

Refugee Resettlement in St. Louis, Missouri: Race, Religion, and Identity

Hisako Matsuo

Kathryn Kuhn

Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Saint Louis University

Emmanuel Uwalaka

Department of Political Science
Saint Louis University

Cynthia Wessel

Thu Do

Department of Educational Studies
Saint Louis University

Wala Almostadi

Candace M. Ruocco

Center for Public Policy and Social Justice
Saint Louis University

Abstract

St. Louis' refugee population has increased steadily since the early 1990s, when the city was designated as a preferred relocation community. Approximately 70,000 Bosnians and 5,000 Somalis presently live in the St. Louis area. While these two groups are primarily Muslim, they are distinctly different with respect to population size, community solidarity, racial background, religious practices, and available resources. This study addressed similarities and differences in the resettlement processes that these two groups had encountered. Convenience sampling and criterion sampling were used to recruit potential study participants. Data collected through 23 face-to-face interviews with Bosnian and Somali refugees show that despite similar United States entry and length of stay, these two groups have had different experiences adapting to American society. The Bosnian population has European roots; the Somali population has African roots. Bosnians tend to have higher levels of educational attainment and report less discrimination than Somalis.

Keywords: Refugees, Bosnians, Somalis, Resettlement, Race, Religion, Identity

1. Introduction

St. Louis, Missouri's long history of assisting refugees dates back to waves of European refugees in the early 1900s (Singer et al., 2006). Ranking only 60th among American municipalities for foreign-born population size, St. Louis interestingly ranks 21st for highest refugee resettlement, with 22,046 refugees arriving from 1983 – 2004 (Singer et al., 2006). In the 1990s, over 13,185 refugees initially resettled in St. Louis and an additional 41,073 foreign-born residents entered due to secondary and tertiary migration (Singer et al., 2006). Now home to the second-highest resettlement of Yugoslavian refugees, St. Louis welcomed 9,816 such refugees from 1983 – 2004, second only slightly to Chicago (Singer et al., 2006). The city's employment opportunities and low cost-of-living, well-known among Bosnian refugees, have created major secondary migration trends, and estimates indicate the city's Bosnian refugee count has more than doubled (Singer et al., 2006). While Columbus, Ohio and St. Paul, Minnesota are two major cities where Somali refugees are concentrated, more than 1,000 Somali refugees have resettled in St. Louis.

The considerable scholarship devoted to Bosnian refugees initially explored resettlement services and mental health. The Center for Applied Linguistics aptly surveyed 44 refugee service-providers from 22 United States communities in 1995 to gather recommendations for pre-arrival orientation content facilitating Bosnian resettlement (Somach, 1995). Noting significant service variation between cities and individual refugees, the Center found that the largest adjustment challenges related to work, language, culture shock, current Bosnian events, and the experience of *starting over* (Somach, 1995). Studying mental health during resettlement, Miller, Weine, Ramic, Brkic, Bjedic, Smajkic, Boskailo, & Worthington (2002) linked social isolation and exposure to war-related violence with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and linked exile-related stressors to depressive symptomatology. Next, Miller, Worthington, Muzurovic, Tipping, & Goldman (2002) used semi-structured face-to-face interviews to analyze exile-related stressors affecting Bosnian refugees participating in a Chicago mental health program. Exploring pre-war Bosnian life, journey of exile, and Chicago life, the interviews identified primary distress sources including family member separation, social isolation, poverty, inadequate housing, lack of environmental mastery, and the loss of community, social roles, and life projects (Miller et al., 2002).

Subsequent literature analyzed the implications of race, gender, identity, and religion for Bosnian refugees in settlements around the world. Colic-Peisker (2003) found three key, interconnected issues - community, identity, and employment – to be prevalent among Bosnian refugee narratives in Australia. Colic-Peisker's later study (2005) attributed Australian preference for Bosnian immigrants not to their oft-cited "European background" fostering resettlement-potential or social-cohesion, but rather to Bosnian *whiteness* granting *invisibility* until second-stage resettlement renewed potential language barrier exclusions. Franz (2003) further showed that female Bosnian refugees adapted to host environments, Vienna and New York City, faster than males because women remain influenced by traditional role models, with family (rather than wages) as their center of life. Framing dress as a discursive gender practice, Huisman and Hondagneu-Sotelo (2005) found dressing habits constitute collective identities and signify individual achievements for women.

