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Ayfer Hurmuzlu

Ayfer Hurmuzlu, aabedaljabar@clarku.edu

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Refugee Self Organization in Lowell, MA: The Effects of Organizations on Refugees

Author: Ayfer Hurmuzlu

May 2017

A Master's Paper Submitted to the faculty of Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the department of International Development and Community Environment

And accepted on the recommendation of Anita Fabos, Chief Instructor

Abstract

Refugee Self Organization: the Effects of Organizations on Refugees

The following abstract will introduce research conducted to find how incoming refugees integrate themselves into American societies through the aid of organizations. The paper was divided into two main questions: 1. How do refugees self organize themselves upon arrival to a new country? 2. How do organizations help them transition into integration? The paper is serves to define ways that refugees integrate into new environments. The research was collected through conducting interviews to organizations that serve refugee communities. The findings presented in this paper were defined through a collection of the main themes from the interviews that were provided by executive directors and leaders of the five organizations. Themes such as leadership, teamwork, collaboration, and supporting and cooperative board members were derived from the interviews.

Anita Fabos , Ph.D. Chief Instructor

Robert Zarges, Ph.D. Assistant Professor

ACADEMIC HISTORY

Name: Ayfer Hurmuzlu

Date: May 2017

Baccalaureate Degree: College of Law

Source: Mosul University

Date: 2001

Other degrees, with dates and sources: N/A

Occupation and Academic Connection since date of baccalaureate degree:

Occupation: Culture Advisor at Lowell Community Health Center, Case Manager at, Interpreter at Catholic Charity, Community Support Program CSP Worker Massachusetts Behavioral Partnership, Consultant in Domestic Violence, Arabic Consultant at Health Resources in Action, Case Worker at Ascentria Care Alliance.

Academic Connection: Clark University Masters Program

Dedication:

To my three daughters, and my mother

Thank you for all the support you have given me through this journey.

Acknowledgments:

I would like to thank Cheryl Hamilton Director for Partner Engagement at International Institute of New England and professor Anita Fabos for both your support of this research and for your guidance through this. I would like to thank Dr.Robb Zarges as the second reader of this research.

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Introduction:

As the refugee crisis increases, there are more arrivals of refugees that have to resettle in the US or a host country. As reviewed and studied in this paper, the introduction of organizations to the US began post World War II after the end of Jewish expulsion from Europe. The US has become home to more than 3 million refugees as they seek refuge. As a nation, the US has significantly outstanding to provide refugees with proper resources to aid them in resettlement. In Lowell, Massachusetts, the agency that has the initial responsibility for resettling refugees who are part of the federal resettlement program is called the International Institutes of New England. The IINE has an ongoing relationship with a number of self-help organizations founded by refugees themselves. With the support of Cheryl Hamilton, the Director of Programs in IINE's Lowell Office, this study was conducted to learn more about the pathways and barriers to refugee community self-help.

This paper addresses the following questions, which lays the guidelines of the following paper:

How do refugees self organize themselves upon arrival to a new country?

How do self-help organizations help them transition into integration?

The question is broken up into two parts and serves as the main research question of the paper. The questions were derived from wanting to understand how refugees resettle when arriving to the United States and how they are able to through the aid of various organizations.

There are many different types of refugees from around the world. A *refugee* is defined as one that flees; *especially* : a person who flees to a foreign country or power to escape danger or persecution according to Merriam-Webster's dictionary. An immigrant is: one that immigrates: such as :a person who comes to a country to take up permanent residence. According to the United Nations nearly 4% of the world's population is made up of immigrants as they make up 244 million of the world's population. The Russian Federation is the leading country in hosting immigrants (11.0 million), Germany following closely behind at 9.8 million, and Saudi Arabia (9.1 million). While Europe hosts the most immigrants, refugees are often being displaced as over 65 million have been displaced worldwide.

For refugee newcomers, successful refugee resettlement depends on the extent of ways they could attempt to integrate themselves through cooperation through the programs and services provided to them. Receiving outside resources from organizations is an excellent way to begin transitioning into American life including conducting your own methods of integration. To retrieve the answers to my hypothesis I conducted interviews with 5 organization leaders who work with newcomers all in Massachusetts. I met with 5 non-profit organization leaders with different but similar missions to guide their people into American lives. The organizations all reflected a different culture but provide services that help newcomers the same. The ideas are very informative to providing an understanding of the research questions. Refugees being placed in new environment are being placed in these programs to promote self guidance and boost the positive outlook for refugees as well as allow them to have access to different types of resources that they wouldn't if they were on their own. I start by stating policies on refugees, and continue to explain different methods of resettlement new refugees use to integrate. As the paper

continues, I begin to introduce the research questions which is split up into two parts in the Section 2 includes the literature review which was conducted on the different types of support organizations provide for refugees. Following the literature review I later describe the organizations that were interviewed and continue to list the ways that refugees organize themselves. Section 3 includes various aspects of what makes up an organization., I conclude the paper with recommendations and remaining opinions/problems unsolved. I concluded the paper by stating the results that were received from the outcome of the study.

