

HIGHER EDUCATION: THE IMPACT ON BOSNIAN WOMEN WHO CAME AS
REFUGEES TO THE UNITED STATES

by Belma Sadikovic

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the following:

To the bright and courageous women who came to the United States as refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and were willing to share their time and your stories. Thank you for sharing your stories of struggles and success. Your resilient spirit taught me so much about life. Your friendship means much to me.

To a woman, who has a special place in my heart, my beloved mother, Emira Omeragić, who has supported me in every way possible with wise guidance, advice, and much love. I am, because of you.

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I want to extend my deepest gratitude to Nidžara Pečenković and the board members of the Bosnian-American Professional Association (BAPA) for supporting my research and for helping me recruit study participants.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact college education has on Bosnian refugee women who resettled to the United States. The research findings help us better understand the effect higher education has on female students who came to the United States as refugees, their self-sufficiency and their overall integration into their new society. Using Kunz's refugee theory and Bourdieu's theory on social and cultural capital as a theoretical framework, the study explores socio-cultural factors that enable and constrain the ability of Bosnian women to navigate the facets of higher education, and how those factors affect their self-sufficiency and overall integration. The participants came to the United States from Bosnia and Herzegovina as refugees during the mid-1990s and early 2000, and are first generation Bosnian or Bosnian-Americans living throughout the United States. The Bosnian women range in age from 26 to 40, and achieved levels of education ranging from a current undergraduate to doctorates. Narrative inquiry methodology was used to represent the ten participants through their personal stories. Data collection methods included recorded individual in-depth interviews along with field notes, and a focus group follow-up. The study results illustrate how Bosnian women's multiple uprooted experiences as refugees affected their educational experiences and their disposition toward a college education. A rich account of the women's complex experiences in their native country, temporary exile, and the United States, provides educators, educational policy makers, professional staff, and the host community a framework for how to efficiently support Bosnian refugee students as they integrate into

their new community and bridge into higher education. Recommendations for other refugee communities and the U.S. refugee policy makers to support effective integration of refugees are also provided.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

I have two homes, like someone who leaves their hometown and/or parents and then establishes a life elsewhere. They might say that they're going home when they return to see old friends or parents, but then they go home as well when they go to where they live now. Sarajevo is home, Chicago is home.

- Aleksandar Hemon, *The Book of my Lives*, 2013

What compelled me to conduct this study is derived from my own account as a refugee. Waking up one morning to the sound of my mother's favorite radio station to waking up the next morning to the sound of sirens signaling the upcoming shelling on my city. The Bosnian War came suddenly and spread quickly. As an eight-year-old child, I did not understand war. I did not understand why I could not go to school or play with my friends in the park. I did not know why my father suddenly started wearing a uniform and would leave my mother and me for days, sometimes weeks. As a child of war, I could not fathom what was happening to me and around me. I did not understand why we hid in the basement of our building or why my mother stopped asking me about my homework. The life I once knew came to an abrupt stop. I watched my neighbors and people I once knew leave our city with merely a bag in their hands, as if they were going on a short vacation. One night it was my turn to leave my family and friends. That was the night I would start my journey. The journey of a refugee. A journey that would become a part of me and carry me into adulthood.

This research study encompasses stories of ten Bosnian women who came to the United States as refugees. I aim to explore the educational experiences of Bosnian female refugees in the United States. Moreover, the goal is to explore the effect college education has on Bosnian women who resettled to the United States as refugees, and how education affected their self-sufficiency and overall integration into their new communities. This study intends to utilize the potential of narrative as a research tool to collect stories from participants about their educational experiences and their accounts of how education affected their self-sufficiency and integration into their communities. Based on their accounts I argue that those women are role models to the immediate and broader communities of Bosnians and Bosnian-Americans¹ across the United States. By using the narrative inquiry approach to collect stories, the intention is to document the experiences of Bosnian women on a personal, social and universal rank.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 will provide an extensive introduction of the Bosnian population. Then, chapter 1 offers an overview of women from Bosnia during the Bosnian War. As this study focuses on a specific gender of an ethnic minority population in the United States, this chapter highlights women from Bosnia who came to the United States as refugees. Moreover, it focuses on the portrayal of the Bosnian women in a transnational fashion, which is central to the research focus. Chapter 1 will provide the background and problem statement as well as the purpose of the study, rationale, definition of terms and

¹ Bosnian-Americans are individuals whose ancestry can be traced to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Those individuals are either born in the U.S. or gain a U.S. citizenship through naturalization.

the research question. This chapter also discusses the limitations and researcher positionality. This chapter also contains my personal narrative.

Chapter 2 comprises a review of the literature presented in three sections. In efforts to better understand the situation of refugees in the United States, the first section argues the distinctions between refugees and other immigrants. The second section examines refugee resettlement to the United States from historical and political perspectives. The third section focuses on the contemporary aspect of refugees attending higher education. This chapter also examines the educational aspect of acclimation pertaining to formal education to explain the role of educational participation as a relevant factor in refugee integration, and self-sufficiency.

Chapter 3 portrays and describes the methodological approach utilized, and the reasoning for using qualitative design. This chapter introduces the study participants. Ethical procedures and participant recruitment approaches are discussed. Chapter 3 also presents the data collected.

Chapter 4 describes the research findings. This chapter contains two sections. The first section introduces readers to the women who played a central role in this study. The second section of the chapter, presents the three main themes that emerged through participants' narratives. Each theme conforms to the research question on how higher education impacts Bosnian women's self-sufficiency and overall integration in the new communities. The three main themes are The Refugee Experiences, Educational Experiences upon Resettlement, and Educational Experiences in College.

Chapter 5 is the concluding chapter. Chapter 5 discusses the research results and its implications for education, and recommendation. First, I provide a summary of the

study. Then I discuss the research results and their implications. I suggest how the findings may be important for future research, theory, policy, and practice. Finally, I present the recommendations and advocate for specific actions in respect to subsequent research, theory, policy and practice.

Bosnian/Bosnian-Americans in the United States

For this study, it is important to understand the histories of the Bosnian war-inflicted nation whose traumatic experiences shape their ability to navigate U.S. schools and American society. First, I will provide a definition of the terms: Bosnian, Bosniak, Bosnian and Herzegovinian, and Bosnian-American. Then, I will present information about the demographics and the war in Bosnia in an effort to provide a more in-depth understanding of this particular population. Finally, I will describe the role of women during the Bosnian War and portray their experiences while adjusting to their new lives in the United States.

People of Former Yugoslavia Now Bosnia and Herzegovina

Refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina (commonly known as Bosnia) who have resettled to the United States during the mid-1990's to early 2000 due to war, are usually known as Bosnians. However, based on religion, ethnicity and/or the region, people from Bosnia may choose to identify themselves differently.

The southern region of Bosnia is referred to Herzegovina. While the vast majority of people in this region refer to themselves as Bosnians, certain people prefer to call themselves Herzegovinians. Historically, the Bosnia and Herzegovina people have been ethnically and religiously mixed. Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of three major ethnic groups: Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats (Kalyvas & Sambanis, 2005). The most

distinguishable feature of the three ethnic groups is their religion. Bosniaks are largely Muslim, Serbs are mainly Orthodox Christians, and Croats are predominantly Catholic. While some people refer to themselves according to their ethnic background, the majority of people of Bosnia and Herzegovina refer to themselves as Bosnians. However, there are instances where people choose to call themselves Yugoslavs. This is mostly the case with the population who grew up during the ruling of Marshall Tito² from 1943-1980 (Kalyvas & Sambanis, 2005). Furthermore, Bosnian-Americans are individuals whose ancestry can be traced to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Those individuals are either born in the U.S. or gain a U.S. citizenship through naturalization.

War that Caused Dissolution of Yugoslavia

The Balkans³ are known for its many elicited conflicts throughout history (Kalyvas & Sambanis, 2005). For this study, however, the focus will be on the most recent war in the “Western Balkans”, more specifically Bosnia and Herzegovina. After World War II, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ) came to existence as a federation of six republics, as illustrated in Figure 2.4: Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia (Milohnić & Švob-Đokić, 2011). Nonetheless, after Tito’s death, with the system of the federal government weakening, leaders such as Slobodan Milošević gained power allowing for ethnic conflicts among each other. With the nationalist Serbian leader Milošević’s rise to power in the late 1980’s came the collapse of Yugoslavia.

² Josip Broz- also known as Marshall Tito or Tito was Yugoslav politician and revolutionary who was active from 1943 until his death in 1980. In 1953 Tito was elected Yugoslav president. In 1953 his term was made unlimited. Tito served as a president of Yugoslavia until his death on May 4, 1980.

³ “The Balkans” are located in Southeast Europe that encompasses the following countries: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo (the republic of Macedonia), Montenegro, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Greece, and the European part of Turkey. (Milohnić & Švob-Đokić, 2011).

After numerous political conflicts during the late 1980's the political and social atmosphere in Yugoslavia began to change more rapidly. During the 1990's national rhetoric on each political side increased dramatically, leading each republic one after the other, to claim its independence. Two days after the United States and the European Community (now known as the European Union) acknowledged Bosnia and Herzegovina's independence in early May 1992, as illustrated in Figure 2.5, the Army of Republika Srpska launched an attack on Sarajevo, Bosnia's capital (Bassiouni, 1994). After a number of violent inter-ethnic occurrences, a string of wars broke out inside the territory of the former Yugoslavia. One of the most severe wars in Europe after WWII was the Bosnian War. The Bosnian conflict also known as the "Bosnian War" or the "Bosnian Civil War" occurred during 1992-1995 in multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina. While numerous violent incidents occurred in the former Yugoslavia during the 1990's, the Bosnian War started on April 6, 1992 and ceased on December 14, 1995 (Milohnić & Švob-Đokić, 2011). Clark (2007) describes the upheavals gruesome events describing the mass killings of the multi-ethnic nation:

Armed groups from Serbia and Croatia each terrorized and burned villages of other ethnic groups. Serbia besieged Sarajevo, seized 70 percent of Bosnian territory, and terrorized both Bosnian Muslims and Croats by atrocities that came to be known as "ethnic cleansing." Serbs employed mass murder, mass rape, concentration camps, rape camps, and torture against the other groups and especially against Bosnian Muslims. (p. 20)

During the almost four years of the horrid war in Bosnia, people witnessed senseless mass killings, shelling of cities and villages, systemic mass rape and genocide largely committed by the Serb forces.

Events such as the Siege of Sarajevo and the Srebrenica genocide have become iconic symbols of atrocities committed on humankind after World War II (Hartmann,

2007). The Siege of Sarajevo is considered the longest siege of a capital city in recent history where more than 13,952⁴ casualties were accounted for (Bassiouni, 1994). The siege lasted from April 5, 1992 to February 29, 1996. (Burke, 2016) The Srebrenica genocide occurred during July 11-22, 1995 in and around the town of Srebrenica. The mass killings were committed by the Army of Republika Srpska (Bosnian Serbs) slaughtering over 8,373 Bosniak men and boys due to their Muslim faith (Silber, Little, & British Broadcasting Corporation, 1995). Just at the beginning of the war in Bosnia, one of the largest exterminations of Muslim men took place in a village near Bratunac, a town just outside of Srebrenica where the Serb forces killed and tortured about 350 Muslim men to death (Silber, Little, & British Broadcasting Corporation, 1995). Similar massacres of men, children and women occurred in other areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Serb forces were also responsible for other heinous crimes. In Srebrenica, women watched in horror as the Army of Republika Srpska separated the men, mostly elder men and young boys, from them never to be seen again.

In efforts to accomplish ethnic cleansing of Bosniaks, Serb forces committed mass murder in various other parts of Bosnia (Bassiouni, 1994). To this day, mass graves are being discovered across Bosnia. While body remains of Bosniaks have been exhumed

⁴ Out of the 13,952 casualties resulting from the Siege of Sarajevo 5,434 were civilians and 6,137 were soldiers of the Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bassiouni, 1994).

over the years and have been given proper burial by their families, many bodies remain missing in Srebrenica and across the country.

Former Yugoslavia



Figure 1.1 Former Yugoslavia Map. Source: U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. (1992). *Former Yugoslavia: A map folio*. Retrieved November 2, 2016 from <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/europe/yugoslav.jpg>



Figure 1.2 Bosnia and Herzegovina Source: U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. (1992). *Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Retrieved November 2, 2016 from https://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/europe/bosnia_herzegovina_pol97.jpg

Women during the Bosnian War

The war in Bosnia depicts several gendered aspects of this war where both men and women paid a steep price. The war brought unique struggles to the women in Bosnia. Across the country, both younger and older generations of women witnessed and experienced terror. Many women had to bear witness to the senseless killings of their husbands, children and family members by the Serb forces. Women were victims of rape (Olsson, 2002; Lent-Hirsch, 2012). During the war, women were “systematically and strategically targeted and sexually violated in many of the concentration camps, some of which have later been referred to as “rape camps” (Copelon, 1995 as cited in Olsson, 2002, p. 5). Although all sides committed sexualized attacks against women, Bosnian Serbs were responsible for the majority of rape committed primarily on Muslim women. Approximately 60,000 Muslim women from Bosnia were victims of rape (Lent-Hirsch, 2012). Intense sexualized violence left a substantial mark on the lives of older women and young girls alike (Lončar, Medved, Jovanović, & Hotujac (2006).

Women also suffered other forms of torture such as witnessing their daughters being raped in front of their eyes, and/or having their baby’s throat slit as they are pleading for their baby’s life (Silber, Little, & British Broadcasting Corporation, 1995). Furthermore, with their husband gone, women were left to their own devices to take care of their family. Of the women who were able to escape with their children into “safer” cities such as Tuzla and Zenica, they were faced with hunger and homelessness. Internally displaced, many women sought refuge in the homes of other people or stayed in school gymnasiums since schools were closed. Cities such as Tuzla and Zenica encountered severe hunger since the UN convoys had difficulty reaching the people to

provide food. Being internally displaced, hungry, and at the mercy of the goodwill of other people of Bosnia created another layer of trauma, and desperation for women. However, the inability to be in control of their lives (Mosselson, 2002a) taught women to become more resilient (Spaulding, 2009).

The war inflicted significant trauma on women. While the women faced diverse unfortunate events during the war, trauma is what all these women had in common (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002; Tollefson, 1989 as cited in McBrien, 2005a). The level of trauma differed based on what these women have experienced leading to mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Miller, Worthington, Muzurovic, Tipping, & Goldman, 2002). The trauma these women acquired during war, is very much alive to this day. Furthermore, women who fled seeking refuge in a third country such as the United States have experienced a different type of stress and trauma from the women who stayed in the country (Stein, 1981; LaCroix, 2004). Fabri and Boskailo (2002) state that there is no refugee experience for the people from Bosnia alike, and it is “important not to generalize the Bosnian refugee experience...just as Bosnia has been regionally a diverse country historically, the war generated a vastly diverse set of experiences” (as cited in Olsson 2002, p. 4). Thus, no generalizations can be drawn in respect to the trauma each person experienced or the extent of long-term effects each war survivor carries.

Although, much has changed in Bosnia and Herzegovina since the devastating war during the early and mid-1990s, the situation regarding the role of women in Bosnia has not changed much. Even as of today’s date, women in Bosnia and Herzegovina are

“underrepresented in positions of economic social, and/or political power” (Asylumaid, 2001 as cited in Olsson, 2002, p. 5).

Integration to the American Way of Life

The Bosnian War lasted almost four years, finally ending in 1995 with the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords⁵. Between the periods from 1992 to 1995, about 200,000 people, primarily Bosniaks, lost their lives (Olsson, 2002). The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia at The Hague, ruled the Srebrenica massacre a genocide (U.S. Department of State, 1995). By that time, the war left long-term political and economic damage in Bosnia and Herzegovina with more than half of the people of Bosnia, 2.2 million out of a prewar population of 4.3 million, becoming refugees (Toe, 2016).

In the most recent census conducted on the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2013, data shows that an estimated 3.8 million people live in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Toe, 2016). Compared to the census last taken in 1991, this is a significant drop, primarily due to people fleeing Bosnia during the war. Out of the estimated 2,000,000 people from Bosnia who live outside Bosnia and Herzegovina borders, approximately 161,000 Bosnian refugees resettled to the United States during the mid 1990's and early 2000 (Coughlan, 2011). Major cities where the Bosnian diaspora settled were Chicago, St. Louis, Atlanta, Phoenix, and Tampa.

⁵ The Dayton Peace Accords is the peace agreement reached near Dayton, Ohio, United States on November 21, 1995 signed by the President of Croatia Franjo Tuđman, the President of Bosnia and Herzegovina Alija Izetbegović, and the President of Republic of Serbia Slobodan Milošević (who represented the interests of Bosnia Serbs due to the absence of Radovan Karadžić). The Peace Accords aimed at putting an end to the almost four yearlong Bosnian war. The agreement was formally signed in Paris, France on December 14, 1995 (U.S Department of State, 1995).

After about two decades post resettlement of Bosnian refugees to the United States, the Bosnian (also referred to as Bosnian-American) communities have found ways to reestablish their lives and thrive in their new communities. Although, the process of starting anew was tremendously difficult due to language, cultural, and economic obstacles among others, Bosnian communities are an essential contributor to the U.S. economy (Moore, 2013). Furthermore, the versatility of skills and abilities that Bosnians brought with them contributed toward their overall success. According to Moore (2013) Bosnian refugees “remade” St. Louis’ Bevo Mill neighborhood into a “thriving business district, with restaurants, bars, markets and a newspaper” (p. 1). A major factor that enabled this process, was that a bank in the area provided Bosnian refugees small loans, which over time led towards the establishment of Bosnian-owned businesses in St. Louis and across the country. These businesses are now small, mid and large-scale employers.

While the Bosnian community is frequently portrayed as the “immigrant success story,” members of that community as well as onlookers state that the process toward successful integration, the reality of starting over, was rather complex and varied among the Bosnian population (Coughlan, 2011, p. 8). Many women made their journey to a third country without their husbands and/or children. The process of starting anew in a foreign country with a different language and culture added to their trauma (Moore, 2013). After resettlement to the United States and the rather brief refugee assistance package newly resettled refugees receive, many Bosnian women were left to their own devices. Various factors enabled and constrained their self-sufficiency and integration process, including but not limited to the English language, educational background, and sociocultural status (Mosselson, 2002a; McBrien, 2005a; Clark, 2007; Ager & Strang,

2004; Roxas, 2008; Clipper, 2008). It is also important to note that the trauma each refugee experienced affected his or her ability to integrate and succeed in the new community (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002).

While Bosnian men and women generally had “more education, better health, and better socio-cultural understanding of the western world than some of the refugee groups”, their physical and mental traumas followed them into their third country, which affected their path toward self-sufficiency and integration into their new communities (Clark, 2007, p. 24). “Their advantages of education, and Westernized lifestyle eased the transition into life in the United States and often masked or even exacerbated struggles related to Bosnians’ histories as refugees and war survivors” (Clark, 2007, p. 24).

Additionally, because of their European heritage, and their white race, it is perceived that Bosnian refugees did not face any hardships during their process of adjusting merely due to their white skin (McBrien, 2005b). However, Chubbuck (2004), states that “Whiteness is socially constructed”, and “Whiteness” being the fundamental component of “institutionalized power and privileges that benefit White Americans” (p. 303). Furthermore, the dominant group has become a synonym of the white race, which in turn is referred to being “American” (Roxas, 2008, p. 26). Roxas (2008) argues that using the term “American” to refer to the white race is discriminatory toward minority populations in the U.S. because affluent white Americans do not and should not represent the entirety of the U.S. Apple (1998) adds that defining “America” from only one perspective, promotes hegemony of the white dominant group.

Aside from their skin color and facial features, Bosnian refugees do not have much in common with the white dominant group in the United States (Clark, 2007). As

refugees, ethnic minorities, and in many cases religious minorities, the term “American” does not coincide with Bosnian refugees simply due to their skin color. The lack of “Whiteness” (Chubbuck, 2004) or the ability to “act white” (Roxas, 2008, p. 26) in terms of cultural and social capital does subjugates the White race of the Bosnian refugees their social and cultural norms, which differ vastly from the mainstream American social and cultural norms. However, after almost two decades of making the United States their home, Bosnians or Bosnian-Americans continue to take pride in their Bosnian heritage and tradition, as well as their accomplishments in the United States.

Background

Immigration to the United States has been growing at a steady rate. Historically the United States has welcomed refugees from across the world (Kunz, 1973; Hein 1993). The United States also known as the nation of immigrants, throughout its history, has accepted millions of people who have left their homelands searching for an opportunity at a new chance at life. Immigrants and refugees continue to come here to this day.

The number of displaced people is at its highest ever, exceeding the numbers of post-World War II refugee plight, when the world was facing one of the most distressing events in history (UNHCR, 2015). The United Nations (U.N.) reports that just under 1% of the world’s population is either "an asylum-seeker, internally displaced or a refugee" (UNHCR, 2015, p. 3) The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) indicates that at the end of 2015 there were 65.3 million displaced people worldwide, of which 21.3 million consisted of refugees. However, about 16.5 million refugees worldwide are registered by the UNHCR and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) registered 5.2 million

refugees (UNHCR, 2016). In other words, every single minute about 24 people across the globe flee their homes due to war or persecution (Domonoske, 2016). With the current plight of Syrian refugees it is projected that refugee resettlement to the United States will continue to drastically rise (U.S. Department of State, 2016).

Role of Education

Various advanced countries, including the United States, take in refugees from war-torn countries. The U.S continues to provide permanent resettlement to refugees more than any other resettling country (U.S. Department of State, 2016). However, to this day, the United States Resettlement Program continues to strive toward hasty integration, with the emphasis on employment as a means of self-sufficiency. Research on refugees considers education to be a fundamental resource toward the overall social, emotional and economic mobility of refugees (Mosselson, 2002a, McBrien 2005b; Roxas 2011), but it is challenging to obtain due to the immediate emphasis on employment upon arrival (Dwyer, 2010). The histories that resettled refugees bring to the United States are diverse. Their unpleasant pasts are reflected in their everyday lives. Thus, academic success of refugee students is imperative to their overall acculturation, community engagement and healing (Sinclair, 2001 as cited in McBrien 2005b).

Education, including higher education, is a means of enabling refugees to effectively acculturate in their new country as well as become self-sufficient, which provides avenues for social engagement, enhancing refugees' social and cultural capital as they seek employment (Ager & Strang, 2004). Nonetheless, the nature of the U.S. Refugee policy, emphasizing short-term assistance, places the refugee populations in a vindictive circle of trauma and survival. This inhibits the ability for refugees to achieve

their dream to pursue an education, constraining refugees to regain control over their futures and lives as New Americans.

Problem Statement

While some research is seeking to understand how refugee students experience and navigate higher education, only little research embodies the educational experiences of refugee women in academia. This research seeks to address the influence education has on refugee women, more specifically Bosnian women in higher education and the role education plays in their social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), as well as their self-sufficiency and overall integration into their new communities.

Upon refugee resettlement to the United States, the U.S. resettlement policy provides only immediate needs in areas such as housing, employment, food, transportation, and healthcare, disregarding long-term refugee integration (Dwyer, 2010). Furthermore, it accentuates rapid employment over higher education and other educational opportunities. While short-term assistance is vital during the initial months of resettlement, short-term assistance does not effectively contribute toward long-term solutions to integration, self-sufficiency and upward mobility of resettled refugees. Resettled refugees have diverse resource needs from their host country (Stein, 1981, Hein, 1993; Cortes 2001) and resources such as education are considered imperative tools efficiently integrating and succeeding in their new country.

The enforcement of hasty integration, however, forces refugees to accept and work menial jobs. Oftentimes, working two or three jobs to make ends meet is likely to hinder refugees from pursuing educational opportunities, which is a foundational element toward self-sufficiency and overall integration (Stein, 1981, Cortes, 2001; Spaulding,

2009; Shakya, Y. B., Guruge, S., Hynie, M., Akbari, A., Malik, M., Htoo, S., Khogali, A., & Alley, S 2010). However, the desire to regain control over their futures and efficiently participate in their communities are also significant factors for refugees to obtain a college degree (Mosselson 2002a; Roxas 2011; Besic & McBrien, 2012).

Because of rushed integration only a small number of refugees attempt higher education (McBrien 2005b; Roxas; 2011). Additionally, research studies conducted on refugee adolescent students in the U.S. public schools point out that teachers, staff and parents, as well as the overall community, impacts a students' ability and success of high school completion and the advancement toward higher learning (Mosselson 2002b; Ager & Strang, 2004; McBrien 2005b; Roxas 2011; Dryden-Peterson 2015).

Purpose of the Study

To better understand the effect higher education has on female students who came to the United States as refugees, their self-sufficiency and overall integration into their new communities, this study examines the impact college education has on Bosnian refugee women who resettled to the United States. Specifically, the study examines socio-cultural factors that influence and constrain the ability of Bosnian women to navigate the facets of higher education, and how those factors affect their self-sufficiency and overall integration into their new communities. This study adds to the existing educational research on refugee students in higher education by specifically focusing on the context of the opportunity to pursue higher education and its impact on the self-sufficiency and the overall integration of Bosnian female refugee students into their new communities.

The participants involved in the study are Bosnian women who came to the United States as refugees and now live across the United States. These women are a first generation Bosnian, or Bosnian-American if she is a naturalized American citizen, and come from diverse educational backgrounds. Each participant is currently enrolled in a U.S. college/university as an undergraduate/graduate student or is an alumna. This study aims to inform local and national government officials on refugee policy, educational policy makers, teachers/staff, communities and the larger society about the importance of providing appropriate and effective resources to the refugee population in the United States to enable their path toward self-sufficiency and overall integration. Moreover, this research study will benefit scholars involved in ethnic studies, cross-cultural studies, women's studies, including refugee and immigration studies.

The experiences of refugee students in K-12 education in the U.S. are heavily documented in research studies displaying the struggles and successes of refugee children, youth and adults in the U.S. educational system (Dwyer, 2010). While there is an ample amount of research conducted on English Language Learners (ELLs) in the U.S. K-12 schools where immigrant students intermix with refugees, (Mosselson, 2002a; McBrien, 2005a; Roxas, 2008), it is important to note that only a limited amount of research has been conducted on the refugee student population in higher education.

Furthermore, historically very little research has been conducted on refugee women in higher education (Chodon, 2007; Cohen, 2010). To this day, a dearth of research exists on refugee women in higher education (Chodon, 2007). Particularly research on Bosnian female students in higher education is scarce (Clark, 2007).

Chodon's (2007) dissertation study *Tibetan women and higher educational experience:*

An exploratory study and Clark's (2007) dissertation "*I'm a product of everything I've been through*": *A narrative study of the cultural identity construction of Bosnian Muslim female refugee students* is one of the few studies specially focusing on refugee women in college.

