focus on the dynamics regarding sub-identities and their attributes in Afghanistan that play a significant role in a group of Afghan refugees' emigration from their homeland. Afghanistan is a diverse country in terms of ethnicity and religious affiliation. The country comprises multi-ethnic identities, including Pashtuns, the dominant ethnic group, Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, and others. In terms of religion, Sunni Islam constitutes the mainstream sect and branch of Islam, while Shi'a Islam comprises a minority sect in the country (Robson and Lipson 2002). Afghan refugees, particularly Hazara Afghans who identify themselves with the Shi'a sect, described threats and violence that Hazara people faced in Afghanistan, making them feel unsafe and flee the country. Hazara Afghans have become direct targets for violent attacks because of their affiliation with the United States and their ethnic identities, which is what I call this double insecurity that Hazara Afghans experience in their home countries.

Latifa, who worked at the US embassy in Kabul, spoke about her emigration from Afghanistan due to her ties to the United States. However, this wasn't the only insecurity she confronted back in Afghanistan. She also addressed her sub-identity, the Hazara identity, which was vital in her decision to flee her home country. She explained:

> There is a lot of violence against the Hazara people in Afghanistan, which is not good. We had an explosion in schools where Hazaras were studying. There were even explosions in mosques where Hazara people went. Most of the things were happening to the Hazara people. That's why Hazara people migrate, because Afghanistan is not safe for them.

Latifa referred to a specific incident that happened to a Hazara Afghan person who tried to flee Afghanistan during the Taliban's takeover of the country in the summer of 2022. She continued:

> I do not know if you saw videos from last year at the airport in Kabul, but everyone was trying to escape. There was a Hazara person with a visa, passport, and everything, but there was a soldier who said No, you are a Hazara and must stay here. We have suffered from this kind of stuff. You cannot solve this problem. That's why it would be better if we had a chance of leaving this country.

Thus, Latifa emphasized the ethnic identity that created a physical insecurity for her, which affected her decision to leave her homeland.

Esin, a 33-year-old Hazara Afghan woman living in Kabul, suffered from similar threats and a violent environment due to her ethnic and sectarian backgrounds. Her husband was an SIV holder who worked with a US company and the Army. The company where her husband worked halted operations in Kabul and relocated to Kunduz province. Since traveling between these provinces was too risky, Esin and her children also moved to Kunduz together with her husband. However, Esin and her children relocated back to Kabul because Kunduz was unsafe due to ethnic and sectarian issues. She explained:

> Whenever someone knocked on our door, I was afraid because we were Hazara while Kunduz was a Pashtun city. The Pashtun people are enemies of the Hazara. They do not accept Hazaras as friends or neighbors in their regions. They call Hazaras non-Muslim. If Hazara people are killed, that's okay for them. Since we moved to Pashtun City, I had this fear because of the many Pashtuns around me. By the time I noticed that they were not looking at us in a good way. When somebody knocked at the door, I opened it, but nobody was there, so I felt scared. I had two children. I couldn't get out by myself. It's a long story. I don't want to go into details. However, I didn't feel safe, so I moved with my children back to Kabul.

Esin also experienced similar physical insecurities because of her husband's affiliation with the United States in Kunduz. Her husband eventually resigned and moved back to Kabul, where they began to live in a neighborhood. Initially, everything was fine in their lives, but later things went wrong. She expressed:

> We moved back to Kabul, so there was a neighborhood that we were living in Kabul. It happened the same attacks happened in the neighborhood where I was living. So back then, we didn't feel anything bad about them [Pashtun people], but by the time we saw that some people were raising the Taliban flags. It was terrifying for all the people and us.

She continued by drawing attention to attacks toward the Hazara Afghans in Afghanistan:

> We saw a lot of explosions against the Hazara people for four or five years in Afghanistan. If you look at the news, all the bombings happened to Hazara and Shia people. Those places were the center of the Hazara people or the Shia people. It happened in the schools, hospitals, etc. Two days ago, we had an explosion in two schools on the same day. The day after, another explosion happened in a mosque. I don't want to say that all Pashtun people are Taliban, but the Taliban speak Pashto and do not accept any Dari speaker, and they're also Sunni. Some Pashtun people support Talibs. The Taliban are a group of people who are not educated and do not know anything about modern technology. When the US attacked the Taliban, the Pashtun people were hiding them as family members or something like that. It was super hard for the US to recognize them. When attacks happened to Hazara or Shia people, most Pashtuns remained quiet. They did not raise their voices. But when those attacks happened to Sunni people in their places, Pashtun people would raise their voices.

Thus, Esin, whose husband is an SIV holder, also highlighted the violent attacks Hazara Afghans faced in Afghanistan due to their ethnic and sectarian axes, which also influenced Esin and her family's decision to flee their home country. Her husband applied for SIV, and they relocated to the United States in 2017.

Overall, this section focuses on sub-identities and their attributes, including ethnic and sectarian axes, which play a key role in the emigration of a group of Afghan SIV holders facing double insecurity.

2.2.4 Restrictions in Everyday Life

These physical insecurities that Afghan refugees experience unfavorably affect different aspects of their lives by restricting their everyday activities, such as traveling, because of the fear that they will face violence. Hamza, a 35-year-old Tajik Afghan man who studied agriculture and worked with USAID and the United Nations (UN) to collect data for agricultural projects, described threats by the Taliban that restricted his life as follows:

> The Taliban threatened us several times. Since we worked with those organizations, all people, like neighbors, knew we were working with foreign people, such as Americans. We were a spy or something like that for the Taliban. This happened a lot, especially in small places. Now, there is no place to live for those who are working with organizations in

> Afghanistan. The main cities in the provinces were under the control of the government. Other towns and villages, like everywhere, were under the control of the Taliban.

Thus, Hamza addressed how working with the United States confined his and other SIV holders' lives in Afghanistan, as they are known to be working with Americans and viewed as spies. Specifically, Ebrahim articulated how it was difficult attending his mother's funeral in his town because of insecurities stemming from his link to the United States. He explained:

> I am originally from Southeastern Afghanistan. When my mother passed away, I could hardly go to her funeral in my hometown. Usually, we hold the funeral ceremony for three days. And when I was there, my cousins were barely guarding me. That area was remote, which was the outskirts. It was insecure and under the control of Taliban insurgents. And everyone there knew that this guy in costume had come from Kabul. He worked with Americans.

Irfan could not even visit his family members living outside Kabul to say goodbye to them before migrating to the United States. Instead, his family members visited him, although this was against cultural norms in Afghanistan. This was due to the fear that the Taliban would harm him. He expressed:

> I didn't have any trips outside of Kabul. The problem was that the Taliban encircled the area where my father was living. I didn't have any way to get there. That's why I never had a trip to my area. I asked my father to come to see me. It's against the culture. Normally, the kids must go to see their fathers, you know. But my father came to me to say goodbye when I traveled to the US.

Moreover, this travel restriction even affects small activities, like going on a picnic, due to a sense of insecurity. Besides issues in attending his mother's funeral, Ebrahim mentioned difficulties even going to a picnic with family members or friends due to the fear of being attacked. He shared:

> In Afghanistan, we're like prisoners as we couldn't move. We could not even go to the picnic with our friends or families. Our family members or friends would tell us not to go. In Afghanistan, we have beautiful provinces, including mountains and rivers. We could go to those places on weekends, but unfortunately, not because we're scared. Insurgents were very powerful and everywhere. They could hurt us.

Thus, Ebrahim used the metaphor of "prisoners" to explain how a sense of insecurity restricted his social activities.

Overall, this sub-section focused on restrictions in everyday life that Afghan refugees experience in Afghanistan due to their link to the United States, which created a sense of insecurity and fears among them. It addressed a range of dynamics, processes, and mechanisms that drove Afghans to flee Afghanistan (Adhikari 2013; Bohra-Mishra and Massey 2011). The following section examines physical insecurity in the context of Türkiye.

2.3 The Context of Türkiye

2.3.1 Violence and Kidnapping

Afghan refugees who migrated to Türkiye experienced direct violent attacks, including kidnapping by the Taliban in Afghanistan, which led them to flee their homelands. For example, Nizamuddin, a Tajik Afghan aged 40, married and with a child, experienced a violent attack firsthand in which he was hurt. After studying medicine at a military school in Afghanistan, he worked as a doctor in the Afghan special forces. One day, while he was performing his job, he and his personnel came under attack. He shared, "One day, we got wounded people via an ambulance at the airport in Kabul. The explosives, planted on the road, exploded when we passed by. I was badly hurt. My jaw was broken. I had 32 stitches in my abdomen."

Like Nizamuddin, Armaghan, a thirty-one-year-old Afghan woman, faced a violent attack by the Taliban in Afghanistan because of her profession. She began practicing powerlifting in 2015. She competed in international competitions, winning medals and teaching the sport to 20 students. However, her profession led to threats from the Taliban, who did not approve of women engaging in this sport. She even faced physical violence because of this. She explained, "One day, when I was coming home in the evening, several people whom I did not know came

and wounded me with a knife. I stayed at the hospital for a month. That's why I left Afghanistan, because of the danger to life." After this incident, the Taliban still threatened her. Then, she decided to leave her homeland and migrate to Türkiye in 2019.

Violence is not the only type of physical insecurity Afghan refugees experience in Afghanistan. My data shows that kidnapping, which may also involve torture, presents another kind of insecurity for Afghans, affecting their decisions to flee their home countries because they want to live their lives free from their fears (The United Nations Development Programme 1994; Vietti and Scribner 2013a). Nasser, a 55-year-old married Tajik Afghan, was a high school graduate. After working as a private school teacher and a government official, he opened a small-scale car gallery, importing cars from Germany to sell in Afghanistan. His business helped him make a lot of money. Therefore, the Taliban forces kidnapped Nasser and his two sons for ransom. The Taliban even tortured him during the kidnapping process. While conducting the interview, he showed me those scars but did not give more details about the incident, as this might remind him of some bad memories. He told me one of his sons studied at a Turkish school in Afghanistan, where he was a successful student and was awarded a medal. He paid thousands of dollars to the Taliban to release both of his children.

One of the key points about kidnapping is that the Taliban forces target specific individuals who are financially better off to demand a ransom. The kidnapping incident that Nasser experienced illustrates this, as he owned a car gallery in Afghanistan, which attracted the Taliban's attention for ransom, even though it was a small-scale gallery. Hidayat, a 33-year-old Uzbek Afghan who is married and has three children, faced a similar kidnapping incident by the Taliban in Afghanistan. Although Hidayat was a taxi driver and did not earn a high income, the

Taliban kidnapped him to demand a ransom because his brothers worked in Saudi Arabia and were seen by the Taliban as financially affluent. He explained:

> The Taliban kidnapped me because my brothers had been working in Saudi Arabia, so they demanded 200.000 dollars to release me. Later, elderly people gathered to talk to them about my situation. They told the Taliban that if I had had 200.000 dollars, I would not have worked as a taxi driver. After this talk, the Taliban released me, and I came home.

After being released by the Taliban, Hidayat continued his normal life in Afghanistan. However, this situation did not deter him from living in fear, prompting him to reconsider and apply for a Turkish visa. After receiving his visa, he migrated to Türkiye in 2017, leaving his wife and children behind.

Overall, this section emphasized the physical insecurities, including dynamics and processes Afghan refugees face firsthand in Afghanistan, which affected their emigration to seek safety in Türkiye (Adhikari 2013; Bohra-Mishra and Massey 2011).

2.3.2 Affiliation with the Afghan Government/Foreign Countries

Afghan refugees who migrated to Türkiye cited their employment in the Afghan government and ties to foreign nations as reasons for fleeing their homeland (FitzGerald and Arar 2018). They received threats, which put their lives at risk. Nizamuddin, who was exposed to a bombing attack while performing his job, shared the threats he encountered from the Taliban because of his work in the Afghan army. He expressed, “The Taliban threatened my family and me, saying I had to quit my job because I was working in the name of the Afghan government.” Then, he quit his job and remained unemployed for two months, but shared, “I still had no life security. After all, I was married and had a newborn baby.” Thus, this threat, accompanied by the bombing attack, forced him to flee his home country in 2020 by leaving his wife and newborn baby behind.

Ismail is another Afghan man who experiences physical insecurity due to his affiliation with the Afghan government. Ismail is 47 years old, married, and identifies as Hazara. He dropped out

of the university while studying Computer Science and pursuing teaching credentials. He spent part of his life as a refugee in Pakistan, where he worked as a school principal. He returned to Afghanistan and, thanks to a friend who facilitated his employment, worked as an IT officer in the Ministry of the Interior and Foreign Affairs. One of his tasks in this job was to attend meetings. He later quit his job and worked in an NGO. During the interview, he told me he faced problems while working in this Afghan institution, which forced him to "escape from his home country." When I asked him what issues he faced, he emphasized his affiliation with the Afghan government. He shared:

> You know I worked in the Afghan ministry. Most of the time, I was with the minister or the vice minister. I was also in the media a lot. Then, the Taliban said everyone who has worked with the foreigners or the Afghan government, such as the interior minister or foreign minister, would be killed. Then, I fled Afghanistan.

Thus, his ties to the Afghan government led him to feel insecure in Afghanistan, playing a significant role in his emigration for safety.

Barat, another Hazara Afghan aged 35 and married with three children (one was born in Türkiye), worked as a plasterer, painter, and papier-mâché maker in construction in Afghanistan. He was also a building contractor who worked with a firm that did business with foreign countries, including the United States, England, and Australia. He worked with these foreign countries, earning a good income and having a car and a house. When I asked him what happened and why he emigrated from his home country, he highlighted the threats he received from the Taliban due to his collaboration with these foreign countries, which resembles stories of Afghan refugees who live in the United States. He said, "The Taliban threatened me almost every week or every two weeks by writing on a paper, saying I was an infidel because I was working with foreigners who were also infidels." He kept working with these foreign countries for a while, but then he gave up because his father told him they would find and hurt him. Also,

Barat feared the Taliban, who could hurt his family, including his two daughters. Because of these factors, he left everything behind and migrated to Türkiye in 2018.

Overall, this section addresses physical insecurities, such as threats faced by Afghan refugees, stemming from their employment in the Afghan government and foreign nations. These Afghan refugees are also afraid of the Taliban hurting their family members, especially their children.

2.3.3 Sub-Identities and Emigration from Afghanistan

When I conducted my fieldwork in Istanbul province, I met a group of Afghan refugees who identified as Hazara. One of these men was the president of a Hazara non-governmental organization in Trabzon province. During my interview with them, they invited me to visit their organization in Trabzon to extend my fieldwork to this province. I traveled to Trabzon and met them at their organization. While sitting in the president's office, we began discussing the conditions of the Hazara people in Afghanistan. Then, the president turned on his mobile phone and showed me a WhatsApp video posted by a Hazara Afghan who had faced violence from the Taliban in Afghanistan. In the video, that individual asked the president for help fleeing Afghanistan. This violent incident that a Hazara Afghan person experienced presents sub-identities as another significant dynamic that plays a vital role for Afghan refugees from various ethnic and sectarian backgrounds in fleeing their home countries.

People from various sub-identities, or we can also call them “minority groups,” can be a direct target of the Taliban or other illegal armed groups, creating physical insecurity for them. Murtaza, a Hazara and Caferi Afghan aged 34 and married, explained this as follows:

> Right now, they burn, ruin, or take Hazaras’ homes. They also ask people about their ethnic identities on the road. Then, choose Hazaras and kill or kidnap them. They eradicate the Hazara people. By leaving the Hazara people in difficult situations, they force them to leave the country. I am not saying that all Pashtuns are bad. The Taliban also oppress Pashtuns, who also flee from Afghanistan, but their numbers are not large. The Taliban caught me once

> and hit my head with a knife. They said we had to leave our village. They said we did not have the right to live here. We had our house, but they forcefully took it from my father.

Thus, Murtaza addressed the unfavorable security conditions for Hazara Afghan individuals and the physical violence he faced due to his ethnic and sectarian axes.

Additionally, Hazara Afghans addressed "double insecurity" due to their affiliation with the Afghan government or foreign countries, such as the United States. Ismail, who worked in the Afghan government, shared:

> For example, we had a Hazara town over there where a bomb attack happened. As another example, when I was in Kabul, I heard about 40 or 50 of my students had been killed. It happened near the school, and unfortunately, we lost many children and students there.

As another piece of evidence, Barat, who did business with foreign countries, such as the United States, explained:

> There are many problems for the Hazara people in Afghanistan. Bombs could explode in schools, mosques, etc. For example, when I was walking on the road or leaving my neighborhood, a bomb could explode. I experienced these kinds of insecurities in Afghanistan.

Not only violence but also threats constitute another form of insecurity based on ethnic and sectarian dynamics. Diyar, a 22-year-old Afghan man with Pashtun and Sunni sub-identities, left Afghanistan due to ethnic and sectarian obstacles in marrying a Hazara Afghan woman. He fell in love with a Hazara Afghan woman and intended to marry her. However, he was afraid to discuss his intentions with his family, who strictly opposed him marrying someone from a different ethnicity and sect. He remarked, "We have such differences regarding sects, like being Sunni and Shia in Afghanistan. That's why neither Pashtuns nor Hazaras want to marry or be together." Subsequently, the Hazara woman's family tried to force her to marry someone from her ethnicity and sect; as a result, Diyar and his partner began contemplating escaping from their homeland. They understood that marrying in Afghanistan was impossible, and even attempting

to do so could lead their families to harm them. Fearing for their safety, they migrated to Iran, where they lived for three to four months but faced threats from their families through unknown individuals in Iran, leaving them feeling insecure. Later, they migrated to Istanbul, Türkiye, in 2019, where they married through a religious ceremony known as "Imam Nikahı" in Turkish, as they were not permitted to marry officially due to their undocumented status.

Overall, this section discussed sub-identities, including ethnic and sectarian axes, and their roles in a group of Afghan refugees' emigration from their homelands for safety.

2.3.4 Deteriorating Economic and Social Conditions

My data show that these physical insecurities Afghan refugees experience in Afghanistan often affect their economic and social conditions unfavorably and thereby play a significant role in their decisions to flee their home countries (Adhikari 2013; The United Nations Development Programme 1994; Vietti and Scribner 2013a). Ishaq, a Tajik Afghan aged 35, lost his father and one of his brothers, who was a police officer, in a bombing attack in Afghanistan. Before migrating to Türkiye in 2014, Ishaq and his Indian partner ran a business in Afghanistan selling medicinal herbs for 9 years. He had a successful business and did not intend to emigrate from his home country, as security conditions were relatively favorable in 2006. However, in time, explosions, such as those by the Taliban, increased again, which affected his business negatively. Thus, he changed his mind and decided to leave his home country. He explained, "My business was good over there, and I had a good income. Afghanistan was also safe for me. This was eight years ago. Then, bombs began to explode. Because of these, I migrated to Türkiye."

Like Ishaq, Latif, an Uzbek Afghan aged 25, described how his working conditions deteriorated in Afghanistan. Latif finished high school but was unable to continue his education because his family faced economic problems, which led him to work to contribute to his family's

livelihood. They owned an agricultural field in Afghanistan. He shared, “I was occupied with farming in our field in Afghanistan, but because of the Taliban and war, we came to Türkiye because we thought that we could not do anything there. We could not work there anymore because of the war.” Thus, war conditions and the Taliban led them not to work in their agricultural fields, which affected their emigration.

Besides deteriorating security conditions affecting the economy, social conditions in Afghanistan also worsened. Specifically, public places like mosques and schools were unsafe for a group of Afghan refugees. Ishaq remarked, “We could not go to the mosque to pray because of bombing incidents.” Ishaq could not pursue a university education because of the insecure environment. He maintained, “We could not go to school because of war conditions, including bombings in schools. Many people could not go to university because of this.” War conditions resulted in Afghan refugees facing travel restrictions as well. “We could not travel. We could not go to our village because the Taliban were there. We would go, but they asked if you came from the city. They did not like us. Therefore, we were uncomfortable,” Ishaq added.

Overall, this sub-section highlighted deteriorating economic and social conditions for Afghan refugees due to war and the Taliban, which played a role in their fleeing their homelands (Adhikari 2013).

2.4 Conclusion

Drawing on the human security framework within “freedom from fear,” e.g., threats, and “freedom from want,” including economic hardships, this chapter focused on physical insecurities, such as threats and violence Afghan refugees face, and how these shape their decision to emigrate (The United Nations Development Programme 1994; Vietti and Scribner 2013a). This chapter argued that Afghan refugees experience distinct yet similar insecurities

regarding their emigration from Afghanistan to the United States and Türkiye. Afghan refugees who migrate to the United States encounter physical insecurity due to their affiliation with the United States, which leads them to face threats and to feel insecure because of their sub-identities, including their ethnic and sectarian axes. Afghan refugees who migrate to Türkiye experience violence firsthand, harming their bodies, and, similarly, their ethnic and sectarian backgrounds play a role in why they flee their homelands. Thus, my research revealed that sub-identities and their attributes, including ethnic and sectarian axes, should be considered a dimension of the human security approach, as they evolve into physical insecurity that drives people to flee their countries. Moreover, it examined the dynamics, processes, and mechanisms behind why Afghan refugees living in the United States and Türkiye flee their home countries (Adhikari 2013; Bohra-Mishra and Massey 2011).

In the US context, Afghan refugees articulated their affiliation with the US Army, companies, or organizations in Afghanistan, which led them to flee their homeland because of a sense of insecurity that emerged as a consequence of threats, including being emailed, receiving phone calls from unknown people, and being followed by strangers they encountered. The chapter addressed those sub-identities and their attributes, including ethnic and sectarian axes, in addition to links to the United States, which also play a key role in the flight of Afghan refugees from their home countries. A group of Hazara Afghans highlighted their employment at US institutions in Afghanistan and their ethnic and sectarian backgrounds, both of which affected their decisions to flee Afghanistan due to threats and violent attacks toward Hazara Afghans. I name this double insecurity that they experience in Afghanistan. These physical insecurities restricted the everyday activities of Afghan refugees, from traveling to going for a picnic.

In Türkiye's context, Afghan refugees expressed the direct violent attacks they faced in Afghanistan, which played a significant role in their emigration to seek safety in Türkiye. As part of this violence, Afghan refugees also mentioned kidnapping by the Taliban to demand a ransom from those who are viewed as affluent. However, Afghan refugees similarly articulated their connections with the Afghan government and foreign countries, particularly the United States, which posed a security threat to their well-being in Afghanistan. Similarly, Hazara Afghans and Uzbek Afghans, in particular, emphasized violent attacks against them in Afghanistan, which was a driving factor in their emigration from Afghanistan. These physical insecurities had a detrimental effect on economic and social conditions.

The following chapter focuses on the legal context and resettlement process for Afghan refugees in the United States and Türkiye. It explains why they chose to resettle in the greater Sacramento area, the provinces of Istanbul and Trabzon, and how they navigated their new lives and environments.

Chapter 3: The Legal Context for Afghan Refugees in the United States and Türkiye

3.1 Introduction

On November 7th, 2022, I met my translator, who was also an informant in my research and worked at an NGO, to conduct an interview with an Afghan woman who lived in the Zeytinburnu district of Istanbul. After meeting my translator, he called the Afghan woman, Gul, to determine where to interview because I was not able to speak Dari. Then, Gul told my translator to come to their house, describing the address. It was hard to find her flat in Zeytinburnu because she was living in an old part of the district with a very disorganized structure. While walking its narrow back streets with cars parked, we finally found an old multi-storey building, where she lived. We climbed the stairs, came to the front of her flat, and rang the bell. She opened the door and invited us inside. Gul greeted us with a smile, wearing a skirt and blouse with a headscarf. We entered the living room and sat on the long, narrow floor cushion, which they call "Toshak," with pillows to lean back. There was also a rug on the floor. Afghans use this traditional design in their houses rather than on sofas. For example, when I interviewed another Afghan woman at an Afghan NGO, we also sat on these cushions that covered the entire room, from one corner to another. There was also a table and a television on it in the living room.

Later, Gul, 44, began speaking about her story of migration to Türkiye. She told me that she migrated to Türkiye with her two daughters in 2018, crossing the Turkish-Iranian border without inspection. She aimed to use Türkiye as a transit country to resettle in a third country. She wanted her children, who were minors at the time, to continue their education, as they lacked this opportunity in Iran, where they resided for three or four years as refugees. Their journey from Iran to Türkiye took several days because they had to walk in stages. For this journey, they paid smugglers 1,000 euros for each family member.

After coming to Van province in Türkiye, Gul and her family traveled to Ankara province to register for IPS, which is granted to Afghan refugees in Türkiye. IPS enables them to avoid deportation and access education and health services. The UNHCR resettled Gul and her children in Trabzon province, where they faced economic hardships and accumulated debts, including those owed to smugglers. Gul couldn't work due to health problems, forcing her to rely on her eldest daughter to support their livelihood in Trabzon.

Gul and her family moved to Istanbul after living in Trabzon for a year and a half. Istanbul provided better job opportunities for her children and enabled them to immigrate to Europe. Consequently, their IPS was canceled, rendering their ID documents invalid. After relocating to Istanbul, she first lived in the Şirinevler district. However, she was advised to consider living in the Zeytinburnu district, which hosts an Afghan community and offers job opportunities. Thus, she thought that if she moved to Zeytinburnu, a fellow countryman could help her.

Subsequently, Gul and her family attempted to cross the Greek-Turkish border without inspection, but Greek police halted them. On their return to Istanbul, her eldest daughter lost her shoes, causing sharp thorns to prick her feet, while her youngest daughter lost her way. Eventually, Gul and her oldest daughter found her youngest, and they could return to Istanbul. They wanted to cross the Turkish and Greek border via the Aegean Sea, but this journey was considerably more dangerous and costly. Gul mentioned they would attempt to cross the land border again once it opened.

This chapter examines the legal status and resettlement experiences of Afghan refugees in the United States and Türkiye. It argues that in the United States, Afghan refugees are legally protected through their visa programs. However, in Türkiye, they are legally insecure, since Türkiye does not grant refugee status to people coming from outside Europe. Among Afghan

refugees I interviewed in the United States, most held a SIV, granted to Afghan people who worked with U.S. institutions in Afghanistan. A small number arrived in the United States through the USRAP from a second country, such as Türkiye, which served as a transit country for their eventual resettlement in the United States. Upon arrival, Afghan refugees in this study applied for a green card, typically receiving it within one year, which granted them residence status and a pathway to citizenship (Waters and Gerstein Pineau 2016).

Refugee programs enable Afghan refugees to undergo the U.S. federal government resettlement process. Many Afghan SIV holders opt to resettle in the greater Sacramento area, so this chapter explores why and how Sacramento is a destination for Afghans, examining different dynamics, such as social networks and the presence of the Afghan community. Moreover, the chapter focuses on the experiences of Afghan refugees during resettlement, including the economic and social assistance provided to newcomers by the federal state through resettlement agencies that contract with the U.S. Department of State (California Department of Social Services n.d.). These agencies are essential in helping Afghan refugees adapt to their new environments. Thus, the chapter delves into the relationships and interactions of newcomers with these agencies. In cases where agencies have not provided adequate support to newcomers, social networks and the Afghan community have been crucial to Afghan refugees as they navigate their new lives in the United States.

In Türkiye, the legal status of Afghan refugees presents a more complex issue, as they encounter legal insecurity, which means undocumented Afghan refugees lack legal protection, and those with an IPS live in liminal legality (Ozdemir 2026). This refers to a grey area between documented and undocumented status, and an ambiguous characterization, as it may include qualities of both (Menjívar 2006; Menjívar and Coutin 2014; Menjívar and Lakhani 2016). The

legal insecurity stems from a geographical restriction imposed by the Turkish state on Afghan refugees arriving in Türkiye from outside Europe. Instead of receiving refugee status, Afghan refugees are granted IPS by the Turkish state; thus, they lack a pathway to Turkish citizenship and are required to reside in a satellite province until being resettled in a third country.

Trabzon is one of the satellite provinces where Afghan refugees chose to be resettled or were resettled by the Turkish authorities or UNHCR officials in Ankara province. However, Afghan refugees do not undergo official resettlement after arriving in Trabzon, meaning that a resettlement agency does not assist them in adapting to their new environments or by the Turkish state through social and financial support. Additionally, Afghan refugees reside in non-satellite provinces, such as Istanbul, as undocumented migrants. They are more vulnerable in Istanbul because their undocumented status makes them vulnerable to deportation and prevents them from accessing resources such as education. Still, they reside in Istanbul thanks to employment prospects, social networks, and status as a transit hub.

The US section first focuses on the dynamics, such as social networks, behind Afghan refugees' resettlement in the greater Sacramento area. It then examines their resettlement experiences, including their livelihoods, transportation issues and car ownership, as well as housing insecurity. The Türkiye section begins with the dynamics behind Afghan migration, followed by the migration process from Afghanistan to Türkiye. It then focuses on the asylum regime and the rights of asylum seekers in Türkiye, using Afghan refugees as a case study. Later, it explores their resettlement experiences in Trabzon, a satellite province where Afghan refugees hold IPS, and then examines undocumented Afghans' experiences in Istanbul, a non-satellite province.

3.2 The US's Context

3.2.1 The Greater Sacramento Area's Emergence as a Destination Place for Afghan Migrants

California, specifically the greater Sacramento area, has emerged as a refugee hub, following the city of Fremont in Alameda County, referred to as little Kabul by Afghans (Lindgren and Lipson 2004:122; Robson and Lipson 2002). As I mentioned previously, 20,000 Afghan SIV holders have been resettled in Sacramento County. The city of Sacramento alone hosts more than 10,000 Afghan immigrants (Abramsky 2024). Afghan refugees arriving in the United States through the SIV program have opted to settle in the greater Sacramento area. However, the United States has resettled those coming via the USRAP in Sacramento. This section focuses on the dynamics regarding why Afghans relocated to Sacramento and their resettlement experiences.

3.2.1.1 Social Networks

Social networks play a key role in channeling migrants along routes, reducing costs, and, most importantly, facilitating integration in destination countries (Massey et al. 1998). These social networks help newcomers find temporary homes and jobs (Phillips and Massey 2000; Waldinger and Lichter 2003), and provide them with information about navigating their new environments in host societies (FitzGerald 2022). Refugees who flee violence and conflicts similarly experience these dynamics (Crisp 1999; FitzGerald and Arar 2018; Hein 1993; Koser 1997; Scalettaris 2007; Williams 2006).

In line with this literature, my findings show that social networks significantly influenced Afghan refugees' resettlement decisions in the greater Sacramento area. Specifically, these networks consist of friendship ties, including colleagues and family ties, as well as relatives who had already migrated to and settled in Sacramento. For example, Rustam, a 39-year-old married

man who immigrated to the United States in 2018, moved to Sacramento thanks to his social networks, including his family ties. And he pointed out that he chose Sacramento during his visa application at the US Embassy in Afghanistan, where he was asked for his social ties in the United States. He explained:

> During the document processing at the US Embassy in Afghanistan, they inquired whether I had family or friends in the US. This is important because, once I arrived, someone needed to pick me up from the airport and take me home. I had a cousin here who is my sister-in-law, my wife's sister. We provided her address to the US Embassy. I considered moving to Virginia, near the Capitol, as my educational and job background is in political science. That would have been beneficial for more work connections. However, they needed me to go to Sacramento because of my family members and friends. After arriving, I could choose to relocate anywhere I wanted. That was the reason behind my destination in Sacramento.

Not all Afghans were asked about their social connections by the US Embassy in Afghanistan. The decision on where to move took some time for other Afghans. For instance, Akbar, a 37-year-old married man, researched where to live for three or four months, aiming to find the ideal place for him and his family. During this process, he talked to his friends living in the United States. He ultimately chose to resettle in Sacramento, as one of them was eager to help him with the resettlement process. He explained this as follows:

> We were a group of people working at the same company in Afghanistan. A couple of them were already in the United States, including Virginia, Texas, Florida, and Sacramento, California. One of them explained everything and encouraged me to relocate to Sacramento. He assured me he would help, such as contacting a rental department to secure an apartment when I arrived. I appreciate everything he did for us. When we arrived in Sacramento, my whole family was his guest for thirteen days in a sticky situation. It was very nice of him.

Thus, Akbar's friend living in Sacramento influenced his decision, as he was very willing to help Akbar, especially regarding housing (FitzGerald 2022).

Similarly, Ahmet, a 34-year-old married man, searched a lot for where to resettle. He finally chose California, although it was an expensive state, thanks to his friends living in Sacramento. He shared, "I did a lot of searches to find out where I should go and which place was better.

Then, I came here because my two or three friends came before me. They were my colleagues in Afghanistan, where we worked in the same company." And his friends also helped him a lot during his resettlement. Ali talked to his sister and brother-in-law, who live in Sacramento, about where to move. He finally chose Sacramento. He noted, "They told me to come to our city to start my life. They said once you get settled, you can go anywhere you want. Therefore, I came to Sacramento because I thought she could help me settle here. I wanted to be closer to her, so she helped me with my new life here."

Overall, this section focused on Afghan refugees, highlighting social ties that influenced their decisions to resettle in Sacramento to be supported by family members or friends during resettlement.

3.2.1.2 The Afghan Community

Social networks, including ties to family and friends, help migrants adapt to their new lives in host societies, providing them with resources and opportunities. However, the availability of a community in the destination country is another significant pull factor, as it provides a sense of belonging to incoming migrants in their new environments. My fieldwork shows that Afghan refugees emphasized the Afghan community in Sacramento as a reason for their resettlement and highlighted community dynamics helping them feel connected to their new environments.

I visited the Ebu Hanife masjid in Sacramento in the summer of 2020 to meet Baddar, who was working at a resettlement agency. He would help me connect with incoming Afghan refugees to interview. Since the weather was extremely hot, I planned to wear a T-shirt and shorts. However, I decided not to wear shorts because I thought they wouldn't be appropriate attire for the masjid where Afghans pray. When I arrived at the masjid, I saw Baddar at the entrance. He was in a hurry because it was his afternoon break, meaning he needed to return to

work after praying. Upon seeing him, I was reminded of a typical Muslim man with a long mustache. What intrigued me was his traditional Afghan outfit, known as a "Perahan Tunban," which is wide and loose with sleeves. The outfit ended at his knees and featured buttons on the shoulders. I told him I saw Afghan people praying when I visited a masjid in Davis. He responded that Afghan people in Davis typically do not wear traditional Afghan attire. He was right because Davis lacks a significant Afghan community, unlike the greater Sacramento area.

The Masjid was overcrowded since it was Friday. The Friday prayer, known as "Jummah," is significant for Muslims as it is a communal worship service held in the afternoon and is required for Muslims to attend. I could not enter the Masjid that day. However, I participated in Friday prayer at a Masjid in Davis, where the Imam began with a speech on topics from morality to environmental issues, emphasizing how mosque members should behave in their daily lives. For example, the Imam discussed environmental issues and offered suggestions for prayers on what to do in their lives. After his speech, he started the prayer, and I left the Masjid. The Masjid in Sacramento lacked enough capacity to host such a large crowd. As a result, the Friday prayer was held multiple times. The first group of Afghans had already prayed with the Imam. It was the second group's turn next, followed by the third group. In this way, the Masjid tried to accommodate as many people as possible.

Baddar introduced me to another Afghan man dressed like me in pants and a T-shirt. He asked me to wait while he prayed. I said, "Sure." The Masjid had a patio with several benches, so I went there and sat on one. Soon, some Afghan men arrived and chose to sit on the grass rather than the benches. While looking around, a table in front of the Masjid's door caught my attention. It resembled a stand where several Afghan men served food and drinks to community members after leaving the Masjid. Later, the men sitting on the ground began to pray upon

hearing the Imam's voice. They bowed and touched their foreheads to the ground during the prayer. After finishing, they remained sitting on the ground. Occasionally, I made eye contact with them, as I appeared foreign to them and was not participating in the prayer. Eventually, we started talking in English. I told them I was from Türkiye. One of them then encouraged me to go to the stand where food and drinks were being distributed for free to get something to eat and drink. I got some bread, halva (a candy dessert), and water. Afterward, I returned to my bench and continued sitting. I thanked them for suggesting I get the food. Then, I waited for the Afghan interviewee.