Comparatively, less research has focused on Somali refugees, though they have become one of the largest refugee populations and represent the largest subset of African immigrants to the United States in the recent decades. Fleeing civil war and severe persecution by the Somali majority, many Somalis have, over the past 20 years, lived in refugee camps for long periods, mainly in Kenya. An increasing number of Somali families and individuals have been resettling with legal refugee status in the United States since 2003 (Gardner & Bushra, 2004). Somali lifestyle and daily rhythms in Somalia and Kenya are far different from that experienced by refugees after arriving in the United States. Limited access to formal education in Somalia and refugee camps rendered most refugees illiterate in both English and their native languages (Wissink, Jones-Webb, DuBois, Krinke, & Ibrahim, 2005). The vast majority of Somalis practice Islam, and have relative homogeneity of language, culture, and religion (Carroll, Epstein, Fiscella, Volpe, Diaz, & Omar, 2007; Palinkas, Pickwell, Brandstein, Clark, Hill, Moser, & Osman, 2003).

Similar to scholarship on Bosnian refugees, most research on Somali refugees in the United States is health-related. Wieland, Morrison, Cha, Rahman, and Chaudhry (2011) studied the quality of health care for Somalis, finding disparities between Somali and non-Somali patients. Dharod, Croom, Sady, and Morrell (2011) found that 72 percent of Somali refugee households were *food insecure*, and thus significantly less likely than *secure* households to consume fruits and green leafy vegetables.

Many other studies indicate Somali immigrant refugees experienced war-related trauma in their homelands, including: personal violent victimization, loss of family members, and/or witnessing the death of loved ones (Halcon, Robertson, Savik, Johnson, Spring, Butcher, & Jaranson, 2004; Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007; Robertson, Halcon, Savik, Johnson, Spring, Butcher, & Jaranson, 2006; Yakushko, Watson, & Thompson, 2008). Scuglik, Alarcon, Lapeyre, Williams, and Logan (2007) explored community perceptions of medical/psychiatric needs, cultural characteristics, barriers to care, and potential solutions among Somali refugees in Minnesota. The study showed Somali refugees encountered multiple traumatic experiences related to acculturation in the host country, such as learning a new language, finding housing and jobs, and changes in cultural practices and norms. Moreover, the refugees rarely acknowledged psychiatric problems despite the ineffectiveness of common traditional treatments in the new context.

Both the Bosnian and Somali refugee populations in St. Louis have increased steadily since the early 1990s, when the city gained the designation as a preferred relocation community. Despite both groups' primarily Muslim religion, similar United States entry, and length of stay, the populations differ substantially regarding size, community solidarity, racial background, religious practices, and other key factors. This article uses comparative qualitative data to illustrate the very different resettlement and adaptation experiences of seemingly similar refugee groups.

2. Method

2.1. Instrument and Sampling

This study used a semi-structured face-to-face interview to collect information about participants' perceptions and experiences regarding race, religion, socioeconomic status, and self-identification among Bosnian and Somali refugees. The team members reviewed and revised the interview schedule several times to construct questions and topics relevant to the study. Two researchers who had been studying Bosnians and Somali refugees evaluated the final interview schedule after which the University's Institutional Review Board approved the interview schedule.

Face-to-face interviews conducted with 23 refugees from Somalia or Bosnia relied on a purposive sampling method. In a purposive sampling, the researcher selects participants or groups in order to understand a central phenomenon relevant to these groups (Neuman, 2011). In this study, the central phenomenon was the personal circumstances of race, religion, socioeconomic status, and self-identification among Bosnian and Somali refugees in St. Louis, Missouri. The criteria for inclusion were: Participants had to be 18 years old or older, migrated to the United States as refugees, and resided in the St. Louis area at the time of interviews. Twenty-three Bosnian and Somali men and women participated in the study. Interviewers distributed invitation letters to potential participants, which indicated the goals of study and guaranteed minimum risks for interviewees and the protection of confidentiality. Face-to-face interviews lasted 60 to 90 minutes, and participants received a \$30 gift certificate to a local grocery store at the end the interview. The sample consisted of male and female Bosnian and Somali refugees of various age, educational level, and length of stay in the United States.

2.2. Data Analysis

Several team members met regularly and discussed information that had been obtained from interviews. As soon as several interviews were conducted, audio-recorded materials were transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were then subject to open-coding, followed by axial-coding, using a grounded theory method approach. The process took place several times, and the principal investigator of the team reviewed the list of categories and relevant quotes. An equal representation of both groups was difficult to achieve because Somali women's culture and gender roles were different from those of Bosnian refugees. It was necessary to identify Somali men first in order to obtain permission to interview their wives. While the gender proportion of two groups was not perfectly equal in the current study, the team made considerable effort to maximize variations of the refugee backgrounds in terms of age, educational level, occupation, and length of stay in the United States.