Limited research studies describe what factors influenced female students who resettled to the United States as refugees to pursue higher education, how they negotiate success in academia, and whether education contributes toward their self-sufficiency, and integration into their new communities (Mosselson 2002a; Clark, 2007; Chodon, 2007). Although, Chodon's (2007) dissertation study on Tibetan women in higher education illustrates experiences of how minority female adult students navigate the channels of higher education, the study does not investigate possible correlation between a college education, and their personal, professional and academic success. Clark's (2007) dissertation study focuses on Bosnian women in higher education, specifically addressing identity negotiation of Bosnian women of Muslim faith who came to the United States as refugees. The study highlights the role of U.S. schooling in the cultural identity construction of Bosnian Muslim refugee women and how the role of U.S. schooling as well as their desire for "bicultural competence" would affect the self-sufficiency and overall integration of Bosnian women (Clark, 2007).

Rationale

A plethora of reasons necessitate me to study Bosnian refugee women, including but not limited to the fact that: Bosnian women in higher education are immensely under researched. Bosnian refugees are one of the largest refugee populations resettled to the United States during the 1990's. Bosnian women and children resettled to the United

States in larger numbers than their male counterparts. In fact, eighty percent of the world's refugees are women and children (Mosselson, 2009). Many Bosnian females were strategically and systematically targeted and sexually abused for what is known as "rape camps", (Cutts, 2000; Coughlan & Owens-Manley, 2006; Reid-Cunningham, 2008; UNHCR, 2015). Furthermore, due to their gender and their gender role, women are depicted as passive victims (Mosselson, 2009). Their apparent absence of voice, and lack of social status within their own community posed serious consequences post resettlement (Coughlan & Owens-Manley, 2006; Reid-Cunningham, 2008). These facts point out that Bosnian women are likely to struggle adjusting to their social, cultural, and financial settings once resettled to the United States.

Based on Chodon's (2007) study on Tibetan refugee female college students, and Clark's (2007) story on Bosnian female adult students' identity negotiation, the obstacles that Bosnian women face will likely contribute to challenges to pursue an education and obtain a college degree. Thus, the reasons I am compelled to study Bosnian women who came to the United States as refugees and are currently in a field of higher education or have already obtained a degree is because of distinctive expectations and stressors put on Bosnian women. For many Bosnian women this means an expectation to succeed in academia and work toward a degree that can provide a good job in efforts to establish self-sufficiency for them as individuals and their families (Clark, 2007; Cohen, 2010). While pursuing an education, many women are also expected to work a menial job or jobs as a way to support the family and pay for their education (McBrien, 2005b; Chodon, 2007). Moreover, women must undertake gender specific roles (Ross, 2012).

Particularly women with children are expected to negotiate roles between school, family, and a job if they are employed while pursuing an education. (Calderon-Berumen, 2015)

The focus of this study is to explore the effect college education has on Bosnian women who resettled to the United States as refugees, and how education affected their self-sufficiency and overall integration into their new communities. The ability to engage in higher education in the new country enables refugees to acculturate and receive meaningful employment (Ager & Strang, 2004). While a dearth of research about the experiences of refugee female students in higher education even exists, the research on Bosnian women in higher education is scarce. Moreover, the little research that has been conducted on refugee women in college is mostly authored by individuals who do not share the ethnic, cultural, and/or racial aspects of minority population (Chodon, 2007). Chodon (2007) further argues that the United States, a multicultural society, lacks scientific educational studies on some minority communities, such as Tibetans.

Chodon who is also Tibetan argues in her dissertation study that “there has been limited attention given to the education of the newly arrived Tibetans in general and the education of Tibetan women in particular” (2007, p. 3). Thus, it is not only the scarcity of research that has been done on marginalized populations in higher education that raises concerns but the existence of research conducted on marginalized populations done by researchers who are not a part of the minority population. “No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption” (Freire, 1993, p. 54). Hence, the rationale to conduct a scientific educational study on Bosnian refugee women in higher

education as an insider, a woman and a member of the Bosnian community, is key for challenging the invisibility of Bosnian women and a call for rising against marginalization of the Bosnian refugee ethnic minority in the United States.

Significance of the Research

This study on Bosnian women uniquely contributes to the field of education. First, very little educational research exists that provides an insight on what it feels like to be a refugee woman in higher education. Even fewer educational studies offer an understanding of what it is like and what it feels like to be a Bosnian woman who came as a refugee to the United States, and is pursuing higher education. Furthermore, very little is known about cultural and cross-cultural experiences in higher education. Out of the few studies on refugee women attending higher education, Chodon (2007) and Clark (2007) provide different angles of interpretation of the effects of education on the refugee female student population. However, the scarceness of research in the field of education on Bosnian female students in higher education conducted by researchers who also came to the United States as refugees from Bosnia is evident.

This type of research would further investigate how educational experiences influence the self-sufficiency and overall integration of refugee women. In addition, this research aims to understand how these women were able to pursue their educational long-term goals. By studying one of the largest refugee population that resettled to the United States in recent years the researcher has the ability to offer a more in-depth understanding of the overall refugee experience. This study can further teach us about the role of education in the process of acculturation, self-sufficiency, and cultural identity. In addition, this study has a unique implication on the current gender and sociopolitical

atmosphere in the United States. Due to the current political controversies about gender, immigration, and education, as well as the United States economy, this study's relevance is quite timely for educational and political policy makers and educators alike.

The role as the researcher and insider of the Bosnian refugee population will also provide a unique look into why and how Bosnian refugee women pursued higher education and whether their education provides a path for self-sufficiency and effective integration into their new communities (Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane, & Muhamad, 2001). Additionally, this study will provide a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural factors that enabled and constrained their ability to navigate the facets of higher education. Finally, this study aims to present issues and propose recommendations for further research in the education of refugee women in U.S. higher education.

Research Question

This study intends to answer the following research question:

What effect does higher education have on Bosnian women who resettled to the United States as refugees and how does it affect their self-sufficiency and overall integration into their new communities?

Definition of Terms

The following list provides working definitions of terms central to understanding this research study.

Acculturation: Is a process where a resettled refugee becomes a participant in the host culture while he/she is able to maintain his/her own cultural identity (Berry, 2001; Nadal, 2011). The term acculturation is used interchangeably with integration in this study.

Assimilation: A process in which a resettled refugee gives up his/her own cultural identity because he/she is expected to conform to the new country's culture and customs identity (Berry, 2001).

Bosnian: Bosnian refers to people who trace their ancestral roots to the Bosnian indigenous population.

Bosnian-Americans: Bosnian-Americans are individuals whose ancestry can be traced to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Those individuals are either born in the U.S. or gain a U.S. citizenship through naturalization.

Bosnian Diaspora: Bosnian Diaspora refers to Bosnian emigrants including their descendants who reside in other countries such as the United States and across the world.

Cultural capital: Cultural capital comprises of non-economic resources that enable social mobility. For example, cultural capital is the cultural knowledge a person has of the surrounding culture and is also able to contribute to the culture. (Bourdieu, 1986).

Displaced: Displaced people are defined as people who were forced to relocate their country of origin based on war and/or political persecution, and natural disaster (UNHCR, 2015).

Higher education: Post-secondary education that is attainable at universities, colleges, and institutions of technology. In this study, I will refer to colleges and universities that offer Bachelor, Master and Doctoral degrees as higher education.

Immigrant: A person who voluntarily leaves his/her home country and resettles to another country (Kunz, 1973; Hein, 1993).

Integration: (a) Integration is a process where a resettled refugee becomes a participant in the host culture while he/she is able to maintain his/her own cultural identity (Berry, 2001); (b) integration is a term used to indicate the process of acculturation (Strang & Ager, 2010).

Internally Displaced Person: An internally displaced person is an individual who is forced to flee his/her home but remains within his/her country's borders. Many times, those individuals are referred to as refugees, however, they do not fit the current legal definition of a refugee (UNHCR, 2015).

Multiculturalism: (a) Multiculturalism is the co-existence of diverse cultures. An individual who is multicultural is a representative of different cultures, and therefore possesses the ability to represent multiple cultures. (b) A society that values and fosters diversity (Berry, 2001).

New Americans: The White House Task Force on New Americans defines New Americans as, “An all-encompassing term that includes foreign-born individuals (and their children and families) who seek to become fully integrated into their new community in the United States” (U.S. Department of State, 2015, p. 54).

Refugee: A refugee is a person who is unable or unwilling to return to his or her home country because of “a well-founded fear of persecution due to race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion” (Immigration and Nationality Act [INA], 1980, §101a, 42a).

Refugee Resettlement: Defined by the UNHCR refugee resettlement is considered one of three durable solutions for refugees. Resettlement is considered the permanent

placement of refugees in developed countries such the United States, and other nations who engage in permanent resettlement of refugees to their country (UNHCR, 2015).

Social capital: (a) “Social capital comprises of collective resources that an individual gains only by belonging to a network of social relationships and/or group memberships. (Bourdieu, 1986); (b) Social capital is an aggregate of economic resources that will increase the access to the broader society and will increase refugee’s ability to acclimate to their new surroundings. However, a refugee only has access to such resources if he/she is a part of social and/or group memberships (Strang & Ager, 2010).

Self-Sufficiency: (a) Finnan (1981) states that the pattern of acculturation is a determining factor of economic self-sufficiency strategies of refugees; (b) Granovetter (1973, 1985) argues that the importance of interpersonal ties or information networks particularly, *new* ties are an essential aspect of acculturation, helping achieve economic self-sufficiency; (c) English language instruction is an important aspect of self-sufficiency as it provides access to economic, political resources and power (Hoyles, 1977); (d) Education, is considered an essential self-sufficiency tool, where English language proficiency is the “overriding importance” toward self-sufficiency (Stewart, 1993, p. 50). (e) The US government refers to employment as a means of self-sufficiency (US Department of State, 2013). (f) Post-secondary education is an outlet toward self-sufficiency because many Refugee Resettlement Programs rely on short-term and inadequate grants, which in turn provide uncoordinated services to refugees (Dawood, 2011 as cited in Patnaik, 2014); (g) Refugees can attain self-sufficiency if they have access to community services such as education, housing, health services, and employment (Threadgold & Court, 2005 as cited Ross, 2012). Scholars and governmental

institutions define different factors that contribute toward self-sufficiency, leading to unique approaches of defining self-sufficiency. In this study, I will focus on all the factors that play a role in achieving self-sufficiency, while placing an emphasis on higher education as a self-sufficiency tool due to the focus of this study.

Third country: Third country is referred to as the country of resettlement. The country a refugee flees to and stays in temporarily is considered the second country, and the country of origin or home country is considered the first country.

Undocumented/Illegal Immigrant: An undocumented individual is someone who has fled their home country possibly under pressure and crossed the border into another country yet has not followed the legal process for admission into a country in which they are seeking asylum.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study. The nature of research on marginalized populations is that each population is different. This also applies to refugee populations. Each refugee population is different because refugees have different experiences pre-, during and post-resettlement. Their process of fleeing their native country, experiencing one or multiple refugee camps, and their ways of resettling to a third country can be vastly different. Furthermore, there are even differences within each ethnic group due to race, religion, socioeconomic standing among other factors that play a role in the refugee experience. Each individual is different and therefore he or she carries unique refugee experiences. Not every refugee experiences refugee camps or experiences the same amount of trauma during each stage of migration (Kunz, 1973).

Since this study is grounded in narrative inquiry and relies mostly on interviews with Bosnian women who came to the United States as refugees about two decades ago, recalling past events can be challenging. Since this study focuses on first generation Bosnians but allows for a wide range in participant's age that will be ranging from their early twenties to their early forties, it can be challenging because of misinterpretations of events and/or the lack of remembrance for details during certain events. Therefore, the age of the Bosnian women contributors can be a potential limitation.

Another limitation to this study is my position of the researcher who is also an insider of the Bosnian community. Researcher's position as a college-educated Bosnian woman, who came to the United States as a refugee is a potential researcher bias. Merriam (2009) states that qualitative researchers needs to approach bias by identifying it and monitor the potential for bias during the process of data collection. Banks (1998) further argues that "social science and educational researchers should strive for objectivity but acknowledge how the subjective and objective components of knowledge are interconnected and interactive" (p. 6). The insider position has its own advantages and limitations. The most appropriate resolution for researcher could be "intellectually poised between familiarity and strangeness", to discover the "intellectual distance" (Brayboy and Deyhle, 2000, p. 165). This means that the researcher needs to actively reflect upon his or her own beliefs, which will lead to unbiased, and ethical research practices. Therefore, the researcher in this study will hold an observer status.

Positionality

Social scientists, to this day, are conceptualizing positionality as a central element in the process of qualitative, and to a point in quantitative, data collection (Ganga &

Scott, 2006). Engaging in the discourse of whether it is beneficial to have an insider's involvement in a qualitative research study, is closely related to the ability of the researcher, insider or not, to keep focus on objectivity and critical self-reflection while conducting research (Becker, 1996). Ganga & Scott (2006) clarify the term "insider" and its impact in qualitative research:

By "insider" research, we mean social interviews conducted between researchers and participants who share a similar cultural, linguistic, ethnic, national and religious heritage. This insider status takes on an added degree of importance, moreover, when research involves social interaction between a migrant researcher and a migrant participant from within the same imagined community. Insider interviews of this type create a distinct social dynamic, whereby differences between researcher and participant are brought into focus as a result of shared cultural knowledge. We term this "diversity in proximity" which effectively means that as insiders we are better able to recognize both the ties that bind us and the social fissures that divide us. Our insider status can make us accepted within the group, but it can also affect the way in which others perceive us within this relatively close social world. (p. 1)

Ganga & Scott (2006) further argue for the advantage the researcher insider has by stating that as insiders it is easy to take-for-granted one's social proximity and the advantageous consequences this may have. Thus, it is important to understand the realism that such status gives our participants and us; a greater access to our private selves and a closer relationship with our population.

Banks (1998) portrays the arguments among insiders and outsiders by stating that researchers who are also insiders claim that only a member of their ethnic or cultural group is able to truly understand and accurately portray the group's culture because the connection and socialization within it gives them unique insights into the population.

In this study, I, the researcher, chose to employ snowball sampling in which the researcher reached out to a person from a Bosnian non-profit organization to help identify potential participants (Creswell, 2013). In addition, I have taken important steps to

monitor and guard against bias during the research by triangulation of data as well as initial assessment of data, such as member checks, peer debriefing, and intercoder reliability (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Furthermore, I employed the procedure to ask all participants questions in the same way, ensured individual privacy and chose a comfortable location for the participants (Maxwell, 2013). Application of these steps along with the researcher's positionality will allow me to address the limitations encountered in the study and avoid researcher bias.

As a researcher, I worked closely with the study participants and actively involved them in all stages of this research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As I collected stories, I was also involved in negotiating relationships, smoothing transitions, and being useful to the participants (Creswell, 2013). Together with my participants, we engaged in negotiating the meaning of the stories (as cited in Creswell, 2013). This means, "...within the participant's story may also be an interwoven story of the researcher gaining insight into her or his own life" (Huber & Whelan, 1999 as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 75). In addition, because I belong to the Bosnian-American community, I share their stories. I have walked in their shoes. I have the ability to feel the stories of these women first hand, and therefore include my own personal narrative as a Bosnian refugee and marry it with the Bosnian women who came to the United States as refugees. Even though, we come from different parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and while we may tell unique stories of our childhood, exile and integration, our stories intersect, representing an overarching narrative of the first generation Bosnian-American woman.

Belma's Story

As a child of war, fleeing war-torn Bosnia in a stranger's car on a snowy night on January 7, 1993, I was forced to leave everything behind, including my father. My father was not allowed to come with us. He was drafted into the army, and he had to stay. It would be two long years until my mother and I reunited with my father in Germany. On the night we fled, I was forced to leave behind everything I had known as a child.

I left my family, my classmates, my teacher and the playground at my school, which had been destroyed by grenades. I left my birth town, Zenica. Moreover, I was forced to leave my education behind. It was not until we crossed the nearest border into Croatia, that I remembered I had homework to finish. But that did not matter anymore. I could not do my homework, even if I wanted to. I watched my mother put only the most crucial items needed for survival in her purse. She packed our passports, some paperwork and a few photographs of family and friends, while I stuffed the pockets of my coat with snacks. There was no room for my school supplies or my favorite doll to remind me of peaceful times, laughter and play. All now a distant memory.



Figure 1.3 This photo was taken in September 1992 in front of the main entrance of my elementary school, Ivan Goran Kovačić. After the war, the name of my school was renamed to Musa Ćazim Ćatić, a prominent Bosniak poet of the Bosnian Renaissance at the turn of the 20th century. Here I am at the end of 1st grade with my class, days before school closure due to shelling. (Sadikovic, 2017)

On a Monday, the local radio station, Radio Beta Zenica, informed parents that it was safe enough for schools to reopen their doors to students and teachers. This was also around the time a new term started. Like most students, I spent my entire winter break inside or hiding in the basement of the apartment building during times of aggression. Unlike many children in Bosnia, I was lucky to have escaped the horrors of war. During the night hours of Thursday January 7, escaping into the unknown, I realized my life would never be the same. The war ripped me out of school yet again, sending me on a voyage I could not verbalize as a child. It disrupted my education, forced my father into an army uniform, took some of my family members and dear friends and most importantly it took my childhood. There is much more the war took that cannot be put into words. It set me on a journey of fear, distress, hardship, persistence, and hope.

That snowy January night in 1993 would be the start of a voyage I frequently recall. Arriving in Germany as a refugee student, I was put into remedial classes, separate from the students my age. At the beginning of the new school year, I was asked to repeat

second grade due to not completing second grade in Bosnia. While my German language was not up to par with regular class instruction, I also experienced other immense academic struggles. My Bosnian culture and the inability to master my second language quickly enough precluded me to integrate into the school culture or make friends. I spoke with an accent, and ate foods that looked much different from those of my peers. I felt ostracized by the school culture and the people in school. This is only fully understood in light of how it felt to be ignored.

After the end of the war in Bosnia, my mother received a letter of repatriation stating Germany, our host country, was no longer accountable for us. Through my mother's friend, we learned that the United States promised a permanent resettlement opportunity for refugees providing them a safe haven and the chance of a new start. As repatriation to Bosnia was not an option for my family because my parents were called traitors and received threats from some people who used to be their friends for fleeing Bosnia during the war, the refugee experience followed. At this point, I experienced another significant interruption in my education. In fact, it came to an abrupt end. My school friends, I once again tried very hard to make disappeared as quickly out of my life as they came into it. Yet again, on the day of my departure for the United States, I did not turn in my homework I worked on the evening before. This time, I knew I did not have to do my homework. I did it because I needed to be distracted from what was awaiting us the next morning.

On an utterly cold night of December 15, 2000, we finally reached the United States. My parents carried nothing more than a white bag labeled IOM, given to us by the officials of the International Organization for Migration prior to departure, and a small

orange sports bag, which entailed a few pieces of clothing and some photos that my mom carried with her since we initially escaped Bosnia. I carried a blue backpack filled with goodbye letters and memorabilia given to me by my friends that were meant to serve as memories and good-luck tokens. I still have everything tucked in my closet, including the blue backpack and a diary-like notebook, which I only recently started reading. It took much time and effort to compile enough emotional strength to be able to dive back into the raw realities of my experiences as a child. Some parts are difficult to revisit, like witnessing the bombing of my apartment, my school ground, the terror in my mother's eyes, and my father's tears. Those memories, especially during heavy waves of nostalgia, come back to life to haunt me. As frightening and painful as some of those memories can be, to me they serve as a reminder to be thankful for each new day. Sharing my story is also a way of healing. It is a way of getting to know myself.



Figure 1.4 This photo shows my parents and me sitting at the JFK International Airport in New York on December 15, 2000 waiting for our connecting flight to Boise. We finally arrived in Boise close to midnight on Sunday, December 16, 2000. In this photo, you can see me holding my light blue backpack. (Sadikovic, 2017)

In Boise, I did not start school again for several months. Under a different situation, I would be thrilled to not be held accountable for not going to school. But not this time. I had already been missing too much school, which created a huge gap in my education. Instead of going to school, I accompanied my parents in the “starting-over” process. Although, this was not the first time I had to step into the shoes of adulthood as a teen, this part of my life was extremely challenging. Because my broken English was better than both of my parents, I was the language broker. I was responsible for translating. So there I was, a teen who belonged in the classrooms of a school, turned into an amateur interpreter following my parents and our caseworker along.

Like all refugees during the initial months of resettlement, my family and I underwent medical examinations along with completing legal paperwork. This time I was placed directly in a language academy for newly arrived refugee students. The English Language Academy was housed in a junior high school. This language academy program was designed for incoming refugees and immigrants, who were of age to attend high school, but could not due to their novice English speaking skills. The refugee kids were not allowed to interact with any of the regular students. We had our own small part of the building downstairs, where we would hang out and go to class. While it was easy to leap from one class to another, it felt strange to not be able to go on lunch breaks with the American kids at the same time. It felt humiliating. We felt like outcasts.

I spent an academic year at the Language academy school with my fellow refugee peers until I was notified by my English teacher that my language skills were “good enough” to be placed into a mainstream high school. Despite pleading with my English teacher to keep me at the academy, my teacher insisted I “move on.” And there I was, on

one unusually pleasant February morning standing in front of a real American high school, staring at the tall stairs of the main entrance of Boise High School. It was my first day in a “real” American high school. I thought to myself, “it is impossible for me to succeed academically and make friends at this new school with my English skills consisting of a tourist’s vocabulary.”

Boise High School was just like the schools portrayed in American movies. Unlike my American peers, I experienced my very first day of 11th grade in the middle of spring semester; to be exact February of 2002. There I was, staring at the floor of my classroom. In my dreams, I still relive the day I was shoved into the classroom by the counselor. Next to me stood my English teacher. Trying to avoid the stares of my classmates, I continued to stare at the dirty brown carpet, clutching my textbook. Silence. Then I heard some chuckling. As if from afar, I hear the teacher speaking in a high pitched voice. I believe it was the adrenaline rushing through me that I barely deciphered what she had asked me. I was supposed to introduce myself to the class. With the little English I spoke, I produced a choppy yet quick introduction of myself, in a British accent that I acquired learning British English in Germany. I survived.

The next year and a half of high school called on my survival skills I mastered through my journeys as a refugee child. Although, I learned at a fast pace I was never good enough because I spoke with an accent, never on the same level as my peers because I couldn’t make friends. I didn’t want to stand out. I wanted to fit in. I just wanted to belong. A few months passed. I tried to stay under the radar as much as possible, pretending to be a thinker so I didn’t have to speak English. As you can imagine, that didn’t fly with my English teacher. I was placed in a Study Skills class

where I met Mr. Bradbury. He was my Study Skills teacher. He was patient with me, and he wanted to get to know me beyond the “refugee” label. Over time, he learned about my strengths and flaws. Mr. B. as I called him was more than just a teacher, he became my mentor; and in a way, he saved me. Mr. B. was someone who I could talk to and trust. It was as if he understood this confusing world of a teenage refugee. Over time, with the help of Mr. B., I became more confident speaking and writing in English, which helped me excel academically.

One Friday Mr. B. sat down next to me and said, “What do you think if you and I go to the Career Center and fill out a college application?” First, I stared at him, and then I looked down and stared at my homework. I thought to myself, there was no way I could get accepted to a university, or pay for tuition! I’ve always dreamt of going to college but why would any university accept a refugee who doesn’t even speak English perfectly? Then, I quietly replied, “I am not good enough for college.” Silence. I did some more staring at my homework, and then I felt a hand on my left shoulder. “I want you to apply to Boise State University. It is here in Boise, so you don’t have to travel far from your family. Think about this. You have the whole weekend to think about it.” Mr. B’s voice sounded soothing. I nodded. I started thinking about the possibility of my dream to go to college becoming a reality. My heart jumped filled with joy! Immediately, my insecurities and unpleasant thoughts of failing college destroyed my happiness. Then, the bell rang shaking me out of my negative thoughts. I jumped up, and gathered my homework trying to avoid eye contact with him. Just as I was stepping out of the room, Mr. B. said loudly, “Belma, think about it. You don’t want to regret your decision.” I thought about what Mr. B. said all the way home. Mr. B was right. It would be a wise

choice to go to Boise State University because this way I would live at home and help my parents out. I felt obligated but not in a negative way to stay with my parents and contribute toward establishing our new lives. In fact, I wanted to stay close to my parents and be there for them as a way to pay back for what they have done for me, even if I had to sacrifice going out of state to study.

Mr. B. encouraged me to pursue higher education, helped me study for the ACT/SAT tests, and went to a college fair with me. He helped me get in touch with the TRiO program, which helps first generation low-income students apply to college. With the help of a patient TRiO adviser, Mr. Jim Wright, I successfully filled out my application and sent it off to Boise State University. Mr. Wright would come twice a week and meet with me in Mr. B.'s classroom to help me fill out scholarship applications. I was extremely thankful for Mr. B and Mr. Wright because my parents would not have been able to help me financially or academically. My parents nor I understood the process of applying for scholarships. Also, my English language skills were more advanced than my parents' English skills. With the dedication of my teacher, Mr. B. and my TRiO adviser, Mr. Jim Wright, I finally felt supported in my academic endeavors.

I started my new academic endeavors at Boise State University on August 26, 2003. My experiences as a refugee student pursuing college were intense, challenging, but mostly gratifying. In college, I felt that no one paid attention to my accent. In fact, some students were intrigued by it and would approach me and ask me where my accent is from. Of course, there were instances where I felt my academic and cultural knowledge clashed with the academic and cultural knowledge of my American born classmates. Certain aspects of my academic life highlighted those clashes.

In college, although I had grown to be more confident, I felt that I was at a disadvantage because I felt that, at times, my cultural knowledge, or the lack of, hindered me from effectively taking part in certain class conversations and succeeding academically in courses such as my English writing course. Finding myself oftentimes on the receiving side and not being able to meaningfully contribute enforced the notion that not all knowledge is valued equally. I was familiar with the Bosnian and German culture and language. However, the fact that I was not yet fully familiar with the American culture outweighed the cultural wealth that I already possessed. It was then that I realized the magnitude that cultural and social wealth had on my academic success, acculturation, and social mobility. Instances such as these led me to study hard and grow to my full potential academically. The harder I worked to educate myself the clearer I was able to see the effect education had on my social mobility in my new community. With an education, I was able to open some doors of opportunities that were previously out of my reach. In the midst of my mostly unpredictable journey as a refugee, education provided stability in my life.

Understanding the positive effect education had on my cultural and social wealth I decided to become an educator by profession. Higher education helped me develop myself and rise to my full potential, and I wanted to share the power of education with the rest my community. My journey toward obtaining an education is an account that shines light toward reaching for the American Dream for someone who is foreign to its new country. While I was able to succeed and achieve the American Dream, not many refugees do. Refugees have a history of being cast in a negative spotlight as ones who do not contribute to the wellbeing of our society. Based on my own story and the stories

shared by many other refugees across the country, it is to conclude that refugees are eager to contribute, only if they are given the opportunity to effectively integrate and become self-sufficient. For refugees education is the pillar of growth, stability, and healing. Education is key for effective integration and self-sufficiency. By being given the opportunity to obtain an education, I learned to read, speak and write in English. My education provided the opportunity to positively contribute to my new community. An education allowed me to find myself on the giving side of things. I contribute and work with many communities. I am now part of my community. Education gave me a voice and a purpose in life. It gave me the power to share my story with you. I no longer need to survive. I am healing.



