# Understanding the Refugee Community through Global and Educational Lenses

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## Comprehensive Rationale

Being that I am passionate about working with children, I have taken it upon myself to gain a variety of experience in working with this population. While working with the King Street Center this summer and the election process showing an ever growing popularity for Donald Trump, the students fear of deportation brought the issue of refugees to the forefront of my attention. Then, this past fall, I interned at the VNA (Visiting Nurses Association) Family Room in which I worked with primarily refugee families. On the day of the election I both attended my internship at the VNA Preschool and then substituted at the King Street Center.

That day began with tears as my supervisor and I hugged and cried over the election results. I watched as each of the refugee families dropped off their children to us with somber looks in their eyes. Not knowing what to say, I greeted them as normally as I could and exchanged looks of sorrow. That afternoon, I walked into the King Street Center and many of the employees were torn between feelings of sadness and anger. We decided to forgo the normal schedule and celebrate the wonderfully caring environment and family that the facility offers those children. We had them make signs with inspirational messages and then marched in a circle around the block chanting, “WE WANT PEACE!”

Seeing all of their faces reassured that they are loved reminded me that there are people in this country who are determined not to allow our president to deport these wonderful people. Because of the powerful connection that I have made with the children and families of the local Burlington refugee community, I feel that it is up to me to do what is in my power to assist them in any way I can and show them that Burlington is a welcoming place with a variety of resources.

In working with this population, I have noticed that there is no centralized place for people to access resources in regards to the refugee community. Also, much of the help provided by programs, such as the Refugee Resettlement Program, end after eight to twelve months of being in their new homes. Often people who I have worked with at the VNA or the King Street Center explain that some of them know of certain resources available, but no one is proficient in understanding the extent to which the area is providing for this community or where to send them.

There are also many common gaps in knowledge regarding the refugee community. Many people do not understand the issues faced by refugees or what areas they need support in. This is especially true in the local education system. In the Burlington school district, most training available regarding cultural differences are focused on inclusion on a basic racial level and do not begin to address the needs of the refugee community. These trainings also lack the specificity required to address the needs of the various communities coming to Burlington. In order to understand these needs, it is important to understand the various cultures and backgrounds that encompass the refugees of Burlington as well as why they left their home countries.

To address the gaps in knowledge both regarding resources as well as for educators to understand the refugee population, I am creating a website to fill in the knowledge that is not currently available. This website will be designed for two target audiences; educators and the refugee community/those working with this population. This website will be a way to facilitate conversations and trainings for both communities.

In regards to working with the educators of the Burlington area, I am hosting a training at the King Street Center and hope to do the same within the Burlington school district. These trainings will work to explain the refugee population living in Burlington and the challenges specific to their communities. This information will all be available on the website for future access by educators.

In regards to the refugee community, this website will aim to consolidate all of the resources available in the Burlington area to explain what is available and where to find applications to important resources, such as housing, child care, and more. As of right now, many families are unsure of where to find resources and are only receiving limited knowledge from people working in their various organizations who may not be aware of the breath of resources available. When explaining to the families that there are vouchers for their families to go to Echo for free, this concept was confusing and they did not understand the process of how they could use them or how to get there. Providing a consolidated place to explain resources and provide links to applications will be an effective way to communicate with this population using the staff from organizations such as the VNA Family Room.

The website will pull from existing resources to explain what help is available and where to find various resources needed by the refugee population. While literacy and language may pose an additional problem regarding access to this website, this is a known problem. This website will be able to be translated for various language needs. Another option for utilizing this website would be for the organizations that are already working with the refugee community to use this website in their conversations with the families. As stated before, getting knowledge to this community can be a daunting task with the use of translators, thus I feel it is best to leave it

up to the organizations to do this in the ways that they already have established for communicating with these families.

This project will be an effective tool because it is something that many people working with the refugee families have been needing. Since I have begun working on this project, many people from various organizations have expressed gratitude towards this project and look forward to integrating this website into their programs. This website will work to better advertise and pull together all of the various resources available in this community to allow the refugee population the understanding of what help is available. As a result, more people will be using the resources allocated to them, thus producing higher levels of adjustment for the refugee community in Burlington.

When someone views the website the first page will present the option to indicate if you are looking for information as an educator or for the refugee community. When these links are clicked on they will bring you to information specific to these populations. There will also be a navigation menu along the top of the website to make accessing information easy and quick. This website will also include a page directed towards information regarding the history of refugees in the United States and the laws surrounding refugees from 1920-today. Another page available on the navigation menu will be an about page that explains the purpose of this project and

Information available to educators will include background information on various refugee populations and their cultures, common challenges faced by educators working with refugees, and ways to help refugee parents. The background information provided will be directly corresponding with the most common refugee communities of Burlington, this includes Syrian, Sudanese, Somali Bantu, and Nepali Bhutanese people. It is important for educators to be

informed on all of these populations to be able to effectively communicate with both the children and parents.

Information available to help the refugee community will include a directory of all available resources in the Burlington area as well as links to any applications needed, information about public schools in the United States and what is expected from both parents and their children, and a page that discusses the rights of the refugee community and who to contact to obtain more information regarding current policies.

At this point, there aren't currently any websites that I can find that fill the gaps that my website would address. There are many websites such as Hias (https://www.hias.org/) and Cultural Orientation Resource Center (http://www.culturalorientation.net/resources-for-refugees) that provide general knowledge, but do not provide a comprehensive look at the refugees of that community and what their needs are and they do not address education. I have yet to find a website that is aimed towards helping educators to better understand the specific communities that they are working with. There are several global and national level websites aimed towards informing educators about working with refugees, such as Educate a Child (http://educateachild.org/) and The UN Refugee Agency (http://www.unhcr-centraleurope.org/en/index.html). However, both of these websites only help at a surface level and do not address the individual issues that may be experienced by the educators or the refugees themselves.

## Understanding the Refugee Community through Global and Educational Lenses

In 2007, there were roughly 14,000,000 refugees throughout the global population (Hope 2008). In 2011, the United States hosted 56,419 refugees from 65 various countries. The majority

of refugees coming from Bhutan, Burma, Eritrea, Cuba, Iraq, Somalia, Russia, and Iran (Isik-Ercan 2012) . The U.S. is continually among the top refugee-hosting countries and in 2013, the U.S. hosted a total of 263,600 refugees (Lepore 2015). Between the years of 1975 and 2003, the U.S. has permanently resettled roughly 2.4 million refugees; many of which were well-educated individuals from South Asia (McBrien 2003).

While the number of refugees entering the U.S. has remained stable, the demographic of the refugee population continues to change. This is due to political and economic conditions in the countries of origin (Lankes 2011). Every year, roughly 20,000 school-aged child refugees enter the U.S. coming from many various countries. Most of these students do not speak any English and may never have had any formal schooling (Lankes 2011). Today's refugee population is more diverse than ever, speaking a wide range of dialects, thus causing an increasing difficulty interpreting information. This is one of the many challenges that schools are facing with the child refugee population. It has been found that students typically need three to five years to learn enough English to function in a typical U.S. classroom (not including children without former schooling experience) (Lankes 2011).

## Stages of Migration

There are three stages to the migration process. The first is called the "premigration or departure stage" (Pine 2013). This stage includes the social, economic, educational, and political factors that the people are experiencing. For the refugees of Southeast Asia, Bosnia, Somalia, or Liberia this included abrupt flights from their homes. This stage may also include exile, departure from family, expectations for a better life somewhere else, leaving/missing a familiar

environment, persecution, potential violence, loss of loved ones, long waiting periods, and sometimes living in limbo while waiting for departure (Pine 2013).

The second stage is the "transit or intermediate stage" (Pine 2013). This stage often includes travel by sea (as in the case of Haitian and Cuban refugees) or by commercial flight (the experience of many Asians, Caribbean islanders, and Europeans). This stage may last between several hours to many years. As in the case of many Southeast Asian and Somalian refugees, there may be several years spent at refugee camps while awaiting a final destination. This stage may also include extended stays in detention centers while waiting for the country to decide to either permit entry or deport. In other situations, refugees may leave the country of origin, connect with family in the new host country, and be settled within a matter of hours (often the case for Asian, Caribbean islander, and European refugees) (Pine 2013).

Issues that arise during this stage include; stress surrounding family matters, discrepancy between what is expected of the new country and the reality, the degree to which the native people will accept the refugees, and the opportunities available in the new country. Not all families are re-united due to complications surrounding familial structures; including stepparents, half- or stepsiblings, and other relationships of the like. This stage may also include a shift in power from the parents to their child(ren) which may result in conflicts. Changes in culture present many issues such as; mental health, education, child-rearing, gender roles, and family expectations. Depression, substance abuse, suicide attempts, parent-child conflicts, and spousal or child abuse are the highest reported conflicts among refugees in this stage of migration (Pine 2013). This stage also presents many conflicts surrounding undocumented refugees, leaving them vulnerable to deportation under the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and

Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA), which eliminates the right of the person to judicial review in cases of groups of undocumented people. This law operates under the knowledge that often these groups may include people who have been convicted of crimes related to drugs, child abuse/neglect/abandonment, immigration laws, aggressive felonies, and misdemeanors (Pine 2013). The IIRIRA is retroactive meaning that if a person has arrived in the U.S. and had committed an offense years prior, they may be deported due to the conviction despite having been a productive member of the workforce while in the U.S. and possibly raising a family (Pine 2013).

The third stage of migration is, "return to the country of origin" (Pine 2013). In some cases, when able, many people will return to their country of origin while others may be deported back to the country. In cases where a parent is deported, the child will most likely enter the foster care system unless there is another family member suitable to care for them. In some cases, the child may go with the deported parent back to the country of origin, leaving the rest of their family in the U.S., causing their family to be separated. It is important to acknowledge that the person being deported will be sent back to the country of their birth, which may not be the country in which they were raised. This could mean returning to a country that is unfamiliar in which the person does not speak the language (Pine 2013).

## Displacement of Refugees

Refugees often experience secondary and tertiary displacement. Refugees also commonly face "overlapping displacement" which entails sharing the same physical space as other people who are currently displaced (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016). Because of the nature of the constant

displacement cycle, these refugees often form communities which welcome, protect, and support new groups of displaced people (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016).

The overlapping displacement often leads to a unclear way of determining the difference between the displaced people and the hosting refugees. One example of this is in northern Uganda where host populations live in the same camps as the displaced individuals and may have the same limited access to property (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016). In many ways, policy interventions are necessary to avoid conflicts between the hosts and the newly displaced refugees as they compete for resources and services available (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016). Instead of believing that these conflicts are inevitable, it is obvious that the current policies and programs in place promote resentment and insecure feelings among host families. For this reason, there is increasing efforts in implementing "development-oriented" programs to support both the newly displaced refugees and the host families. It is believed that much of the conflict is derived from uneven development of programs for various generations of refugees or for refugees in regards to their countries of origin (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016). The aim is that the new programs will be developed to avoid further marginalization of this community and be sensitive to supporting the needs and rights of all refugees regardless of if they are hosting or being hosted (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016).

## Understanding the Refugee Crisis

To better understand the refugee population it is important to know the challenges faced by various refugee populations as well as host countries. The refugee crisis is a global issue that has lasting impacts on both the people and the countries involved. While many refugees have similar overarching challenges, it is important to understand that each refugee population faces

their own difficulties and need support in areas specific to their needs. In working with the refugee community it is very important to understand the turmoil that is experienced around the world and the variety of situations that the refugee community is experiencing. It is important to recognize that not only are refugees often fleeing war zones, but they are facing a great deal of obstacles on their way to their new homes.