2.3. Demographic Characteristic

For the Bosnian group, nine participants (two men and seven women) were between the ages of 26 and 60. Most of the participants lived in the United States for 12 years or more, and half were full-time employees. Most of the participants' completed secondary schooling and several participants were graduate students at the time of interviews. In the Somali group, 14 participants (nine men and five women) had an average age of 30. At the time of the interview, the average length of stay in the United States ranged between 5 and 18 years. Most of the participants were married and had at least one child. Nearly all of the participants obtained secondary schooling and working in low-wage jobs.

3. Results

Four major themes emerged from the analysis of our data. These themes were: loss and distress; identity and place; freedom, and discrimination.

3.1. Loss and Distress

Refugees involuntarily left their country because of the war and out of fear of persecution. They left behind their homes, belongings, property, and other material assets.

Several of the items left behind were heirlooms passed along from generation to generation. Those items were simply irreplaceable. More important than the loss of material things were the loss of loved ones. Several refugees recalled family members and friends who became casualties of the war. The loss left long-lasting effects that continue to be a source of distress.

A Bosnian woman in her early 40's recalled, "My family, my close family, parents, brothers, sisters, we survived but wider family, cousins, yes, they were killed and persecuted and many, many friends." A male Somali taxi driver in his mid-40's shared a horrifying incident that he personally experienced as he recalled the loss of a close relative while they were fleeing their country, "I lost, actually, uncle who, you know, who got shot while we flee. He got shot. He was in a car. They shot the car. And the car got fire."

The refugees abandoned their homes and left their belongings and property in search of a safe haven. Many of the refugees did not know where to go so they travelled to a new country and found refuge at camps. Life at the camps was rough, but at least, the refugees were safe. Provisions at the camps met their basic needs, such as food and shelter, but very little beyond that. Some refugees who were born at the camps did not get education. Wissink et al. (2005) found that some refugees were illiterate even in their own native language. A male Somali in his mid-thirties shared his experience while living at a refugee camp when he was a child, 12 or 13 years in age:

You know, refugee camps are really tough. The couch had a lot of people. You know. There is no running water. There was not paper toilet, ah, food. You know. Basically, no classes. So you don't have school. You know, it's tough. Refugee Somali is very tough. You know, children, we played soccer. Have fun, but not just much like ... you know... No school. We didn't go to school. There is a school, private school. You have to pay. The refugees, we do not have money.

Although Bosnian refugees were in Europe and Somali refugees were in Africa, their experiences living in camps drew many similarities. During the interviews, memories of living in camps became vivid as scenes from the past played out. One person interviewed was a female Bosnian in her early 30's. She came to the United States as a teen who entered high school in her junior year. She completed her secondary and higher education in the U.S. and is now working as an immigration lawyer at a university.

Not all refugees lived in camps. Some Bosnian and Somali refugees were fortunate to have moved to host countries, such as Germany, and some Somali refugees lived with friends or relatives in Kenya. At their host countries, the refugees found jobs and the children attended schools. Although they found a place to resettle, their immigration status was temporary. The threat of deportation loomed in their minds thus posing constant distress.

When the United States approved to accept refugees from Bosnia and Somalia in accordance with the Refugee Act of 1980, the refugees filed their application for an opportunity for permanent resettlement. The refugees came to the United States in search of a place to start a new life, free from fear of deportation and persecution. Although they were aware that life would be different in their new host country, they were nonetheless ill prepared to deal with the inevitable difficulties for adaptation to American society. Relocation by crossing borders was a source of stress. Differences in culture, language, surroundings, and even modes of transportation added to the uncertainty of settling in a new place. Some refugees experienced distress and depression as they faced new challenges of navigating life in a new country. A Bosnian woman, who is married and has children, recounted the difficulties she and her family experienced when they arrived in the United States:

You know, we came because we had to come somewhere. We could not go back. We can go back, but that couldn't be a real life. When we came here, it was new for us. It was hard for us. We didn't know language. We didn't know culture. We didn't know anything about that... You know? Who will come and knock our door. We didn't know language. We didn't know neighbor. We didn't know nothing. It was hard and difficult for us to live that life...

