

Kennesaw State University

DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University

Master of Science in Conflict Management
Final Projects

School of Conflict Management, Peacebuilding
and Development

Fall 12-1-2019

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN THE U.S.: THE HIDDEN REALITIES OF THE U.S. REFUGEE INTEGRATION PROCESS

Bienvenue Konsimbo

bkonsimb@students.kennesaw.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/mscm_etd



Part of the [Adult and Continuing Education Commons](#), [Human Rights Law Commons](#), [Immigration Law Commons](#), [International and Area Studies Commons](#), [International Humanitarian Law Commons](#), [Natural Law Commons](#), [Other Legal Studies Commons](#), [Peace and Conflict Studies Commons](#), [Social Welfare Law Commons](#), and the [Student Counseling and Personnel Services Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Konsimbo, Bienvenue, "REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN THE U.S.: THE HIDDEN REALITIES OF THE U.S. REFUGEE INTEGRATION PROCESS" (2019). *Master of Science in Conflict Management Final Projects*. 1. https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/mscm_etd/1

This Internship is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Conflict Management, Peacebuilding and Development at DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master of Science in Conflict Management Final Projects by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@kennesaw.edu.

Bienvenue Michelle Konsimbo

MSCM 7720

Field Experience Analysis

Refugee Resettlement in the U.S.: The Hidden Realities of the U.S. Refugee Integration Process

Identifying the Impact of the U.S. Humanitarian Drawbacks.

Project Goal: The purpose of the project is to investigate whether the U.S. refugee resettlement policies offered fair and equal treatment to the refugees.

Keywords: U.S., U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), Department of State (DOS), Refugee Resettlement Organization, Immigration, Refugees, Non-governmental refugee resettlement agencies (VOLAGs), insecurity, self-identity, discrimination, security.

Introduction

Statement of the problem

“Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free” (Xu, 2007, p.38). This is the belief that started the U.S. humanitarian project to rescue refugees who have experienced displacement due to wars, violence, and persecution. There are ten countries of resettlement in the world. The U.S. is the largest country that has accepted the largest group of refugees since World War II (WWII) (migration policy). This endeavor started in Europe under the U.S. resettlement program, but later on, it included Cuba, Southeast Asia, and Eastern Europe (Brown & Scribner, 2014, p.103). A major reconstruction was passed by Congress, and the Refugees Act of 1980 was enacted to foster collaboration between the federal government and the resettlement agencies (Brown & Scribner, 2014, p. 101). Since its reform, the U.S. has resettled more than two million refugees in the country. Studies have shown that this humanitarian effort has not been fully upfront because its main focus has been and is: Self-sufficiency with employment as the main focus rather than acculturation, integration, language, and education (Gonzalez Benson & Panaggio Taccolini, 2019, p. 29). Many of these refugees are victims of social injustice due to the language and culture barriers, which resulted in inadequate

living conditions, reduced-education, and insufficient, poor health care. Therefore, under such circumstances some refugees may still be “the tired, the poor...yearning to breathe free” in part due to the limit of the social services to integrate the refugees fully, which has somehow pushed back on the U.S. humanitarian effort to give them a fair and equal treatment of justice. This paper will be divided into three sections: First, it will look at the history, the state and current practices of the U.S. refugee resettlement using my CM 7600 literature review. Second, a description of my fieldwork experience and the reasons behind my choice. Lastly, how will my fieldwork experience add to the existing knowledge of the CM field?

What do we know about the area?

Since its independence in 1776 from Great Britain, the U.S. has gone on to become the richest developed nation in the 19th and 20th century due to its large territory, its natural resources, its strategic location between the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, and also due its driven force of manpower, which continues to boost the economy and its power globally. The U.S. immigration, which started in 1630 with the Puritans who fled religious persecutions from Great Britain or the Irish or Germans due to famine (Weddle, 2018, p.434) was the beginning of the humanitarian effort, which led to the establishment of the refugees’ program during World War II. This driven force of manpower has helped to ignite the U.S. refugee resettlement program, a humanitarian effort to rescue refugees from all over the world to America. While it might not be the focus of this paper, it is worth noting that in that historical time, these settlers who were fleeing from persecution in Europe ended up being the persecutors of indigenous people in the Americas. One example of this persecution is the “Trail of Tears,” which was the removal of Cherokee Indians from North Carolina on orders of President Andrew Johnson (Bryant, 2008 p.6). Thus, others argue that after World War II, this endeavor has been more of an

ad-hoc basis (Brown & Scribner, 2014, p. 102) than a humanitarian effort due to the way the program has been set up. Indeed, studies show that the U.S. refugee relief was a counter-strategy during the Cold War by the U.S. in its fight against communism. The fleeing refugees were seen as “political and ideological assets that had propaganda value both at home and overseas” (Chiba, 2014, p. 10). This refugee relief started under the Displaced Persons Act in 1948 through 1953. Of the 700,000 refugees who settled in the U.S., 70 percent came from the USSR and Eastern Europe. Later on, this endeavor led to changes and expansion to include millions of refugees from all over the world (Chiba, 2014, p.10). Therefore, how did the U.S. refugee resettlement program evolve?

The federal government defines a refugee as a “person outside his or her country of nationality who is unable or unwilling to return because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution” (Utržan, Wieling, & Piehler, 2019, p. 128). Forty years after World War II, the U.S. federal government created the Refugee Act of 1980, which reflects “the American tradition of granting refugee status to diverse groups suffering from or fearing persecution” (Xu, 2007p.). From the 1946 to the 1980 Act, more than two million refugees have resettled in the U.S. (Eby, Iverson, Smyers, & Kekic, 2011p.). This has made the U.S. the largest of the 10 resettlement countries (Xu, 2007, p. 38). For these millions of refugees, their expectations to find “employment, education, to provide a better environment for their children, and to integrate into the community” (Xu, 2007p.38) may not be the case once in the U.S. The refugees’ resettlement is operated under the leadership of the Department of State (DOS), which has three branches known as the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) (Lewton, 2016, p.12). The DOS distributes Reception & Placement per capita grants and allocated refugees to the nine domestic agencies by contracting them (Darrow, 2015p.), and the newly added Department of

Health and Human Services (DHHS), which oversees the resettlement of unaccompanied refugee children (Xu, 2007p.). Furthermore, these nine domestic agencies are called VOLAGs or non-government agencies. They are voluntary, faith-based, or secular organizations (Darrow, 2015, p.94) working with the DOS to implement the DOS' Reception and Placement program (R&P) (Darrow, 2015p.), which seeks "to find refugees a place to live, a job, food and clothing, counseling, connections within their new community, language classes, and transportation to destinations" (Bose, 2018p.). Of these services mandated by the R&P programs, housing and employment are the two main focuses, which are intended for the first 90 days of their arrivals. The DOS' hope is to give "the refugee a leg up on their journey to self-sufficiency" (Darrow, 2015, p. 92). However, this pre-package deal is not without repercussions or unintended consequences.