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Literature Review

The following literature review is written to address the history and importance of refugee and immigrant based organizations. The sources that were collected provided an understanding of how refugees organize themselves more specifically how organizations help refugee and immigrant communities. The literature aims to explain a broad reorganization

process that is performed by refugees through adaptation, assimilation, and integration. Refugees have resettled in the United States for years. The United States is the largest resettlement station for immigrants and refugees in the world. The organizations are established to provide refugees and immigrants services that will help them integrate as well as provide them with basic care. Externally the community receives outside help or advice from someone who is assimilated to the American culture. This person's views guide them into integration but at the same time preserve their culture because they will learn what to keep and what to adopt as their own. There has been limited study on the way refugees reorganize themselves in the United States but also prominent evidence that it has happened before due to all the groups and organizations formed through communities.

The articles included all focus on certain types of organizations. Many of them provide resources that indicate that the more a refugee is assisted by a resource they are able to integrate much more successfully than those who attempt to do it on their own. A main reason for this is because refugees are placed in an unfamiliar environment and can very well cause confusion and misguided decisions. Confiding in resources from organizations and associations is a more effective way to gain better access to a more successful organization into society. The article shows that refugees that have been hosted by an organization or a group have been more successful in finding sources like employment and housing. As for refugees and immigrants arriving with little to no assistance in the United States have trouble making connections with outside sources and understanding the system on their own.

The research presented through the articles relates with the presence of community support. The reliability on organizations also exposes refugees to lack of experience when they

are finished being aided by an organization. There is a large controversy on the effects of organizations that assist refugees when they first arrive. Many think that once refugees stop participating in a program their resources are limited because their case manager has done everything for them. Others believe that the presence of an organization is vital because it introduces them to all their basic needs and leads them to access better housing and employment. The articles state that both theories can be supported with substantial evidence but further to note that refugee's success stories have been based off their enrollment in an organization or their establishment of such. The participation of an outside source in a newcomer's life is important for exposure to the rest of the community to show the refugee that he or she isn't alone. Communities form through the existence of continual gathering and support towards each other. Continual reliance on a specific idea or goal aids refugees tremendously. For example, the reliance on faith based organizations leads to the discussion by Eby, Iverson, Smyres, and Kekic who focus on faith-based organizations specifically. The article shows how churches around the United States have contributed to the development of faith-based organizations. According to the article, FBOs have contributed to resettling 70 percent of refugees that have arrived in the US today. The authors claim that a main part of refugee resettlement through FBOs is based on open support from churches and federal programs. Through many FBOs churches have been hosting refugees and providing them with services. These services preserve the culture that refugees hold with them but also help integration into American society.

A special service that is provided to refugees is co-hosting by a family. When a refugee is co-hosted, their transition into American society is more successful than refugees who resettle on their own. The study was conducted through a series of interviews and statements from refugees

who have been serviced by FBOs and how it has further helped their integration. One of the major findings of the article is that FBOs have played a key role in the integration of refugees and immigrants. An over emphasis of how employment is a large part of integration proves that when these refugees are being employed they are being placed in an environment where they can connect with people who aren't necessarily from their own community. Faith based organizations help refugees feel a sense of connection to each other and themselves because they share a common faith or belief. Other forms of resettlement for refugees include Mutual Assistance Associations which originally started when large groups of Indochinese refugees began arriving as stated by Donald A. Ranard. The associations that were being formed began as "informal gatherings for social, cultural, and spiritual purposes" like other immigrant and refugee groups.

Stephanie J. Nawyan's comparison of faith-based organizations and non-governmental organizations are compared in her article *Faith, Ethnicity, and Culture in Refugee Resettlement* gives a good insight on Ranard's views of FBO's because she concludes that organizations don't play a major role on the religious activities but Ranard believes otherwise. Her article contradicts Ranard's views after her findings of the two research questions in which she proposes:

Research Question 1: How do FBOs and secular NGOs differ in how they resettle refugees?

Research question 2: How does the religion of refugees affect resettlement? MAAs changed into associations that served specific groups like women, veterans, or a community of a certain ethnicity or culture. Ranard then reviews the six different kinds of Mutual Assistance Associations. Cultural preservation and social activities, resettlement/social services, religious services, special constituency groups, business economic development, and advocacy and

political action groups are what most MAA's around the country can be categorized into. Mutual Assistance Associations provide refugees with resources that can allow them to organize into their own type of community whether it is based off culture, similar views, or race.