From a different perspective, a 25-year-old Somali female, who came to the United States when she was an eight-year-old child, remembers the excitement of moving to the United States, exploring her new surroundings, and experiencing the new culture. Life in the United States was better than at the refugee camp in Mombasa, Kenya. Although they had to start from nothing, she was optimistic that everything will turn out fine. However, she also saw the pain and anguish of some of the Somali adults. Some of the refugees, who came to the United States as an adult, experienced depression resulting from having to leave their country and loved ones behind.

She saw the struggles of the adults as they worked hard to learn to adapt to learn the language, culture, and norms of their new country:

Mmm, when I came I thought it was great, the freedoms getting used to it, seeing my family, getting used to laws. It was exciting! It was very nice but as a young kid, of course, I wanted everything at that time and to try everything but as time went passed, I was coming to see the adults deal with the depression of, you know, coming and you can't wear your custom, and teaching us, the children, not to lose our culture, our religion. So I remember that depression part of it.

Loss and distress describe the emotional wound that these refugees carried during the process of exile from their home countries and relocation to the United States. Many refugees remembered the many lives that were lost, family members, friends, and neighbors. They relived their experiences of living in refugee camps where accommodations were minimal and provisions were basic. Transitioning to life in the United States caused additional stress as they worked to start a new life in a foreign country without knowledge of the language, culture, or their surroundings. The theme of loss and distress supports research conducted by Miller et al. (2002) on refugee mental health during resettlement.

3.2. Identity and Place

After leaving the refugee camps, their initial host countries (Croatia, Germany, or Kenya) provided the refugees with a safe haven and protection against the war. The refugees settled in their host countries; many of them staying for several years. Settling in their host countries, some refugees did not have difficulty finding jobs while their children attended the local schools. Inasmuch as their host countries provided more opportunities and better living conditions, their status as war immigrants remained temporary. The host countries did not have provisions for the refugees to acquire permanent immigration status. Subsequently, the refugees lived in constant fear of deportation. Although they longed to return to Bosnia, the refugees knew that was not an option even after the war ended. Many Bosnians feared for their safety if they returned to their country. The war responsible for the Bosnian Diaspora and genocide was foremost in the refugees' mind and they felt displaced as a result.

When the United States opened its borders as a resettlement destination, Bosnian and Somali refugees filed applications to relocate to the United States with the hope of acquiring permanent residence. Forced to leave their country of origin and then, their initial host countries, the refugees came to the United States to rebuild and start a new life. In the United States, refugees can apply for permanent residency after living in the country for one year. A preferred resettlement community, many of the refugees chose to move to St. Louis because of the availability of jobs during the 1990s, the lower cost of living, and its relatively temperate climate.

Upon arrival, the refugees received assistance from governmental agencies such as the International Institute, a resettlement agency, in finding homes, learning the language, and looking for employment. The refugees who spoke some English recalled finding jobs within a few months of their arrival. Those who did not speak English upon arrival in St. Louis took advantage of free English classes just until they could manage to communicate effectively in a work environment. Slowly, the refugees began their resettlement process. Within several years after resettling in St. Louis, the Bosnian and Somali refugees rebuilt their lives and made St. Louis their new home.

When asked how they defined their identity, some refugees expressed how they have adapted to their new culture while still maintaining their own. They consider themselves to have a blended culture. They are protective of their own culture but they are accepting the American way of life. One Somali male who is married with children and drives a taxicab proudly proclaimed his identity. "Oh, I am all. I am Somali, American, and Muslim. That is the good thing in American. You can be the same while I am Somali, Muslim, and American. I am all."

Some refugees expressed a strong connection to their ethnic roots. These refugees were steadfast in holding on to their culture, their own identity. They stand tall to display their ethnicity and methodically preserve their culture to ensure they and their children carry on with their traditions. As if afraid to lose their identity, some refugees cling to the ways and norms of their beloved country. A 50-year-old Bosnian female who has lived in St. Louis for 15 years adamantly defended her origins as she stated, "I am still Bosnian because I am older generation, you know. I came here when I was 30 years old. You can imagine, yeah? So, and I still think Bosnian ways, you know." Likewise, a Somali male in his early 50s was clearly amused when the interviewer asked him to define his identity.

He chuckled at the seemingly ridiculous question and said as a matter-of-fact, “Yeah, I still keep my culture. I'm proud my culture!”