The Integration processes

The resettlement agencies and Faith Based Organization (FBO) roles

Once a refugee is admitted into the U.S., he or she is assigned to a secular resettlement agency or a faith-based organization based on the contract between the DOS and the refugee agencies. The latter agreed to provide basic needs such as safe housing furnishings and appliances, assisting in finding employment, assisting in applying for public benefits, assistance in applying for government-required identification, registering adults for English as a Second Language (ESL), assisting in school enrollment for their kids, assisting in applying for medical services and immunizations (Baxter, 2018.p.). In return, the DOS will pay "\$1,850 to support costs incurred during the initial 90-day resettlement period" out of the amount the agencies are required "to use a minimum of \$925 to pay direct expenses for the resettlement of the refugee", \$725 to pay their agency administrative expenses and the remaining \$200 can be used for any additional expenses (Darrow, 2015,p105.). Additional financial assistance like cash assistance or

refugee medical assistance may be given through other venues such as the DHHS's Office of Refugee and Resettlement for a period of eight months from their arrival or through the welfare programs such as the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) (Xu, 2007, p.46). While the primary focuses are "job placement and housing, cultural orientation, English language acquisition, and health care access" (Xu, 2007, p.46), in the eyes of the American lawyers, employment is an important focus and should be found upon their arrival. This is because to them, "It leads to economic self-sufficiency for the family" (Xu, 2007, p.46). However, the repercussions of the services offered are alarming because one, the services are provided at a minimum level (Xu, 2007, p.47), and two, not all refugees have the ability to quickly integrate.

First, to the U.S. refugee resettlement policy in regard to integration is the housing mandate, which requires the resettlement agencies to provide adequate and furnished housing. To that end, some scholars argue that because the mandate by the R&P program describes housing as something that should be "affordable based on projected family income and accommodates known disabilities to the extent possible" (Darrow, 2015, p.105). Again, this leaves the "specific of the housing to the interpretation of the agency and caseworker" (Darrow, 2015, p.105). Therefore, their housing conditions might be unsanitary because the resettlement agencies are tasked with limited funding, which is due to the Trump administration budget cut in refugee resettlement and the reduced number of the refugee admittance. These Executive Orders (EOs) enacted by "President Donald Trump scale back refugee admission, which brings the estimates to historic lows" (Utržan et al., 2019, p.128). While the Trump administration has "surmised the financial cost to \$96 million during the period of 2005 to 2014 (GLOVER, 2019.p316). Other scholars like Mark Hetfield argue that the refugee resettlement is "a payoff investment" because the "U.S. refugee resettlement program is a relatively inexpensive system where the emphasis is

on early employment and self-support, rather than providing years of aid to refugees” (Boas, 2007, p. 458).

Second, in the case of U.S. refugee resettlement policy in regard to integration, employment is the main focus because the idea is to instill the “Protestant work ethics” to refugees so that “ they can return as quickly as possible and participate in the labor market to support their families”(Xu, 2007, p.48) and not to become a burden to the state. As one scholar puts it, “To mediate the risk of refugee dependency on the US government, the INA, Section 411 notes: ‘employable refugees should be placed on jobs as soon as possible, and often with minimal English training, after their arrival in the United States’(Koyama, 2015,p.510). This situation puts the resettlement agencies in a difficult position to save their own jobs since their assessments and funding depend on the accomplishment of their contracts, (Gonzalez Benson & Panaggio Taccolini, 2019 p. 29) but also this affected the refugees who may be the ones that carry the repercussions. Since the employment requirement does not specify for the caseworker/resettlement agencies to provide the refugee with a job that corresponds to his or her needs or experiences, the choice is left to the caseworker. In this case, transferable skills may not be an option because the caseworker’s priority is to find him or her a job with or without those skills. (Koyama, 2017 p.510.). Therefore, the resettlement caseworker might be looking “for refugees who are willing to take any job and willing to adopt the necessary skills to accomplish it.” Thus, some of them might end-up “with low-wage paying jobs, and limited opportunities for themselves” (Gonzalez Benson & Panaggio Taccolini, 2019, p.32) such as moving away from a poor neighborhood or going back to school to improve their English language skills or pursue higher education.

Just like their American counterparts, refugees are also looking to fulfill these needs. That is the human nature of wanting to improve his or her status. Maslow, a need theorist describes needs as a hierarchical stage of things human beings go through as they progress in life. Such needs include physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization are what drive these refugees and their children into coming to the U.S. Harrigan & Commons in their article argue that within Maslow's hierarchical needs, there are primary reinforcers (food, sleep, social stimuli) and secondary reinforcers are "learned when paired with a primary reinforcer" like money for instance (Harrigan & Commons, 2015, p.24). For the refugees, money is their secondary reinforcers because they are not able financially to move away from poor neighborhoods due to the low-wage paying jobs. Consequently, this might lead to an intergroup conflict as one group, the refugee is unable to reach the stage of self-actualization. However, Sherman, Brookfield, & Ortosky argue that when individuals are given the opportunity for self-affirmation in return it will help to reduce conflicts in the intergroup.

Such conflict discrimination and prejudice which the refugees and their children experienced upon their arrival to the U.S (Xu, 2007, p.43). due to the barrier in language, ethnicity, or religious belief. To them, self-affirmation not only can bring peace, but it can also bring out-group and in-group closer so that both members can recognize the values and appreciations they each shared. They also argue that "Providing people with an opportunity to affirm the self has been shown to reduce defensive threat responses and to make people more open-minded to threatening information across domains such as health risks" (Sherman, Brookfield & Ortosky, 2017, p.3). Acculturation in a way can help both groups, refugees and non-refugees, attain their self-affirmation.