## Burundi Refugees Living in Tanzania

In Burundi access to education is thought to be not only a right, but an essential part of the sustainability to return to their home country and prevent re-displacement (Anselme 2012). The refugee community in Tanzania enrollment in school was 23% lower than the students who stayed in Burundi. Of those who returned to Burundi, the number of students to attend school was 55% less than those who never left the country (Anselme 2012).

Difficulties that many young people returning to Burundi faced included poverty, which resulted in the inability for families to pay for education costs. Other challenges included limited capacity for students at the schools, lack of school certificates to show their level of education for re-admittance, unfamiliarity with the language used in schools, and the need to catch up with the subjects that they were not being taught while in Tanzania (Anselme 2012). Often, those who returned to Burundi, who were not in school, found it so difficult to integrate themselves back into the culture that they would recommend that those still in Tanzania stay in that country. Those who returned to Burundi and integrated back into the school system had solidified plans for their futures and easily envisioned staying in Burundi. It was found that boys generally had an easier time integrating than girls, this is largely to do with the school environment (Anselme 2012).

## Syrian Refugees

In Syria, the conflict between the government of Bashar al-Assad and other forces started in 2011 and continues to displace Syrian people. By the end of 2014, it was estimated that 7.6 million people were displaced and 3.7 million Syrian refugees fled the country since the beginning of the conflict. Because of the more than one million registered Syrian refugees, the global total of refugees rose to 3,688,402 by the end of 2014 (not including the 117,590 Syrians awaiting refugee status) (Ostrand 2015).

The upheaval of Syrian refugees causes a tremendous challenge for neighboring countries; Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey taking the largest strain. In the end of 2014, Lebanon hosted 1,146,405 registered Syrian refugees, which meant that roughly one in every five people were Syrian. At the end of 2014, Turkey hosted a the largest number of Syrians by taking in a total of 1,552,839 registered refugees by the end of 2014 (Ostrand 2015).

It was estimated that 56,400 Syrians requested refugee status in the 44 industrialized countries within the year 2013. That number went up to 149,600 in 2014, which is the highest number recorded by a single group of people since 1992 (Ostrand 2015). Countries that have taken in Syrian refugees struggle with the massive effects on the countries economics, societies, and infrastructures, thus threatening their stability (Ostrand 2015). Over 80 percent of Syrian refugees in neighboring countries live in communities and cities instead of refugee camps. The large numbers of refugees arriving in urban areas has strained resources like water, sanitation, health care, food, electricity, and housing. The areas which were already the poorest prior to the Syrian crisis, such as the northern region of Jordan and the Syrian border of Lebanon, were hit

particularly hard. These areas have received the largest number of refugees, but have less resources and wealth to serve the influx of people (Ostrand 2015).

Shelter is a large concern for Syrian refugees in Lebanon because of the absence of formal refugee camps and affordable housing. By the end of 2014, 55 percent of registered Syrian refugees were living in substandard living conditions (Ostrand 2015). In Jordan, 84 percent of registered Syrian refugees lived in urban or rural areas instead of refugee camps in 2014. About two thirds of Syrians lived below the Jordanian poverty line ($96 U.S. dollars per month) and one sixth were below the abject poverty line ($40 U.S. dollars per month). Almost half of all their homes were without heat (Ostrand 2015). Similar conditions were reported in Turkey where more than 70 percent of registered Syrian refugees lived outside of the government run refugee camps and instead lived in overcrowded rental homes. These people struggle to secure housing, healthcare, or education (all of which are available at the camps) (Ostrand 2015). Because of the instability in the governments of Iraq and Egypt, there has been a negative impact on the housing conditions for Syrian refugees there as well (Ostrand 2015).

The United States and the United Kingdom are the two top donors in humanitarian aid towards the Syrian refugees. The U.S. contributed the most by giving 2.9 billion between 2012 and 2014. More than 1.4 billion dollars of that money was to be used towards assisting refugees and their host communities. The United Kingdom's contribution in 2015 was of 790 million dollars worth of aid to those affected by the Syrian conflict. 407 million dollars of that was allocated towards helping Syrian refugees and their host communities.

However, housing is not the only trouble facing Syrian refugees. Rape is a commonly used weapon of war used within this conflict and is often utilized as a tool of "control,

intimidation, and humiliation" (Sim 2016). In many instances, soldiers have been said to tie men and brothers up and make them watch as their wives, mothers, and sisters were raped. This is done as a way to make the men feel helpless in relation to the soldiers (Sim 2016). One of the most devastating factors leading to mental disorders in Syrian refugees comes from the realities of arriving in a safe country, including sexual assault, violence, and discrimination (Sim 2016).

## Afghan Refugees in Pakistan

After a recent influx of Afghan refugees in Pakistan, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) in cooperation with United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) coordinated a national conference to shed light on the issue of promoting the right of education in regards to the Afghan refugees. The goal was to encourage the inclusion of Afghan refugee children (Need for educating all 2012). The people of Pakistan believe that all children have the right to education regardless of their country of origin (Need for educating all 2012).

When asked, majority of the Afghan child refugees identified as Pakistani due to feelings that Pakistan was their country. The people of Pakistan also recognized that the integration of Afghan refugees means benefits to themselves as well due to having to pay less taxes as well as less spending on social security. They also acknowledged that there can be no security or peace without education. As of 2012, there are 200,000 Afghan refugee children attending privately managed schools that follow Afghan education curriculum (Need for educating all 2012).

## Hmong Refugees in Laos

Many of the Hmong refugees fled their homes in the 1970's because of their alliance with the United States during the war in Vietnam. This migration to the United States continued through 2004 upon the closure of the final Hmong refugee camp in Thailand. As of 2012, over 200,000 Hmong refugees live within the United States (McCall 2012).

Because Hmong students' experiences emphasize cultural pluralism, provide equal opportunities for academic achievement, and address issue of inequality for Hmong refugee students and their families, it is important that teachers in the United States emphasize learning about various cultures (McCall 2012). Teachers should not only advocate respect towards diversity, but also explain that not all cultures have been valued equally. It is especially important to have students share experiences in which they have each been discriminated to exemplify inequalities among cultures (McCall 2012).

Upon arriving in the United States, the Hmong refugees had to struggle to learn English, seek employment, and adapt to a non-agricultural lifestyle like they had in Laos. Overall, the Hmong population in the United States is not proficient in English, is less formally educated, has higher rates of unemployment, and requires larger amounts of public assistance than that of the general population and other ethnic minority groups. Due to the general lack of knowledge within the United States population of the history of the Hmong people's aid to the United States during the Vietnam war, they often discriminate against the Hmong, resulting in racism and prejudice. This lack of knowledge partly stems from public schools omitting this alliance in the teachings of the Vietnam war (McCall 2012). The combination of the lack of knowledge of the history of the Hmong people and their reliance on resources led to common stereotypes that the

Hmong people are all welfare recipients and purposely have large families to increase the amount of benefits that they receive.

Upon arriving to the United States, many of the Hmong traditions in regards to familial expectations were disrupted. Children often learned English first, causing an imbalance in parental authority (McCall 2012). Sometimes, college women would protest their parents rules surrounding dating, interacting with men, and how they use their spare time. The youngest sons would also resist the rules regarding the expectation to care for their parents as they age and live with them (McCall 2012). Hmong people value education greatly, however it is expected in Hmong values that daughters marry, bear children, and carry out traditional roles. Early marriage before completing education can be seen as resisting  American culture and may be a means of gaining independence from their parents as well as racism/classism experienced by women in educational settings (McCall 2012).

## Refugees in the United Kingdom

In 2013, the United Kingdom's government implemented the 'Go Home' pilot campaign poster that said, "Is life here hard? Going home is simple," with a picture of a man sleeping on the streets. Luckily, this campaign ended after a few months (Morrison 2016). Through the process of entry into the UK, Asylum seekers are identified with illegal immigrants or unwanted labor migrant workers and seen as "bad migrants" (Morrison 2016). "Good migrants," are seen as people who pay taxes, and meet labor shortages or are fee paying students (Morrison 2016). This is due in part by areas having seen an influx of asylum seekers who were viewed as being a burden on society, a threat to housing and job opportunities, and overall an unwelcome social demographic change after the introduction of the 1999 dispersal policy (Morrison 2016).

Asylum seekers and refugees in the UK report poorer psychological health than either the general population or labor migrants. The Asylum seekers and refugees reported grief, anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder stemming from their experiences with violence and torture along with post-migration challenges (Morrison 2016).

## Chechen Refugees in Poland

In 2006, schools in Poland began to accommodate refugee pupils in an organized way. Before then, school principals would require documents to prove that students had attended or graduated from schools in their native countries. This was a great challenge for the Chechen community of refugees, making up 86 percent of applications for refugee status in Poland between 2007-2011, mostly coming from Russia, but thought to be from Chechnya. The transcript requirement was impossible for most Chechens to meet because of the lack of formal education (Kosc 2013).

Polish teachers have great difficulty teaching the Chechen children because of their lack of Polish language skills, mental health issues, and gaps in formal education, which all lead to the school receiving lower test scores and it's standing within the system. These teachers are unprepared to work with these children or often don't feel like making the effort and believe it is best for the refugee children to simply keep quiet. The schools make no effort to integrate the refugee children into peer groups and tolerate bullying (Kosc 2013).

While the Polish ministry disagrees with claims that the teachers are unprepared to work with refugee children, it has been witnessed by volunteers, teachers, and families that refugee children are continuously left behind their Polish peers (Kosc 2013). However, there is a private school named Jamsaheb Digvijay Singh Jadeja Gymnasium No. 20 in Warsaw where enrollment

of refugees is free of charge. This school serves refugees from Armenia, Chechnya, Georgia, and Tibet. The school has two goals; to teach refugee children how to live in Poland and to open Polish students up to their peers coming from various cultures. Many of the student who attend this school go on to universities and professional careers in Poland (Kosc 2013).

## Refugees in Norway

For refugees in Norway, various housing options are available; some are a single building such as residence halls and others are decentralized houses throughout various parts of town. It is said that asylum centers draw attention to the insecurity experienced by individuals and families, the boredom, and the discomfortable feeling of unhomeliness. Residents that live in the centers are provided a bed and access to a bathroom, kitchen, and laundry. Communal areas are designed to be safe and address the needs of children towards learning and activities (Archambault 2012).

While residents have to ask to be able to leave the center overnight, they are free to go in and out when they would like as well as do their own shopping and eat what they like. Many adults express being impatient and bored while waiting for their applications to gain a response.

Many children wish for housing equal to what the Norwegian families have or what they are used to from their home countries. It was found to be common for children to mention wanting their own room in their new house (Archambault 2012). Many children also dreamt of their future school, friends, town, and things to do for fun several months before their settlement (Archambault 2012). When children were first asked what they were looking forward to in regards to moving to a new place, the main responses included; seeing their new home, getting to see their new school, making friends, and joining in on local activities (Archambault 2012). Most parents wished for a single family house or semi-detached home.