These collective relations I observed at Ebu Hanife masjid constitute an important element of the Afghan community. The Masjid not only provides an environment for Afghan individuals to pray. It also serves as a place to gather for interaction and sharing food, demonstrating hospitality. Additionally, the Masjid environment gives these Afghan refugee men a sense of community belonging. Therefore, the presence of the Afghan community in the greater Sacramento area constitutes another factor in why Afghan refugees resettle in this region. The community plays a vital role in adapting to its new environment, from available amenities such as masjids for worship and Afghan stores selling Afghan food, to psychological support from community members. Nasib, 32 years old and married, explained the importance of the community in his decision to resettle in the greater Sacramento area as follows:

> There is a big community of Afghan people here. So we have, the Afghans have this habit that we are not living without our community. This is a kind of collective community. Even in Afghanistan, we are having a collective family living like it's totally different here because, and here I'm seeing that the people are living alone, even away, away from their families, their parents, like mom, dad. But since, like, till that time I moved from Afghanistan, I was living with my mom, with my dad, but with the whole family, with my brother, my sister. So the second reason was the Afghan community in Sacramento.

Thus, for Nasib, the Afghan community was like family, and he even compared this with members of the host society to emphasize his relocation to Sacramento.

Like Nasib, Asmaan, 31 years old and married, decided to live in Sacramento thanks to the Afghan community. Yet their experiences differed from those of Nasib, as Asmaan and her family first resettled in Texas, with the impression of a more affordable cost of living, meaning that rents were more affordable than in California, and there were more job opportunities. However, over time, Asmaan and her husband found that Texas was not an ideal place to live due to the lack of an Afghan community. She said, "In Texas, there were no Afghans around us. It was difficult for us to find shops and grocery stores. We did not have anyone there to show us the grocery stores." Then, Asmaan and her husband decided to move to the greater Sacramento area, which hosted an Afghan community with Afghan stores and restaurants. Thanks to the community, they could access the Afghan food, job, and housing markets. She remarked, "In Sacramento, there were a lot of Afghans. They helped us. You know they were familiar with the area. We found where we could eat here. My husband applied for a job and got it. And he found an apartment." Thus, Asmaan's experiences indicate that the presence of the Afghan community was crucial to adapting to their new environment in the United States.

More specifically, Zakariya, a 30-year-old married man, emphasized the role of the Afghan community in helping his wife not to face mental health issues. He told me how this played a key role in their resettlement in Sacramento. He explained:

> I picked Sacramento because I heard many stories about other Afghans. They went to different states with no Afghan community. They were the only family back in there. So, their wives got depressed, and they got sick from being under a lot of stress. There was one woman in one of the states who died because of depression. So, I was worried about my wife because we wanted to be in a community where there were a lot of Afghans for support and stuff. So now that we're here, we live in a complex where many Afghan families live. Now she's so happy living there. She does not feel she's in another country because all the Afghans are around.

Overall, this section focused on how the Afghan community influenced the Afghan people's decision to resettle in Sacramento and their beliefs in the community that would help them adapt to their new lives in the United States.

3.2.1.3 Favorable Economic, Social, Cultural, and Weather Conditions

In previous sections, I argued that the greater Sacramento area attracted Afghan refugees due to their social networks and the presence of the Afghan community. Afghan refugees identified additional factors influencing their choice of Sacramento, which I categorized as economic conditions, including affordable living costs such as housing and job opportunities, as well as social amenities like educational resources, cultural diversity, and pleasant climate.

From an economic perspective, Afghan refugees emphasized that the Sacramento area was more affordable, particularly with lower rents. Additionally, it offered numerous job opportunities. Muzafar, 34 years old and married, resettled in Los Angeles rather than Sacramento because one of his American colleagues owned a mortgaged house. His American colleague lived in Afghanistan when Muzafar migrated to the United States in 2014, allowing Muzafar to live in his house, with the condition that he would pay his mortgage. Muzafar accepted the offer, but over time, he observed that Los Angeles was an expensive city. He had a friend living in Sacramento. His friend suggested that Muzafar move there due to the more affordable housing market (FitzGerald 2022). Additionally, Muzafar's friend, who was working at Apple, mentioned a job opportunity at the same company in Sacramento (Phillips and Massey 2000; Waldinger and Lichter 2003). He explained:

> For some reason, in 2014 or 2015, the job market in the US was very slow. Finding a job, no matter how hard you tried or how qualified you were, was impossible. There were no available jobs as the demand was low compared to the number of job seekers. Later, I had another friend living in Sacramento who worked for Apple, which was hiring. Consequently, I relocated from Los Angeles to Sacramento in 2015.

Thus, economically speaking, Sacramento offered more affordable housing and job opportunities, provided especially by Apple, where some other Afghans also worked. These factors affected Muzafar's decision to move to Sacramento.

Like Muzafar, Ebrahim, 42 years old and married, emphasized favorable economic conditions in California. However, he also paid particular attention to cultural diversity, which would help him experience a smooth and comfortable resettlement. He articulated, "I haven't been to the US before, and I was talking to my American friends, which state should I pick to go to lots of them, because of the cultural differences we have. And because California so much is a diversified, rich state. I mean, I was I was told to go to other states too, but California was rated the highest." Specifically, Ebrahim emphasized the discrimination that Muslim people experience in other states. He remarked, "We heard about discrimination in other states. People might not like the Muslim community. I do not mean this does not happen in California, but people are kind and nice. They show love, respect, and affection. That's why we picked California." Overall, due to a belief that California is a diverse state and would embrace Muslims, Ebrahim resettled in California.

Access to social facilities, including educational opportunities, and California's favorable climate are other factors that attracted Afghan refugees. Hamza, 35 years old and married, expressed, "California offers numerous educational opportunities for those looking to continue their education. Women have many options and can easily attend college to further their studies." Regarding favorable climate conditions, Ebrahim said, "The weather is pleasing. There's no winter here. I have allergies. That's why we chose California." This also applies to some other Afghans who had relevant health issues, which affected their decisions to live in California.

Overall, this section focused on favorable economic, social, cultural, and climate conditions, which played a significant role in Afghan refugees' resettlement in Sacramento, California.

3.2.2 Resettlement Experiences of Afghan Refugees

3.2.2.1 Livelihoods

Regardless of whether Afghan refugees arrived through the SIV program or through the USRAP, they have benefited equally from federal assistance. The 1980 Refugee Act established this assistance to incoming refugees to the United States through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, supporting refugees and asylees through various forms of assistance, including cash aid, access to social welfare benefits like food stamps, medical evaluations, healthcare assistance, and employment support (Waters and Gerstein Pineau 2016). Resettlement agencies are intermediary institutions that assist incoming Afghans in accessing resources, such as registering for Social Security numbers, Medicare, and food stamps, as well as accessing the housing market. For example, Rustam, who migrated to the United States in 2018, expressed:

> An International Rescue Committee (IRC) representative met me at the airport, but I had many other friends who came to greet me. This IRC representative managed all documentation, including assisting me in obtaining my Social Security number, green card, and benefits. We worked with her for 90 days. She took us to our medical appointments and any other necessary government offices.

Most importantly, agencies support newcomers by providing "Welcome Money" for each family member. However, this financial aid lasts only for the first three months because the U.S. social service system aims for self-sufficiency (Gowayed 2022b). Thus, newcomers are expected to enter the labor market quickly to avoid relying on federal assistance. Agencies use this money for deposits, rent, and household purchases. While some Afghan refugees found this financial support adequate, others deemed it inadequate. For example, Nasib, a 32-year-old married father of three, said, "For me, that was enough. It was good. I could set my life."

In contrast, other Afghans, like Nouman, a 40-year-old married father, found it lacking. He commented, “Not a lot. I believe it was a thousand dollars, which just wasn’t enough. Come on, man, this is California.” A key point is that the “Welcome Money” increases according to the number of individuals in the family. Therefore, married Afghan refugees with multiple children receive a larger sum of “Welcome Money,” helping them start their new lives.

One major issue highlighted by my data concerning the “Welcome Money” is the complaints from some Afghans about how their agencies managed it. This arose from a “top-down approach” by agencies that failed to meet their actual needs. The agencies used the welcome money to purchase unnecessary or non-urgent items. Andam, 39 and married, expressed dissatisfaction with how his agency handled his welcome money, explaining:

> When I arrived here, I instructed them not to spend my money. That's my welcome money, which was federal funds. However, whenever they made a purchase, they used our welcome money. I asked them if they could give it to me in cash because we didn’t like their choices. For instance, they bought one or two car seats for $260, but I could find them for $60 or $70. I told them that my wife and I would buy items we prefer with better quality.

Thus, Andam disliked the way his agency spent his welcome money. As a result, he stopped communicating with his case manager. However, subsequently, his agency provided him with all of their welcome money. Like Andam, Amir, who is 30 years old, married, and migrated from Türkiye through the USRAP, expressed negative sentiments about his agency, which did not pay attention to his needs. He explained:

> I talked to my case manager. I told him that whatever money you spent from that welcome money, that’s enough. Why don’t you give us the rest of the money in cash or a check so I can buy a car? If I buy a car, I can find a job. Instead of buying me a couch, which would not do anything for me, I said, “Give me money.” He was like, “No, we can’t do that.” Then, I talked to my case manager through a Turkish translator. I said, “I don’t need anything here. We were trying to buy a car. We came to America with less than a thousand dollars. We cannot buy a car with a thousand dollars, so if there is money left from the welcome money, give it to us. We didn’t need any other home equipment, etc.” At that time, they gave us $1,700 from $5,500. We had a little bit of money from Turkey. We put it together and bought our first car.

The other financial assistance that incoming Afghan refugees received was monthly cash aid from the federal government. Afghan individuals used this money to cover the cost of living, especially rent, but it was insufficient. Ahmet explained, “The government paid me $800, but my house rent was around $960. The other expenses, including car insurance, gas, and electricity, were over 200 dollars. Therefore, I needed a job immediately to meet my expenses.” Similarly, Hamza addressed the insufficiency of the monthly cash aid. He received $1,200 in cash from the government, but his rent was $1,400. Thus, he explained how this affected their lives as follows: “I had many other expenses. If you have kids, expenses are even higher. That's why initially, we faced some financial problems. There are lots of refugees who face mental illness, which is due to high expenses, and the government pays them less.”

Additionally, a group of Afghan refugees stated that their resettlement agencies provided them with donated household items, such as sofas. Nasib said, “My agency gave me home stuff like the beds for my kids, a sofa, and some cooking materials. They were not new. They were secondhand. I didn’t pay for them even a penny.” Esin, 33 and married, said, “We also got some donations like a sofa and kitchen supplies, including plates, spoons, and kettles.” Thus, these donated items, some of which Afghans took from their agencies, helped them cope with the economic challenges they faced during resettlement, since they did not have to pay for them.

Overall, this section examined the federal assistance incoming Afghan refugees received through resettlement agencies and the issues they experienced.

3.2.2.2 Transportation Issues and Car Ownership

In the previous section, Amir emphasized that he needed a car to find a job but lacked sufficient funds to buy one, prompting him to request his welcome money from his agency.

Eventually, he managed to receive his remaining cash and bought a car. He stated, “Places are often too far away in Sacramento, so distance matters. For instance, my first job was twenty miles from my home. I had no way to get there on time using public transit.” Afghan refugees often faced a similar issue to Amir upon relocating to Sacramento, where the transportation system is underdeveloped. Newcomers view car ownership as essential for commuting to their jobs or grocery stores. Hamza shared:

> It was quite hard for me at the beginning. Many friends here called me every day, offering to help. They took me to the market. However, I couldn’t call them every day because they were busy with their families and jobs. My family and I walked to a supermarket for over 30 or 40 minutes to buy groceries in the hot weather. Then, I applied for a driver's license and obtained it. After that, I bought my car, which solved about 60 to 70 percent of my problems.

Thus, Hamza emphasized how buying a car solved most of his problems, including commuting to grocery stores in the summer.

Akbar was not as fortunate as Amir and Hamza; he was involved in an accident while learning to drive his friend’s car. Later, he bought his first car, which was an old one that caused problems. He explained:

> I didn’t know how to drive in Afghanistan. I learned in the United States. However, on my first day of training with one of my friends, I had an accident by hitting a wall. This accident cost me around $3,000. All of my welcome money went towards that. Then, I had another accident. That was a tough time because we didn't have enough money to buy a new car. We had to buy used cars, which were problematic almost every day. We spent a lot of money on old cars in the first two years. I was exhausted from going to the mechanics here. It's super expensive. As soon as I got a job, I bought a brand-new car.

Thus, Akbar addressed how these car accidents resulted in financial issues for him, since he had to use his welcome money to repair his friend’s car.

Overall, this section analyzed transportation issues that Afghan people faced in Sacramento and the importance of having a car in finding a job or commuting around town.

3.2.2.3 Housing Insecurity

Housing was a central issue Afghan refugees encountered during their resettlement. Latifa, 29 years old and married, experienced the housing problem deeply. She explained:

> The housing was such a big problem for us that we have never forgotten it. Before you come here, everything should be arranged for you. You come here, and they find the house. They at least meet primary needs like kitchen stuff, carpets, and something to sleep on, like blankets. These are important needs for you, and they will help you have them. They will pick you up from the airport and take you to your house, apartment, or somewhere. But, in our case, it did not happen like that. When we arrived, they did not find an apartment for us, and housing was a big problem in Sacramento. They said, "You could go to your friend's house." We said yes, but he was not our friend. He was just a colleague. My colleague's family was so nice and gave us their contact number. But we should not bother them. My agency said no. They are nice. They would help you. I said no. We wouldn't be comfortable there. They said no. They would be happy to have you, so they pushed us. They were persuading us. We stayed three nights there. We, including my kids, were unhappy. It was not a good idea to live in their place. And on the third day, they said Could you please go somewhere to stay? He was nice and said we could live in a hotel. Ooh, I thought, yeah, this is a good option. I called our case worker and said we do not have a house. Please put us in a hotel. They said okay. Yes, I pray to God they found a hotel because all the hotels were just busy. We lived in the hotel for more than a month. Then, our agency found an apartment in a terrible neighborhood. They said we had only this option. Do you want to go there? That's it. Okay, what should we do then? We moved there, but were trying to get out of that house because it was not a safe place to live. There were no facilities there.

The story Latifa has told so far is about how it was hard for them to find an apartment. They finally found one, but they were not happy with it because it lacked any facilities. Thus, they decided to move to a different apartment, but this time, they faced some other challenges. She continued:

> When you rent a house, they ask about your credit score. Oh my God. How should I find a credit score in one month? You know. They are saying that you have a job, so I am just here as an immigrant, so how can I have a job? I'm not going to buy that apartment. I am just going to rent it. We went to all the apartments with my friend in Sacramento. We did online checking, everything. No one accepted us because all the apartment owners said there was no availability. They just asked whether we had a credit or a job, like an income, and if they had available apartments. Three or four months later, in January, our caseworker finally found the house like a low-income house. We said yes. But they rejected our application. They said your income is high now because my husband got a job. Can you imagine? Finally, we got this apartment via an American friend I made here who became the cosigner. This neighborhood is safe and a better place.

Thus, Latifa emphasized challenges, such as a lack of a credit score to rent an apartment during this process. Ali experienced similar issues, sharing:

> At that time, I did not have any income. I did not have a job. It was hard for me to get housing. The assistance from the DHA and cash aid was not enough. Most of the housing requirements required a double income to qualify to rent a place. My income did not double the rent. I lived in my sister's house for three weeks. Then, I rented an apartment in the same complex where my sister and my brother-in-law have been living. My brother-in-law signed as a co-signer, so he sponsored me.

Rustam also experienced similar issues, including a lack of a credit score and a job when renting an apartment. Thus, he asked his resettlement agency to cosign, but they told him they would not cosign for their clients. Meanwhile, a cosigner is the person who pays the rent if the renter does not. He said, "It's a headache because it can be tough for someone coming to the US from a different culture, especially if they don't know the language." During this process, he stayed at his sister-in-law's house for about a month. Then, his friend cosigned for him and managed to rent an apartment (FitzGerald 2022). However, this time, he rented it in a very pricey location. He shared:

> It was a luxury apartment. We paid about $2,000 monthly. I didn't even receive my welcome money because all of it went toward rent and deposit. I had to ask my family to send me money, and they sent around $15,000 from Afghanistan. We had a couple of cars in Afghanistan, which they sold. Then we used that money to pay a year's rent for that place. After securing the apartment, I immediately began looking for a job.

Not all Afghans experience issues in renting an apartment. For example, Esin did not face any issues regarding this, and she explained it, referring to the number of refugee agencies receiving:

> Back then, it was easier to find a place because there weren't many refugees. Today, agencies receive five or ten families, maybe in a day, so housing is the most complicated problem for everybody coming here. There are no available apartments. If there is one available, there are many conditions that you must have income, or your income must be three times higher than the rent. If the family members do not work and have no savings for deposits, they can't rent an apartment. This is a very complicated thing today.

Thus, at times, agencies would have more cases than they could handle, making their work more difficult. Moreover, whether incoming Afghan refugees received sufficient support from their agencies depended on which agency they worked with during their resettlement. Meanwhile, during my interviews, the greater Sacramento area hosted five resettlement agencies: the International Rescue Committee, Lao Family Community Development, Opening Doors, Sacramento Food Bank and Family Services, and World Relief.

Overall, this section explored the challenges a group of Afghan refugees faced in renting homes because they lacked credit scores and sufficient income to meet the typical requirement to double or triple the rent. The lack of these requirements forced newcomers to find a cosigner to rent an apartment, as resettlement agencies did not serve as cosigners. Therefore, Afghan refugees relied on their social networks and community to rent an apartment.

3.3 The Context of Türkiye:

3.3.1 Dynamics Behind Migration of Afghan Refugees to Türkiye

Türkiye does not grant a visa like the SIV granted by the United States to Afghan refugees, nor does it implement the USRAP resettlement program as a receiving country. Thus, this raises questions about why Afghan refugees migrate to Türkiye and how this migration occurs, with a need for empirical evidence. Based on this dissertation research, I categorized the dynamics behind their migration to Türkiye into three central themes: educational reasons, cultural aspects, and a transit country between Afghanistan and Europe. These categories are distinct but may also overlap.

Education is a major reason Afghan refugees migrate to Türkiye. A group of people relocated for a university education. I interviewed several Afghan refugees in Istanbul who have been studying for a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree. Bahadur, 26 years old and single, studied

civil engineering and worked on various projects in a private company for three years. He legally moved to Türkiye in 2020 to pursue a master's degree. He said, "I decided to get a master's and then a PhD. Türkiye was a great option because civil engineering was highly advanced scientifically." At the time of the interview, he was doing his master's in engineering. However, not everybody was as fortunate as Bahadur in pursuing a university education. Zaahir, 25 years old and married, had been studying the English and Uzbek languages program in Afghanistan for two years. However, he did not complete it and wanted to continue his education in Türkiye to get a better education. Since his brothers have been living and working in Türkiye, he thought that they would cover his expenses. He shared how his dream of pursuing a university education in Türkiye failed: "After relocating to Türkiye in 2018, I went to Yalova University to learn Turkish. Then, I took the university exam, but couldn't get into university here because, depending on the department, the departments I chose did not match the scores in universities in Afghanistan." Like Zaahir, Ishaq, 35 years old and single, could not pursue a university education in Türkiye because of a lack of financial support. He explained:

> I finished high school in Afghanistan. Then, I thought that if I moved to Türkiye, I could study at a university. Studying here would be very good for Afghans in Europe. I came here and saw that the state does not give us aid because we are single. Then, I had to work. If I go to university, employers don't give me an hour off. They want you to work from morning to evening. If we don't work, there is no money. You know that rents are 800, 700, or 1000 TL. There is electricity, water, and clothes. If you go to school, there is a school fee. Because of these, I could not continue my education.

Afghan adults do not only migrate to Türkiye for a university education; some Afghan refugees see it as an opportunity for their children to continue their education. Ismail, who is 47 years old, married and has three daughters aged 12, 12, and 8, contacted his brother living in Türkiye to inquire about his children's education. He stated, "I asked my brother about the education system here and whether children could attend school. He told me yes; everyone could

receive an education here." Similarly, Barat, 35 years old, migrated to Türkiye after living in Iran for some time, seeking better educational opportunities for his children, who were 3, 6, and 9 years old. He said, "It was difficult for my children to attend school in Iran. Life was harsh there. I would do anything to help my children get an education. That's why I came to Türkiye."

Cultural dynamics also play a significant role in migrating to Türkiye. By culture, I refer to Turkishness, which includes a shared descent and the Islamic religion; some Afghans view Türkiye as a Muslim country. Afghan refugees from Uzbek backgrounds highlight their Turkish identity by stating that they are of Turkish descent and speak the same language, which is Uzbek, a Turkic language. Nadir, a 27-year-old single Uzbek Afghan who lived in Iran for six months before deciding to migrate to Türkiye in 2022, crossed the Iranian and Turkish border without inspection due to hate speech directed at Afghan people in Iran. He remarked:

> While in Afghanistan, we believed that Türkiye stood by everyone oppressed and protected them. I thought, instead of going to a country to beg and be under their control, why shouldn't I go to a country with Turkish ancestry? I believed I should be under Türkiye's protection. Thus, given the dire situation in Afghanistan, I see Türkiye as the Turkish homeland. After all, I am an Uzbek Turk.

Thus, Nadir emphasized his Turkish identity as a reason to migrate to Türkiye. Guldasta, a 55-year-old married Uzbek Afghan woman who fled to Pakistan and lived there for 27 years, decided to leave for Türkiye due to a bombing attack in 2007. She emphasized both her Turkish/Turkic and religious identities:

> We lived in Pakistan, but there is no such thing as residency. In other words, Pakistan never grants citizenship. Therefore, we migrated to Türkiye, which has the same culture. We share the same religion and speak the same language. We believed Turkish people were like our brothers and Türkiye was our home. We spent a long time in Pakistan and feel we wasted those years. I wish we had come to Türkiye earlier because they accepted and embraced us.

Ismail, a Hazara Afghan, highlighted similar cultural aspects, particularly religion and marriage. He expressed, “Turkish people and we have many similarities. We share a lot in common. One of those is Islam. This country is a Muslim one.”

These educational and cultural dynamics that Afghan refugees mentioned in migrating to Türkiye are also related to the Afghan-origin communities established in Türkiye, which supported and facilitated their migration. However, Afghan refugees also migrate to Türkiye, viewing it as a transit country to Europe and the United States or as an opportunity to be resettled in a third country by the UNHCR. For example, Amir, an Afghan man who migrated to Türkiye in 2011, intended to migrate to Iran but then realized there was no way to travel from Iran to the United States. He later thought about migrating to Syria, but there was a civil war in Syria. Finally, he decided to migrate to Türkiye, saying, “Türkiye was a bridge for refugees to travel to other countries. We thought it would be better to move to Türkiye because some friends had moved here, and they crossed the border and went to Europe.” I should note that this migration from Türkiye to Europe emerges “illegally” as refugees cross the Turkish-Greek border to Europe without inspection, or they can go to Europe via the sea between Türkiye and Greece. However, Amir and his family lacked the economic means to migrate to Europe because he was not the only person, meaning he had his mom and brother. Thus, the only option for them was to stay in Türkiye. Eventually, they were resettled in the United States by the USRAP in 2013.

Additionally, I interviewed a group of Afghan people who migrated to the United States as SIVs, as they worked with the US Army or companies in Afghanistan. These Afghans believed that processing their SIV in Türkiye would be easier. For example, Arman, who was 65 years old, married, and worked as a security officer at an American firm in Afghanistan. He relocated to Türkiye in 2019 on a visa for people with health issues. He expressed, “We came here because

it would be faster and easier to receive the US visa from here." I met an Afghan man in Istanbul who worked with the United States in Afghanistan. He was resettled in the United States as an SIV holder. I spoke with him by phone after moving to the United States (however, I did not have a chance to interview him).

Apart from migration to Europe without inspection and to the United States through the SIV program, third-country resettlement via UNHCR makes up another reason Afghan refugees migrate to Türkiye. Mahmoud, 23 and engaged, migrated to Iran, which granted a three-month temporary visa. This means he had to go back to Afghanistan after his visa expired. He explained:

> I asked people and inquired about UNHCR. If there is one in a country, you explain your situation. They will give you at least temporary protection. Then, they will try to resettle you in a third country, resulting in a more permanent solution. Since there was no UNHCR in Iran and no such opportunity for resettlement, I had to leave Iran. I came to Türkiye.

Thus, for Mahmoud, the presence of the UNHCR in Türkiye played a key role in migrating to this country to be resettled in a third country.

Overall, this section examined the dynamics behind the migration of Afghans to Türkiye, focusing on educational and cultural aspects, as well as its role as a bridge to Europe without inspection, and the United States as an SIV holder, and UNHCR resettlement in a third country.

3.3.2 How does the Migration of Afghan Refugees to Türkiye Happen?

The migration from Afghanistan to Türkiye often occurs through Iran, with the help of smugglers who charge hundreds or thousands of dollars to Afghan refugees, depending on the number of people in the family. Afghan people are forced to use this route despite its expense, the hours or days it takes, and the hardships, including safety risks, because Turkish visas are harder to obtain and/or costly. During the journey, Afghan refugees use various modes of

transportation, such as cars and minibuses, and at times they walk or use animals because of the mountainous terrain. Ishaq explained the process of his migration as follows:

> Ishaq: The Turkish visa fee was very high there. At that time, my situation was not good financially. I couldn't afford it. So, I came 'Kaçak ('illegally').' I first went to Pakistan, then from Pakistan to Iran, and later from Iran to Türkiye.
> Cetin: How long did it take?
> Ishaq: Nineteen days. For some people, it is a month, while for others, it is three months.
> Cetin: Did you walk?
> Ishaq: Yes, we walked. We started our journey in the morning adhan (the Islamic call to prayer). We arrived in Iran around 8 or 9 in the evening. We walked. We used a truck. We got into the ambulance. We took a taxi. We came at night with the cows. Therefore, we took whatever we had. We encountered villagers. I mean, we had a lot of trouble until we came here.
> Cetin: How much money did you spend on average on smugglers?
> Ishaq: It starts from $800 to $1500. I paid $1200 myself.

Thus, Ishaq used the Afghanistan-Pakistan-Iran route to migrate to Türkiye. During the journey, he used different modes of transportation and experienced significant challenges.

Not all Afghan refugees are directly migrating to Türkiye. Some Afghans live in Iran for a specific period and then migrate to Türkiye. Mahmoud, who lived in Iran for about three months, migrated to Türkiye with his mom and cousin. He explained:

> I inquired about the legal ways to come to Türkiye, but they did not give us a visa. Then, there was only one way left: the 'Kaçak (illegal)' way. We talked to a few smugglers in Iran and paid them approximately $1.000.
> Cetin: Whom did you come with?
> Mahmoud: With my family, like my mother and my brother's son. We faced great difficulty on the way. Smugglers brought us in different ways. We walked for about ten hours. We crossed the border by walking. This is how we entered Türkiye.

Thus, Mahmoud emphasized that he was unable to obtain a Turkish visa in Iran, so his family also migrated to Türkiye with the help of smugglers, whom they paid for each family member.

As Ishaq and Mahmoud addressed, Afghan refugees face many hardships during the journey. Some of these hardships are due to the lack of physical safety, including death risks, kidnapping, and rape/harassment. Other adversities stem from the inability to access fundamental needs:

food, water, and shelter. Additionally, transportation issues and financial pressures, including being asked for more money by smugglers, were among other hardships they experienced. For example, Diyar, 22 years old and married, explained the dangers during the journey in these words:

> There are many difficulties on the way. There might be an accident or a theft incident. And there are hundreds of people. Thank God, if you come across other families on the road and come together, you will not have many problems. But if you come alone or if a husband and wife come, it is a big problem because smugglers also do many bad things and cause disturbances on the road. There may be different situations. For example, you carry your food in your backpack, but it ends halfway through—no water, no food, and no communication of any kind. You stay in the mountains at night. Sometimes, for example, when you cross the border, you see hundreds of people. Suddenly, the smuggler calls out, "Come on, run. You will run for 10 minutes from here." If people can't cross the border, they remain. Those who are injured or killed stay there. No one has the chance or mercy to help those remaining and injured. There is no such thing. Everyone is on their own.

Following this arduous journey, Afghan refugees enter eastern Türkiye through Van province, and they often do so without going through an inspection by Turkish officials. These Afghans lack Turkish visas; some do not have passports and can use fake passports if needed. Nadir explained:

> After Van province, there was a district called 'Tatvan.' Then, they threw us, 25 people, into a truck with textile machines for a 36-hour trip. There was no seat. We could not eat or drink. We did not make a sound or go outside. The people in the car were crying so much that they said it would be better if we died. The smugglers had told us that no matter what would happen, we would stay in the truck for 36 hours. How would these 36 hours pass? It was uncomfortable, and we could not sleep. We could not even go to the restroom. People were crying. There were also machines. We could not sit. People hug each other. Sometimes, the truck shook, and the irons of machines could sting us. 36 hours passed, like 36 years.

Thus, Nadir traveled in a truck for 36 hours without food and water, and they could not even go to the restroom in order not to be caught by the Turkish police. They then arrived in Gebze, a district near Istanbul province, at 2 am. He continued:

> We did not know where we would go because we had no friends waiting for us in Gebze. We've never heard of this district. We didn't know the language. I was the only person who could understand a few Turkish words because I was a Uzbek from Uzbekistan. Wherever I

> went, people were running after me. We were like sheep. Then, we saw two or three cars arrive. They weren't a police car. They were normal people. They were yelling at us and chasing us like sheep. We ran away. We waited until the morning by hiding outside.

After waiting in Gebze until morning, he somehow managed to contact his friends living in Istanbul. Then, they sent a taxi to take him.

Overall, this section explored Afghan refugees' journeys from Afghanistan to Türkiye, focusing on the challenges they encountered along the way.

3.3.3 The Asylum Regime and the Fundamental Rights of Asylum Seekers in Türkiye

Afghan refugees constitute one of the largest irregular migrant groups in Türkiye. While most Afghans flee the conflict in Afghanistan, they do not qualify for formal refugee status in Türkiye due to the country's geographical limitation under the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention, which restricts the granting of refugee status to migrants arriving from Europe (İçduygu and Karadağ, 2018: 490). Therefore, Afghan refugees are eligible for conditional refugee or subsidiary protection status as two types of IPS, with the expectation of resettlement in a third country mediated by the UNHCR (Spahl and Österle, 2019).

Afghans from non-European countries of origin qualify for conditional refugee or subsidiary protection status under IPS in Türkiye, based on articles 62 and 63 of the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP), which was established in April 2013 (Spahl and Österle, 2019). Turkish authorities established a conditional refugee status to differentiate the treatment of refugees from European countries from that of non-European nations, referencing the 1951 Convention on Refugees. The criteria for subsidiary protection status apply to individuals who do not qualify for refugee or conditional refugee status.

Determining the status of Afghan refugees is a lengthy and arduous process, comprising three main stages: registration, refugee status determination, and resettlement (Sarı and Dinçer, 2017).

Afghan refugees entering Türkiye must register with governorates on the date and the place of the status determination interview to be settled in satellite cities, which are economically weak, small, and rural cities in the country's interior rather than coastal areas, to prevent them from migrating to Europe “illegally” (Sarı and Dinçer 2017:65; Spahl and Österle 2019a). After the resettlement in the satellite city, Afghan refugees must register with the PDMM, which coordinates and monitors refugees’ activities. According to Article 71 of the LFIP, international protection applicants must reside in a satellite province and fulfill administrative obligations such as reporting to authorities (Güler 2020b; Karadağ and Sert 2023).

Until September 10th, 2018, the UNHCR could also register asylum seekers, determine their status, and resettle them within Türkiye. However, after this date, the UNHCR ended registration, status determination, and resettlement within Türkiye by rendering the PMM the sole authority. The UNHCR resettles Afghan refugees with conditional refugee status under IPS in a third country (UNHCR n.d.-a) (Registration and Refugee Status Determination “RSD” with UNHCR). However, this is another lengthy and uncertain process. The third country may reject applications (Sarı and Dinçer, 2017). If Afghan refugees acquire the right to resettle in a third country, they must obtain an “exit permit” from the Turkish authorities to leave the country (Sarı and Dinçer 2017). If Afghans do not qualify for resettlement, their IPS continues in Türkiye, and their rights, obligations, and access to assistance and services will not be affected (UNHCR n.d.-b) (Resettlement). Consequently, the Turkish state considers Afghan refugees to be temporary, and Afghans have no clear long-term prospects (Spahl and Österle, 2019).

Afghan refugees, as international protection applicants, receive a provisional identity certificate from the Turkish authorities and use it until the date of their interviews (LFIP: article 27) (Güler, 2020: 6). The Turkish authorities issue an International Protection Applicant Identity

Document, valid for six months, after the interview. This document, which can be extended, substitutes for a residence permit (LFIP: article 76/1 and 76/4) (Güler, 2020: 6). When IPS has been granted to Afghan refugees through conditional refugee or subsidiary protection statutes, the Turkish authorities issue an identity document, substituting for a residence permit again, with three years' validity (LFIP: article 83) (Güler 2020a:6; PMM n.d.). Identity cards are subject to a three-year renewal until the status of IPS holders is terminated or canceled (PMM n.d.) (International Protection "Documents").

As IPS applicants or conditional refugees, Afghan refugees become eligible for a work permit after six months following international protection application (LFIP: article 89/4a) (Güler, 2020: 8). Conditional refugee beneficiaries hold work permits for 1 to 3 years (International Labor Force Law 'ILFL': Article 10/1 and 10/2) (Güler, 2020: 8). IPS applicants and conditional refugees may apply for independent work permits to establish businesses or be exempted from seasonal agricultural or animal husbandry jobs (Refugee Rights Turkey n.d.). Work permits may be constrained for a certain time and within certain sectors, professions, and geographical areas (ILFL: article 12/3) (Güler, 2020: 8).

Additionally, employers must apply for a work permit from the Ministry of Labor by presenting information, including job descriptions, qualifications, and justifications for hiring Afghans rather than Turkish citizens. Employers must also employ five Turkish nationals for each non-citizen (Ertorer, 2021: 2580–81).

Türkiye provides all international protection applicants and beneficiaries, having a valid Turkish ID card, with access to public education (LFIP: article 22), public healthcare services, which became temporary in 2019 (LFIP 2013) (Asylum Information Database 2024), and public relief and assistance (LFIP: article 22) (Güler, 2020: 6).

Thus, this section explored the legal context for Afghan refugees in Türkiye and their rights and obligations.

3.3.4 The Process of Resettlement in Trabzon Province

Afghan refugees I interviewed had typically arrived in Türkiye before September 10th, 2018, and they went through the resettlement process with the UNHCR (in case they contacted the UNHCR, not the Turkish authorities) located in Ankara province, which had the right to resettle undocumented Afghan refugees in satellite provinces, opening to registration.

The PDMM in Trabzon does not provide data on the number of Afghan refugees with IPS. However, according to a 2021 study, the number of Afghan refugees registered with the PDMM is around 4,000 (Özgün 2021). Some Afghan refugees opted to be resettled in Trabzon thanks to their social networks and the Afghan community (Crisp 1999; FitzGerald and Arar 2018; Hein 1993; Koser 1997; Özgün 2021; Scalettaris 2007; Williams 2006). Barat was one Afghan man who arrived in Türkiye in 2018, crossing the Turkish-Iranian border without inspection. He traveled to Ankara to register with the UNHCR, which resettled him in Trabzon, owing to his friends and the head of a Hazara Afghan association. Below is the dialogue between him and me:

> Barat: I went to the UNHCR in Ankara to register. The UNHCR asked me which province I would like to go to. I said Trabzon.
> Cetin: You chose Trabzon, right?
> Barat: Yes. They told me about several provinces that were open for registration. Then, they asked me which province I would like to go to. I said Trabzon. I went to Trabzon then because I had several childhood friends from Afghanistan who worked here. Also, a specific Afghan man was working here (Barat refers to the head of the Afghanistan Hazaras Culture and Solidarity Association in Trabzon).

While staying in Trabzon to conduct my fieldwork, I met with the head of this Association multiple times, who helped facilitate my access to Afghan refugees. He invited me to a cultural event organized by his NGO to raise awareness about Afghan refugee women facing violence. Upon arriving at the municipality's conference room, I sat in the back to observe the attendees.