As a result, this leads to, “economic disparity for occupational level and earnings when refugees are compared to non-refugee migrants” (Koyama, 2015, p.610). Therefore, one might ask why is it that the English acquisition is at a low level or why is it that the agencies are only concerned that the refugees get limited English to get the job? Is it because once their English is at a high level, the refugees might not take on the low-paying jobs and instead will want higher-paying jobs (Koyama, 2013; Koyama, 2015), which may leave this field unfilled? President George Bush once said, “Immigrants are doing the jobs Americans won’t do”. Or is it because the English instructor is a native speaker with no training, or it is that in some cases, the instructor appeared unorganized, unprepared, and unequipped with inefficient tools such as old textbooks or lessons from elementary schools (Koyama, 2017, p. 504).

Studies have shown that the mandated program itself is a barrier to refugee integration. The unintended consequences are also reflected in the children as well who are dependent on their parents, economically and socially, to support them. Studies have shown that young refugees will drop out of school to help support their families (Rubinstein-Avila, 2016 p.82). As a result, children of refugees who are under 18 years old are constrained to stop their education once they reach the age of 18 to support their parents (Hauck, Lo, Maxwell, & Reynolds, 2014). Therefore, not having a well-being and supportive family can impact their mental health and coping skills. As researchers noted, “Stress in the family and exposure to war and violence are two equally weighted major determinants of refugee children’s poor mental health” (Xu, 2007, p. 44).

As noted by the authors, Kia-Keating & Ellis, B.H, refugee children with mental health issues are experiencing more problems with the school system due to their inability to perform and to connect because the schools lack “in school-based refugee mental health services” (Kia-

Keating & Ellis, B. H. 2007, p. 31) to assess and assist them with depression and PTSD. Furthermore, scholars argue that refugees are lacking quality care in mental health services because they are usually assigned to general doctors who are not specialized in treating PTSD disorders and psychiatric patients. For example, in their studies of the Cambodian refugees they found that these refugees have received an average of minimal or limited care in trauma-focused therapy session, which resulted in 29 minutes with 9 sessions rather than the appropriate standard, which recommends a session of eight to 12 sessions of 60 to 90 minutes each (Wong, Marshall, Schell, Berthold, & Hambarsoomians, 2015, p.983). Consequently, one might assume that there may be a gap in offering social services (health care, education) to the refugees. Little has been done to show if different ethnicities or religious groups were receiving differential treatment in regard to social services.

Field work Experience Description

Description of my Field Work Experience, and the reasons behind my choice

My fieldwork experience as an intern started in September 2019 at the IRC (International Rescue Committee) Atlanta. IRC Atlanta chapter is an international refugee resettlement in Clarkson, GA. Their commitment is to provide shelter, resources such as employment, healthcare, education, and security to refugees who have fled their homeland due to persecutions related to wars, race, or religion. My first day at work put me in a different spectrum of life, which I was not familiar with. One will think that living in the U.S. or my little town of Marietta where I lived for the past 17 years has a usual type of a diversified U.S. population. Or, is it because at some point even people with a culture difference assimilate or integrate eventually? However, on that first day at the IRC, I met people whom I will say may have just arrived in the States. The languages they spoke, which were very unfamiliar to me, the clothing made of

traditional clothes gave me the impression that I may have stepped into another country. I committed myself to a seven-hours work schedule with two days a week. My fieldwork supervisor welcomed me to the Economic Empower (EE) department. She then gave me a tour of the agency and introduced me to my future team members.

During her pep talk about the EE, I realized that it was made of subunits such as Career Development, Microenterprise, Financial Coach, and Early Employment, which I will be working under as an employment specialist intern. My subunit, EE is also subdivided into three sections: Matching Grant (MG), State Grant (SG), and FEA (budget and financial learning). MG was the subunit I was assigned for the duration of my internship. I learned that the MG program unit handles the cash allowance amount up to \$2,500 for refugees (depending on the refugee family size), which the agency received from the state and private funding. This financial aid will help to provide housing, utilities, food, transportation, English language classes, employment skills training, job referrals, family budget planning, and other services to refugees. By doing so, the IRC will ensure that the refugees will become financially independent upon 180 days of their MG orientation and enrollment according to the State Department (DOS) mandate.

As an employment specialist intern for the MG program, my duties and responsibilities on a daily basis involve entering case notes on the employment dashboard using ETO (Enterprise Non-profit Software) such as Individual Employment Plan (IEP), Family Self Sufficiency Plan (FSSP), follow-up on a client's self-sufficiency intermittently at 2 weeks, 90 days, 120 days until they exit the 180 days mandate. This also involves calling clients to inquire about their employment status. For example, if he or she was still working, how much they got paid, if they were happy with their jobs, or if they were working full time (40 hours). If not, find out the reason: If it is a health issue, assigned the client to my direct supervisor and if it's not, offer other

alternatives like another part-time job or switching shifts, or invite the client to come at the agency for a job intake. Lastly, I was called in to sit in as a French translator to some French-speaking clients. Not only did that part reconfirmed my goal in becoming a humanitarian worker, but I also realized that I probably may have overlooked my work duties at first.

A few days ago, I was called in to translate for a refugee lady who came in to seek help with the agency, but was not admitted to enroll with the agency because she was already in the system with another refugee resettlement agency. This lady burst into tears when I told her the bad news. But again, she explained to us how hopeless and worried she was as a single parent with three kids, uncertain of how she will pay her current rent and household expenses with no job at the moment. She then told us that she was told by her caseworker at the other agency that she had reached her matching grant benefits limit and will not be receiving any financial assistance from the MG program.