Figure 1.5 This photo was taken on Saturday, April 2, 2016 during a break at the TEDxBoise Conference. As a speaker, I presented my story on “What it Feels like to be a Refugee.” (Sadikovic, 2017)

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

“No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark.”

-Warsan Shire, Teaching my mother how to give birth. 2011

Review of the Literature Overview

This literature review builds on existing educational research that has been conducted about refugee populations in the United States and across the world. I will utilize a multidisciplinary approach to provide a detailed understanding of the purpose for my research study. The focus of this study is to explore the effect college education had on Bosnian women who resettled to the United States as refugees, and how education affected their self-sufficiency and overall integration into their new communities.

I will draw on multiple disciplines to comprise various perspectives, and render a unique view of the terrain that should be considered when working with the refugee population. The literature review will provide a comprehensive review of the existing literature on adult refugee student experiences in U.S. higher education. The literature provides an understanding of the larger historical, political and social contexts, portraying the struggles of the refugees’ during their integration process and progress toward self-sufficiency, as well as, socio-cultural factors that affect their ability to navigate the facets of higher education.

This literature review contains three sections: the first section examines the distinctions between refugees and other immigrant populations; the second section covers an exploration of refugees and their resettlement to the United States from historical and political perspectives; and the third section provides a contemporary look at refugees in

higher education in the United States and the role of higher education as a factor in refugee integration and self-sufficiency.

Who are Refugees?

Colson (2003) defined the twentieth century as the “century of the refugee” (p. 1). This classification arose because of the rising numbers of uprooted populations due to ongoing conflicts in the developing world (Hein, 1993). The report titled *The State of the World’s Children* (2001) by The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), stated that on any day there are more than 20 conflicts being fought in the world, most of which are in poor and developing countries (as cited in Carballo, M., Smajkic, A., Zeric, D., Dzidowska, M., Gebre-Medhin, J., & Van, H. J., 2004). While wars are no new phenomenon, not until the later portion of the 20th century was a greater concern exhibited for civilians in conflict areas (Carballo et al., 2004).

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the high number of conflicts has led to an increase in population displacements (Carballo et al., 2004, UNHCR, 2000). These conflicts have resulted in religious and/or ethnic persecution, causing women, children, and men to flee their home countries (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2001; Doyle, 2004). Many are forced out of their homes with little or no warning. Uprooted individuals experience immediate danger of being captured or killed as they flee across borders into other countries in efforts to seek refuge by which they become refugees (Cortes, 2001; Hein, 1993; Schmid, 2001; Doyle, 2004).

“Refugee” in Research Literature

Once outside of their country, most refugees cannot return home or they are reluctant to return because of fear of persecution (Kunz, 1973; Hein, 1993). The UNHCR

indicates that at as of the end of December 2015 there were 65.5 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, of which 21.3 million consisted of refugees. However, about 16.1 million refugees worldwide are registered by the UNHCR, while the United Nations Relief and Works Agency has registered 5.2 million Palestinian refugees (UNHCR, 2015). Various countries including Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon, and Germany temporarily host incoming refugees, while countries, such as the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom permanently resettle refugees from war-torn countries (UNHCR, 2015).

For several decades, the influx of refugees to the United States has been holding a steady pace. According to the U.S. Department of State, the United States recognizes permanent resettlement as a long-term solution to the refugee plight and has a history of welcoming refugees (U.S. Department of State, 2016). Since 1975, the United States has welcomed almost 3.2 million refugees from across the world (UNHCR, 2015; U.S. Department of State, 2016). Refugees who have permanently resettled to the U.S. have built new lives, futures, and communities in towns and cities in all 50 states (U.S. Department of State, 2016).

In research literature, the terms “refugee” and “immigrant” is oftentimes used interchangeably. The lack of clarity about what encompasses the term “refugee” generates nebulousness and confusion. Disagreements about key terms, such as migrant, immigrant, and refugee, in the literature is common among researchers (Stein, 1981; Portes & Bach, 1985; Pryor 2001; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001 as cited in McBrien 2005a). Hein (1993) explains that immigrants constitute an economic form of migration, while refugees constitute a political form. However, empirical research has failed to consider

crucial differences that distinguish “economical immigrants” from “refugee immigrants” (Cortes, 2001). Most studies that incorporate refugees “tend to remain under the rubric of “immigrant” studies” (Mosselson, 2002, p. 20). Furthermore, various disciplines describe the term ‘refugee’ differently, even though the UNHCR defines refugees as persons with a “well founded fear of persecution” as the key term for defining a refugee by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 1951 Refugee Convention Act (Hein, 1993; UNHCR, 2010).

Even though there has been a steady influx of refugees to the United States, particularly over the past few decades, research on resettled refugees to the United States is marginal (Ahearn & Athey, 1991). Resettlement to the United States happens for various reasons and under different circumstances therefore, immigrants cannot be referred to or treated as a “homogenous group of individuals” (Cortes, 2001, p. 465). Cortes (2001) suggests that immigrants can be separated into at least two discrete groups: “refugee immigrants” who flee their homes due to persecution and war, and “economic immigrants” who voluntarily move from their homes in search of better jobs and economic prosperity. Ogbu (1982) explains that unlike immigrants, refugees are not voluntary minorities. Involuntary minorities “have been conquered, colonized or enslaved” (Ogbu & Simons, 1998, p. 165). Individuals who choose to move on voluntary terms have different motivations, whereas refugees’ movement is initiated acutely, and is forced (Kunz, 1973; Stein, 1981; Haines, 1996; Ogbu & Simons 1998; Cortes, 2001; Segal & Mayadas, 2005).

Refugees are a distinct “social type” (Kunz, 1973, p. 130). Based on the internationally proclaimed definition of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 1951 Refugee Convention Act, a refugee is,

An individual who owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or, who, not having a nationality or being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (Kunz, 1973, p. 130)

Each discipline makes inadequate distinctions between refugees and immigrants, blurring the lines between the two. In addition, the world perspective makes limited distinctions between immigrants and refugees (Portes & Bach, 1985). For government officials, the significant part of UNHCR’s definition of refugee is “well founded fear of persecution”, whereas for social scientists, the key concept is that refugees “break ties with the home state and seek protection from a host state through migration” (Kunz, 1973, p. 130). By crossing the international border, uprooted individuals become refugees, and those who stay within their country of origin are displaced persons (Kunz, 1973; Stein, 1981; Haines, 1996; Doyle, 2004). From historical/political perspectives, an immigrant is an individual who moves for economic reasons, whereas a refugee is termed an individual who flees for political reasons and due to war (Cortes, 2001; Schmid, 2001; Stewart, 2011).

Differentiations between Refugees and Immigrants

While the concepts of “immigrant” and “refugee” are intermixed, the line between the two different populations is blurred. Although research tends to label refugees under the umbrella concept of immigrants, a refugee is indeed a special category of immigrant.

Various foundational characteristics differentiate between an immigrant and a refugee. Whereas the views of the concept of what defines a refugee are in conflict among interdisciplinary research, the key differentiations between immigrants and refugees varies between voluntary versus involuntary movement, as well as the diversity between the immigrant and refugee experience (Hein, 1993). Therefore, a vital factor in determining the foundational difference between an immigrant and a refugee is that the majority of immigrant populations emigrate from their native country due to economic opportunities, while refugees flee their country due to imminent danger to their lives and the lives of their family. Furthermore, voluntary migration, which pertains to immigrants while involuntary migration pertains to the refugee situation, is the key concept in understanding the refugee experience, and the response to forced migration (Kunz, 1973, Stein, 1981; Hein, 1993). Another key factor that distinguishes immigrants from refugees is that most economic immigrants bring assets such as money, and other valuable goods with them to their new country, whereas refugees may not bring any financial resources with them due to acute relocation (Stein, 1981).

A significant factor that distinguishes an immigrant from a refugee is that refugees are not able to choose the new country to which they are resettling (Kunz, 1973; Cowart & Cowart, 2002 as cited in McBrien, 2005a). Mosselson (2002b) discusses the difference in immigrants' and refugees' control of their futures:

Immigrants exercise a measure of control over their futures as they prepare and plan for emigration. Refugees, in contrast, are compelled to leave their home and homeland usually by force and often on short notice. They have little choice about where they go and typically never have the possibility to return home. They often find themselves without a state, without citizenship, without nationality, and without a home. (p. 21)

In most cases, refugees are unable to visit or return to their initial country due to occupation or destruction of their property as well as fear of persecution, whereas immigrants have the ability to visit or return to their home country (Cortes, 2001). McBrien (2005a) notes that trauma and psychological illness is a differentiating factor between refugees and immigrants. While both immigrants and refugees experience stress in the process of migration, and when exposed to new surroundings, the possibility that refugees suffer from psychological illnesses and trauma are more likely than immigrants (McBrien, 2005a).

Defining what it means to be a Refugee

Hostile experiences such as physical and mental torture, witnessing killings, and living in unsanitary conditions, affect the everyday lives of refugees. After resettlement, refugees must also adjust to new surroundings as well as engage in social interactions, educational and professional experiences (Kunz, 1973). However, the capacity to overcome adversity and to keep pushing forward and start life anew in a new country in spite of misfortune, demonstrates astonishing resilience (Spaulding, 2009). Displacement due to war and persecution (Stein 1981; Hein 1993), having no control of their future (Mosselson, 2002b), and physical destination (Kunz, 1973) provide a more in-depth understanding of the psychological and emotional effect migration has on refugees (Kunz, 1973). Experiences of war, trauma and stress during forced migration negatively affects mental health, trust and building of relationships, learning a new language, residence and community patterns (Stein, 1981; Haines, 1996; Cortes 2001; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2000 as cited in Roxas, 2011).

Furthermore, language differences among native and host culture affect refugees' ability to adjust to their new environment and to pursue an education or to pursue professional opportunities (Hein, 1993; McBrien, 2005b; Garrett, 2006; Hartog & Zorlu, 2009; Besic & McBrien 2012). (Kunz, 1981; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Besic & McBrien, 2012) The inexistence of the freedom of choice and movement is a significant cause of distress and a central source of hopelessness (Ogbu, 1991). Adverse experiences influence the adjustment and can obstruct the ability for refugees from pursuing new opportunities in their new home.

Defining what it Feels Like to be a Refugee

To be a refugee goes beyond a word or a label—it is an experience. Refugees are agents of repeated violence, discrimination, and trauma in their countries of origin (Kunz 1973; DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang, 2007, as cited in Roxas, 2011). They are witnesses of trauma, and many are survivors being victims of torture. Enduring rape or torture and witnessing killings of family members, many refugees suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002; Tollefson, 1989 as cited in McBrien, 2005a). Their adverse histories may negatively affect the adjustment in their new settings. Their ability to adapt to a different environment is overwhelmingly more challenging than the immigrant population (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Surviving the upheaval of war and the violence of refugee camps indicates refugees' determination to live and succeed when given a new opportunity at life.

Refugees are eager to start life anew; however, after experiencing trauma and suffering, many refugees have the tendency to approach their new home country with mixed feelings (Stein, 1981; LaCroix, 2004). Unlike immigrants, refugees fled their

homes to escape imminent danger (Kunz, 1973). While immigrants make a mindful decision on their new destination, refugees take a “plunge” into the “unknown” (Kunz, 1973, p.173; Stein, 1981, p. 326). While many factors intersect the experiences of refugees, particularly given their violent past and acute resettlement, there is a tendency to see refugees from the same country as a homogenous group, which they are not (Kunz 1973, as cited in Stein 1981). “Refugees are people with an identity, a past, a history, a cultural heritage” (LaCroix, 2004, p. 147).

Individuals have uniquely experienced injustices forced upon them. Such severe experiences of violence and trauma will influence identity, values and beliefs, particularly when resettled to a new and foreign environment (LaCroix, 2004; McBrien, 2005a). Resettled individuals, who have experienced human rights violations, end up living among native residents, and like any human, they yearn to reestablish losses of work, school, community and religion (Stein, 1981; Guerrero, 2004). Refugees are eager to start their lives over again when they are given an opportunity to succeed and become independent in their new country (Stein, 1981; Cortes, 2001; Spaulding 2009).

History of Refugees in the U.S.

As defined by Section 101(a)(42) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), a refugee is a person who is unable or unwilling to return to his or her home country because of a “well-founded fear of persecution” due to race, membership in a particular social group, political opinion, religion, or national origin (UNHCR, 2010). This definition is founded on the United Nations 1951 convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, to which United States joined in 1968 (UNHCR, 2010; American Immigration Council, 2015). Post Vietnam War and the

following experience of resettling Indochinese refugees to the United States Congress passed the Refugee Act of 1980, which “incorporated the Convention’s definition into U.S. law and provides the legal basis for today’s U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP)” (UNHCR, 2010; American Immigration Council, 2015, p. 1).

The United States has long been a country for immigrants to seek refuge from segregation and oppression, from all around the world. The United States is currently the most “linguistically, culturally, religiously” and an “ethnically diverse nation in world history” (Howard, 2010, p. 39-40; Galbraith, 1996, p. 70; Prewitt, 2002 as cited in Spinelli, 2008, p. 101). According to the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau, nearly one person in five (or 47 million U.S. residents age five and older) spoke a language other than English at home in the year 2000 (U.S. Census, 2010). Historically the United States has welcomed refugees from across the world (Kunz, 1973; U.S. Department of State, 2016). The United States sees resettlement in a third country as a durable solution for the world’s most vulnerable refugees (U.S. Department of State, 2015; UNHCR, 2015). In Fact, the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) provides the opportunity of resettlement of refugees worldwide regardless of their “national origin, health status, occupational skills, or level of educational attainment” (U.S Department of State, 2015, p. 1).

Table 2.1 Historical Arrivals Broken Down by Region (1975 – Present)

Department of State Office of Admissions - Refugee Processing Center Refugee Admissions by Region Fiscal Year 1975 through 29-Feb-2016									
Cumulative Summary of Refugee Admissions									
Regions (Based on the Nationality of the Principal Applicant)									
Fiscal Year	Africa	Asia	Europe	Former Soviet Union	Kosovo	Latin America Caribbean	Near East South Asia	PSI	Total
1975	0	135,000	1,947	6,211	0	3,000	0	0	146,158
1976	0	15,000	1,756	7,450	0	3,000	0	0	27,206
1977	0	7,000	1,755	8,191	0	3,000	0	0	19,946
1978	0	20,574	2,245	10,688	0	3,000	0	0	36,507
1979	0	76,521	3,393	24,449	0	7,000	0	0	111,363
1980	955	163,799	5,025	28,444	0	6,662	2,231	0	207,116
1981	2,119	131,139	6,704	13,444	0	2,017	3,829	0	159,252
1982	3,412	73,755	11,109	2,760	0	580	6,480	0	98,096
1983	2,645	39,245	11,867	1,342	0	691	5,428	0	61,218
1984	2,749	51,978	10,096	721	0	150	4,699	0	70,393
1985	1,951	49,962	9,233	623	0	151	5,784	0	67,704
1986	1,322	45,482	8,503	799	0	131	5,909	0	62,146
1987	1,990	40,099	8,396	3,699	0	323	10,021	0	64,528
1988	1,593	35,371	7,510	20,411	0	2,497	8,368	733	76,483
1989	1,902	45,722 *	8,752	39,602	0	2,604	6,938	1,550	107,070
1990	3,453	51,598 *	6,094	50,628	0	2,305	4,979	3,009	122,066
1991	4,420	53,522 *	6,837	39,226	0	2,253	5,342	1,789	113,389
1992	5,470	51,899 *	2,915	61,397	0	3,065	6,903	882	132,531
1993	6,967	49,817 *	2,582	48,773	0	4,071	6,987	251	119,448
1994	5,860	43,564 *	7,707	43,854	0	6,156	5,840	0	112,981
1995	4,827	36,987 *	10,070	35,951	0	7,629	4,510	0	99,974
1996	7,604	19,321 *	12,145	29,816	0	3,550	3,967	0	76,403
1997	6,065	8,594 *	21,401	27,331	0	2,996	4,101	0	70,488
1998	6,887	10,854 *	30,842	23,557	0	1,627	3,313	0	77,080
1999	13,043	10,206 *	24,497	17,410	14,161	2,110	4,098	0	85,525
2000	17,561	4,561 *	22,561	15,103	0	3,232	10,129	0	73,147
2001	19,020	4,163 *	15,794	15,983	0	2,975	11,956	0	69,891
2002	2,551	3,512 *	5,459	9,969	0	1,934	3,706	0	27,131
2003	10,714	1,724 *	2,506	8,744	0	455	4,260	0	28,403
2004	29,104	8,084 *	9,254	0	0	3,577	2,854	0	52,873
2005	20,745	12,076 *	11,316	0	0	6,699	2,977	0	53,813
2006	18,126	5,659 *	10,456	0	0	3,264	3,718	0	41,223
2007	17,483	15,643 *	4,560	0	0	2,976	7,620	0	48,282
2008	8,935	19,489 *	2,343	0	0	4,277	25,147	0	60,191
2009	9,670	19,850 *	1,997	0	0	4,857	38,280	0	74,654
2010	13,305	17,716 *	1,526	0	0	4,982	35,782	0	73,311
2011	7,685	17,367 *	1,228	0	0	2,976	27,168	0	56,424
2012	10,608	14,366 *	1,129	0	0	2,078	30,057	0	58,238
2013	15,980	16,537 *	580	0	0	4,439	32,390	0	69,926
2014	17,476	14,784 *	959	0	0	4,318	32,450	0	69,987
2015	22,472	18,469 *	2,363	0	0	2,050	24,579	0	69,933
2016	8,240	4,836 *	1,270	0	0	356	8,124	0	22,826
Total	334,909	1,465,845	318,682	596,576	14,161	126,013	410,924	8,214	3,275,352

(Source: U.S. Department of State, 2016)

Throughout history individuals who fled war and persecution in their country of origin made the United States their new home. Many populations from Europe, Asia, the former Soviet Union, Africa and Latin America/Caribbean, who experienced human rights violations, have made the United States their home. Since 1975, the United States has resettled approximately 3.2 million refugees, more than half of them being children and women (Cutts, 2000; Torres, 2001; UNHCR, 2015). Refugee resettlement has been on the rise due to various different conflicts across the world (see Figure 3.2, *Refugee Admission by Region*). The United States admits half of the refugee population; the rest of the accepting countries resettle the other half - for refugees, 1 in every 100 is resettled- (U.S Department of State, 2013a.; UNHCR, 2015).

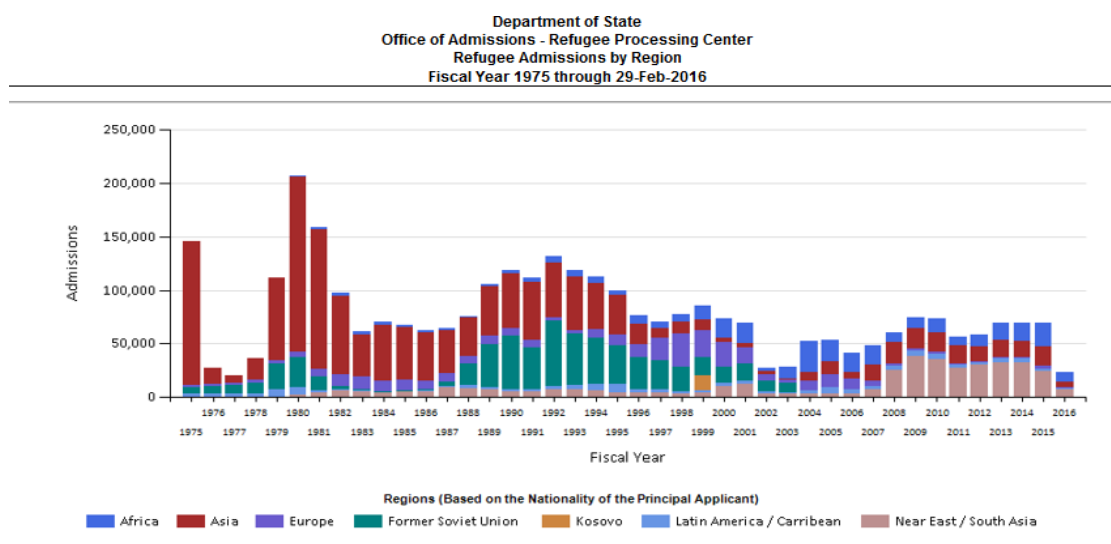


Figure 2.1 Refugee Admission by Region. Source: Refugee Processing Center. (2016)

The President of the United States, in consultation with Congress, determines the numerical ceiling for refugee admissions each year (American Immigration Council, 2015). However, the number of refugees admitted to the United States can be adjusted.

According to the U.S. Department of State (2016) the proposed ceiling for Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 has risen to 110,000 due to 14,000 unallocated admission numbers, The unallocated reserve serves only if additional refugee admissions from any region are needed. The proposed ceiling for FY 2016, was 85,000 (U.S. Department of State, 2015). In Fiscal Year, 2015, the Administration aimed to reach the ceiling of 70,000 refugee arrivals established by the President. From the Office of the Spokesperson at the U.S. Department of the State (2016):

Refugees survive terrible ordeals: torture, upheaval, perilous journeys, and tremendous loss. They are persecuted because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or social group. Today, due to conflict and repression, there are nearly 20 million refugees in the world. For a small number of the most vulnerable of these refugees, the United States strives to provide a new start through refugee resettlement. (p. 1)

According to the U.S Department of State (2015), the United States is a world leader in providing humanitarian aid. Innocent people fleeing from crises consider the United States as the most desirable destination for refugee resettlement by the UN refugee agency (UNHCR as cited in U.S. Department of State, 2015). The United States has come a long way to become the top choice for refugee resettlement. Not until more recently did the United States have proper and sustainable solutions to offer refugees upon resettlement.

Table 2.2 Refugee Admissions In Fy 2015 And FY 2016. Proposed Refugee Admissions By Region For Fy 20172

REGION	FY 2015 ACTUAL ARRIVALS	FY 2016 CEILING	FY 2016 PROJECTED ARRIVALS	PROPOSED FY2017 CEILING
Africa	22,472	25,000	27,500	35,000
East Asia	18,469	13,000	14,000	12,000
Europe and Central Asia	2,363	4,000	4,000	4,000
Latin America/Caribbean	2,050	3,000	1,500	5,000
Near East/South Asia	24,579	34,000	38,000	40,000
Regional Subtotal	69,933	79,000	85,000	96,000
Unallocated Reserve		6,000		14,000
Total	69,933	85,000	85,000	110,000

(Source: U.S. Department of State, 2016)

Displaced Persons Act of 1948 and the 1951 Refugee Convention

Since World War II, conflicts among and within countries produced the largest number of refugees (Zollberg, et. al, 1989 as cited in Hein 1993). Prior to the 1948 Displaced Persons Act and the 1951 Refugee Convention in Geneva, several significant events occurred affecting the refugee resettlement experience and pushed for laws, policies and change toward a humane approach in the case of working with and on behalf of the refugees. The Displaced Persons Act of 1948 delivered a new immigration policy focusing on providing a durable solution towards permanent resettlement of refugees (U.S. Immigration Legislation, n.d.)

The Displaced Persons Act of 1948 signed into law was for the persons who were victims of the Nazi government during World War II and could not go back to Germany

due to fear of being persecuted based on race, religion, and/or political views. This policy, however, was also intended to keep the gifted and talented refugees in the United States. The U.S. government knew some refugees would bring useful skills and abilities that might be of benefit for the economy and broader community (Haines, 1996).

According to the *United States Policy toward Jewish Refugees* from 1941-1952, (n.d.) this act called for strategies for refugees to assimilate and, while assisting them in finding employment and housing, the vision is that the United States would also benefit from the refugees resettling (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d.). While the United States may have accommodated those who brought specific skills and abilities with them, the ones lacking formal and practical skills did not receive the same treatment, and their integration stage had been jeopardized. There were still many loopholes in the third phase of migration. Specific services were provided to certain people only (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d.).

On July 28, 1951, at the convention in Geneva, a law was signed into effect relating to the status of refugees, providing a clear definition of who is a refugee, their rights and legal obligations of the states where refugees have been resettled (UNHCR, 2010). This policy would allow international agencies to collaborate on the support and aid for refugees in the resettlement stage and beyond. According to Loescher, G., Betts, A., & Milner, J. (2008) the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was established by the United Nations General Assembly on December 14, 1950 with the vision to fulfill its work in three years (p. 13). On July 28, 1951, the basic statute guiding UNHCR's work was created and adopted (Loescher, et al., 2008, p. 14). It was in 1956 when UNHCR became more heavily involved, which was after the

Hungarian revolution and the Russian intervention. From those two major occurrences it was clear that the UNHCR would be needed in the near future for reasons such as the major conflicts witnessed during and after World War II.

Again, after the decolonization of Africa, there was a need for UNHCR's presence and work to provide refugees protection and a safe place to stay. UNHCR's focus was not have to return refugees to an unsafe area, their country of origin, where they faced both persecution and prosecution. The purpose and foundation of UNHCR, which holds true to this date, twofold: to assist refugees to safely resettle to another country, and to also be actively involved in local integration of war torn counties.

The motivation for UN action in 1951 was to rebuild Europe after World War II. The impetus for such action was particularly for the seven million Europeans unable to return to their homelands (Marrus, 1985 as cited in Hein, 1993). Loescher et al (2008), denotes that throughout history the UNHCR has been doing a good job in providing humanitarian assistance to the "people of concern"; advocating that every human should be able to practice the right to seek refuge, in other words asylum, in another country if he or she fears of prosecution in the country of origin (p. 42).

Organizations Involved in the Plight of Refugees: World War I to Present

A precursor organization just after WWII that preceded the UNHCR was United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). Largely supported by the United States, an international relief agency representing 44 nations, UNRRA was founded in 1943. This branch became a part of the UN in 1945 and closed its doors in 1947 (Loescher et al., 2008, p. 9). Its sole purpose was to closely work with charities and organizations to help support and provide food, shelter, and clothing among many other

necessities to people, especially those who had been hit heaviest not having any basic necessities to survive and function in time of war.

Loescher et al, (2008) stated that the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) was a precursor of the UNHCR, also established in 1943 and existed until the end of WWII (p. 9). Unlike, the UNHCR, SHAEF perceived the displaced population as a problem and a risk to “social and political order in Europe” and focused on the efforts of coordinating the return of hundreds of thousands displaced of people back to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union (Loescher et al, 2008, p. 9-10).

A more modern approach to refugee resettlement and resolving the needs of refugee populations other than SHAEF was the International Refugee Organization (IRO) (see Table 1), which was established on April 20, 1946. The purpose of this organization was to attend to the immense refugee plight created by World War II (Loescher et al, 2008). It was only after the IRO that states recognized “the right of refugees not to be repatriated against their will”, and a universal definition of “persecution or fear of persecution” based on the grounds of religion, nationality, race or political action was adopted (Loescher et al, 2008, p. 11).