Guests, including Afghan refugees and PDMM officials, began entering the room. Some of these Afghan individuals were people I had interviewed before. For instance, Ismail, who came with his wife and children, greeted me and sat in front of me. Then, the head of the NGO and a PDMM officer made speeches. After the speeches, we watched a short video highlighting the conditions of Afghan refugee women in Türkiye and Afghanistan. Next, a group of Afghan refugees, along with Syrian and Iranian refugees, performed a play illustrating violence against women. Following this, the program concluded, and attendees exited the conference room.

Below is a picture from this event:



This anecdote I shared here, based on my observation, highlights the importance of the Afghan community in Trabzon, where Afghan refugees spend time together and interact with

one another. This Hazara Afghan organization not only organizes cultural events for incoming refugees but also supports community members with educational and legal services related to Türkiye.

Additionally, some other Afghan refugees were resettled in Trabzon by the UNHCR without being asked for their opinions. Mahmoud migrated from Iran to Türkiye without a visa in 2016. After entering Türkiye through Van, the smugglers gathered all refugees, including Mahmoud, in a house and bought a bus ticket for Istanbul. He explained his and his family's resettlement in Trabzon as follows:

> One student from our village studied with a scholarship at Yıldız Technical University in Istanbul. We contacted him and met him at a bus station. Of course, we didn't know the language or anything. We explained our situation. Then, he rented a house for us. We stayed there for about a month and a half. At that time, people were going to Europe. We pondered whether to go to Europe, which was better than Türkiye for refugee rights. Then we said let's not go. After research, I found the address of the UNHCR in Ankara. We traveled to Ankara to register with them. After that, we said, let's wait for the process. Later, UNHCR told us that we had to reside in Trabzon. After receiving the document, we went to Trabzon.

Although the UNHCR granted the IPS to Mahmoud and his family, resettling them in Trabzon, they did not undergo an official resettlement, like in the United States, since Türkiye does not grant refugee status to non-European people. Therefore, Afghan refugees depended on members of the Afghan community and their social networks to navigate their new lives, including renting and registering for the PDMM (FitzGerald 2022). Mahmood mentioned:

> When we came to Trabzon, we met the head of the Hazara Afghan Association. We're grateful that he helped us a lot at that time. He still helps refugees. We did not know the language when we arrived. We didn't know where or how to find the house. We didn't know how to register the PDMM. We didn't know anything about these kinds of issues. He helped us. He took us and registered us with the PDMM. He found a house for us.

Thus, Mahmoud received significant help from the Hazara Afghan Association in navigating his new environment in Trabzon. As another piece of evidence, Hikmatullah's grandson, in his early twenties, explained this process in those words:

> We came to Trabzon. Thank God, one or two Afghans were working at the bus station. They understood that we had just arrived. They hired a minibus. They sent us to the square. We walked from the square to the governor's office. They said to rent a house first and bring an invoice later. Then they would register us. However, we had no money, so how would we rent an apartment? We went to Ata Park and sat there for a while, like for three or four hours. It was Friday. Someone came and sat down on a chair next to the mosque. He looked at us. Later, he approached us and started talking. I studied a little Turkish before coming here. I learned very little. But I didn't understand that man at all. There was a child there. He was also Afghan. He migrated before us and knew Turkish. He came and translated it, saying: This man says I have a house, but it is very old. Then, the man continued, "If we want to stay there, we can stay. If we don't have money, that's fine." Having no other choice, we accepted his offer. We went to the house in Erdoğdu. The house looked like a hovel. Half of the bathroom had no walls because it had collapsed, but we had no choice. We stayed there. The landlord was a very good person. He helped us a lot. He cleaned the house up. There was no electricity, water, or anything, but we stayed. A week later, electricity and water were connected. He made the bill in my name or my mother's name. Then, we went to the governor's office there and registered ourselves.

Thus, Hikmatullah and his family relied on members of the Afghan community in Trabzon, who helped them rent their houses.

Overall, this section focused on how Afghan refugees resettled in Trabzon and how community dynamics and social networks helped them adapt to their new environments.

3.3.5 Afghan Refugees under Undocumented Status in Istanbul Province

Undocumented Afghan refugees reside in non-satellite provinces, such as Istanbul, across Türkiye, but unfortunately, there is no estimate for their numbers. Since Afghan refugees lack an IPS, they do not hold an identity document. Consequently, without an IPS, these individuals are vulnerable to deportation by Turkish authorities, and they do not have access to essential resources such as education and public health services. Nevertheless, Istanbul attracts Afghan refugees due to employment opportunities, the Afghan community, and social networks (Crisp 1999; FitzGerald and Arar 2018; Hein 1993; Koser 1997; Özgün 2021; Scalettaris 2007; Williams 2006). Nadir, who arrived in the Gebze district by truck, contacted his friends in

Istanbul to pick him up at the bus terminal. He was helpless and did not know what to do. He maintained:

> It's around 6 am. I called many people but couldn't reach them. Then, I had a friend in the Sarıgazi district, Istanbul. I reached him somehow. He sent a taxi and brought me. When I came, I was like a tree. I had lost so much weight along the way. I stayed at my friend's house in Sarıgazi for two days. Then, I talked to other acquaintances in the Zeytinburnu district, and one person had a textile business. I said I will work with you. He said okay. I started to work. On my first day, I stood on my feet for 12 hours, so I thought this job was not for me, and I couldn't work because I couldn't do it. Then I stayed at my friend's house for two months without leaving the house.

The experiences of Nadir indicate the importance of social networks in navigating his life, including housing support and access to employment (FitzGerald 2022; Phillips and Massey 2000; Waldinger and Lichter 2003). However, Nadir was later caught by a 'Bekçi (watchman)' while speaking with one of his friends outside in the evening and sent to a police station to be deported.[5]

Like Nadir, Faaiq followed a similar path from Van to Istanbul and ended his trip at a bus terminal. In fact, smugglers left them in Istanbul and told them to take care of themselves. Since they did not know anybody, they went to a police station to seek help. They were then detained in a detention center for a week and given an official document to reside in Aksaray province. However, they must first go to Ankara to register with UNHCR and then to Aksaray. At that time, they had only 1300 TL, so they did not have enough money for the trip. And people at the bus terminal would charge immigrants more. Thus, they stayed in Istanbul. He shared:

> We did not go there because we did not speak Turkish and were unsure if we could find a job. We settled in the Zeytinburnu district because of the Afghan community and many job opportunities. We met an Afghan man here and stayed in his place because he was not living there. There's food at the house. We gave our money to him for rent. Later, my children immediately found jobs in the textile or other industries. My wife also got a job.

[5] Fortunately, Nadir was not deported. The Turkish authorities resettled him in Bingöl province, and he was granted IPS. Then, he relocated to Istanbul and maintained his IPS. Normally, Afghan refugees are not granted IPS in Istanbul, a non-satellite province. However, a Turkish organization connected with the Turkish authorities helped Nadir to maintain his status.

This quote from Faaiq shows how the Afghan community helped them adapt to their lives in Istanbul.

As Nadir and Faaiq mentioned in the passages above, the Zeytinburnu district has a large Afghan community that attracts migrants who refer to it as a little Afghanistan. I experienced this during my visit to conduct field research in the district. Normally, the Zeytinburnu district was divided into two main areas by a train station. The seaward side of the district was gentrified, which hosted luxury restaurants, cafes, and hotels. The inner side of it had old buildings, which enabled Afghan refugees to live there.

On an unusually hot day in September 2022, I met an Iranian researcher who showed me around on my first visit to Zeytinburnu, where there were many Afghan restaurants. When we entered one of them for lunch, accompanied by Afghan music, I saw the restaurant cashier on my left and food displayed in a glass-enclosed area on my right side to attract customers. There were tables and chairs in front of us. We did not sit on the floor at the entrance. We headed to the first floor and sat at a table. The restaurant was not busy and smelled good.

Then, a female server wearing a headscarf came to our table to take our order, but I was unsure what to order since it was my first time eating Afghan food in an Afghan restaurant. I also struggled to communicate with the waitress because she did not speak Turkish. My Iranian friend began talking to her in Persian. Meanwhile, Afghanistan has two official languages: Pashto and Dari. Dari is quite similar to Persian, which is why my friend could communicate with her in Persian. Later, a male server arrived to take our order, and he spoke a little Turkish. While my Iranian friend conversed with the waiter in Persian, I spoke to him in Turkish.

Since it was my first time, I did not know what to order. Therefore, my friend helped me, and we ordered our food. We ordered a traditional Afghan pilaf with beef and a side salad. In fact,

we had some Afghan appetizers, including soup, which was free. Soon after, the female server brought the main food to our table, and we had our meal. Afterward, we went downstairs to pay the bill. My Iranian friend spoke to the cashier in Persian. When the cashier realized I didn't understand Persian, they halted speaking in Persian and explained the charges to me in broken Turkish.

After our meal, we began strolling through the Zeytinburnu district, home not only to numerous Afghan restaurants but also to Afghan supermarkets, shops, and NGOs. My Iranian friend guided me to the backstreets of Zeytinburnu, where clothing stores employed hundreds, if not thousands, of Afghan refugees, and some of these textile shops operated in basements beneath the apartments. As we walked through, we noticed the bustling activity, with sounds of machines and voices filling the air.

On another visit to the Zeytinburnu district in October 2022, I attended a community event organized by Uzbek Afghans. An Uzbek Afghan master's student invited me to this event, and he welcomed me at the entrance of an old wedding hall, warmly shaking my hand. We then headed downstairs to watch the event celebrating the anniversary of the Uzbek language, one of the Turkic languages among the Turkic countries. The wedding hall consisted of rows of chairs and a main stage. Most participants were men in the wedding salon. Female participants wore headscarves and sat separately from the men, but this segregation was not strict. I still saw female and male participants sitting together.

During this event, some Uzbek Afghans, including professors, made speeches about Uzbek culture and language in their native languages, so I did not understand much. Then, one of the participants and presenters, another Uzbek Afghan master's student whom I interviewed two weeks ago, gave his speech in Turkish. This student spoke to the audience about the oppression

of the Uzbek language in Afghanistan, highlighting a significant issue: the lack of educational opportunities in their native tongues. He noted that the Uzbek language had been recognized as an official language during certain historical periods. However, in the present day, it has been stripped of that status, as the Taliban government removed it from the Afghan constitution.

Additionally, these Uzbek Afghans mentioned the role of women in the family to the crowd within the context of language acquisition of Uzbek-origin kids in Afghanistan. Since they lack education in their native tongue in Afghanistan, the only way to teach language to kids is through their mothers. Of course, this language acquisition comes through oral culture in Afghanistan. They called this "çekirdekten yetişme (trained from the cradle)."

Following these speeches, two Uzbek-Afghan women in traditional Uzbek attire presented their conventional dances accompanied by Uzbek music. Their dresses featured different patterns and colors and covered their entire bodies. After these women got on the stage, some male participants reacted harshly because they did not like their dresses, so they left the salon and returned after the performance. Below is my picture from this event, wearing an Uzbek-Afghan traditional dress:



Overall, the Zeytinburnu district provides an ideal place and a haven for Afghan refugees seeking a sense of community and different opportunities, such as employment or access to the housing market.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter examined the legal context, including resettlement experiences, for Afghan refugees in the United States and Türkiye. In the United States, incoming Afghan refugees have legal protection through the SIV and the USRAP programs, allowing newcomers to secure a Green Card and a pathway to citizenship. However, in Türkiye, Afghan refugees lack legal protection, which does not provide them with a naturalization path since Türkiye restricts refugee

status to people from Europe. Thus, in Türkiye, Afghan refugees apply for IPS to obtain conditional refugee status, enabling them to resettle in a third country through UNHCR's resettlement program. Besides international protection applicants, Afghan refugees reside throughout Türkiye as undocumented migrants, exposing them to the risk of deportation by Turkish authorities and barring them from access to various resources, such as educational services, especially for minors. Nevertheless, Istanbul province attracts Afghan refugees primarily due to job opportunities, the presence of the Afghan community, and its role as a transit location.

Afghan refugees experience this legal context differently in the United States and Türkiye. In the United States, Afghan refugees participate in an official federal resettlement program established in 1980, administered through intermediary agencies that provide economic support, including "Welcome Money," and access to social resources, such as registration for Social Security, Medicare, food stamps, and cash aid. Thus, resettlement agencies play a significant role in helping them navigate their new lives. However, Afghan refugees have faced various challenges during resettlement, and one central issue has been difficulty accessing the housing market, as they have had trouble renting an apartment, which has been attributed to insufficient support from their agencies. Hence, they have relied on relatives, friends, or friends' friends to serve as cosigners for apartment rentals.

In Türkiye, Afghan refugees who hold an IPS do not undergo an official resettlement process. Afghan refugees who were resettled or opted to resettle in Trabzon province, a satellite province, relied on their Afghan community and social networks to adapt to their new environments, including renting apartments or registering with the PDMM. This situation also applies to those

residing in Istanbul province who depend on members of the Afghan community and their social networks.

The following chapter analyzes labor market conditions for Afghan refugees in the United States and Türkiye. It examines the hyper-precarity Afghan refugees face, focusing on multidimensional insecurities in both countries. In the United States, Afghan SIV holders experience a loss of class status and precarious conditions in the labor market. These conditions lead to a sense of deprivation that they express through disappointment. However, they can also manage this by finding better jobs and/or pursuing a college education, thanks to their legal status. In Türkiye, they face hyper-precarity due to difficulties obtaining work permits and labor market precarity, including unfree labor relations. Their insecure legal status in Türkiye has a wider precarization of their lives.

Chapter 4: Economic Insecurity: Hyper-Precarity

4.1 Introduction

Yonos, a 40-year-old Afghan man, is married and has six children. He studied Law and Political Science in Afghanistan. He then began his career as a liaison officer in 2001 and later became a regional security officer overseeing five northern Afghan provinces during the first parliamentary election in 2005. Later, he was employed by the IOM as a program assistant for disarmament, democratization, and integration of ex-combatants. Subsequently, he worked as a field research liaison officer for USAID on the Fundamental Education Support System for teachers. After this, he moved to Sudan, where he became a recovery and integration officer supporting refugee returns and the reintegration of internally displaced Sudanese people. He moved back to Afghanistan and began working as an aid officer for Save the Children International, followed by a program officer role for the World Food Programme. Later, he worked as a program and policy director in a Hungarian NGO. He was then employed in a USAID-funded project for regional agriculture development.

After a long professional career in national and international organizations, he established his local company in Afghanistan, where he supported small and medium-sized entrepreneurs. He was responsible for implementing various projects funded by organizations, such as USAID and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. He trained over 5000 potential entrepreneurs to generate business ideas and write their plans. More than 50% of these people established their businesses.

Like most Afghan refugees, Yonos lost his class status after relocating to the United States in November 2019, as he could not transfer his educational credentials and professional skills. He was employed in a technology company, Apple, below his qualifications. At this company, he repaired phones. When I asked him about why he started working at Apple, he replied: “I always

wanted to be on my feet, so I tried to start something immediately." He experienced economic precarity at this company, as he was employed on a one-year temporary contract and earned slightly more than the minimum wage. Because his position was temporary, he was not entitled to work-related benefits. Consequently, reflecting on his position at Apple, he expressed frustration, saying, "Going from a director or manager level to a casual level was challenging." I describe this as status frustration, as incoming Afghan refugees often state sentiments such as challenge, disappointment, and shock, due to the loss of class status and the need to secure employment under precarious conditions. However, Yonos told me that he had to start somewhere to pay his bills and that he had a large family. Subsequently, he found a better job as a peer-specialist administrator at an NGO in Sacramento. This job fits his education and professional background, as he has managed humanitarian projects. However, his role was still an underqualified position, given his previous experiences in Afghanistan and Sudan. This job was also temporary, meaning he likely had to find another job once the project ended.

This chapter focuses on hyper-precarity through the incorporation of Afghan refugees into the labor markets of the United States and Türkiye. It argues that Afghan refugees face hyper-precarity due to multidimensional insecurities that are shaped in distinct ways by asylum and refugee policies in these countries. In the United States, Afghan refugees experience hyper-precarity through the loss of their class status, including an inability to transfer their credentials and skills, and precariousness in the labor market. In Türkiye, they face hyper-precarity through their insecure legal status, obstacles in accessing work permits, and labor market conditions, including unfree labor relations.

The concept of precarity defines insecure labor conditions and relations (Bourdieu 1998). The literature on precarity has focused on labor conditions (Millar 2017) and addressed insecure,

low-wage, nonstandard, high-risk, and flexible employment that has emerged with the rise of neoliberal labor markets (Castel 2003; Fudge and Owens 2006; Kalleberg 2011; Vosko 2006). Guy Standing (2011, 2014) used the term precariat to describe a new social class with various characteristics, including employment insecurity and instability, and a lack of upward mobility. Individuals in the precariat lack an occupational identity and cannot use their educational qualifications in their jobs. Therefore, this situation forces them to seek employment beneath their qualifications, resulting in status frustration (2011, 2014).

To examine how refugees and asylum seekers experience precarity, the scholarship used the term hyper-precarity to explain how migration regimes and asylum policies shape access to fundamental rights, such as work permits, and asylum seekers and refugees face extreme labor market exploitation or the inability to access material or non-material resources due to the lack of rights (Ertorer 2021; Lewis and Waite 2015). For example, in Great Britain, asylum seekers and refugees face hyper-precarity due to multi-dimensional vulnerabilities, which include poverty, lack of rights, such as work permits, lower levels of education, language barriers, unrecognized education/work credentials, and limited access to decent jobs and welfare (Ertorer 2021; Lewis et al. 2015).

Additionally, hyper-precarity is linked to free or unfree labor relations experienced by asylum seekers and refugees, which concerns whether they can control their labor market conditions and avoid extreme economic exploitation (Cruz 2018; Davidson 2010; O'Neill 2022). They can experience exploitative practices in the unfree labor market, such as excessive working hours and the inability to receive their pay (Lewis and Waite 2015). Legal status or residence status, which determines the level of freedom in the labor market, can lead to broader precarization in the lives of asylum seekers and refugees (Ertorer 2021).

Drawing on this line of research, this study examines hyper-precarious conditions that multi-dimensional insecurities produce, focusing on experiences of Afghan refugees in the labor market in the United States and Türkiye. Afghan refugees in both countries face precarity, including temporary and flexible employment. However, insecure labor market conditions are not the only dimension that leads them to face precariousness. Access to work authorizations, recognition of educational and/or occupational credentials, employment opportunities aligned with their credentials, and engagement in free or unfree labor relations are other dimensions that can render Afghan refugees hyper-precarious in the United States and Türkiye. And, legal status may lead to broader precarization, especially in Türkiye, which does not grant refugee status to Afghans.

In the US context, incoming Afghan refugees face hyper-precarity as they lose their class status after migration. This means they cannot transfer their human capital, measured by years of education, credentials earned, and employment in the relevant field, and secure employment beneath their qualifications (Portes and Rumbaut 2014; Sanders and Nee 1996). Also, recognizing their educational and/or occupational credentials involves a rigorous process that may take a long time and fail. Moreover, jobs are often temporary and flexible, which do not offer benefits. They are based on the minimum wage and do not require specific skills. Since newcomers cannot transfer their credentials and skills and end up securing precarious jobs in the labor market, they express severe status frustration and deprivation, from feeling undervalued to experiencing disappointment. Thus, newcomers describe their economic conditions with a discourse "starting from zero or scratch." However, this study also highlights that Afghan refugees can cope with hyper-precarity by seeking better jobs in their fields of expertise, which are also financially stable. Additionally, they can pursue a college education to earn degrees and

enhance their skills for a more prosperous life. Ultimately, their legal status may enable them to grapple with hyper-precarity in the United States.

Afghan refugees in Türkiye experience hyper-precarity distinctively regardless of their undocumented and international protection statuses in Istanbul and Trabzon provinces. Multi-dimensional insecurities generate this hyper-precarity as Afghan refugees are legally insecure and face difficulties accessing work authorizations in Türkiye. Moreover, Afghan refugees face precarity in the labor market through employment without contracts, with a lack of benefits such as health insurance and a minimum wage. They can also engage in unfree labor relations due to the lack of control over their employment. They can earn less than minimum wage and work excessive hours. Employers can also withhold pay. Jobs may be irregular and unstable, including seasonal, such as in agriculture or construction (particularly for Afghan individuals residing in Trabzon) (Ertorer 2021; Karadag 2021; Şenses 2016c). Hyper-precarity significantly impacts the lives of Afghan refugees, who articulated this struggle through their inability to meet their expenses. They receive financial and food aid from the Turkish state and local Afghan NGOs to cope with precarity. However, my fieldwork also shows that only a group of Afghan refugees who live in Trabzon did not mention precarious conditions because they have established their businesses, mostly small shops, thanks to their IPS, enabling them to access independent work permits. Shop owners consider themselves economically insecure only due to the high cost of living in Türkiye, which also involves the high taxes they pay to the Turkish government.

The US section will begin to explore the loss of class status for Afghan refugees, followed by issues in recognizing their educational and/or professional credentials. Then, it will focus on the precarious labor market conditions experienced by newcomers. Later, it will examine the status of frustration and deprivation Afghan refugees face, followed by the idea of starting from zero.

Finally, it will examine their coping mechanisms in the face of hyper-precarity. The Türkiye section will begin with a debate on hyper-precarity, including unfree labor relations that Afghan refugees face. This section will then explore the meanings attributed to jobs and the effects of hyper-precarity on their lives. Later, the section will focus on the experiences of Afghan shop owners in Trabzon. Lastly, it will discuss coping mechanisms with precarity.

4.2 The US's Context

4.2.1 Loss of Class Status After Migration

Research shows that professional and skilled immigrants often suffer from de-skilling, underutilization of their skills, and non-recognition of their foreign credentials in Canada (Bauder 2003; Grant and Nadin 2007). Research also focused on the relationship between human capital and employment earnings among immigrants in Canada (Li and Li 2013; Reitz 2001). Drawing on this literature, this section argues that Afghan refugees lose their class status in the United States because they experience issues in transferring their human capital, including their credentials and skills, and a reduction in their responsibilities and power, as well as in their earnings.

Afghan refugees relocating to the United States often secure employment at a level below their credentials or qualifications. More specifically, newcomers, predominantly SIV holders, have highlighted challenges transferring their education, certifications, training, professional experiences, and skills, all significant aspects of their human capital (Lipson and Omidian 1997:116; Magagnini 2017, 2018; Rostami-Povey 2007:251). The SIV holders are frequently educated individuals with professional backgrounds in Afghanistan. Despite their skills and educational qualifications, they often end up securing employment for which they are

overqualified. Table 4 below shows Afghan refugees' educational attainments and occupations in Afghanistan and the United States:

Table 4: The Greater Sacramento Area

Name	Programs	Educational Attainment in Afghanistan	Educational Attainment in the United States	Occupation(s) in Afghanistan	Occupation(s) in the United States
Ayan	SIV	High school	Did not take any education	An interpreter→ Admin Assistant→Admin manager (within the same occupation)	Apple (fixing phones) → Lyft driver→Peer specialist administrator in an NGO
Andam	SIV	Bachelor (economics) Master's degree (political science)	Did not take any education	A team leader in World Bank project→ Export Expert in USAID	Lyft→Apple (trainer)→Car dealership→Peer specialist administrator in an NGO)
Yonos	SIV	Bachelor (law and political science)	Did not take any education	Laison officier in NGO and USAID→Integration Officer→Established his company	Apple (fixing phones)→ Peer specialist administrator in an NGO
Hamza	SIV	Bachelor (agricultural faculty)	Did not take any education	Monitoring and evaluations in the US and UN projects	Apple (assembler position)→Peer specialist administrator in an NGO
Latifa	SIV	Bachelor (medical school, nurse)	Did not take any education	Nurse in the US Embassy	Medical assistant
Hassan	SIV	Bachelor (psychology)	Did not take any education	Teacher	Production and inserting position
Ismail	SIV	Bachelor (computer science) but dropped out	Bachelor (mathematics)	Interpreter in a private American company	Admin position in a school in Sacramento
Esin	SIV	Bachelor (teacher credentials)	High school	Teacher	Teacher
Zakariya	SIV	Bachelor (literature)	Did not take any education	Guard→ A Guard Commander→Finance Officier in a US company	Apple (fixing phones)
Zahra	UNHCR (Türkiye)	High school	About to finishing high school	House wife (also in Türkiye)	Apple (fixing phones)
Muzafar	SIV	Bachelor (civil aviation institute)	Associate degree in computer information	Air traffic controller→An Interpret in the US's army	Apple→Walmart→Lyft→Computers technology in an NGO
Sumbul	Refugee (neither SIV or UNHCR)	Did not take any education (came to the US as a child)	Bachelor (business with emphasis in project management) and Associate degree in paralegal stuides and pharmacy technology	N/A (came to the US as a child)	Broker for insurance
Kamil	SIV	Bachelor (computer science)	Did not take any education	Computer programmer	Web programmer→ working at UC Davis
Ahmet	SIV	Bachelor (law and political science)	Did not take any education	IT personnel	Warehouse→Apple (fixing phones)→Uber
Anisa	SIV	Bachelor (law and political science)	Did not take any education	Admin assistant	Seeking a job (will probably apply to Apple)
Ali	SIV	Medicine	Associate degree in pre-health occupation	Doctor→Protocol assistant→The head of a private company	Phlebotomist
Asmaan	SIV (his husband was a SIV holder)	High school	ESL in college	Teacher (4 to 6 months)	Customer service but quit her job
Akbar	SIV	Bachelor (psychology but dropped)	Planning college	Translator	Refrigeration technician

Abbas	SIV	Bachelor (civil engineering)	Working on the exam for industry licence	Project engineer	Warehouse
Amir	UNHCR (Türkiye)	High school (Iran)	Associate degree of computer and maths	Volunteered and worked as a translator, restaurant, construction (in Türkiye)	Warehouse→Apple→ the IT technician
Musa	UNHCR (no information about the country)	High school	Bachelor (Biology. About to graduate)	No information (came to the US as a minor)	Cashier
Baddar	SIV	Bachelor (Law) but dropped out of university	Associate degree of criminal justice	An interpreter but as a mentor	Apple→Uber
Firouzeh	UNHCR (Türkiye)	High school (Türkiye)	Planning college	No information	Apple (cleaning phones)
Farzaad	SIV	Bachelor (English)	Planning on Master's rather than pursuing a MA degree	Office jobs	Assistant coach
Nouman	SIV	High school	Associate of medical assistant	Coordinator	An associate in Wallmart→ a driver for a delivery company→Uber
Omar	SIV	High school (only English classes in university)	Associate of Business Adminstration	Translator	Ramp agent→Apple technician→Uber
Yasin	SIV (his father)	No information (came to the US as a minor)	Associate degree of dentist	No information (came to the US as a minor)	Debug in Apple
Ebrahim	SIV	Master's on BA and Bachelor (Medicine)	Did not take any education	Team leader→Project management→Advisor to Minister	Management consulting
Sardar	SIV	Bachelor (English department)	Did not take any education	Translator→Operation Manager. Also worked as an academic counselor.	Technician in Apple (extra part-time jobs: Doordash, Amazon, and translator)
Rustam	SIV	Master's and bachelor (Political science and international relations)	Did not take any education (Planning Master's or PhD)	Interpreter and Recruiter→Chancellor	Apple (fixing phones)→ Translator→Trainer
Nasib	SIV	Master's (criminology) and Bachelor (language and literature)	Evaluation process	Entry-level→Analyst→ Quality Controller→Team Leader→Supervisior (within the same occupation and company)	Apple (warehouse leader and then auditing)
Yahya	SIV	No information	No information	Driver and security guard	A car mechanic
Abdullah	SIV	BA on IR. Two Master degrees on Int. Rel. and Bus. Adm.	Did not take any education	Program coordinator working with different Ministries. Making and selling carpets.	Security manager
Farid	SIV	High school	In high school	No information	Worker in a bakery
Idris	No information	No information	No information	No information	No information
Tariq	SIV	No information	No information	Administration	Doordash
Tahir	No information	No information	No information	No information	No information
Sami	No information	No information	No information	No information	No information

According to the table above, nineteen Afghans, SIV holders, held a BA degree. Two Afghans dropped out of the university. Five SIV holders held a high school degree (one of these persons

was a woman whose husband was an SIV holder). There is no information about the three SIV holders (one person arrived in the United States as a minor whose father was an SIV holder).

Besides this educational attainment, the table shows the occupations of Afghan refugees in Afghanistan and the United States to explore how the trajectory of their occupations has altered after migration. The table involves various jobs and/or positions for Afghan refugees in Afghanistan and the United States. The arrows in the table show the first and subsequent employment. Those SIV holders have middle-class, upper-middle, or upper-class backgrounds. The table indicates that SIV holders cannot maintain their class status. There are also exceptions, but this is not typical. For example, Kamil studied computer science and worked as a computer programmer in Afghanistan. After migrating to the United States, he worked as a web programmer in a company for six months and subsequently found a better job in the same field at a university. He remarked:

> Well, I told you my major was computer science, and my subjects were in English at the university in Afghanistan. My job for the American government in Afghanistan improved my English. Speaking English was not a problem when I came here. Also, the language of the computer is international. When you are a computer science major, you get a job everywhere in the world because it is a common language, so I did not face any problems with my diploma or anything. Nobody asked for my diploma or anything in my job. They just interviewed, and I passed it.

Thus, Kamil emphasized how his computer science diploma and professional experience helped him find a job in his field.

The table indicates that Afghan refugees with specific degrees, including Law, Political Science, International Relations, English, and Medicine, face the most difficulty transferring their degrees and skills to the United States. Rustam, a 39-year-old man, has an upper-middle-class or upper-class background. He studied International Relations and earned his MA in the same field in Afghanistan. After graduation, he worked as an interpreter for the American

military in Afghanistan. Later, he became a recruiter, bringing in individuals from other countries to join the Army. In 2012, he resigned and took a major step by founding a private university in Afghanistan, investing about $ 2 million. Additionally, he got involved in politics, working with Afghanistan's president and vice president. After migrating to the United States, Rustam worked at Apple repairing phones. He explained:

> I came in October and joined Apple on December 5th. That job did not add much to my background, not my educational background, not my experiences, but that was okay at that time because I wanted to cover all the bills, and I wanted to be, I mean, okay at the end of the day.

Thus, he emphasized how his role at Apple was unrelated to his credentials and experiences, but he needed to work to support his family financially. Subsequently, he worked as a translator at a resettlement agency in Sacramento. Following this, he transitioned to a teaching role at the agency, assisting incoming Afghan refugees to adapt to their new environments in the United States. This last job closely matched his qualifications, although he remains overqualified. He remarked:

> I have experience in management, such as managing a company and writing academic articles and books in the international relations field. I need a job that fits my skills. I had tens of employees and hundreds of students at my university in Afghanistan. I had daily meetings, managed budgets, and held discussions with high-ranking officials, from the president to municipal officials to ministers. So that's my field. I am unsure if I can find a similar job in the United States.

Therefore, he did not know he could find a job that fit his skills and credentials.

Doctor Ali's case also illustrates the loss of class status of Afghan refugees upon migrating to the United States. Ali, 43 years old and married, studied Medicine and worked as a doctor at a public hospital in an Afghan province, but was dissatisfied with his job due to the low salary. Then, he resigned from his medical position and returned to his home province, Kabul. Next, he worked as a protocol assessor at the US Embassy. Subsequently, he resigned from this job and

ran his business to engage in public health projects. Upon arrival in the United States, the urgent need for employment compelled him to downplay his medical degree, claiming to be a high school graduate to secure a job promptly. He said, “When people asked me about my Bachelor's, I did not say it was Medicine. I said I was a high school graduate to get the job. I needed a job. I did like this because they would not hire people with higher education.” Ali's adaptation to his new life in the United States reflects the common experience of Afghan refugees, with SIV holders striving to meet their family's needs and navigate the challenges of a different professional landscape. He took pragmatic steps to secure his family’s livelihoods. His journey involved volunteering for an NGO in Sacramento, where he later became a part-time medical interpreter, offering mental health support to migrant communities, particularly the Afghan community. Subsequently, Ali transitioned to a phlebotomist role at a hospital, acknowledging that the position was below his qualifications. However, he needed to work. He explained:

> It is still an underqualified job for me. Someone with a high school degree can become a phlebotomist. There are a lot of policies, rules, and regulations in the United States. People like me, who graduated from outside the United States, cannot enter Medicine because I must start everything again here. That’s why I said, How can I work with patients? What is the easiest and fastest way? Because of my age and time, I did not want to go a long way, so I said I needed something quick, like phlebotomy, because I just needed a license.

As we will see in this passage above, Ali referred to the US rules and policies that barred him from transferring his degree and skills. However, when I compare Ali with Rustam, Ali is relatively luckier as he does not find himself working at Apple. He had the opportunity to remain in the medical field, albeit in positions where he felt underqualified.

Additionally, the loss of class status signifies a shift in power and responsibilities, as well as a decline in income. In terms of the loss of authority and responsibilities, Ali articulated, “I managed a company in Afghanistan. I was a boss. I could hire or fire. I had the power. Here, I had a very entry-level job. It is hard.” Ali further articulated:

> In Afghanistan, I had a high-status job. I had a security guard who was provided with armored vehicles. My brother-in-law came to the United States before me. He knew my job in Afghanistan. When I told him I was coming here, he told me I would not be able to survive here because he knew my life there. He told me I had a high-status job there. I had bodyguards and cars. I would have nothing here.

Thus, Ali addressed the loss of his power, referring to his high-status jobs in Afghanistan.

Hamza, 35 years old, emphasized the loss of power and responsibilities, as well as a reduction of his salary. In Afghanistan, he studied agriculture and worked in monitoring and evaluation roles on USAID and UN projects, collecting agricultural data through interviews. Upon arriving in the United States, he initially secured a job at Apple. However, he expressed dissatisfaction as it was unrelated to his professional background:

> Cetin: You know, you had a professional background in Afghanistan, but then you came here and started to work at Apple, which was unrelated to your education or professional background. What do you think about this?
> Hamza: Yeah, it's a good question. Great question! I worked in different organizations and positions, such as managerial positions in Afghanistan. I had a good salary, the same one I currently have here, and we paid 1,500$ for the rent. And I couldn't get a job for three months (laughing).

Hamza also compared himself with other Afghan individuals at Apple regarding his position and salary. He remarked, “Many different people have different mindsets. Men and women. Some of them are 18 years old or 60 years old. They work here in the same position as me and receive the same salary (laughing).”

Overall, this section focused on the loss of class status for Afghan refugees after migrating to the United States. I argue that this is one of the insecurities Afghan refugees face, as they are unable to transfer their human capital to the United States.

4.2.2 (Un)Recognition of Educational and/or Occupational Credentials

The previous section argued that incoming Afghan refugees face challenges transferring their class status to the United States due to the inability to transfer their human capital. However, a

significant question remains about whether newcomers apply for an evaluation of their credentials, including educational documents such as diplomas and/or occupational experience. This is an important question because refugees can face hyper-precarity due to unrecognized educational and occupational credentials (Ertorer 2021; Lewis and Waite 2015), which can result in employment below their credentials.

My data indicate that 6 Afghans, out of 38, applied or would apply for an evaluation of their credentials. Muzafar did not have his degree evaluated, while Hamza managed to transfer his credentials to the United States. Abbas, Farzaad, Latifa, and Nasib were being evaluated during the interview. Muzafar studied at the Civil Aviation Institute and worked as an air traffic controller at Kabul airport and as an interpreter in the US Army in Afghanistan. He moved from Los Angeles to Sacramento to work at Apple, where his friend was working. He told me that the pay for his job was not good and that he was not working in his field. Then he went to college to study and signed up with a counselor. He explained the process of his application to the US authorities as follows:

> I told the counselor I was an air traffic controller in Afghanistan and wanted to study in this field by receiving my certificate to work at an airport such as Sacramento Airport. They said okay, sounds good, and let's work on it. After the evaluation, the person told me I must receive several extra credits. Then, I should be good to go. I said Great. We made an appointment for next week. At the appointment, that person told me I had bad news for you. He said, You know, post 9/11, the US Government or the Federal Aviation changed the rules and regulations. People who are not U.S. citizens cannot participate in air classes. They told me that I could not go and study for an air traffic controller because I'm not a US citizen. I think after 9/11, they changed the rules.

Thus, Muzafar described this situation as devastating news because he did not expect this, so he was surprised and tried to understand the reason. He then admitted that this was a rule made by the government, not the counselor. As a result, he could not attend any of those classes.