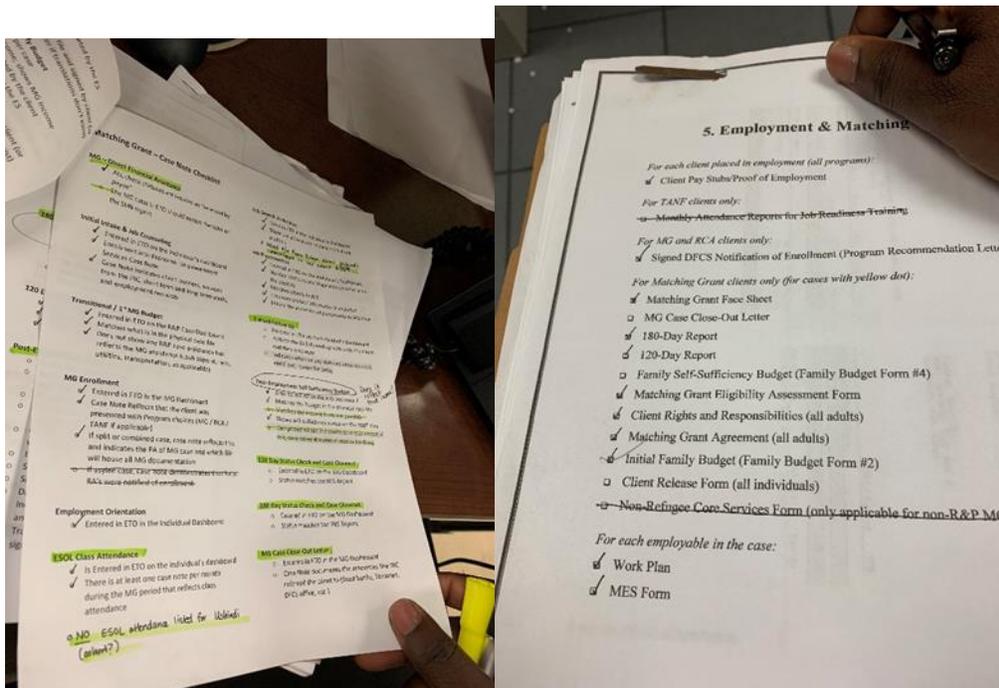
My team leaders then went to recheck her status on the state database and saw that she actually was still enrolled in the MG program. At this point, they decided to do a three-way call to the agency to find out more. Through the call, we found out that actually her rent was paid until she will exit the MG program, which was in December, and also that they set up a job interview for her the next day. I guess maybe there was a miscommunication since she told us that one, they did not provide a proper translator for her only and relied on her broken English and that she will understand the information given to her. Two, she thought she was supposed to come to the agency to depart for the job interview, which I rectified to her that instead, the agency will send someone to bring her to the job interview. I felt overwhelmed by her plight. I tried not to sob into tears, but only hugging her and telling her that it will get better. First, my interest in the refugee resettlement field was to test myself to see if I am made of what it takes to

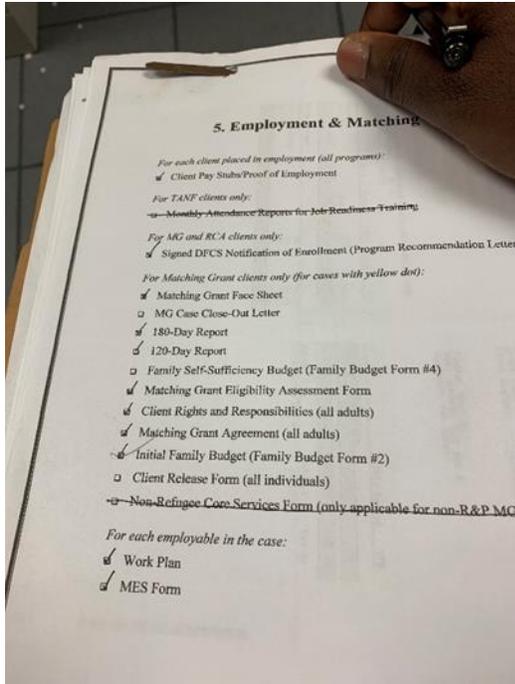
become a humanitarian worker, a diplomat, election monitor, economic development specialist, or human resource professional in conflict management. The leadership role came to me at a

younger age. For example, during my elementary, middle, and high school years, I would volunteer to become the spokesperson of the class or I will get nominated to assume the role.

Second, as an immigrant myself, I wanted to understand the plight of refugees living in the U.S. I also wanted to comprehend the processes of getting them to the States, their hurdles, their achievements, and the integration process.

Apprenticeship Report





The economically self-sufficient mandate by the DOS is not a mere action or overlooked by the IRC. First, during a refugee orientation, he or she is given a contract, which stipulates his or her commitment to becoming self-sufficient by the end of the 180 days, and to collaborate with the agency meaning to take on any job offered by the agency unless he or she has been diagnosed by a physician of incapacity or unable to perform the job. “Any job” does not sit well with the refugees because one job that is certain to be available and easy to get hired are the “chicken factory jobs.” During my job application intake for refugees or when I did job searches for clients based on their specifications “chicken factory jobs” were not listed as their choices. Instead, there were criteria expressed like “easy job,” “not too far,” “first shift or second shift,” and “wanted to work at the same job with a friend so to commute”. The fact is that refugees cannot grasp the importance of what a job experience and education mean to a U.S. employer. Most applications I came across had from no education to middle school education with experience to none because most of them are not familiar with the type of U.S.’s retail, factory,

fast-food jobs before they came in the U.S. Their previous livelihood has been to survive in the refugee camps. Confronted with a crowded population, very limited access to food, security, and health care, one can imagine that working or getting an education was not their primary preoccupation. Second, it is very uncertain or difficult for a refugee family to fully work 40 hours and obtain financial independence. For example, a refugee couple with children might decide that one parent should be the breadwinner so that the other parent can stay home to take care of the children. Or, maybe depending of the refugee culture, or religion, the husband may decide that is not appropriate for his wife to work, and therefore, this makes it difficult for one parent to assume the sole financial responsibilities unless one of the kids become legally workable and put his or her high school diploma or college dream on hold. Thus, how will my fieldwork experience add to the existing knowledge of the CM field?

The U.S. certainly did not stay untouched by the plight of refugees. It is a fact that since the passing of the Refugee Act in 1980, the U.S. has taken under its umbrella more than 3 million refugees from all over the world (Lundy, Hayes). However, since 2016 a new era of xenophobia, prejudice, and discrimination emerged with the election of the first populist president, Donald. J. Trump leading the path to where refugees/immigrants are no longer the destitute, and vulnerable but the ones whom American citizens needed to be scared of and worried about. Therefore, are these newly arrived refugees still welcomed in the U.S?

The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which the U.S. is a signature member states that, “All people are entitled to ‘security of person,’ which reinforces needs-based concepts of freedom from physical and psychological harm and creates a rights-based obligation for the state to provide such security” (Lundy, Hayes). Moreover, the U.S. Declaration of Independence also declares that, “All men are created equal, that they are endowed by their

Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness” (U.S.History.com). Are refugees in the U.S. subject to discrimination and threats from race, ethnicity, and religion?