A different debate within the articles is why immigrants receive benefits by their attachment to ethnic communities and ethnic organizations in an article by Brendan Mullen and Lorraine Majka titled *Ethnic Communities and Ethnic Organizations Reconsidered: South-East Asians and Eastern Europeans in Chicago*. Their debate is led by the study of a large body of literature that provides evidence that suggests that ethnic organizations provide refugees with opportunities to assimilate and adapt. Their argument against the topic is that it slows adaptation because institutions are less accessible to immigrants because of this. On one side of the controversy, a large body of literature suggests that the ethnic community, which often contains resources that promote immigrants' adaptation and assimilation, actually hinders adaptation because the resources of mainstream institutions are less accessible to immigrants (often because they are also minorities). The opposing side of the argument states that many people emphasize the positive effects of ethnic communities and ethnic organizations on immigrant populations, while ignoring many of the negative consequences. The purpose of this article is to reconsider whether ethnic communities and ethnic institutions aid immigrants' socio-economic adaptation. The study is conducted on a Metropolitan area in Chicago during the 1980's to analyze a group of Southeast asians and groups of Eastern Europe arriving that were being assisted by organizations. The data is collected through in a statewide refugee database of refugees resettling in the Illinois Refugee System. Main variables of the study are the place of residence, gender, education, and proficiency level.

One source included in this literature review's findings were inconclusive to the topic as it analyzed in an extensive qualitative collection of data on the Vietnamese community in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The author concludes that the community is ultimately non-existent. The inefficient process of community formation has been neglected in this Vietnamese community making it difficult to gather much information except coming to a conclusion that the community never was able to form or conduct themselves in a group manner. The study was done over a 3 year period through observation and interviews. The study is an example of a community that lacked the resources and necessary people to form a community bond. Stated above is an example of another contradiction of the remainder of the authors that organizations affect the development of refugees by hindering them because they received no help from a refugee led-organization and there was no effort to establish one.

Overall, this literature review has discussed the importance of organization introduction to refugees and how it has helped them or harmed them. The authors have contributed to each other's ideas through the debates and key ideas. The information helped to obtain how refugees accommodate to their new living styles through organizations. The research indicates that although there are factors that show organizations may be holding refugees development back, the research from this research paper and the literature review concludes that refugee integration and reorganization into a society is very much needed.

History and Context:

As the history of refugee resettlement develops and increases it all began when the U.S. Congress established the first refugee legislation in 1948 following the admission of more than

250,000 displaced Europeans that were affected by the violence of World War II. This legislation aided for the admission of an additional 400,000 displaced Europeans. Later laws provided for admission of persons fleeing Communist regimes, largely from Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia, Korea and China, and in the 1960s Cubans fleeing from Fidel Castro arrived to the United States. Most of these refugees were assisted by private ethnic and religious organizations in the United States which lay the foundation for organizational systems today.

The fall of Vietnam in 1975 created a large issue of where to resettle them in the US, causing the creation of a task force and temporary funding. Following the poorly timed procedure, Congress decided to pass a law called The Refugee Act of 1980, which lay the basic guidelines of the admission of refugees. Since 1975, the U.S. has resettled more than 3 million refugees, with almost 77 percent being either Indochinese or citizens of the former Soviet Union. Since the enactment of the Refugee Act of 1980, annual admissions figures have ranged from a high of 207,116 in 1980, to a low of 27,100 in 2002.

An excellent example of a community forming is through the Polish community that was formed in 1899 and is possibly one of the earliest established associations in the US. The Polish community was established when the Poles started having significant population in Salem, Ma according to the National Parks Service (NPS). The neighborhood association was formed through the St. Joseph Hall. The hall was important to Poles because it served as their identity and provided them with a space of common ground. As the development of the community increased they built a Polish Catholic Parish that they used for gatherings. It was considered a vital establishment in the Polish community living there. The development of the Pole community is not only a successful formation of a neighborhood association on Derby St, but is

an example of how organizations and communities form as the refugees attempted to organize themselves into a group where they felt included into society. Refugees form communities over-time. There has been proof of refugee community bonding through the many organizations that have a mission to provide refugees with services. Many stories have emerged of successful and failed attempts to form a community and bond it for better purposes. The formation of the Cambodian community in July 1984 in Lowell, Ma, was established to help the influx of refugees coming from Cambodia. At the time, there were not many organizations that were helping the income of refugees, and the federal funding that went to help this organization was a big factor. The lack of Cambodian refugees led to things changing and the agency was molded into what it needs to be today. The agency helps create leaders, gives settlers more opportunities. It helps settlers not only be an individual living in the community, but it also helps individuals be a part of the community. The Cambodian helped more than 30,000 Cambodian refugees and continues trying its best to continue to serve more Cambodians in need of services. The importance of finding a community gives a sense of belonging to refugees so they can feel like they are part of something.