In some instances, placement in a new home is not easy. In one case, the entire family had been disappointed for many reasons ranging from the size and potential of the house to the location making it difficult to commute to language courses (Archambault 2012). Many children also mentioned the conformity to their neighbors houses as being of importance. In other cases, while the children were satisfied, parents expressed the lack of home feeling and feelings of nostalgia for a home with a neighborhood (Archambault 2012). Many parents also experienced feelings of loneliness after leaving the centers for life in the asylum center was a community experience for them to engage with others of the same profile (Archambault 2012).

Overall, the marginal housing provided in Norway to the refugee community in comparison to what refugee children view as the Norwegian standard seems to be more difficult to accept for children and parents after settlement as compared to while living in the asylum center (Archambault 2012).

## Mexican Refugees in Canada

The majority of women in Mexico are victims of some form of violence from their spouse, partner, or former partner. Mexico ranks number sixteen globally for female homicides (Bhuyan et al. 2016). Canada recognized more Mexican asylum seekers in the world and between the years 2000 and 2014 they recognized 7,777 Mexican refugees (70 percent of the global total) while the United States recognized a mere 3,287 (29.6 percent of the global total). During this same period, only 46 refugees were recognized by other countries (Bhuyan et al. 2016).

In Canada, people who submit a claim within the country are deemed, “refugee claimants,” and are granted access to basic health care, social assistance, and are granted the

ability to work while awaiting their decision. In the year 2014, Canada processed 13,500 claims and approved 9,869 refugees at an approval rate of 49 percent. For those who can prove that removal from Canada would represent a violation of their rights, Canada offers permanent residence on, "humanitarian and compassionate grounds" (Bhuyan et al. 2016).

In 2009, Canada introduced a visa requirement for Mexico to ban the entry of asylum seekers whom the Canadian minister of citizen and immigration saw as, "bogus refugees" (Bhuyan et al. 2016). Then, in 2012, Mexico was also included on a list of Designated Countries of Origin to deter humanitarian migration from, "safe countries" (Bhuyan et al. 2016). This restricted access to public benefits, institutionalized forced detention for refugees whose means of entry to Canada seemed, "irregular," meaning they may have been trafficked, and reduced health care access (this was later restored in 2016) (Bhuyan et al. 2016). This was aimed specifically at refugees who came from a, "safe country." These people have shorter times to submit their applications, fewer rights for appeal, and are disadvantaged by restrictions regarding collecting and submitting proper documents regarding their flee from domestic violence (Bhuyan et al. 2016).

Canada is allowed to turn away asylum seekers at the U.S. border under the expectation that they can submit a claim in the United States (unless they qualify for an exception to the agreement such as having family in Canada, being an unaccompanied minor, have a valid work/student permit in Canada, have valid travel documents, or may be issued proper travel documents once in Canada).

Hurdles that women seeking protection regarding gender-related persecution face include: that persecution against women normally takes place in intimate relations in which the

state does not play a direct role, evidentiary requirements assume that women have access to male dominated legal systems, and that women have the same mobility as men (relocating alone or without their children) (Bhuyan et al. 2016).

Mexico was determined to be a, "safe country," because it has, "mechanisms," (women's shelters and laws) to offer assistance to women who have been victims of domestic violence. While laws in Mexico exist to protect women, there has been many shortcomings in which there are high rates of impunity for violent crimes such as rape, domestic assault, and femicide. Thus, for entry into Canada, the refugee must have proof that the state failed to protect them (Bhuyan et al. 2016). Canada's limitations regarding humanitarian migration significantly restrict the legal options for Mexicans to seek refuge. By claiming Mexico as a, "safe country," Canada is exemplifying that everyday violence against women is not deemed worthy of international intervention (Bhuyan et al. 2016).

## Refugees in Australia

Australia is bound to protect refugee and asylum seeker children against forms of discrimination and accord them at least the same treatment as the national children with respect to elementary education being that it is a signatory of both the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (Christie 2006).

However, Australia has a very strict regulatory system to all who seek entrance into the country. Since 1991, Australia has a policy of mandatory detention for all people arriving, "illegally," which has resulted in a number of children being locked in detention centers as a result of attempting to seek asylum. In the detention centers, the children have very little, if any,

access to education and more than half the children detained are eventually found to have legitimate refugee status (Christie 2006).

Australia also has a policy by which all people who arrive to the country by boat without visas are immediately deemed as being an unlawful non-citizen and placed into mandatory detention while the government assesses their refugee status. Those who are found to have genuine refugee status are released into the community on temporary protection visas (TPV) for three years and then they must apply for renewal. Unfortunately, the assessment process of refugee status takes more than a year in over a third of cases (Christie 2006).

However, those who arrive to Australia by plane with valid visas are able to apply for asylum within 45 days of arrival and are granted bridging visas, then released to the community. If they are then determined to have refugee status, they are granted permanent protection visas (PPVs), but are not given full refugee status. Full refugee status may only be obtained by people who apply for refugee status from outside Australia, or are assessed as refugees by the UNHCR prior to arrival (Christie 2006). It is estimated that around 50,000 people live in Australia without permission. The largest group within that number is comprised of people with expired visas, most of whom are from the United Kingdom and the United States (Christie 2006).

It is said that the difficulties faced by refugees in the community are mild in comparison to the children living in the detention centers. Australia is the only signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention that inflicts indefinite required detention on children. The most widely known immigration detention centers (IDC) in Australia are in remote, desert locations that are described as, “isolated and bleak”(Christie 2006). The desert camps have high fences for security and are topped with razor wire. IDCs operate similarly to prisons in which there are locked

spaces, guards, and restrictions regarding the movement of people. IDCs are administered by private for profit companies that also administer prisons and are responsible for maintenance of asylum seekers including education and health. The company does not allow access to the public to the IDCs (Christie 2006). In the IDCs, children are often witness to, and sometimes participate in, acts of self-harm or suicide. Also, at times of protest, the IDCs have been known to use teargas, water cannons, and extreme violence on children (Christie 2006).

## Play In Australia

Play has been found to impact the negative experiences by teaching children ways by which they can regulate their responses to unanticipated events as well as improve their ability to handle stress and uncertainty (MacMillan et al. 2015). Play is a critical aspect of childhood development; helping children to attain skills in tolerance, problem solving, leadership, resilience, and cooperation. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child outlines in article 31 that children have the right to play. Playing benefits the child's social development, emotional development, cognitive development, and physical health (MacMillan et al. 2015).

In an experiment conducted by MacMillan, Ohan, Cherian, and Mutch, refugee children were noted to have mentioned play infrequently when referring to past experiences. Over one third of children had experienced familial separation during the transit process and fifteen percent were still separated from a parent. All of the refugee children in the study had experienced violence, threats to their safety, and denial of their rights (MacMillan et al. 2015).

One child from the study explained that when they were in Iran there was no play. They lived in a room with six people and were too afraid to play outside. This child had to share one or two dolls with their three siblings. Since being relocated, she describes being happy and playing

in the part with her siblings (MacMillan et al. 2015). Her mother also reported that there was limited exposure to outside play and that maybe once a year they would go to the park because it had been too dangerous with the Iranian police (MacMillan et al. 2015).

## South Sudanese Refugees in Australia

One of the fastest growing humanitarian migrant groups arriving in Australia are people from South Sudan (Ibolya 2016). Knowledge is still needed by natives in understanding intergenerational conflict within immigrant families as well as the role that child protective services may be able to take on in order to intervene effectively with those families (Ibolya 2016).

Upon arrival, the refugee community is taught about Australian law, social norms, and society through government-administered programs. While this population is making great strides in their contribution to Australia, the forced migration caused great strains on this community in regards to assimilating to their new country and find the government-sponsored interventions to be a threat to their parental authority and power within the household (Ibolya 2016). The South Sudanese parents have a shared understanding of familial structure and household rules, which affect their perception when interacting with child protection authorities (Ibolya 2016).

When external factors, such as government authorities, interfere within familial matters dictated by the patriarch it is considered to be an attack on his family, identity, and authority. Corporal punishment is often seen as an acceptable and widely used practice for disciplining one's child in the South Sudanese culture. This form of punishment is used as a way to raise responsible and capable adults. This is not seen by them to be the same as violence against a

child because that is defined to them as severely beating a child without reason whereas corporal punishment is a parenting tool (Ibolya 2016).

However, Australian Law prohibits physical punishment or corporate punishment in cases that leave markings, bruises, or other injuries. These cases are seen as physical abuse and may lead to the child being taken from the custody of their parents (Ibolya 2016). It has been found that when clients are able to identify shared goals with workers, there is higher rates of compliance. However, those who oppose the authority's objectives and/or do not trust them, the clients are generally non-compliant (Ibolya 2016).

In South Sudanese culture, child rearing is the responsibility of female family members. Due to migration, many parents often lose important support networks. Generally, fathers have low engagement in the day-to-day activities involved in child rearing, thus leaving child care to mothers (Ibolya 2016). Commonly, South Sudanese single mothers are found in Australia. This is due in part because of family separation as well as humanitarian visas issued by the Australian government under the Women at Risk visa which is aimed to support widowed and separated mothers (Ibolya 2016). Single parenting has many difficulties, including limited resources and an increase in demands, but for South Sudanese families there is the additional challenge of having large family sizes and an absence of assistance from extended family members. In cases of divorce, South Sudanese fathers are less familiar with the idea of joint custody. Often, these fathers do not know their rights to seeing their children after separation (Ibolya 2016). This results in an increase of stress on the parent and creates environments of conflict (Ibolya 2016).

Many South Sudanese parents feel that the cultural values of Australia, in particular the increase of freedom, undermine existing structures of balance in their family. They believe that

youth have too much freedom in Australia. This may be due to the shift of dynamics within the families causing a threat to parental power as well as the challenge of finding legally approved, but also culturally significant, parenting tools to maintain parental authority (Ibolya 2016). Some of this frustration may stem from the fact that children and youth have adopted the Australian culture more rapidly than their parents (Ibolya 2016). This creates a cultural divide between the parents and the children. Many parents have a strong desire for their children to continually practice the values and traditions of their cultural heritage (Ibolya 2016). In their perspective, many parents feel that their children are abandoning their culture.

The fear of losing parental power over their children was expressed by all participating parents in a study conducted by Ibolya. Most parents attempted to increase hierarchical elements of traditional parenting techniques, including corporal punishment. However, this was met with disapproval and intervention from the Australian government (Ibolya 2016). Many parents feel that without physical discipline they will not be able to socialize their children into becoming responsible adults and for these reasons are unwilling to change their parenting styles. Most participants in this study feel that it is necessary for the South Sudanese parents to have access to understanding other alternate forms of parental discipline (Ibolya 2016).

While the sense of diminishing parental authority in their new community originated from a variety of factors, most parents in this study blamed government intervention as the main source of loss of familial authority (Ibolya 2016). Many parents also fear that their children will engage in high-risk behaviors ones out of their home because of lack of parental discipline (Ibolya 2016). One difficulty experienced by refugee families when engaging with Australian child protection services and other government services was a feeling of overall lack of cultural

knowledge on the part of workers (Ibolya 2016). There is a lack of cultural understanding that has affected not only the ability of child protective services to engage effectively with families, but also their ability to provide appropriate services (Ibolya 2016).