U.S. presidential candidate, Donald J. Trump during his campaign trails in 2016 did not share the same views, and went on to make the Somalia refugees in the State of Minnesota one of his campaign touchpoints. The president declared that the state of Minnesota was in real danger of being uprooted by the influx of Somali refugees, and if elected, he will do something about it (Washington Post.com). As one may argue that the then-candidate saw the opportunity and used it as a political power struggle against his opponent. Another might argue that the act revealed that first, refugees with a non-Western culture maybe subjected to racial and religious discrimination because the President did not stop his attacks against the Somali refugees. Instead, he pursued his tirade of vendetta against refugees starting with the first elected Muslim, and congresswoman in Minnesota, Ilhan Omar, who came to the U.S. as a refugee from Somalia, and also congresswoman, first elected Iraqi, and the U.S. born, Rashida Tlaib. The President by questioning their allegiance to the U.S., which put doubts and created a social conflict where refugees from Muslim countries and poor countries are seen as unwelcomed. This above example demonstrates “how perceived injustices can be heaped onto migrant ‘others’, blaming migrants for their difficult situations, sometimes leading to outright discrimination and violence” ((Lundy, Hayes).

Moreover, the President has not given any tangible justifications to his decision to decrease the number of refugees admitted to the U.S. to a low 18,000 refugees, which represents the lowest number made by any past presidents. This showed that the U.S. humanitarian effort is

dissipating as fewer refugees are admitted to the U.S. Thus, how will my fieldwork experience add to the existing knowledge of the CM field?

During the first week of my fieldwork, my agency and another agency teamed up to allow their recruiting warehouse partner to host a career fair for their clients (refugees). First, the refugees needed to have their application on file before coming in. While my agency filed their clients' applications online for their clients, the other agency did not when we got there. Since one of my team leaders brought his computer, we ended-up filling their clients' applications for them because the recruiting company insisted on having the application filed online. This was not the first time they worked with the recruiting agency. Therefore, it looks to me that there is negligence or no proper protocol to ensure that their clients get the jobs.

One might think that the agency did not want to take up on those responsibilities and left it to their clients. The agency should know that their clients may not have access to a computer or that their English level is still insufficient, which makes the clients unable to complete the application. What does this tell us? First, refugees who face a language barrier in their host countries may become victims of negligence, discrimination, and second, refugees from non-Western cultures maybe subject to intergroup conflict and identity-based conflict. Hocker and Wilmot define conflict as “an expressed struggle between at least two parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals” (2017 p.27). In order to understand why these three fundamental reasons (perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others) created the conditions for conflict, we need to unravel the driven force behind these conditions.

First, “perceive incompatible goals.” Culture is defined as the way one prays, eats, and loves. When it comes to the American culture, the white populist or Far-Right extremists viewed

it as being white and speaking English while others, like the evangelical Christians, viewed it as sharing the Anglo-Saxon values, speaking English, being Christian, and democracy. These values do not reflect the 2017 fiscal year of the U.S. refugees' population. In a 2017 Pew survey, the largest refugee population admitted to the U.S. came from the Democratic Republic of Congo with 9,377, followed by 6,886 refugees from Iraq (www.pewresearch.org). As one can see, those Western characteristics of "Whiteness, English language, Christianity, and the Anglo-Saxon values" are lacking in these refugees' profiles because they are non-white, Muslim, speak other languages, and governed under an authoritarian regime. While on the one hand, the U.S. refugees' aspiration is to integrate themselves and fulfill the American dream just like their counterpart white Americans, and on the other hand, these refugees viewed their cultures as ascribed and not something to be wiped out so to please the white populism.

Insofar, these differences have created the perceived incompatible goals, which prompted the election of Donald Trump because to some Far-Right movements such as the Nativist Populism Movement, "Islam is understood as an external and even existential threat to the American way of life" (Scribner, 2017). Moreover, a political advisor to Donald Trump, Michael Anton, publicized under the pseudonym of Publius that, "Islam and the modern West are incompatible," and that "when we welcome them en masse into our country they change us and not for the better" (Scribner, 2017, p.273). This intergroup conflict is reflected in Samuel Huntington's Clash of Civilizations theory. His argument is that, "The contemporary world is experiencing a series of fundamental conflicts that divide along cultural fault lines" (Scribner, 2017, p.270).

In this case, the cultural differences between the predominantly white American population and the refugee population represent an obstacle for these two groups to associate

themselves with. Therefore, the refugee cultural difference is seen as perceived incompatible goals, which prevent them to coexist in harmony. The white American population is in a state of fear that their religion and their way of life will be diminished or taken over by the refugee population. The refugee population also feel fear and persecution from the white American population over their safety and prosperity.

Second, “scarce resources.” Being one of the wealthiest nations like the U.S. does not make it immune to an economic recession. Indeed, in 2008, the U.S. economy experienced a fatal crash, which changed the life of the average white American, notably for the evangelical Christians. Indeed, “The average income for evangelical Christians today remains 1.6 percent lower than in 2007, and 2.4 percent lower than the high reached in the 1990s.” From this point, the narrative has been that one of the reasons the economy failed was the fact that the U.S. admitted the largest refugee population during the Obama administration, which has caused the job deficiency and therefore brought the economy down. As Scribner argues in her article, *You are Not Welcome Here Anymore: Restoring Support for Refugee Resettlement in the Age of Trump* that “A large majority of Trump supporters (80%) thought of immigrants as burdens on the economy because they take Americans’ jobs, healthcare, and housing” (Scribner, 2017, p.277). These Trump supporters whether the white populist or the evangelical Christian were in fear that their resources (jobs, incomes, religions) not only became limited but that they were also being undertaken by the massive refugee population who did not share their cultures.

Third, is the concept of interference. To remedy for the incompatible goals and scare resources felt by his millions of supporters, and to retaliate after the 2015 San Bernardino shooting by a radical Islamic extremist, which left 14 people dead and 21 injured; President Trump enacted in 2017 “his Executive Order No. 13,767 by suspending refugee admissions into

the United States and banning visitors from seven Muslim countries: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen” (McCleary & Chaudhry, 2017,p.525). Also, by revising “the annual refugee cap downward from 110,000 during President Obama’s final year to 50,000 in 2017, 45,000 in 2018, and 30,000 in 2019” (McCleary & Chaudhry, 2017, p.2/18). From this point, a preference for Christianity religion and female refugees have affected the U.S. refugee selection. Scholars Adida, Lo, & Platas, reveal through their 2016 survey that, “American public prefers Syrian refugees who are female, highly-skilled, English speakers, and Christian.” (Adida, Lo, & Platas, 2019, p.1/18).