Unlike Muzafar, Hamza, who studied agriculture and worked in his field in Afghanistan, just completed this process and received the equivalent of his bachelor's degree during the interview. He explained this process with the Department of Human Assistance as follows:

> There is a policy that we should contact the Department of Human Assistance to refer applicants to the relevant departments. I talked with that department, which assigned me a worker. Then, I contacted him. There was a California university certified by the Ministry of Education. They have the right to evaluate foreign documents. The relevant department arranged an interview and asked me questions about my experience and education. I provided a lot of documents, like my transcript, diploma, and resume. Then, they sent all my documents to the relevant university for evaluation. The university did the background check and contacted the university in Afghanistan. They evaluated my scores. Then, they called and told me that you passed your degree. Your evaluation passed. Congratulations!

Hamza further explained:

> After the evaluation process, some people may have to get the credits from a university, where they study for six months or maybe four years. After that, they get the relevant equivalent documents. They told me that I had worked for more than ten years in agriculture projects. Also, my scores were good. They said this is why I passed the evaluation. They told me that they would send me the documents. After two weeks, I received equivalent documents with a seven-page report, one page like a diploma, and an equivalent letter for the bachelor's degree. They told me I could use that document as a BA degree in the United States to send to an employer.

As in Hamza's case, the evaluation process is rigorous and comprises different stages. One of the central stages is that the applicant may have to take some college credits to receive the equivalent degree. Yet Hamza received his degree of equivalence without taking any credits, thanks to good scores on his transcript and his extensive professional experience. I should note that Hamza arrived in the United States in September 2020 and received his equivalency degree during the spring of 2022, when I conducted the interview.

Latifa, 29, who relocated to the United States in 2021, was applying for an equivalent degree at the time of the interview. She attended medical school and worked as a registered nurse in the American embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan. She, who works as a medical assistant in the United States, explained:

> Latifa: I am an assistant right now. I cannot work as a registered nurse here because of my documents. I think I need to work a lot on evaluations of my documents to work as a nurse here.
> Cetin: I see. Do you need to go to college here again to earn a degree?
> Latifa: Maybe.
> Cetin: Are you thinking about that?
> Latifa: Actually, I heard that there might be more credits I need. Right now, they are evaluating my credits. For example, they may say you know you need to have more credits for psychology or nursing. I may have to go to school. That's why I had already started school, so now I'm a student. I am in college and taking online English courses because language is a big problem. I am working on TOEFL. Hopefully, I don't need to restart all over—I mean, I may not have to take a lot of credits. Maybe it would be one more year.

This last passage indicates that Latifa does not know how many credits she needs to take in college and how long this process will take. An interesting point she raised in our interview concerned her interactions with other Afghans in transferring her diploma. She continued,

> Some people told me I could not evaluate my documents, so I must start from zero, meaning I must go to university and start everything again. I said no. I would use my documents and invest only one year because I went to school for seven years of medical school, including four years of nursing in Afghanistan.

Thus, other Afghans discouraged Latifa from pursuing her degree and told her to start over. However, she disagreed with this suggestion and decided to apply for an evaluation of her degree. This situation is interesting and common among Afghans in their communities.

Additionally, my research shows that Afghan refugees encounter uncertainties or hardships in navigating this process due to the US resettlement support, which is only three months. As discussed in the previous chapter, the US resettlement aims to ensure newcomers achieve self-sufficiency promptly (Gowayed 2022b). Thus, Afghan refugees may not apply to evaluate their credentials and must secure employment immediately in jobs below their qualifications.

Overall, Muzafar, Hamza, and Latifa's experiences reveal that Afghan refugees must undergo a rigorous evaluation process to transfer their educational credentials and/or occupational skills to the United States, which may include completing additional college credits and can take years.

Thus, these policies can place Afghan refugees in a hyper-precarious situation, since they can experience challenges in transferring their credentials and skills. They need to find a job immediately to provide for their families (Ertorer 2021; Lewis and Waite 2015).

4.2.3 The Labor Market Precarity

The previous sections argued that incoming Afghan refugees are unable to transfer their educational and/or occupational qualifications, resulting in the loss of their class status. Recognizing these credentials involves a rigorous process that strictly evaluates their qualifications, and only a few individuals have gone through it. Another question arises: how do these newcomers earn a living, and what types of employment do they secure upon relocating to the United States? The findings of this study reveal that Afghan refugees often find jobs in the labor market, experiencing precariousness characterized by flexible, temporary contracts and a lack of benefits (Castel 2003; Fudge and Owens 2006; Kalleberg 2011; Millar 2017; Ravenelle 2019; Standing 2011, 2014; Vosko 2006). Furthermore, these positions pay slightly above minimum wage, do not require specific skills, and may involve physical labor. Finally, they are associated with monotonous work and strict rules.

The Apple company was a primary destination for Afghan individuals seeking employment. 44% of Afghans (17 out of 38) worked at Apple after resettling in the greater Sacramento area through their social networks and the Afghan community. In the previous section, Hamza stated that being unemployed for three months after relocating to the United States prompted him to find a job immediately to support his family. Then, he managed to get a job at Apple with the help of his social networks. He explained this process as follows:

> I first started with the Apple company because, you know, the recruitment process for Apple or other companies, such as Siemens, is easy. Someone who speaks a little English and has some background working with organizations can join Apple. This job is a good one in a good place for those who are new. And I just heard about this job from my friends, who

> provided me with their human resources contacts. Then, I contacted them and provided them with my resume. Later, they organized an interview, and I passed it. I received the offer letter. This was a direct process, meaning it took about a week to start working there. It was good for me.

Thus, he addressed how easy it was to work at Apple, since it did not require any specific skills.

Apple does not offer a long-term contract to its workers. Employment contracts are temporary, that is, for one year. Afghan refugees who worked at Apple frequently said something: "I worked at Apple for a year and got a three-month layoff." Afghan refugees are allowed to reapply to Apple, but there is a three-month waiting period before reapplying, typically for a different position. Afghan refugees also lack benefits at Apple, and this is why the company offers a one-year contract. Andam, 39 years old, expressed, “Afghans work there for a year and then get laid off. The company does not offer permanent long-term positions because they do not provide benefits like insurance and take advantage of refugees.” Thus, Andam addressed the exploitation that refugees face at Apple. Specifically, Ayan said, "There are no benefits there, like medical and other stuff."

Some Afghans who work at Apple for one year or resign before the end of their contracts seek employment in other companies, such as Siemens or Walmart, to secure a long-term contract with various benefits. For example, Hamza, who complained about similar issues at Apple, started searching for a better job and found one at Siemens. He shared, “Siemens was a company like Apple. However, it was a bit different than Apple. We received the same salary, but it was a permanent job. Also, we had various benefits, including sick and paid leave. Lastly, the environment was better.” Thus, he addressed that Siemens had more job security than Apple, although he received the same wage (Standing 2011, 2014).

Another notable feature of working at Apple is the hourly wages, which are at or slightly above minimum wage, depending on the department. Ayan stated, “A problem with Apple is that they paid the minimum wage." This policy was due to the process of hiring employees, meaning Apple did not hire employees; it subcontracted with another company. Muzafar’s salary was slightly over the minimum wage, and it was not the best, since other companies paid more. He pointed out:

> The problem with Apple was that they hired through an agency. I didn't know how much the hiring agency would get from Apple, but they would give you only half of it. If the hiring agency got $30 from Apple, they would pay you only $12 or $11 (at the interview). Thus, the profit would go to that agency.

Thus, subcontracting was the main issue for Muzafar, since it reduced their wages.

The positions in Apple vary, ranging from assembling cell phones to data entry roles. Thus, Afghan refugees frequently stated that working at Apple did not require specific skills. As we can see from Hamza’s situation, Apple’s recruitment was not robust. He began working as an assembler, saying that:

> Our activities are mostly related to checking the screens of different kinds of iPhones. We just sat there at a table with many mobile phones. They put those phones on the table, and we checked their screens, including their front and back cameras, to see whether there was a scratch. We also checked scratches on the other parts of the phones. Then, we had a checklist. If we found anything like a scratch or any missing parts on the phone, we recorded them.

This assembler position did not require any specific skills for Hamza, as we will see in the quote. However, I should also highlight that Afghan refugees working at Apple often perform monotonous, repetitive tasks while fixing Apple devices. The quote from Hamza shows this. Muzafar also emphasized this, working in a data entry role at Apple:

> In the repair shops, they would get many electronic devices like iPhones. You must enter the data on what came in and what is going out. Everyone had a specific job there. Some people worked there in one position for almost eight or nine months, and they turned off an iPhone and then passed it around, you know. Then, some people checked if it was charged or not. And you're stuck in one position.

Therefore, Muzafar described these monotonous, repetitive actions for Afghans, who got trapped in a position for months.

Additionally, Apple imposed strict rules that led some Afghan refugees to complain and eventually quit their jobs. Hamza expressed this situation by comparing Apple with Siemens and deemed Siemens better than Apple. As another piece of evidence, Andam expressed, "The rules were strict. You could not take your food to the shop, had to leave your electronics behind, and get scanned every day. It's like they accused you daily of stealing stuff. Why would they scan you?" Andam also stated that before entering the warehouse, he needed to touch his fingers on a screen for security purposes. After working for two hours, he had a 15-minute break. In the afternoon, he had a 30-minute lunch break. He worked for an additional two hours, took a 15-minute break, and left his work. Thus, he described his role in the warehouse as "slavery." Because of these strict conditions, which made him feel psychologically bad, he resigned after working three or four months at Apple.

Technology companies were not the only employers of Afghan refugees. My data show that other sectors, including ride-hailing services such as Uber and Lyft as well as warehouse work, provided newcomers with employment opportunities. Although Afghan refugees similarly experienced economic precarity in these sectors, these experiences differed. In particular, those working as Uber or Lyft drivers expressed both positive and negative views of their jobs. After leaving Apple, Muzafar worked at Walmart for a short period before becoming a Lyft driver. He chose this job because its flexible schedule allowed him to attend college while earning an income (Ravenelle 2019). He explained:

> Muzafar: It was a good student job at that time. For me, it was just to go to college to attend my classes. If I had a lot of assignments, I would just stay home, but if I had fewer

assignments to study, I would just drive for Lyft. That's how I managed until I graduated from college.
Cetin: How long did your program take?
Muzafar: Two years. I started in 2016 and graduated in 2018.
Cetin: For two years, you just did Lyft. You just drove.
Muzafar: I just, yeah. That was the best student job ever because there's no fixed schedule; you can drive anytime. You know, it's at your fingertips. Turn the car on, clean it, and then start driving.

However, Andam, who worked as a Lyft driver, described this job as the worst thing in his life because of his inability to drive long hours and his passengers' behavior. He explained:

> I wasn't a mechanic. I wasn't a driver. I wasn't able to drive for 11 or 14 hours per day. It was very difficult for me. Some passengers were really bad. They even spat in the car. When they became drunk, they vomited in the car. I needed to clean up my car. Sorry fuck this life (laughing)! I came from Afghanistan with a good position, and I was cleaning stuff like throwing up. It was disgusting.

The warehouse job is similar to the one at Apple, as it does not require any specific skills. However, it requires physical labor. Abbas, who is 30 years old and married, studied civil engineering in Türkiye and worked as a project engineer in Afghanistan. Upon moving to the United States, he secured employment in a warehouse in Sacramento, which he calls "an ordinary job." His role was to "handle the materials" in the warehouse, meaning he moved and stored them, so his position required physical power. He viewed his job as a "survival job." Ahmet, who worked in a warehouse, said, "It was a warehouse job, and we carried big packages like cartons. I even planned to return to Afghanistan. It was hard for me, and I could not do it (his tone of voice rising)." Thus, Ahmet would nearly return to his home country because of the physical labor his job required.

Lastly, like Abbas, other Afghan refugees emphasized that they must work in these entry-level or menial jobs within precarious conditions to survive in the United States. Hamza said, "Afghans try to find a job in the first or second month since the expenses are high. When they figure out there is no money, what should they do? Then they need to find a job. It doesn't matter

whether it is in a factory or a third level or whatever the job is." More specifically, Hamza had to work at Apple because he could not find a job for three months while applying to various companies. During this process, he spent the money he brought from Afghanistan. He purchased some stuff for his home. Thus, his money has gone. He said, "If I continued like this, being unemployed, it would be too difficult for me (laughing). Then, I needed a job immediately, regardless of the type of job." Since the relocation requires significant spending, Afghans believe they must start working to survive. This is why they call these jobs "survival jobs."

Overall, this section examined the precarity that Afghan refugees experience after migrating to the United States, as they secure employment with temporary contracts and slightly above the minimum wage. The section focuses on their experiences, particularly at Apple.

4.2.4 Status Frustration and Deprivation

The loss of class status, including issues in recognizing educational and/or professional credentials and accompanying labor market precarity experienced by Afghan refugees in the United States, leads to status frustration among them; thus, newcomers feel deprived of their new status (Grant et al. 2015; Grant and Nadin 2007; Standing 2011, 2014). This deprivation is manifested through frustration, including various negative sentiments, such as undervaluation, disappointment, discouragement, stress, shame, shock, and mental torture (Grant et al. 2015; Grant and Nadin 2007). Hamza, who lost his class status and was employed by Apple, expressed:

> It was very disappointing and discouraging for me. I thought I was going the wrong way. And, if I continued like this, why would I do then? I got stressed because I did not feel good and was uncomfortable with that job. There were many happy people. However, I did not want to be like them because I tried my best to get a job in a field such as organizations I have experience.

Thus, Hamza addressed disappointment and discouragement as his work was unrelated to his credentials and skills.

Like Hamza, Latifa and her husband expressed negative emotions about losing their class status. After attending medical school, Latifa worked as a nurse at the American embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan, caring for embassy employees and local people affected by explosions. In the United States, Latifa started working as a medical assistant, a position beneath her qualifications. She did relatively better than her husband, meaning she worked fewer hours and earned a higher salary. Her husband, Hassan, studied psychology and taught at a private school in Afghanistan. In the United States, Hassan secured a job at a company that produced envelopes, a role that required physical labor. Thus, this position was unrelated to his education and professional background. One of the main issues he encountered was limited English proficiency, which created a language barrier that hindered his ability to pursue a better job (Lewis et al. 2015). Furthermore, he found himself in a minimum-wage job, working long hours from 6 am to 6 pm. Latifa stated:

> Yeah, my husband is saying it's not a good feeling because we had a good life there, but here, the income is low, and everything is different. We did not expect this. However, he also understands that it's just a start and a good start. Changing life and relocating are not easy. Everyone faces these big issues after relocating to a new country. Therefore, it's a good start, but of course, it's eventually frustrating for us to come from a good life, you know, to a low-income position.

Thus, Latifa's husband expressed frustration with the loss of class status, specifically referring to lower incomes in the United States.

Interestingly, some Afghan refugees experience this frustration so profoundly that they are reluctant to give a detailed explanation or information about their jobs in the United States. For example, Rustam, who fixed phones for Apple, stated that this transition was shocking because in his last job, he was the chancellor of his private university. He would meet high-ranking officials, such as the president and cabinet members, on a full schedule every day in Afghanistan.

He had a secretary and driver. He would have TV interviews. After migrating to the United States, he said:

> Immediately from the top, like 100, I came down to zero. It was like a shock for me. But it was okay. I could have managed that because I didn't want to be stressed at that time, not to lose myself since I had kids and my wife. I managed that, but I didn't enjoy it, yeah, it was not great for me, but it was okay.

As I previously discussed, Andam described his job experiences in the United States as the worst experience. He studied economics and did his MA in political science. He worked in the customs department of the Minister of Finance and as a team leader at the World Bank for a project on computerized systems in Afghanistan. After these, he worked on USAID projects exporting agricultural products from Afghanistan to other countries. Upon arriving in the United States, he worked as a Lyft driver and then as a technician at Apple. He expressed his frustration by adding, “It was the worst experience. I wasn’t a technician. I wasn't a driver. I came from Afghanistan with a good position. I was cleaning throw-up. It's disgusting.” Andam believes the United States emerges as an attractive destination for Afghan refugees, particularly those with lower or lacking educational backgrounds and/or professional histories. He remarked, “I know many people have had low positions in Afghanistan. However, they have a good life here. But this is not a good place for professional people.”

In this study, four Afghan individuals migrated to the United States through the USRAP, three of whom relocated from Türkiye. All four had high school degrees and no professional careers before arriving in the United States. Like many other Afghans, they started afresh upon migrating to the United States, but they didn’t believe they were unable to use their human capital, such as their credentials. Amir, 30 years old, was one of them. He lived in Iran and completed high school there. However, he could not continue his education there due to his insecure legal status and economic difficulties. He also lacked the right to be resettled in a third

country. Subsequently, he migrated to Türkiye as an undocumented migrant. In Türkiye, economic constraints compelled Amir to work in labor jobs, including construction and restaurants, to support his family financially; thus, he was unable to continue his education. He volunteered at the Foreigners Branch in Ankara province, translating communications between Afghan or Iranian refugees and Turkish officers. He was later hired as a translator.

The USRAP admitted Amir to the United States through the UNHCR after he lived for years in Türkiye. In Sacramento, he applied to Apple and passed the interview successfully despite language barriers. He stated, “I had an interview there, and believe me, I did not understand a word during the interview. Whatever the person said to me, I said, “Yes, okay.” During the interview, he underwent tests in Excel and Word, which he successfully passed. Subsequently, he secured a position as a technician at Apple and remained employed there for a year. Then, he pursued a college education to enhance his English skills, ultimately earning an associate degree in computer and mathematics. Later, he secured a job in the IT department.

Amir's trajectory is an example of not facing deprivation in the United States. Having lived in Iran and Türkiye, Amir built his career in the United States by obtaining a degree and securing a promising job in his field. For Afghans who manage to avoid deprivation, the significance of access to education becomes even more apparent. Their legal status allows them to pursue studies.

Overall, this section focused on the status frustration and deprivation that Afghan refugees with SIV holders experience after migrating to the United States, due to the loss of their class status, including the inability to transfer their human capital and precarity in the labor market.

4.2.5 Starting from Zero or Scratch

Afghan refugees often characterize their economic situations in the United States as “starting from zero or scratch.” This encompasses their human capital, including the challenges of

securing employment in their respective fields and their living conditions, such as car and home ownership in Afghanistan. Yonos—I shared his story at the beginning of this chapter—stated his wife started from scratch by pursuing a college education in the United States:

> My wife and I are from a professional background. We have been working together in Afghanistan. She worked with the United Nations, international NGOs, and USAID programs. She has been admin finance HR. She is a college student now. She is also starting from scratch. She wants to study ultrasound and start her career, so I'm helping her.

"Starting from zero" carries various meanings for Afghans, one of which relates to sacrifice or leaving everything behind. Ebrahim, who studied Medicine in Afghanistan, could not practice Medicine in Kabul due to a lack of available positions. Despite opportunities in other provinces, safety concerns deterred him from relocating. He then worked as a consultant in a high-ranking position at a company in Afghanistan, consulting the Afghan government and US companies on improving policies, laws, and regulations in the economy and trade sectors. He served as a team leader and project manager, overseeing a team of over 100 individuals. In this process, he pursued an MA in Business Administration. He expressed, "I'm not complaining about it. I am just trying to explain to you how we started from scratch. That is a sacrifice we made." He further emphasized his previous status, "I was a high-ranking guy. Believe me. I had a good life back in Afghanistan. I had a good car. I had a house. I was receiving a good salary. I was making good progress." Dr. Ali similarly elaborated on this situation. He studied Medicine and worked as a medical doctor in Afghanistan. He had a diplomatic and business background. He was a vice president of a company with the largest number of employees. He said, "I left everything. When I came here, I started from zero. I showed all my resumes when I spoke with people. They said I had to start from the entry level. That's why I started hard." Despite progressing, Dr Ali thinks, "I did not achieve what I wanted since I was not licensed. I have a medical degree. I am overqualified. They will not hire me because I am not licensed. I cannot work."

Although Afghan refugees acknowledge that "starting from zero" is challenging, they often rationalize this experience through various discourses, expressing gratitude and recognizing the different economic and social contexts in Afghanistan and the United States. Like Yonos's wife, he started from zero after migrating to the United States. Yonos, holding a degree in political science and law, worked for national and international organizations in various roles, from liaison officer to program assistant in Afghanistan and Africa. He established his business. After migrating to the United States, he worked at Apple to fix phones, a role unrelated to his educational and professional background. Subsequently, he secured another position in an NGO, working as a peer specialist. Even though this role was closer to his educational and professional background, it remained below his qualifications and was a temporary project. However, he had to begin anew due to the responsibilities of providing for his large family, including his wife and six children. He expressed gratitude for his achievements in the United States, referring to safety issues in Afghanistan:

> I am thankful for what I have achieved here so far, and thankfully, I was not there (in Afghanistan); otherwise, I would have experienced much more difficulty than working in a warehouse job here (he refers to unfavorable security conditions in Afghanistan). I am starting from scratch. Yet, Alhamdulillah! (Thank God!), I'm happy and moving forward.

Thus, Yonos legitimized "starting from zero," referring to safety issues in Afghanistan.

Fahmi, who studied Law and Political Science in Afghanistan, served as a legal advisor to diverse projects, collaborating with the US Embassy and specializing in criminal case management. In the United States, he found employment as an electrical assembler at Siemens, taking on an entry-level position. He conveyed:

> Our situation in Afghanistan and the US is different. For example, if I talk about a doctor, all the diseases, like everything in Afghanistan, are different from the US. If you work as a doctor in Afghanistan, you are familiar with the specific kinds of diseases. There are other diseases in the US. If we say like tuberculosis, we were practicing tuberculosis in Afghanistan. We had this problem in Afghanistan. But here in the US, it's hundreds here that

> they don't face any tuberculosis illness or like polio, any other things that we were facing in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, we are facing a lot of allergies here. So, it's different. Engineering is like that. Economics, accounting, and so on are different in the US. Especially my career is 100% different.

As we will see in Fahmi's case, "starting from zero" is also described as an imposed circumstance dictated by external factors such as labor market conditions.

This section focused on a discourse, "starting from zero or scratch," that Afghans often used to describe their economic situations in the United States.

4.2.6 Coping with Hyper-Precarity

I previously discussed that to understand how asylum seekers and refugees experience precarity, the scholarship employed the term hyper-precarity to examine how migration regimes and asylum policies shape access to rights (Ertorer 2021; Lewis and Waite 2015). Asylum seekers and refugees may face hyper-precarity due to multidimensional vulnerabilities or insecurities, such as non-recognition or lack of proof of qualifications held in other countries (Lewis et al. 2015). My findings reveal that incoming Afghan refugees can cope with hyper-precarity in the United States by pursuing a college education to develop their skills and by conducting job searches aligned with their fields of expertise, thereby providing financial stability. Their legal status plays a key role in this, as Afghan refugees in this study relocate to the United States with a visa status, namely the SIV or USRAP refugee resettlement programs, which enable them to obtain a Green Card and citizenship. For example, Rustam, who believes in the power of education to have a better job and a more prosperous life in the United States, explained this as follows:

> I need to study for a better job in the United States that matches my qualifications and background. I don't want to be here for a couple of years because I just enrolled my daughter in the first grade of the school, and she graduated from kindergarten this year, and then joined the first grade. We will focus on at least 20 years. So, in these 20 years, we need to have everything. I mean, if we don't have education over here, we can't have access to everything.

> We need to have a good quality education and a permanent job. We need to have a house, I mean everything.

However, Rustam, holding a BA and MA and having written academic articles and books, lacked the knowledge of how to navigate the education system. He was unsure whether to start from scratch by pursuing a college education again to earn an associate degree or apply for an MA or Ph.D. program. After our interview, he asked me how to pursue an MA or PhD, as he had not found a way to do this.

As we will see in the cases of Amir and Zahra, a college degree means a prosperous life in the United States. It is uncommon, but two Afghans with university degrees in Afghanistan retook college education to earn associate degrees in the United States. Muzafar is one of these Afghans who pursued a college education after being unable to evaluate his educational and occupational credentials. He studied computer science, which was connected with his previous job at Kabul airport, where he used various technologies, including computers. He explained:

> I said if I can't evaluate my credentials, let me go and study computer science. Therefore, I registered for a college and received my associate degree in computer information science, network, and database management. My plan for the near future is to get my bachelor's. I have a transferable associate. I will transfer to a university to receive a bachelor's. You know that's the plan for the near future. I don't worry.

Additionally, Afghan refugees seek more secure jobs that fit into their educational and professional backgrounds. After working at Apple and Siemens, Hamza found another job as a peer specialist at an NGO in Sacramento, helping incoming Afghan refugees adapt to their new environments in the United States. This job was also a temporary project, but could be extended. He articulated:

> I'm trying to find a good job. I got this job at an NGO because this is an organization where we did the same activities in Afghanistan. We have a lot of useful projects at this organization. That's why I'm thrilled that I joined this organization. I'm new here. I work hard to show my ability and capacity to this organization. This position is perfect. I'm working as a peering administrator. It's a good opportunity for me. I can pursue a career in

> this organization because many experienced people are here. They are knowledgeable people. I'm working with a big team. It is a good place to improve myself and make a career. Also, this job relates to my previous background, which is good for me. We have relevant activities, slightly different from those we had in Afghanistan. But overall, it is the same. I am working with a nonprofit organization.

Thus, this quote shows that Andam was constantly struggling to find a job that offers improved working conditions and fits his skills. Like Hamza, Ebrahim found a better job closer to his consulting job in Afghanistan:

> I found this job with this consulting firm. They implement state projects. Thus, it's an excellent job, a promising job. I learned a lot. Not only about world culture, but also about how things are done in states, and on the consulting side, I used to have computer skills. It is management consulting. We are working on management, processes, and improvement procedures.

After working as a Lyft driver and at Apple, Andam finally secured employment at an NGO with a better income. He stated, “This job is more financially stable than my previous jobs. I started with $17, and I am receiving $22.”

Overall, this section examined strategies vis-à-vis Afghans' struggles to cope with hyper-precarity in the United States.

4.3 The Context of Türkiye

4.3.1 Hyper-Precarity in Türkiye

Afghan refugees in Türkiye experience hyper-precarity due to multi-dimensional insecurities, and these encompass their insecure legal status and hardships in accessing work permits. Additionally, hyper-precarity for Afghan refugees represents precarious labor conditions, including unfree labor market relations, regardless of their undocumented and international protection statuses. The only difference is that in Trabzon, they can open businesses through independent work permits provided to IPS applicants and holders (Refugee Rights Turkey n.d.). Therefore, shop owners do not engage in unfree labor market relations and can control their employment. Shop owners addressed economic insecurity only in the context of Türkiye’s high

cost of living. Tables 5 and 6 below display legal status, educational attainments, and occupations in Afghanistan and Türkiye:

Table 5: Istanbul Province

Name	Legal Status	Educational Attainment in Afghanistan	Educational Attainment in Türkiye	Occupation in Afghanistan	Occupation in Türkiye
Abdulaziz	The Turkish citizen	High school (dropped out of college in Afghanistan)	Dropped out of college	Owning their store	Selling tickets→Trading→ Running his own shop and factory
Farrukh	The student visa	High school	MA and BA of International Relations	Student	Receptionist→Working as a volunteer in an NGO
Hidayat	Residence permit (only himself)	High school (Saudi Arabia)	Did not take any education	Cooking bread in Saudi Arabia→Driver in Afghanistan	Chief in a restraunt
Maryam	The student visa	High school	Doing his BA on Law	Student	Student and worked as an interpreter
Izzat	Undocumented	Elementary school (Saudi Arabia)	Did not take any education	Seller in Saudi Arabia→ Waiter in Afghanistan	Working restaurants, washing cars, etc.
Guldasta	Residence permit	High school (dropped out of college)	Did not take any education	Teacher (Pakistan)	Women's branch head in an NGO (volunteer)
Bahadur	The student visa	College (civil engineering)	Doing his Master's on the same field	Civil engineer	Tailoring→Car Washer→Motorcycle Courier
Farhod	The Turkish citizen	No information	BA degree (no information)	Did not work (migrated to Turkiye as a minor)	Volunteering as the head of an NGO in Türkiye
Amina	Undocumented	High school	Did not take any education	Tailor	Textile
Armaghan	Undocumented	8th years	Did not take any education	Trainer in weight lifting (her mother was a tailor)	Textile (not working for three months)
Diyar	Undocumented	Dropped out of 11th year.	Did not take any education	Did not work	Waiter (also work in restraunt, textile, etc. on the weekends)
Latif	Undocumented	Dropped out of 11th year.	Did not take any education	Animal husbandry&agriculture	Torchman→Baker
Luqman	Residence permit	The 4th grade	Did not take any education	A traditional singer	A traditional singer
Faaiq	Undocumented	The 7th grade	Did not take any education	A taxi driver	Not employed (depending on wife and children in Turkiye)
Aamir	Residence permit	Unschooled	Did not take any education	A security officier	Not employed (depending on wife and children abroad)
Gul	Undocumented	Unschooled	Did not take any education	Tailor	Not employed (depending on daughters in Türkiye)
Jamila	Undocumented	High school	Did not take any education	Housekeeper in Iran	Not employed (depending on daughter)
Zaahir	Undocumented	Dropped out of the university (English and Uzbek Lan.)	Did not take any education	Did not work (due to education)	Dairying→Construction Worker
Mustafa	Undocumented (Residence permit expired. Trying to extend it)	10th grade	Did not take any education	Running a photo shop in Afghanistan→Selling fruits and vegatables in Russia.	Textile
Tahir	International protection	Unschooled	Did not take any education	Did not work (migrated to Turkiye as a minor)	Textile (master)
Nadir	International protection	BA on Economy	Did not take any education	Media→Notary	Working in a NGO
Murad	Undocumented	Secondary school	Did not take any education	Did not work (migrated to Turkiye as a minor)	Textile→Agriculture→ Upholstery
Salahuddin	The Turkish citizen	Bachelor (Medicine)	Did not take any education	Doctor	Finance collection and report

Presented with xmind

Table 6: Trabzon Province					
Name	Legal Status	Educational Attainment in Afghanistan	Educational Attainment in Türkiye	Occupation in Afghanistan	Occupation in Türkiye
Habib	International protection	High school	Did not take education	Constructor and computer software	Construction
Murtaza	International protection	Unschooled	Did not take education	Construction	Collecting tea and construction (freelance)
Suleiman	International protection	4th grade	Did not take education	Mechanic apprentice (freelance)	Constructor (eye problem)
Barat	International protection	7th grade	Did not take education	Constructor	Moving company, Electricity Installation, and Tea Collector (freelance)
Javed	Conditional refugee	3rd grade	Did not take education	Student	Art, Construction, and Tea Collection (freelance)
Mahmoud	International protection	High school	BA on economics	Student	Volunteer in a finance position in an NGO
İsmail	Conditional refugee	Dropped out of college (computer science and teaching credential)	Did not take education	The principle of a school in Pakistan→IT technician in Afghanistan	Tailor and works as a volunteer (teaching such as English) in an NGO
Hikmatullah	International protection	Unschooled	Did not take education	Installment and welding in Afghanistan and Iran	Not employed (ear problems and age)
Safiullah	Cancelment of con. ref. Having humanitarian residence permit	Cinema (in Iran)	Did not take education	Freelance in İran	Tailor at home (having a sewing machine) and teaching such as Math to Afghan students at home
Nooruddin	Conditional refugee	Unschooled	Did not take education	Seller in a shop in İran	Running his small shop on food and beverages
Jamaluddin	The student visa	BA on Pol. Sci. Two MA on Pol. Sci. and Soc. and Int. Law. Phd on Human resources	Phd on sociology (in progress)	Manager in NGO, lecturers in univerisites, and writer.	Capacity builder in an NGO
Yusuf	International protection	7th grade	Did not take education	Labor jobs in Iran→Agriculture in Afghanistan	Tailor in his shop
Nizamuddin	International protection	BA on Medicine	Did not take education	Doctor in Afghan army	Working in a bakery
Fereydoun	International protection	Unschooled	Did not take education	Tailor in their shop	Shop owner on food and beverages
Nasser	International protection	High school	Did not take education	Teacher→Officier→Car seller	Shop owner on food and beverages
Ishaq	International protection	High school	Did not take education	Running a shop on herbs	Shop owner on food and beverages
Musa	International protection	7th grade (in iran)	Did not take education	Selling vegetables and welder	Construction→Running his father's shop on food and beverages
Qadir	International protection	High school	Did not take education	Money transfer and trading, such as bracelet internationally	Labor jobs→Shop owner on Afghan food and beverages
Jalaluddin	International protection	High school	Did not take education	Officier and textile	Co-owner of a textile factory (not formally)
Bilal	The Turkish citizen	No information	Did not take education	Owner of an oil factory and textile	Co-owner of a textile factory
Arif	Conditional refugee	Dropped out of high school	Did not take education	Repairing phones	Shoeshiner→ Collecting metals

Presented with xmind

According to the tables, only six Afghans (out of 45) held a university degree in Afghanistan. Two dropped out of university. The rest of the Afghans had high school degrees or less,

including those who were unschooled. Those Afghans holding university degrees, including Ismail, who dropped out of university, worked as doctors, civil engineers, teachers, officers, and managers in NGOs and media outlets, constituting a middle-class background.

The tables also present the type of employment Afghan refugees secure in Türkiye (the arrows show first and subsequent employment). The textile sector is the primary destination for Afghans, particularly in Istanbul province. Additionally, the construction and agriculture sectors, particularly in Trabzon province, offer job opportunities to Afghans. These sectors are highly labor-intensive and require a labor force, which Afghan refugees provide in Türkiye. Shop owners under international protection in Trabzon province are another group, but they do not experience labor market precarity.

In Chapter 3, I debated whether Afghans as IPS applicants or conditional refugees are eligible for a work permit after six months following an international protection application (LFIP: article 89/4a) (Güler 2020a:8). IPS applicants and conditional refugees may apply for independent work permits to establish businesses or be exempted from seasonal agricultural or animal husbandry jobs (Refugee Rights Turkey, N/A). However, I also argued that work permits are not automatically granted and are subject to specific requirements, which can be challenging to meet (Ertorer 2021). Work permits may be constrained for a certain time and within certain sectors, professions, and geographical areas (ILFL: article 12/3) (Güler, 2020: 8). Additionally, employers must apply for a work permit from the Ministry of Labor by presenting information regarding job descriptions, qualifications, and justifications for hiring Afghans and employing five Turkish nationals for each non-citizen (Ertorer 2021). As a result, many Afghans remain unable to obtain them, forcing them into insecure jobs.

In addition to challenges in accessing work authorizations, Afghan refugees engage in precarity in the labor market, which also includes unfree labor relations. They are often employed in no-contract jobs, which may be irregular and seasonal, and lack benefits (Ertorer 2021; Karadag 2021; Şenses 2016c). These jobs often offer minimum wage or below. Furthermore, they include excessive working hours and obstacles in receiving pay. Afghans are unable to do anything about these labor relations due to their insecure legal status, particularly those who are undocumented, who are more vulnerable.

Afghan refugees often secure employment with unstable schedules due to seasonal reasons, weather conditions, and demand. In particular, they encounter these conditions in construction or agriculture. Murtaza, picking tea and hazelnuts thanks to a work permit from the PDMM to work in agriculture, said, "There is not much livestock farming here. We pick tea and hazelnuts in summer since there is no agriculture here in winter." Zaahir, 25 years old, married, and undocumented, was a construction worker in Istanbul. He explained this as follows:

> Construction work does not occur every day. I work three or four days a week. I currently freelance, which is why I am in construction. I have been in Istanbul for eight months, but have not found a decent job. Jobs are inconsistent; on some days, work is available, while on others, there is none. Bad weather makes it worse.

Thus, Zaahir particularly drew attention to irregular construction jobs, which may also stem from weather conditions.

Furthermore, these no-contract jobs do not offer any benefits, such as healthcare, to Afghan refugees. Izzat, 35 years old, single, and undocumented, lived in Istanbul. He was employed in jobs such as restaurants and car wash shops, with no benefits. He said, "Employers do not give us our rights because we work without insurance. They do not pay our insurance." Diyar, a 22-year-old married man, was undocumented and lived in Istanbul. He, working as a waiter in a restaurant, emphasized the lack of health insurance, which was a main issue for him because his

wife was pregnant. Therefore, he needed to obtain healthcare services from private hospitals, which charged him a lot. Meanwhile, I should emphasize that Türkiye allows all international protection applicants and beneficiaries with a valid Turkish ID card to access public healthcare services for one year after registration for IPS (LFIP: Article 22) (Asylum Information Database 2024; Güler 2020). Only IPS holders who are shop owners with social security, and those with disabilities, minors, and people over sixty-five, can access public healthcare.