Different types of Organizations explored:

Refugee self-organizing has taken various forms including the establishment of organizations including Nonprofit Organizations (NPOs), Faith Based Organizations (FBOs), which are organizations whose values are based on faith and/or beliefs, which have a mission based on social values of the particular faith, and which most often draws its activists (leaders, staff, volunteers) from a particular faith group, and Mutual Assistance Associations (MAAs),

which are ethnic-based association that provides support for certain groups of people. The relationship between the different types of organizations is that they provide similar services to refugees and are established to serve refugees in need. The five organizations that I worked with were all non profit organizations, serving refugee communities in Lowell, Ma.

Overview of Refugee Self-help Organizations:

There are hundreds of different types of services provided to refugees through their host organization. Services include hosting them and providing them with housing from the moment they arrive. The organizations that were interviewed in the following paper are examples of different types of services. The organizations are focused on many different types of cultures and ethnicities as well as providing refugees with services within the programs they provide. Most refugee resettlement organizations and agencies provide refugees with basic care, including job placement and English Language classes. Many programs have events that empower youth and women to welcome them and help them classify themselves into part of something rather than a resettled refugee.

The following section will aim to define the findings of the research. The first research question is organized by what methods refugees use to integrate themselves into a new society. The second portion of the question is focused on the organizations and how they serve the community. The organization of newcomer refugees is achieved ultimately through gathering and teamwork. Findings further support the idea of uniting through the interviews conducted through the organization leaders. Many of them stated that they felt that their organization

couldn't exist without teamwork and cooperation from both the community and the leaders. How do refugees reorganize themselves upon arrival to a new country?

Forming a community/common base

Refugees form communities as a means of reorganizing themselves. Often refugees are in need of someone who shares a common ground with them. Refugees have formed communities over the same interest for years. These communities can be based off ethnicity, race, or similar views. In the past, as refugee development progressed in the United States communities started forming. Whether it was through neighborhood gatherings, or through gatherings of a particular group or community.

Religion

Religion has played a key role in helping the resettlement of refugees. As refugees come together over their religion it increases the establishment of Faith-Based Organizations. Faith based organization has increased upon the arrival of many Muslim refugees in the United States. Religion encourages gatherings in popular religious places. As refugees participate in any form of worship they are forming a bond with each other and setting a place where they are forming a community bond. The evidence can be concluded through many statements of the interviewees including myself. An interview with an Asian organization indicated that a majority of gatherings would occur at religious places such as temples, mosques, and churches. As religious beliefs have decreased around the world, refugees and immigrants rely on religion and faith to help them feel connected to a group and themselves.

Specific grouping

Groups that are formed by specific types of people are a prominent way that refugees reorganize. Groups of veterans, women, and youth have emerged to form their own groups. The uniting of these specific groups whether it is within their own community or a separate way to gather they are forming a subcommunity that makes them feel important.

Self empowerment

Self empowerment is promoted in refugee and immigrant communities as they attempt to integrate. Lack of empowerment leads to discouragement to try to learn things such as English, or the diversity of other cultures that they interact with everyday. Many programs encourage refugees and attempt to provide them with resources that will help self-empowerment. A program named the Refugee & Immigrant Self-Empowerment (RISE) which is formerly known as the Somali Bantu Community Association (SBCA) is a great example of a program. Founded in 2004 by Somali Bantu refugees to ease the transition to resettlement in a new environment the organization began in a small homework group at one of the homes of the members. They are committed to assist the diverse refugee and immigrant communities in Onondaga County. Their program is targeted to promote self-sufficiency through employment, education, and economic empowerment. These are great examples of further self empowerment as employment, income, and education can make a refugee or immigrant feel like they belong into a part of society. This is one of the most important aspects of the findings because it is a way not only to settle into a new home in a different environment, but clear their head of any lingering regrets or sadness about being displaced from their home country.

Refugee and immigrants arrive to a new country after being either forced to flee or displaced. The idea that they may not be able to return to their home is a difficult notion for most of them. It is especially difficult to deal with mental issues or physical issues that may have developed due to the persecution or events they experience. Statements of refugees have been collected through the Huffington Post's article titled "Refugees Discuss the Most Difficult Part of Living in America". Refugee Mostafa Kanjou's story is told through the article. He lived and loved his life in Syria. His family owned a furniture business in the city of Homs which is located in Syria's largest province. He currently lives in Pomona, California in his new apartment. Everything changed for him in 2011 when he and many thousand Syrian refugees marched in the street demanding for a change. The march was responded to by the Syrian government violently opening fire on them. He states that "I saw with my own eyes the killing of the civilians who were protesting and calling for change from the police force and the military force, they were brutally shot right in front of my eyes". According to the Huffington Post, only 1,500 Syrian refugees have been accepted into the United States following the start of the Syrian War. Mostafa Kanjou represents one of the 0.3% of the nearly 4 million refugees that have fled Syria that arrived in the United States. He was one of the lucky Syrian families that passed the screening process and accepted. Since arriving in the United States, Kanjou and his family have moved out of temporary housing into an apartment. Kanjou has secured a job as a construction worker, along with healthcare and benefits. His daughters are enrolled in the local school. But according to the family, the refugee resettlement process in the U.S. has not provided the help and support they hoped for. "Unfortunately these agencies are treating us are pretty badly because they penalize us for any minor thing. Any paperwork they don't have or any tiny

mistake and they will deduct from our financial benefits. That really interrupts the development of our rebuilding process.”