In order to foster new parenting practices among refugee parents as they arrive in refugee communities, it is important to create a culture of trust, respect, and communication as well as finding shared understandings through open dialogues (Ibolya 2016). South Sudanese parents often do not understand the goal of Austrian care and protection services in wanting to build safe environments for children, including the refugee children of their communities. However, Australian protective services do not understand that keeping children and family safe is the main reason that South Sudanese families adhere to their long-standing traditions (Ibolya 2016). Parents should be given the opportunity to explain the reasons behind their practices as well as their unwillingness to conform to Australian requests. The current Australian child protection system lacks focus on preventing abuse and neglect and instead looks only at investigation of rapidly increasing reports and actions needed for substantiated cases (Ibolya 2016).

## South Sudanese Refugees in Uganda

Armed conflict continues to be a major concern for various people around the globe. In 2014, there were 40 armed conflicts, thus creating the highest conflict yearly fatality rate since the Cold War (Adaku et al. 2016). In 2011, the Republic of South Sudan achieved independence as a nation after decades of civil war. Continued conflicts within Sudan have influenced the country since their independence (Adaku et al. 2016). In 2013, a struggle of power between President Kiir and his ex deputy Riek Machar and subsequent fighting occurred, resulting in thousands of people being killed and 2.1 million people being displaced (Adaku et al. 2016). As

of January 2016, over six hundred and forty four thousand refugees have fled to neighboring countries including Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, and Uganda. On August 26th 2015, a peace agreement was signed by conflicting parties, but conflict continued (Adaku et al. 2016).

The Peter C. Alderman Foundation (PCAF), an organization that works with public partners in efforts to establish mental health and psychological support with in post-conflict countries, established a multidisciplinary team to be located at the Arua Regional Referral Hospital in Northern Uganda since 2010 (Adaku et al. 2016). This team is comprised of a supervising psychiatrist, psychiatric clinical officer, social worker, counselor, nurse, and a community social worker that works with community health workers (Adaku et al. 2016). The team makes visits to the Rhino Camp settlement and conducts health education sessions and psychoeducation regarding various topics during outreach (Adaku et al. 2016).

Ugandan government includes a policy of, "self reliance," in which refugees are provided a plot of land and allowed to settle in government-appointed areas (Adaku et al. 2016). Within those areas, refugees are allowed to receive government-funded regional health & education resources (Adaku et al. 2016). South Sudanese refugees have been found to be more likely to seek health care if a physical problem is suspected to be the underlying cause of mental health issues (Adaku et al. 2016).

There have also been a limited number of child protection advocates that have focused on implementing child-friendly spaces, referring children to health services, providing educational services, providing legal support, and tracing family lineage as well as reunification (Adaku et al. 2016). More in-depth psychosocial support has been provided by organizations such as the Uganda Red Cross Society, Medical Teams International, and PCAF (Adaku et al. 2016).

When interviewed, refugees indicated that their most common psychosocial problems included overthinking, ethical conflicts, and child abuse (Adaku et al. 2016). Common stated concerns included family separation, drug abuse, unaccompanied to minors, and poverty. They also indicated that their coping strategies include being connected to a tribe, social support, seeking advice from church leaders or elders, and resolving issues as a community (Adaku et al. 2016). Some social concerns that were emphasized include ethnic engines regarding child abuse, sexual abuse, and gender-based violence (Adaku et al. 2016).

## Sudanese Refugees in the United States

Due to the United States government agreeing to resettle refugee children whose parents were determined as deceased or untraceable, there were 3,500 refugees resettled in the United States (Bates et al. 2005). It has been found that the Sudanese refugee youth are quite resilient. After twelve to eighteen months of being in the United States, it was found that 98% of Sudanese child refugees were attending school and 91% expected to earn a minimum of a four year college degree. In regards to social support; 93% were members of a church (of which 62% attended weekly), 68% discussed their feelings with others regularly, and 95% indicated having someone to help resolve their problems (Bates et al. 2005). Despite the support these children were receiving, many reported symptoms of PTSD and their scores indicated double children who had experienced a single event (Bates et al. 2005).

Unfortunately, many schools are ill-equipped to handle the needs of this population and the support provided is inconsistent throughout various school districts (Bates et al. 2005). Areas in which there are large groups of refugee populations are more likely to have ESL (English as a Second Language) courses, but rural areas are often unable to provide this support (Bates et al.

2005). The educational background of the refugee students varies greatly, some never had formal education, and none of them had been taught U.S. history or other similar courses (Bates et al. 2005).

Because refugee students are often placed into classrooms based on their age, many junior and senior high school students experience frustration in having to complete six or seven classes before being able to graduate (Bates et al. 2005). While this requirement was less daunting for some, it prevented many students from graduating on time (Bates et al. 2005). Both male and female students indicate having experienced harassment from other students surrounding topics of language, race, and cultural differences (Bates et al. 2005).

In regards to the fostering system of refugee children, often there is a disconnect between the youth and family's perceptions of a foster relationship should look like. Many families expect that children will become easily integrated into their existing families and that they will effortlessly create long-lasting relationships (Bates et al. 2005). In many cases, children do not emotionally bond with their host family at all or the bond takes much longer than expected by the host family (Bates et al. 2005).

Regardless of the varied expectations, many children expressed feelings of gratitude to their foster families and explained many ways that their new families were helping them to succeed. Many of the children were used to more freedom than they experienced with their host families, thus having difficulty accepting new rules such as chores (Bates et al. 2005). Other children felt that these limitations would allow them to succeed in school (Bates et al. 2005).

One major issue for refugee children is food in their new setting. Parents' comments surrounding the topic of eating may be interpreted as an insult to refugee families. In Sudanese

culture, eating well may be associated with greed (Bates et al. 2005). Caseworkers also report that the lack of familiar food as well as prepared meals at each eating time are two common complaints among refugees. Due to cultural differences, there may also be a lack of education/various perspectives surrounding the topic of food, such as understanding refrigeration or viewing cooking as a woman's duty (Bates et al. 2005).

A common misconception is that Sudanese people are being rude by not looking at the other person while engaged in a conversation. However, in their culture, eye contact with an elder is considered to be disrespectful (Bates et al. 2005). For this reason, in Sudanese culture, children do not look their parents in the eye (Bates et al. 2005). Sudanese families have defined structures. It is expected that the oldest boy and girl have specific duties in comparison to younger siblings (Bates et al. 2005).

### Somali Bantu and Nepali Bhutanese Refugees in the United States

Known to be slaves in Somalia, the Somali Bantu community escaped during the 1991 civil war and fled to refugee camps in Kenya (Betancourt et al. 2015). In 2003, roughly 12,000 Somali Bantu refugees arrived in the United States (Betancourt et al. 2015). In regards to the Nepali Bhutanese refugee population, in the early 1990's the Nepali citizens of Bhutan were exiled from their country of origin and forced into refugee camps in Nepal for nearly 20 years (Betancourt et al. 2015). Around 75,000 Nepali Bhutanese refugees have settled in the United States since 2008 (Betancourt et al. 2015).

The most commonly mentioned issues facing the Somali Bantu community include not having money for necessities (rent, clothes, food, and various bills), the loss of children's moral/religious education, and assistance regarding homework help. 25% of parents also

indicated having difficulties in which they speak different languages than their children (Betancourt et al. 2015). Ways in which the Somali Bantu community has received help for these problems include community support, schools working with the child and their parents, and government facilities and support (Betancourt et al. 2015).

For the Nepali Bhutanese refugees, the most frequently mentioned issues included being unable to communicate with teachers/school staff, not having enough money for necessities (food or rent), issues completing homework, fighting loneliness, depression, and being afraid (Betancourt et al. 2015). The Nepali Bhutanese community has acted as a support system to cope with these difficulties. This community also recognizes government assistance as being a vital resource to solving some of the issues they face (Betancourt et al. 2015).

## United States Policy on Refugees

Some of the first governmental actions in the United States regarding refugees were as early as the 1920's. In that time, the U.S. established the Emergency Quota Act and the Immigration Act of 1924 (History of Refugee Resettlement in America 2016). The Emergency Quota Act created the first national origins quota system regarding immigration within the U.S. (History of Refugee Resettlement in America 2016). The Immigration Act of 1924 was the first permanent limitation on immigration, creating the, "national origins quota system," which set the annual immigration quota as 2% of the number of people given nationality in the U.S. (History of Refugee Resettlement in America 2016). This quota system changed in result to the desirability of various nationalities. Often, western European countries were given large quotas, while Asian nationalities were almost excluded in entirety (History of Refugee Resettlement in America 2016). Senator Robert Wager promoted the quota increase to allow 20,000 Jewish

children to come to the United States from Nazi Germany, but was rejected by congress in 1939 (History of Refugee Resettlement in America 2016).

In 1948, the Displaced Persons Act was the first indication of U.S. policy towards admitting people who were fleeing persecution and allowed for the admission of 205,000 people during two years (History of Refugee Resettlement in America 2016). Shortly after, in 1951, the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees was adopted which outlined the rights of people seeking asylum and the responsibilities of hosting nations. This included defining the term refugee as a, "A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it" (History of Refugee Resettlement in America 2016). With this, the responsibility of refugees globally was in the hands of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (History of Refugee Resettlement in America 2016).

In the 50's there were several changes regarding refugees in the United States. In 1952, the Immigration and Nationality Act was enacted to remove racial limitations of immigrants and authorize the Justice Department to deport naturalized citizens or immigrants that engage in subversive activities (History of Refugee Resettlement in America 2016). The 1953 Refugee Relief Act soon authorized the admission of 214,000 refugees from Europe due to war as well as refugees from countries dominated by Communists (History of Refugee Resettlement in America 2016). The Refugee-Escapee Act defines refugees-escapees as, "persons fleeing persecution in

Communist-dominated and Middle Eastern countries" (History of Refugee Resettlement in America 2016). Following the revolution in Hungary, President Eisenhower invited 30,000 Hungarian refugees to enter the United States on parole status (they were not granted immigration visas) (History of Refugee Resettlement in America 2016).

In the 60's and 70's several more changes were made regarding the rights of refugees in the United States. In 1960, The Fair-Share Act was declared to permit the Justice Department to admit larger numbers of refugees under parole status (History of Refugee Resettlement in America 2016). The Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1962 sought to use funds towards the needs of the new refugee and migrant population within the U.S. (History of Refugee Resettlement in America 2016). The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 abolished the quota requirements previously instated and instead established a new policy on the premise of reuniting immigrant families in an effort to bring skilled labor to the United States (History of Refugee Resettlement in America 2016). In 1975, Congress passed the Indochina Migration and Refugee Act after the fall of Saigon and the end of the war in Vietnam. This act allowed roughly 200,000 refugees from Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam to enter the United States with financial assistance (History of Refugee Resettlement in America 2016).

The 1980 Refugee Act brought the number of annual immigrants allowed into the United states up to 320,000, including 50,000 refugees under the definition provided by the United Nations (History of Refugee Resettlement in America 2016). With this act came an estimated 125,000 Cuban refugees seeking asylum in Florida after the Communist regime of Fidel Castro (History of Refugee Resettlement in America 2016). The American Homecoming Act granted admission to 10,000 children to the United States to be fathered by U.S. citizens (History of

Refugee Resettlement in America 2016). The 1987 Amerasian Homecoming Act led to the admission of upwards of 10,000 children (and their mothers and siblings) fathered by American GIs (History of Refugee Resettlement in America 2016).