Regarding minimum wage, Mustafa, a 52-year-old married man living as an undocumented migrant in Istanbul province, worked as an "Ortacı (errand boy)" in a textile shop, coordinating work among tailors to facilitate garment production. Mustafa's employer paid him 4,000 Turkish lira ($216) —below the minimum wage of 5,500 TL ($297). Similarly, Murtaza, a 34-year-old man residing in Trabzon under IPS, expressed concerns about the minimum wage in the labor market, drawing on his experiences as a tea picker and construction worker. He said, "We receive a minimum wage of 5,000 or 5,500 TL ($297). Normally, we should earn more because we are skilled workers. But we receive only the minimum wage." Thus, both Mustafa and Murtaza emphasized the extreme exploitation.

Prolonged work hours are another central issue Afghan refugees face in the labor market. Mustafa said, "I go to work at 8 am and finish working at 7:30 pm. I work 11 hours and 30 minutes a day. I work five days a week." Like Mustafa, Armaghan, working in a textile shop in Istanbul, addressed long working hours: "I was working from 12 pm to 12 am. I was off for one and a half days. I would work till noon on Saturdays. It was a holiday on Sundays. I was working under heavy conditions. They would cut my salary if I did not come to work." Thus, these quotes from Mustafa and Armaghan show that long working hours signify hyper-precarity through

another type of extreme exploitation that Afghan refugees face in the labor market (Ertorer 2021; Lewis and Waite 2015).

Another typical issue Afghan refugees encounter is the inability to receive their pay from their employers. Armaghan, living in Istanbul, stated, “I worked in several textile shops but couldn't receive my full payment. Some employers paid me only half.” Since Armaghan’s employers either paid her only half or did not pay her at all, she raised the issue with them. However, this time, her undocumented status prevented her from taking further action. She continued, “When I spoke up, they said I did not have an identity card and threatened to report me to the police.” Thus, she could not do anything because of her undocumented status. Similarly, Tahir, 28 and single, was not paid by his employers several times. He was a conditional refugee registered in Yalova province. He frequently traveled to Istanbul to work in the textile sector, despite the law, as he was required to reside in Yalova, a satellite province. He explained:

> After being resettled in Yalova, I found a job and worked there for two months without pay. Sometimes, employers paid me less than what I deserved. An employer once told me he would pay me after a month of working there. I replied, “Would I stay hungry for a month?” That employer also did not pay me. Then I came to Istanbul. Someone advised me to go to the Çağlayan district, known for many pensions and textile shops. I was in a tough situation. I began working there daily. Some employers accepted my offer to work daily, while others wanted me to work monthly. I asked them, 'When would you pay me?' Sometimes, they told me after 15 days. I often worried about whether they would pay me or not. If I have no money, I can’t do anything. There was a guesthouse where Afghans were staying. My money was running low. As I couldn’t find work, I went to Tokat province. I stayed there for a month or two without working. I began to search for a job again. I worked for 45 days, but when I tried to get my money, the employer did not pay me.

Thus, this quote emphasizes that Tahir frequently encountered situations in which he did not receive his pay. However, he could not do anything due to his legal status and the economic hardships he has been experiencing.

Like Armaghan and Bahadur, Diyar also faced obstacles in receiving his pay. However, his experience was distinctive because his Turkish did not get his employer’s attention, who thought

that he was ethnically Turkish. He stated, “I worked somewhere here for several weeks and received my pay. However, after three weeks, they did not pay me when they noticed I was from Afghanistan. My Turkish was very good; this is why they did not realize it before.” Indeed, Diyar’s Turkish was perfect, and I also noticed this when I interviewed him at a non-governmental organization in Istanbul. Had he not told me he was from Afghanistan, I could have known that he was Turkish. Therefore, it is interesting how he experienced this discrimination because of being from Afghanistan.

Overall, Afghan refugees are legally insecure and face obstacles in obtaining work permits due to their legal status in Türkiye. Drawing on these insecurities, this section examined precarious labor conditions that Afghan refugees encounter in the Turkish labor market.

4.3.2 Meanings Given to Precarious Jobs

Afghan refugees do not experience hyper-precarity only concerning unfree labor relations, such as low wages, long working hours, withheld pay, and irregular and unstable jobs (Cruz 2018; Davidson 2010; O’Neill 2022). They also experience hyper-precarity by describing the labor market as highly challenging and requiring a great deal of effort. Additionally, precarity has unfavorable effects on their lives. Nasser, 55 years old, married, and the father of six children, resides in Trabzon under IPS. Before opening his Afghan shop, funded by his son living in Switzerland, he worked at a furniture store, earning a weekly wage of 200 TL ($11). He said, “It was a tough job. I had to work in this role because I had no other options. I couldn't open a car dealership like in Afghanistan.” Similarly, Murtaza, who worked in agriculture and construction, explained:

> Here, I did every kind of job, which were tough jobs, to meet my family’s expenses. I also performed my work well. If you are a foreigner here, you must take on tough jobs. For example, the construction job is hard. The tea collection job is, too. I have been collecting

> tea for two years. I have worked in construction as well. A Turkish worker may not do his job diligently, but we do. Our employers cannot complain about our work.

Thus, he emphasized the toughness of the labor market for foreigners in Türkiye and compared himself with Turkish workers about the exploitation he faced.

However, despite this precarity, Afghan refugees expressed that they must work to survive to cover their expenses. Murtaza maintained, “If we do not work in construction or tea-picking jobs, how will we pay our rent, electricity, water, etc.? Also, we do not have health insurance. The examination fee is 400 TL. Blood analysis, X-rays, and so on cost us about 3,000 TL.” Bahadur, a 26-year-old man who had to take on heavy jobs, such as construction, similarly noted that, “We must work in every job since we do not have any other options. If I am unemployed, how will I meet my expenses? I need money. I am a student. I waste my time if I do not work.” Thus, he emphasized meeting his expenses to survive in Türkiye.

Being able to survive is also related to how Afghan refugees experience this precarity in their lives. My data shows that Afghans face significant hardships in paying their rent or bills and meeting their expenses. Mustafa expressed how difficult it was to meet his family’s grocery expenses and pay their rent:

> I earn 4,000 Turkish lira in a month. I spend 2,000 on rent and 1,000 on bills. The rest is for groceries. When I go outside to buy something, I spend 60 or 70 lira. Now, my landlord is trying to evict me. Last year, they did the same thing so they could move in. They increased the rent by 500 Turkish lira. I am staying there, and my landlord is Afghan. If I move out, where will I live? It's hard to find a new place. Rents are nearly 8,000, 9,000, or 10,000 Turkish lira. Therefore, it’s tough to live in this manner.

As this quote shows, half of his monthly earnings go to rent, while the other half goes for groceries, rent, and bills. Barat, a 35-year-old married man with three children and an IPS holder in Trabzon, has also struggled to cover his family's living expenses while working in the construction sector. His earnings are insufficient to cover those expenses due to the high cost of

living. He expressed, “I work for 20 days a month and earn 7,000 TL. I spend 3,000 TL on rent and 1,000 TL on bills, leaving 4,000 TL. This amount must cover food, drink, and the children's needs.” Therefore, Barat stated that life in Türkiye is not easy because he can barely make it through the month. Diyar, a 22-year-old married man who mentioned difficulties regarding his wife’s access to healthcare services, stated, “I live in an old basement apartment and pay 2,500 TL for the rent. There is no gas. If I want to stay in a newer apartment, I must pay a higher rent, but I cannot afford it. It is expensive here.” Thus, in this quote, he focused on housing issues.

Overall, this section focused on how Afghan refugees give meaning to this hyper-precarity in Türkiye. And the section reveals that they often highlight how challenging the jobs are and how much effort they require. However, despite these arduous tasks, they must work in these jobs to survive. Precarity unfavorably affects their lives.

4.3.3 Hyper-Precarity and Shop Owners

Nine Afghan refugees have established businesses in Trabzon in the food, beverage, and textile sectors. Like Turkish shop owners, Afghan shop owners legally pay taxes to the government. Afghan shop owners do not complain about hyper-precarious working conditions, such as working at or below minimum wage and prolonged hours. They can also control their employment relations. However, they still view themselves as economically insecure because their jobs are not profitable for various reasons, such as living and bill costs or inflation in Türkiye.

Ishaq, 35 years old and single, lives in Trabzon. In his first job, he worked as a laborer, carrying sacks of potatoes, onions, and other produce. One day, while carrying ten sacks, each weighing 50 kilograms, one of them fell onto his leg, and he was unable to work for three months. Subsequently, he contacted his family in Afghanistan for financial support to open his

shop. Although Ishaq feels more comfortable in his new role as a shop owner, he remains concerned about the varying costs associated with his shops. He explained:

> I could not pay the rent for this shop. The shop owner wanted it yearly, but I told him I could not manage it. Then, he told me to vacate the shop. I spent a lot of money on this shop because I fixed it. And I have customers. Therefore, I cannot vacate my shop. Besides the rent, I have an electricity bill of 3,000 TL. Also, there is a water bill. We do not have water right now in the shop since I could not pay the three-month bill. Tomorrow, they can cut off electricity. I have a refrigerator here. If they cut it, I do not know what to do.

Thus, Ishaq paid attention to issues with rent payments and high bills that other Afghan refugees face in Türkiye due to high inflation.

Afghan refugees have also established textile businesses in Türkiye. Freydoun, who runs his tailoring shop in Trabzon, first purchased two tailoring machines for textile manufacturing in his house. Later, he contacted his brother, who lives in Germany, to help him trade textile products with Germany. After his brother agreed to this, he opened his shop. Like Ishaq, Freydoun paid taxes to the government for his shop. Freydoun saw himself in similar economic conditions as other shop owners, given the financial circumstances in Türkiye:

> Unfortunately, it is tough. We are facing many difficulties in terms of the economy. I have been here and working for about five years. There has been no progress for me. The general system in Türkiye is not good. I opened this shop. I work here. I pay money legally, including my taxes. I do this work, but what is the benefit to me? Unfortunately, this is very challenging for me. For example, I pay two thousand TL for “Bağkur 2 (social security)” and around a thousand TL for taxes. Also, there are the costs of the shop. If I close this shop and work daily, I can earn 4,000 or 5,000. Also, if I apply for state assistance, they help me with 1000 or 2000 TL. I can continue like that, but I decided not to; I would pay full tax here for an advantage. Unfortunately, the system is so flawed that it won't benefit me.

Freydoun was dissatisfied with opening his shop, despite some benefits, such as working legally and having health insurance. Due to this dissatisfaction, he compared himself with other Afghans in the labor market to emphasize that running a shop does not bring an economic advantage:

> What's the difference between other Afghan workers and me? Generally, people here work daily. And, they work 'Kaçak' (illegally). So, what is the difference between them and me? I pay this much money. I'm doing everything right. The difference is that I work legally, but

> they do not. However, I make the same money as they do. There are no other benefits to working here.

Thus, this quote shows that Fereydoun emphasized his income, since it is almost the same as what Afghan workers earn, due to the high taxes he pays on his shop, despite being legal.

This section focused on a group of Afghan refugees in Trabzon, who established their businesses, primarily small shops, through independent work permits. These shop owners do not mention precarity in the way that they earn minimum wage or less, work long working hours, and face obstacles in receiving their pay. They often complain about high taxes and bills that they must pay for their shops.

4.3.4 Coping with Precarity

My research also reveals that Afghan refugees are active agents and cope with hyper-precarity through various strategies, such as receiving assistance from the Turkish state, NGOs, or UNHCR, and sharing their homes to split the rent. In Trabzon, they can access financial and food aid from the Turkish state or UNHCR through their IPS.

Mahmoud, a 23-year-old single man and an IPS holder in Trabzon, could pursue a university education in Türkiye thanks to his IPS. During his studies, he received a scholarship from an international organization that provides financial support to refugee students in Türkiye. "University tuition was our most significant expense, but I received a scholarship and covered it," he said. Mahmoud, who had an elderly mother and a young nephew in need of financial assistance, received support from the Turkish Red Crescent. "While I was at university, my family received partial financial aid from the Red Crescent to cover rent and bills," he added. Thus, this financial support was important to his family living in Trabzon to meet their expenses.

Local NGOs also assisted Afghan refugees in both provinces, which played a significant role in their livelihoods. A local NGO assisted Hikmatullah, 69, and his family, residing in Trabzon.

“We got help from an NGO during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, they brought us oil, olives, rice, etc.,” Hikmatullah's grandson, who translated our interview, said. This assistance was crucial for Afghan people in Istanbul under an undocumented status, which prevented them from receiving any aid from the Turkish state or the UNHCR. Local NGOs, particularly those in Istanbul’s Zeytinburnu district, supported Afghan refugees in various areas, including financial aid, food assistance, health, and legal consultation services.

Latif, 25 years old and single, immigrated to Türkiye in 2018 without inspection by leaving his family in Afghanistan. He was involved in a work-related accident, exposed to electricity while working as a welder in Konya province. He then visited a public hospital, where the doctor refused to treat him because he did not have an ID. Subsequently, he went to a private hospital, which accepted me. He paid 2,400 TL for the treatment, but the doctor only dressed the wound and took no further action. He told me this was all the doctor could do. Since Latif could not access the healthcare system in Konya due to his undocumented status, he traveled to Istanbul to access health services through one of his friends' relatives, who had an ID card. However, this strategy did not work either. Therefore, Latif visited an Afghan NGO in Istanbul’s Zeytinburnu district to receive healthcare from volunteer doctors. He has been working in a bakery with his injured foot. Latif was desperate and seeking a way to recover.

However, Afghan refugees often stated that this assistance, particularly economic and food assistance by the Turkish state or local NGOs, was temporary, insufficient, or unstable. Mustafa expressed, “I received food assistance several times from an NGO. Except for this NGO (where we conducted our interview), I have not received any assistance from other NGOs.” As another piece of evidence, Suleiman, a 42-year-old man and married with three children, said, “We pay for our rent with the money I receive from the Turkish Red Crescent. We then pay for bills. If we

have money left, we spend it on food and beverages. If we do not have money left, we are trying to make a living. Sometimes, they pay us less than what we need to get." Thus, Suleiman emphasized the insufficiency of financial aid and the uncertainties surrounding it, as he occasionally receives less aid than his family needs.

Additionally, Afghan refugees implement other strategies to grapple with hyper-precarity by sharing their apartments and shopping in affordable places. Sharing apartments with other Afghans, including families, to split the high rent, is one main strategy. This particularly applies to Afghan refugees living in Istanbul, where rents are higher. Armaghan expressed:

> We live in a house with two rooms and a living room. We live with the other two families. I pay 2,000 ($108) TL. They pay the rest. One family stays in one of the rooms, whereas the other family stays in the other room. How will I pay the rent if I do not share my house with other families? The rents start from 5,000 or 6,000 TL.

Thus, she addressed the inability to pay her rent if she does not share her home with other families. Moreover, Afghan refugees pay particular attention to when and where they will shop. Bahadur articulated:

> When buying clothes, we search for the cheapest and most discounted ones. For example, there is a discount in an A101 store. We are considering what kind of discount it will be today or on Sunday. When we buy shoes, we think about them for weeks. We are also waiting for a discount on them. We must think about them every time. We have no choice.

Therefore, Bahadur constantly searched for the most affordable time and place to shop.

All in all, this section discussed various strategies regarding how Afghan refugees cope with hyper-precarity in their everyday lives. Interestingly, I should note that my data does not often show that Afghan refugees secure employment in a different job or work extra time to grapple with hyper-precarity.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter examined hyper-precarity for Afghan refugees, drawing on their experiences in the labor market in the United States and Türkiye. The chapter argues that Afghans face hyper-precarity due to multi-dimensional insecurities, which are distinctively shaped by asylum and refugee policies in these countries. In the United States, Afghan refugees face hyper-precarity due to the inability to transfer their human capital, including their credentials and skills. They have the right to apply for an evaluation of their degrees and professional experiences by US officials, but this process may take time and fail. Afghans also lack enough resources for this. They must secure employment below their qualifications and skills. Therefore, they experience a downgrade in their class status. They are employed in precarious conditions, including temporary and flexible contracts, and lack benefits, such as health insurance. They often receive a minimum wage or slightly above it, especially at Apple and in warehouses. These jobs do not require specialized skills, are monotonous, and impose strict rules on Afghan employees. As a result of these multiple insecurities, they experience status frustration and deprivation that manifests through various feelings and emotions, including disappointment, discouragement, frustration, stress, shame, and mental torture. However, in the United States, Afghan refugees, along with SIV holders, cope with hyper-precarity by seeking better jobs that match their qualifications and skills and/or pursuing a college education for a more prosperous life, thanks to their legal status.

In Türkiye, Afghan refugees experience hyper-precarity regardless of whether they are undocumented or internationally protected. It is related to their precarious legal status and the hardships they face in obtaining work authorizations. While undocumented Afghans in Istanbul cannot obtain work authorizations, those with an IPS in Trabzon can obtain them, but not automatically. This means they must meet certain criteria (Ertorer 2021). Moreover, they encounter precarity in the labor market, including unfree labor relations stemming from less

control over their employment due to their status. They are often employed in no-contract jobs, which may be irregular and seasonal, and lack benefits (Ertorer 2021; Karadag 2021; Şenses 2016c). These jobs often offer minimum wage or below. They include excessive working hours and obstacles in receiving pay. They describe their jobs as tough, requiring physical strength. And they must be employed in these jobs to survive. Many of them complain about being unable to meet their expenses, such as difficulty paying rent or buying groceries. This situation also arises from the high cost of living in Türkiye due to inflation, leaving Afghan shop owners economically insecure, even though they do not experience labor market precarity in control over their employment relations. Moreover, Afghan refugees often rely on financial and food assistance from the Turkish state, UNHCR, and local NGOs to grapple with hyper-precarity. Specifically, local NGOs in Istanbul province play a vital role in assisting Afghan refugees, from food aid to health services.

The following chapter will explore the social insecurity and exclusion faced by Afghan refugees in the United States and Türkiye. In the United States, social insecurity emerges through Islamophobic discourses and behaviors that Afghan refugees encounter. In Türkiye, Afghan refugees experience xenophobia based on economic conditions and sectarian dynamics.

Chapter 5: Social Insecurity

5.1 Introduction

On a rainy day in the Fall of 2022, I left my hotel to visit the Afghanistan Hazaras Culture and Solidarity Association to interview with Javed, a 29-year-old single man who arrived in Türkiye as a minor in 2010 and has been residing in Trabzon. When I entered the NGO classroom for the interview, Javed was already there, waiting for me. I greeted him in Turkish, and we continued speaking in Turkish because his Turkish was perfect, as he had been living in Türkiye for 12 years at the time of the interview. Javed wore pants and a T-shirt. He had a beard and glasses on his face. His hair was short but getting grey. He seemed anxious about conducting this interview, and after listening to him, I understood his concerns, as he had experienced numerous insecurities and forms of exclusion in Türkiye that had affected his mental health.

Social insecurity and exclusion are one main issue Javed experienced, due to the members of the host society's approach to Afghan refugees with various narratives, such as taking their jobs or receiving economic support from the Turkish state. He explained,

> I sometimes come across people who tell us these. For example, I worked somewhere where a friend of ours, a master in the electrical department, said, 'We come here and take their jobs.' They tell me people cannot find jobs and are hungry here because of us. We do cheap work. They keep saying these things to me. Also, they say the Turkish state takes care of us and gives us money. I tell them the state does not pay us. Because I know Turkish, I can explain this to them. Others can't explain it.

Thus, Javed encountered this kind of misrepresentation and misunderstanding about the Afghan people, who are seen as job takers and scapegoats for economic problems in the country, including receiving economic aid from the Turkish state.

This chapter delves into another structural force that undermines human security for refugees, focusing on cultures that discriminate based on race, religion, gender, or other arbitrary classifications (The United Nations Development Programme 1994; Vietti and Scribner 2013a).

In host societies, immigrants may face social insecurity based on xenophobia and intolerance as a consequence of the suspicion and mistrust that members of the host society direct toward them (Merheb and Loughna 2006). Such xenophobia and intolerance arise when immigrants are perceived as threats to economic prosperity, social stability, and/or cultural identity (Merheb and Loughna 2006). Local communities can welcome immigrants warmly, but if immigrants put pressure on the housing market, social services, and the environment, and remain longer than expected, they may face intolerance and exclusionary behavior.

Social exclusion refers to a multidimensional disadvantage that places individuals or groups in severe positions that prevent them from participating in major processes and opportunities, such as exclusion from the labor market or social isolation, due to their races, genders, ethnicities, or religions, across cultures and abilities (Babacan and Babacan 2013; Young 1999). Drawing on this body of literature, this chapter examines how Afghan refugees experience and navigate social insecurity and exclusion in everyday life, including at work and school in the United States and Türkiye. The chapter argues that Afghan refugees experience differing forms of social insecurity and exclusion in these countries, which are shaped by structural forces, including policies towards refugees.

In the United States, Afghans experience social insecurity and exclusion through Islamophobia within the socio-cultural context. More specifically, they often express social insecurity and exclusion with feelings of threat and suspicion due to their Muslim identities. Broadly speaking, scholars view Islamophobia as a socially produced form of racism, which is a racial project, where people experience violence, discrimination, and hate speech (Allen and Jørgen 2002; Considine 2017; Love 2017; Maghbouleh 2017; Ramberg 2005). Some other scholars describe it as a phobia, which emerges from fear and dislike that result in targeting the

religion of Islam, thereby affecting Muslims and their communities detrimentally (Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia 1997; Diène 2007; Organisation of Islamic Cooperation 2008; Wright 2016). My definition of Islamophobia in this study is a combination of these two central definitions. I see Islamophobia as a form of social insecurity and exclusion that Afghan refugees face in their everyday lives through hate speech, intolerance, discrimination, and suspicion due to their Muslim identities. Therefore, my departure point is social insecurity and exclusion as a form of human security approach, rather than a form of racism. Additionally, the scholarship has addressed that Islamophobia is a structural issue in the United States and is spread by law and perpetuated by policy that fluidly communicates harmful stereotypes, prejudices, and misrepresentations about Muslims (Beydoun 2018; Elsheikh et al. 2017). Then, these endorse popular views and misconceptions, as well as motivate and inspire hate and violence towards Muslims (Beydoun 2018).

In line with this literature, this study focuses on the everyday experiences of Afghan refugees with Islamophobia as a form of social insecurity and exclusion in the United States. In particular, my research shows that Afghan women wearing hijabs or headscarves, which are considered a marker of Islam, experience Islamophobic behavior through hate speech. Afghan mothers are concerned that their daughters feel insecure about wearing hijabs, especially in schools, which leads daughters to isolate themselves from their friends. The chapter also highlights that Islamophobia manifests in various contexts in the United States, not necessarily through discrimination and hate speech. Members of the host society may approach Afghan individuals to convert to Christianity due to suspicions about Muslim individuals. This section further explores how Afghan people navigate these anti-Muslim behaviors.

In Türkiye, Afghan refugees experience social insecurity and exclusion due to their ethnic identities within the country's socioeconomic landscape (Tunç and Güllüpınar 2024). The 1934 Settlement Law plays a key role in their exclusion, as it established the legal criteria for the migration and integration of people under the notion of Turkish origin and culture (İçduygu and Karadağ 2018). For example, one study examined the coping strategies of refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Sudan living in Konya province in Türkiye, with ethnic categorization and exclusion policies of the local population (Tunç and Güllüpınar 2024). Thus, ethnic ties may constrain the integration of Afghan refugees into Turkish society due to immigration policies. I should also remind you that the Turkish state does not grant Afghans official refugee status due to their non-European origin. Instead, they are granted international protection status.

My findings show that in Türkiye, Afghan refugees often encounter various narratives from members of the host society, who view them as taking their jobs and receiving economic support from the government. Shop owners also believe that members of the host society avoid shopping in their shops because they are Afghans. These discriminatory practices stemming from their ethnic identities also manifest as hate speech in everyday life. Afghan refugees employ different strategies to grapple with social insecurity and exclusion, including discrimination and hate speech, by explaining their conditions to members of the host society to inform them. Moreover, they emphasize their sub-identities—especially Uzbek Afghans who associate their Turkic roots with Turkish identity.

The US section will begin to examine social insecurity and exclusion that Afghan refugees face in everyday life, within the context of Islamophobia. The section will focus on how Afghans feel insecure and socially excluded due to encountering hate speech and bigotry in their lives. Then, it will discuss Islamophobia within the context of suspicion faced by Afghans. The

Türkiye section will start by examining various narratives toward Afghan refugees, such as stealing jobs from the members of the host society, due to their ethnic identities. This part will also focus on discrimination and hate speech faced by Afghan refugees in everyday life, within xenophobia and intolerance. Next, the section will examine the responses of Afghan refugees toward social insecurity and exclusion, including xenophobia and intolerance.

5.2 The US's Context

This section examines social insecurity and exclusion by exploring how Afghan refugees are perceived as a threat to the cultural landscape of the United States because of their Muslim background and how they experience Islamophobia in their everyday lives after migration (Merheb and Loughna 2006). After September 11, Islamophobic hate crimes targeted Muslim men and women wearing a hijab or traditional dress have increased in the United States (Kaplan 2006). In chapter 3 on the legal context, Ebrahim remarked that he chose to resettle in California due to the discrimination that Muslim people have experienced in other states. He believed California was open to diversity and would embrace his family as Muslims. He did not specifically face any Islamophobia incidents or behaviors during his time in California. However, some other Afghans were not as fortunate as Ebrahim.

Yonos, a 40-year-old Afghan man who is married with children, directly experienced Islamophobic behavior from members of the host community in Sacramento. Yonos is a religious person who prays at the mosque, but one day, he had to take his children to a park, where he needed to pray. Then, someone confronted him about his praying. Yonos said, "When I was praying at the park, someone approached me and told me I didn't have the right to pray at the park because I was not an American. He told me some other stuff." Although Yonos felt socially insecure, he did not generalize this incident to all Americans. He conveyed this to me

with a metaphor: “When you go to a jungle, you find a lot of animals. There are good animals and bad animals, and the same applies to humans. You find good people, but at the same time, bad people.” Yonos managed this negative incident “very professionally” to avoid harming people. This professional management, as Yonos described it, involves educating others to cope with Islamophobia in the United States. He further told that person, “One of my children was born here. Look at him. We all have the same rights in this country. This country is diverse in terms of culture and religion, so you can’t say that I can’t pray here. We are not in this country to harm people. I tried to be very kind and respectful to her.” This quote illustrates Yonos’s feeling of insecurity as a Muslim and highlights diversity in the United States. It is important to note that Muslims are expected to pray in a mosque, especially on Fridays, to be part of the mosque community. However, if attendance is impossible due to reasons such as work commitments, praying anywhere, including parks and workplaces, is accepted in Islam. For instance, during my interview with an Afghan man, I inquired about his connection to his mosque community. He explained that he could not attend the mosque because of work, and as a result, prayed in his car.

As another piece of evidence, Andam, a 39-year-old Sunni and Pashtun Afghan, stated, “When I was working at Apple, I couldn’t pray. There was such a restriction.” Working at Apple required a strict schedule, which means some shifts included only 15-minute breaks. These shifts conflicted with the praying times for Andam, which was the main problem. Also, he mentioned his customers’ behaviors while working as an Uber or Lyft driver since he was an Afghan: “When I was working as an Uber or Lyft driver, many people told me why I came to this country and that I must go to my own country. Customers told me these kinds of things.” In his last and current job, he worked for a Muslim-American non-governmental organization where he could pray, which made him content. “In this organization, we have specific times to pray even though

we have a lot of meetings," he added. Overall, the experiences of Yonos and Andam indicate insecurity faced by Afghan refugees in public places, including at a park or work.

However, not only Afghan men but also Afghan women encounter islamophobia in everyday life (Alimahomed-Wilson 2020). Chris Allen (2020) has argued that being a "Muslim" or "Muslimness" includes identifiers and markers that lead Muslim individuals to be targeted through discriminatory behaviors, hate speech, and bigotry. Especially veiled Muslim women may face Islamophobic attacks, such as hate speech in Britain or the United States that is legitimized through the veil due to its representation of a marker of Islam (Allen 2015; Chakraborti and Zempi 2012; Kaplan 2006). Similarly, this study highlights that Afghan women who wear headscarves experience Islamophobia-motivated behaviors more frequently due to their headscarves, which are considered symbols or markers that represent Islam.

Zahra, a 32-year-old married Afghan woman with two children, experienced Islamophobia firsthand at her workplace, which is a supermarket owned by a Latino individual, due to her headscarf, which she calls "Çador" in Dari. She stated how the attention her headscarf received at work from customers, and the hate speech she encountered because of it:

> Some customers would steal and conceal items in their pockets or backpacks at the supermarket. Some of those customers were Black Americans. When I asked them to remove the stolen items from their pockets or backpacks, they would respond with insults. They would curse me by saying that I was a Muslim. Occasionally, they would insult my "Çador."

Thus, these Islamophobic incidents that turn into hate speech caused Zahra significant psychological distress. She stated:

> I would ask my supervisor to speak to those who cursed me. Then, my supervisor would talk to them. If my supervisor were not at the supermarket, I would confront them. These individuals had no right to treat me this way. They would provoke me by insulting my "Çador." I am a human being. Since these incidents frequently occurred at the supermarket, my morale was low. I could no longer tolerate their behavior.

The experiences of Zahra at the supermarket mirror these Islamophobic behaviors, including hate speech due to her headscarf, which was considered a symbol or marker of being a Muslim.

Additionally, Esin, a 33-year-old married teacher with two children, mentioned that one of her friends experienced a similar incident to Zahra in public. Esin said, “I know one of my friends was in public, and somebody said something about her hijab.” Because of this, Esin’s friend, like Zahra, did not feel well. Her friend felt super sad. This Islamophobic incident caused Esin’s friend not to wear a hijab anymore, as she felt insecure. Esin further explained, “She thought that people would look at her as a terrorist. In general, people could look at women with Hijabs as terrorists by calling them Daesh or Taliban.” Thus, because of the fear of being considered a terrorist, Esin’s friend changed her mind and decided not to wear a hijab as she did not want to encounter Islamophobic behaviors.

Sumbul, an Afghan woman who is 47 years old, experienced Islamophobia while she was working at a bank, where one of her customers asked strange questions about hijabs and marriages. I should state that apart from Esin and Zahra, who wear headscarves, Sumbul did not wear a headscarf, which did not make her a target for Islamophobic behavior. However, her country of origin, Afghanistan, along with her physical appearance, such as her dark hair and brown skin, resulted in her facing bigotry. Sumbul explained:

> When I was working at a bank, an arrogant white guy came up to me. I had never seen him before. He sat down, and back then, they were very curious about these people. If you look a bit different because of what was happening in the world, they're like Where are you from? This guy looked at me and said, Where are you from? I used to be afraid or embarrassed to say I was from Afghanistan, but I said Afghanistan. He's like Oh, you can work. Like, yeah, why couldn't I work? Are you married? I said, Why are you asking me these questions? Does your husband have four wives? I looked him in the face. He said, Do you cover? They're referring to the burka. What they see on TV in the villages in Afghanistan is a small number of people doing it out of fear. Village women are uneducated, and most Afghan women do not dress like that. They dress very modern and Westernized. And he's like, Where's your cover? I was getting a little irritated with him. I said it's hanging in the back; would you like me to go where it is and return and display it for you? He knew I was being sarcastic. And

> then he's laughing, he's like, Are you married? I said no. He asked whether men had four wives in Afghanistan. I said no. Then, I said I live in the United States and have four husbands.

This quote highlights that Sumbul expressed embarrassment, fear, and discomfort regarding her dialogue with her customer. She further continued:

> I remember people would think I'm Arab. And you know we work hard. When we work hard, for example, the difference between Afghans, Arabs, Turkish, and Iranians when we work hard, we strive to buy a beautiful home, nice cars, dress nice, you know, take care of ourselves, and just because they would see me drill up to work in a brand new Mercedes right or they would know where I live, which part of town they're like oh. Is your dad's oil money buying you this oil money? They would never think a woman like me could work hard and buy those things. They would automatically assume I have some prominent oil places back home because they're so arrogant here; they don't understand anything.

Sumbul also told me how she was identified with an Arab identity, which turned into gendered, discriminatory behavior.

Additionally, my data reveals that female children also encounter Islamophobic incidents in schools. Afghan women, as parents, must deal with their daughters' situations in schools due to wearing headscarves. Thus, it is more challenging for Afghan mothers to cope with Islamophobia faced by their daughters, who are minors, as this situation affects their children's mental health and social interactions adversely.

Zahra herself faced Islamophobia in the workplace, mentioning a similar incident with her daughter, who encountered physical contact in school due to her headscarf. She noticed this incident as her daughter no longer wanted to wear her headscarf. She shared:

> My daughter wore her 'Çador,' but after two months, she told me she did not want to wear it. I said, " Why? " but she did not answer. Then, I went to her school to ask her friends if anything had happened. Her friends told me that while she was playing with her friends-they were probably Mexicans-they took her 'Çador' off. Then, she cried.

Zahra discussed this incident with the school administrator, but was unsuccessful. She maintained:

> I went to the school administrator to report this incident. I told the administrator I would file a complaint and would like to talk to that student's parents. I said this was the United States, where there were laws. And this was my right. I would give them a warning. Then, the administrator told me not to raise the incident further, and I did so. At that time, I did not speak English very well. I did not know what else I could say.

Thus, due to her poor English and being unfamiliar with the system as a new refugee in the United States, Zahra was unable to do anything. This incident has deeply affected her daughter in school, who felt insecure and excluded. And her daughter no longer wanted to wear her Çador. "My daughter said I would do everything religiously, such as praying and fasting, but for god's sake, I do not want this Çador. As a mother, I do not force her to wear it anymore," Zahra added.

Esin's daughter, who wears a hijab, faced similar problems as Zahra's daughter. Esin observed that her daughter was experiencing significant pressure at school, which hurt her relationships with her classmates. She explained:

> In school, my daughter was not social much. Somehow, she was not feeling okay with her hijab in the classroom because nobody was wearing one. This situation got worse when there were Taliban or Daesh attacks in any Islamic country on the news. For example, if someone attacks by saying 'Allahu Akbar (God is greater),' she thinks that she would be responsible since she was wearing a hijab in the classroom. Because of this, I noticed that she was feeling lonely. Her teachers told me she was not talking to anybody.

Esin's daughter felt socially excluded in school due to Islamophobia. Then, Esin negotiated with her daughter to solve this issue. She continued:

> My daughter told me she was not feeling okay with the hijab. Instead of the hijab, she wanted to wear a hoodie. I said that's fine. Then, she was feeling better. However, in summer, nobody can wear a hoodie. It is going to be super-hot. I told her that if she does not want to wear a hoodie or hijab, that's fine. I don't want to force them to be Muslim. We have some Muslim women who do not wear a hijab. I said, 'Be a good girl.' I wanted to give this freedom to my daughter because I did not want to see her in a bad mood. Maybe she'll do something to her that I cannot imagine.

Thus, instead of the hijab, her daughter started wearing a hoodie. However, in the end, Esin made it a personal choice for her daughter, as she did not want her daughter to stay lonely.

Interestingly, Esin legitimized her behavior to her daughter by comparing the United States with Afghanistan regarding rules and social environment. She explained:

> In the United States, I cannot force her. If this situation had been in Afghanistan, she could have seen everybody around her who was wearing a hijab. Without forcing, she could be okay with that. But here, since she is not OK with that, I don't want to push her. I can force her for one year, two years, or three years, but what about in the future? How long can I force her to wear the hijab? Therefore, I gave this option to her. She will decide by herself.

Hence, this quote shows that context for Esin is important, as she compared the United States with Afghanistan. And finally, she gave her daughter the freedom to wear a hijab or not.

Overall, this section has focused on Islamophobia experienced by Afghan people, including female minor students in everyday life, due to wearing headscarves, and their handling strategies with Islamophobia.