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is a large factor in not only his story, but much of other refugees that leave their homes. A main factor that fuels his illness is when government officials burst into his home without permission and he tried to confront them. In response, he was dragged from his home and taken to prison in front of his wife, his mother, and two very young daughters. His family received no information about where they were keeping him or if he would be released. Kanjou doesn't want to disclose the location of his captivity in fear of retribution against him or his family according to his interview. He spent 45 days in a three-by-three meter cell he shared with 25 other men. There were no beds or toilets, and the guards tortured and humiliated the men, insulting their families, withholding their mail, starving them, and beating them. He doesn't like to remember what happened in the jail due to all the torture he experienced. He rushed to Jordan after being released, leaving his family in Damascus. After establishing himself, he sent for his family but his wife and daughters were turned away at the border but were eventually allowed to cross. His situation is one of many that presents PTSD due to the traumatic events he underwent.

Mediterranean”, Washington Post)

Refugee Self-Help Organizations in Lowell, MA

This section addresses the question, “How do organizations help refugees and immigrants transition into integration?” in the context of refugee organizations in Lowell, MA. Here I review the different organizations that were interviewed and a brief definition of each. The organizations all aim to provide new refugees with the best care to the fullest of their ability. The organizations

interviewed were mainly non-profit, they gave answers to the interview questions providing an understanding to the research question. The methodology and background will provide an understanding of inputs of the leaders of the organizations and how the research was conducted.

Methodology

Five organization leaders were interviewed in Massachusetts. Interviews from organization leaders provide a vital in-depth understanding of how some refugees and immigrants managed their organizations and shows the amount of impact it has imposed on refugees and immigrants in need of assistance.

The five organizations that were interviewed included Asian organizations, a Bosnian organization and an association that consisted of a dance group to spread culture to the Cambodian youth. Many of the organizations that were interviewed have the a similar vision to fulfill the needs of every community that they serve the only difference is that they're adjusted to the best interests of their community needs. They aspire to serve their community by preserving their culture and allowing them to understand different ways they can begin or continue integration into their communities.

The following section will review the different types of organizations that were interviewed and a brief definition of each.

The five organizations that were interviewed included Asian organizations, a Bosnian organization and an association that consisted of a dance group to spread culture to the Cambodian youth. Many of the organizations that were interviewed have the a similar vision to fulfill the needs of every community that they serve the only difference is that they're adjusted to

the best interests of their community needs. They aspire to serve their community by preserving their culture and allowing them to understand different ways they can begin or continue integration into their communities. The organization of newcomer refugees is achieved ultimately through gathering and teamwork. Findings further support the idea of uniting through the interviews conducted through the organization leaders. Many of them stated that they felt that their organization couldn't exist without teamwork and cooperation from both the community and the leaders.

The interviews were conducted through a system composed of five simple questions to ask the organization leaders as follows:

- 1) Why did you start the organization?
- 2) What has been the biggest challenge? When have you felt the most success?
- 3) How does your organization interact with either mainstream organizations or other mutual assistance association? Where did you see the most success?
- 4) When do you find your personal identity to be a benefit and/or obstacle either with people of your nationality or others?
- 5) What have you learned about straddling two cultures (former and US) as a community leader?

Background of organizations and people interviewed:

Bosnian Community Center:

The Bosnian Community Center in Lynn, Ma is directed by Dr. Adnan Zubcevic, Executive Director. The mission/vision for the Bosnian Community Center in Lynn, MA is

committed to immigrant and refugee advocacy. According to Dr. Zubcevic they strive to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services to refugees and immigrants who have resettled in the Greater Boston area. They aim to support and empower refugees as they rebuild their lives in the United States of America and help them become able participants in all facets of American life. The executive director aspires to protect and serve Bosnians that arrive in Massachusetts. A main method that he used to bond the community is throwing parties for Bosnians in Concord to allow the Bosnian community to meet and become friendlier with each other. His biggest challenge is that his organization was one of the first to be established as a mutual assistance association so he acquired difficulties on structuring and following a guideline for the construction of his newfound organization.