The scholar Mark Hetfield discussed earlier that the refugee resettlement is “a payoff investment.” One can deduce that there is profit to be made from both sides and also that “there are evidence that the United States needs immigrants, both skilled and unskilled” (Agnew, 2019 p. 521). Thus, U.S. interference in blocking the refugee admittance is seen as a solution for the country to achieve financial stability. As one might see it as a way to limit certain religious groups or non-Western culture groups into the U.S., others see it as a way to prevent a culture clash or a culture take over. Samuel Huntington’s prediction after the Cold War that culture and religious identities will be the determinants of future conflicts may not have been baseless. Thus, in order to understand Samuel Huntington’s theory of the Clash of Civiizations, one needs to look beyond the conditions that lead to conflict with regard to theories such as social identity theory, social categorization theory, and social dominance theory to understand the driven force that leads people to conflict.

Social identity theorists Tajfel & Turner argue that individualism is powerless in regard to group memberships. To them, group membership is what defines every individual attitude and belief. Once an individual joins a group, his or her self-esteem is lost in favor of the collectivity.

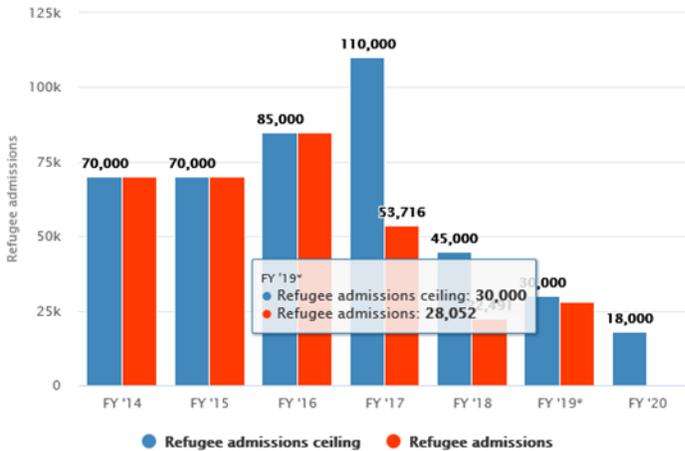
Therefore, people who belong to group membership are prone to differentiate themselves from other groups. Henceforth, this leads to two groups distinctions: the ingroup, and the outgroup (Oakes & Turner, 1980, p.295). In the case of the U.S., Christianity and the English language respectively are the strong hold of the white evangelical and the white populist.

Of these groups: the ingroup made up of Christians and nationalists viewed themselves as true Americans for sharing common beliefs and values such as the religion, the language, and the American rule of law. On the other hand, the outgroup represented by the refugees is seen as the “outcast” group who cannot be trusted because they do not share the same values as theirs. This kind of distrust towards refugees or Muslim foreigners, in general, can be traced back after September 11, 2001. This tragic attack, which caused the death of over 2,900 people, was the result of an Islamic terrorist attack. Since then, the Islam faith has not only been blamed as the “scapegoat” for the atrocity but also mistaken by some Americans as the religion of violence. McCleary & Chaudhry argue that “Anti-Muslim sentiment has waxed and waned in the decade following 9/11 and was recently triggered by the Syrian Civil War and refugee crisis” (McCleary & Chaudhry, 2017, p.523). As “Americans and Canadians became more suspicious of foreigners, and opposition to immigration” (Dovidio, 2013, p.6) this led to more animosity. As one can see categorizing people for what they are not, does amplify hate, discrimination, and exclusion towards the vulnerable Muslim refugees whose only fault is their religion and cultures. As scholar Petonio argues that, “Equating Islam with political violence and anti-Western sentiment has rendered Muslims particularly vulnerable to discrimination and stereotyping” (Monshipouri & Petonito, 1995, p. 775). Indeed, social categorization is not a new ideology. During World War II, Hitler used social categorization in Nazi Germany to denigrate and eradicate millions of Jews during the Holocaust in order to “protect the Christian German group”

(Coy & Woehrle, 2000, p. 20). Thus, Hitler asserted his claims that Nazi Germany had a “Jew problem” or “problem people” and by doing so, he has “selectively ignored the individual variation within the category and endeavor to convince people that all Jews not just a select few constituted a problem” (Coy & Woehrle, 2000, p. 20).

Today, in the U.S., we are witnessing the same kind of social categorization in President Trump’s speeches. President Trump asserts that “Refugees and other migrants from this part of the world could very easily be a “Trojan Horse” for America” (Scribner, 2017, p.265). Trump also speaks of current and past terrorist attacks such as the San Bernardino and 9/11. Instead, President Trump did not single out the individuals responsible for the attacks but he did use their religious background to generalize his social construct that refugees with a Muslim identity admitted to the U.S. are not “pacifier but threat” or “troublemakers” to the U.S. With the emergence of outgroup and ingroup, social dominance appears to reflect the power or control, or superiority which one group, the outgroup, uses to put pressure on the ingroup in order to control resources allocation, government institutions, and rule of law. As social dominance theorists Sidanius, Pratto, Colette, & Levin argue that, “Powerful individuals disproportionately allocate goods such as prestige, wealth, power, food, and health care to members of dominant and privileged groups, while directing undesirable things such as dangerous work, disdain, imprisonment, and premature death toward members of the less powerful groups” (2004, p.847).

The Trump administration reduced the refugees’ cap to 18,000, 80% lower than the Obama administration. This has not only reduced the services provided for the new refugees but he has also endangered the livelihoods of the resettlement agencies’ workers. This means that “Local offices rely, in part, on federal funds that are only disbursed when refugees arrive. Fewer arrivals, and thus fewer federal dollars” (pri.org).



Source: Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration

*Fiscal Year 2019 figures as of Aug. 31. The fiscal year ends Sept. 30, 2019

What does my field experience suggest about what is missing, or what is needed?

As this paper started out to identify the hidden realities of the U.S. refugee resettlement program, which centers around Trump’s DOS mandate of limited or interrupted English language, limited culture integration, limited education but most importantly the short-term in the 180 days self-sufficient mandate. We also learned that it shows that the DOS system is not entirely to blame but also the American public generosity that wants to be viewed by the rest of world as the country of second chance, diversity acceptance, and the fervent advocate of “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free” (Xu, 2007, p.38) .

Today, in the midst of all this what does a resettled individual or family most need?