5.2.1 Islamophobia and Suspicion

I also asked my informants whether they experienced any other behaviors from the members of the host society for being Muslim, which does not necessarily have to relate to discriminatory hate speech or behaviors, or bigotry. Some Afghan individuals articulated that they were approached by some members of the host society who wanted to convert them to Christianity. Latifa, 29 years old, mentioned an incident she experienced upon her resettlement in the greater Sacramento area:

> When I relocated here, I made a friend who was probably of Filipino origin. She was helping immigrants. She said they would organize a party for only women, and I would have a good time with my kids, so she invited me. But I did not accept it because she always talked about Jesus. I said I was busy with kids. Every day, she said to me, ‘Come and bring your husband.’ One day, I decided to go there. They took me to a different room, and they were singing songs. I thought it was a concert, but I think they were praying. I don't know whether you’ve faced something like this. They were singing about Jesus.

This situation caused Latifa to cut ties with her friend, as Latifa did not feel safe, although her friend was a kind person and helped immigrants. She continued:

> These people overthink. This is the same problem with the Taliban. They overthink Islam. I am afraid of these people. I am a Muslim, but I never want to overthink like ISIS and the Taliban. I think all of them overthink, so it's dangerous. People who talk about Jesus are terrifying. I hope that in the future, my kids don't face such a problem for being Muslim.

Thus, Latifa believes that people like her friend have the same mentality as those Muslims who are extremists.

Additionally, I asked Afghan individuals whether anyone from the host community had visited their homes to discuss Christianity, specifically Jesus. As a researcher from Türkiye, I encountered such situations in the United States, and some Afghans in this study mentioned them. Therefore, I wanted to ask everyone about their encounters with those people in this study. I am not sure if those members of the host community directly targeted Afghans because of their Muslim identity. Tahir, a Pashtun Afghan in his 40s, mentioned a local person who came to his house to talk about Christianity to convert him, but he said to that person that he was a Muslim and did not want to convert to Christianity. Then, that person left. Like Tahir, Esin experienced the same incident: "Those people who talk about Jesus also came to my house. I tell them I am a Muslim, and I also believe in 'Isa (Jesus).' Then, they leave."

Although some Afghan individuals have not experienced any adverse incidents regarding Islamophobia, they may still feel insecure and excluded because of being scrutinized. Muzafar, a 34-year-old married man, articulated:

> I haven't experienced anything as such, but you could see it in people's faces, like facial expressions, you know their moods and attitudes, especially if you travel to a neighborhood where there is racial dominance, which is either Latino, black, or white, you know. If you travel to any of such neighborhoods or cities and then you're walking there with your wife having a hijab or a scarf on her head, you could see people who would look at you, and they would like to check you, like double-check here, you know, you could see it. But I haven't had any first-hand experience with someone coming to me or telling me something.

Thus, this quote addresses how Muzafar's wife wearing a Hijab draws attention when they walk through a neighborhood. Muzafar made an interesting point about the Sacramento community and Islamophobia:

> Those people's concerns are valid. Luckily, I should say that Sacramento is diversified enough, you know. Here, people are somehow getting used to it. It is almost becoming a norm for Afghan girls or Muslim girls. I should say it is not just Afghans, but Iraqis, Pakistanis, or other nationalities. They are wearing headscarves. I didn't see anyone objecting to that. Schools are getting used to it, for example, if we're having the Eid holidays, they expect that 50% of their students won't show up for the next two or three days due to the Eid. And one of the schools, I don't remember the name, but the entire school was off for three days due to Eid, because this is like, you know, the majority of our students are Afghan kids, and they don't show up. We'll have only five or six kids in the classrooms, so let's cancel that day.

Thus, Muzafar also noted that people in Sacramento seem more welcoming to Muslims due to the city's diversity and residents' familiarity with the Muslim religious practices, such as Eid, which he viewed as a positive development.

Overall, this section focused on the experiences of Afghans who experience Islamophobia through suspicion in daily life, being targeted by host community members to be converted to Christianity. Moreover, the section discussed that Islamophobia is still a prominent issue, and any ethnic/racial group can manifest Islamophobic behaviors in the United States.

5.3 The Context of Türkiye

In Türkiye, Afghan refugees experience social insecurity and exclusion due to their ethnic identities in the economic and social landscape of the country (Tunç and Güllüpınar 2024). More specifically, they encounter xenophobia and intolerance through various narratives, such as stealing work or being responsible for increasing rent, and discrimination, such as challenges in renting an apartment. Xenophobia and intolerance also transform into hate speech in everyday life (Babacan and Babacan 2013; Merheb and Loughna 2006; Young 1999).

My data shows that Afghan refugees face social insecurity and exclusion through discriminatory practices in the economic landscape of the country. This social insecurity and exclusion often begin with being labeled as Afghans by members of the host society in everyday life. Gul, living in the Zeytinburnu district of Istanbul, shared, “When I go downtown or to the bazaar, they say, ‘Look, Afghans are everywhere.” As another piece of evidence, Latif, 25 years old and single, living in Istanbul, said, “When we tell people we are from Afghanistan, people do not like it. Everybody complains about us.” Therefore, these two quotes show that Afghans can be labeled automatically, especially in places like Zeytinburnu or Trabzon, where a significant number of them live.

This labelling as Afghans can also result in various narratives that they often encounter within the economic context, such as taking job opportunities from Turkish citizens. For example, Hidayat, an Uzbek Afghan, aged 33 and married, residing in Trabzon, said, “Everywhere, people say Afghans come to our country and steal our work, but we don’t steal their work.” Similarly, Murtaza, a 34-year-old married man living in Trabzon, said, “I experience this frequently. People tell us we take their jobs, as employers hire us, not them, because we work cheaper than they do and do not have insurance." Thus, both Hidayat and Murtaza highlighted that the members of the host society believe that Afghans take their employment opportunities. Zaahir, a 25-year-old resident of Istanbul province, experienced similar incidents to those of Hidayat and Murtaza, which had a detrimental effect on his relations with his co-workers. He explained:

> I lived in Kırklareli province for six months and made cheese in a factory. People would constantly ask me why I left my own country. For instance, a woman would tell her friends why Afghan people left their country and came here. She would say our children were unemployed because of us. I didn't have a bad relationship with those people, but I experienced discrimination, so I didn't hang out with them much.

These quotes from Hidayat, Murtaza, and Zaahir show that Afghan refugees often face intolerance, as they are viewed as a threat to the economy by members of the host society in Türkiye (Merheb and Loughna 2006). They can also refrain from interacting with the members of the host society.

Interestingly, this economic exclusion that Afghan refugees mention is also about Afghan shop owners in Trabzon who believe Turkish customers discriminate against them by not buying items from their shops, despite selling the same items as Turkish shop owners do. For example, Ishaq, a 35-year-old single man, mentioned that most of his customers were Afghans and Syrians:

> When Turks come to our shop, they see that we are foreigners or Afghans, and they do not shop. Whatever Turkish shop owners sell, we sell the same stuff. However, Turks do not come to us. They tell us we are foreigners. Only some of my neighbors come to us to buy items. Our customers are mostly Afghans and Syrians.

Thus, Ishaq emphasized how he felt discriminated against by the Turkish customers who do not shop there because of his ethic identity. Qadir, another shop owner who is 45 years old and married, expressed similar thoughts about his customers: mostly Afghans, Arabs, or Iranians. Only ten percent of his customers were Turkish. He shared one of his experiences with me in this way:

> One month ago, a Turkish /person came into our shop. That person was going to buy some stuff. He realized my Turkish was not good when we talked during the payment. Then, he asked me whether I was a foreigner. I said yes. He left the stuff he grabbed. Then, he left the shop.

Therefore, Qadir was discriminated against by his customer, as he could not speak Turkish well and had an accent.

Overall, these experiences of Afghans demonstrate that their ethnic identities often place them in a disadvantaged position, contributing to social and economic exclusion in the labor market

and in their roles as shop owners (Babacan and Babacan 2013; Barry and Hallett 1998; Young 1999).

Another facet of social exclusion happens in housing, as Afghan refugees encounter discrimination in renting apartments in Istanbul and Trabzon due to their ethnic identities. Diyar, living in Istanbul, shared, "When we try to rent a house, they ask us where we are from. When we say Afghanistan, they say, No, brother, we do not rent it to foreigners." This issue in Trabzon is more common, possibly because it is less cosmopolitan than Istanbul. Ishaq said, "Now, they do not rent an apartment to foreigners. They ask you where you are from. When you answer Afghanistan, they say no, we do not rent it to foreigners." Like Diyar and Ishaq, Barat, aged 35 and married, experienced the same issue. He articulated:

> The owner initially agreed to rent my home to me through my friend, but when I met the landlord in person, he refused because he did not want to rent it to foreigners. The landlord said foreigners do not take care of the apartment and pay the rent. My friend intervened and explained that I would work as a painter and plasterer and that he could vouch for me. After this, the owner approved, and I signed the contract. I have been living here for five years.

Thus, Barat's friend played a key role in renting his apartment. Then, he was evicted by his landlord, so he needed to find an apartment again. He experienced similar challenges. He continued:

> My landlord told me one month ago that he would renovate the house and asked me to move out. I did so. I struggled to find this new apartment as a foreigner, and when I finally found one, the landlord again hesitated to rent it to me. I explained my situation to my employer, who talked to the landlord on the phone. My employer said I was trustworthy since I had worked with him for five years; thus, he could vouch for me. After this, the landlord agreed to rent the apartment to me.

This time, Barat's employer helped him rent the apartment. These quotes from Barat show an interesting point that, in some situations, Afghan refugees are also referred to as foreigners and discriminated against.

Another Afghan man, Safiullah, 46 years old and divorced, has experienced discrimination in renting an apartment and particularly addressed how landlords approached Afghans when they tried to rent an apartment. He explained:

> I could not rent a house for one or two months. People told me they would inform their decisions, but they never responded. Or, sometimes, they intentionally increased the rent. Why? Because they increase rents, they think we cannot afford to rent it. There are also such things in Türkiye. There are both bad and good people in Türkiye. I hosted some Afghans in my house until they could find a place.

Therefore, Safiullah emphasized that landlords intentionally raised rents or were unresponsive when he tried to rent his apartment.

Additionally, my research shows that social insecurity and exclusion that Afghan refugees experience in Türkiye transform into hate speech in everyday life. Nadir, 27 years old and single, residing in Istanbul, conveyed an incident he experienced regarding this situation:

> I resemble a Turk more than an Afghan. A 'kahvehane (a coffee house)' is near me, where I often go to drink a coffee. One day, a man walked in and made derogatory comments about Afghans. He said, 'Look at those Afghans. They can go anywhere freely. They do different things (in a negative meaning).' He did not know that I was an Afghan. If he had known, he would have told me some negative things. I did not respond to him.

Thus, this quote shows that Nadir faced hate speech by the members of the host society due to his ethnic background and his appearance.

Armaghan was another Afghan who experienced hate crimes in her life. My Uzbek-Afghan translator, a political science master's student in Istanbul, spoke on the phone with Armaghan, a 31-year-old Afghan woman, to arrange the meeting location for our interview. We decided to meet at Zeytinburnu Marmaray Station. From there, we would go to a coffee shop to conduct the interview. After ten minutes of waiting at the station, Armaghan arrived with her son. She wore a very modern outfit, including pants and a T-shirt, complemented by makeup. Her hair, especially striking for its short blue style, caught my attention. The way she dressed and the color of her hair suggested that she wanted to avoid drawing attention, particularly from police officers, as

she was undocumented. She pretended to be a tourist rather than a refugee to mask her legal status. Later, we discussed which coffee shop we would use for the interview and how we would reach it without being spotted by the police officers. Then, we began walking through a passageway and onto the main street. While walking, we remained cautious and tried to avoid drawing attention. Finally, we entered a restaurant owned by Kazaks to conduct the interview.

I wanted to share this anecdote because Armaghan was verbally harassed while walking on the street in the Zeytinburnu district due to her appearance, including her dressing style and her country of origin. She said, "Someone told me why I would wear like this in Türkiye and why I would wear differently in Afghanistan. That person intervened in my dressing style." Armaghan did not face only verbal harassment; she also confronted hate speech due to rent increases associated with foreigners. She stated, "When walking on the street with my child, someone told me why we were here. That person said to me that rents increased because of us. She also told me some bad words and threw a stone at me. After this, police (or municipal police) intervened and separated us." Armaghan did not understand this hate speech from one of the members of the host society due to her poor Turkish, but his child understood. Similarly, Gul, an Afghan woman aged 44 who was living with her two daughters, experienced hate speech at one of her daughters' workplaces for being Afghan. She said, "I went to my daughter's workplace one month ago. A Turkish woman saw us and noticed we were Afghans. Immediately, she started to swear at us. She said we were dirty and should leave this country." Hence, this quote shows how Armaghan was scapegoated for bad things happening in Türkiye.

Furthermore, Afghan refugees confront hate speech in everyday life due to speaking their languages, accompanied by phenotypic traits. Bahadur, an Afghan student, 26 years old and single, explained his encounter with hate speech as follows: "We were walking on the street,

speaking in our language. Sometimes, we have to speak in our language, Uzbek. A woman said, 'a dirty Afghan' for us." I asked Bahadur why they called them Afghans but not other nationalities like Syrians. He explained, "We look like Afghans in terms of facial features. Also, we do not speak Arabic, but Syrians speak Arabic. Turkish people are familiar with Arabic. However, our language is Uzbek. We also use Persian words or speak in Persian. This is how they recognize us." Thus, he addressed phenotypic and linguistic aspects, which led him to face hate speech.

Finally, Afghan shop owners in Trabzon can face hate speech in everyday life. Ishaq, the shop owner, articulated this as follows: "Some Turks here drink Vodka or wine. They come and forcefully take some stuff from us. They swear at us. They say Afghans made this place terrible. They tell us to leave this country." Because of this constant hate speech, he cannot open his shop by midnight, although customers still come. He also talked to officials about how those people would disturb them. However, the officials told him to close the shop at 9 pm; otherwise, they could not do anything. Another shop owner, Qadir, aged 45 and married, encountered hate. He said, "Sometimes, people come to the front of my shop. They swear at me. They tell me if anybody purchases anything from me, which is like they scoff at us."

Overall, this section discussed how Afghan refugees experience social insecurity and exclusion, including xenophobia, discrimination, and hate speech in everyday life due to their ethnic backgrounds.

5.3.1 Responding to Social Insecurity and Exclusion, Including Xenophobia, Discrimination, and Hate Speech

I also asked my informants what they think of the social insecurity and exclusion they face in everyday life, including xenophobia, intolerance, and hate speech, and how they respond to

these. My data show that Afghan refugees are not passive people, and they often respond to these incidents by explaining and informing the host society members about the intolerance and misunderstandings towards Afghans and their country. Bahadur explained:

> People think about Afghanistan as bad. I do not know if they heard from the media. However, I explain to them, including those in my workplace, that they're wrong. After that, most people apologize to me. For example, last time, a guest came from Van province. We hosted that person one night because he did not have shelter. He told me he had heard negative things about Afghans. For example, Afghans were ignorant. However, after staying with us, he told us there were good and intellectual Afghans. He was surprised.

Thus, Bahadur informs the members of the host society about Afghans and his country to cope with social insecurity and exclusion.

While explaining their situations, Afghan refugees often refer to the war conditions in Afghanistan, which propelled them to migrate to Türkiye. Ismail said, "I do explain the situation in Afghanistan to them. I tell them I didn't want to leave my house, but I did because I lacked any other chance to live there." When the members of the host society ask Fereydoun about why he left his country and migrated to Türkiye, he answers their questions as follows: "I tell them how many Turkish people live in Germany. They say two or three million. I tell them why they left their country. Did they migrate to Germany for pleasure? No. Therefore, I told those people I didn't come to this country for pleasure. I had to come." Thus, Fereydoun compared Turkish people who migrated to Germany with Afghans who migrated to Türkiye to legitimize his migration to Türkiye, which was necessary.

Furthermore, Afghan refugees do not see themselves as a burden on the state in terms of receiving economic support and on the people for taking work or increasing rents. Murtaza said, "I am trying not to harm people and the state. I am not a burden on the state. The less we are a burden on the state, the better for us and the state. More specifically, Armaghan, who faced hate speech due to increasing rents, said, "There is no connection between us and the rent increase.

Here, we try to work to win our bread. We meet our expenses. Nobody, including the state, supports us. Since we have to stay here, we stay silent."

My data shows that the responses of Afghan refugees to social insecurity and exclusion include another important point, which is that Afghan refugees who identify themselves as Uzbek sub-identity emphasize their Turkic (or Turkish) origin to cope with xenophobia towards them in Türkiye. Nadir remarked, "In some places, people tell me I am from Afghanistan, but I am not Afghan. I am an Uzbek. I tell them I come from their descent and share the same history. Sometimes, people in the "kahvehane" (the coffee house) and even police officers get softer, as they understand me." As we will see in this passage by Nadir, the Uzbek Afghans use their sub-identity strategically in daily life to grapple with misunderstandings and misconceptions toward them. This strategy also emphasizes the same descent and history. Similarly, Bahadur articulated:

> We have suffered a lot for being a Turk in Afghanistan. Our ancestors and we have struggled not to assimilate into Afghanistan. We have tried to protect our culture and language. We should also develop ourselves to guarantee our future. Because of this, I came to Türkiye, as I had big expectations from Türkiye. I thought that Türkiye would have protected us, and I would have had a better life, including a good job. However, I experienced that we must constantly prove our Turkish identity in Türkiye. We must tell the Turkish people we're Turkish. We're also under pressure here because of these political issues.

Therefore, Bahadur emphasized his Turkish background by referring to a shared culture and language, as well as the challenges these created in their lives in Afghanistan.

Hidayat, who holds a Turkish residence permit, drew attention to issues with finding a job in Türkiye. He stated, "Some employers are seeking workers. When we ask them if they'll hire us, they ask where we're from. We say Afghanistan. Then, they say no, but when you say we are from Uzbekistan (like Uzbek), they say Okay. But if they look at our passports, they see we are from Afghanistan. Then, it will be a problem." Thus, this quote shows how being an Uzbek

Afghan facilitates employment in Türkiye because of their Turkic or Turkish background. More superficially, he experienced this situation when he sought a job. He emphasized his sub-identity to be hired. He thinks that this situation started anew because of economic problems in Türkiye. There was no such thing before. He continued, "Before, when we said we were from Afghanistan, they would call us brothers. People now ponder whether to hire me when I say I am from Afghanistan. Then, I tell them I am an Uzbek Afghan and have been working and living in Türkiye. I also have a residency permit. Then, they hire me." Thus, emphasizing his Uzbek-Afghan sub-identity along with his residence permit helped him get hired.

Overall, this section highlighted strategies Afghan refugees employed to cope with xenophobia and intolerance in Türkiye, including explaining their circumstances to members of the host society and emphasizing their Turkish/Turkic background.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter explores another structural force that produces human insecurity for refugees due to cultures that discriminate against them, based on various arbitrary classifications, including race and gender (The United Nations Development Programme 1994; Vietti and Scribner 2013a). It specifically focuses on social insecurity faced by refugees in the host societies due to xenophobia and intolerance toward them from members of the host society, who can perceive them as a threat to economic prosperity, social stability, and/or cultural identity (Merheb and Loughna 2006). Social insecurity is also related to social exclusion that immigrants may face in the host society, due to multidimensional disadvantages that severely affect their lives, from economic exclusion to social isolation (Babacan and Babacan 2013; Young 1999). Social exclusion can occur along various axes, such as race, gender, class, ethnicity, and religion, as well as across cultures and abilities.

Drawing on this body of literature, this chapter argues that Afghan refugees experience various forms of social insecurity and exclusion in the United States and Türkiye, shaped by structural forces, including immigration policies. In the United States, they experience social insecurity and exclusion due to their Muslim identities, which means they face Islamophobia in daily life through discrimination, hate speech, and bigotry. In particular, Afghan women and their daughters who wear headscarves directly face Islamophobic behavior in public settings, from workplaces to schools. These women socially isolate themselves and change their behavior to cope with Islamophobia. Additionally, this chapter highlights that Afghan refugees experience Islamophobia through suspicion and can be targeted by members of the host society to convert them to Christianity. Thus, the US section reveals that Afghans encounter Islamophobia from members of the host society, who view them as a threat to the socio-cultural landscape of the United States.

In Türkiye, Afghan refugees experience social insecurity and exclusion because of their ethnic identities. I highlight that the 1934 settlement law, which emphasizes the migration and integration of people of Turkish origin and culture, plays a role in this. Therefore, my findings show that members of the host society view Afghans as a threat to the country's socio-economic landscape. More specifically, Afghans face discrimination, intolerance, and insecurity in everyday life, such as when seeking a job or accessing housing. In some situations, these insecurities and exclusions manifest as hate speech that Afghans endure in everyday life. Moreover, my data shows that Afghans respond to social insecurity and exclusion, including xenophobia and intolerance, by explaining their conditions to members of the host society. A group of Afghan refugees identifying themselves as Uzbek sub-identity refer to their Turkish or Turkic background to grapple with xenophobia in Türkiye.

The following chapter focuses on how these insecurities, particularly legal and economic insecurities, have far-reaching effects on Afghan refugee men's gender identity and status through the lens of notions of precarious masculinity and masculinity crisis.

Chapter 6: Gendered Insecurity: Precarious Masculinity and Masculinity Crisis

6.1 Introduction

In previous chapters, I mentioned Muzafar, a 34-year-old man, who migrated to the United States as an SIV holder in 2014. He was married and had four children, ages fourteen, eleven, and seven, plus a newborn. He graduated as an air traffic controller from the Civil Aviation Institute in 2007 and has worked at Kabul Airport since then. He then worked as an interpreter for the US Army in Afghanistan because he spoke English well and could earn more.

After resettling in the United States, he worked in a data entry position at Apple on a temporary contract, which lasted one year and paid minimum wage with no benefits. Due to these precarious working conditions, he resigned and began working at Walmart. This job provided better working conditions, including a slightly higher income. More importantly, Muzafar was employed in roles that did not align with his educational and professional background. Therefore, he contacted federal authorities to request an evaluation of his documents and to transfer his credentials from Afghanistan to the United States so that he could work at an airport. However, his application was rejected because he was not a US citizen. Thus, he attended college to study computer science. During his college education, he worked as an Uber driver, allowing him to study while earning an income. After receiving his associate's degree, he found another job at a non-governmental organization in his field, earning more and enjoying better working conditions. He plans to pursue a BA degree in the following years.

The interesting point is that Muzafar could maintain a comfortable standard of living in Afghanistan despite earning a lower income because he received his salary in US dollars, rather than the Afghan Afghani. There was a significant disparity between the US dollar and the Afghan Afghani. Muzafar stated that expenses in the United States were considerably higher.

For example, he expressed concerns about the higher cost of living, particularly regarding his children's needs in the United States. He keeps expenses low because he is the sole provider of the household, coping with economic precarity.

Moreover, Muzafar's wife is not working, but he believes her employment is essential and is supporting her, given the economic precarity his family faces. She has enrolled in online English courses offered by a local college to improve her English skills and plans to pursue an associate's degree. She handles all childcare responsibilities because he and his wife recently welcomed a baby. Also, he asserted that childcare or daycare costs could be high even if she works. Therefore, these situations necessitate that she remain at home to care for their children.

This chapter delves into immigration-related insecurity through gender, focusing on male precariousness experienced by Afghan refugee men in the United States and Türkiye (Vandello et al. 2008). The loss of gendered power that Afghan men face after refugee migration may differ between Türkiye and the United States due to the varying contexts and specific insecurities they encounter in each destination. Thus, I argue that Afghan refugee men experience and perceive these insecurities as a loss of masculinity, which is manifested through social practices within household and community relationships. These practices differ between the United States and Türkiye because of the distinct insecurities Afghan refugees face in each context. To explore how men lose their sense of masculinity and whether they regain it after forced migration amidst legal and economic insecurities, I employ the concepts of precarious masculinity and masculinity crisis. These concepts are illustrated by the experiences of Afghan refugee men in the United States and Türkiye, which serve as the theoretical basis for this analysis. I illustrate that masculinities are precarious and can be lost after forced migration, when refugee men face difficulties in supporting their families economically. Moreover, precarious

masculinity can evolve into a masculinity crisis for a group of men due to the intersecting axes, including age and health conditions, which hinder employment opportunities or lead to job loss (Whitehead 2007). Therefore, insecurity leads to a crisis for these men who express negative sentiments and must rely on other family members, including their wives and children, and/or assistance from the state or non-governmental organizations to survive, especially in Türkiye.

Anthropologist David D. Gilmore (1991:11) stated that real manhood is a precarious state that must be earned rather than a natural condition that occurs spontaneously with biological maturation. Drawing on this definition, scholarship has used the term precarious masculinity, which portrays manhood as a precarious social status that is considered elusive, meaning it must be earned or achieved (Bosson and Vandello 2011; Vandello et al. 2008; Vandello and Bosson 2013; Wade and Ferree 2019). Additionally, scholarship has addressed that manhood is tenuous and easily lost due to social transgressions and shortcomings, such as "losing a job" or "being unable to support a family." Lastly, it requires public demonstrations of proof through actions that people confirm, as it can be perceived as a matter of social rather than biological status (Bosson and Vandello 2011; Vandello et al. 2008; Vandello and Bosson 2013).

The notion of precarious masculinity is related to the concept of a masculinity crisis, which describes the erosion of the traditional code for masculine role behavior, such as the good-provider role, accompanied by gender role strain resulting from a failure to meet the code's expectations (Levant 1997, 2011; Pleck 1995). One of the key factors behind the masculinity crisis is the erosion of male labor due to capitalist transformation and the feminist movement since the 1970s (Çarpar and Göktuna Yaylaci 2021; Kimmel and Aronson 2004; Koyuncu Lorasdağı and Onur İnce 2004). Men who lose the good-provider role tend to search for

alternatives by constructing new definitions of masculinity that involve devoting themselves to work or denying their situations.

However, the scholarship has also approached the concept of a masculinity crisis cautiously, as the term "crisis" implies the destruction or restoration of a system. However, masculinity is not a system but rather a configuration of practice within a system of gender relations. Therefore, we cannot speak of the crisis of a configuration. Instead, we can discuss its disruption or transformation (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Furthermore, men are a heterogeneous group and are torn apart by contesting pressures and variables across class, culture, ethnicity, economics, education, nationhood, and sexuality (Whitehead 2007). Certain groups of men face a masculinity crisis, but this does not necessarily mean a stable shift in men's structural power (Hearn 1999). As women gain more power, the symbolic relationship between men's power and women's weakness shakes up; thus, men believe that they face a masculinity crisis (Segal 2006).

In particular, migrant men can lose their sense of masculinity due to unemployment and low-paid work (Pease 2009), which leads them to face challenges in fulfilling their breadwinner roles (Pease and Crossley 2009). They may feel feminized because of disempowerment and a reduced sense of masculine achievement as family providers (Friedman 2017). They might also adopt different strategies to reaffirm their masculinity, including being more resistant or emphasizing their breadwinner role through paid employment (Çarpar and Göktuna Yaylaci 2021).

This debate on the notions of precarious masculinity and the masculinity crisis relates to whether men see themselves as the only providers and how they view women's paid work. The loss of masculinity is tied to a cultural erosion experienced by men in their patriarchal positions after forced migration. Migrant men may view their wives' paid employment as a threat to their masculine identity, even if they remain unemployed (Pease 2009). In this way, migrant men

reconstruct their cultural position by opposing women's paid work to preserve patriarchal culture (Çarpar and Göktuna Yaylaci 2021). However, the scholarship also noted that the men's attitudes toward women's paid employment may vary. In her study on gender relations among Central American women in the United States, Cecilia Menjivar (1999) argued that while some men are opposed to their wives' paid employment, which can potentially reduce household services, some other men view the financial contribution as valuable, as it enables the family to survive (Yalim and Critelli 2023) and helps them send remittances to relatives in their home countries. Still, different men may have mixed feelings about their wives' paid employment.

Drawing on this line of literature, my data show that following migration to the United States, Afghan refugee men embody precarious masculinities as they lose their manhood, which is viewed as a threat to their gender identity, as they often find it challenging to support their families fully due to economic precarity. Afghan men reclaim their manhood by working extensively or pursuing a college education to obtain a degree, thereby improving their job prospects and providing better for their families. Moreover, men reclaim their manhood by participating in third spaces, where they socialize and build solidarity with other Afghan men. However, my research also indicates that regaining masculinity constitutes a challenging process for Afghan men, who often require their wives to contribute to family finances through paid employment. Yet, Afghan women cannot speak English and are responsible for childcare, preventing women from working outside the home. Also, Afghan men oppose their wives working in "entry-level" jobs, such as cleaning, which will not bring better opportunities in the future. Thus, Afghan men encourage their wives to learn English and pursue a college education.

In Türkiye, Afghan men face the associated challenges of precarious manhood, akin to their counterparts in the United States, as they struggle to fulfill their provider roles. Legal insecurity

in Türkiye, compared to the United States, is the driving force that constrains men's opportunities to secure better employment and meet their families' needs. Afghan men also face hyper-precarity, including constant exploitation of their labor. Additionally, this study emphasizes that a group of men, including Suleiman, confront a masculinity crisis, as they can't achieve their manhood, stemming from not only legal and economic insecurities but also some other intersecting dimensions, including aging and health conditions. These men show extremely negative emotions, including being too fragile and feeling insufficient. Regaining masculinity constitutes a more challenging process for Afghan men in Türkiye, as they are trapped in economic precarity, and their legal status does not allow them to engage in finding better employment or taking college degrees, as in the United States. Additionally, they are unable to reclaim their manhood by participating in third spaces, where they socialize with other Afghan men and develop solidarity.

This chapter begins to examine the loss of masculinity in the US context, followed by challenges faced by Afghan men as family providers. Then, the chapter focuses on how Afghan men regain their manhood. Finally, it documents responses from Afghan men to women's paid employment, followed by debates on language and childcare issues that Afghan women encounter. The section of Türkiye explores the loss of masculinity and the masculinity crisis among Afghan men. Later, it focuses on how Afghan men reclaim their manhood. Finally, it analyzes their responses toward women's paid employment.

6.2 The US's Context

6.2.1 The Loss of Masculinities after Migration

In the chapter on economic insecurity, I argued that SIV holders were well-educated and held middle- to upper-class jobs in Afghanistan, enjoying lives characterized by solid incomes and

homeownership. However, upon resettlement in the United States, these men faced a decline in their class status, as they were employed below their qualifications, paid minimum wage, and offered temporary contracts. As a result, Afghan men conveyed the challenges of supporting their families in the United States compared to their previous lives in Afghanistan, expressing sentiments that providing for their families has become difficult and overwhelming.

Ahmet, a married Afghan father of two, aged 11 and 5, illustrates a great example of this. He studied law and political science in Afghanistan and worked for a company that provided information technology (IT) solutions to the US and Afghan armies for eight years. Upon migrating to the United States and resettling in Sacramento in December 2015, he remained unemployed for five months. He shared, "During the first months, I was busy with my paperwork and getting my license. I then began seeking a job, but it was difficult for me to find one because I was unfamiliar with the procedure. I was jobless for almost five months." Then Ahmet went to two or three places for warehouse jobs, where he began working but had to stop because he found it very physically demanding. Later, he secured a temporary one-year job at Apple, earning minimum wage. After this, he drove for Uber for three years but had to pause the job due to the COVID-19 lockdown; as a result, he remained unemployed again for two months. Ahmet remarked, "You know it costs me too much, as we have different payments, such as rent and car insurance. Because of these, it is difficult for me, and my wife is not working." Thus, as the household's breadwinner, he faced challenges supporting his family after migrating to the United States.

Similar to Ahmet, Ali embodied precarious masculinity after migrating to the United States, which means he lost his manhood due to the challenges he faced in terms of performing his provider role in the household. Ali, 43, was the father of three children aged

11, 14, and 15. He studied Medicine in Afghanistan, where he worked as a doctor at a public hospital and later held a position in protocol assessment at the US Embassy in Kabul. Later, he established his business, conducting health-related projects in Afghanistan. Ali relocated to the United States in 2014 and resettled in the greater Sacramento area, where he first volunteered for a non-governmental organization. However, Ali needed to "feed his family," as he was the sole provider in the household, which compelled him to secure a job immediately. The main issue with Ali was that he was overqualified for certain jobs in the labor market, making it difficult for him to secure one. He said, "I am overqualified because I have a medical degree. When people ask me about my bachelor's degree, I do not say it is in Medicine. Instead, I tell them I am a high school graduate. Some jobs do not hire people with higher education. So this is why I say this." Then, he found a part-time job in a hospital as a phlebotomist. He described his role as a provider in the family as "very overwhelming," as he must perform his role to support his family and children. He added, "My wife is a housewife who is not working, so I must provide food for her and my children."

Overall, the experiences of Ahmet and Ali illustrate how it became challenging for them to provide for their families after migrating to the United States, as they lost their gendered power and manhood. The following section focuses on specific challenges faced by Afghan refugee men as family providers.

6.2.2 The Challenging Aspects of Being a Provider

More specifically, Afghan men addressed various expenses that make it challenging to support their families in the United States. These expenses include school-related needs, such as school projects, utility bills, and rent payments. When they articulate challenges in meeting

these expenses, they also refer to their living conditions in Afghanistan to show how difficult it was to meet living expenses as a breadwinner in the United States.

Ebrahim, a 42-year-old married man, has two children, ages 3 and 8. He earned his bachelor's degree in medicine and his master's degree in business administration in Afghanistan. He worked as a team leader and project manager in a company, followed by an advisor position to an Afghan minister. During this process, he also consulted American companies and the US Army in Afghanistan. He migrated and settled in Sacramento in 2017, where he initially worked in a marketing position for a local company and later found a different job in consulting. He explained:

> There's a lady who is now a medical interpreter at UC Davis Hospital. She studied for four years here and paid thousands of dollars, but she cannot secure a residency. You see, she spent four years, and she is still going nowhere. It's still zero progress for her. And she is a female. Based on Afghan culture, the responsibility of females for a hundred years has been to take care of the family. Her husband helped her study, but in my case, I have family here to support, and it is so hard to adjust to American life. Here, I pay for 10,000 things. I pay a high medical cost. One pound of tomatoes is two or three dollars. It was not like this in Afghanistan, where we used to pay for a good house, a four-bedroom apartment, just a maximum of $300. So, I'm running a family. I have responsibilities.

Therefore, Ebrahim paid particular attention to the unfavorable living conditions in the United States, comparing them with those in Afghanistan to emphasize that his role as a breadwinner for his family has become more difficult to perform due to economic precarity. Similar to Ebrahim, Ahmet emphasized the higher cost of living, especially rents in the Sacramento area, comparing them with those in Afghanistan. He shared, "Sacramento was cheaper when I arrived five years ago. Rents in other places, like Davis, were more expensive. Now, Sacramento is also expensive. Living conditions, especially rents, are much higher here compared to those in Afghanistan."

Since Ali and Ahmet have school-age children, they highlighted school expenses (in addition to utility bills) to emphasize how difficult it is for them to cover these costs. Ali, who had three children who were born in Afghanistan, explained:

> There are many expenses and responsibilities here compared to Afghanistan. My children attend a school with numerous events, projects, and sports programs. There are a lot of costs and activities, making it hard to keep up sometimes. Especially with one person working at home and paying for utilities, bills, and school. There are high transportation costs because children attend different schools.

Ahmet, who had two children, one of whom was born in Afghanistan, while the other was born upon migrating to the United States, articulated:

> You know, having kids in this country is hard. We set many budgets. In Afghanistan, we did not have these. Here, they have some field trips, such as going to camp. They watch movies in school. You should pay for this. You should pay for that. It is too costly. Here, it is hard. I do not want to have more kids.

These quotes from Ebrahim, Ali, and Ahmet illustrate that meeting their living expenses, including rent, bills, and their children's needs, has become more difficult for them as the sole breadwinners in their families.