Operations of the IRO concluded in 1952, which prompted the UNHCR to replace it. The purpose of founding the UNHCR on December 14, 1950 by the United Nations General Assembly was to fulfill a specific mandate, which is the refugee protection, in particular to offer such population legal protection (UNHCR, 2010). Throughout the years, it is clearly visible that the needs have been greater than to just protect and assist refugees. With its growing demand, and a limited budget along with the lack of a workforce, it is not an easy task for the UNHCR to provide and cater to the demands.

Initially, refugees who were forced to leave their countries and stateless people were under the protection of the 1951 Refugee Convention. Since the 1990s the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) increased, which contributes to the pressure on the UNHCR to fulfill its job in a timely fashion (Loescher et al, 2008, p. 104 - 105). It is expected for more need to rise and require the assistance of UNHCR to take care of those who are displaced.

Table 2.3 List of Organizations with Timeline

<p>1920 - The League of Nations (LN), an intergovernmental organization founded by conquering powers on January 10, 1920. The result of the Paris Peace Conference ending WWI spurred the launching of the League of Nations. The LN had several goals, which included disarmament, negotiating in the settlement of disagreements between countries, improving global welfare, and using collective security and diplomacy to prevent war.</p>
<p>1943 - Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF), a predecessor of the UNHCR. Established in late 1943 and existed until the end of WWII. SHAEF dissolved on July 14, 1945. SHAEF perceived displaced population as a problem and a risk to “social and political order in Europe” and focused on the efforts on organizing the return of hundreds of thousands displaced people back to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.</p>
<p>1943 - United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) founded on November 9, 1943. An international relief agency, mainly supported by the United States but representing 44 nations. UNRRA became part of the United Nations in 1945, and shut down operations in 1947. UNRRA’s purpose was to closely work with charities and organizations to help support and provide food, shelter, and clothing among many other necessities to people, especially those who had been hit heaviest not having any basic necessities to survive and function in time of war.</p>
<p>1946 - International Refugee Organization (IRO) established on April 20, 1946. The IRO concluded its operations in 1952, prompting the UNHCR to replace it. The IRO was the first international agency to deal comprehensively with all aspects pertaining to refugees' lives. Its purpose was to attend the massive refugee plight created by World War II.</p>
<p>1950 - Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), also known as the UN Refugee Agency, formed on December 14, 1950. UNHCR succeeded the earlier UNRRA. The UNHCR strives to ensure that each individual has the ability to seek asylum and find a shelter in another country with the choice to voluntarily repatriate or to resettle in a third country.</p>

(Source: Adapted from UNHCR, 2015.)

However, ineffective national and local policies and laws can hinder the assistance available for uprooted civilians, and obstruct the process of migration (Axinn & Levin, 1975; Hein 1993; Balgopal, 2000). To understand the patterns in policies and resettlement of refugees to the U.S. it is important to understand the impacts international and national resettlement policies have on refugees and the resettlement process to the United States (Hein, 1993). Refugees throughout history and in many parts of the world have faced intense trauma during all three stages of migration (Kunz 1973; Stein 1981; Cortes, 2001). Traumas faced during migration have serious consequences on the individual, but also the broader community (Balgopal 2000). “Physical and mental illnesses, cultural exclusion, and marginalization” make integration to the new life in a foreign country more difficult (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002, p. 51).

Stages of Migration: Premigration, Transit and Resettlement

Each uprooted person undergoes a unique journey of migration to safety (Kunz, 1973). Literature on refugee migration indicates three major stages a refugee takes during migration. While researchers characterize each stage using a different term, the stages represent the three major steps a refugee undertakes towards safety. Potocky-Tripodi (2002) represents three stages of migration: premigration/departure, transit, and resettlement. Miller et al., (2002) characterize and divide the journey of a refugee into three stages: pre-migration, in transit, and post migration.

During each stage, a refugee goes through a great deal of trauma (Kunz, 1973; Potocky-Tripodi, 2002; Miller et al., 2002). Refugees from various countries differ in stages and types of trauma that they have experienced during the three stages of migration. Refugees from one country may differ in their education, socio-economic

status, along with other factors that play a role in the integration stage once resettled to the United States (Kunz 1973, Stein 1981, Cortes 2001). Comparing refugees from various regions of the world may also differ vastly by the economic status of their native country and their personal socio-economic standing and education (Cortes, 2001). Therefore, each refugee resettled required individualized assistance and attention for resettling to the United States.

The first stage is premigration (departure stage). This stage is where refugees flee their native land due to social, political, and/or economic factors. This stage may be the most traumatic stage. Individuals may live in life-threatening circumstances Potocky-Tripodi (2002). Individuals may have witnessed killings of families and other human rights violations (Stein, 1981).

The second stage is the transit stage. At this stage, refugees may have fled to camps or are temporarily residing in a neighboring country awaiting departure to a safe country willing to take them on permanently (United Nations Commissioner for Refugees, 2002; Kunz 1973; Stein 1981).

The third stage of migration is the resettlement stage. This step could be seen as a lasting stay in a new country. This stage includes engagement with resettlement agencies, social workers or personnel working to provide services to the newly resettled refugees (Miller et al., 2002).

Premigration (Departure Stage). A refugee's migration is forced. The refugee's journey is often "unplanned, chaotic, and dangerous" (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002, p. 53). In the process of preparing and leaving for safety many may find themselves in dangerous situations escaping adverse circumstances (Miller et al., 2002). During this stage, the

premigration (departure stage), a vast number of refugees go through many traumatic experiences such as witnessing killings, rape, famine, torture, and being subjected to discrimination leading to premigration. (Balgopal, 2000, p. 35).

Transit Stage. Uprooted persons leave their native country as a refugee and flee in efforts to find a refuge from the dangerous circumstances happening in their native land in the transit stage (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002). The transit stage can also be very dangerous due to people having to walk for long hours in harsh conditions with “little or no food or water, along with the fear of being caught by the enemies and being killed. Sometimes people flee to neighboring countries and mostly end up in refugee camps” (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002, p. 52). While camps serve as a refuge, they also come with dangerous circumstances such as living in unsanitary conditions, not having clean water or food to eat, and the fear of being raped (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002). In this stage, refugees are in a transitional stage waiting to be relocated to a permanent place. Sometimes this transitional stage can turn into years of waiting to be relocated to a permanent country.

Resettlement Stage. This stage can be very challenging physically and mentally for the refugees resettling to their new home country. In this stage of migration, refugees deal with language and cultural obstacles. Many refugees feel uneasy about the type of reception from their new country and its people (Stein, 1981; LaCorix, 2004). Financial stability and opportunity to reclaim dignity, affect how refugees acculturate and prosper in the new land. “Occupational and economic adjustment is crucial to adult refugees' acculturation in a new country, as much as educational success is essential for refugee children's acculturation” (Stein, 1979 as cited in McBrien, 2005b, p. 330-331). However,

the lack or inexistence of acceptance and a support system can add to the trauma on these individuals (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002).

While other countries partake in the relocation program with the agency on a small scale, United States is considered the world's most active country in taking part in refugee resettlement (U.S Department of State, 2015). Thus, as the influx of refugees are at a steady pace, bringing with them different cultures, languages, norms, and customs, to the mainstream world of nationals of their host country (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Cortes, 2001; Ngo, 2010). Refugees feel the pressure to accommodate to their new ways of life (Stein 1981; Besic & McBrien, 2012). Members of society, including neighbors, resettlement agencies, teachers, and other members of institutions actively partake in collaborative efforts with refugees in efforts to encourage self-sufficiency and prosperity of New Americans⁶ (Stein 1981; Potocky-Tripodi 2002; McBrien 2005b; Kanno & Varghese 2010). Opportunities at establishing a new life in a safe environment may lead to healing and overcoming of traumatic experiences (Potocky-Tripodi 2002; Besic & McBrien, 2012). Thus, any inconsistencies between expectations of newly arrived refugees and reality faced in the United States to hastily integrate, can add to stress and trauma during the initial process of resettlement as well as affect the ability to become self-sufficient (Stein, 1981). In Chodon's (2008) study on Tibetan women in higher education, findings indicate that education is the driving force toward economic mobility, and that education is a crucial path toward securing a job or a

⁶ The White House Task Force on New Americans (2015) defines New Americans as, "An all-encompassing term that includes foreign-born individuals (and their children and families) who seek to become fully integrated into their new community in the United States". p.54

successful career. Like many minority groups, “Tibetans want to share the American Dream and consider higher education as a means to this end, (Chodon, 2008, p. 53).

Refugees and the Political Perspectives on Resettlement

U.S. policy on refugees, demonstrates that the U.S. Resettlement Program (USRP), which formed during the Refugee Act of 1980 and is a “longstanding public-private partnership”, offers specific goals established to aid refugees resettled to the United States (Refugee Council USA, 2011, p. 2). “The Departments of Homeland Security (DHS), State and Health and Human Services (HHS) work together to uphold America’s humanitarian response to refugees through the U.S. Resettlement Program (USRP)” (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2015). Despite the collaboration with national agencies whose primary focus is to provide necessary assistance to refugees, efficient aid and support that is provided to refugees is insufficient (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002; Wessels, 2014). In Rumbaut & Ima’s (1988) study *The adaptation of Southeast Asian refugee youth*, researchers indicate that the response to the Refugee Act of 1980 whose main goal of the federal resettlement program is to "achievement of self-sufficiency as quickly as possible" for refugees admitted to the U.S., programmatic efforts have focused on the “placement of adults in regular employment” (p. 2).

Several decades later, the United States Resettlement Program continues to strive toward hasty employment as a means of self-sufficiency. Funding Refugee Assistance Programs that encapsulate short-term assistance⁷ such as the Cash and Medical Assistance Program (CMA) only provide resources for refugees for up to eight months from the date of arrival in the U.S. (Wessels, 2014). Such approaches only lead to

⁷ The duration of certain financial support for newly arrived refugees such the Cash and Medical Assistance Program (CMA) has been on the decline over time (Wessels, 2014).

discouragement, helplessness and dependency (Kunz 1973; Potocky-Tripodi 2002).

Dwyer (2010) argues that long-term refugee integration is not an immediate goal of the United States Resettlement Program as it aims at providing only immediate needs in areas such as housing, employment, food, transportation, and healthcare (Dwyer, 2010, p. 15).

While temporary resources may be available for the refugee population, which is vital to the initial resettlement stage, long-term solutions to aid in effective integration and self-sufficiency are not prominent. Researchers have indicated that education is crucial for restoring social and emotional healing (Huyck & Fields, 1981; Sinclair, 2001 as cited in McBrien 2005b). Education is a means of enabling refugees to acculturate leading towards becoming self-sufficient in their new country (Mosselson, 2002a; Ager & Strang, 2004). Thus, education is considered both an indicator of integration and a means of attaining it. However, education as tool for healing and a long-term solution for igniting the path to self-sufficiency and overall integration is not prominent in the U.S resettlement policy.

Providing newly arrived refugees short-term resources and ample long-term resources, such as education, occupational and personal prosperity enhances the chances for New Americans to engage in the healing process (Huyck & Fields, 1981; Sinclair, 2001 as cited in McBrien 2005b). Refugee support is mirrored in the same policy in which the government of the United States groups immigrants, particularly within the realm of education (NCES, 2009). Education as a key tool for healing, worthiness, and self-sufficiency is essential during post-resettlement (Sinclair, 2002; Mosselson, 2002a; Ager & Strang, 2004).

Physicians Altshuler, Scott & Careyva, (2011) argue that appropriate and effective medical assistance to the unique health needs of newly resettled refugees is often not adequately provided due to the refugee resettlement process being a rather hasty route to assimilation (2011, p. 1). After leaving the country of origin, it is typical that refugees register with the UNHCR (UNHCR 2010). This agency makes sure that the individual qualifies as a refugee under international law. Once qualified, one of several agencies can refer the refugee to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). The agencies that can refer refugees to this program are the UNHCR, the United States Embassy or one of the authorized non-governmental organizations (NGO). The next step is for a regional Resettlement Support Center (RSC) to prepare a case file for the individual or family. Then, the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (DHS/USCIS) will conduct an interview in order to determine if the individual or family qualifies as a refugee(s) under United States law (U.S. Department of State, 2013). Upon the approval of the case, the applicant and their family must have multiple medical examinations, which is mostly paid by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), go through security clearances, and complete a cultural orientation program (International Organization for Migration, 2012). The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) is the central agency for domestic refugee programs. The ORR assists refugees through its various programs and grants to achieve self-sufficiency and integration in the shortest time after arriving in the United States.

In the U.S., the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) works with Refugee Resettlement Agencies in each city to plan the final resettlement location (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2012). Once all of the above processes are completed, and after

the refugee and family members pass the security clearances, they are put on a plane to their new home (International Rescue Committee, n.d.). Their travel to the United States is costly, especially for a refugee family with multiple family members. While refugees do not have to pay any interest on their travel loan, they usually start paying their loans back after the first six months of resettlement to the United States (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, n.d.). Once refugees arrive at their new permanent location in the U.S., the resettlement agency is responsible for the refugee tasks such as; case management, resource management, job placement, cultural information, and in some cases basic English language learning (International Rescue Committee, n.d.).

Integration into a new community has many challenges (Kunz 1973; Stein 1981; Balgopal, 2000). Potocky-Tripodi (2002) captures the importance of quality resettlement services by stating, “This triangle of negativism- a disjointed family structure, the forced uprooting with multiple losses, and a xenophobic reception-contributes to the marginality of the refugee status and the dehumanization of the person” (p. 207). Historically, negative focus has been placed onto refugees, labeling the New Americans as ones who fail to contribute towards the economic wellbeing of economy and community (Weine, S. M., Ware, N., & Klebic, A., 2004). Refugees strive harder to regain control of their lives and future in a new country (Stein 1981, Cortes, 2001; Mosselson, 2002b, Spaulding 2009) by working menial jobs (McBrien, 2005b) despite the lack of English language proficiency (Zhou, 2001 as cited in McBrien, 2005b). Nonetheless, the United States resettlement policy prioritizes hasty integration that, more times than not, forces refugees to accept and work menial jobs, creating a vicious cycle of poverty and despair, hindering

educational opportunities, a key element toward self-sufficiency and overall integration (Stein, 1981, Cortes, 2001; Spaulding, 2009; Shakya et al., 2010).

Contemporary Look at Refugees Attending Higher Education

Throughout the last 50 years, the non-native born population of the United States has experienced significant changes in demographic distribution, as well as size and origins (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). “Since the mid-1970s, U.S. colleges and universities have experienced a dramatic increase in the population of immigrant students who entered the educational system as children and developed complex bi- or multilingual repertoires throughout their adolescence” (Roberge, 2009, as cited in Prado, 2013, p. 2). With the rapid demographic growth of foreign born populations contributing to more diversification, cultural customs and traditions, the United States has shown continuous struggles to accommodate populations that have been received into the country (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Besic & McBrien, 2012). In 2010, approximately 40 million foreign-born people, refugees, and immigrants lived in the United States representing 12.3 percent of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

The steady admittance of refugees to the United States places unique challenges not only on its economic and educational system but also on New Americans as well (McBrien, 2005b; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010; American Immigration Council, 2015). Providing permanent resettlement to refugees more than any other resettling country across the globe, the United States accentuates rapid employment over higher education and other educational opportunities. This move restricts refugees from accessing key elements toward self-sufficiency (Ager & Strang, 2004; Spaulding, 2009; Shakya et al. 2010). Vital resources such as education are considered fundamental toward the overall

social and economic mobility of refugees, but are difficult to obtain due to immediate emphasis on employment upon arrival. Language and cultural barriers as well as lack of cultural and social capital also affect success (Mosselson, 2002a, McBrien 2005b; Roxas 2011).

Unequal access to opportunities, including education, for immigrants has been documented throughout history in the United States (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Ngo, 2010). Education is a key indicator of integration as it enables the development of language skills, cultural literacy, social networking, and credentials that facilitate professional mobility (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Ager & Strang, 2004; McBrien, 2005a; Ngo, 2010; Roxas, 2011). Education is a critical element for successful integration and self-sufficiency (Shakya et al. 2010). Moreover, because refugees experience forced journeys, which is a cause of anguish and a central source of hopelessness (Ogbu, 1991), education is a crucial tool to reestablish social and emotional healing (Huyck & Fields, 1981; Sinclair, 2001 as cited in McBrien 2005b). “Education should be viewed an essential element of humanitarian response to crisis” (Sinclair 2001, as cited in McBrien, 2005, p. 338) where refugees are able to regain their freedom of choice and movement (Ogbu, 1991), creating a safe space for refugees to regain control of their lives and future (Mosselson, 2002b).

Reclaiming control over the current situation and their future in turn provides the opportunity for resettled refugees to learn to navigate their new surroundings, and gain cultural as well as social mobility. Moreover, education is an outlet for refugees to secure their individual growth and contribute to the communal prosperity. Education also acts as a key element for community building where New Americans have the ability to bridge

the refugee community and the broader community. The most crucial aspect of education, however, is the power of knowledge, voice, and leadership, which plays a vital role reclaiming the dignity, and voice of the otherwise voiceless community. Therefore, primary, secondary, and higher education, should serve as an outlet to promote intellectual growth, empower and encourage cultural and linguistic diversity and individual freedom, as it ought to preserve the abundant wealth of each individual creating a democracy.

Role of Education in Refugee Integration, and Self-Sufficiency

The histories that resettled refugees bring to the United States are diverse. Their unpleasant pasts are reflected in their everyday lives. Refugees come from many countries and many political, religious, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. While their migration paths are unique and reasons for resettlement varied, most refugees have experienced extended stays in refugee camps or urban areas within countries of first asylum (Dryden-Peterson, 2015). The average number of years a refugee spends in camps is about 17 years (UNHCR, 2015). Many camps lack basic things such as clean water, sufficient food, sanitary items, much less a classroom and qualified teachers (Dryden-Peterson, 2015).

Many refugees come with some or no education, yet some men and women come with highly educated backgrounds (Hein, 1987 as cited in Hein 1993; Cortes, 2001). Many refugees have experienced recurrent disruptions and some had limited or no access to formal education (Dryden-Peterson, 2015). For some refugees, their professions range from professors, business administrators, to lawyers, and medical doctors. Yet other refugee populations range from minimally literate in their native language to non-literate,

due to various factors such as the lack of educational opportunities in refugee camps or agricultural and tribal backgrounds (Stein, 1981; Kanno & Varghese, 2010).

However, given the numbers of refugees permanently resettled to the United States, only a small number of refugees attempt higher education post high school (McBrien 2005b; Roxas; 2011; Besic & McBrien, 2012). Several research studies conducted on refugee adolescent students in the U.S. public schools indicate that various factors including the ability for psychosocial adjustment of refugees, teachers, staff and parental support, as well as community engagement, play a crucial role in successful completion of high school, and envisioning higher learning (Mosselson 2002b; Ager & Strang, 2004; McBrien 2005b; Roxas 2011; Dryden-Peterson 2015). The notion of being able to effectively participate in their communities through financially contributing to family is another significant factor for refugees to obtain a college degree (Mosselson 2002a; Roxas 2011; Besic & McBrien, 2012).

Yet, prior experiences of refugees and their children affect the way they experience their new community and school and the ways they form relationships with their teachers and peers. Some of the tragic histories of resettled refugees are often hidden from their new neighbors, educators and peers due to factors such as language barriers, cultural norms, and the fear of being harassed or teased (Mosselson 2002a; McBrien 2005b; Roxas 2011). While the dream of pursuing an education in a field of higher learning may be present within the hearts and minds of our New Americans, the lack of effective communication and misstructured support system within schools and community outweighs their bridging into higher education.

Refugee Student Research in K-12 Education

There has been a plethora of research conducted on English Language Learners (ELLs) in the U.S. K-12 schools (Mosselson, 2002a; McBrien, 2005a; Roxas, 2008). Although studies such as Roberts's (1995) *Narrations of Identity: Life Histories of Refugee and Immigrant Students in School*, intermix refugee with the immigrant populations since they also fall into the category of ELLs, there has been a solid amount of research conducted on the refugee student population in the U.S. public schools. Ample research about refugee students in K-12 education has been written (Patnaik, 2014). Research on refugee children and youth can predominantly be found in doctoral dissertations.

While numerous studies intermix refugee students with immigrant students, especially when conducting research on English language acquisition and schooling experiences, the following studies in this review section specifically focus on refugee students. These three studies look specifically at the experiences of refugee students through diverse lenses such as self-identity, psychosocial trauma, and socio-cultural aspect of academic success. While looking at refugee student experiences in schools provides a richer understanding of the psychosocial aspect of navigating schools and students' academic motivation and success, the studies do not offer insight on how education affected their self-sufficiency, and overall integration into their new communities. However, one way to gain a more inclusive understanding into how refugee students amend to the educational experiences in the United States, is through an overview of such studies dedicated to documenting the refugee student experience, while focusing on specific refugee populations.

This section highlights three doctoral dissertation studies about refugee students in K-12. Roxas's study (2008) aimed to understand the "socio-cultural factors that influence and constrain the academic success of Somali Bantu male high school students", and contexts of reception of racial minority male students in the communities into which they have settled (p. 3). McBrien's (2005) study focused to explore the relationships between these attitudes, "concepts of self-identification and goals, and educational motivation in the refugee population" (p. 41) in refugee girls. Mosselson's, (2002) study looked at how self-identity and "the ways in which education and the ethnic enclaves affect, and are affected by," the flight and resettlement to the United States" (p. 107) with the Bosnian refugee students.

Roxas's (2008) dissertation study, *Who Really Wants "the Tired, the Poor, and the Huddled Masses" Anyway?: A study of the Socio-Cultural Factors that Influence and Constrain the Academic Success of Somali Bantu Male High School Students*, focuses on the perspectives of reception for Somali Bantu male students at high schools and in their local communities into which they settled. In addition, Roxas is interested in the social networks Somali Bantu students used to help them increase information and succeed in school as well as after school, and how the cultural capital the adolescent students possessed were valued or under-valued by their teachers and other service providers. The significance of the study is to educational policymakers, educators, and educational researchers to more fully understand the refugee experience in the United States. Roxas (2008) warns that lacking an understanding of the "experiences of these children and their families will become increasingly difficult for teachers to help these students

achieve academic success and become productive members of their local communities” (p. 17).

The study was executed due to too few educational research studies that portrayed transition to public schools in the U.S. despite gaps in education in their native country. How success was negotiated in a formal schooling environment of recently resettled refugee students and their families was an element that needed to be investigated. Roxas (2008) states that what makes the situation more difficult for refugee students is the adjustment problems “often intersect and occur simultaneously forcing refugee students to learn coping skills and strategies and be resilient in times of adversity” (2008, p. 21). Furthermore, findings suggest that the Somali Bantu students in Roxas’s (2008) study have an inadequate understanding of the U.S. school system, and that they have not had previous experience with subject matter that is central to their academic success. In addition, these students applied negative peer pressure upon one another. Teacher responses to these students included negotiating and bargaining, avoidance, disappointment and frustration, and regret when working with the refugee students. “Ms. Case described herself to me as being "discouraged" by Abdullah's behavior in her class” (p. 112). “She stated that Abdullah can usually do the work assigned if he is given some direction and encouragement, but often chose not to complete the work that is assigned to him for her class” (p. 113).

Roxas argues that continued lack of attention to the educational and social needs of refugee students are likely result in a “loss of academic potential and human capital that will affect these students, their families, and the larger communities in which they reside” (p. 21). While the study did not explore the attitude of the Somali Bantu

male refugee students toward college education in depth, the study did discuss some refugee students were better off at bridging into college than their peers. “Abdullah also has a seeming advantage over his Somali Bantu peers because his father speaks English, is the only college graduate in the entire community, and has some knowledge about how schools in the U.S. work” (p. 58). However, Abdullah faced multilayered obstacles bridging into higher education:

Abdullah's plan for a future career in medicine is vague and not grounded in how the school system works in the U.S. He has an end goal of becoming a doctor but has very little idea of how to attain this goal, either in the short term for what he needs to currently do as a high school student or in the long term of how to apply to college or medical school. (p. 68)

Despite the support and knowledge of his father on how the school system in the U.S. operates, the refugee student struggles to bridge into post-secondary education. Roxas (2008) states that many students didn't know how to fill out applications properly as well as how to access forms along with other requirements a high school student must meet in order to apply and be accepted to college. In addition, community engagement has a significant impact on the refugee students and their academic and overall growth. Roxas's study is unique as it looks at social networks and its effects on academic success and community engagement.

The focus of McBrien's (2005a) *Discrimination and Academic Motivation in Adolescent Refugee Girls* dissertation study examines the relationship between perceived discrimination and subsequent academic motivation of adolescent refugee girls resettled in the United States. It adds a distinct factor, discrimination, to look at academic motivation on female refugee students. McBrien addresses the following questions: Do adolescent refugee girls perceive themselves to be targets of discrimination by their U.S.

peers and/or their teachers? What are the similarities and differences between the responses of Muslim and non-Muslim participants? And for those answering “yes” to question one, is there a relationship between perceptions of discrimination and academic motivation? In what ways?

The significance of the study was to look at the educational experiences of refugee students post resettlement to the United States, and the fact that acceptance of these new residents obligates the United States to “provide an education to refugee children that will allow them to become productive new citizens” (p. 7). In addition, the study informs policymakers and practitioners who could benefit knowing how discrimination and prejudice may affect the academic outcomes of refugee students.

Using a case study design McBrien (2005a) examines the specific situations of 18 adolescent refugee girls, nine Muslim and nine non-Muslim, attending school in the second largest refugee resettlement area in the southeastern United States. Student participants were from Sierra Leone, Sudan, Gambia, Vietnam, Ethiopia, Iraq, Iran, Somalia, and Bosnia. Half of the student participants were Black Africans, and the other half of the students were from Asian, White European, or Middle Eastern ethnic backgrounds.

McBrien conducts the study mainly at a refugee agency, with brief observations at three secondary schools that many of the student participants attended. The study finds that the majority of the girls perceived themselves to be targets of discrimination. Furthermore, Muslim refugee girls reported discriminatory experiences twice more than non-Muslim students. McBrien also finds that the refugee center staff

reported occurrences of discrimination, while school observations reveal welcoming and motivating teaching techniques in addition to unwelcoming structural designs:

The relationship between negative experiences in school and the girls' subsequent academic motivation was complex. The girls said that they were experiencing discrimination and that they wanted to avoid school. However, the negative experiences did not ultimately cause them to be unmotivated or to believe themselves incapable of achieving academic success. Even a girl who said that her teacher made her feel "stupid" was positive about continuing in school and attaining a college education. (p. 107)

This 2-year study of 18 adolescent refugee students from eight countries shows that the girls who were upset by peer discrimination and their teacher indicated that they made-up illnesses in order to avoid school. Some girls threatened to drop out of school. However, each student stayed in school and worked hard to receive high grades, and wished for careers in teaching, medicine and law.

“The girls”, as McBrien states they liked to be called in the study, contemplated differently about the importance of obtaining an education post high school. “Many hoped to receive a good education to help their parents and to move out of the United States. Some, however, felt pressure not to go to college in order to get jobs and help the family financially” (p. 40). Regardless of perceptions of discriminatory experiences, all 18 girls in the study preserved academic motivation and all planned to complete secondary schooling as well as attend college. All 18 female participants received good grades. In addition, four of the participants attended college at the time Mosselson composed her dissertation.