The 1990 Immigration Act allowed for a temporary protective status for people fleeing war, generalized violence, and natural disasters in efforts to strengthen the family unit immigration policies and set the first immigration ceiling (History of Refugee Resettlement in America 2016). In 2001 the United States adopted the USA Patriot Act to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act in efforts to broaden the criteria of people ineligible for admission or deportable due to terrorist activity. This included people who are; "representative of a political, social, or similar group whose political endorsement of terrorist acts undermines U.S. antiterrorist efforts; has used a position of prominence to endorse terrorist activity, or to persuade others to support such an activity in a way that undermines U.S. antiterrorist efforts; or has been associated with a terrorist organization and intends to engage in threatening activities while in the United States" (History of Refugee Resettlement in America 2016).

### Executive Order: Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States

With the recent election of President Donald Trump, there are several executive orders that are critical to the existence of the refugee population both living in the United States currently as well as hoping to enter the country (Trump 2017b). The first executive order on the matter was Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States, signed January 25, 2017 (Trump 2017b). The purpose of this order is to enforce immigration laws to maintain national and public safety with concern of illegal aliens entering the United States or overstay within the country (Trump 2017b).

It is noted in this executive order that, “sanctuary jurisdictions across the United States willfully violate Federal law in an attempt to shield aliens from removal from the United States,” and that these jurisdictions have caused harm to American citizens as well as the foundation of the Republic (Trump 2017b). This order continues by saying that tens of thousands of removable aliens (many criminals who have served jail time while in the U.S.) were released into communities due to their home countries refusal to reaccept them into their countries (Trump 2017b).

While Federal immigration law currently includes a framework designed for Federal-State partnerships to enforce immigration laws and ensure the removal of illegal aliens, the Federal Government has not used this option. According to Trump, it is not possible to execute immigration laws of the United States if classes/categories of removable aliens are considered exempt from potential enforcement. Thus, this order is designed to employ, “all lawful means to enforce the immigration laws of the United States” (Trump 2017b).

### Executive Order: Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorists Entry into the United States

The second executive order enacted by Donald Trump that is of importance to the refugee crisis is his order; Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorists Entry into the United States. In this order, President Trump explains the purpose as being that the visa-issuance process is a critical way of identifying people who have ties to terrorists and stopping them from entrance into the United States (Trump 2017a). He cites the events of September 11, 2001 as a reason for needing to limit access to the United States by terrorist people and states that the updated visa

process has yet to, "stop attacks by foreign nationals who were admitted to the United States" (Trump 2017a).

Trump explains that many foreign-born people have been convicted/implicated in various terrorist crimes since the September 11th attack, including foreign nationals who have entered the country either through the refugee resettlement program or after receiving visas as a student, employee, or visitor (Trump 2017a). Trump indicates that the conditions of many countries dealing with war, disaster, or civil unrest may increase the probability of terrorists attempting entry into the United States, thus requiring the United States to be cautious of the visa-issuance process to protect the American citizens (Trump 2017a).

Section three of this executive order details the suspension of issuing visas and immigration benefits to countries, "of particular concern," including Iran, Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Libya, Yemen, and Somalia (Trump 2017a). The Secretary of Homeland Security along with the Secretary of State and the Director of National Intelligence will be conducting a review to determine what is needed from any country to be issued visas, admission into the United States, and any government benefits to immigrant populations in an effort to determine that the individual is who they claim and are not a security threat to the public of the United States (Trump 2017a).

This executive order goes on to explain President Trump's plan to suspend entry to the United States for immigrants and nonimmigrants for a 90 day period starting with the date signed on this order (Trump 2017a). He goes on to state his concern in accepting Syrian refugees to the United States as being, "detrimental to the interests of the United States," until he feels that sufficient changes have been made to the USRAP (United States Refugee Admissions Program)

(Trump 2017a). He also indicates that there will be no more than 50,000 refugees accepted into the United States within the fiscal year of 2017 due to it being seen as detrimental to the United States interests (Trump 2017a).

## Refugee Life in the United States

The United States is one of the top countries in accepting refugees globally, hosting 263,000 refugees in the year 2013 (Lepore 2015). The experience of the refugee community could be incredibly varied. Many refugees arriving in host countries could be affected by regional politics, including the trauma related to violence observed during war. Other refugees experience issues regarding socio-economic difficulties, such as refugees from Ethiopia or Somalia facing famine (Isik-Ercan 2012).

Since 1975, the United States has become home to 2.6 million refugees through the Refugee Resettlement Program (Isik-Ercan 2012). The number of refugees fluctuates each year, between 27,100 to 207,116. One of the primary issues faced by the refugee community of the United States is the cultural differences between American culture and their countries of origin (Isik-Ercan 2012). This may lead to further alienation of children from both their new surroundings as well as their cultural heritage. Many parents express wanting their child(ren) to integrate into their new cultures, but also hold onto their home culture's identity (Isik-Ercan 2012).

As a result of the political issues in Burma, a rapid increase of Burmese refugees have flooded into Thailand, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and other countries (Isik-Ercan 2012). The United States Office of Refugee Resettlement reports receiving 16,901 Burmese refugees in the year 2011 (Isik-Ercan 2012). The majority of these refugees settled in Indiana, New York, and

Texas. The estimated number of Burmese refugees in the United States the following year rose to 100,200 (Isik-Ercan 2012).

Luckily for these Burmese families, many of them were able to successfully keep their family units intact and were resettled as a family unit in which most families still maintained two biological parents (Isik-Ercan 2012). However, most of the job opportunities available to these parents are located out of state in meat or sewing factories, thus separating families once having arrived in the United States (Isik-Ercan 2012).

## Post Traumatic Stress in Refugee Populations

It has been found that roughly 40% of refugees resettled into the United States are under 18 years old. Of that population, between 19-54% of child refugees have evidence of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and 3-30% show levels of depression (Nugent 2013). Of the global population of refugees in 2005, 44% were children under the age of 18 and 12% of them were under the age of 5 (Qingwen 2007).

PTSD is a clinical diagnosis that may occur after having been exposed to a traumatic event. This diagnosis includes both a threat of death, serious injury, or physical integrity to a person or those surrounding them as well as elicit intense fear in the person (Hart 2009). Three types of symptoms include re-experiencing the event, avoidance, and an increased arousal (Hart 2009). When reexperiencing the event, it is common for people to do this through through nightmares, intrusive thoughts, or flashbacks (Hart 2009). When people experience avoidance, this may include avoiding their feelings, thoughts, conversations surrounding the event, people who may have been involved/evoke emotions, and the inability to remember events (Hart 2009).

Increased arousal may include reduction of sleep, inability to concentrate, and irritability (Hart 2009).

Some people argue that because PTSD is a Western term with limited applications to other areas of the globe (Hart 2009). Others express that the refugee experience should be seen from a perspective of cultural bereavement where the loss of family, homes, routines, and familiarity can result in PTSD symptoms (Hart 2009). It is important however, to understand that refugee children's reactions to stress and trauma may be different as a result to their cultural background (Hart 2009). By diagnosing people with PTSD, there is a chance for people to overlook trauma as only being able to be experienced in their country of origin (Hart 2009).

Refugee children are commonly exposed to various risk factors including elements of war, genocide, and the resettlement process; including the lack of formal education, forced displacement, exposure to violence, and loss of family and community members (Qingwen 2007). All of these risk factors have lasting effects on the psychological well being of the children (Qingwen 2007). Refugee children often live in poverty and are raised by people with limited education and English speaking ability. Both the caregivers and children often experience substandard health care and a substantial amount of emotional stressors, including the assimilation to a new culture, political system, and language (Qingwen 2007).

Refugee children often lack the support of a healthy familial environment due to missing family members as well as families dealing with the ongoing stressors from employment, depression, and cultural issues (Qingwen 2007). It has also been found that stress from within the family and exposure to war or violence are two equally weighted determinants of poor mental health in refugee children (Qingwen 2007). Aspects of the home environment that often

correlate with children's cognitive development are the development of PTSD in either parent, maternal depression, unemployment of a parent, verbal and emotional response from mother to child, the mother's ability to cope with stress, and the physical environment in which the child resides (Qingwen 2007).

In longitudinal studies it has been found that half of the Cambodian adolescent refugees suffer from PTSD two years after having been resettled into the United States. The rates of PTSD within this community drop slightly after three (48%), six (38%), and twelve (35%) years (Qingwen 2007). Within the first six months of resettlement, the focus of services provided includes the immediate resettlement process. During this stage, the most common issues being addressed include job placement, cultural assimilation, health care access, and learning English (Qingwen 2007). Then, the efforts aim to assist in long-term integration and other mainstream social services; including Medicaid, Food Stamps, and other welfare benefits (Qingwen 2007). After eight months of being in the United States, refugees are expected to become employed and self-sufficient (Qingwen 2007).

Unfortunately, the needs of refugee children is not specifically addressed through the refugee resettlement program, except in cases of unaccompanied refugee minors. Resettlement services are generally aimed to adults in hopes that a resettled family with at least one person working will be able to provide for the needs of the children (Qingwen 2007). It has been found by social workers that in order to adequately help refugee children during their first years after resettlement, additional social services are needed including: family counseling, cultural orientation, ethnic identity programs, social adjustment programs, bilingual programs, and many others (Qingwen 2007). Refugee children also have the added stress of experiencing regular and

sudden upheavals that include changing to a new house and a new school. For children who are unable to understand these decisions, this process is more confusing and difficult to process (Hart 2009). Children who are not given the ability to discuss their experiences may have a harder time dealing with emotional consequences. Children who are not aware of the situations that they are involved in may experience more anxiety due to lack of understanding (Hart 2009).

Children who suffer from PTSD are commonly misdiagnosed with other disorders, primarily ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), major depressive disorder, ODD (oppositional-defiant disorder), conduct disorder, phobias, and separation anxiety (Hart 2009). Research conducted on Bosnian refugees indicated that of child refugees, 68% had been diagnosed with PTSD, 47% had been diagnosed with depression, and 29% had been diagnosed with anxiety (Hart 2009).

It has been said that refugees often view their host country experience as being more detrimental to their mental health than the problems they fled in their country of origin (Hart 2009). Many asylum seekers and refugees escaped conditions of of domination, discrimination, and exploitation only to face those issues again in the new, unfamiliar environment (Hart 2009). It is common that refugee children experience discrimination from their teachers, peers, and school administrative staff (Hart 2009). Often, children express that peer bullying in their new country is worse than the memories of their old country (Hart 2009). In one case, a child reported that he feels unsafe at school and finds it difficult to trust the other children (Hart 2009). Because of the nightmares that this child would experience, he was unable to maintain rested and would fall asleep in class (Hart 2009).

Trauma from pre-migration and loss can increase feelings of isolation and shame as well as survivor's guilt which may add to the person's depression and/or PTSD (Hart 2009). Adolescents who have spent a larger portion of their early life exposed to repeated trauma describe a sense of surreal reality in their daily experiences in the United States (Hart 2009). Loud noises, silence, and nightmares can trigger horrible images of trauma and loss which makes completing everyday responsibilities nearly impossible (Nugent 2013).

## Transitioning to United States Education

After refugee children have been settled into a new community within the United States, there are still many more challenges to be faced. In many cases, children's mental and emotional well-being do not show signs of improvement after settlement because of the new stress caused by their new school community, personal identity, and having to advocate for the family due to language barriers (Qingwen 2007).