Based on my internship, one thing is certainly clear, these vulnerable refugees as suggested by the international committee (UN) are people who witnessed tremendous physical and psychological trauma. Therefore, they cannot be pressured to attain self-sufficiency economically. As also mentioned earlier on in the paper, all refugees do not have the same strength or resiliency to adapt to a new country like the U.S. Demanding the DOS mandate on

them regardless of their ages or mental capability assurance shows mistreatment and human rights violation. For example, the case of a young refugee with his elderly parent was not spared by the mandate. The family was told that their only son needed to achieve self-sufficiency for his family by moving from his part-time job to a full-time job, which the son vowed never to do, even if it means going back to the country of his departure. Another case is a single mother of three who was also told that she needed to get a job because her matching grant money, which used to pay her rent, was running out and will not be there next month for her.

Lastly, the case of this refugee who tried so many times to reach his caseworker for his medical bills concerns but couldn't reach him, only to find out later that his caseworker is no longer his caseworker, and that he was assigned a new one. Well, what a resettled individual or family mostly needs is time. Time to become economically self-sufficient. Time to learn about their options and see what is best for them, and not to be told that they need to put their dreams and needs on hold to fulfill the DOS mandate, especially for those who want to pursue their education. Time to learn the language and culture so that their counterpart "white Americans will not express discomfort when they are around immigrants who do not speak English" (Scribner, 2017, p. 276), and time in not having to choose between attending their English classes and the mandate job, which most ending up choosing in order to acclimate with the protestant work ethics. As reported on some refugees' ESL (English as Second Language) touchpoints, those who showed a lesser ESL attendance were strongly advised to attend the classes but not pressured to attend in the case that they were working. In those cases, a note such as "client is currently working to justify his or her absence." Thus, giving them the ready jobs of the chicken factory jobs will not solve the self-sufficiency problem in the long term.

One might say that after exiting the program, the refugees now have a chance to go back to school or get a better job; however, what about the time and money wasted to ensure that they exited the program no matter what? As they exited the program, most of them have quit those jobs and came back to the agency to look for help for better opportunities or still depending on state welfare programs such as SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program). That time and money could have been invested to ensure that they obtained a proper skill or vocational job or proper ESL classes for those who are qualified to enter college. Henceforth, what does the U.S need to do to remedy these unmet needs?

The U.S. as a host country needs to show its allegiance to the vulnerable refugees, it vowed to protect from harm such as discrimination and unfairness. Using a few individuals to vilify an entire group based on their religion or culture is not what the U.S. stands for. As the country that advocates for equality, freedom, and pursuit of happiness, this is not quite the standard to those values held today by the Trump presidency. Even “the tradition of welcome among many Americans remains strong, even in the face of the parallel fear and disdain for ‘the other,’ which also has long and deep roots in American life” (Scribner, 2017, p.267). The U.S. has an opportunity to not repeat the European mistake of social categorization, exclusion, and nationalism. Rather a more diverse acceptance of ethnicity based on equality will allow for a return to its roots. A pro-active action to decolonize social work theory is necessary. As the authors argue, in their article Ethical Considerations For Social Workers Working with Muslim Refugees that the “world is inter-related and codependent, a questioning of crossing cultures is necessary, and that readdressing inequality will only happen in the face of solidarity and a commitment to addressing and critiquing Whiteness” (McCleary & Chaudhry, 2017, p.525). Meaning that “eliminating the binary of “black” and “white” (2017, p.525) by employing more

diverse religious social workers like Muslim social workers in leadership roles will help alleviate the bias.

After all, the U.S. is still the most diverse country in the world. Will the U.S. go back to its roots of diversity inclusion and integration or will it take on the Europeans ideology?

A 2016 survey showed that Europeans “prefer asylum-seekers with greater employability (higher-skilled) and who are Christian rather than Muslim” (Adida, Lo, & Platas, 2019, p.6/18); this means that “Americans and Europeans are similarly motivated by anti-Muslim bias” (Adida, Lo, & Platas, 2019, p.13/18). However, in the U.S.’s case, only a “small subset of the immigrants hate America compared to a significant number in France and England respectively who hate French and British values and cultures” (Halvorson, 2017, p. 251).

What does it mean for the U.S.?

Simply put, American values are still the core reason why those refugees would want to have a second chance in life because they know that they have a better chance of fighting not only for their lives but for their children’s future. Today, the country is home to the largest second-generation immigrant population, thanks to the refugees’ resilience and hard work.

Therefore, a refugee policy reform is necessary to reform the culture so that it will become “a us problem versus a them problem.” Lastly, maybe the U.S ought to look at its Canadian counterpart refugee program where it is not mandated with self-sufficiency within the 180 days rather a program “where refugees receive income and essential supports for up to 1 year through government support or private sponsorship” (Shaw & Funk, 2019, p. 2).

References

- Adida, C. L., Lo, A., & Platas, M. R. (2019). Americans preferred syrian refugees who are female, english-speaking, and christian on the eve of donald trump's election. *Plos One*, 14(10), e0222504. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0222504
- Agnew, J. (2019). The asymmetric border: The united states' place in the world and the refugee panic of 2018. *Geographical Review*, 109(4), 507-526. doi:10.1111/gere.12333
- Baxter, M. (2018). Bringing refugees from crisis to flourishing: The role of resettlement agencies and the church in facilitating integration and stability. *Social Work & Christianity*, 45(3), 19-34. Retrieved from <https://login.proxy.kennesaw.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=sih&AN=131273186&site=eds-live&scope=site>
- Boas, H. H. (2007). The new face of America's refugees: African refugee resettlement to the United States. *Georgetown Immigration Law Journal*, 21(3), 431-468.
- Bose, P. S. (2018). Welcome and hope, fear, and loathing: The politics of refugee resettlement in Vermont. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 24(3), 320-329. Doi:10.1037/pac0000302
- Butcher, Charity & Carter, Hallward. Maia (2020). Refugees and Migration. In D.Brandon., Lundy, Hayes & Sherrill W. Editor (Eds.) *Understanding International Conflict Management* (200-212) Unpublished Book. Routledge
- Bryant, J. (2008). State secret: North Carolina and the Cherokee trail of tears. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 47(2), 3. Retrieved from

<https://login.proxy.kennesaw.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.24398556&site=eds-live&scope=site>

Brown, A., & Scribner, T. (2014). Unfulfilled Promises, Future Possibilities: The Refugee Resettlement System in the United States. *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 2(2), 101–120. <https://doi.org/10.1177/233150241400200203>