Mosselson's (2002a) dissertation study *Roots and Routes: Re-imagining the Identity Constructions of Bosnian Adolescent Female Refugees in the United States*, is similar to McBrien's study although it focuses on Bosnian refugee female students in a

U.S. secondary school. The study involves 15 adolescent refugee girls. This study sheds another layer of insight of the complexity of the adjustment process and the elements of the process of adjustment to new surroundings are not necessarily synchronized. The purpose of the study was to analyze and portray the perspectives of the Bosnian female adolescent refugee students in the US “regarding their self-identity and the ways in which education and the ethnic enclaves affect, and are affected by, their flight and relocation to the United States” (p. 106).

Mosselson aims to discover which specific factors contributed toward a successful transition between two cultures. In addition, Mosselson intends to understand how identity is perceived and negotiated by Bosnian refugees during the adaptation process. Sabina, a refugee mother, reflects about the influence of the adaptation process of Bosnian youth in the U.S. and the dynamics within their household:

The children, we discuss children a lot, of all ages, they became very Americanized extremely quickly. So it's their cup of tea being here in many ways. A lot of materialistic fun, a lot of consumer-type activities. In which they are able to recognize themselves, and they started to think as Americans, so very often in the same household you have a real Bosnian and a real American. And they have to interact. (p.147)

Mosselson finds that the girls worked hard to achieve high grades. The students were aware that their “high achievement status progressed them from being regarded as alien to an identity that was more likely to intermingle with U.S. culture” (p.257). The Bosnian refugee students specified that they worked hard in order to avoid the attention that academic shortfalls could generate. Mosselson indicates that the girls' depression was also overlooked due to their anonymous status. The students reported that their experiences in U.S. schools were negative, and many did not fit into the broader culture. One Bosnian refugee student explained:

Before I proved myself in high school, they didn't know what to do with me. I was a refugee. They were afraid of what I'd seen, and they didn't know how to handle a kid who had seen the worst of life when they couldn't imagine it. But then, when I started getting A's, they were so happy, because now they could talk to me. They understood and they could clasp something they knew, and now they could pretend that's all I was - the A student who they could offer something tangible to, help, college advices [sic.], school support. I think before, they wanted but didn't know what to do with me. (p. 257-258)

One refugee student found that due to her high achievement, she gained invisibility in which case the school personnel no longer focused on her, regardless of the fact that she was battling depression. Mosselson (2002b) infers that the girls' needs were ignored in schools because school success did not fit the traditional psychosocial model of poor adjustment or depression, (p. 20). This study helps scholars and practitioners to better understand adaptation, and support individuals in the classrooms as well as "promote issues of concern" (p. 266). Moreover, this study also aims to help refugees to be able to break down the "barriers to the expectations imposed upon them by the hegemonic society" (p. 266), as well as learn how their identity can be used as a cushion as they traverse their new environment in the United States.

Refugee Student Research in Higher Education

It is imperative to note that a limited amount of research has been conducted on refugee students in higher education in the United States. Unlike studies on refugee students in K-12 education, studies about refugee students in higher education can mostly be found in research dissertations. Researchers have been focusing on various aspects of education relating to refugee students. Similarly, to the research in K-12 education, refugee students in higher education are likely to be intermixed with other language minority students. This is particularly visible in the research on English language acquisition of English language learners. According to Harklau & Siegel (2009)

“language minorities” are students “whose home or first language is a language other than English and who are bilingual or multilingual” (as cited in Prado, 2013, p. 21). This definition also pertains to the first generation refugee students. Like other immigrants, English will be the second, third, fourth, etc. language for most refugees. Moreover, many refugees arrive to the United States already speaking multiple languages.

Despite mixing the refugee student population with other immigrant and language minority students, a reasonable amount of research has been conducted pertaining to refugee students in higher education in the United States (Patnaik, 2014). Researchers studying refugees in higher education have placed focus on a variety of aspects in education including the influence education has on the acculturation process. Clipper (2008) and Ross (2012) explore the perception and impact higher education has on acculturation using different refugee populations of male and female gender. Similarly to Mosselson’s (2002), McBrien’s (2005) and Roxas’s (2008) studies exploring the refugee students’ experiences in K-12 education, Felix (2016) and Chodon (2007), focus mainly on the interpretations of experiences in higher education.

While Felix’s (2016) study focuses on refugee males and females who have resettled to the U.S. from different countries, Chodon’s (2007) study *Tibetan Women and Higher Educational Experience: An Exploratory Study* focuses on female adult students from Tibet. Although, Chodon (2007) uses female international students in her sample, the study provides a unique understanding of how immigrant women navigate higher education. However, neither of the two studies provide a clear insight on how education affected their self-sufficiency, and overall integration into their new communities.

Despite the effort to understand how refugee students experience higher education, only a few studies illustrate the educational experiences of refugee women in academia and insight on how education affected their self-sufficiency, and overall integration into their new communities. Cohen (2016) describes the struggles of German refugees during WWII who fled to Britain and the difficulties to continue their education, obtain a job based on their academic credentials, and resume their lives in a new country. Furthermore, Cohen (2016) examines how a specific group of refugees adjusted to their new life in Britain during the late 1930s and early 1940s. Clark's (2007) study, *I'm a Product of Everything I've been through": A Narrative Study of the Cultural Identity Construction of Bosnian Muslim Female Refugee students* focuses on more recent refugee women. Clark (2007) aimed to understand how educational experiences influenced negotiating identity of Bosnian female refugee in higher education.

However, a specific way to gain a more comprehensive understanding into how higher education influences the self-sufficiency of refugee women, and overall integration into their new communities in the United States, is through an overview of studies dedicated to documenting the experience of refugee women, while focusing on specific refugee populations.

This section highlights the studies about refugee students in higher education, including refugee female students. Clipper's (2008) published dissertation study *Trials, transition, and trade offs: A descriptive study of the educational implications of the adjustment experience of Sudanese refugees in southwestern Pennsylvania* explores the influence of education in the acculturation patterns of Sudanese refugees resettling in Southwestern Pennsylvania. The research encompasses the "formal and non-formal

education experiences that bridge the social, political, and economic influences on the adjustment of Sudanese refugees through the lens of acculturation processes” (p. 20).

Clipper contemplates the interaction of Sudanese refugees’ personal experiences to the concepts of “institutions and service delivery and policies to the acculturation process” (p. 20).

This study contributes to the research on the adjustment experiences of Sudanese refugees, in particular, as well as how formal and non-formal education affect their acculturation. It informs professionals and institutions that directly work with the refugee population. The study also serves to inform policymakers on issues of refugee acculturation and the effect formal and non-formal education has in their lives as well as their lasting socioeconomic well-being. Purposeful sampling prompts Clipper to select 10 adult Sudanese refugees, who resettled to the U.S. around 2000 and 2006 and resided in Southwestern Pennsylvania. Out of the ten participants, six were male and four were female.

Clipper (2008) uses acculturation theory to investigate the mutual change that occurs as the result of contact between two cultural groups, emphasizing on the maintenance of one culture and interaction with other groups on a daily basis. Clipper (2008) finds that premigration educational experiences were significant factors in the adjustment experiences of the Sudanese refugees. Other key conclusions of the study were that the Sudanese refugee participants identify acquiring education for themselves, and if applicable for their children, as the number-one need and goal. The participants of this study carry their strong motivation to attain education from their culture into resettlement. Classes to continue their interrupted pre-baccalaureate education and any

classes toward advanced degrees are a priority in a schedule already in some cases filled with more than one job. They perceive education as the most important adjustment objective as well as facilitative strategy for restoration of normalcy in resettlement and to assist those still oppressed in Sudan. (p. 192) Two men out of four had advanced degrees in the pilot study. In addition, five out of six men and one of four women in Clipper's (2008) main study had advanced degrees. Four of which received their advanced degree or secondary study in the United States, and two of Sudanese refugees attained advanced degrees in Sudan and Europe (p.193).

Participants in Clipper's (2008) study viewed education as the central path to reestablish important values that they lost during forced migration. Sudanese refugee participants also regarded education as a tool that could help them overcome institutional barriers. Furthermore, participants stated that educational experiences served them as a coping mechanism to help them navigate particular instances as well as occurrences in every-day life. Participant 1 stated,

Education is not only the key to a refugee's way of absorbing information needed to live in new environment but it is the key to accepting change which is pivotal to adjustment."...Participant 6, "When I went to college I came into contact with more intellectual and good people that were very helpful to me and told me about importance of hard work and that it was possible for me to be what I wanted to be based on the education that I could get!! I met teachers and scientists who were very encouraging to me because I was a good student and they told me that I could have a future!" Participant 14, "Education has eased my communication with those in the community here already. If you are able to express yourself, then you can get around, talk with people, get to know them, and they can get to know you." (p. 180)

Ross's (2012) dissertation study *Post-Secondary Educational Experiences in the Acculturation of Resettled Refugees in the United States* is somewhat similar to Clipper's study in that it specifically focuses on how refugees that resettled in the Tampa Bay area

of Florida perceived their post-secondary education received during resettlement on how it has influenced their acculturation. “The purpose of the study is to understand the phenomenon of post-secondary educational experiences of resettled refugees and uncover the essence of those experiences (Merriam, 2009) in understanding their acculturation process” (p. 11). Ross (2012) argues that while education is a means of helping refugees acculturate in their new country, there is a significant gap in research on higher education as a means of acculturation for resettled refugees. The effects education has on refugees’ acculturation helps explain how refugees’ identify themselves in their new society due to the education they received. “It also explains how education affects their ability to adapt within their new society” (p. 12).

Participants in the study consisted of four female and three male adult refugees, who were 15 years of age or older when they resettled from different countries to the United States. Studying refugees who arrived as adults or teenagers supports to control for the acculturation experience, which makes their K-12 education less likely to affect their acculturation experience.

Ross uses participants who already obtained a degree to portray the hard work, grit and resilience those individuals exerted in order to pursue higher education in the U.S. while working a job. “Each had a strong motivation to get a degree or qualification that would help them grow as individuals and gain better jobs. Resiliency of character figured significantly in the participants’ stories” (p. 82). Education also ignites the path to self-sufficiency and participants’ community engagement.

Refugee Women in Higher Education

Several other similar studies have enriched the field of higher education pertaining to refugee students such as Felix's (2016) *The Experiences of Refugee Students in United States Postsecondary Education* study, which focuses on the experiences of male and female refugee students in higher education, particularly in a community college setting. While the effort to better understand how refugee students as one student population experience the facets of higher education is expanding in research, only some research depicts the educational experiences of a specific group of refugee students, specifically women in academia.

Cohen (2010) states that throughout history very little research has been done about refugee women in higher education. In her article, *Crossing Borders: Academic Refugee Women, Education and the British Federation of University Women during the Nazi Era*, Cohen argues that:

Formal and informal educational experiences of migrants remains under researched in the history of education, making an examination of the way in which a specific group of refugees adjusted to their new life in Britain in the late 1930s and early 1940s a valuable contribution to this area of investigation. (p. 175)

Furthermore, Cohen states that because of Nazi repression, in 1933 some 400 women from "Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Austria sought entry to Britain following Hitler's accession to power in Germany March 1933" (p. 176). With each year, more women with degrees sought refuge in Britain. Cohen (2010) writes that it is hard to envision the "trauma experienced by those who were fleeing their homes, families and established academic and professional careers to settle in a new country, albeit one which

offered sanctuary but within a very different cultural milieu and with a different language” (p. 177).

Similar, to today’s uprooted women, German women had a difficult time adjusting to the language and culture of the British. Cohen describes the hardship women endured in Britain due to language and cultural barriers. Those women refugees were rarely able to find employment matched to their professional qualifications, or obtain employment in their field of expertise. Many highly educated worked menial jobs to make ends meet. However, as members of the International Federation of University Women (IFUW), the British Federation of Women Graduates (BFUW) helped these academic refugee women from Germany to enter Britain and provided educational and financial assistance. Many German women and their families decided to make Britain their home and became citizens.

Despite the plight of refugees in today’s world, it is difficult to locate research on refugee women pursuing higher education. A limited amount of research has been done in the United States. Chodon’s (2007) dissertation study *Tibetan women and higher educational experience: An exploratory study* illustrates and illuminates the experiences of Tibetan female adult students in higher education in Western Massachusetts. Codon interviewed 12 Tibetan women who were pursuing their degrees in different Western Massachusetts educational institutions. During “Fall 2004 to Spring 2006 those women were either currently enrolled in degree programs or had graduated within the past two years from an accredited higher educational institution” (p. 43). Some of the women came as international students to study in the U.S. and has already obtained a degree in India.

Chodon shines a light into these women's unique interpretations of their experiences in higher academic institutions. Codon (2008) finds that:

All the Tibetan women in this study firmly believed that higher education essentially is a means to upward economic mobility. Furthermore, they also overwhelmingly held the belief that higher education is the most important path to secure a job or successful career. In addition, the women agreed on the importance of education for diasporic populations such as Tibetans. Hence, like many other minority groups, Tibetans want to share the American Dream and consider higher education as a means to this end. (p. 53)

For these minority women education does not only mean economic mobility but also “gaining respect from community members” (p. 54). These women strongly believe that higher education provides opportunities that they otherwise would miss without an education beyond secondary education.

Gap in Research on Bosnian Women in Higher Education. As stated before, while a large amount of research on refugee and immigrant children and youth in K-12 has been established, there is an insufficient amount of research about refugee student experiences in higher education. Specifically, very little research exists on refugee women in higher education. Additionally, research on Bosnian female student experiences in higher education is scarce.

The Bosnian population, specifically women, have mostly been represented in the field of Public Affairs, Sociology, and Anthropology, as well as Social Work. Studies on trauma, identity, and acculturation are some of the many factors why the Bosnian population appears in journals and dissertations. Yet, in the field of Education minimal research exist on the Bosnian population, particularly Bosnian women in higher education.

Although, Clark's (2007) *I'm a Product of Everything I've been through*: A Narrative Study of the Cultural Identity Construction of Bosnian Muslim Female Refugee Students dissertation study focuses on Bosnian women in higher education, it specifically addresses Bosnian Muslim women who came to the United States as refugees. The importance of Clark's work is that it addresses Bosnian Muslim women, who happen to be the majority of Bosnian refugees in the United States.

Clark's (2007) guiding question is, "What do students' narratives reveal about the role of U.S. schooling in the cultural identity construction of Bosnian Muslim refugee women?" provides a clearer understanding how those women construct cultural identity (p. 1). The participants consisted of five female students between the ages of 18 and 22, all of them ethnically Bosnian Muslim who lived in Parksburg (pseudonym), and were nearing high school graduation or were in postsecondary study at the time of Clark's (2007) study. The personal narratives of the women divulge a common desire, which is to develop "bicultural competence" in academic and social settings (p. 37). The study portrayed the impact education had negotiating identity within the Bosnian community and the broader community in school and outside of school. However, it would be of importance to further the focus and investigate how educational experiences as well as cultural identity construction impacts the self-sufficiency and overall integration of Bosnian women.

Conclusion

Historically the United States has welcomed refugees from across the world (Kunz, 1973; U.S. Department of State, 2016). Despite the steady influx of refugees to the U.S., it continues to provide permanent resettlement to refugees more than any other

resettling country across the globe (U.S. Department of State, 2016). However, the United States Resettlement Program continues to strive toward hasty employment as a means of self-sufficiency. This move hinders refugees from reaching self-sufficiency (Ager & Strang, 2004; Spaulding, 2009; Shakya et al. 2010). Vital resources such as education are considered fundamental toward the overall social and economic mobility of refugees, but are difficult to obtain due to immediate emphasis on employment upon arrival. Language, cultural barriers, and trauma, as well as lack of cultural and social capital also affect a refugee's social and economic mobility (Mosselson, 2002a, McBrien 2005b; Roxas 2011).

Researchers across the globe studying refugee students found that education is critical for restoring social and emotional healing (Huyck & Fields, 1981; Sinclair, 2001 as cited in McBrien 2005b) and that “education should be regarded as a vital element of humanitarian response to crisis” (Sinclair 2001, as cited in McBrien, 2005b, p. 338). The experiences of the refugee student population in the U.S. is based on a plethora of evidence in literature displaying the struggles and successes of refugee children, youth and adults in the U.S. educational system (Dwyer, 2010).

Academic success of refugee students is imperative to their overall acculturation and community engagement. Education, including higher education, is a means of enabling refugees to effectively acculturate in their new country as well as become self-sufficient, which provides avenues for social engagement, enhancing refugees' social and cultural capital as they seek employment (Ager & Strang, 2004). However, the nature of the U.S. Refugee policy, which provides short-term assistance, places the refugee population in a vicious circle of not being able to achieve their dream to become

independent and to pursue an education. Studies on refugees, particularly women attending higher education, provided a different angle of interpretation of the effects of education on the refugee student population. Yet further studies that investigate how educational experiences influence the self-sufficiency and overall integration of refugee women would provide a more in-depth understanding of the overall refugee experience.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

“We are storytelling creatures, and as children we acquire language to tell those stories that we have inside us.”

- Jerome Bruner, *Acts of Meaning*, 1990

Introduction

In chapter 2, the review of the literature examined the educational aspect of acclimation pertaining to formal education explaining the role of educational participation as a relevant factor in refugee integration and self-sufficiency. The purpose of this chapter is to portray and describe the research design and methodological approach of this qualitative study. The methodology used will help address the research questions, collect, analyze and present data. First, chapter 3 presents Kunz’s (1981) refugee theory and Bourdieu’s (1986) social and cultural capital as the theoretical frameworks that underpin this study. This chapter also describes the ways these theoretical frameworks enable a unique and valuable perspective for analyzing the experiences of Bosnian women. Second, I present narrative inquiry, as it is the chosen approach to this study. Third, this chapter provides ethical procedures, approaches to the validity and reliability of the study. Participant recruitment approaches are also discussed in this chapter. Limitations and researcher positionality were addressed in chapter 1.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, the theoretical foundations are based on Kunz’s (1981) refugee theory and Pierre Bourdieu’s (1986) concept of cultural and social capital and its impact

on self-sufficiency and the overall integration of women who resettled in the United States as refugees. Specifically, this study positions itself within the theoretical frameworks of Kunz's (1981) analysis of factors that affect outcomes of refugees prior and post flight, including the elements that enable prediction of the course of future events. Bourdieu's (1986) cultural and social capital, which allows for exploration of the socio-cultural factors that influence social mobility and allocate social power (Bourdieu, 1986), also underpin the theoretical framework. In an effort to explore the socio-economic factors that affect the educational success, self-sufficiency, and overall integration of Bosnian women who came to the United States as refugees, it is imperative to understand the diversity of refugees from the same country. Based on their diverse religious and ethnic background Bosnian refugees cannot be referred to or treated as a "homogenous group of individuals" (Cortes, 2001, p. 465). Due to the fact that the war in Bosnia generated a vastly diverse set of experiences in individuals, the tendency to see all refugees from a country as a "homogenous group such approach is not accurate" (Fabri and Boskailo, 2002 as cited in Olsson 2002, p. 4).

Kunz's Refugee Theory: Home, Displacement and Host Related Factors

Kunz's (1981) typology comprises three main areas: home-related factors, displacement related factors, and host related factors (see Figure 5). Kunz (1981) claims that the refugees' social relationships to their country and compatriots has substantial impact on resettlement to their new country, in that "some feel more marginal than others toward the society which they leave behind" (p. 71). A previous article by Kunz (1973) "The Refugee in Flight: Kinetic Models and Forms of Displacement" dealt with a central theme, that of "refugee's Odyssey: displacement, transit and arrival in the host society"

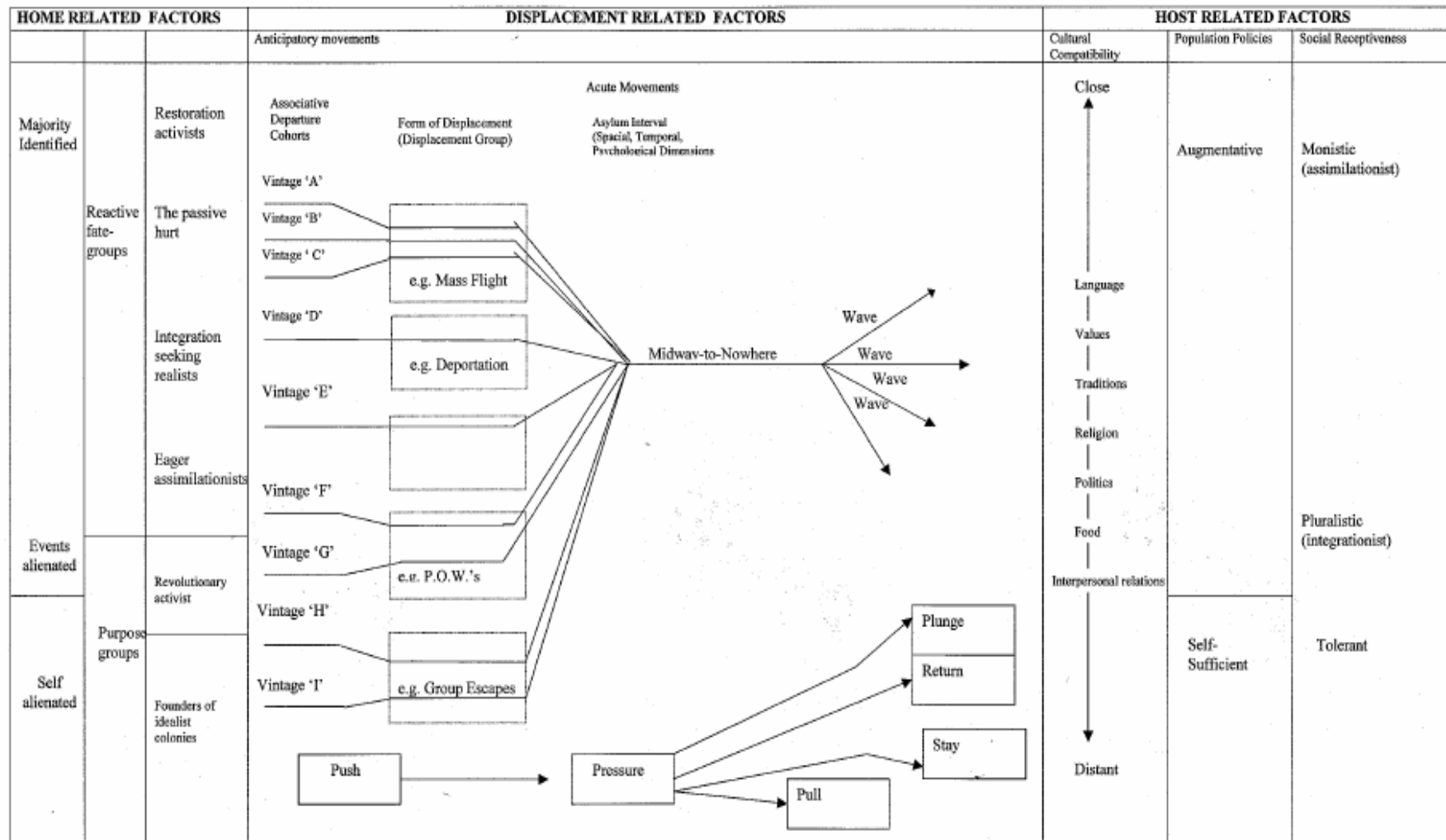


Figure 3.1 Home, Displacement and Host Related Factors. Source Kunz (1981, p. 50) International Migration Review 15 (1/2).

(p.131). While Kunz's (1981) work *Exile and Resettlement: Refugee Theory*, extends the analysis of elements that may affect the outcomes pre and post flight. He states that several of the refugees problems could be traced back to their emotional links with and dependence on their past. The refugees' "marginality within or identification with their former home country is important" (Kunz, 1981, p. 42). Based on their social relationship to their compatriots in their native country, unrelated to whether their flight was anticipatory or acute, there are three main categories of refugees in resettlement (see Figure 5). Kunz (1981) describes the categories as follows:

1. *Majority-identified.* These refugees identify with their nation but not with their government. They believe the majority of their compatriots share their opposition to events in their country.
2. *Events-alienated.* These refugees formerly yearned to be associated with the nation. However, these individuals are embittered toward their compatriots due to past discrimination or events just prior to their refugee situation that was caused by the nation or a section of its citizen. These individuals are religious or racial minorities but rarely social class. Most known examples of event-alienated refugee groups, the German Jews and Germans with partly Jewish origin.
3. *Self-alienated.* These refugees, based on their personal reasons or ideologies, have no desire to be associated with their native nation or their compatriots. Since their "departure is a logical result of their alienation", it is hard to conclude whether these individuals are to be categorized as self-alienated refugees or voluntary immigrants (p. 43).

Kunz (1981) furthermore states that based on the attitude toward displacement related factors, refugees fall into two groups: *reactive fate-groups* or *purpose groups* (see Figure 5). Refugees who fall into the reactive fate-group include refugees who fall in the majority identified and event-alienated category. They flee their native country unwillingly without a clear plan or solution. Refugees, who fall into the purpose groups, differ distinctly from the reactive fate-groups. These refugees are the makers of their own refugee situations, and at times, it is not clear whether they need to be identified as voluntary immigrants or refugees. Refugees belonging to the purpose groups typically include self-alienated individuals whose philosophies conflicted with their native homeland.

Just as the home-related factors and displacement related factors act as prognostics of the outcomes of refugees in resettlement, host related factors could predict future outcomes for refugees resettled in a new country. Kunz (1981) states that despite the impact of memories of home and transit, “refugees will begin to explore the surroundings, assess the attitudes of the hosts, and endeavor to find a niche for themselves in which they can feel consistent both with their background and with their gradually changing expectations” (p. 46). Cultural compatibility, one of the host factors, has the most influence on the satisfactory resettlement of refugees (Kunz, 1981). Refugees, who find themselves in a linguistically foreign environment and are unable to overcome the gap created by unaccustomed values and practices, may lead to depression, isolation, and withdrawal (Kunz, 1981). However, if refugees are able to find an adequate number of people in their new country who speak their language, share their tradition, values, and religion, and are able to anticipate their hosts’ actions and responses, may

integrate more quickly and effectively (Kunz, 1981). Kunz (1981) further states that some underpopulated nations enthusiastically support population through immigration:

Such augmentative societies are likely to look at the refugee as a sought after and valued immigrant who is expected to contribute to the nation's numerical growth and its economic capacity. Resettlement in an augmentative society holds out obvious advantages for the refugee: short in manpower and backward in development usually are, they frequently offer limitless possibilities. Yet augmentative societies have their disadvantages as places of resettlement: they look at the pool of refugees primarily as a manpower source to be exploited to their own advantage, and tend to select the healthy. (Kunz, 1981, p. 48)

Furthermore, augmentative societies tend to be unsympathetic toward homeward oriented refugees. However, augmentative societies, being growth oriented, see refugees as permanent residents whereas overpopulated countries are less likely to resettle a large number of refugees (Kunz, 1981). These overpopulated societies⁸ have no interest in assimilating newly resettled refugees into their culture and are less likely to force new arrivals to abandon their language and traditions. The degree of conformity in augmented societies is based on their social receptiveness. “Monistic societies are less likely to be hospitable to people who cling to their differing cultures than pluralistic societies of broader experience” (Kunz, 1981, p. 48). The conformity demands can cause great stress on the majority identified, homeward oriented refugees, but are less damaging to events-alienated groups because they are unable to return to their native country due to being provoked by their former compatriots (Kunz, 1981).