Religious identity was very important to both refugee groups. While they had, to varying degrees, adapted to American culture, redefining some aspects of their lifestyles, their religious beliefs remained strong, and many found solace in keeping their religious identity intact. Many Bosnians' are Muslims and a small number are Catholic or Orthodox. However, Bosnians are non-practicing Muslims as they are predominantly secular (Matsuo, 2005). Nevertheless, they maintain their religious faith and seek comfort in their personal beliefs. When asked about her religious affiliation and its role in her resettlement, a Bosnian female in her mid-20s and who teaches ESL at the International Institute said, “very helpful, because I feel like you know it's... keep part of my identity by having a place to go to for religious purposes and I feel they do sometimes like classes.”

Somali's, on the other hand, are mostly religious Muslims who regularly practice their faith. Many of women wear their traditional Muslim religious veil or *hijab*. For many Somali refugees, practicing Islam is a mark of their religious belonging. A Somali female who has lived in the United States for 17 years expressed how religion defines her personal identity:

I think it is important to keep my culture because that is who I am. That's where I come from. I can't be me without my culture, without my religion, you know? My religion is the way of life. Who you are, where you are from. From days you were raised, in the day you was born. You dad puts it in your ear the first things you would hear. It is part of who you are. I can't be me, you know, without my tradition, my religion, and I think it is my identity.

It appears that both Bosnian and Somali refugees transitioned and adapted to life in St. Louis, Missouri. They learned the American culture and then redefined their cultural identities. They established roots and became contributing members of the community.

3.3. Freedom

After living in several countries as refugees, the refugees reported a sense of relief when they finally came to the United States. They were in a place where they could start a new life and gain permanent residency with the opportunity to become naturalized citizens. They were relieved to finally be free from fear of deportation, persecution, or ethnic cleansing. They appreciated the opportunity to live in peace. A Bosnian woman in her 40's who moved to St. Louis in 1998 was clearly grateful for having moved to the United States and the freedom the move afforded her:

I have been here for 14 years and if I had to go back to Bosnia, I think, I will decide to stay here because I have all freedom! Everything, I like, people. I like everything, how they live, how they do.

The Muslim refugees were victims of the ethnic cleansing from their countries. Remembering their plight and forced departure from their countries, the refugees recalled the loss of their rights and freedom that resulted in them seeking shelter and safe haven in other countries. Moving to the United States granted the refugees the same civil rights enjoyed by Americans. They were thankful for the opportunity but above all, they most cherished the right and freedom to practice their religion. Being devout Muslims, a Somali female wearing a *hijab* breathed a sigh of relief as she expressed her gratitude that she is free to worship in this country:

I'm happy that I'm here, I'm glad I can practice my religion. I'm glad I have opportunities, Alhamdulillah. God has been good to me and I hope, I pray, that people have the same hopes and expectations that I do. I hope good things! I hope that we can get to a better place and I'm in a better place. I'm happy.

Although Bosnians are secular Muslims, their religion is an ingrained part of their identity. Their beliefs and values have deep-seated roots in their religion.

Another Bosnian female who now works as an academic advisor described the freedom that she and her family have enjoyed since coming to the United States: They availed themselves with free amenities offered to refugees, albeit limited. The freedom they experienced after resettling in the United States provided them the peace they were seeking for. Freedom is one of the ideals of the United States and the refugees, who have escaped atrocities, seem to be enjoying this ethos regardless of their immigration status.

3.4. Discrimination

Both refugee groups reported experiencing some form of discrimination.

Some were seemingly intentional while others were not. The Bosnians interviewed for this study did not report any explicit discrimination directed towards them. However one Bosnian female recalled an incident in high school when she and other fellow Bosnian students felt singled out due to their ethnicity:

Certain people do say some hurtful things. Like in high school, for example. We only had about 30 Bosnian students at that time. One day we were all sitting in our classes. Obviously I wasn't in class with all the Bosnians, we were all spread out. Some was in math, some was in English, whatever. And over the intercom system, the superintendent was like, "All Bosnians, please report to the cafeteria." And I was like, "What the hell?" That was so weird. So I got up and left, and all the American students are like, "Why are they--?" It's so weird. Had they said, "All African-Americans, please go--" I mean that's so horrible. Who does that? So things like that were happening, but I honestly think because they were just so ignorant. They just didn't know better. I don't know if it was purposely done that way. I don't think so. But it made you feel like, "Oh my God, I did something wrong. Something bad is going on."