Chiba, H. (2014). The role of the protestant church in the US refugee resettlement program during the early cold war era: The Methodist case *Exchange*, 43(1), 9.
Doi:10.1163/1572543X-12341300

Chiu, Allyson (October, 2019). Stunning in ugliness & tone’: Trump denounced for attacking Somali refugees in Minnesota. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/10/11/trump-somali-refugees-minneapolis-rally/>

Coy, Patrick.G., Woehrle, Lynne.M., Hovey, Michael. W., Hedeem, Timothy., & Dayton, Bruce. W. (Eds.). (2000). *Racial Discourse and Enemy Construction*. In Petonio, Gina (Ed.). *Social Conflicts and Collective Identities* (20-22). Plymouth, United Kingdom: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers

Darrow, J. (2015). The (re)construction of the U.S. department of state's reception and placement program by refugee resettlement agencies. *Journal of three Society for Social Work & Research*, 6(1), 91-119. doi:10.1086/680341

Dovidio, J. F. (2013). Bridging intragroup processes and intergroup relations: Needing the twain to meet. *The British Journal of Social Psychology*, 52(1), 1-24. doi:10.1111/bjso.12026

Eby, J., Iverson, E., Smyers, J., & Kekic, E. (2011). The Faith Community's Role in Refugee Resettlement in the United States, *Journal of Refugee Studies*. Volume 24, Issue 3, September 2011, Pages 586–605, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fer038>

Glover, K. (2019). Risk analysis in refugee resettlement. *Duke Journal of Comparative & International Law*, 29(2), 307-334. Retrieved from <https://login.proxy.kennesaw.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=137010481&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

Gonzalez Benson, O., & Panaggio Taccolini, A. (2019). "Work is worship" in refugee policy: Diminution, deindividualization, and valuation in policy implementation. *Social Service Review*, 93(1), 26-54. doi:10.1086/702182

Halvorson, George.C (2017). *The Art of Intergroup Peace*. Columbia: SC. Institute for Intergroup Understanding.

Harrigan, W. J., & Lamport Commons, M. (2015). Replacing maslow's needs hierarchy with an account based on stage and value. *Behavioral Development Bulletin*, 20(1), 24-31. doi:10.1037/h0101036

Hauck, F. R., Lo, E., Maxwell, A., & Reynolds, P. P. (2014). Factors influencing the acculturation of Burmese, Bhutanese, and Iraqi refugees into American society: Cross-cultural comparisons. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 12(3), 331-352. doi:10.1080/15562948.2013.848007

Hocker, Joyce L., Wilmot, William W, (2018). *Interpersonal Conflict*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Education.

- Karas, Tania. (2019). US refugee agencies wither as Trump administration cuts numbers to historic lows. Retrieved from <https://www.pri.org/stories/2019-09-27/us-refugee-agencies-wither-trump-administration-cuts-numbers-historic-lows>
- Kia-Keating, M., & Ellis, B. H. (2). (2007). Belonging and connection to school in resettlement: Young refugees, school belonging, and psychosocial adjustment. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 12(1), 29-43. doi:10.1177/1359104507071052
- Koyama, Jill (2013) Resettling notions of social mobility: locating refugees as ‘educable’ and ‘employable’, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 34:5-6, 947-965, DOI: 10.1080/01425692.2013.816033
- Koyama, J. (2015). Learning English, working hard, and challenging risk discourses. *Policy Futures in Education*, 13(5), 608-620. Retrieved from <https://login.proxy.kennesaw.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1066870&site=eds-live&scope=site>
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1478210315579547>
- Koyama, Jill. (2017). For refugees, the road to employment in the united states is paved with workable uncertainties and controversies. *Sociological Forum*, 32(3), 501-521. doi:10.1111/socf.12346
- Lewton, P. (2016). From the mouth of a shark: refugee resettlement and the need for procurement contracts. *Public Contract Law Journal*, 46(1), 189-208. Retrieved from <https://login.proxy.kennesaw.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1863551593?accountid=11824>

- McCleary, J. S., & Chaudhry, S. (2017). Ethical considerations for social workers working with muslim refugees. *Social Work in Public Health*, 32(8), 521-528.
doi:10.1080/19371918.2017.1373720
- Monshipouri, M., 1952-, & Petonito, G. (1995). Constructing the enemy in the post-cold war era: The flaws of the “Islamic conspiracy” theory Retrieved from
<https://login.proxy.kennesaw.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=hsi&AN=509567178&site=eds-live&scope=site>
- Oakes, P. J., & Turner, J. C. (1980). No title. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 10(3), 295-301. doi:10.1002/ejsp.2420100307
- Radford, Jynnah. (November, 2017). How U.S. refugee resettlement in each state has shifted since 2002. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/11/02/how-u-s-refugee-resettlement-shifted-in-states-since-2002>
- Rubinstein-Avila, E. (2016). Immigrant and refugee students across “Receiving” nations: To what extent can educators rely on PISA for answers? *Clearing House*, 89(3), 7984.
doi:10.1080/00098655.2016.1168350
- Scribner, T. (2017). You are not welcome here anymore: Restoring support for refugee resettlement in the age of trump. *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, (2)
doi:10.14240/jmhs.v5i2.84
- Shaw, Stacey A; Funk, Mallory (2019). A Systematic Review of Social Service Programs Serving Refugees. *Research on social work practice* Vol.29(8), p.847-862 DOI:
10.1177/10497315188244

- Sherman, D. K., Brookfield, J., & Ortosky, L. (2017). Intergroup conflict and barriers to common ground: A self-affirmation perspective. *Social & Personality Psychology Compass*, 11(12), N.PAG. doi:10.1111/spc3.12364
- Utržan, D., Wieling, E., & Piehler, T. (2019). A needs and readiness assessment of the united states refugee resettlement program: Focus on Syrian asylum-seekers and refugees. *International Migration*, 57(1), 127-144. doi:10.1111/imig.12479
- Wong, E. C., Marshall, G. N., Schell, T. L., Berthold, S. M., & Hambarsoomians, K. (2015). Characterizing the mental health care of US Cambodian refugees. *Psychiatric Services*, 66(9), 980-984. doi: 10.1176/appi.ps.201400368
- Weddle, D. B. (2018). An American tune: Refugee children in U.S public schools. *Kansas Journal of Law Public Policy*, 27(3), 434-456.
- Xu, Q. (2007). A child-centered refugee resettlement program in the United States. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 5(3), 37-59. Doi:10.1300/J500v05n03_03