School can also be terrifying to children if they cannot be comforted with their own language (Hurley et al. 2011) Embarrassment about education level and competence in the classroom can lead to withdrawal of refugee children from social interaction and sometimes class altogether (Windle 2012). Regarding children (especially adolescents) in English programs, it is common that some students have poor attendance, fail out of school, or transition poorly to high school (Windle 2012). Also, child malnutrition could be affecting the child's behavior and learning in ways that are yet to be discovered (Windle 2012).

Ways in which parents are able to adapt and cope with their new surroundings will greatly influence the transition process for their children and their ability to adjust to their new school (Hart 2009). Unresolved feelings surrounding displacement and trauma may interfere

with the child's ability to perform in school (Hart 2009). Support from parents, extended family (when possible), and community organizations can impact the outcome of assimilation to the school environment (Hart 2009).

In a study conducted with students of the Los Angeles area, it was found that exposure to violence within the community was associated with lower levels of academic success, poor self-regulation, depression, and disruptive behavior (Hart 2009). Both depression and disruptive behavior were correlated with poor academic performance (Hart 2009). Also, it was found that children who are exposed to violence in their communities are more likely to be bullied (Hart 2009).

Trauma can influence school performance in many ways, but courses that appear most affected are math, physics, and grammar (Hart 2009). It also seems that the more severe the trauma, the greater trouble with academic performance (Hart 2009). Children who have been exposed to trauma may sometimes be treated differently by teachers (Hart 2009). This could be a result of concern for emotional stability or having lower expectations of them because of their past (Hart 2009).

In cases in which the child was shielded from some of the stress that their parents are experiencing (such as persecution or unemployment) it is important to acknowledge that children will experience stress vicariously and this could be more harmful (Hart 2009).

Because children are resilient and able to adapt more quickly than their parents to new environments, service providers/educators/parents may overlook signs of developmental delays and dysfunction (Qingwen 2007). The United States works to address this through child-centered resettlement programs (Qingwen 2007).

## Refugee Stories and Literacy

Because refugee children often lack formal education and/or the ability to speak English, the term ‘low literacy refugee-background’ (LLRB) has been established (Windle 2012). Like other English language learners, LLRB students participate in up to 12 months of intensive English courses at separate schools and then enter into mainstream schooling (Windle 2012).

“Like other new ESL arrivals, LLRB students receive up to 12 months of intensive English language instruction in separate schools, following which they enter mainstream schools. Many students entering mainstream classes from language schools in the secondary years have reading and writing levels similar to those of lower primary school students, and previous studies have deemed current time in language centres insufficient.” 318 (Windle 2012) The process of learning linguistic attributes of genres of writing specific to certain subjects for non LLRB students can take seven to ten years (Windle 2012).

Children's literature is an excellent context for sharing stories of refugee backgrounds and native children alike. This can be used as an outlet to discuss fears, feelings, and work against stereotypes that may be present (Hope 2008). In one example, a refugee student expressed feelings that the history of refugee cultures is important to challenge the stereotypes and prove that refugees can be of wealth (Hope 2008).

Creating classroom environments that allow for cultural knowledge to be explored is motivating and allows learning new language and concepts more meaningful to students (Windle 2012). This practice also allows teachers to get to know their students better, including their language needs (Windle 2012).

It is important that children are able to read books in which characters similar to them are represented to help them understand their place in the world (Hope 2008). This would also promote the understanding of various backgrounds, geological locations, and history of places different than what is already known (Hope 2008). This learning process may lead to greater tolerance and understanding as well as clarifying one's own cultural identity (Hope 2008).

## Faith in United States Education

In a study conducted within the United States, 76 Somalian refugees between the ages of 12 and 19 indicated that higher levels of school belonging relate to lower levels of depression and higher levels of self-efficacy (Due et al. 2016). Early childhood education positively influenced future school achievement and supports the adjustment process for refugee children (Isik-Ercan 2012). Joining school programs at an early age allows those children to understand what is expected of them in American schools and will help to ease them into other stages of schooling (Isik-Ercan 2012). However, many Burmese refugee families cannot afford early childhood education (Isik-Ercan 2012).

Burmese parents generally perceive public schools as a safe haven for their children and commonly compare them to the schools of refugee camps (Isik-Ercan 2012). These parents take solace in knowing that their children will not be harmed at school and are safe (Isik-Ercan 2012). Burmese families often decide to move to the United States with education in mind, believing the U.S. public education as one of the best in the world (Isik-Ercan 2012).

Often, these parents would worry about their children at schools in Burma because if they did not understand something they would be hit by their teacher (Isik-Ercan 2012). Because of

these reasons, the Burmese families are willing to accommodate and adapt because they do not feel that learning the ways of language will harm their communal identity (Isik-Ercan 2012).

## Challenges Faced within United States Education

There are many various challenges facing the education system within the United States regarding properly educating refugee children. One challenge that faces educators is the cultural differences around the ideas of safety and rules; example, the use of car seats. Expressing concern to the parents may create a power struggle because the educators are trying to help, but it may come across as telling the refugee family that their way of doing things is wrong (Hurley et al. 2011). School policies may also conflict with various cultures, such as not allowing children to leave with other children to go home (Hurley et al. 2011).

Other issues that can be frustrating for the parents include not understanding how to set appointments and the importance of being on time, complex school policies that may differ between settings, and procedures needing parental signatures (Isik-Ercan 2012). These can all be very intimidating to parents and cause them to withdraw from the school environment (Isik-Ercan 2012).

Similarly, many LLRB students are not familiar with the school day routines in the United States and do not receive the opportunity to develop their understandings of their social and cultural setting (Windle 2012). These students are also underprepared for the metacognition and learning strategies that are assumed of students as well as prior knowledge of subjects (Windle 2012).

Low rates of Burmese children in childcare and preschool are attributable to the lack of knowledge of the importance of early childhood education and the limitation of bilingual

opportunities (Isik-Ercan 2012). By missing early childhood opportunities, Burmese children still face language barriers which affects social belonging and academic success (Isik-Ercan 2012).

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 tasked teachers with using research-based strategies to deliver services to their students, however no information was provided on what that would entail when working with culturally diverse populations (Hurley et al. 2011). Any information available is limited only to migrant families who speak Spanish (Hurley et al. 2011). In general, teachers feel unsupported by the research-based system and rely on guesswork in regards to working with refugee students (Hurley et al. 2011). This is of great concern being that the refugee children are among the most vulnerable for poor academic performance and are considered at risk (Hurley et al. 2011).

A common issue that refugee families face is the lack of cultural competency among teachers (Hurley et al. 2011). Teachers express needing more education regarding various groups of people in order to gain knowledge of cultures (Hurley et al. 2011). Often, teachers will unintentionally offend parents due to lack of understanding (Hurley et al. 2011).

Parents are also commonly concerned with the lack of halal food in their child's schools (Isik-Ercan 2012). Due to the diets required by some cultures, children may not be able to eat the school provided foods (Isik-Ercan 2012). Often, refugee parents are unaware that they are able to request halal food or vegetarian options to be added to the school menus (Isik-Ercan 2012).

Another common issue faced by parents is that educators may underestimate their children because of their social status and culture (Isik-Ercan 2012). Refugee parents on the other hand understand that their chances of being successful are unrealistic, but their children are seen to have a world of opportunities (Isik-Ercan 2012).

Educators also tend to misinterpret learned behaviors that are involved with survival as behavioral difficulties and thus have lower expectations of the students because they come from immigrant families (Due et al. 2015). This was found to happen in both the United States and the United Kingdom (Due et al. 2015).

It is known that educators often put primary emphasis on language acquisition instead of other areas of education or social needs (Due et al. 2015). This happens because of the belief that once language skills have been mastered, the other needs will be met (Due et al. 2015). The problem with this is that if a child is having difficulty learning English, the blame of them not having friends and assimilating is put on them (Due et al. 2015).

Learning English takes roughly six to seven years of practice. Because children tend to learn new languages quicker than their parents, this means that they are often responsible for handling bills, grocery shopping, assisting their families to get to medical appointments, and many other adult tasks (Nugent 2013). Interpreters are rarely provided to refugee families, making the unfamiliar community very isolating (Nugent 2013). Often parents are afraid to ask locals questions for fear of being laughed at (Nugent 2013).

Interpreters are difficult to schedule, pay for, and find necessary languages needed (Hurley et al. 2011). In New England, the average interpreter costs between $25.00-$75.00 per hour (Hurley et al. 2011). This makes it difficult to use interpreters for frequent meetings between parents and teachers. The number of languages spoken by the people who need interpreters makes it difficult for people to communicate even when interpreters are provided (Hurley et al. 2011). In cases in which interpreters are available, there is sometimes a lack of confidence that the interpreter is being accurate (Hurley et al. 2011). Often, teachers will

schedule frequent meetings with other parents, but not those in need of interpreters (Hurley et al. 2011).

## Creating a Safe School Environment

Child refugees now resettled in the United States have explained situations in countries such as Liberia and Ghana where they were hit by teachers for doing something wrong (Nugent 2013). These children had to adjust to the discipline structure in the United States (Nugent 2013). Even when changes are positive, they can still be confusing to children and their families while adjusting to their new lifestyle (Nugent 2013). Children also explain that in Ghana neighbors were friendly to each other, but in the United States they rarely see their neighbors (Nugent 2013).

Many newly settling refugee families experience isolation, which can be worsened by language and cultural barriers (Nugent 2013). This can be reinforced by the community neighborhoods where the families reside (Nugent 2013). The situation grows more problematic when those neighborhoods are unsafe. One child explained having to run home as quickly as he could after school every day because of the crime that filled the streets between his school and home (Nugent 2013).

## What Schools and Programs Are Doing to Help

### Ways to Help Parents and New Students Feel Welcome

There are many ways in which schools can work with parents and children to make them feel more welcome. To reduce the confusion and anxiety of the student, it is important for schools to offer the child the ability to spend time within the school getting to know the building

and administrative personnel before jumping into class. (Lepore 2015). Use of community and other educational resources to gain information about the cultures of the children and families being settled in that area is important to help the refugee families feel welcomed and appreciated (Lepore 2015).

Consulting with other school staff to encourage understanding of the hardships faced by refugee families. This creates a more tolerant school environment (Lepore 2015). Also, encouraging students to be accepting and curious of other cultures will ease the process for them to welcome refugee students into their classes (Lepore 2015).

A challenge that is often overlooked by educators is the cultural differences surrounding food. Be sure to explain to parents what foods will be served to their children in the cafeteria and what each food is made out of (Lepore 2015). Also, taking the time to learn what foods the family is used to is very important and will allow them to feel that their culture is important (Lepore 2015).

Be aware that children often learn English much sooner than their parents. This often causes a shift in the balance of power within households (Lepore 2015). Thus, whenever possible, try to use official translators and interpreters to facilitate conversation with parents rather than depending on the child (Lepore 2015). This is especially important when discussing the child's performance in school (Lepore 2015). Many letters to parents may also be translated using online resources, such as Google Translate (Lepore 2015). In cases where it is needed, communication can also be facilitated through the use of images or symbols (Lepore 2015).

Hygiene and dress habits are often an issue at school. It may be useful to have the school nurse meet with parents and new students to demonstrate how hygiene products are used in the

United States and the importance of each product (Lepore 2015). Through this process, be sure to be culturally sensitive to the practices of the family and make it clear that this is only an explanation and that the families are not being forced to follow these practices (Lepore 2015).

Understand that refugee students may become frustrated and confused with their new environment (Lepore 2015). This may cause them to use forms of aggression and hit or push (Lepore 2015). Be aware of this as a possibility to be prepared for discussions with the family if needed (Lepore 2015).