Kunz (1981) provides a comprehensive list of predictive hypotheses based on and interconnections suggested by his typology (see Figure 4) and observations resulting

⁸ “Great Britain, Switzerland, France, Belgium and Holland have traditionally shown such a tolerant attitude to political refugees” (Kunz, 1981, p. 48).

from the study of past and present refugee movements. These hypotheses directly apply to the research focus of this study:

- “Vintages of refugees may be comprised of individuals belonging to a similar type of political, educational, social, or religious background. Although seldom fully homogeneous, each vintage tends to take on different proportions of the ingredients of the society they left behind, making it distinctive enough not to resemble in its composition another vintage” (p. 49).
- “All things being equal, the refugee settlers of events-alienated background, unless the experiences make them strongly rhetoric, adjust themselves more quickly to life in augmentative societies and are more successful than refugee settlers who identified themselves with the majority” (p. 49).
- “Reactive-fate refugee groups, which in their history had a long experience of minority life, after settlement, tend to form communities with emphasis on friendship, customs, self-help, and ethnic identity. Such associations of refugee settlers are structurally well integrated into the host society and show high participation rates of refugees who as persons and families, assimilate slowly” (p. 49).
- “Initial cultural incompatibility can be overcome by the young and the highly educated with a greater ease, but the highly educated, in the long run, may remain more impervious to assimilationist pressures than less educated compatriots” (p. 49).

Because each refugee population is unique, has overcome distinctive adversities pre-, during, and post flight, it is imperative to understand the historical and the socio-

political context surrounding refugee populations' prior undertaking research with a refugee population (Kunz, 1973, 1981; Potocky-Tripody 2002). Refugees are individuals who hold little social power in their new country (Kunz, 1981). Refugees typically find themselves in countries where a foreign language is spoken, and where there pressures of hasty integration that Bourdieu refers to as "symbolic violence" (Bourdieu, 1986). Due to their inability to speak and communicate with the language of their host compatriots, refugees have difficulty taking part in the society, thus it is unlikely to have their voices heard. In his concept of cultural capital, Bourdieu (1986) argues that having one's voice heard and having the right to speak is linked to the social standing within society. Furthermore, Bourdieu (1986) claims that these voices are typically further silenced in society.

Bourdieu's Cultural Capital and Social Capital

Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital has been most influential for empirical researchers (Sullivan, 2002). Bourdieu classifies cultural capital and social capital as forms of symbolic capital. Bourdieu argues that symbolic forms of capital may be collected, just like economic capital. Thus, it carries social power in ways economic power grants its holders higher position in society and higher privilege:

Cultural capital is formed by experiences in one's home, which constitute cultural resources that may be used to assert one's position in a social field—conferring social advantage to some individuals over others, much like economic capital. These resources may take the form of competencies or character traits, which are viewed as valuable by those with power in a social field. In this way, cultural capital acts as “a kind of symbolic credit which one acquires through learning to embody and enact signs of social standing.... Because of this credit, the actions of people with higher social standing automatically achieve greater currency and legitimacy” (Levinson, Foley & Holland, 1996, p. 6). An important facet of cultural capital is that it is not transmitted through families in a conscious manner “Cultural capital can be acquired in the absence of any deliberate inculcation, and therefore quite unconsciously” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 245). These assets are generally acquired through immersion rather than instruction, as in the case of linguistic accents, artistic tastes, and social manners (deCarvalho, 2001 as cited in Clark, 2007, p. 61)

Cultural capital comprises non-economic resources that enable social mobility. Cultural capital is the cultural knowledge a person has of the surrounding culture and is able to contribute to the culture (Bourdieu, 1986). Additionally, cultural capital assumes the central importance process of social reproduction because inequalities in cultural capital reflect inequalities in social class (Tzanakis, 2011). Lamont and Lareau (1988) describe cultural capital as *“institutionalized, i.e., widely shared, high status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviors, goods and credentials) used for social and cultural exclusion”* [italics in the original document] (p. 156).

Cultural capital comes in three forms: the embodied state, objectified state, and institutionalized state. The embodied state comes in the form of dispositions of the mind and body. The objectified state comes in the form of material goods (books, pictures, instruments, etc.) with cultural value. Finally, the institutionalized state comes in the form of objectified entities such as educational qualifications as well as academic credentials. However, it is imperative to note that embodied cultural capital includes linguistic means such as languages, which is a vital concept of culture.

Linguistic capital includes not only the way in which one speaks, but also the fundamental right to speak in a social situation. In a given social field, an individual involved in discourse regards his or her interlocutor as “a legitimate speaker” and as worthy to listen (Bourdieu, 1977b, p. 650). The right to speak and “the power to impose reception” are both crucial elements of linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1977b, p. 75 as cited in Clark, 2007, 61).

Cultural capital consists of fluency with the dominant culture in a society. Particularly the ability to understand and use “educated” language demonstrates the possession of cultural capital. Bourdieu (1986) argues that cultural capital is not evenly distributed and it accounts for class differences in educational attainment. Individuals with upper class backgrounds have a built in advantage because they have been “socialized in that dominant culture” (1986, p. 85). Sullivan (2002) suggests “cultural competence and familiarity” can be interpreted as knowledge of and participation in the dominant culture” (p. 155)

Social capital, a type of symbolic capital, is comprised of collective resources that an individual gains only by belonging to a network of social relationships and/or group memberships. (Bourdieu, 1986). It is an aggregate of economic resources through participation in social networks, which has the potential to increase the access to the broader society. In other words, to have “membership” in a particular group, which

“provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital,” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 249). Thus, an individual’s social capital depends on the extent of their social network. Schools act as social networks (Sullivan, 2002). While schools are not the source of this inequality (Sullivan, 2002; Tzanakis, 2011) schools perpetuate social inequality because of their significant role in society (DiMaggio, 1982). Thus, because of their central role, schools are vital players in the cultural struggles between social classes (Bourdieu, 1986). Research has found that cultural capital “facilitates educational success, and that educational success actually is associated with occupational advantage. Furthermore, evidence suggests that educational capital is as much a vehicle of social mobility as of social reproduction”. (Sullivan, 2002, p. 154). Since schooling is, a social and political process (Bourdieu, 1986) schools are places in which status and culture matter (Erickson, 1975 as cited in DiMaggio, 1982, p. 189).

Research Question Restated

The purpose of this research study is to analyze and describe the perceptions of Bosnian women who arrived in the U.S. as refugees toward higher education and its impact in their self-sufficiency and integration into their new communities. This study was led by a focal research question in order to explore experiences of Bosnian women in higher education. This research study intends to answer the following research question: What effect does higher education have on Bosnian women who resettled to the United States as refugees and how does it affect their self-sufficiency and overall integration into their new communities?

Research Design

To reiterate the significance for the study and to vindicate employing narrative inquiry approach, provided is the hypothesis guiding the research and analysis. The review of literature reveals that education is a primary aspiration of refugees (Mosselson, 2002a; McBrien 2005a; Roxas, 2008). Scholars from various disciplines agree that education as an imperative tool for healing, worthiness, and self-sufficiency is essential during post-resettlement (Sinclair, 2002; Mosselson, 2002a; Ager & Strang, 2004). Education is a key indicator of integration as it enables the development of language skills, cultural literacy, social networking, and credentials that facilitate professional mobility (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Ager & Strang, 2004; McBrien, 2005; Ngo, 2010; Roxas, 2011). Thus, education acts as a significant element of community building where New Americans have the ability to bridge the refugee community and the broader community. Finally, a critical aspect of education is that it allows for reclaiming voice of the otherwise voiceless community (Mosselson, 2002a). Furthermore, reclaiming one's voice, particularly in the case of the refugee population, strongly correlates to belonging, which influences integration and self-sufficiency. (Atfield et al., 2009 as cited in Ross, 2012).

The literature on refugees in education presents the dearth in studies that emphasize on the impact higher education has on their self-sufficiency and integration into their new communities. Literature on refugees in schools indicates a gap in the research on how education enables the reclaiming the voice of refugees (Mosselson, 2002a). Furthermore, there is a need for a refugee perspective in developing long-term opportunities, and an inclusive environment such as educational institutions where

refugees can thrive and succeed in their new communities. In this study, refugees' perspectives will be presented through their narratives.

Narrative Inquiry

Stories affect and shape our lives. People interpret their past based on stories that shaped their lives. Narrative inquiry allows for the view of “human experience in which humans individually and socially lead storied lives” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20). Bruner's (1986) groundbreaking proclamation “concerning two different modes of human knowing, narrative and paradigmatic,” helped set the stage for narrative inquiry as a research method (as cited in Craig 2010, p. 123). Narrative inquirers position themselves in ways where they consider themselves in relationship with other people, places, and things, specifically those with whom they work closely (Craig & Huber, 2006). The human experience is concurrently privileged as a personally and socially shaped phenomenon (Craig, 2010). For example, in *Life as Narrative*, Jerome Bruner (2004) describes how one constructs a personal narrative is essentially the act of how one constructs reality. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state that researchers in the narrative inquiry practice “avoid strategies, tactics, rules, and techniques that flow out of other theoretical orientations” because “experience is our concern” (p. 188). Furthermore, the power of story is imperative in the narrative inquiry tradition (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). My decision to gather stories of Bosnian refugee women from the view of narrative inquiry, will allow the researcher, participants, and the public, to experience a multistoried process arising from a “nested set of stories--ours and theirs” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 93 as cited in Craig, 2010, p. 124).

Voice as Social Power

Narrative inquiry captures the voices of people who may not have typically been represented in traditional historic writings (Dougherty, 1999 as cited in Clark, 2007). Therefore, utilizing narrative inquiry to capture narratives of participants who belong to marginalized groups is suitable. Kunz (1973) claims that since refugees are not a homogenous group, their post resettlement experiences, including adjusting to new surroundings as well as engaging in social interactions, educational and professional experiences are distinctive. However, refugees typically resettle in countries where a foreign language is spoken, therefore the opportunity for communication as well as interaction with their new compatriots is very limited. Bourdieu (1986) argues that the right to speak and to have one's voice be heard attributes to linguistic capital in Bourdieu's cultural capital, which in turn is linked to social standing. Social power enables refugees to reclaim their "voice". Thus, for refugees, voice symbolizes resistance against imposing of social power against those who do not possess cultural capital.

Women and Voice

The reasoning behind focusing on women is because only a very limited amount of research portrays the experiences of Bosnian women who came as refugees to the United States. The war inflicted significant trauma on women. While the women faced diverse unfortunate events during the war, trauma is what all these women had in common (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002; Tollefson, 1989 as cited in McBrien, 2005a). Females young and old are passive recipients of trauma during and post war (Miller et al., 2002). Like many societies across the world, western societies nurture an ideology of the mainstream Anglo-Saxon supremacy and patriarchy (hooks, 2000), where gender

inequalities presume power relations. Female voices play a key role in understanding women's perspectives, and are tools in negotiating gender equity (hooks, 2000).

Moreover, Bourdieu (1986) argues that having a voice and to have that voice be heard is closely linked to social standing within society. In the case of refugees--females in particular, who hold little social power, a "concentrated effort must be made to hear their voices" (Clark, 2007, p. 71). Hence, the focus on Bosnian women who came to the United States as refugees will illustrate the cultural, social, gender as well as political challenges that Bosnian women encountered during their pursuit to self-sufficiency and academic success.

Capturing the Refugee Experience through Story

The reasoning behind utilizing narrative inquiry is due to a very limited amount of research available on the experiences of Bosnian women who came as refugees to the United States and the impact higher education has on their self-sufficiency and integration into their new communities. The focus on narratives from students themselves delivers a level of insight along with detail that is rare in current works on refugee education (Hones, 1999 as cited in Clark, 2007). The qualitative nature of this study focuses on understanding the depth of the experiences of each individual rather than generalizing the experiences since there is no refugee experience alike. Qualitative research is "grounded in the lived experiences of people" and has the ability to provide genuine insight into the world of the individual studied (Creswell, 2013, p. 184). Narrative inquiry offers a space for the "voice" to emerge, and allows for the interweaving of theoretical frameworks that underpin this study. Furthermore, this qualitative approach will capture the "voice" through the narratives of study participants

and provide an in-depth understanding of each refugee experience. It is essential because it provides a deeper contextual understanding of the overarching refugee experience. Therefore, the rationale for utilizing the narrative inquiry approach in this study is embedded in the element that this methodology will offer deeper and exclusive insights to particular challenges related to the Bosnian refugee women.

Participants

I interviewed ten Bosnian women, ages 26 to 40, from across the United States. The women in this study are diverse. The participants came to the United States from Bosnia and Herzegovina as refugees during the mid-1990s and early 2000, and are first generation Bosnian or Bosnian-Americans. Since resettlement to the United States, nine women have become naturalized U.S. citizens, and one woman is a permanent resident and is working toward her citizenship. These women originated from various parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and came from different socio-economic backgrounds. Some of these women had parents who pursued college while others had parents who did not have the privilege to complete their high school degree. In those cases, mostly the participants' mothers did not obtain a high school diploma. Six women identified their race as white, while four identified as "white passing." These four women referred to their race as "white passing" because they did not have anything in common with the privileges of the dominant race, except for their white skin color. Furthermore, two women identified as Bosniak, ethnically Bosnian Muslim. (Ethnic identity categories are explained in depth in Chapter 1).

The youngest participant was two years old when she left Bosnia and the oldest was sixteen years old. All participants lived in exile for a period prior to relocating in the

United States. Some women lived in as many as two foreign countries as refugees prior to immigrating in the United States. The ages of these women during resettlement to the United States differ, ranging from five years old to twenty-three. All participants have lived in the United States for over fifteen years. The women interviewed are fluent in at least two languages: Bosnian and English. Women who lived for a period as refugees in Germany are also fluent in German. The level of education among the women range from a current undergraduate student to master's degrees to doctorates.

Brief Description of Participants

The following table illustrates basic details about the participants. All names are pseudonyms chosen by the subjects:

Table 3.1 Brief Description of Participants

Name	Azra	Ajla	Emina	Selma	Lejla	Lea	Una	Senka	Mia	Lamija
Age	27	26	31	38	31	28	29	40	31	35
From	Prijedor	Brčko	Gacko	Sarajevo	Bosanski Novi	Glogova (Bratunac)	Derventa	Bosanski Novi	Mostar	Prijedor
Left Bosnia	1993	1993	1992	1993	1992	1992	1992	1992	1992	1992
Year Arrived to the U.S.	2000	1994	2000	1994	1999	2000	1999	1999	1995	1993
Years in the U.S.	17	23	17	23	18	17	18	18	22	24
State of Residence	Illinois	Illinois	Massachusetts	Louisiana	Illinois	Illinois	Wisconsin	Iowa	Pennsylvania	Massachusetts
Degree Obtained	Law Student (final year)	JD-Juris Doctor	Bachelor of Business Management	PhD in Education	Master in Women's Studies & Social Work	Bachelor in Business Management & Marketing	MBA-Master of Business Administration	<i>pursuing a</i> Bachelor degree in Healthcare Administration	Master in French	Master in Conflict Resolution
Student Status at Interview	Graduate student-Law Student	alumna	Graduate student-International Affairs	alumna	alumna	Graduate student-MBA	alumna	undergraduate student	alumna	alumna
Occupation	Intern at Law firm	Attorney	Finance Professional & Community Organizer and Activist	Post Doctoral Research Fellow	College Instructor	VP of Sales Operations	Investment Specialist	Clinic Manager	French Instructor	Author and Public Speaker
Community Involvement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

(Source: Sadikovic, 2017)

Data Collection

Participants in this study were invited to participate based on five criteria:

1. Participant is a female and comes from Bosnia (BiH)
2. Participant was under refugee status upon arrival to the United States
3. Participant is a first generation Bosnian (Bosnian-American)
4. Participant is currently enrolled in a U.S. college/university as an undergraduate/graduate student or is an alumna
5. Participant currently resides in the United States

Due to a “push” factor (Kunz, 1981) that contributed to a permanent resettlement to a new country, participants still had a connection with their native culture and country of origin (Ogbu, 1982). The connection to their heritage called for negotiation between their native culture and the acquired culture once resettled to the United States (Kunz, 1981). And because of the school’s significant role in society, (Bourdieu, 1986) I was interested in the role higher education played in the self-sufficiency and overall integration of refugee women. Therefore, I was interested in the stories, experiences, and interpretations provided by participants. This narrative study, falls into the category of oral history because it intends to gather events and their causes and effects personal reflections from a single individual or a group of individuals (Plummer, 1983 as cited in Creswell 2013). I chose to focus on ten participants because my intention was to provide detailed accounts of the effect college education has on Bosnian women who resettled to the United States as refugees. Narrative inquiry focuses on the depth and quality of data, therefore there is no set number applied to participants. However, for the data to be

trustworthy, it is recommended to have participants with different skills (Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2013).

As a member of the Bosnian-American Professional Association (BAPA), I contacted the Chicago chapter to help me recruit diverse participants from across the United States. Nidžara Pečenković, one of the board directors of BAPA, helped me with participant recruitment and posted a call for participants on their BAPA Facebook and Twitter page. The post stated that potential participants were instructed to contact me, the Principal Investigator, if they were interested in taking part in the study and pass the study criteria.



BAPA Bosnian-American Professionals Association

Are you a first generation BiH-American female who arrived to the U.S. as a refugee and is currently a college/university student or an alumna?

Would you be interested in participating in a study exploring the effect college education has on BiH women who resettled in the United States as refugees and how education affected their self-sufficiency and overall integration into their new communities?

Belma Sadikovic, a mentor in BAPA's mentoring program and a Ph.D. candidate at Boise State University, is recruiting participants who are willing to spare 1-2 hours of their time.

Those interested should contact Belma at belmasadikovic@boisestate.edu or 208.297.9836.

Figure 3.2 Call for Study Participants posted by BAPA. Source: Bosnian-American Professional Association (BAPA) Facebook page

Once I received emails from interested individuals, I emailed them a Recruitment Letter, with an Informed Consent form attached (see Appendix A and B). I asked that the women to carefully read the informed consent, sign, and email it back to me if they were

interested in taking part in the study. Once I received the signed Informed Consents from ten participants, I used the Doodle Scheduler to set up the individual interviews at the convenience of the participants.

Demographic Questionnaire

Prior to engaging in the in-depth individual interviews, a demographic questionnaire was utilized that consisted of seven questions to get to know my participants better (see Appendix A). After each in-depth interview, I created a thorough description of my participants.

In-Depth, Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews are one of the most commonly used methods in qualitative research to collect narrative data (Creswell, 2013). Utilizing narrative inquiry in this study, narrative data was collected from participants through ten individual interviews, and a focus group follow-up conversation. Participation was voluntary. Participants were able to decline to answer any question they may have felt uncomfortable answering. None of the women opted to decline any of the semi-structured questions posed during any of the in-depth individual or focus group follow-up conversation. The women immediately felt comfortable with me. It felt as if we already had a connection. This was probably because I was one of their own; a female researcher who was also an insider of their community. I shared many experiences with the participants, including the fact that I came to the United States as a refugee from Bosnia. The participants felt comfortable sharing the some very personal experiences during the interviews. The women were grateful for this study and were eager to share their experiences and insights with me. They wished to talk for long periods and provided rich, insightful, and reflective narratives about their

journeys. Through each of the interview, I relived my own experiences as someone who fled her war-torn home and was given another chance at life in the United States.

Prior to starting each interview, I took some time to go over the consent form. I also talked about how and why I came to the idea to do this research. These conversations provided me with an opportunity to build a rapport with the Bosnian women. I established trust with the women almost immediately, and I felt like I had known the women I just met for a long time.

The one to two hour-long in-depth on-on-one interviews and the focus follow-up conversations, allowed me to collect data that was of quality and quantity. Since my participants come from across the United States, interviews were conducted via Skype or via phone. The video feature provided the interviews with a more realistic, live format. Each interview was audio recorded as I wished to use their exact words to identify themes. In an effort to present accurate data in my final report, I felt the need to audio record these interviews. I also took some notes during our conversation describing the nonverbal cues these women provided during each interview. The participation in the study was confidential and participants were able to select their own pseudonym. Only I, the principal investigator, had access to recorded interviews and notes.

Focus group follow-up conversation. The second set of data collection came in the form of a focus group. The purpose of a focus group is to provide deeper insights and understanding of the phenomena being studied (Creswell, 2013). These group interactions have the ability to capture data and deliver a comprehensive understanding of what is being studied (Maxwell, 2013). Communication between participants may encourage individuals to make connections to certain concepts through the collaborations

that may not occur during one-on-one interviews (Merriam, 2009). The purpose of the focus group was to better understand, from participants' perspectives, what effect college education has on Bosnian women who resettled to the United States as refugees.

Participants were selected based on common themes that required more investigation to fully understand some of the data that was provided in the first set of data collection. One of the common themes was that four women purposefully sought opportunities to take part in the Bosnian/Bosnian-American community. These four women, given their credentials in law and social science, and their professions, expressed a need for strengthening the Bosnian/Bosnian-American communities in their cities by utilizing their academic and professional credentials and skills.

The focus group follow-up collaboration lasted over an hour, and it was conducted via Skype. The four participants that were chosen connected immediately despite having never met before. Prior to the focus group follow-up, the four women visited with each other, exchanged emails, and phone numbers as they showed interest in staying in touch. I was instantly invited to take part in the conversations. To this day, I have been in close touch with each participants that participated in this study.

At the beginning of the focus group follow-up, women were also reminded that their participation was confidential and voluntary and that they may decline to answer any question they feel uncomfortable or drop out of the study at any time. Furthermore, the participants were reminded to protect the privacy of focus group members and not to disseminate what is discussed in the focus group with anyone else.

I utilized Atlas.ti, a Qualitative data analysis software that enabled me to transcribe the interviews and store them safely. Atlas.ti also enabled me to code and

analyze my data effectively. Nine women preferred to speak English with me during their interviews. One woman chose to answer the questions in Bosnian language stating she wanted to practice her native tongue. As a native speaker of the Bosnian language, I manually translated the interview to English and then transcribed it using Atlas.ti.

Data Analysis

Analysis of data in qualitative research comprises of “preparing and organizing collected data for analysis,” then through a process of coding and condensing codes, reducing the data into themes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables or discussion (Creswell, 2013, p. 180). Analysis of data is a complex, multilayered process, and while there are variations on this approach, researchers use this general process across qualitative research (Creswell, 2013).

Huberman & Miles (1994) state that data analysis is not off-the-shelf; rather it is custom-built, revised, and “choreographed” (as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 182). Furthermore, the procedure of data collection, data analysis, and report writing are not supposed to be separate steps, they are interrelated and often happen simultaneously in a study (Creswell, 2013). As suggested by Creswell (2013), in order to present each aspect of the process, I will address data analysis in the following five sections: data organization, coding, analysis, interpretation, and data presentation.

Data Organization

Since data analysis is a multidimensional process, I utilized Atlas.ti, a multifunctional analysis tool, that not only safely stored my qualitative data but also provided coding features that allowed for the coding and analysis process to be organized. Furthermore, this tool assisted in the interpretation and presentation process of

narrative data. Huberman and Miles (1994) argue that valid analysis is vastly supported by “data displays that are focused enough to permit viewing of a full data set in one location and are systematically arranged to answer the research question at hand.” (p. 432). Unlike Clark’s (2007) argument that utilizing physical reading material is a better approach at immersing in the data, Atlas.ti allowed me to become deeply involved in my data and it provided a flexible and organized platform that could safely store complex data.

Analysis

A three-dimensional narrative inquiry space was used as a framework to capture the stories of Bosnian women (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Clandinin & Connelly’s (2000) approach to data analysis uses a three-dimensional space approach, which includes analyzing the data for three elements: “interaction (personal and social), continuity (past, present, and future), and situation (physical places or storyteller’s places)” (Creswell, 2013, p. 189). In narrative inquiry, my data were stories that are also referred as “field texts” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I chose this approach for data analysis because it compliments my theoretical frameworks. Narrative research situates field texts within “participants’ personal experiences (their homes, jobs), their culture (racial, ethnic) and their historical contexts (time and place)” (Creswell, 2013, p. 74). To analyze the field texts, the researcher engages in the “restorying” process, which could include organizing the field texts in chronological sequence (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). In the process of restorying, the researcher provides a causal link among ideas (Creswell, 2013). “Chronology of narrative research, with an emphasis on sequence, sets the narrative apart from other genres of research” (Cortazzi, 1993 as cited in Creswell,

2013, p. 74). Beyond the chronology, researchers might detail themes that arise from the field text to provide a detailed discussion of the meaning of the story (Huber & Whelan, 1999 as cited in Creswell, 2013).

Structuring the in-depth individual interviews and the focus group follow-up conversation in a chronological but also by topic fashion allowed me to study the data in a historical context of time and place (Creswell, 2013). The in-depth interview and the focus group interview contained three sections:

1. Background information. For example, life prior to war, life during war, life in exile, and first impressions upon settling in the United States.
2. Education. For example, initial experiences in United States schools, struggles and successes navigating the United States education system, current educational and/or professional endeavors.
3. Community/Integration. For example, what role these women play in their community, how their education impacts their community, and some lasting impressions of their experiences integrating/acculturating into American society.

This structure allowed me to create a timeline about the lives of my participants chronologically by time and place, which helped me during the coding process.

“Recognizing salient themes, recurring ideas or language, and patterns of belief that link people and settings together is the most intellectually challenging phase of the analysis and one that can integrate the entire endeavor” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 114).

At first, I browsed through all transcriptions as a whole and made notes about my impressions. Then, I read each field text again line by line, in no particular order. Reading each field text very carefully, I was able to identify categories that helped me

cluster the data into meaningful groups. Some of the clusters for example, indicated the context of life in the native country prior to the war, the context of navigating the United States school system, or the context of integrating into the American way of life. Then I looked over the transcribed data seeking specific stories within each cluster that the participants willingly to shared. For example, Ajla's description of how proud she was of her family achieving the 'American Dream' by buying the apartment complex where they once lived immediately after their resettlement to the United States. Then I coded data, based on the patterns the data revealed between all ten participants. I looked at reoccurring patterns such as, for example, "living a normal life in Bosnia prior to war" or "the lack of English language fluency" as an obstacle to academic success. I also looked at unique or isolated instances that emerged. Because the coding process is more complex than simply grouping and separating parts of data, I used the data and their interpretations to identify underlining themes.