Somalis, by contrast, reported several incidents of intentional discrimination. One Somali male described a not uncommon experience:

Because I'm cab driver. Because some customer say, "Where you from?" When I answer them, "Africa," they say, "What you doing here?" So, what means like that? Understand? Some people, people is different around the world. Some people bad, some people good. I can't say American, all of them is bad people or good people. Some of them very good people. Some of them bad people.

Although both groups are Muslims, their racial background and skin color are factors in the amount and degree of discrimination they have experienced. Bosnian refugees, who are of European descent, experienced less discrimination, due in large part to their skin color. Both groups' religious background continues to be a source of discrimination in American society. Although Bosnian and Somali refugees are Muslims, Bosnians are secular Muslims who do not wear the traditional Muslim veil or garb. The lack of distinguishing attire makes it easier for Bosnians to blend in with the dominant culture. Inasmuch as their European looks have made it easier for Bosnians to find acceptance, most are uncomfortable talking about their religious beliefs for fear of discrimination and backlash resulting from the terrorist attacks of September 11. In contrast, many Somali refugees wear traditional veils and attire. The outward showing of their religious and cultural practices, along with their dark skin color, makes them stand out and create more opportunities for discrimination.

4. Discussion and Limitations

The findings reveal several similar core features in the lives of Somali and Bosnian refugees resettling in St. Louis. These similarities are due in large part to the common pre-immigration experiences of the two groups. First, both Bosnian and Somalis were both displaced from a war-torn country, where they experienced war-related trauma, witnessed the deaths of loved ones, lost family members, or were victims of war violence (Halcon et al., 2004; Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007; Robertson et al., 2006; Yakushko et al., 2008). The aforementioned researchers explored these experiences in order to focus on the mental health of Bosnian and Somali refugees. Because of experiences of the war-related loss, these refugees encountered depressive symptom and psychological distress (Miller et al., 2002). Their findings are similar to our theme of loss and distress.

Though Bosnians are from Europe and Somalis are from Africa, they are both Muslims. Being Muslims, they cherish the family bond, and take seriously their responsibility to teach family members to be faithful Muslims. Thus, they attempt to maintain their identity, even as they settle in a country in which Islam is not the dominant religion. Though they suffer loss and distress because of war in their country of origin, they hope for a brighter future. They take advantage of the opportunities offered in the foreign country, working hard to be established. The same strength of will that allowed them to overcome the difficulties in the foreign environment enables their children to access good education (Matsuo, 2005). Moreover, these refugees have created an information network fostering upward mobility that combined with their strong family ties to allow them to capitalize on family human resources despite occupational downward mobility (Matsuo, 2005). Our findings stand in stark contrast to Al-Ali (2002), who found that many Bosnians spoke about the high number of separations and divorce among the people they knew. This difference suggests that the experiences of Muslim refugees in different countries result in a range of effects on such things as family ties.

Despite their similar religious and immigration backgrounds, resettlement experiences and opportunities differ greatly between Bosnians and Somalis. While a relatively small number of Bosnians in St. Louis are Catholic and Orthodox, most are Bosnian Muslim. However, they are predominantly secular Muslims who do not practice their faith. Al-Ali (2002) argues that a large number of Bosnian refugees encounter Islam only during certain fateful moments, such as war, despair, and loss. Thus, while some Bosnian men and women turned to Islam as a faith; many others considered it largely a framework for ethnic and cultural identity rather than a marker of religious belonging. As Matsuo (2005) explains, European secular Muslims, such as Bosnian refugees, are 'racially invisible,' thus they blend into American society, generally bypassing the discrimination and prejudice that Middle Eastern Muslims encounter. Moreover, differences between gender ideologies, social background, and place of origin (rural/urban) are partly responsible for the heterogeneity of Bosnian Muslims. Furthermore, Bosnians' sense of being Muslims and awareness of certain religious and cultural rituals vary significantly (Al-Ali, 2002).

In contrast, Somali refugees are African and religious Muslims. While discrimination based on skin color and racial status is technically illegal in the United States, Somalis nonetheless experienced discrimination because of their skin color. Bosnians did not report these experiences of prejudice and discrimination. This occurs also with the refugees in Australia where Bosnian refugees experience less discrimination on the job market than do the more visible non-European refugees. Indeed, African refugees experience much higher degrees of prejudice from Australian employers (Colic-Peisker, 2005). Hopskin (2006), too, found the marginalization of many Somalis in terms of receiving services and collective representation.