Hamza, a 35-year-old man, addressed similar challenges, including both high rents and expenses for their children, by addressing insufficient federal financial support in meeting these costs. Hamza, a married man with three children aged 4, 5, and 9, studied agriculture in Afghanistan, where he worked on USAID and UN projects in monitoring and evaluation positions. He migrated to the United States in April 2014. He settled in the Sacramento area, where he initially worked at Apple and later transitioned to a temporary position with a non-governmental organization. He stated:

> Benefits do not cover all the expenses of a refugee here. For example, the rent of my home was $1.400, but I received $1,200 in cash aid from the government. I also had many other expenses, especially for the kids, which were too high for me. Therefore, in the beginning, I faced some financial problems. Then, after some months, I felt a little better; I mean, it was less difficult for me. Because of these problems, many refugees who come here face mental

> illness. I mean, they get problems. This is due to the high costs here, and the government doesn't help much.

Thus, Hamza mentioned economic challenges he faced after resettling in the United States and the insufficient federal financial support.

Additionally, some Afghan men, as breadwinners, provide financial support to their families back in Afghanistan by sending remittances. In addition to supporting his family in the United States, Hamza also helps his relatives in Afghanistan financially. He shared, "I am the only one working here to support my family, including my sister, brother, and father, who live in Afghanistan. I fully support them by sending money to them monthly, which is difficult for me." Ali similarly supports his family in Afghanistan, noting, "I am also helping my parents in Afghanistan. I must work for my family here and for my parents there." Thus, these quotes show that these Afghan men also support their family members in Afghanistan, which leads them to experience difficulties performing their provider roles for their families in the United States.

Overall, in this part, I argue how masculinities are precarious for a group of Afghan men who have trouble performing their provider roles in the household after migrating to the United States. Sending remittances to family members in Afghanistan puts more pressure on their roles. The experiences of these men illustrate how masculinities can be lost after forced migration, which undermines the power of men as good providers in the family due to economic precarity faced by them (Bosson and Vandello 2011; Çarpar and Göktuna Yaylaci 2021; Menjívar 1999; Vandello et al. 2008; Vandello and Bosson 2013). The following section argues that men engage in remasculinization strategies to restore their precarious masculinities and prove their masculinity.

6.2.3 Trying to Regain Masculinity

As I discussed in the chapter on economic insecurity, Afghan refugees employ various strategies to address their situation, such as seeking better jobs and/or pursuing a college education to develop their skills and find more stable employment in the United States. In addition to these, they often work part-time jobs for extra income. Their legal status allows them to pursue these strategies. I argue that these strategies, implemented by Afghan men, in turn shape their conceptions of masculinity as they work to regain or reclaim their manhood by providing better for their families (Bosson and Vandello 2011; Vandello et al. 2008; Vandello and Bosson 2013). Additionally, Afghan men reclaim their masculinity by participating in third spaces, such as Masjids, where they interact with other male community members and provide resources to one another.

As mentioned previously, Hamza expressed that he faced many challenges in covering his family's needs as the family's provider after migrating to the United States. Therefore, he constantly sought one that offered more stable working conditions, such as a higher income. After working at Apple and Siemens, he found a job at a non-governmental organization that offers improved working conditions, including a higher income. He said, "This job was way better than my previous jobs because the salary is much better than my previous jobs." Ali, working as a volunteer in a non-governmental organization, needed to secure paid employment as soon as possible to provide for his family. He found a job as a phlebotomist in a hospital. Simultaneously, he began studying to earn an associate's degree in pre-health occupations. He stated, "I work 60 to 70 hours a week to do all these things. I help not only myself but also my family. I have sacrificed for my family for the last five years. I did not have enough time for my children and my wife. I go to school, which means I have 4 or 5 hours at night to study—that's

all." Therefore, as a father of three children who must work and study, he sacrificed himself for his family by working excessively (Çarpar and Göktuna Yaylaci 2021).

The act of regaining and proving masculinity, especially for Ali, who stated he sacrificed himself for his family, often applies to other Afghan men who do extra work in their spare time, as they need additional income to support their families in both the United States and Afghanistan. Ebrahim, who worked in marketing and consultancy, expressed this by directly addressing his provider role in his family:

> Everyone wants extra money. Some people can become Uber drivers because they might not have other skills that I have. I luckily had another option: my master's degree or my medical degree. Through my master's degree, I could find a job or the skills that I needed for a job, for the prosperity of my family. The shame is if you cannot feed your family; that's the shame. In the past, I also did other consultancy jobs. I have even been looking for, and I'm still looking for, another side job. This is based on the energy level I will have. Earning extra bucks would be good. But this is also hard. You know, human capacity, physiology, and anatomy. You can work and sleep for 8 hours a day. It can make you tired if you work 10 or 12 hours a day.

Thus, Ebrahim emphasized the importance of working extra hours to fulfill his role as a family provider; otherwise, failing to provide for his family would be shameful.

One common job Afghan men, such as Ebrahim, mentioned in my interviews was driving for Uber or Lyft. Hamza, one of the Afghan individuals who went for Lyft to earn additional income, said, "When I joined this organization, I sometimes drove for Lyft on the weekend, but now I'm too busy. I don't have time to do it. If I lose my job, I can do it again when I have time or on the weekend. This is an excellent part-time job to make extra money." Like Hamza, Ali drove for Uber when he needed extra cash. He explained:

> Sometimes I am short. I am unable to meet financial expenses. Occasionally, I drove for Uber in the past when I was short. I do this when I need extra cash, not full-time, because it is difficult for me to work like this. I do it when I need a little bit more money. This job now covers my minimum costs, so I can't save and live in a better place. I live in a low-income neighborhood. My current salary covers just my costs. I need more income for a better

> neighborhood. That's why I am trying to get into school, like medical activities, for a better job, and then I will move to a different place.

Thus, in this quote, Ali emphasized that he sometimes could not cover his family's expenses and worked as a part-time Uber driver to meet their expenses and move out of his low-income neighborhood.

Moreover, my research suggests that Afghan men reclaim their manhood through cultural practices in third spaces, such as Masjids, sports tournaments, and picnic days, where they interact with other men and build solidarity. Afghan men go to the Masjid to pray, organize a soccer tournament to commemorate Abdul Ali Mazari, an important figure for Hazara Afghans, and spend picnic days together, bringing Afghans together. I have attended these spaces and observed and spoken with men about their lives in the United States. These spaces provide men with different resources. In Chapter 3, I described my experiences at a Masjid in Davis, where the Masjid's Imam discussed various topics to inform men who participated in prayer. One of the topics concerned a group of people who came to the Masjid to discuss the U.S. Census registration and the employment opportunities it provides to community members. Moreover, Baddar, whom I interviewed on the phone and met at a Masjid in Sacramento, stated,

> The Masjid is the main source we get every Friday. Yeah, almost like 3 or 4 hundred people come together, so the main reason, the main source in the community to find is the Masjid. Most of the people, even friends, have loved each other for 15 years at home; they find each other here, so the main source is the Masjid, so we get together on Friday. We can see each other. We can help each other. Where do we do? What do we do? If available any available jobs, the Masjid is the main source in the community.

Thus, Baddar emphasized that the Masjid offers a space for men who share information, including available employment opportunities for community members.

Soccer tournaments and picnic days are other third spaces where Afghan men gather and spend time together. For example, I participated in a picnic day in the Vacaville Valley with

Afghan men, and their wives and children. The valley was green in spring, surrounded by mountains, with a lagoon in the middle. Afghans spread a rug on the grass and sat on it. One thing that caught my attention was the segregation at the picnic, where men and women sat separately. I first noticed it at breakfast, when Afghan men cooked tomatoes, peppers, and eggs rather than women. The segregation continued all day. At lunch, men and women sat separately again. This segregation extended to games as well. For example, we played cornhole, also known regionally as sack toss or bags, a lawn game in which players or teams take turns throwing fabric bean bags at a raised, angled board with a hole at the far end. We then played with a ball for an hour. Later, Afghan men played a game like cricket.

At the picnic, I talked to several Afghan men about various topics. One of those men was Farid, who migrated to the United States in the summer of 2021 when the Taliban took control of the country. He faced different problems in the United States. Farid did not have a bachelor's degree in Afghanistan, so he wanted to go to college to earn an associate degree. Since he did not have a high school diploma, he needed to start from zero. He told me that he would have six more months to get his high school diploma. Then he would like to continue at college.

Farid would work on his high school courses at night. During the day, he worked at a bakery, making bread such as hamburger bread. He did not experience any deprivation due to his new status in the United States, but he is willing to pursue a college degree for future. Right now, he is not earning much, but he has many expenses, such as rent and bills, which cost him more than $4,000. Therefore, as a breadwinner, he was having difficulty meeting his family's needs. Other family members were also working to help him cover these expenses.

As a father, Farid also looked worried about his children's education because he did not know how to navigate it. His oldest daughter was 23, while his oldest son was 21. He wanted them to

go to college. But the problem was that although they had graduated from high school in Afghanistan, they could not transfer their diplomas to the United States. They needed to take courses, such as U.S. history, to earn their high school diplomas. Their courses were online rather than in person, which was difficult for his children, who seemed uninterested in earning their high school degrees. After they received their high school degrees, he wanted them to go to college but did not know how to navigate the process. For example, he did not know what major his children should choose.

Additionally, Afghan men may reclaim their manhood through volunteering to help their community members. Ali, who studied Medicine in Afghanistan, volunteered for an organization in Sacramento. He explained:

> I was working for a non-profit organization as a volunteer; I was giving a lot of time, and I was guiding newly arrived refugees. And in the meantime, I volunteered in the hospitals after work. I was going to the Emergency rooms, and I worked at night, but as a volunteer, getting like a week, like 15 hours, 20 hours a week, working in an emergency room, helping out people who had war trauma or any emergency-related cases. I also volunteered as a university lecturer at the UC Davis public health department. I have delivered many lectures on refugees, health issues, and also lectured at UC Davis Medical School for refugee health, especially mental health. A lot of doctors want to go into Psychology and Psychiatry. They need to know what the mental health situation is among Afghan refugees. How? What are the how do they perceive mental health? How do they perceive depression? So I delivered many lectures on that. I am still a visiting professor officially with UC Davis. Whenever they have a course on refugee health, I am a guest lecturer.

This quote shows that, as a man, Ali, in his words, sacrificed not only his family but also his community members to adapt to their new environments in the United States.

Overall, Afghan men seek to regain their masculinity by seeking better employment and/or earning a college degree to secure more stable employment in the future. They often work part-time jobs, such as driving for Uber or Lyft, to earn extra income. Additionally, they participate in third-spaces, such as soccer tournaments, to reclaim their masculinity culturally. The following

section focuses on men's approach toward women's paid employment and their economic contributions to the family.

6.2.4 Afghan Men's Approach Toward Women's Paid Employment

As I mentioned earlier, the concepts of precarious masculinity and the masculinity crisis are tied to how immigrant men react to their wives' paid employment. On one hand, immigrant men oppose this, as they view it as a threat to their sense of masculinity, try to protect the patriarchal culture, and believe that it can cut down on household chores (Çarpar and Göktuna Yaylaci 2021; Menjívar 1999; Pease 2009). On the other hand, they might support it because women's income helps make ends meet, allowing the family to survive (Yalim and Critelli 2023). Additionally, they may feel conflicted about it due to difficulty weighing the pros and cons (Menjívar 1999).

In this study, I also asked Afghan men about their views on their wives' paid employment, including how they approach them. The findings show that Afghan men often require their wives to contribute to the family budget due to economic insecurity, including the high cost of living in the United States. In previous sections, Ahmet stated that it was challenging for him to cover his family's expenses as a breadwinner. He constantly told me that his wife was not working because of her poor English skills. Therefore, he needed her financial contribution to the family budget. He said, "It is really good for both of us if she works." Similarly, Hamza stated how his only income was insufficient to cover the costs: "We planned for her to get a job, such as at Apple, in the short term, because one income in a family is not enough to cover everything. It isn't easy. That's why I tried to improve my wife's knowledge, so she is taking the language course to be eligible to get a job." Therefore, Hamza valued his wife's paid work as a means to

meet their expenses in the United States. Like Ahmet and Hamza, Akbar supports his wife's paid employment while still considering himself responsible for caring for his family. He explained:

> We have a responsibility, the number one responsibility, to provide all necessary for the family for the men. That is our culture, that is our belief, that is our religion. Women do not want to bring money home. She does not have any responsibility to bring money. She does not have to bring money home. I am responsible, and I have to do it, and this is my responsibility, and I am going with it. That is my commitment to my family, and I will do whatever I can to support my family. If she goes to school or works, I will still support her with all my capabilities.

Thus, in this quote, Akbar referred to culture, belief, and religion to emphasize his provider role as his responsibility.

Asmaan's husband faced similar challenges after migrating to the United States in 2014. Asmaan, a 31-year-old Afghan woman who is married and has two children aged 4 and 2, moved to the United States, thanks to her husband's SIV, as he worked as an interpreter for the US Army in Afghanistan. After relocating to Sacramento, her husband initially started working at Apple. Later, he worked part-time as a teaching assistant at a school that paid him a little. At the same time, he has been attending college to earn an associate degree, which would help him secure a better job in the future. However, due to California's higher cost of living, she also began working at a company as a customer service representative, assisting other Afghans with health-related problems. This job did not require English proficiency since her customers were Afghans. Meanwhile, while she was employed, they had no children. She stated, "I also started working as a customer service representative at a company in Sacramento to support my husband and our family."

Drawing on these quotes, Afghan men view their wives' paid employment as crucial for managing increasing living costs in the United States. Nevertheless, during my interviews, some Afghan men and women reported conditions imposed by men on women's paid employment.

This is germane to the concept of patriarchal bargain; women strategize to navigate patriarchy within concrete constraints to obtain autonomy and security regarding their economic contribution to the family (Kandiyoti 1988; Pease 2009). A key response from my informants highlighted men's disapproval of their wives working in what they term "entry-level jobs," such as cleaning or warehouse jobs. Hamza elaborated:

> My wife doesn't work here. She didn't work at any organizations in Afghanistan. She doesn't have any work experience. She has no certificates or documents, such as educational ones, from the United States. First, she should study in a specific field for a while to have a document. Then, she can start from the beginning. This is the way that she can improve herself and get a job. Otherwise, getting a job directly is too difficult here. There are many jobs, including supermarket jobs, but she can't make a career. It's not good for a long time, yeah. Maybe some people do this, but for me, no, as there is no future. I registered her in college. She is taking a language course. Then, she will select a specific field. After two years, she can get an associate's degree. Following this, she can get a job.

Therefore, this passage shows that Hamza expects his wife to learn English and earn an associate degree for better job prospects in the future, rather than working in entry-level jobs.

Like Asmaan, Esin, who is 33 years old, married, and has two children, migrated to the United States in 2017 through the SIV granted to his husband, who worked in an American company in Afghanistan. Esin worked as an elementary school teacher in Afghanistan, making her one of the few Afghan women with work experience and a university education in teaching credentials. After relocating to Sacramento, her husband, who attended medical school in Afghanistan, secured employment at Apple, fixing phones. After working one year at Apple, her husband found another job in a post office, earning less than Esin. When she discussed paid employment with her husband, he set various criteria, one of which concerned the type of job. She said, "My husband set some conditions for me. For example, he did not want me to work in jobs like a warehouse. He did not like it."

Overall, this section addresses that Afghan men support women's paid employment, as they believe this will help them cope with economic insecurity. However, men also negotiate this with women and are opposed to their employment in entry-level jobs.

6.2.5 Language and Childcare Issues Among Afghan Women

The lack of English proficiency and childcare are two central drivers that constrain women's paid employment in the United States. Language emerges as a barrier to women being employed in non-entry-level or low-paid jobs. Afghan women are often unable to speak English, and one of the main reasons for this is a lack of university education in Afghanistan. Men encourage their wives to learn English and pursue a college education. Childcare constitutes an area that men and women negotiate.

Regarding language issues, Afghan men often encourage their wives to learn English first and then pursue a college education, believing this will open up better opportunities in the future. This strategy is not only implemented by Hamza, who urged his wife to learn English and obtain an associate degree, but also by Ahmet, who supported his wife's college education. Ahmet shared, "My wife can't speak English. She is a student, and I sponsor her. She is going back to school here and starting over. She has been in college for a year and a half. She wants to study pharmacy to become a pharmacist and will then begin working." Similarly, Ebrahim elaborated on this situation by paying particular attention to security conditions, which prevented her wife from receiving an education in Afghanistan:

> My wife didn't graduate from high school because of the Taliban ban that prevented girls from going to school in Afghanistan. She is now studying the English language. She wants to become a nurse in the future. I'm helping and supporting her to achieve that goal. Once she becomes a nurse, she can serve the community or the people. This is the highest aspiration we have set. I'm happy that as a man, father, and husband, I have the opportunity to support my family and my wife. I will do whatever it takes. I am doing my best to give her time and space so she can focus on her studies. She should make up for the time and the years that are wasted, that we're back in Afghanistan. I want to empower her. If you empower

> women, you empower the family, the economy, and the world. When women are strong, men are also stronger. If women are weak, men are also weaker.

Ebrahim addressed the right time and job for his wife, but like other Afghan men, he encouraged her wife to study first. He continued:

> We are not in a situation where both of us should work. My salary can cover expenses like paying rent. So, it's a perfect opportunity for her to study for the next two years. She can prepare for higher education. She feels happy. I do not want her to work anywhere, so I am the only one working. I told my wife that she would work when the right time comes. I told her she was a housewife and didn't have the chance to do more in Afghanistan. However, here, she has an opportunity to study. I prefer her not to work to feed the kids and me, although she is free to do so.

Asmaan, with a high school degree, commenced taking English courses at a college to improve her English and then earn an associate degree to become a teacher's assistant. She explained, "My husband is very supportive of me continuing my education through higher education. He always gives other women as an example. They have a higher education and can financially support their families."

At this point, I must state that Afghan men's encouragement of women's college education to secure better employment in the future reflects the intersection of class and legal status. As noted previously, the majority of Afghan men come from middle-class or higher socio-economic backgrounds, often with university education and professional skills and responsibilities. This situation positively shapes their approach to women's paid employment and pursuit of college education. Additionally, the legal status of Afghan immigrants does not prevent them from pursuing a college education and seeking improved employment in the future, as they migrate to the United States with visa statuses that guarantee they can obtain a Green Card and a path to naturalization.

Childcare presents another major challenge for incoming Afghan refugees in the United States. Afghan women are required to stay at home to care for their children, which prevents

them from working outside. This situation can also be considered a patriarchal bargain within the domestic division of labor linked to women's economic contribution to the household, as men and women negotiate gender relations (Kandiyoti 1988; Pease 2009). For instance, Esin, who worked during the daytime, and her husband, who worked at night, stated that her husband supported her paid work. However, this situation also created discontent in him. She explained:

> I was working until five, but to be honest, I wasn't getting out of the workplace at five. I was getting out at 6:00 pm, 6:30 pm, or 7:00 pm. Sometimes, I would go directly to high school classes until 9:00 pm or 10:00 pm when I was getting back home. So, after a while, he wasn't happy with this. He was like I was out all day, and not in our house anymore, so we should do something about this. He told me that maybe I shouldn't work, or I shouldn't go for the education, or I should choose one of these. When he told me these, I could not believe it, especially since I did not have any of these. I knew I was a mom and had some responsibilities at home with my children, but I told him I wanted to work, and he said okay, and I could continue working. However, as I get more responsibility in my work (Esin has just become a teacher after her teacher assistant position) and continue my education, he feels unhappy, as he says, "This is too much."

This passage by Esin conveys that she negotiates her paid employment and childcare responsibilities with her husband. The interesting point is that despite solving the childcare issue through working times, as Esin worked during the day while her husband worked at night, her husband still felt discontent with this situation, as Esin had more responsibilities at work.

However, my findings show that Afghan refugees often face challenges in childcare upon migrating to the United States. Therefore, not everybody was as lucky as Esin and her husband. Through interviews with my informants, I have gathered varied perspectives regarding daycare options for their children. Traditionally, men view women as the primary caregivers. In Afghan families with multiple children, it becomes essential for women to remain at home to fulfill these childcare duties. Moreover, it's worth noting that most Afghan participants in this study are in their 30s and 40s and are married with either a newborn, a preschooler, or a school-aged child. This dynamic makes childcare a critical concern for Afghan families, affecting various facets of

their lives, particularly women's ability to engage in paid employment. This situation is germane to Ali, who shared:

> It would be challenging for both of us to work. We have three children going to school, so I need someone to take care of them at home. It did not work for both of us to go to work, and I would also go to school, because we have children. And we need more support from one of the parents.

In this quote, Ali cited his college education and work as the reason his wife needed to stay home and take care of the children. Additionally, Ali elaborated on the different needs of his children to legitimize why her wife does not work and takes care of the children: "She supports my children and me full-time. My children have school appointments or projects, and medical appointments, including dentist appointments. It is a lot for someone who has three children going to three different schools at different times." Overall, the situation necessitated that Ali's wife stay home to care for their children.

Like Ali, other Afghans, such as Asmaan, expressed similar views, considering themselves responsible for childcare. However, this situation was due to newborn babies, who required women to stay home to care for them. Asmaan expressed, "My kids were born. That's why I left my job. I had to stay at home to take care of them. Right now, my older son is four years old, while the other one is two years old, so I am seeking a job." Like Asmaan, Muzafar, whom I mentioned in his migration story at the beginning of this chapter, addressed his newborn baby by saying, "Because we have a baby, when she is grown enough, that, like becoming mature enough, that she will be working."

In addition to the newborn babies, Afghan refugees articulated various reasons, which I term "cultural reasons," that mothers must stay with children at home and give them the love they need or teach them, as in the Islamic culture. Nasib, who is thirty-two years old, married and has

three children, one of whom was just born in the United States, and the other two are going to school, explained:

> I am the only person working in the family. My wife is also eligible to work because she is a knowledgeable person and has good communication skills. However, I prefer my wife to be with the kids because I don't want to damage my children's futures. I don't want them to be raised like Western children. What I mean by Western is that if I compare the life of an American family here, they raise their children with a babysitter. So, the child does not get the mom's and dad's love. When they come home from work, they are tired, so they can't give much love to the children. My children need at least one dad or mom to be with them to give them the love they need. If I hire a babysitter, it will have a bad impact on my children because they are still at an age that requires one of us to be with them all the time. I want them to maintain the same culture that I have in Afghanistan. I don't want them to lose their country's culture, such as religion, and some other things like family traditions. That's why I prefer to work alone.

Additionally, Afghan men highlighted the expensive aspect of childcare. Muzafar remarked:

> You should figure out everything. Okay, let's plan for childcare. You should plan and analyze, or assess your options. Childcare in the US is too expensive. How much can we earn if we get educated or work? And how much will we pay for childcare? Isn't it even worth it? You know, my friends are in the same situation. They start to work. And then, if they earn like $4,000 and have four kids, they must pay 3000 or $2,800 back to childcare. It's like, what? I'm working the entire month for $1,200. It's like it's not even worth it, so they must quit their job and take care of their children. Once the children are old enough to take care of themselves, they will go and work. At that time, we will be assessing our options. Otherwise, I'm not opposed to her working and supporting her.

Like Muzafar, Akbar, 37, a married man with four kids working as a refrigeration technician in Sacramento, said, "If she wants to work, that's fine. However, if we both work, we'll end up with childcare as we have four kids. We will end up paying a lot of money for childcare. The mom is not working because she is busy with the kids." Overall, the experiences of Muzafar and Akbar show that the high cost of childcare may pose an obstacle to Afghan women working outside the home.

Furthermore, whether Afghan refugees have available family members or relatives in the greater Sacramento area is another crucial factor to consider when addressing the childcare issue. For example, Asmaan lacked any family members or relatives, saying, "It is hard when you do

not have any family or friends here. You do not have anyone who takes care of them, at least you get a rest, or you know how to recover after you give birth to kids." Similarly, Akbar shared:

> If you have one of the parents here, especially your mom, if you bring your mom here for the kids, that will be good. In Afghanistan, if you are living with your parents, it is not a problem because they take care of your kids. They will enjoy their time with the kids. You do not need to pay for anything. But we do not have anybody here.

This situation is about solidarity relations or bonds among Afghan families or relatives. Muzafar described it as a "communal life" they had in Afghanistan:

> In Afghanistan, we live in a community system. Families are multi-generational. I was living with my parents, kids, and grandparents when I left Afghanistan. You know, you get a lot of support or help around you at every stage of life, so it is just phenomenal. So obviously, we are missing all of that because here you're just like by yourself, three or four of you, stuck in an apartment; you go to work from nine to five, you come back home, and then you think about another day, you know.

Ebrahim said, "Sometimes our American friends may not know much about our Afghan culture; they may think Afghan families may not take care of their children, but that's not the case."

All in all, the experiences of Afghan refugees indicate that men support the paid employment of their wives, as being a sole provider in the household is challenging for them. However, Afghan women encounter two main issues that include language and childcare, which prevent them from working.

6.3 The Context of Türkiye

6.3.1 Precarious Masculinity and Masculinity Crisis

In Türkiye, Afghan men experience precarious masculinity akin to that of their counterparts in the United States, as they often lose a sense of their masculinity after migration due to challenges in providing for their families (Bosson and Vandello 2011; Vandello et al. 2008; Vandello and Bosson 2013). The main difference is that Afghan men embody precarious masculinity more profoundly because of their legal status and greater economic precarity. I argue that a group of

men experience a masculinity crisis due to legal and economic insecurities, as well as the interplay of age and health conditions, as they are unable to secure employment to take care of their families (Friedman 2017; Pease 2009).

Diyar is an undocumented 22-year-old married man who lives in Istanbul. He worked as a waiter at a restaurant, earning just over the minimum wage and lacking benefits, such as access to healthcare services. He was the only breadwinner in the household, stating, "I am working now and can pay only my rent, bills, and food. It is end-to-end." He was married. His wife was pregnant, and they would soon welcome their babies. His wife's pregnancy makes him think about how she would give birth because she (and Diyar) could not access the public healthcare system in Türkiye due to their undocumented status. He continued, "For example, if I have a health problem, I go to a private hospital as public hospitals do not accept us due to our status. Therefore, I must pay more." In the previous quote and this one, Diyar addressed challenges in meeting his family's expenses as the sole breadwinner. Moreover, Diyar and his wife want to live in a better house, as their current apartment is an old one, despite being affordable. He shared, "I pay 2.500 ($135) Turkish lira for rent of a basement house in a very old building, which also does not have a gas system. Nobody must stay in this house. However, when we search for a better house, the rent is too high. I can't afford it." Unfortunately, Diyar and his wife are unable to move to a better apartment, as he earns slightly above the minimum wage (4.500 TL).

Afghan men often cite the high cost of living in Türkiye and the difficulty of covering it due to economic precarity. Murtaza, a 34-year-old married Afghan man, illustrates a great example of this. He, who farmed and shepherded in Afghanistan, migrated to Türkiye in 2016 and settled in Trabzon under international protection status. In Trabzon, he has worked as a tea picker in

agriculture and as a construction worker under precarious conditions. He said, “I'm having a hard time here. I'm really having a hard time. My wife is in this situation (her wife has health issues). I work. I'm away from home for a month or two.” What makes Murtaza’s situation more difficult is that he, similar to a group of Afghan men in the United States, is required to send remittances to his family members in Afghanistan since he is the only breadwinner. He stated:

> My family in Afghanistan also needs money. My mother is old. They’re in a difficult situation. They don’t work.
> Cetin: So you also take care of them, right?
> Murtaza: Exactly. I have to. If I don't, no one else will take care of them. If you were in my situation, what would you do? You’re forced to take care of them if no one is working in your family. You have to cover their expenses no matter where you are. Thank God. I’ve done it so far, but it’s difficult. I work in hard jobs.

My research indicates that precarious masculinity evolves into a masculinity crisis for a group of Afghan men after migrating to Türkiye. This issue stems from the intersections of their legal status, age, and health, which hinder their ability to find employment suited to their age and health conditions. Thus, the forced migration deeply disrupts their masculine identity and reduces their gendered power (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005), as these men are unable to perform their provider roles in the household. They are unable to regain their masculinity through paid employment and must rely on their family members and/or assistance from the government or NGOs. Suleiman, a 42-year-old married man with three children, resided in Trabzon, where he worked freelance, including in construction or agriculture, which did not provide a stable income or pay him. Suleiman faced significant health issues due to war-related conditions, including explosions in Afghanistan, which impaired his vision and hearing. As a result, his workplace relationships in Türkiye suffered. For example, he encountered difficulties communicating with colleagues and employers. He even had a work accident that resulted in a hand injury in Türkiye. Consequently, he often faced unemployment and expressed severe

poverty. He thinks he is incapable of working and severely struggles to support his family as the family provider.

Faaiq and Arman are two other Afghan men who also experience a crisis in their masculinity because they are unable to work due to not only their health conditions but also their ages. I interviewed these two Afghan men at a café shop in the Zeytinburnu district of Istanbul. I would normally interview their wives, whom I was introduced to, not their husbands. However, Faaiq and Arman came instead of their wives. My translator then introduced me to them, who were wearing suits. We sat on the second floor at the café because we did not want to get the attention of, especially the police officers, because of these Afghan men's undocumented status. We also thought this situation could distract from our interview, including our behavior. We ordered Turkish black tea. Since the weather was hot, we left the windows open.

Faaiq, a 65-year-old married man with three children, worked as a taxi driver in Afghanistan. He migrated to Türkiye "illegally" in 2017, resided in Istanbul, and was undocumented. Upon relocating to Istanbul, he worked in a factory for two months. The working conditions were tough, as he worked 10 hours and stood all day. Therefore, he experienced foot soreness upon returning home because he had stood too long at work. He was then fired due to Covid. Subsequently, he sought another job but was unsuccessful in finding one. He visited various workplaces, but they did not hire him due to his age. He even mentioned an interesting incident: "I went to a workplace. The employer brought me tea out of respect because I was his father's age. He didn't hire me." Additionally, his legal status prevented him from finding a suitable job due to his health conditions. As I stated, he was a taxi driver in Afghanistan, but here, like most Afghans, he had to work in jobs such as textile or construction, which require hard physical labor. He explained:

> If there is a soft job that I can do here, I will do so. Of course, I would like to work to contribute to the household. In Afghanistan, I could work as a taxi driver despite my health conditions. This job was not difficult for me, as I drove. However, here, you must work in jobs requiring labor power. For example, I have recently gone to a workplace to work. Someone scoffingly asked me whether I could carry stuff upstairs and downstairs. However, I was unable to do that because of my age and health conditions.

Therefore, unlike most Afghan men, he was not the provider in the family because he was unable to work due to his age and health conditions, including a heart condition. He expressed negative sentiments about this situation: "The man, or the oldest person, is the breadwinner in the family. It's so painful that I can't work. Therefore, I feel guilty about not working." Faaiq must rely on his wife and children, who are employed in the textile industry, for their livelihoods.

Arman is 63 years old, married, and has five children. He worked as a security officer for an American firm in Afghanistan, where he enjoyed a good standard of living, receiving his salary in US dollars and owning a car and a house. In 2019, he legally migrated to Türkiye and settled in Istanbul. At the time of the interview, he held a residence permit that protected him and his family from deportation, but it did not grant him a work permit. Upon relocating to Istanbul, he found a job as a horseman at a horse farm. However, his employer fired him due to his health conditions, a problem with his foot bones, which made it difficult for him to stand for long periods. Following this setback, he never sought a job, believing it would be impossible to find employment suitable for his age and health conditions. He noted, "In Afghanistan, the breadwinner is the father, regardless of ethnic identity. If the father dies, the oldest son becomes the breadwinner. Therefore, it is hard not to provide for my family and children. I can't even explain this." Therefore, this quote indicates that Arman felt psychologically bad, as he was unable to work due to his age and health conditions. He added, "My children studied business or marketing at good universities. I worked to ensure they studied as much as possible. I struggled for them. But I am in this situation. Life brought me to this situation. I have nothing to do. We

came to Türkiye. We are waiting." In this quote, as a family provider, Arman emphasized how he helped his children study in Afghanistan. However, he was helpless in Türkiye due to his legal situation, which caused uncertainty. While he was explaining this beside me at the table, he got very emotional. Then, tears came from his eyes. At that moment, I was shocked and felt how these conditions made him so fragile as a man. I told my translator to ask a follow-up question to discuss this issue further, but he said Arman was unable to speak. Following this, we, including the translator, changed the topic.

Overall, Faaiq's, Arman's, and Suleiman's experiences shed light on the dynamics operating between migrants' gender and immigration status, and how these axes intersect with age, and on the role of health conditions in producing these dynamics. Moreover, these men have faced labor market exclusion as a form of social exclusion due to their ages and health conditions, which have led them to remain unemployed (Babacan and Babacan 2013; Barry and Hallett 1998; Young 1999). Unemployment and poverty significantly affect their masculine identity through the crisis they experience.

6.3.2 How to Navigate Masculinity

In the United States, masculinities are precarious but also crafted by men, as their legal status allows them to engage in different activities, including searching for better employment and/or pursuing a college education to secure one in the future. In Türkiye, masculinities can't be crafted, as men's legal status does not allow this. Men are trapped in economic precarity due to their inability to find better jobs. Afghan men with IPS can pursue a university education in Türkiye thanks to their legal status; however, they are unable to find jobs in their fields due to the lack of a work permit, which is not granted automatically by the Turkish

authorities. Some Afghan men experience a masculinity crisis stemming from the intersections of legal status, age, and health conditions (Friedman 2017; Pease 2009).

Like Ali, who lives in the United States, Murtaza sacrificed himself by working excessively to meet their living expenses in Türkiye, where the inflation was too high. In this way, he reaffirms his masculinity (Çarpar and Göktuna Yaylaci 2021), remarking:

> Prices have recently increased. Everything has become very expensive. If you buy a bottle of water or drink a cup of tea at a cafe, it's 50 Turkish liras. Therefore, we adjusted our earnings accordingly. I told my wife she should figure out how much water, electricity, and gas we would use. I am grateful that we have been fine so far. However, if we have a tough time, I go to collect tea. I do not come home for a month or two months. I work there, so I don't need anybody.

The interesting point is that Murtaza believes he is required to work to care for his family, even though he faces extreme exploitation due to overworking in the construction work. He shared:

> There is no specific time in construction work. We start at 7:30 am, 8 am, or 8:30 am and work until the evening call to prayer. We work until the person tells me it's enough. The work ends when they say it's enough. It's up to them. We can't say anything to them. If I tell them that I start at eight and leave work at five, they do not like it. If I do this, I will lose my job. Then, my family would be needy. Therefore, I have to work. I do everything for my family here.

Only a few Afghan men adopt different strategies to reclaim their manhood by working extra hours in their spare time (Bosson and Vandello 2011; Vandello et al. 2008; Vandello and Bosson 2013). For example, Diyar worked five days a week in the restaurant. He would take on extra jobs in the evenings (outside his working hours) or on weekends to earn an additional income. He said, "There is a place in our neighborhood. We go there. Employers come over here when they need workers. Sometimes we work in textiles, restaurants, or construction. Whichever job is available, we work and get our money." However, achieving manhood for Afghan men is extremely difficult because of the precarious conditions, particularly the prolonged work hours in

Türkiye; thus, this situation does not allow them to secure part-time employment for additional earnings.

One common and pivotal support for Afghan refugees in Türkiye was financial and food assistance from the Turkish state and NGOs in Istanbul and Trabzon provinces. My data suggests this support was essential, particularly for Afghan men confronting a masculinity crisis. As I mentioned previously, Suleiman was employed in precarious jobs, including construction and agriculture, and had a low income. Additionally, his health conditions exacerbated his employment opportunities, which resulted in him not having a stable income and constantly facing unemployment. Therefore, he received financial assistance from the Turkish Red Crescent. He shared, "There is pressure on me. I pay our rent with the money I receive from the Turkish Red Crescent. Sometimes, that money is insufficient. We're trying to make ends meet with a piece of bread." Therefore, this quote indicates that Suleiman, as a man, feels overwhelmed due to economic precarity, as he can barely afford his rent with money from the Turkish Red Crescent. In addition to financial assistance, he occasionally receives food assistance from an NGO. Overall, when I interviewed him at a non-governmental organization in Trabzon, I could see the toll it took on him; he appeared worn out. This made me immediately reflect on the hardships he faces in Türkiye due to his IPS and hyper-precarity, which have far-reaching effects on his life.