African American Community Center:

The African American Community Center is a new but aspiring project that aims to have the immigrant's voice heard. Gordon Halem, executive director for the center, aims to have a voice and represent his community. His challenges were that choosing the people that were going to receive aid from the organization. The organization is partnered with many resources for refugees such as International Institute, the CTI, Eastern Bank, the PACA Foundation in Boston, The Lowell Community Health Center, and Lowell Public Schools. As a leader he believes that you must be able to listen to other people's opinions which is an important trait to have in the success of his organization. His organization interacts with other mutual assistance associations through a coalition which he created around the time that organizations like that started becoming more popular. The mission of the African American Community Center is to help adults and children and families from this community to be active in the city of Lowell,

have a place where Africans can look for information, help African children improve their self-esteem and their self-image, decrease drug use, smoking, drinking, STDs, violence and abuse in the African community.

Angkor Dance Troupe:

The Cambodian organization was begun to preserve Cambodian culture and heritage through Cambodian performing arts. It's executive director, Dahvy Tran, aims to recollect Cambodian culture through the arts and passes it to the youth so they can keep a piece of their culture. Holding a unique way to bond the community through the arts. In 1986 Tim Thou and a group of Cambodian refugees with a passion for Khmer performing arts came together in Lowell, Massachusetts with the sole purpose to revive a culture once almost lost. As the heart of the Cambodian Community, the Angkor Dance Troupe is nationally recognized as one of the most accomplished and experienced U.S. - based Cambodian traditional arts organizations. People remember Cambodia as a place of genocide, death, and sadness, and the organization aims to show that the culture of Cambodia can bring light and peace upon the grief that is labeled on the country. Their mission is to connect communities through preservation, education, and innovation of Cambodian performing arts. A challenge was bridging the gap between the youth and adults since their views were difficult to agree on. The co-founders of the organizations came from different generations and did not agree on the same values. Everyone brought different values to the table which made it difficult to agree on one. It is challenging because the dancers are younger and the founders are older making some of the value differences difficult to conclude on. An example they aim to set was that people take everything for granted and they aim to make younger people understand that you cannot think in that mindset.

Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association:

The Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association was started in July 1984 in Lowell, MA, it was established to help the influx of refugees coming from Cambodia. At the time, there were not many of organizations that were helping the income of refugees, and the federal funding that went to help this organization was a big factor. The executive director, Sovanna Pouv, has aided refugees until the decline of Cambodian refugees entering the United States has made the increase of the The agency helps create leaders, and gives settlers more opportunities. It helps settlers not only be an individual living in the community, but it also helps individuals be a part of the community. The federal funding was a huge challenge for the agency. Back in 2010, Cambodia wasn't considered a war country anymore. When other organizations were formed and became their own entities the Cambodian mutual assistance attempted to look for ways to collaborate with other organizations. They work with other agencies to see how we can partner and bring the resources to the people. With non-profit organizations, it can be helpful to the community, but it can also be very competitive. Instead of competing with the other communities, they decided to put their ideas together and find the best way to provide the community with these resources that they are in need of. As they attempt to incorporated American culture into Cambodian culture it gives them a unique aspect of successful integration into American society. They started this organization not to empower political views, but to help the people that are in need of help. Another challenge they faced was criticism but try to overcome it by being patient and continuing to work hard. The impact that the program has put through this work begins to show through the people.

Iraqi-American Community Center:

As the director of the Iraqi-American Community Center I realized there was a need for a place that incoming Iraqi's could call home. It was established to provide a variety of services to the Iraqi refugees to prepare them to integrate into American society. The Iraqi community needed to be united under a symbol so they would feel at home in a new environment. After the 2003 war, people fled their homes and miss their culture, food, and traditions they experienced in their homeland and they needed an example of it reincorporated into their lives. There were endless challenges to establishing the program. Gathering refugees and bringing the community together after they've experienced war was a major challenge. Everyone was in their own specific group. Another challenge was that the existence of Iraqi refugees was very unfamiliar and newly introduced in the United States so there was a very limited amount of well educated people that understood the aspects involved in decision making with an organization. Funding was a major issue, there was no grants to aid the organization so there had to be a created partnership with Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association to gain a grant. The most success was when people from the community started to come to the center and the feeling of providing services to them and others offering to volunteer.

There was a partnership with One Lowell, the Lowell Community health center, the city management, People for Peace, and the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association. The interactions provided hope for the organization. The most success with interacting with other communities was when it was transferred to the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association because it allowed for expansion. After relocation, the program was able to provide further

services such as English Second Language programs(ESL), community services, donation distributions, connect people to more resources.

People of the same nationality will most likely understand each other's values and traditions making it easier to connect with each other. Beneficial aspects from people of a different nationality is that my personal identity allowed me to bridge a gap between the Iraqi individual and the American individual considering myself an Iraqi-American. Obstacles with people from my own nationality was that being from the same community and speak the same language but have different religious beliefs which had two different views on religion. It was difficult to allow the two groups to bond when they didn't want to. There were no obstacles towards people outside the community because they just wanted to be introduced to the culture.