Coding. The software I used during the coding process allowed me to place codes on the right side of the transcribed data. Using the software, I created a "code manager" that organized and saved the codes. Furthermore, the "code manager" also operated as a "quick link" that contained a list of all my codes and sub-codes, and it enabled me to rename or delete codes. The codes ranged from very general "academic success" to specific, such as "studying hard." I started out coding based on my theoretical frameworks (Creswell, 2013). I coded relevant words, phrases, or sections based on repetition, a theory or concept, or something my interviewee explicitly stated indicating that something is important. The software allowed me to apply different types of codes, "open coding" that allowed me to create a code based on my research question and

theoretical framework (Creswell & Miller, 2000 as cited in Creswell, 2013). I was also able to label data using words directly stated by the participants in the interview. This type of coding is called “in vivo” coding.

Forming codes is the heart of qualitative data analysis (Creswell, 2013). During this process, researchers build detailed descriptions, develop themes and provide an interpretation in the light of their own views of perspectives in the literature (Creswell, 2013). An essential task in data analysis is to identify mutual themes based on the descriptions of events shared by study participants (Maxwell, 2013). Each field text was coded, analyzed and categorized according to specific themes. As suggested by Creswell (2013) I started out with a short list of codes that consisted of five or six categories. My categories expanded as I continued to review and re-review my field texts. Classifying, a popular form of analysis, pertains to taking the qualitative information or text apart to look for themes (Creswell, 2013). Themes can be envisioned as broad units of information that comprise of several codes combined to form a common idea (Creswell, 2013, p. 186). After themes emerged out of each of the ten field texts, I conducted member checks with participants to ensure accuracy of the information.

Interpretation

Studying and explaining the data analysis in relation to a theoretical framework is essential during the interpretation process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003 as cited in Clark, 2007). This study involves examining and interpreting data using Kunz’s (1981) refugee theory and Bourdieu’s theory of cultural and social capital. Interweaving of these frameworks during the process of data analysis proved essential. Moreover, incorporating Clandinin & Connelly’s (2000) approach narrative inquiry provided a strong platform for

the interpretation of data. Huberman & Miles (1994) highlight that data analysis is not “prepackaged”, it is custom-built, revised, and “choreographed” (as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 182).

Thus, the process of data collection, data analysis, and report writing is interwoven and frequently occurs concurrently in a study (Creswell, 2013). Because these women experienced disruption during their childhood or early adulthood due to war and experienced education in the United States in greatly different ways, understanding their complexity and the uniqueness of participants’ experiences is a criterion for interpreting the findings.

Data Presentation

Clandinin & Connelly (2000) claim that presentation of narrative data can take several forms. Distinguished narrative researchers such as Clandinin & Connelly (2000), Czarniawska (2004), and Riessman (2008) are unwilling to “prescribe a tightly structured writing strategy” and instead they emphasize the core elements using a “flexibility in structure” (as cited Creswell, 2013, p. 220). Clandinin & Connelly’s (2000) three-dimensional inquiry space is a “text that looks backward and forward, looks inward and outward, and situates the experiences within place” (as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 220). Furthermore, Clandinin & Connelly (2000) suggest implementing “story chronologies” in the narrative report (as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 72). Riessman (2008) further suggests that chronology can be further organized by specific episodes or by time (as cited in Cresswell, 2013). Riessman (2008) proposes that a narrative report could consist of “reporting what participants said (themes), how they said it (order of their story), or how

they interacted with others (dialogue and performance)” (as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 221).

In their article, “Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry”, Connelly & Clandinin (1990) argue that one theory in educational research holds that humans are “storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives” (p. 2). Thus, narrative inquiry is the study of the ways individuals experience the world (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Narrative inquiry was driven by a sense of the whole; therefore, the sense needs to drive the writing and reading of the narrative, even when diving into concrete detail (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Crites (1986) argues that a good narrative constitutes an "invitation" to participate, in way that studies “may be read, and lived, vicariously by others” (as cited in Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 7). Thus, I have approached presentation of participants’ narrative not as raw objective data but as information that “lives and breathes” documented through stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 7).

Research Quality

A qualitative study requires more interaction with participants than other forms of research (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research also uses different terminology to describe validity and reliability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) use the terms such as credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as “the naturalist’s equivalence” for internal validation, external validation, reliability and objectivity (as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 246). Lincoln and Guba (1985) also state that when a researcher reflects faithfully during each process of the study, then the researcher engages in rigorous and responsible research, which ensures the credibility of the study

(as cited in Creswell, 2013). Due to the fact that this study is rooted in a theoretical understanding that the lived experience of humans include multiple meanings and understandings of reality, I incorporated triangulation of data to ensure validity and reliability of the study.

Validation Strategies

In order to and uphold validation of the study, I have employed multiple validation strategies to document the “accuracy” (Creswell, 2013, p. 250). Creswell (2013) recommends that at least two strategies be applied in any given qualitative study.

Triangulation. Mathison (1988) claims that good research practice compels the researcher to triangulate, which means to use multiple methods, data sources, and researchers to enhance the validity of research findings. Triangulation is perceived to be a strategy for improving the validity of research or evaluation findings: "... triangulation is supposed to support a finding by showing that independent measures of it, agree with it or, at least, don't contradict it" (Miles & Huberman, 1984, as cited in Mathison, 1988, p. 13). In other words, triangulation is a strategy aids in the elimination of bias and allows for the dismissal of rival explanation in order for a truthful proposition about a “social phenomenon” can be made (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Denzin, 1978; Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, & Sechrest, 1966 as cited in Mathison, 1988, p. 13). To avoid intrinsic biases and to provide corroborating evidence for validating the accuracy of their study, researchers combine multiple theories, methods, sources and investigators.

Historically speaking, triangulation is a “new concept in the social science”, which dates back to an article published in 1959 by Campbell and Fiske (Mathison, 1988, p. 13). While Campbell and Fiske (1959) introduced the idea of using multiple methods,

Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, & Sechrest (1966) coined the term “triangulation” and it was Denzin (1978) who provided a detailed explanation of how to triangulate (Mathison, 1988). Four types of basic triangulation are identified by Denzin (1978):

- Data triangulation: encompasses time, space, and persons
- Investigator triangulation: encompasses multiple investigators in a study
- Theory triangulation: encompasses utilizing multiple theoretical schemes in the interpretation of the phenomenon
- Methodological triangulation: encompasses using multiple methods such as interviews, questionnaires, observations, and documents to gather data.

Since Denzin (1978) considers the notion theory triangulation to be “problematic at best, and likely impossible in reality”, seriously suggesting only three types of triangulation (as cited in Mathison, 1988, p. 14), I implemented data triangulation in my study. This study was comprised of ten female participants, each playing equal roles as sources of data. Participants were interviewed during different times of the day, and during different days of the week. A focus group follow-up conversation was conducted with four participants who had academic degrees in law and social science and shared their stories about their intentional involvement in the Bosnian/Bosnian-American community, in which they could use their credentials and professional skills to strengthen their Bosnian/Bosnian-American communities. In addition, multiple follow-ups throughout the study with the women enhanced the validity of research and study findings.

I had no other researcher accompany me in this study. Methodological triangulation consisted of utilizing ten semi-structured individual interviews, a focus

group interview, and a demographic questionnaire that consisted of seven questions, which I asked prior to the individual interviews.

Clarifying Researcher Bias. Narrative inquiry research requires close interactions with subjects and can contribute to the decrease of credibility of the study if not approached correctly. To build and maintain credibility, I carefully monitored my understandings of the participant and the content of their narratives by keeping a journal during data collection. Because of my role as an insider of the community, I made a journal entry about my thoughts, emotions and perceptions toward the participants, and their stories after each individual interview. Journaling helped me keep my judgements and subjectivity toward the research outcome in check. Clarifying researcher bias through journaling helped me identify how my prejudices would have shaped the interpretation and approach to my study (Merriam, 2009). I purposefully stated the limitations and researcher positionality in chapter 1 of the dissertation so that the reader understands my researcher position.

Rich, Thick Description. This technique enables readers to make decisions concerning transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988 as cited in Creswell, 2013). Thick description indicates the researcher provide comprehensive details when describing a case or when describing a theme (Creswell, 2013). “A thick description is rich if it provides abundant, interconnected details” (Stake, 2010 as cited in Creswell, 2013). In chapter 4, the Findings chapter, I provided thick descriptions of the themes that emerged.

Member Checking. Lincoln and Guba (1985) consider this technique “the most critical technique for establishing credibility” (as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 252). In this

technique, the researcher solicits participants' "views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Miles & Huberman, 1994 as cited in Creswell, 2013). Participants need to play a major role in examining the rough drafts of the researcher's work, and provide "critical observations and interpretations" (Stake, 1995 as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 252). In this study, I asked all ten participants to judge the accuracy and credibility of the preliminary findings from their interviews. Each participant received a draft copy of chapter four, with their pseudonym highlighted. Additionally, I conducted a focus group follow-up conversation that consisted of four of my study participants who had academic degrees in law and social science and shared their stories about their intentional involvement in the Bosnian/Bosnian-American community, in which they could use their credentials and professional skills to strengthen their Bosnian/Bosnian-American communities.

To better understand why these women strongly indicated the desire to actively take part in the Bosnian/Bosnian-American communities, during the focus group interview, I asked the four women to reflect on their answers that they shared during the individual, in-depth interview. In addition, I asked the focus group additional questions (see focus group questions in Appendix D) to better understand the themes that emerged during the initial in-depth interview. At the end of the study, I once again reached out to all participants to go over the final findings. I contacted each woman individually via Skype, Google Hangouts or other forms of communication platforms. Each of the ten conversations lasted about half an hour to an hour where I was able to connect with the women, visit with them and go over the findings. Each participant provided valuable feedback to my findings. Although women used words such as "obstacles", "barriers",

and “hurdles”, to express their hardships in their new country, they agreed that I replace the word “barrier” with the term “obstacle” because they felt that the word barrier carried a negative connotation because of its use in literature and in every-day language that is used toward marginalized populations.

They felt that the word barrier carried a far more negative meaning than the term obstacle. They felt that the word barrier was used by the dominant society to portray the flaws of their marginalized community. Furthermore, several women noted that when they read literature, especially research literature, the term barrier representing the hardships of marginalized populations acted as a negative label, portraying those populations as burden to the society. Senka, for example specifically used the term barrier when she talked about the inability to transfer her college credits from Germany, which inhibited her from continuing her college education in the United States. Senka made specific distinctions between the word barrier and obstacle. To her, an obstacle is something that can be overcome with adequate tools and effective support, while a barrier is something that she was not able to overcome and that set her back such as having to start her college education over again. Lamija also stated she considers a barrier to be something that she cannot overcome and something that she cannot physically change. For example, Lamija considers not having roots in the United States to be a barrier, whereas the lack knowing how to navigate the American school system she considers an obstacle. Thus, all women agreed that the word obstacle was a more fitting term because these women overcame the obstacles once they had the appropriate support and tangible tools. At the end of our conversation, the women expressed gratitude for this study on Bosnian women, and offered their continuous support for my work.

Peer Review or Peer Debriefing. This technique provides an external check on the research process as interrater reliability does in quantitative research. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992 as cited in Creswell, 2013). This reviewer can be a peer, however the role of the peer is to be the “devil’s advocate” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) who keeps the researcher honest by asking “hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). Prior to engaging in the interview process with my participants, two coders, who work closely with refugees, reviewed the in-depth interview questions to confirm their appropriateness. After I transcribed and coded the first two in-depth interviews, I consulted with the coders asking them to code the transcript data from those two in-depth interviews.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

“War is not suspended in time, something outside a woman's experience of life; it is part of life, woven into all the rest.”

- Sally Hayton-Keeva, *Valiant Women in War and Exile*, 1987

Introduction

This chapter focuses on ten Bosnian women who came to the United States as refugees and the impact higher education had on their self-sufficiency and overall integration into their new communities. This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section titled “The Bosnian Women”, I introduce readers to the women who played a central role in this study. In the second section of the chapter, I present the three main themes that emerged through participants’ narratives. Each theme complies with the research question on how higher education impacts Bosnian women’s self-sufficiency and overall integration in the new communities. The three main themes are The Refugee Experiences, Educational Experiences upon Resettlement, and Educational Experiences in College. Each theme also includes at least one sub-theme. The five main themes and their sub-themes are as follows:

Theme 1: The Refugee Experiences

Sub-themes:

- a. Life in Bosnia Prior to War: “I had a regular, normal childhood.”
- b. Home-Related Factors: “Mommy, mommy, why are we ‘the other’”

- c. Displacement Related Factors: “So you learn to raise yourself very young”
- d. Interrupted Education: “I was a student at the University of Potsdam and I couldn’t continue my studies”

Theme 2: Educational Experiences upon Resettlement

Sub-themes:

- a. Support Networks: “They celebrate how far you've come.”
 - Host Community Support
 - Bosnian Community Support
 - Parental Support
 - Family Support
 - Teacher Support
- b. “Newcomer” Student obstacles: “I hated my accent. I thought it was the devil!”
 - Language
 - Nostalgia
 - Role Reversal
- c. Obstacles Relating to Integration Within a new School: “School was supposed to be my safe place.”
 - Feeling Alienated
 - Bullying

Theme 3: Educational Experiences in College

Sub-themes:

- a. Higher Education: “College was always something I planned to attend.”
 - A Rare Opportunity
 - Voice
 - Equalizer
 - Stability
 - Normalcy
 - Healing
 - Pride
 - Multicultural Identity
 - Cultural and Social Capital

- b. Progressive Capital: “I first and foremost feel a responsibility toward the Bosnian community, because it’s our own.”
- Cultural Brokers,
 - Giving Back,
 - Role Models,
 - Leaders
- c. Obstacles in Higher Education: “I heard of St. Louis University because it was down the street and I heard of Harvard, and everyone has heard of Harvard.”
- Standardized Exams
 - Applying to College
 - Advising/Guidance
 - Information for Parents
 - Financial Constraints
 - Work
 - Cultural and Social Incompatibilities Among Peers
 - Social Networks
 - Not Going out of State to Study
 - Transcripts
 - The Glass Ceiling

I implement “story chronologies” in the narrative report as suggested by Clandinin & Connelly’s (2000) to effectively portray the lived experiences of the participants. Story chronology will also allow me to portray participants’ stories as a whole by using Clandinin & Connelly’s (2000) three-dimensional inquiry space “text that looks backward and forward, looks inward and outward, and situates the experiences within place (Creswell, 2013, p. 220). This approach will also allow readers to follow the participants through time and space. Kunz’s refugee theory and Bourdieu’s cultural and capital theory provides a lens for analysis and interpretation of this study’s findings.

The Bosnian Women

This section presents a brief introduction of the study participants who comprise of ten Bosnian women who resettled to the United States as refugees.

Lea is a young 28 year-old Vice President of a renowned American technology enterprise in Illinois. Despite her young age, Lea has reached the top of the corporate ladder. Lea is pursuing her MBA, and her ambition is to eventually raise a healthy family, and become an amazing CEO. Lea gives back to the community by going to schools and giving speeches and providing internships to undergraduates at her firm.

Una holds a Bachelor in Finance, an MBA, and currently holds a position at an investment firm in Wisconsin. At just under thirty years of age, Una married a man from Bosnia who joined her in Wisconsin last year. Una is very ambitious to create a stable and fulfilling life for her family, and to help the Bosnian community in Wisconsin with her professional skills.

Selma recently earned her PhD in Education and is currently a research fellow at a university in Louisiana. Her passion for her career in education was sparked by a graduate course she took on the role of children's play in education. In her free time, Selma enjoys spending time with her husband and her toddler. During her graduate studies, Selma spent six years working with refugee youth at a local community center.

Senka is a successful clinic manager who is only two steps away from becoming the VP of Operations. She sees herself being very comfortable in the position of an administrator. Senka is forty years young, married and has two wonderful young boys who keep her busy. Senka is finishing her Bachelors degree in Healthcare Administration and is thinking of pursuing her masters in the near future. Community involvement is extremely important to Senka. Besides being involved in her son's school, Senka also does local community based programs through her work.

Emina found her passion for leadership and advocacy during her undergraduate studies in Massachusetts. Since, that time, she has been a very active leader of her community. Emina is currently pursuing her Masters in International Affairs. She is optimistic that her undergraduate degree in Business and her graduate degree in International Affairs will enable her to immerse herself into her leadership role and advocacy position.

Lejla is the president of a not-for profit charitable and educational organization in Illinois. At age 31, Lejla holds a Masters in Gender and Women's Studies and Social Work. Lejla has been actively involved in minority advocacy work, and effectively collaborates with the Bosnian/Bosnian-American organizations across the globe.

Lamija is an author, a successful business owner, wife and a mother of two young wonderful children. Lamija holds a Master's degree in Conflict Resolution. For the past twenty-three years, she has worked closely with the Bosnian community in the New England area, helping them integrate into their new surroundings. Lamija sees her role as a community member to educate her community in Massachusetts about genocide awareness.

Azra is finishing her last semester of Law school. She is currently employed by a large corporate law firm in Illinois, and plans to stay there after her graduation. Azra is married and in her free time, she commits to advocacy work and works closely with the Bosnian community.

Ajla at the age of twenty-six, is a successful attorney in the Chicago area. Ajla also serves as a board member on a few professional associations. She is dedicated to

contributing to the Bosnian-American community through her professional expertise and is always looking for opportunities to inspire younger generations.

Mia is an instructor of the French language. Mia obtained her Master in French Language Application in Paris, France, where she lived and worked for several years. Mia recently returned to the United States and currently teaches for a private institution in Pennsylvania. Community engagement is very important for Mia, and she provides free tutoring lessons to women who want to learn English.

Introduction to the Themes through Narratives

It is imperative that I begin with the lives of the ten Bosnian women prior to their arrival in the United States in an effort to paint a clear picture of their histories and their complex journeys, which led them to cross the Atlantic Ocean in search of a new beginning at life. First, I will introduce the reader to the lives of these women prior to the war in Bosnia. Then, through their narratives, the women will bear witness to horrifying events that forced these women and their families into exile. In this section, Kunz's (1981) analysis of factors that affect outcomes of refugees prior and post flight, including the elements that enable prediction of the course of future events, provides a lens for analysis and interpretation of themes.

The Refugee Experiences

The narratives provided of pre-war experiences and the experiences of during their temporary stay in exile serves as a foundation for providing context for the participant's understanding of self, their educational experiences prior resettlement to the

United States, and the impact their journeys as refugees had on their current lives. Home-related factors and the displacement-related factors closely affected their attitude toward higher education. By enabling the women to share their stories through time and space, they were able to draw conclusions as to what motivated these women to continue to pursue an education upon resettlement to the United States despite the numerous obstacles that confronted their educational pursuit. The chronological nature of these women's narratives provided a unique lens into viewing their experiences in their native country, starting over, and integrating into new communities. Furthermore, these experiences shine light into what motivated these women to pursue a college degree in the United States.

Life in Bosnia Prior to War: "I had a regular, normal childhood"

The initial question of the interview invited the participants to talk about what their life was like in their country of origin. Each woman was eager to share her story about her native country. Even the participants who were very young just before the war shared the bits and pieces they remembered about their lives in Bosnia. Azra begins to answer the question with a deep sigh, "So I remember bits and pieces but I cannot say I remember very much about Bosna (*Bosnian word for Bosnia*) or at least about the beautiful part that my parents romantically tell me about" (Interview, January 2, 2017). Only later in the interview did Azra admit she felt sad not being able to remember much from her childhood prior to the war. Azra stated in a sad voice that she wished she could talk about her childhood in Bosnia through her own eyes like other Bosnians but at that time, she was just under three years old when the war started.

Emina, who was a few years older than Azra, shares her memory as she remembered it through the eyes of a child:

So before the war, I lived in a typical middle class family in Gacko, which is in eastern Herzegovina. My parents came from the same village; one came from one end and the other one from another end of the village. We lived in a town and had an apartment there. I have two siblings. I have one younger brother and one older brother. The older one is seven years older than me and the younger brother is a year and a half younger than me. I didn't come from a super religious or politically active family. My mom worked before she had me but not after. My dad was the main provider. I was seven years old when the war started. (Interview, January 5, 2017)

Selma remembers visiting her family over the weekend in Brčko:

I was born in Sarajevo. I lived there for fifteen years. I lived with my mom. My parents divorced when I was sixteen months so I am not in contact with my father. My mom is from Brčko and her family is in Brčko...so we would go and visit them often. I went to school in Sarajevo until 7th grade and then the war started. (Interview, January 7, 2017)

Lamija who is about the same age as Selma, talked about her childhood memories in Bosnia quite fondly. She fondly recalls vacation trips her family took each year, and life entailed prior to the war. Lamija lovingly remembers:

My life in Bosnia prior to the war was perfect. I went to school. I had a regular, normal childhood. We went on vacations every year. My father worked in the army for over 25 years. My mom was a paralegal. She also owned a store and a cafe on the side. My life prior to the war was happy, healthy, and quite ordinary. (Interview, January 3, 2017)

Senka's recollection of her childhood is quite vivid. Senka lived in Bosnia until she was sixteen years old. Nostalgically, Senka recalls:

I lived in a small town called Bosanski Novi. It is on the border of Croatia. It is on the border of Croatia, in northwestern Bosnia. I come from a family of four. I lived with my parents, and my younger sister. My sister is 36 years old now. We had a good life. My dad is college educated. They had very solid jobs and very good lives. I had many friends. As a matter of fact, my best friend's name from Bosnia is Belma. She now has two kids of her own. Life was good! I remember

(pause) we all have that one vivid memory. Unfortunately, most of my vivid memories are tied to me leaving. I can still smell the summer. I can still remember what the snow feels like. It's different. I remember the taste of bread. It's different. I remember the cold room in the school. I remember all that. (Interview, January 3, 2017)

Prior to displacement, these women and their families actively participated within their communities and considered Bosnia and Herzegovina their home (Kunz 1973, 1981; Stein 1981). They had roots in Bosnia and identified themselves with their nation and up until the war in Bosnia yearned to be associated with their compatriots (Kunz, 1981). Thus, for the Bosnian women, no matter how young they were before they left their native country, they spoke very fondly of their lives in their native country, and their overall attitude toward their lives was each woman had a “normal” and happy childhood.

To illuminate the significance of this subtheme, it is important to say that these women come from diverse backgrounds, and were born in diverse parts Bosnia and Herzegovina. Some come from a single parent home, and many grew up in a blue collar or affluent families. Some women lived on farms and others lived in cities. A few spent some time living with their grandparents while parents were traveling for business. However, despite their age differences during the early 1990s, these women were able to sense that things were changing.

Home Related Factors: “Mommy, mommy, why are we ‘the other’”

When asked to describe the reasons that prompted the participants and their family to leave their country, Mia a seven year old who enjoyed playing “teacher-student” with her 16-month younger sister and her friends said in a serious voice:

When this happened, I was 7 years old. I didn't understand what was happening. As a child you just kind of sense when things are not ok. It may be some instinctual or survival thing but there is something in the air when something doesn't feel right. You know, you don't understand what they're talking about but

you can tell from their facial expression, from the tone of their voice, from the lack of attention that they are paying to you. It makes you feel like “well, that’s weird, something’s up.” It felt really weird. (Interview, January 8, 2017)

Emina who is Mia’s age also shared some of her other experiences that inferred to the early tensions prior to war:

My first explicit memory was when I overheard a conversation between my parents. They were talking about how there are Croats, Serbs, Slovenians, and then there was us. We had to be “other.” My parents were talking about it and I was listening. I don’t know why I listened to it but I did. And I remember pulling on my mom’s pocket asking “mommy, mommy, why are we “the other?” “What does that mean, mommy?” She was baffled by my questions and told me that this was a conversation for adults, and that I needed to go play over there, pointing to my room. She didn’t elaborate. So, that is one of my most vivid memories. Another memory was when we lived in these new buildings next to the bus station and I remember seeing one man there, I think he was Albania, but I could be wrong (pause) there was some conflict that he escaped from. And I saw him wearing one boot and one sneaker. I was confused. I thought it was strange. My mom, I guess, knew what had happened there and she just kind of rushed me and tried to distract me. Shortly after the war started in Bosnia. (Interview, January 5, 2017)

Senka, who was in her early teens right before the war in Bosnia broke out, shares an experience that she believes was an intuition of the war:

The most vivid memory that I have...probably the most vivid memory (pauses and continues in a sorrowful voice). So the war would break out on a Tuesday. All the radios went off, all the televisions went off, and that was when the shooting started in Sarajevo. Sunday, two days prior to that, my best friend Belma and I, were bike riding and we went through the whole city. I mean we went into every single side street. (pause) I don’t know if you call it 6th sense but I felt that something was going to happen. There are parts of town that I never went back in again, so I am glad that I had the opportunity to see it one more time, and it’s sitting in my head and it is going to stay there forever. (Interview, January 3, 2017)

The stories of the other women echoed the stories of Mia, Emina and Senka. The women who were under the age five in the early 1900s, state that they didn’t know that a horrible war was to come and sweep hundreds of thousands of people from their

homeland. However, learning about the Bosnian War during their adult life, they say that there were many warning signs that signified war, however “many people were in denial of war or that a war could bring the type of atrocities to a nation” (Interview with Una, January 7, 2017).

Azra who was just under three years old in the early 1990s talks about the initial conversations about war through her mother’s perspective, “My mom always tells us this story, when things were getting bad, there were whispers here and there of war and especially right after the referendum my mom was very uncomfortable with how things were escalating, back at home” (Interview, January 2, 2017). Lea, who is Azra’s age, says that her mother recalls the warning signs that she once thought were conspiracies” (Interview, January 6, 2017).

Emina painfully recalls how people like her grandfather, simply could not believe that the war would bring such atrocities to the Bosnian nation. Many who did not or could not escape paid with their lives:

Sadly, my grandfather didn’t believe that the war would last so long. He thought that it would be over soon, and that some of these young people were just messing with everybody. So, he and my other older relatives stayed and we never saw them again. This still affects me to this day. (Interview, January 5, 2017)

Unlike Emina’s grandfather and her relatives, Selma, who was raised by a single mother, states she was lucky enough to escape to Croatia:

At first it was interesting because people were leaving and we, I guess we were naive, I don’t know. The people my mom knew suddenly were not there anymore. The military set up barricades, then we realized we needed to leave, too. So we tried from the beginning of the war to escape but we couldn’t. My mom put our names on the list for evacuation of mothers with children, and we were on that list for two years (Interview, January 2, 2017).

Ajla remembers:

So we lived in Brčko. Brčko is right on the border of Croatia, and is very close to Serbia. Brčko has always been interethnic so the war (pause) when the war started it pretty quickly advanced to Brčko. The Serbian troops moved in and destroyed some of the bridges. So, my dad just like some other citizens thought it would be a couple of days. And I had a brand new baby sister. She was born on Krvavi Bajram (Bloody Eid), on April 4. She was 12 days old, when my dad heard how quickly the war was spreading, and he was scared, so he moved us into Gunja, Croatia. Again, he thought it would be just temporary you know...like the war in Croatia. It would be like Slovenia where the war only lasted a couple of days and everyone could go back. But obviously they destroyed all the bridges. Serbian troops completely took over Brčko. And they started killing the men. (Interview, January 2, 2017)

Luckily, all the women in this study were able to escape. Some of them were able to flee at the very beginning of the war in April 1992, while other women spent some period in Bosnia prior to displacement. Their undeniably difficult journeys to reach safety ranged from hiding in forests to taking the last bus or flight, fleeing with nothing more than the mere necessities, without a clear idea of what their future holds. It seemed as if their destinies changed from one moment to the other. Their future came to a sudden halt. These women were forced to leave everything behind, including their family members. Their lives as children and students were disrupted. Although, that didn't matter anymore. What mattered was survival. They were now refugees.