A second feature that distinguishes Bosnians from Somalis and other Muslims is that secular Muslim Bosnian women do not usually wear traditional Muslim veils. This can be traced to the Bosnian war. In an effort to restore some autonomy, some women did not wear the traditional veil or *hijab*, and many women did not return to wearing the veil when the war was over (Al-Ali, 2002). Somali women, however, tend to wear the more traditional attire *hijab*. Somalis' traditional attire is also different. They tend to wear more vibrantly hued clothing. Participants in Fangen's research shared the exposure that Somali women who tend to wear trousers and not wear a veil to humiliating comments from elder Somalis (Fangen, 2002). Evidence exist that Somali women, then, experience discrimination even within their culture.

A major obstacle for refugees and immigrants is language, although here, too, there are differences in the degree to which language is a barrier. Bosnians tend to have a relatively better command of the English language than do refugees from other ethnic groups, such as Vietnamese and African refugees, who have lived in the United States for the same length of time (Matsuo, 2005). This difference may be one reason why Bosnian refugees have more opportunities for education,

Warriner(2007) found that refugees in the United State generally encounter obstacles in their attempts to be fully accepted and included in American society. Bosnian refugees, however, adapted and blended into American society faster than Somali refugees. Among Bosnian people, refugee women adapted more quickly than their male partners, due, in part, to their social positions in their country of origin (Franz, 2003). Despite their similar length of stay in the United States, more pronounced cultural differences, educational achievement, and skin color may hinder Somali refugees' adaptation and acceptance. .

The focus of the research on 23 Bosnian and Somali refugees was a limitation in that the sample size reflects a small percentage of the total population of either ethnic group. The uneven gender distribution of interviews collected from each group is another limitation; the sample was predominately male Somalis and Bosnian females located in St. Louis. A different sample may have produced a different set of results for these refugee groups.

While this study of Bosnian and Somali groups examined the intersection of race, religion, and identity, it did not delve deeply into other factors affecting each group's adaptation experience such as their educational attainment and mental health. Due to the researchers' limited access to a wider population, the study was limited to a small number of participants that resulted from purposive sampling. Furthermore, the numerical strength of Bosnians and Somalis has led to internal and external community networks and dynamics, which are vital to accruing social capital, as well as to resettlement service organizations. Thus, it is important to evaluate the resettlement service policies to see the benefits of these services to the refugees.

Acknowledgement

This research was supported by a grant from the Center for Intercultural Studies at Saint Louis University.

5. References

- Al-Ali, N. (2002). Gender relations, transnational ties and rituals among Bosnian refugees. *Global Networks*, 2(3), 249.
- Carroll, J., Epstein, R., Fiscella, K., Volpe, E., Diaz, K., & Omar, S. (2007). Knowledge and beliefs about health promotion and preventive health care among Somali women in the United States. *Health Care Women Int.* 28(4), 360–380.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publication Ltd.
- Colic-Peisker, V. (2005). 'At least you're the right colour': Identity and social inclusion of Bosnian refugees in Australia. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 31(4), 615–638.
- Dharod, J. M., Croom, J., Sady, C. G., & Morrell, D. (2011). Dietary intake, food security, and acculturation among Somali refugees in the United States: Results of a pilot study. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*9(1), 82–97.
- Fangen, K. (2006). Humiliation experienced by Somali refugees in Norway. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 19(1), 69–93.
- Franz, B. (2003). Bosnian refugee women in (re)settlement: Gender relations and social mobility. *Feminist Review*, 73, 86–103.
- Gardner, J. & Bushra, J. E. (2004). *Somalia - the untold story: The war through the eyes of Somali women*. London: Pluto Press.
- Gifford, S. M., Bakopanos, C., Kaplan, I., & Correa-Velez, I. (2007). Meaning or measurement? Researching the social contexts of health and settlement among newly-arrived refugee youth in Melbourne, Australia. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 20(3), 414–440.
- Halcon, L., Robertson, C., Savik, K., Johnson, D., Spring, M., Butcher, J., & Jaranson, J. (2004). Trauma and coping in Somali and Oromo refugee youth. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 35, 17–25.
- Hopkins, G. (2006). Somali community organizations in London and Toronto: Collaboration and effectiveness. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 19(3), 361-389.
- Huisman, K., & Hondagneu-Sotelo, P. (2005). Dress matters: Change and continuity in the dress practices of Bosnian Muslim refugee women. *Sage Family Studies Abstracts*, 27, 4.
- Jackson, R. H. (1990). *Quasi-states: Sovereignty, international relations, and the third world*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kia-Keating, M., & Ellis, H. (2007). Belonging and connection to school in resettlement: Young refugees, school belonging, and psychological adjustment. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 12(1), 29–43.
- Krasner, S. D., & Pascual, C. (2005). Addressing state failure. *Foreign Affairs*, 84(4), 153–163.
- Lamba, N. K. (2003). The employment experiences of Canadian refugees: Measuring the impact of human and social capital on quality of employment. *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 40(1), 45–64.
- Majka, L., & Mullan, B. (1992). Employment retention, area of origin and type of social support among refugees in the Chicago area. *International Migration Review*, 26(3), 899–926.
- Matsuo, H. (2005). "Bosnian Refugee Resettlement in St. Louis, Missouri." In *Refugees Resettlement in the West: Economic, Social and Cultural Aspects*. Val Colic-Peisker and Peter Waxman (eds.) Pp. 109-126. New York: Nova Science Publishers Inc.
- Mestheneos, E., & Ioannidi, E. (2002). Obstacles to refugee integration in the European Union member states. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 15(3), 304–320.
- Miller, K. E., Weine, S. M., Ramic, A., Brkic, N., Bjedic, Z. D., Smajkic, A., Boskailo, E., & Worthington, G. (2002). The relative contribution of war experiences and exile-related stressors to levels of psychological distress among Bosnian refugees. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 15(5), 377–387.
- Miller, K. E., Worthington, G. J., Muzurovic, J., Tipping, S., & Goldman, A. (2002). Bosnian refugees and the stressors of exile: a narrative study. *The American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 72(3), 341–354.
- Neuman, L. W. (2011). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches (7th Ed.)*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education.