Many refugee families are strongly devoted to their children as well as their child(ren)'s education. For this reason, communication with parents will likely be very strong if educators take the time and commitment needed to facilitate conversations with parents and reach out often (Lepore 2015). Refugee parents often feel unable to reach out due to language barriers and may need reassurance that their opinions should be heard (Lepore 2015).

**Using Literature to Empower Students**

Many people feel that the topic of war is too mature for children and that it should not be a topic of conversation with that demographic (Hope 2008). Literary history has included a number of children's books that discuss war (Hope 2008). The Silver Sword is known as the first widely known children's book in which the refugee experience is the central story (Hope 2008). With the increasing number of global refugees reaching 14,000,000 in 2007, the genre of refugee stories began to take off more than ever (Hope 2008).

It is important for children to be able to read stories that they are able to identify with. In many cases, children express being frustrated at their inability to express themselves in a new

language (Hope 2008). Exposing children to literature surrounding refugees can teach them about locations around the world, history, geography, insight to events, and looking at various aspects of the refugee story (Hope 2008).

**School Based Intervention Program**

It has been found that refugee children value the teachers who ask them about their personal experienced and included them in the school curriculum (Hope 2008). It is important for refugee children to understand that they are not the only ones to experience struggles in making make friends and assimilate in a new country and school environment (Hope 2008). It is important to raise awareness of what being a refugee means in order to fully understand their needs (Hope 2008). It is common for young adults who have not had social contact with refugees to exhibit superficial sympathy, but not identify with the experience of refugee people (Hope 2008). Often, these people see the refugee experience of being otherworldly (Hope 2008). The use of personal testimony can empower young children to understand that refugees are ordinary people (Hope 2008).

School-based intervention can be a successful tool in addressing PTSD in children (Hart 2009). One example being the Teaching Survival Techniques program organized by the Children and War Foundation (Hart 2009). This program was built by researchers with backgrounds in clinical child psychology and psychiatry (Hart 2009). The program aims to assist people who do not have experience in regards to working within mental health or with children who have experienced traumatic events. This program works with groups of children through a variety of activities designed to address effects of PTSD through a process of three sessions to each address a set of PTSD symptoms: intrusion, arousal, and avoidance (Hart 2009).

The Teaching Survival Techniques program principles are derived from cognitive behavioral therapy as well as other psychological therapies (Hart 2009). This model has been proven to reduce stress related to trauma as well as depression in children (Hart 2009). This program has been used to help children of Greece and Iran who survived earthquakes, Finnish children who experienced sexual abuse, and children in the UK (Hart 2009).

## Additional Education Assistive Programs

### Grow Your Own Teachers

Grow Your Own Teachers (GYO) is a program designed to, "recruit teacher candidates from underrepresented communities with the intention of the teachers returning to their neighborhoods to serve their community" (Hurley et al. 2011). This program hopes that culturally competent teachers will improve the quality of resources and programs available for underrepresented groups and reduce the turnover in teacher positions, thus creating greater teaching quality (Hurley et al. 2011). This program is designed so that colleges and universities that have programs devoted to teacher preparation in refugee communities can follow GYO to actively recruit teachers who are also refugees (Hurley et al. 2011).

### F.A.C.E. Time

Since 2008, F.A.C.E. Time (Families and Communities Educating) supports refugee children and Latino immigrants in Lexington, Kentucky (Cairo et al. 2013). This program was developed with the help of the Fayette County School System and the University of Kentucky (Cairo et al. 2013). F.A.C.E Time consists of several components including an after-school program and a summer program (Cairo et al. 2013).

The F.A.C.E. Time after-school program is eleven weeks long and consists of helping students with academic skills as well as social and behavioral adaptation as well as cultural expression (Cairo et al. 2013). This program is geared towards children in grades three through five (Cairo et al. 2013). On Mondays, children participate in music lessons (Cairo et al. 2013). Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays are devoted to one hour of tutoring and an hour dedicated to either social/behavioral exploration or expression of culture (Cairo et al. 2013).

The F.A.C.E. Time Summer program lasts five weeks and students meet for three days a week for four hours (Cairo et al. 2013). This program builds off of the local learning center that provides children with hands-on science and math lessons as well as music lessons through their music school (Cairo et al. 2013).

**Project Liberty**

A group of individuals including various professionals from Baldwin-Whitehall School District, The Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council, Jewish Family and Children Services, Lutheran Family Services, Catholic Charities, and others began to meet and discuss ways in which to create a smoother transition for stakeholders involved in the resettlement process. Project Liberty was created in an effort to address the needs of refugee students and their families as well as reduce culture shock (Lepore 2015).

The work of Project Liberty includes researching and locating interpreters in the area as well as translators for languages of the native countries by which the local refugee population came, creating a local community place/teen center, and assisting the refugee population with their educational goals (Lepore 2015). The continuation of Project Liberty has created an inviting

environment to new students and families as well as increased the cultural understanding among the local community and educational staff (Lepore 2015).

## What Refugee Parents Can Do

There are many ways in which parents can help their child to adapt to their new surroundings and school environments. Parental involvement has been shown to increase student's academic success (Refugee Children: A Guide for Parents 2013). Parental involvement in the education of refugee students is vital to their success, being that education is a large determinant for integration into a new culture (Refugee Children: A Guide for Parents 2013).

Parents of refugees can help their children assimilate to their new environment in a number of ways. First, by walking them to school or to their bus stop. Assisting with homework as best as possible is critical. Chaperoning school events, assist with extracurricular activities, volunteering at the school or in the child's class, attending parent-teacher conferences, and joining the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) are all ways in which to become more involved with the school and make the child feel more comfortable (Refugee Children: A Guide for Parents 2013).

Parents should also ask the child about how school is going and listen to them when they talk about school, volunteer at the school or in the child's class, present information about their country of origin to the child's class, speak the native language of the country of origin as well as English, participate in fundraisers, and seek help if needed for depression or anxiety(Refugee Children: A Guide for Parents 2013).

## The Future for Refugees

### Refugee Women in Australia

Since 2011, workshops and seminars have been provided in Australia to 128 migrant women of various ages and cultural backgrounds (Van Kooy 2016). Stepping Stones provides advice, training, and teaches the women as prospective business owners the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to improve performance (Van Kooy 2016). The trainings accommodate both the language and familial/care responsibilities of the women (Van Kooy 2016).

Women who have an idea for their business are accepted into the free program of small business training over the course of eight days (Van Kooy 2016). This training includes information regarding marketing, legal obligations, seed capital, customers, and how to manage operations (Van Kooy 2016). People in the program self-assess their progress against a business framework that includes topics such as how to project budgets and understanding of basic accounting (Van Kooy 2016).

96% of participants in the Stepping Stones program reported that their social networks improved greatly and have been able to pass on knowledge to both their local community as well as their countries of origin (Van Kooy 2016). At the end of the program, 71% of participants were unfortunately still relying on their previous source of income due to a lack of start-up capital needed to start their new business ventures (Van Kooy 2016). Other reasons included needing work experience and having family obligations (Van Kooy 2016).

### Refugee Children in the United States

In a study conducted on the child refugees within the United States, results indicate that the economic status differs by refugee group (Potocky 1996). It was found that Soviet/Eastern

European childhood refugees living in Florida are faring prosperously economically and have surpassed both refugees who arrived as adults as well as U.S. born peers in most indicators (Potocky 1996). Childhood refugees from Southeast Asia living in California are currently in a transitional stage being that they have surpassed the refugees who arrived as adults, but have not yet surpassed U.S.-born peers (Potocky 1996).

Unfortunately, Nicaraguan and Haitian childhood refugees in Florida are not faring as well as others (Potocky 1996). Nicaraguan childhood refugee arrivals had higher economic success than both comparison groups (the adult refugee arrivals and U.S.-born peers), but they had lower salaries and lower educational achievement as well as a higher percentage living in poverty (Potocky 1996). Haitian childhood refugee arrivals had lower economic status than the adult refugee arrivals and U.S.-born peers on most indicators as well as a lower status than the Cuban or Soviet/Eastern European childhood refugee arrivals (Potocky 1996).

**Refugee Experience in Vermont**

The state of Vermont has been experiencing an influx in the refugee population. Since 1989, Vermont has taken in 6,300 refugee people through the federal refugee resettlement program (Kelley 2014). Within that group there are about 1,000 Africans fleeing Burundi, Congo, Rwanda, Sudan, and Somalia (Kelley 2014). That total also includes 1,705 people from Bosnia and 1,437 Bhutanese people from Nepal (Kelley 2014).

Unfortunately, many of the “least glamorous” jobs in Vermont are done by refugees (Kelley 2014). It has been found that refugees who are able to find employment are strongly motivated to keep their jobs, no matter how menial (Kelley 2014). Loan Nguyen, a counselor for the resettlement program, explains that the refugee people are scared and that they don’t want to

go hungry again (Kelley 2014). It is important to recognize that many refugees are highly educated and that it is a myth that all refugees are uneducated or were previously impoverished prior to their resettlement (Kelley 2014).

Vermont is explained to be a welcoming place for refugees according to Thato Ratsebe of AALV (Kelley 2014). She goes on to explain that refugees from other parts of the country move to Vermont and very few originally settled in Vermont leave (Kelley 2014). While the cost of housing may be higher than other states, it has been said that finding available jobs in Chittenden County is easier than other metropolitan locations (Kelley 2014). Vermont is also seen as a safe location where immigrant children can receive a good education at schools where dozens of languages are spoken (Kelley 2014).

In January of 2017, Syrian refugees were to begin arriving in Rutland, Vermont. Rutland is a small Vermont town of only 16,000 people (Keck 2016). Many of these people were opposed to the welcoming of Syrian refugees while others anxiously awaited their arrival (Keck 2016). Many opposed are worried that the refugees will not assimilate to the native culture and that their presence will increase local taxes (Keck 2016). In support of the arriving Syrian community, many people attended free Arabic classes taught by two Arabic professors of Middlebury College (Keck 2016).

Many may wonder why Rutland was chosen to be a refugee resettlement community if it is so small. The answer is that Rutland has a much larger portion of available jobs and cheaper housing for the incoming people than Burlington (Keck 2016). Chandra Pokhrel, an AALV (Association of Africans Living in Vermont) employment counselor, identifies housing as the

single largest challenge faced by the immigrant population of the Burlington community (Kelley 2014).

However, due to recent action taken by President Trump, Rutland will not be receiving Syrian refugees because of the executive order banning immigrants from Syria (Aloe 2017). Currently, two families have made it to Rutland before the ban was in effect and are using the resources that were set in place in Rutland. Members of the Rutland community had collected donations to help establish the homes of the newly arriving families and still hope to be able to distribute those if the families are able to enter the U.S. (Aloe 2017). Many members of Rutland were excited to have people come to the community to expand the cultural diversity (Aloe 2017).

## Educating Refugees in Vermont

In an interview with Jacquelyn Reno, lead preschool teacher of the VNA (Visiting Nurses Association) Family Room, she outlined many issues faced by the refugee community in Burlington as well as issues faced by educators working with the refugee population (Educating Refugees 2017).

One important point Reno addressed as being often overlooked is the importance of being able to differentiate between dual language learners and developmental delays (Educating Refugees 2017). Often it can be hard to understand the needs of refugee children and communication can be challenging between the school and parents due to language barriers, thus communicating the needs of the child can be challenging (Educating Refugees 2017).