Findings

The following section will explore the findings of the research question. The themes derived from the interviewees are vital to understanding the research question. The interviewees, including myself, provided an in depth understanding of the question by providing their input of the experiences they had. The leaders shared many similarities, one of the only differences being that they served different communities and cultures. The interviewees came from different backgrounds and cultures, allowing different types of ways that refugee integration has occurred through the arrival of new refugees.

As theme development progressed in the interviews, there was a prominent mention of leadership. Since the organization cannot exist if there are no leaders, there must be someone fit for the job so the organization can become successful. Leadership includes listening to the opinions of the community so they do not feel that there is a division between the leader and

their people. A leader must still be part of the community but be able to help in certain situations and provide support to refugees. Refugee communities uniting is a major example of empowerment, allowing refugees to define themselves as part of something in a new environment. The forming of a community is also important because the people in the community share the same values and traditions while also living in a new environment and integrating a new part of society into their lives as they start their lives in a new country.

For the organization leaders, a majority stated that a leader must accept criticism and have enough knowledge and experience to become a leader. Sovanna Pouv stated that, “Being patient and respectful is a huge part of this role. Criticism is always there, no matter how hard you work. Being patient and continuing to work hard. The impact that we put through this work begins to show through the people. I have never said anything negative about anyone in the community even though they have said something about me.” As all the organization leaders also stated that leadership training and skills must be developed through training to become a successful organization leader. Appreciation is strong in some communities but other communities are reluctant to accept a new leader or accept help as found in some of the organizations. For example, one leader had to shut down her organization because her community would not accept that there was a woman to provide them with help. Some communities have higher expectations for who they can receive services from. Another community leader said that his community “welcomed him with open arms”. The differences between the communities can be due to different cultural beliefs which act as a barrier between the organization leader and the community or people themselves.

The organizations that I met with, including my own, all were collaborated with establishments and service centers around the city such as hospitals, banks, and schools. Many of the organization leaders felt that without the cooperation of the other resources in Lowell, that their organization would not be able to provide many of the services they are capable of providing. Sovanna Pouv, the executive director of the Angkor Dance Troupe provided an explanation of the need of collaborative resources in the city by stating that “The organization looks for ways to collaborate with other organizations. We work with other agencies to see how we can partner and bring the resources to the people. With non-profit organizations, it can be helpful to the community, but it can also be very competitive. Instead of competing with the other communities, we put our ideas together and find the best way to provide the community with these resources that they are in need of. We are partners with the International Institute, the CTI, Eastern Bank, the PACA Foundation in Boston, The Lowell Community Health Center, and Lowell Public Schools. During the ribbon cutting, the city mayor was there. We got the congress involved.” Resources from outside of the community are vital to the existence of the organization because they provide the organization with resources such as access to the bank, hospitals, and other important institutions in a refugee’s life. Partnerships with other organizations that serve refugees are also very beneficial in providing the organization with diversity and allows two or more communities, cultures, or ethnicities to socialize and share new ideas and traditions.

Difficulty gathering groups of people from a specific community with different beliefs proves to be a difficulty. Missions and visions are made to help refugee organizations which stands as it’s own guideline to accept anyone from a range of diversities and ethnicities. For

example, the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association is not limited to accepting refugees only of Cambodian heritage. This is through many factors such as the decline of Cambodian resettlement in the United States and changing demographics. The organization accepts refugees of all ethnicities which creates a diversely varied community as different types of people interact it forms a web between everyone. Compromise and sacrifice between different beliefs in the community can lead to major conflicts such as division, or even the end of the community's existence itself. One of the leaders discussed the religious beliefs within the community. The community was divided because they could not agree on their differences and it became a big challenge for the leader of the organization. She discusses the issue by saying that “obstacles with people from my own nationality was that being from the same community and speak the same language but have different religious beliefs which had two different views on religion. It was difficult to allow the two groups to bond when they didn’t want to. There were no obstacles towards people outside the community because they just wanted to be introduced to the culture.” Compromise was difficult to accomplish because there was no effort to unite as one. Another leader stated that since their people coexist in the same country, once they attempted to live together as one community, there was no compromise made and a division between the culture differences of people from the same country.

Teamwork is important to establish between communities and leaders as well as leaders and their board. Board members must work together and input their opinions so there will be a diverse range of different types of ideas contributed to the organization as Gordon Halm said, “You don’t choose the right people, they will take the dream that you are so passionate about and take it from you.” Executive directors must work with their board for connecting ideas and

views, otherwise the organization will be disconnected from reaching its fullest potential. As the executive director of the Iraqi-American Community Center I believe that challenges of uniting two different groups of people from the same community. As organizations are established, most leaders have to be experienced in their work and field must know how to run their organizations so they will be able to provide the services that refugees need. Many of the leaders came at a young age and grew up in the United States so they could understand the system when they established their organization. Growing up in the United States helps with an understanding of the system better than being a newcomer. There are also benefits to coming to the United States and having experience of a different culture. That is what most of the leaders agreed with as they discussed assembling their board and their staff. A board and their staff must have members that have both experiences of growing up in the United States and share values and traditions of the same culture but also share and learn American values.