- Palinkas, L. A., Pickwell, S. M., Brandstein, K., Clark, T. J., Hill, L. L., Moser, R. J., & Osman, A. (2003). The journey to wellness: Stages of refugee health promotion and disease prevention. *Journal of Immigration Health, 5*(1), 19–28.
- Reno, W. (2000). Shadow states and the political economy of civil wars. In M. R. Berdal & D. M. Malone (Eds.), *Greed and grievance: Economic agenda in civil wars* (pp. 43–68). Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Robertson, C., Halcon, L., Savik, K., Johnson, D., Spring, M., Butcher, J., & Jaranson, J. (2006). Somali and Oromo refugee women: Trauma and associated factors. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 56*(6), 577–587.
- Rotberg, R. I. (2002). The new nature of nation-state failure, *Washington Quarterly, 25*(3), 85–96.
- Scuglik, D., Alarcon, R., Lapeyre, A., Williams, M., & Logan, K. (2007). When the poetry no longer rhymes: Mental health issues among Somali immigrants in the USA. *Transcultural Psychiatry, 44*(4), 581–595.
- Singer, A., Wilson, J. H., & Brookings Institution. (2006). *From 'there' to 'here': Refugee resettlement in metropolitan America*. Washington, D.C: Metropolitan Policy Program, Brookings Institution.
- Smith, Y. D. (2010). *They bring their memories with them: Somali Bantu resettlement in a globalized world* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://content.lib.utah.edu/utis/getfile/collection/etd2/id/280/filename/388.pdf>
- Somach, S. D. (1995). *Bosnian refugee resettlement in the U.S.: Survey report*. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED385618.pdf>.
- Stoll, K. (2007). Determinants of the psychosocial adjustment of southern Sudanese men. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 20*(4), 621–640.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publishing Ltd.
- Warriner, D. S. (2007). Language, learning and the politics of belonging: Sudanese women refugees becoming and being "American". *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 38*(4), 343–359.
- Wieland, M. L., Morrison, T. B., Cha, S. S., Rahman, A. S., & Chaudhry, R. (2012). Diabetes care among Somali immigrants and refugees. *Journal of Community Health 37*(3), 680–684.
- Wissink, L., Jones-Webb, R., DuBois, D., Krinke, B., & Ibrahim, Q. (2005). Improving health care provision to Somali refugee women. *Minn Med, 88*(2), 36–40.
- Yakushko, O., Watson, M., & Thompson, S. (2008). Stress and coping in the lives of immigrants and refugees: Considerations for counseling. *International Journal of Advanced Counseling, 30*, 167–178.
- Zartman, W. I. (1995). *Collapsed states: The disintegration and restoration of legitimate authority*. Boulder, CO: Lynne R