Reno expressed the benefits of having teachers watch videos of refugee camps to gain a better understanding of the lives of the students before coming to the United States (Educating Refugees 2017). This could also include background knowledge of their home countries and the

historical backgrounds. She goes on to explain the importance of cultural competency to ensure a welcoming environment and expresses that need to increase understanding of religious practices and holidays as well as how to be culturally sensitive (Educating Refugees 2017).

Part of being culturally sensitive is understanding the diet and food practices of the families that are in the community. Understanding food preferences and how to be sensitive during mealtime is vital (Educating Refugees 2017). It is very helpful to parents if schools explain what food contains and be aware of different dietary restrictions (Educating Refugees 2017).

Areas that Reno felt needed improvement for Burlington education to help parents include helping parents to better understand school day routines, what dropping off/picking up their child from school looks like, ways to be involved in PTO (Parent Teacher Organization), what is expected of their child at school, and timeliness (Educating Refugees 2017). Another issue of importance that parents need to understand is how the mental health system works in this country and the importance of seeking mental health help if needed (Educating Refugees 2017).

Parents often need help understanding how special needs are determined in American schools and what those services entail. It is particularly important to be culturally sensitive when discussing this issue with parents so that it does not come across as being an attack (Educating Refugees 2017). Another situation that may cause parents to feel attacked is in cases regarding suspected child abuse (Educating Refugees 2017). It is important that parents understand that teachers are mandatory reporters and that it is their job to report any suspicions of abuse or neglect (Educating Refugees 2017).

## Conclusion

Overall, the refugee crisis is a global issue that is ever changing and of great importance. While there are many overarching needs, frustrations, and commonalities among refugees, each refugee population has their own specific problems, traditions, and perspectives. The host country also has a significant influence on the refugee population. As outlined in this paper, the Sudanese refugee experience differs when in Australia, Uganda, and the United States. Once resettled, the challenges faced by refugees is not over. Having to assimilate culturally, socially, and linguistically is strenuous and many refugees are also coping with PTSD from the migration process. While there are many programs available for supporting refugees, their needs are not always met. Education is an example of an area that is often overlooked regarding both the needs of educators in understanding the refugee community in their area as well as the refugee families to understand the schools.

### Extensive Audience and Stakeholder Research

The key stakeholders for this project will include the refugee community (including parents, children, and friends), organizations that work with children (the school district, afterschool programs, the King Street Center, the Y, Boys and Girls Club, Sarah Holbrook, Parks and Recreation, the VNA Family Room, Headstart, etc.), and organizations that work with the refugee population (The Refugee Resettlement Program, American Civil Liberties Union, Vermont Family Network, Association of Africans Living in Vermont, We All Belong, Wic, StepsVT, Vermont Legal Aid, Vermont Agency of Education, etc.).

Various organizations that work with refugees will be able to access this website in an effort to further support the refugee community. This means that programs already in existence,

such as the ones listed above will be able to use the information I provide to build upon the work that they are already contributing to the community. This will allow them to support the needs of the families in more ways than they currently are and answer questions that they may not have known prior to accessing this website. The website will also be a continual resource to educators and people working within the school districts to act as a guide to understanding the refugee population. This could be useful to after school staff, teachers, paraeducators, substitutes, administration, and more.

Being that I plan to host trainings at the King Street Center and possibly the Burlington School District and Burlington Parks and Recreation, it is important to mention that these educators will be exposed to the information available on my website by me directly. These trainings will allow many questions to be answered by the educators and they will each be provided with a booklet of information. Through this process, I will also learn if my website has any gaps that need to be addressed to better serve the needs of educators. If so, I will make these revisions as needed.

## External Expert Support

Much of my external support for this project would include my contacts at the VNA Family Room and the King Street Center. At the VNA Family Room, I have been working with Jackie Reno, Sarah Sinnot, and Toki Eley. Jackie Reno was my supervisor at the VNA Family Room Preschool. She is the lead teacher and recently was just awarded teacher of the year. She has been working with the refugee community for a number of years and has been an excellent resource through this process. Sarah Sinnot and Toki Eley both work at the VNA Family Room helping to organize the many groups that are coordinated by their facility including; FACT- a

group designed for dads and their children (up to first grade), Dads Group- a group in which dads get together to talk about parenting challenges and child development, Family Play- open play with parents and their children birth to kindergarten, Early Months- a group for mom's and their babies during their first few weeks, Crawlers, Waddlers and Toddlers- a playgroup for parents and toddlers to learn about development, Postpartum Support Group, Strong Families- a group to discuss parenting challenges and develop close relationships with your child, and Parents as Teachers. Being that Sarah and Toki facilitate and organize so many activities, they have worked with the refugee families within this program for many years and have gotten to witness their families grow.

At the King Street Center I have been working with a number of the professionals there including; Vicky Smith, Dacia Ostlund, Gabriella Tufo-Strouse, Carrie Jacques, and Deena Murphy. Vicky Smith is the executive director at the King Street Center and has been able to give me a number of ideas when discussing potential issues for the refugee community as well as contacts to consider. Dacia Ostlund used to work for the Burlington School District as well as being the current associate director of the King Street Center. She has provided me with a number of contacts in the local community including the YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, Sarah Holbrook, Burlington School District connections, as well as many more. Gabriella Tufo-Strouse is in charge of volunteers and interns at the King Street Center in her role as the Director of Community Outreach. She also has provided me with a number of things to keep in mind while working on this project as well as local contacts. Carrie Jacques is my boss at the King Street Center as well as the Afterschool Excellence Director. Through this position she is capable of understanding what it is like to work as an educator of the refugee community as well as a deep

understanding of their needs and what it is like working with parents. Lastly, I have been working with Deena Murphy who is in charge of the tutoring program through her position as the Education Director at the King Street Center. I have been working with her to better understand what she thinks people should know before working with the child refugee population as well as what it is like to be an educator of that population.

Other contacts that I have been working with on this project include; Thato Ratsebe, Pablo Bose, the ELL (English Language Learner) teachers of the Vermont Adult Learning association through the Association of Africans Living in Vermont (AALV). Thato Ratsbe works for AALV as the Direct Services, Programs & Communications Manager. Thato worked as Interim Director for Multicultural Affairs at St. Michael's College to design, implement and evaluate diversity and social justice education programs in order to better support students. She also spent time working internationally in both East Africa and Canada. She has also worked as a Career Development practitioner, in which she coached newly arrived immigrants and helped them navigate labor markets and acclimate to their new environment. Thato Ratsebe has worked with Pablo Bose and gave me his contact information. Pablo Bose is a geography professor at the University of Vermont and has been conducting research on the needs of the Burlington refugee community.

In the course of developing this website I will be using information gathered from The Refugee Resettlement Program, American Civil Liberties Union, Vermont Family Network, Association of Africans Living in Vermont, We All Belong, Wic, Headstart, StepsVT, Vermont Legal Aid, Vermont Agency of Education, Sarah Holbrook Community Center, Burlington

YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, the Department of Health, the Burlington School District, Burlington Kids, and many more.

## Ethical Justification

I chose to develop my project for the Burlington community being that Burlington is a refugee resettlement host city. That means that there is a large population of refugees within Burlington compared to the rest of Vermont. I also felt that with the recent proposal of Rutland being a refugee city, it would be important to make sure to lead an example of how programs are run here and promote the resources available. I chose to limit this project to just the Burlington area instead of focusing at a national level because I felt that it is important to put emphasis on understanding the specific populations of refugees within the area. I think that doing this project on a national level would be amazing, but it was not realistic for the time frame allotted to this project. Also, by focusing on a smaller community I am able to be more aware of some of the lesser known organizations that are helping this community instead of just larger corporate organizations.

This project is greatly needed for the Burlington community. When looking at the refugee community as a whole, it is clear that many of them are confused about how to access resources and need support after having completed the refugee resettlement program. The website I am developing would provide answers to many of their questions and direct them towards organizations and applications that they may need. Obviously, the list I provide will be as comprehensive as my knowledge allows. This means that I will continue to add to this list as I hear of more resources and opportunities available to this community.

While I would love to be able to reach my target audience directly, literacy is a major issue. Many people in the local refugee community are unable to read their native language (or their native language does not have a written component) and many do not speak English. I believe making a website is the right direction because it is capable of being translated as well as being a tool for a translator to be able to tell someone the information without having to interrupt the flow of conversation. Ultimately, I see this website acting as a directory for the people at organizations that already work with this population such as the VNA Family Room. Many of them have expressed to me that each of them knows of several important resources, but none of them know them all and that they would like to have them in one place. I think my website could be a tool for them to use when speaking to families who are in need to help facilitate conversation and act as a directory.

This project is also needed to help educators. While the school district does their best to inform educators about working with the refugee population, some information may not be provided or covered as much as needed. As my literature states, many educators feel ill equipped to handle the needs of working with refugee students and often need additional support. I have also designed the information on this website to not only address working with the refugee population as a whole, but specifically looking at the most common populations in the Burlington area and the needs and backgrounds of those communities. This is vital for understanding the children and parents that are involved in the local schools and will promote better communication between the refugee community and the schools. Again, it is important to recognize that the information provided on this website is not comprehensive to all of the

information that may be required to fully care for the needs of the children and parent and should be instead seen as a guide and jumping off point for educators to gain knowledge on this subject.

Being that I would like this website to act as a communal directory, it is important that this site be maintained and last for longer than the duration of this course. That being said, I will be moving to Chicago in the fall to pursue my masters. In the process of completing this project, I will also be looking for someone local to take over this website to ensure that it is continually maintained and updated. Ideally, I would like for one of the local organizations that I have partnered with to take over hosting this website and link it to their existing sites. This could be done through the VNA Family Room, the King Street Center, the Association of Africans Living in Vermont, or others. If I cannot find anyone to take over this website by the end of this semester, I will maintain the site from Chicago for the next year in hopes of then finding someone to maintain it.

In regards to work that has been done, there are currently websites that provide opportunities for people to donate or volunteer to help refugees. There are also websites designed to advertise local programs that are working to help this population in regards to service efforts. However, there are no websites directed towards providing support to the refugee population (other than the Refugee Resettlement Program) or towards educating those in the school system. I would like to enable educators to understand the struggles of both the children and families they work with and how that will influence the child's performance in the classroom. Also, it should be known that the Refugee Resettlement Program is only aimed to provide support to refugees for their first 8-12 months upon arrival in the United States. Many problems occur

within this community after that time is over and then they are faced with not always knowing what resources are available.

Project Management Plan

| | Website | Implementation |
|---|---|---|
| Week of February 26th-March 4th | Begin working on main page of the website | Reach out to Burlington School District, afterschools, King Street, ect. about hosting trainings for educators |
| Week of March 5th-March 11th | Finish main page of website and begin family page* | |
| Week of March 12th-March 18th** | Finish family page and begin working on educators* | Develop training presentations and solidify dates of trainings |
| Week of March mnbc19th-March 25th | Finish educators | |
| Week of March 26th-April 1st | Edit website as needed | Use this week for hosting trainings |
| Week of April 2nd-April 8th | Edit website as needed | Use this week for hosting trainings |
| Week of April 9th-13th | Finish final touches on project for completion | |

*A large portion of the information that will be available on these two pages will come out of information derived from my literature review.
**Spring Break

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