One of the biggest challenges of establishing an organization to serve refugees and newcomers is attempting to have each side compromise to come to an agreement as a community. One challenge among one of the leaders was fulfilling an age gap. The leader has a hard time uniting the young in the organization. She found that although it was hard to unite the youth and the previous generation, compromise is vital to the process. The previous generation must understand that the youth has grown up in the United States and that they value different things. The youth must also realize that they must integrate Cambodian culture into their lives since that is the main goal of the organization through the arts. The organization has been able to overcome the challenge of the age gap due to compromising. Most of the leaders shared the similarity that they have had work experience in the past to be able to be a leader of their

organization. Many of the leaders built up their position to success as they progressed to start their organizations after several years of working with refugees or even being one. One leader in particular was a physician before he decided to pursue beginning an organization. He came from his country directly to the United States at a young age while many of the other leaders interviewed were born or placed in a refugee camp or a country other than the United States before being allowed to reside in the United States. His situation is rarely seen or experienced but he felt that his community needed help to unite and be one as he discussed with me. He did not see the community as one so he established his organization. Although leaders must have experience in the culture and background, leadership must also be prominent. If a leader does not take charge, the organization will not be able to become successful.

Funding methods:

Organizations that aid refugees are often non-profit and need a source of funding for their assistance and hard work. Many of the organizations interviewed in the study reported that funding was a major issue for them. Resources often run short for refugees because of the high demand that the organizations provide. Fees for goods and/or services is asked for in some instances but rarely because it drives people away since refugees are more likely to be derived of finance. Individual donations are a major way nonprofits and other organizations get their source of funding. Corporate contributions and partnerships with facilities for refugees and immigrants, foundation grants, and government grants and contracts are the most popular ways that these organizations get funds to provide for refugees. Loans/program-related investments (PRIs) are also another popular way. Funding is often an issue within an organization because it is often a barrier between the organization and reaching its fullest potential.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study can be concluded by stating that there are more than enough resources for refugees to integrate and transition into American society. Although there are many arguments that Resources from organizations are a vital part of the integration process and is mostly readily available for refugees that arrive in the United States. The evidence is sufficient for concluding that refugees have been able to self organize themselves all over the country over the past years. The observations from interviewee's suggest that without the presence of organizations that aid refugee resettlement refugees would have a more difficult time finding resources or being able to be part of a community. As for sources collected from the literature review that indicate refugees are being harmed in long-term perspective, it is still a large controversy that is discussed. The findings largely state that organizations often play a large role in refugee's lives.

Problems unsolved:

The following will explain the problems unsolved after the research was completed. Problems unsolved include that there is not a sufficient amount of evidence in literature on the topic that was studied. As many literature sources were collected as permeable to the subject. The sources all concluded that community bonding was specifically vital to the process of self organization. Individual methods of self organization were not mentioned very specifically. Another problem is that over forty percent of refugees live in camps, and they have no way to self organize due to the difficult life-style. While camps provide facilities that attempt to make refugees feel welcome but it is costly and less effective than integration into an actual

community. Another problem unsolved is that if there is a large significant difference between organizational support and without due to the large controversy. Another issue that was faced was funding within their organizations. Organization leaders felt that funding was easier years ago versus today since there is less in the budget to fund organizations.

Remaining opinions:

Remaining opinions for the whole of the research was retrieved from continuous thought have to pick the right people to do the organization and have the same perspective on the mission you are looking for. The members of board have to be a specific faith people that see things professionally and think in the best interest of the community that can be broken up into subcommittees such as someone takes the women children religious events. The board can be made of different types of people with different levels such as someone who's graduated here, and someone that is first generation and can have someone American because they understand the system while the person from the first generation understands the system of the community and their nature. The organization leader must be fully trained in leadership and know what their plan is for the future of the community and understand that they need to put others first most of the time to fulfil the best of the community's interests. The first generation must work with the oncoming generations to reach the fullest potential of an organization forming a strong community bond which gives new refugees a sense of integration and puts them on the path to success.

Recommendations:

- Increase knowledge of American life and values for refugees integrating and adapting to American society.
- Increase knowledge of career options for refugees.
- Increase knowledge of how to find housing for refugees and immigrants if they feel unhappy living where they have been initially housed.
- Increase refugee organization funding to accommodate for the fullest needs of refugees.
- Increase leadership training for organizations leaders that aspire to be leaders of the community.
- As stated before, provide an increase in foreign aid to refugees so they can be able to provide for themselves so they can be displaced less often.
- Increase programs that promote mental health wellness of refugees
- Introduce more American figures into a refugee's life so they can be introduced to American values and traditions.
- Celebrate different cultures/holidays than their own to show different types of activities other cultures/American culture participates in.

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