Like Suleiman, Faaiq and Arman were supported by the Turkish state and NGOs. However, I should also state that undocumented status can be a barrier for Afghan refugees to receive help, especially from the Turkish state. Faaiq experienced this and expressed, "When we go and ask for help, they ask for residence. Help is provided to those who come legally." However, he managed to get financial assistance from the Turkish authorities. He continued, "I received 600

TL from the district governor's office." In addition to this assistance that he mentioned, he received food from some organizations. He added, "There was an organization here that distributed meat. We got it. There is another association here by Uyghurs. Sometimes, they help us, but sometimes, they realize we are from Afghanistan, and they do not help us." Arman was unable to obtain financial assistance from the Turkish authorities. Like Faaiq, he visits the same Uyghur organization to get food.

Additionally, my data indicates that financial and food assistance are rare and irregular. Some Afghan men were not assisted and relied on remittances from relatives abroad. Several men did not intentionally seek assistance, as this would be seen as a deficiency that feminizes them (Friedman 2017); thus, they tried to stand on their own feet. For example, Ismail remarked regarding financial and food assistance, "I advise my wife and children that if anyone wants to help you, like giving money or food, we shouldn't accept that. I'm alive and can work. Most people look for help from other people and don't want to work. This is their decision, but I dislike it." Like Ismail, Murtaza addressed that he did not like receiving aid, explaining:

> I have to cover rent, electricity, and other expenses. We can't get any help anywhere here. When I came here in 2016, I received 150 Turkish lira in the first month, 250 Turkish lira in the second month, and 200 Turkish lira in the third month from the Red Crescent. After these, I have not received anything. And thank God, thank God, I haven't needed it until now. It's God who provides. I also don't like to get help. Why don't I? Because I can work too. This is always my thought. I work hard, as I don't want my family to be dependent on anyone. I'm not disabled; I can work.

Thus, Murtaza emphasized his masculine identity as a hard worker in rejecting financial assistance. Overall, both Ismail and Murtaza reclaim their masculinity by working rather than receiving aid from the Turkish government (Çarpar and Göktuna Yaylaci 2021).

Furthermore, I examined whether Afghan refugees in Türkiye engaged in cultural practices through various activities, such as a soccer tournament, where they built solidarity and reclaimed

their manhood. Between 2013 and 2016, while pursuing my Master's degree at Marmara University in Istanbul, I would often see young Afghan men gathered at a worker bazaar near my campus in the mornings. They waited there for employers seeking to hire daily laborers. Between 2016 and 2018, when I began my PhD at Istanbul University and moved into a dormitory in the Sancaktepe district, I again encountered young Afghan men playing a game on the street that appeared to combine the elements of cricket and baseball. When I visited these places in 2022, I did not observe any Afghan men playing this game or waiting at the bazaar. The shops they previously operated near the bazaar were also closed. These observations, together with my interview data, suggest that Afghan men often have limited opportunities to participate in third spaces, where they can engage in cultural practices, spend time together, and build solidarity, which are significant aspects of reclaiming their masculinity in the community.

One main and obvious reason appears to be their legal status, particularly for those living in Istanbul without an IPS. Fear of deportation by the Turkish police discourages these men from attending such spaces and engaging in public social activities. Additionally, I conducted this fieldwork in 2022, a period marked by growing xenophobia and intolerance toward Afghan refugees following the return of the Taliban regime to power in Afghanistan in the summer of 2021. Thus, the control of Afghanistan by the Taliban intensified public concerns and fears among the members of the host society about a potential increase in the number of Afghans. The 2023 Turkish general elections further exacerbated the economic and social vulnerabilities of Afghan men, as they became a highly controversial subject in political discourse and media coverage. As a result, dynamics like legal status, the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, and the general elections in Türkiye resulted in heightened fear of apprehension and deportation by the

police among especially undocumented Afghans, contributing to their increased invisibility in everyday life.

Overall, this section focused on strategies and limitations about how Afghan men reclaim their manhood in Türkiye. I particularly emphasized that men face challenges in regaining their manhood due to the dynamics related to extreme economic precarity and their insecure legal statuses.

6.3.3 Afghan Men and Women's Paid Employment

In discussing Afghan men's views on their wives' paid employment and contributions to the household in the United States, I received similar responses from Afghan men residing in Türkiye. Men view women's paid employment positively, as this will alleviate the burden on their shoulders. The main difference between the United States and Türkiye is that Afghan men do not oppose their wives working in entry-level jobs.

Murtaza, who is the only provider working in agriculture and construction, stated, "I do not have a problem with her working outside. If she weren't sick, she could work and ease my burden. Meeting our expenses would be much easier. But since she can't, I must pay the hospital bills and buy food." Like Murtaza, Diyar, working in the restaurant, considers his wife's paid employment significant due to the higher cost of living in Türkiye. When I inquired if his income suffices for their living expenses in Istanbul, he replied, "I would talk about that topic. My wife used to work before, but she doesn't now. She's pregnant and at home. I am the only person to work." Then, when I asked him a follow-up question about whether his wife's employment is an issue for him, and whether he is against her working or supports her working, he responded, "Even if I am against her working, our situation is obvious. I must support her, as we have no other options." As I mentioned before, Diyar was the sole provider, and his earnings could hardly

cover the rent, bills, and other expenses, including hospital costs for his wife's pregnancy. Thus, he required his wife to contribute to the family budget, although he was not very willing to support the idea of his wife's paid employment.

As I previously discussed, Faaiq's age and health conditions prevented him from working, so he was not the primary breadwinner in his family. His wife and children worked to cover their living expenses. Specifically, his wife was employed in a textile factory, where she worked in cleaning or cooking roles, including distributing food or delivering tea to the employees. He explained:

> It does not matter whether my wife works or not. It does not matter if men or women work. Both can work. My wife had already worked. She was fired because she could not work for several days due to her health issues. I am not saying that women must work due to economic conditions, but they, of course, have an impact. I am already ill and going to a hospital. There are hospital expenses. There are living expenses. If a few people work, how will we meet our needs?

Although Faaiq thinks that unfavorable economic conditions are not a compelling reason for his wife to work, in the end, living expenses make his wife work.

Like Faaiq, Arman, an unemployed Afghan man with health issues, relies on the financial support of his children and wife. His son, who lived with them in Istanbul, was the family's provider, working in the textile industry and earning 3,000 TL ($162) or 4,000 TL ($216) per month. His two daughters lived in the United States, and the other two lived in Germany. They financially supported Arman when needed. He supports his wife's paid employment at a textile company. He stated, "Well, my wife has been working at a textile company for a month. She prepares food for the employees. She had to work because of economic conditions, and it wasn't enough for our son to work." Thus, Arman endorsed his wife's paid employment due to economic reasons.

One significant difference I found between the United States and Türkiye is that women often work in entry-level or low-paying jobs, such as cleaning, a matter that Afghan men do not possess much power to discuss or negotiate with their wives due to greater economic precarity and their insecure legal status (Kandiyoti 1988; Pease 2009). Faaiq's and Arman's wives represent a great example of this, as they worked in entry-level positions, including cleaning or cooking. Additionally, during my interview with an Afghan family in their home in Trabzon, I witnessed this situation. A female family member in her late thirties or early forties shared that she had worked for a cleaning company for a year. Although she didn't provide specific details about her job, she mentioned experiencing discrimination, as she was paid less than the standard wage and endured long working hours.

Like in the United States, Afghan women are responsible for childcare roles, limiting their ability to work outside the home and financially contribute to the family. Suleiman endorses his wife's paid employment, but her childcare responsibilities prevent her from working outside the home. They have three children, who are four, five, and six years old. His wife also looks after his elderly mother, who is experiencing health problems. Barat, a 35-year-old married father of three children, migrated to Türkiye in 2018. He settled in Trabzon and obtained international protection status. In Afghanistan, he earned a decent income working in the construction sector, collaborating with foreign countries and companies. In Türkiye, he secured employment in the same field but received a lower salary. He explained:

> My wife is not working. She takes care of the children. It does not matter if she wants to work. She has the same rights. I am not saying that she must stay home or not work. But my children are 3, 6, and 9 years old. They need care, like feeding them. She must take care of them. If they're grown, she can work.

Thus, like Suleiman, Barat supports his wife's paid employment, but childcare prevents her from doing so.

Therefore, when comparing Afghan men's responses to childcare in Türkiye and the United States, I find less diversity in Türkiye. Afghan women do not need to teach Islam as Türkiye is a "predominantly Muslim country," and childcare options are limited for Afghan parents facing severe economic hardships.

Overall, as these men's experiences demonstrate, they have difficulty performing their gender roles as household providers. Thus, they value their wives' paid employment to reduce their financial burden. Men in Türkiye lack significant power to negotiate women's paid employment in entry-level jobs because of greater economic precarity and their insecure legal status (Kandiyoti 1988; Pease 2009).

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter focused on immigration-related insecurity through gender, focusing on male precariousness among Afghan refugee men in the United States and Türkiye. I argue that Afghan men experience and perceive these insecurities as a loss of masculinity and that they are shaped through social practices within household and community relationships. These unfold differently in the United States and Türkiye because of the distinct insecurities they face in each location. I highlight that masculinities are precarious and can be lost after forced migration, when refugee men face difficulties in supporting their families economically. Moreover, precarious masculinity can evolve into a masculinity crisis for a group of men due to the intersecting axes, including age and health conditions, which hinder employment opportunities or lead to a job loss (Whitehead 2007). To explore how men lose their sense of masculinity and whether they regain it after forced migration amidst legal and economic insecurities, I employed the terms precarious masculinity and masculinity crisis. Linking with these concepts and the debate on the protection

of patriarchal culture, I focused on how Afghan men approach women's paid employment in these two countries.

In the US context, the Afghan men I interviewed in this study embody precarious masculinities due to economic precariousness and the loss of class status. Precarious masculinities are enacted in Afghan men through challenges attributed to being a breadwinner in the household. Afghan men can reclaim or reaffirm their masculinities by seeking better employment opportunities, which offer higher incomes and align with their educational and professional backgrounds. Men can also pursue a college education or officially evaluate their degrees through the Federal Government, which will lead to better job prospects in the future. In this way, Afghan men reclaim their masculinities in the United States. Moreover, Afghan men in the United States participate in third spaces, where they interact with other male community members. These spaces provide men with resources in coping with these insecurities. Lastly, Afghan men support their wives' paid employment and believe this will help them cope with economic precarity. However, men also negotiate this with Afghan women by opposing their employment in entry-level or low-paid jobs. Women encounter language barriers and childcare challenges, which prevent them from working outside the home.

In Türkiye's context, Afghan men deeply embody precarious masculinities because of greater economic precarity and insecure legal statuses, regardless of their undocumented and international protection statuses. A particular group of men experiences a crisis in their masculinities stemming from legal and economic insecurities as well as health conditions and/or aging. These men display extreme emotions, such as fragility and a sense of inadequacy, because they are unable to fulfill their roles as breadwinners. Afghan men are trapped in precarious masculinities as they are unable to find a better job that is less precarious and hold

undocumented and international protection statuses. Since men work prolonged hours, they often cannot work part-time for an additional income. A pivotal source of support for Afghan refugees is the financial and food assistance provided by the Turkish authorities and NGOs. However, this help is irregular and may be dependent on legal status. Afghan men experience challenges in reclaiming their manhood, as they are unable to participate in third spaces, where they interact with other men due to their legal status, particularly those living in Istanbul, and the xenophobia and intolerance that they face in Türkiye. Afghan men approach women's paid employment positively, as this will reduce the burden on their shoulders. Afghan men do not oppose their wives' paid employment in entry-level or low-paid jobs, as in the United States. However, like in the United States, childcare constitutes a barrier for women working outside the home.

Overall, my research reveals that, in particular, economic and legal insecurities are deeply intertwined with how Afghan men construct their masculinity, making it difficult to separate their sense of manhood from their economic and legal circumstances, including their class status.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This study explored two main questions: How do Afghan refugees experience and navigate a shift from physical insecurity in Afghanistan to legal, economic, and social insecurity in the United States and Türkiye? Second, how do these experiences vary between the United States, where Afghan refugees face political/legal inclusion but economic and social insecurity, and Türkiye, where they encounter political/legal exclusion alongside economic and social insecurity? In addition to these two questions, this study asked how these insecurities, particularly legal and economic, faced by Afghan refugees in these two countries, shape their gender relations, including their sense of masculinity in the household and community relationships.

To answer these questions, I grounded my analysis in the human security framework, emphasizing refugee rights, the political structures in which they live, their economic conditions, and the discrimination they face due to their identities. All these structural forces shape and undermine human security for immigrants, particularly in destination countries (The United Nations Development Programme 1994; Vietti and Scribner 2013a). Physical insecurity refers to refugees' emigration from their home countries, driven by fears of threats and violent attacks (The United Nations Development Programme 1994; Vietti and Scribner 2013a). In addition to physical insecurity, refugees experience different types of insecurities, including political/legal, economic, and social insecurity in host societies. Legal insecurity is linked to the political structures that shape immigrants' life chances across a range of economic and social activities, with a degree of intensity in host countries. Economic insecurity encompasses multiple insecurities and vulnerabilities that lead to the hyper-precarity refugees face within immigration regimes and policies (Ertorer 2021; Gowayed 2022b). Finally, social insecurity refers to

xenophobia and intolerance that immigrants experience due to suspicion and mistrust from members of the host society, who often perceive them as threats to economic prosperity, social stability, and/or cultural identity (Merheb and Loughna 2006).

One key way that we see the rifts caused by immigration-related insecurity is through gender (Donato and Gabaccia 2015), as it is a central social category that organizes identities, social practices, and institutions, reflecting struggles and accommodations vis-à-vis economic, political, and social insecurities (Donato et al. 2006b:13 and 17). The losses of gendered power that Afghan men face following forced migration vary in Türkiye and the United States due to the different contexts they encounter in each destination, particularly the types of insecurity they experience there.

I designed a comparative study, conducting 38 interviews in the greater Sacramento area of the United States, including Sacramento, Elk Grove, and West Sacramento, and 45 in the provinces of Istanbul and Trabzon in Türkiye between 2020 and 2022. My interviews are supplemented by ethnographic observations of Afghan refugees' public spaces. In the United States, I conducted my fieldwork in the greater Sacramento area, where a large Afghan community resided. These community ties and social networks played a significant role in the resettlement of Afghan refugees in Sacramento. Resettlement agencies in Sacramento and the UC Davis Afghan Student Association helped me access Afghan individuals. In Türkiye, I conducted my fieldwork in Istanbul and Trabzon, where the Afghan community is present. Their legal status — they were undocumented in Istanbul, while they held IPS in Trabzon — and my social networks played a crucial role in conducting this fieldwork in these provinces. In Türkiye, I reached Afghan refugees through non-governmental organizations and my social networks. I

recorded all interviews, transcribed and analyzed them using the MAQXDA program to code them to explore recurrent patterns.

7.1 Key Findings

By analyzing the United States and Türkiye, this dissertation argues that refugee insecurity is not confined to the country of origin but is also (re)produced in destination contexts, taking distinctive yet overlapping forms across regions. It addresses the fact that, fleeing physical insecurity caused by war and persecution, refugees encounter new forms of insecurity, including legal, economic, and social insecurity in host societies. It also illustrates that immigrant assimilation and social integration theories, which examine how immigrants fit into the mainstream culture of host societies, overlook the extent to which societies afford immigrants economic and social comfort, enabling their self-realization (R. D. Alba and Nee 2003; Dreby 2006; García 2019b; Gowayed 2022b; Maghbouleh 2017; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Portes and Zhou 1993). Thus, my dissertation study reveals that it is essential to analyze the contingency, differences, and similarities of how migration policies, legal status dynamics, and economic and social structures shape immigrants' economic opportunities, emotional comfort, self-realization, and belonging across different contexts.

Chapter 2 explains that "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want" are the two main parts of the human security framework, particularly in understanding why refugees leave their home countries (The United Nations Development Programme 1994). Using this framework, Chapter 2 introduces the idea of physical insecurity, which undermines human security, leading Afghan refugees to flee their countries in search of safety and to escape threats and violence. The chapter also points out that these threats, such as those faced by Afghan refugees, harm their economic and social well-being, greatly influencing their decisions to leave their homeland and seek relief

from their hardships. Drawing on these conditions, Chapter 2 argued that physical insecurity involves both distinct and overlapping processes, dynamics, and mechanisms that lead Afghan refugees to flee their home countries in search of a safer environment.

Afghan refugees who migrate to the United States face physical insecurity due to their affiliations with the U.S. Army or related companies, where they worked in various positions, such as interpreters in Afghanistan. This affiliation exposes them to threats from "illegal armed groups," including the Taliban; thus, they feel their lives are at stake and emigrate to leave free from their fears and seek safety. Chapter 2 also illustrated that sub-identities and their attributes, including ethnic and sectarian backgrounds, play a key role in why Afghan refugees flee their homelands. Specifically, a group of Afghan refugees, mostly Hazara Afghans, is the most vulnerable group, as they stated their connections with the U.S. army/companies and both their ethnic and sectarian backgrounds, creating a double insecurity for them. These insecurities restrict their everyday activities, contributing to their flight from their home countries.

Afghan refugees who migrate to Türkiye experience physical insecurity more profoundly through not only the threats they receive but also the violent attacks they face for different reasons. However, Afghans in Türkiye similarly addressed their affiliations with the Afghan government or foreign nations, particularly the United States, which led them to face threats from armed groups. Sub-identities and their attributes also played a role in the emigration of Hazara and Uzbek Afghans, who reported violent assaults. Hazara Afghans highlighted the intersections of their connections with foreign nations and their sub-identities, including their ethnic and sectarian backgrounds, as key factors in their decision to emigrate. These unfavorable security conditions impact their economic conditions in Afghanistan, which in turn contribute to their flight.

Building on Chapter 2, Chapter 3 discussed the legal context for Afghan refugees in the United States and Türkiye. Legal status is considered a master status, which may constrain labor market opportunities and employment, as well as access to social and public services in Europe and the United States (Calavita 2005; Gee and Ford 2011; Hall et al. 2010; Massey 2007, 2012; Massey and Gentsch 2014; Menjívar 2011; Takei et al. 2009; Waters and Gerstein Pineau 2016:148). Immigrants may hold various legal statuses, from undocumented to liminal in destination countries. Drawing on this scholarship, Afghan refugees in this study are legally protected through refugee programs, including SIV and USRAP in the United States. In contrast, they encounter legal insecurity in Türkiye, as the Turkish state does not grant refugee status to non-Europeans. In Türkiye, Afghan refugees hold various legal statuses, two of which are undocumented status and IPS. These legal statuses influence the life chances of Afghan refugees in both countries, creating opportunities and constraints in their lives.

Chapter 3 addressed Afghan refugees undergoing an official resettlement process implemented by the U.S. federal government through refugee programs. The greater Sacramento area has emerged as a destination for incoming Afghan refugees due to social networks, the presence of the Afghan community, affordable housing, job markets, and social facilities. Intermediary resettlement agencies help Afghan refugees navigate their new environments by providing economic and social assistance. When resettlement agencies are inadequate, social networks and the Afghan community play a crucial role in helping newcomers adapt.

In Türkiye, Afghan refugees often hold IPS or undocumented statuses. Trabzon is a satellite province where Turkish authorities or UNHCR officials have resettled them. IPS allows Afghan refugees to access educational and health services, prevents them from deportation, and provides them with work permits. However, IPS holders experience a liminal legality due to their

ambiguous status, a grey area between undocumented and documented, characterized by qualities of both (Menjívar 2006; Menjívar and Coutin 2014; Menjívar and Lakhani 2016). Spatial restrictions accompany this liminal legality, as Afghan refugees are required to reside in their satellite provinces until they are resettled in a third country. Before travelling beyond their provinces, they must obtain permission from local authorities. These conditions create a spatial liminal legality for them in Türkiye (Ozdemir 2026).

Afghan refugees also live in non-satellite provinces, such as Istanbul, which hosts a large number of undocumented Afghan refugees. In Istanbul, Afghan refugees are more vulnerable because of their undocumented status, which renders them deportable and prevents access to social resources, including education. However, they still choose to reside there for employment prospects, social networks, and the city's transit hub, which enables them to cross the Greek-Turkish border without inspection (Ozdemir 2026). Overall, IPS grants some rights to Afghan refugees, including work authorization and access to social services. However, it also imposes constraints on their geographic mobility and produces uncertainty about their futures, as they are considered temporary in Türkiye.

Chapter 4 examined how multi-dimensional insecurities produce hyper-precarity for Afghan refugees in the United States and Türkiye. The term precarity explains insecure labor market conditions, including low-wage, nonstandard, high-risk, and flexible forms of employment. Drawing on this body of literature, Guy Standing (2011, 2014) used the term precariat to describe a new social class with various characteristics, which include employment insecurity and instability, and a lack of upward mobility. The scholarship has also focused on how refugees and asylum seekers experience precarity. They conceptualized hyper-precarity to explain how migration regimes and asylum policies shape refugee rights, such as access to work permits, and

how asylum seekers and refugees face extreme labor market exploitation, including free/unfree labor relations or issues in accessing material/non-material resources, stemming from a lack of rights (Ertorer 2021; Lewis and Waite 2015). Legal status plays a key role in the level of freedom in the labor market and may lead to broader precarization in their lives (Ertorer 2021). Drawing on this body of literature, Chapter 4 argued that Afghan refugees experience hyper-precarity in distinct ways in the United States and Türkiye as a result of the multidimensional insecurities produced by each country's asylum and refugee policies.

After migrating to the United States, Afghan refugees often lose their class status because they cannot transfer their educational credentials and/or job experience; as a result, they secure employment below their qualifications. Afghans have the right to transfer their educational credentials and/or job experience through an evaluation of their degrees by US officials. However, they note that this is a rigorous process that may take years and ultimately fail. They often secure employment in precarious jobs, including temporary and flexible contracts that do not provide any benefits. These jobs pay minimum wage and do not require any particular skills. Because of these conditions, Afghan refugees express severe status frustration and deprivation, including feeling undervalued and disappointed. However, the findings also show that Afghan refugees can cope with this precarity through various strategies, seeking more suitable jobs for their qualifications and pursuing a college education to improve their skills.

My findings support existing studies on hyper-precarity, focusing on unrecognized education/work credentials and de-qualification (Ertorer 2021; Lewis and Waite 2015). However, they also shed light on two components: First, loss of class status along with precarious employment conditions leads Afghan refugees to express frustration and deprivation with their status. Thus, this process has strong emotional consequences. Second, a group of

Afghan refugees can cope with this hyper-precarity by finding a better job or developing their skills via a college education, thanks to their legal status.

In Türkiye, Afghan refugees, regardless of whether they are undocumented or holding an IPS, face hyper-precarity due to obstacles in accessing work permits, precariousness in the labor market, which also includes unfree employment relations, and their legal status plays a crucial role in this. In Istanbul, undocumented Afghan refugees are unable to access work permits. Those who live in Trabzon are eligible for work permits, but they are not automatically granted. This means employers must fulfill certain conditions to hire Afghan refugees. Thus, most Afghans are employed in the labor market without work permits. A notable exception is a group of them who established businesses in Trabzon, thanks to independent work permits.

Afghan refugees often take up insecure jobs without contracts or any benefits, such as health insurance. These jobs are often minimum wage. However, Afghan refugees can also endure unfree labor relations, as they cannot control their employment relations. Therefore, they may face severe exploitation in the form of low wages, inadequate compensation, prolonged working hours, and irregular or unstable employment (Ertorer 2021; Karadag 2021; Şenses 2016a).

Afghan refugees articulated that they struggled to meet their expenses because of economic precarity. This research also points out that Afghan refugees receive financial and food aid from the Turkish authorities and local Afghan non-governmental organizations to cope with hyper-precarity. However, they stated that this assistance is temporary, insufficient, or unstable. The findings align with the existing scholarship on hyper-precarity, which includes the concurrent exploitation of labor among Afghan refugees in Türkiye (Ertorer 2021; Lewis and Waite 2015). However, shop owners in Trabzon did not report hyper-precarious conditions associated with

unfree labor relations, such as persistent labor exploitation and barriers to obtaining independent work permits. They addressed economic challenges related to high taxes and inflation.

Chapter 5 delved into another structural force, examining social insecurity and exclusion faced by Afghan refugees in the United States and Türkiye. Immigrants in host societies may encounter xenophobia and intolerance based on their racial, religious, gender, or other arbitrary identities. They may encounter suspicion and mistrust from members of the host society and be perceived as threats to a country's economic prosperity, social stability, and/or cultural landscape (Merheb and Loughna 2006). Social exclusion can emerge as a consequence of multi-dimensional disadvantage that severely impedes asylum seekers and refugees from social processes and opportunities, which may stem from their racial, religious, gender, or other arbitrary identities (Babacan and Babacan 2013; Young 1999).

Drawing on this line of literature, Chapter 5 examined how Afghan refugees experience social insecurity and exclusion and how these shape their everyday interactions and relations in public spheres, such as work and school in the United States and Türkiye. Chapter 5 argued that social insecurity and exclusion faced by Afghan refugees vary in these countries, and structural forces, including policies towards refugees, play a key role in this. In the United States, Afghan refugees experience social insecurity and exclusion through Islamophobia due to their Muslim identities within the socio-cultural landscape of the country, while in Türkiye, they face it due to their ethnic identities within the socioeconomic context.

More specifically, in the United States, Afghan refugees experience Islamophobia, which I view as a form of social insecurity and exclusion they face in their everyday lives through hate speech, intolerance, discrimination, and suspicion due to their Muslim identities. The scholarship discussed that Islamophobia in the United States is a structural issue that is spread by law and

perpetuated by policy that seamlessly communicates negative stereotypes, prejudices, and misrepresentations about Muslims (Beydoun 2018; Elsheikh et al. 2017). These support popular views and false beliefs, as well as encourage hate and violence towards Muslims (Beydoun 2018). Chapter 5 particularly highlighted the experiences of Afghan women who wear headscarves, symbolizing a Muslim identity, which transforms into hate speech for them (Alimahomed-Wilson 2020). Afghan women show concerns about their daughters in schools, who feel insecure because of wearing a hijab. These exclusionary behaviors can lead Afghan refugees, especially children, to isolate themselves from the members of the host society. Afghan refugees endure not only hate speech but also suspicion from the members of the host society due to being Muslim.

In Türkiye, Afghan refugees experience social insecurity and exclusion due to their ethnic identities (Tunç and Güllüpınar 2024). The 1934 Settlement Law plays a key role in their exclusion, as it established the legal criteria for the migration and integration of people under the notion of "Turkish origin and culture (İçduygu and Karadağ 2018). The members of the host society often associate Afghan refugees with various discourses, including stealing jobs or receiving financial assistance from the government. Shop owners also state that most of their customers are non-Turkish and believe that their Turkish customers do not shop in their shops, as they are Afghans. Thus, they experience social exclusion within economic relations. Moreover, Afghan refugees experience discrimination and/or hate speech in everyday life, such as when renting an apartment. Afghans use diverse tactics to cope with social insecurity and exclusion, including xenophobia and intolerance in Türkiye. For example, they inform members of the host society about their conditions to create empathy with them. Or, a group of Afghans highlights

their sub-identities, especially Uzbek Afghans who identify themselves with a Turkish/Turkic identity, to grapple with xenophobia and intolerance.

Chapter 6 examined how these legal, economic, and social insecurities influence gender relations, specifically Afghan men's sense of masculinity in the household and their community relationships. It focused on male precariousness, which I view as another form of immigration-related insecurity experienced by Afghan men in both countries, as they lose their gendered power after migrating to the United States and Türkiye. I argue that Afghan refugee men experience these insecurities as a loss of masculinity and, through social practices within household and community relationships, which manifest differently in the United States and Türkiye because of the distinct insecurities they face in each location. Therefore, drawing on the experiences of Afghan men, I illustrated that masculinities are precarious and can be lost when refugee men experience difficulties in fulfilling their breadwinner roles to meet the needs of their families due to legal and economic insecurities. The findings also point to precarious masculinity that can be transformed into a masculinity crisis for a group of men because of the intersections of age and health conditions, especially in Türkiye, which can prevent men from working. Afghan men can also regain their sense of masculinity through various strategies shaped by legal, economic, and social forces and dynamics.

The precarious masculinity thesis posits that men's social status is precarious, implying that manhood is perceived as elusive and something to be earned (Bosson and Vandello 2011; Vandello et al. 2008; Vandello and Bosson 2013; Weaver et al. 2010). Men can easily lose their masculinity through social missteps and failures, such as unemployment or failing to support their families. Given that manhood is regarded as a social rather than a biological status, men must demonstrate their masculinity through various actions to have it validated by others. This

concept of precarious masculinity is linked with the notion of a masculinity crisis that is experienced by men when the traditional code for their masculine role behavior, which is the good provider role, undergoes erosion, which is accompanied by gender role strain stemming from failing to meet the expectations of the code (Levant 1997, 2011; Pleck 1995). Chapter 6 also discussed how Afghan men see themselves as the family providers, and how they approach women's paid work. Migrant men may oppose this, as they view it as a threat to their sense of masculinity, seek to protect the patriarchal culture, and believe it can reduce household chores (Çarpar and Göktuna Yaylaci 2021; Menjívar 1999; Pease 2009). However, men might support it because women's income helps make ends meet, allowing the family to survive (Menjívar 1999; Yalim and Critelli 2023).

Based on this line of literature, in Chapter 6, I argued that Afghan men who migrate to the United States embody precarious masculinities, meaning they lose their manhood and experience difficulties supporting their families due to economic precarity. Afghan men regain their manhood through strategies that involve working excessively or pursuing a college education, which will help them secure better jobs in the future and thus better provide for their families. Men also reclaim their manhood by participating in third spaces, where they socialize and build solidarity with other Afghan men. My findings show that Afghan men describe this process of regaining manhood as a difficult process, and they require their wives' financial contribution to the family budget. However, Afghan women are often unable to speak English and are responsible for childcare; thus, women are unable to work outside the home. Additionally, Afghan men do not support women's paid employment in jobs that they call entry-level jobs, such as cleaning, as men think that these jobs will not bring better opportunities in the future.

Afghan men who migrate to Türkiye similarly embody precarious masculinities, losing their manhood because of struggles with fulfilling their provider roles. However, legal insecurity faced by Afghan men constrains their opportunities to secure employment with improved conditions and meet their families' expenses. A group of men with old age and health conditions confront a masculinity crisis due to unemployment, which is a vital aspect of achieving manhood. These men express negative emotions, such as feeling fragile and insufficient. Afghan men face challenges in regaining their sense of manhood in Türkiye due to economic precarity and their insecure legal status, as they are unable to find better employment or pursue a college education to enhance their skills. Moreover, they are unable to reclaim their manhood by participating in third spaces, where they socialize with other Afghan men and develop solidarity. Finally, Afghan men often endorse women's paid employment, and many women take up entry-level jobs because of severe economic precarity. Thus, men have less authority to negotiate women's participation in the workforce.

7.2 Policy Suggestions

Given these insecurities and coping strategies, this dissertation project proposes several humanitarian policy changes to mitigate structural insecurities in the lives of Afghan refugees in the United States and Türkiye.

The U.S. social service system aims to promote self-sufficiency among incoming Afghan refugees, expecting them to enter the labor market as soon as possible so they do not rely on federal assistance (Gowayed 2022b). This expectation forces Afghan men to secure employment promptly to provide for their families as breadwinners. They are often employed in jobs that do not match their educational qualifications and/or occupational skills, which results in a loss of status. I recommend that policymakers extend federal aid for a year, as in Canada, to give

Afghan men more time to find an ideal job that matches their skills (Gowayed 2022b). Additionally, federal authorities can develop a more effective system that recognizes newcomers' human capital, providing more resources to help them transfer their educational credentials and/or occupational skills. Thus, these policy changes may have a positive impact on the mental health of Afghan men, who face deprivation and frustration, on their economic insecurities, and on their ability to support their communities.

Furthermore, Afghan refugees have raised several concerns about their resettlement process in Sacramento. Firstly, they frequently expressed complaints about the adequacy of financial assistance, including the welcome money provided during this process. They used this money for rent, which left them unable to cover other expenses. Secondly, resettlement agencies used the welcome funds to buy household items that Afghan refugees did not need. Based on these complaints, policymakers should ensure sufficient income to support a humane standard of living, and resettlement agencies should communicate with Afghan refugees about how to use their welcome funds, taking into account their specific needs.

Additionally, policymakers can develop policies to prevent social insecurity, specifically Islamophobia faced by Afghan refugees, especially in public spaces, such as schools, by informing the members of the host society about Islam. More specifically, they can create various campaigns to enhance awareness of Islam and its symbols.

Potential institutional pathways towards reform should include policies that expand the federal aid from 3 months to 1 year, facilitate the transfer of human capital, and prevent Islamophobia, particularly in schools. However, it is also important to note that implementing such policies toward Afghan refugees to cope with insecurity and precarity involves significant challenges because of the prevailing political environment in the United States, which fosters anti-

immigrant sentiments. For example, when I was writing this dissertation, the Trump administration halted the resettlement program from Afghanistan in 2025. Then, Afghans who helped the United States in Afghanistan and who were in Qatar would be sent back to Afghanistan or the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Nawaz 2026). As another example, the Trump administration aimed to cancel Temporary Protection Status and has already halted it for Haitians and Syrians (Bustillo 2026).

In Türkiye, policymakers should implement a new policy that provides a path to full citizenship for Afghan refugees, which is essential, especially for those whose resettlement applications are rejected by a third country. If full citizenship proves infeasible, policymakers need to consider the significance of the intersection between local, regional, and national legal contexts to enhance the well-being of Afghan refugees.

Afghan refugees endure hyper-precarity, which includes severe labor exploitation. One of its most significant manifestations is the frequent withholding of wages by employers. It is crucial to introduce robust policies aimed at combating the discrimination Afghan refugees encounter in the labor market.

Afghan refugees also face xenophobia, including discrimination and hate speech in daily life, through challenges in renting an apartment and in various other discourses, including the theft of jobs that target them. It is necessary to raise awareness of the conditions of Afghan refugees through policies. For example, local authorities in Trabzon or other satellite provinces can work with local NGOs to organize seminars to inform local people about the conditions of Afghan refugees or other immigrant groups.

Potential institutional pathways towards reform should include policies that provide a path to naturalization in Türkiye, especially for those whose applications have been rejected by the third

country, prevent discrimination, and raise awareness of Afghan refugees. However, there are also considerable challenges in implementing these policies, including the negative attitudes and behaviors of members of the host society towards refugees and the unfavorable political environment, which foster anti-immigrant sentiments.

7.3 Suggestions for Future Research

My dissertation project offers several opportunities to explore insecurity, uncertainty, and inequality that Afghan refugees or other immigrant groups experience around the world. Four main areas for further research are raised: cross-comparative studies, gender relations, identity dynamics in coping with insecurity, and the effects of spatial liminal legality on refugee well-being.

Adding one more country, such as Canada, to this analysis can increase the value of cross-comparative analysis, as Türkiye and the United States have distinctive legal contexts, including different policies towards refugees. For example, Türkiye does not grant refugee status to Afghan individuals, as they are non-European, and they also do not have a path to naturalization. However, Canada has both government and private sponsorship, and incoming refugees undergo a resettlement process, having a path to naturalization (Gowayed 2022b).

The small sample size of women (n = 7 in the United States and n = 6 in Türkiye) is a significant limitation of this study. I did not observe any notable differences or patterns in women's narratives on the basis of gender, likely due to the limited sample. Future research could examine refugee women’s experiences as a distinct group in facing these insecurities in both the United States and Türkiye.

Furthermore, researchers can conduct a study on the role of sub-identities in navigating economic precarity and xenophobia by Afghan refugees in the United States and especially in

Türkiye. My dissertation has delved into the role of sub-identities in the emigration of Afghan refugees from Afghanistan. However, my findings also reveal that particularly Uzbek and Hazara Afghans leverage their sub-identities to navigate economic precarity and xenophobia in Türkiye by aligning themselves with Turkish identity. This strategy proves especially effective for Uzbek Afghans, thanks to their Turkic roots. Therefore, future research can focus on the effects of sub-identities' social and economic insecurities in host societies.

Lastly, in Türkiye, researchers can compare Afghan refugees with Syrian refugees who hold TPS. TPS differs from IPS in terms of the rights it grants. For example, TPS holders cannot seek resettlement in a third country, but they are covered under Türkiye's General Health Insurance. This raises the question: How do Afghan and Syrian refugees experience and navigate spatial liminal legality in Türkiye?

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