While some women were able to escape into borderlands such as Croatia, Slovenia or Serbia, a number of these women were able to escape to Germany or Austria in search for shelter. As they were sharing their stories, the fact is that their journeys toward safety were undoubtedly horrendous. These women left and their families their homes unwillingly without a clear plan or solution (Kunz, 1981; Potocky-Tripodi, 2002). The war disrupted their lives and ripped these women from everything they once loved and considered themselves a part. The memories that are engraved in these women's memories are heart wrenching. Azra recalls how her mother was upset because they did

not flee Prijedor before it was overtaken by the enemy, “because when we missed that window of opportunity, we ended up being stuck there for an entire year while the city was besieged. Essentially, we left with nothing just to save our lives” (Interview, January 2, 2017).

Mia, who was seven years old at that time, remembers the day her mother frantically packed a suitcase for their escape by bus from Mostar to Croatia:

I remember (pause) it felt sudden because I wasn't obviously following the plans but my mom got this suitcase, we were at my grandmother's actually, and she started packing, frantically. I asked “oh, where are we going?” And she was like, “We're going to the beach”... because we were going to Croatia. And I was like “ah super” (in Bosnian language), so I got my šlauf (float). I got all my stuff. And (pause) she looked really angry and she was throwing everything out. And I was like, “I'm confused.” “Why are you throwing everything out? We're going to the beach!” And she basically said, “we're not going swimming.” And I was just perplexed. I didn't know what was going on. My sister and I just looked at each other. I remember asking “why else do we go to the beach, mom?!” (Interview, January 8, 2017)

Lejla, the daughter of a successful executive intensely recalls:

My mom was pregnant with my sister when the war started. My mom was about to give birth to my sister in May...so she was very far along and my dad was actually able (pause) so he heard from other people how serious the war had become. While some people thought that, the war was going to be over very quickly, my dad was actually very skeptical, so he was able get a ticket on the last airplane leaving from Banja Luka to Serbia. My mother and I were on the last commercial flight to Serbia. (Interview, January 9, 2017)

Unlike the other women, Lejla fled to Serbia because her parents had a mixed marriage. Lejla's father, is a Muslim and her mother is Serbian orthodox. Because of her mother's name and religion, it was logical for her mother and her to seek safety in Serbia. Like many Muslim men, her father was not allowed to leave the country, and was eventually placed in a concentration camp.

Emina, who was seven years old at the time war started in 1992, vividly recalls the first initial aggression on her town and the sequence of events that followed, forcing her and her family to flee into the woods and hide from the enemy:

I remember sitting, watching TV, all of a sudden, I saw a shadow of a huge flame, and I remember my dad jumping, turning off the lights, turning off the TV. He peeked from the curtains onto the street, and then he told us to move. That is when they started attacking and burning down the Muslim owned businesses. Gacko is mainly Serbian, and we were the minority there. There were a few Croatian families but that was it. We couldn't stay in our town anymore. My father said that the village where my grandparents lived, was safer for us but we had to make it look like we weren't escaping permanently. So we were only allowed take a plastic bag, and a backpack, like something you would take for a weekend to go to your grandparents. So I remember getting ready, I remember these boots I got for my 7th birthday. I wanted to take them with me but taking the boots was not as practical as packing the flats. I remember my mom saying "you cannot take those" and I remember I was so mad at my mom. Crying, I asked, "why can't I take those?" I feel like that was kind of the moment when my childhood ended. I think that no child should have to make a choice like that. I mean it was just a silly moment because it was just boots and flats, who cares, but the metaphor of it was of what was to come. I couldn't take any toys with me. I remember going to my grandparent's house the next day. When we got there, my other relatives also came. So, we were having lunch and for some reason my younger brother and I didn't want to eat and we were outside in the "avlija" (yard) playing. My little brother smuggled, you know those little tiny cars, in his pocket because they were so small. So we're playing outside (pause) and then there was this huge explosion and everything shook. I was so confused. I remember just seeing my uncles and my dad ran all toward us to grab us. My dad grabbed my brother and my uncle grabbed me. We started running towards the mountains. My uncle was carrying me and I put my head on his arm. He had one of those big winter jackets on, and I guess there was a sniper who could see us and because the sniper saw that we were running he shot (pause) and the bullet went less than half an inch away from my brain. Instead, the sniper hit his bulky jacket and the bullet went through it. That was my first interaction with death or my interaction close to death experience. (Interview, January 5, 2017)

Emina also recalled her family hiding in the mountains. Along with her parents, and her two brothers, Emina slept under rocks for several days. "I knew something terrible was happening but I couldn't quite fathom how we could sleep outside in the rain under rocks", Emina says questioningly. Then, her father heard that if the men

surrendered themselves to the enemy, then the women and children would be allowed to leave the besieged area. Indeed, the women with children were bussed out to Dubrovnik, Croatia. Muslim men, including Emina's father, couldn't follow their families because the Serb forces kept track of the names of Muslim males. Either the Muslim men were taken to a concentration camp or they were immediately executed. Emina's father was sent to a concentration camp.

Unfortunately, the majority of the participants echo Emina's story. The families were forcefully split, sending the women and the children into the unknown and placing the men into concentration camps if they were lucky enough to escape execution. Lejla's father and her uncle were taken into one of the concentration camps in her town shortly after Lejla and her pregnant mother were able to flee. After Una and her mother fled to Germany through Croatia, Una's father was captured and was held as a prisoner of war for several years. Lamija's father spent a long period in a concentration camp and luckily survived. Lea, on the other hand, lost her father. Her father was captured and executed by the Serb forces in the spring of 1992. His remains were found in a mass grave.

The social relationships to their nation and their compatriots pre and during the war played a significant role on the perception of these women in that they felt ostracized toward the society which they left behind" and their perception toward permanent resettlement (Kunz, 1981, p. 71). Although, these women experienced multiple temporary movements in exile prior to settling in the United States permanently, their perception toward moving to the United States remained positive.

Displacement Related Factors: "So you learn to raise yourself very young"

During each stage of migration, a refugee goes through a great deal of trauma (Kunz, 1973; Potocky-Tripodi, 2002; Miller et al., 2002). Furthermore, the trauma each refugee experiences impacts the ability to start anew in a foreign country (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002). In the case of the Bosnian women, all ten were able to escape to a foreign country attempting to continue with their interrupted lives. They mostly fled with their mothers and sibling, as their fathers couldn't leave the country because they were drafted, placed in a concentration camp and in many cases executed. These women fled, carrying bare necessities. Many of them fled their towns with nothing more than the clothes they were wearing. The women who were able to take a bag or a suitcase into exile considered themselves lucky.

Lea and her brother were forced to spend their childhood in exile without their father. Her mother never remarried. Lea and her family stayed in Germany for five years on a provisional visa. At the age five, Lea started school in Germany where she learned how to read and write. Lea stated that it was in Germany, when life started turning into a norm. She made her first friends in school. Lea became fluent in German but at the same time was also losing her native language. Her mother was the only breadwinner and worked long days, leaving Lea and her brother to care for themselves before or after school. Lea and her family lived in a building for refugees where they had one room to themselves and they would share the kitchen and the bathroom with other refugees. "I remember my mother would be at work and my brother and I would stay in the room. So you learn to raise yourself very young," Lea recalls (Interview, January 6, 2017).

Una's childhood during their temporary stay in Germany was difficult. With her father captured in Bosnia as a prisoner of war, Una and her mother spent years in exile,

first in Croatia and then in Germany, until they were reunited with her father in Germany again. Una's experience in Germany resonates with Lea's as she remembers her mother, the sole provider for that time, worked 12-15 hour shifts. Una explains:

“I am the only child so I would have to sleep by myself, and go to bed by myself. And because my mom worked so much I've kind of grown on my own and that is what I believe drove me to become who I am now”. There is nothing wrong with how we grew up. It were just the conditions that were cruel, which forced us to grow up fast. So for example, I had to do my homework by myself. There were no people I could ask questions like, “how do you do that?” You taught yourself pretty much everything. (Interview, January 7, 2017)

Interrupted Education: “I was a student at the University of Potsdam and I couldn't continue my studies”

Although, Senka was several years older than Una when they found a temporary refuge in Germany, their stories intersect in many areas including growing up and becoming responsible at a very early age. Furthermore, women mentioned that with time, their families started to integrate and attempted to start their lives over in their new host country. However, their host countries did not provide these women or other refugees a permanent residence. Senka almost nostalgically shared her story spending seven years of her life in Germany:

So many Bosnian families ended up in Germany. We ended up in Brandenburg, which is right outside of Berlin. I graduated from high school there. Germany was very good for me. It made me into the person that I am today. I was a student at the University of Potsdam and I couldn't continue my studies. I was studying English and German at that time. However, due to the political and economic reasons in Germany in 1998 most Bosnian families got their visas cut. You lost your status as an official refugee. You were placed on these visas called “Duldung”, which basically means “we tolerate you being here.” I think my parents got scared and we had this conversation in our family what makes the best sense to us. We couldn't go back to Bosanski Novi. There was no way. (Interview, January 3, 2017)

The insecurities that the host countries such as Croatia, Slovenia, Austria or Germany provided enforced the instabilities in the lives of these women. The anxiety of what is to come next, brought no room for stable lives in these women's childhood years. Azra's story echoes Una's, Senka's, and Lea's and all the other women who lived in exile as refugees. Azra recalls how her childhood life came to another abrupt stop, this time in Germany:

We were in Germany for 6 & 1/2 years, from 1994 to 2000. We resettled in the United States because Germany gave us....I don't even know what the word even translates in English (pause) and "Abschiebung" (deportation letter). Essentially, it was a notice that we had to leave, and we were no longer able to continue our refugee status with Germany. So, my education came to an abrupt halt. (Interview, January 2, 2017)

The stories revealed that all women who were children at that time did not necessarily have a childhood because the situations in exile obligated them to become responsible individuals. Furthermore, the temporary placements in their host countries did not provide any stability for them or for their families. Eight of the women, who were in schools during their time in exile, had to abruptly stop their education. For most of the participants, this was their second interruption in their educational journey.

As argued by Kunz (1981) refugees' movement is initiated acutely, and is forced. Prior to displacement, these individuals actively participate within their society, and consider their native land to be their home (Kunz 1973, 1981; Stein 1981). Kunz (1981) claims that the refugees' social relationships to their country and compatriots has substantial impact on resettlement to their new country, in that "some feel more marginal than others toward the society which they leave behind" (p. 71). In the case of these women, while they and their families affiliated with their native country, due to their ethnic and religious background, their compatriots who were not of the same ethnic and

religious background ostracized these women and their families. Without an opportunity to return to their native country and the inability to stay in their host countries (Kunz, 1973, 1981), these women and their families longed for an opportunity to be able to stay on a permanent basis, where they could again rebuild their lives. However, like many refugees, the Bosnian women and their families felt uneasy about how they would be received by their new permanent home and its people (Stein, 1981; LaCorix, 2004). While the anticipation and excitement to call the United States their new permanent home was high-spirited, these women and their families were destined to face multi-layered obstacles starting their lives over again.

Educational Experiences upon Resettlement

The second main theme relates to the socio-cultural factors that influenced and constrained educational success after resettlement to the United States. Several factors, which will be presented in the sub-themes, played a role in the pursuit of an education despite the numerous obstacles faced in a new country. Furthermore, the focus is on how socio-cultural factors affect their self-sufficiency and overall integration into their new communities.

Bourdieu (1986) claims that cultural and social capital can be collected, just like economic capital. Therefore, these two forms of capital carry social power in ways economic power awards its holders higher position in society and higher privilege. Bourdieu (1986) argues that cultural capital is formed by “experiences in one’s home, which constitute cultural resources that may be used to assert one’s position in a social field—conferring social advantage to some individuals over others, much like economic capital” (deCarvalho, 2001 as cited in Clark, 2007, p. 61). These resources take the form

of character traits or capabilities, which are regarded as valuable by those with power in a social field (Clark, 2007, p. 61). Thus, according to Bourdieu (1986) cultural capital acts as “a kind of symbolic credit which one acquires through learning to embody and enact signs of social standing.... Because of this credit, the actions of people with higher social standing automatically achieve greater currency and legitimacy” (Levinson, Foley & Holland, 1996, p. 6). Cultural capital is the cultural knowledge a person has of the surrounding culture and is able to contribute to the culture (Bourdieu, 1986). Thus, “cultural capital assumes central importance in the process of social reproduction because inequalities in cultural capital reflect inequalities in social class” (Tzanakis, 2011, p. 76).

Based on Kunz’s (1981) typology, refugees are individuals, who hold little social power in their new country because of the inability to speak the language of the host community, and due to lack of understanding of new cultural traditions. Sullivan (2002) implies “cultural ‘competence’ and ‘familiarity’ can be interpreted as knowledge of and participation in the dominant culture” (p. 155). Therefore, social power is also associated with social capital, which comprises of collective resources that an individual gains only by belonging to a network of social relationships or group membership (Bourdieu, 1986). Social capital is an aggregate of economic resources through participation in social networks. Thus, by participating in social networks, an individual has the potential to increase his or her access to the broader society. In another word, an individual’s social capital depends on the extent of their social network.

These ten women and their families lacked cultural and social capital specific to their host society upon resettling to the United States. While refugees possess certain cultural resources, and bring various assets to their new country such as their native

language, culture, and other forms of knowledge and skills, these resources are “not valued by those with power in a social field”(Clark, 2007, p. 61). Thus, socio-cultural factors that are foreign to the recently resettled refugees has the ability to constrain the educational and overall success of refugees in the United States.

Support Networks: “They celebrate how far you've come”

All of these women have been refugees already once prior to arriving in the United States. Although other countries took these women and their families during a critical time offering temporary stay, the United States offered these women an opportunity to start their lives over again permanently. These women and their families as New Americans would be able to finally pursue their dreams. The dream these women longed to pursue was a college education. In fact, all women unanimously responded stating that college was not a question for them; the question was how to get there and succeed. However, accessing college was not an easy task.

Host Community Support. Selfless members of their communities supported these women and families during their initial resettlement stage. The women recalled the host community stepping in when they were at the most vulnerable stage starting their lives over. Mia fondly remembers their first neighbors who helped her family to navigate their new surroundings:

I'll always remember the first American family that we met when we moved to our neighborhood. This family (pause) they were so selfless. These people didn't have to do anything for us but they knew that there was a refugee family that was resettled in their neighborhood. So, they would come and just keep us company. They would come and ask us about our experiences. They would help us. For example, they would take us to the doctor, and they would take us to the welfare appointments. You know my mom, a single parent, (pause) they helped us with social services, you know get our benefits, and all of that. And that...that's priceless! And we're still friends with these people to this very day. And those are the kinds of people that celebrate your success. They celebrate how far you've

come and (with tears in her eyes continues) I cannot imagine where we would be today without that kind of help. It means so much. And because of that all I want to do is somehow make myself just as useful to other people. I want to reassure other people the way we've been reassured. And it doesn't take an enormous amount of effort. It's just these small little actions over a period of time, they can help somebody transform their lives for the better. It feels like a natural debt but not the bad kind of debt, it's something that just propels you to do good things in the world. How could that be a bad thing? (Interview, January 8, 2017)

Lea's experiences with her host family that sponsored them upon arrival encouraged her family to start their lives in their new community. Lea's tone of voice sounds very happy as she shares her initial experiences:

So, Judy helped us find a place to live. She helped us find a school, and she helped us get our shots. After ten days of living at Judy's we got an apartment. My mom got a job shortly thereafter. We got a bunch of donations from the church. We felt that some people at the church were hoping we'd convert. It usually wasn't that obvious but there may have been a hidden agenda there. But they were honestly amazing to us. Judy, and these people helped us integrate. (Interview, January 6, 2017)

Una was glad she had someone who knew how to enroll in a local school. When she arrived in the United States she was in 7th grade. Una describes the important factor her landlord played during the first turbulent months in the United States. "Our landlord helped us. She was an older lady and she drove us around to find a stove. She went with me the first day to sign up for school because her two daughters went to the same school" (Interview, January 7, 2017).

Senka remembers her initial encounters with the host community in Salt Lake City, Utah:

They were very supportive of the Bosnian community. I felt welcome. I never once heard anyone in Salt Lake City speak negatively of Bosnians or use a derogatory term towards me or my family. They were all very helpful. They wanted me to become Mormon but religion is not something I'm interested in. (Interview, January 7, 2017)

These women faced several obstacles prior to fulfilling their dream of obtaining a college education. Their initial experiences upon resettlement were overwhelmingly difficult due to not being able to navigate in their new surroundings. However, the perception of their host community was positive. The women consider their host community as an integral part of their success and upward mobility. Their host community provided these women the knowledge and the tools of how to navigate their new surroundings, and how to access the resources that were needed to effectively integrate into their new communities.

Bosnian community support. Azra vividly recalls her initial experiences with their sponsors who happened to be Bosnian. Her sponsors were also refugees who resettled to the United States a few years before her and were able to help them settle into their new community. Azra recalls her initial experiences in freezing Chicago:

So, the first night we got here, we were picked up at the airport and it was snowing and awful. It was so cold but we were like “ok we can still deal with this, this is fine”. And then, it was nighttime and I couldn’t really see where we were driving, or what was happening. Then, I woke up the next morning and we had to go to World Relief immediately, get registered, and get vaccinated and do all kinds of paperwork. I remember being dragged to all kinds of different places to do those things. I realized that this was not as great as I thought it would be. At least that is what I thought as a ten year old. But I do remember having to live with this Bosnian family and how gracious they were to us. And how welcoming they were. When we finally rented our own apartment, we moved close to them. The family helped us find initial goods for the home, like furniture, and plates...you know just the most basic necessities from some charitable organization. (Interview, January 2, 2017)

Una further states that her sponsors were Bosnians who had resettled to Wisconsin a few years before them. In addition to her landlord, her sponsors made the initial adjustment to their new surrounding easier because they spoke the same language, thus were able to communicate.

My parents and I came here with a few bags. Just some basics. We came to Milwaukee because we had sponsors here. They were Bosnian. We lived in this

tiny one bedroom apartment in downtown. It was actually nice. There were five of us and there was always something happening. So those few weeks were nice. (Interview, January 7, 2017)

Emina recalls her very first day in her “to be” home in the United States:

So we came to Boston in the middle of December. Boston was cold and it was covered in snow. Gacko (Bosnia), and Croatia had snow but not that much snow. The next day we had to go to the Boston Medical Center where they took all the refugees who resettled and we went through all the medical checkups and vaccinations. Then we had to go to the International Rescue Committee (IRC) office. The IRC was the refugee resettlement agency that helped us resettle to Boston. Then, it was Christmas time. My cousin’s wife was invited to a Christmas party, and she decided to take me with her, and ever since then when it comes to holiday parties I get really excited because I had such happy memories. (Interview, January 5, 2017)

Women who lived in an area with a large Bosnian community expressed that they were supported, especially during their initial resettlement phase. The Bosnian community members would take these women to churches to collect furniture donations, take them to the grocery store or the doctor’s office when their parents didn’t own a car, and explains things to them in Bosnian. Being able to communicate in the same language was extremely important for the newly arrived women and their families.

Parental Support. Parents played a significant role in the lives of these women. They were their vital support system during each stage of migration. These women feel indebted to their parents because of what their parents have done for them. All participants say that they have the utmost respect for their parents because of the sacrifices their parents made to make their lives better. Una recalls the support she received from her parents:

I think my parents sacrificed a lot for me to go to school. So one of the sacrifices was that we had this condo, it was on the south side of Milwaukee and they ended up selling it and buying one that was closer to the university so I could walk to school. That was a pretty big sacrifice. They told me “you go to school, and you

have a part-time job, and the rest is on us.” So I’d work 20 or 30 hours while I was in school and that was tough. My parents, however, were always there to cook me a nice meal. They were the biggest enablers for me to go to school. So for me, the resettling part was very tough. Maybe if I had a brother or a sister it’d be easier. But my parents were there when I had a bad day at school. (Interview, January 7, 2017)

Ajla recalls the lengths her parents went to just to make sure Ajla and her sister were able to access good schools. “My parents moved us out of the city into a better school district and then into another better school district making sure we got a good education”, Ajla remembers (Interview, January 4, 2017). Azra remembers that her parents would do anything they could to allow their daughters to get an education. They strongly believed that the United States would provide their daughters a good education and they did everything in their power to help them get through school. Azra shares a touching story about her mother’s experiences, and how that motivated Azra to become who she is today:

My mom always says in Bosnian “kraj očiju osjećam se slijepa prema svijetu” (despite my eyes, I feel blind to the world) because I’m not educated. So, she always pushed us to go to school. She was always like “go to school! That’s the most important thing that you can do for yourself; to be able to make something of yourself in this world. That opportunity was taken from me and I’m going to do whatever it takes to ensure that you and your sisters have that opportunity.” My mom has been a cleaning lady the entire time that she’s been in the United States. She has worked at one company, cleaning one office building in downtown for the past 17 years. And I knew (pause) I always knew that my mom was a cleaning lady. That was her profession. That’s how she got us through school. That was the way she put clothes on our back and helped pay for our mortgage. I knew that, that was her reality but to me it didn’t really set in until I had to go drop off medicine at her workplace once because she forgot some of her medications at home. I saw her come out in her cleaning lady uniform and that’s when it hit me. I remember getting teary eyed. I felt her anger because of the circumstances in life that brought her to do that job but she was never too proud (pause) to do her job. She wasn’t too good for it and she wasn’t too proud to not do it. In the end, she sacrificed all of that only for us to have the opportunity to go to school. Just the realization how much she has given up for us and how I didn’t want to disappoint them ever. And I guess that’s what sets me apart from even like my peers now in law school. (Interview, January 2, 2017)

Lea also feels this deep appreciation for her mother, who came to the United States as a single mom doing everything in her power to set her children on the right path:

I just want to be able to tell her “thank you” and to make her proud. I want to make her feel like all her efforts, her sacrifices, are all worth it. As we were growing up and my mom was a single parent, some people doubted (*pause*) some people thought we’d go astray because we didn’t have a father. I want to be able to give her a “badge of honor”, a validation to her, to myself and to the community that she did it right. I want to make her proud. (Interview, January 6, 2017)

Family Support. Azra, who faced her educational endeavors in the United States before her younger sisters, shares how her sisters supported her during high school and college. Azra recalls one instance when she felt anxious about her exam when she first started college:

I was having a panic attack for the first time in my life about an exam and my little sister who was still in high school sat next to me and tried to calm me down. My mom and dad were saying, “If you cannot do, if this is too much, your wellbeing is more important than anything else. If you’re feeling this is impacting you that much you shouldn’t...” They didn’t understand the pressures. Then both my sisters said “we believe in you, you can do this. And if you don’t do it, then what’s the hope for us.” And I was like “I can do this, I need to get a grip and I have to set a good example for them.” I felt like I needed to get through this, I needed to get it together (*pause*) get a grip (Interview, January 2, 2017)

When the women talked about their parents, parental support was the most prominent subtheme that emerged through the narratives of these ten women. These women shared that, even though their parents did not speak English nor understood the education process in the United States; they supported their daughters to bridge into college and attain a college degree. Their stories revealed that their parents saw college education to be a promising opportunity for the futures of their daughters.

Teacher Support. While these women faced multilayered obstacles throughout their educational experiences, and yearned for a more structured overall support in their

school, these women recall certain teachers or school staff who helped them overcome their hurdles. Emina has fond memories of her teacher who saw potential in her. This teacher enabled her to become more confident in herself and her studies:

When I first started school, I was referred by an adviser to take ESL. My ESL teacher once asked me to write a couple of sentences about me so I wrote like a two page paper, and my teacher asked me to see her after class. I thought “oh my God, what did I write?!” So after class she asked me “who put you in this class?” I said, “my counselor”, and she was like “come with me.” So we went downstairs and she had words with my counselor like “why did you put her here?” Anyway, I went from freshman in high school to sophomore level. Then, I went to senior year in my sophomore year because I took many advanced classes, and I took Spanish. Because of my teacher, I was able to advance. (Interview, January 5, 2017)

Mia and Lejla also emphasized how supportive their ESL teachers were. During their initial educational journeys through a United States public school, these teachers played an important role in the educational advancement of these women. Lejla also said that during her college years, some of her science professors encouraged her to pursue a science degree because she was doing well in those courses. With the support of her professors, Lejla received her Bachelor of Science in Physics. Azra also emphasized the importance teachers and staff played in her academic journey. Her law academy teacher in high school and her high school counselor played a vital role in her academic journey and helped her bridge into higher education:

Had it not been for a few great counselors and my law academy teacher in high school who helped me write my essays and explained the process on how to bridge into college, I probably wouldn’t have been enrolled in college. (Interview, January 2, 2017)

Like the home-related factors and displacement-related factors that act as prognostics of the outcomes of refugees in resettlement, host related factors could predict refugee integration (Kunz, 1981). Moreover, cultural compatibility, which is one of the

host factors, has the most influence on the satisfactory resettlement of refugees (Kunz, 1981).

“Newcomer” Student Obstacles: “I hated my accent. I thought it was the devil!”

Refugees feel an enormous pressure to accommodate to their new ways of life (Stein 1981; Besic & McBrien, 2012). The pressure to adjust to the language and cultural expectation of their host society, forces newcomers to assimilate rather than acculturate (Ager & Strang, 2004; Ross 2012). Thus, neighbors, teachers, and the rest of the host-society must partake in collaborative efforts with refugees to encourage effective integration and prosperity of New Americans (Stein 1981; Potocky-Tripodi 2002; McBrien 2005b; Kanno & Varghese 2010).

The host society played a significant role in the integration and self-sufficiency of the Bosnian women. The sponsors, who knew how to navigate the surroundings, graciously received the participants and their families into their homes. They helped the newly arrived families acclimate to their new homes. However, factors such as not speaking the English language, not understanding the new culture, taking the responsibility in the family, and other obstacles related to education paved a rather rough road for these women and their families. While these women all “made it” and are now very successful and respected individuals, the lack of their cultural and social capital at their beginning stages of rebuilding their lives caused many hardships that had to be overcome. Not being able to speak the language of the host community, makes it difficult for refugees to take part in the society, which in turn prevents their voices from being heard (Kunz, 1981). Having one’s voice heard and having the right to speak is linked to the social standing within society (Bourdieu, 1986).

Thus, coming into a country as a refugee, means that one has no social power (Kunz, 1981; Bourdieu, 1986). The lack of social power makes it extremely challenging to build social connections, receive a meaningful job, learn English or enroll into a college. Bourdieu's cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1973, 1986) concept allows for exploration of the socio-cultural factors that influence social mobility and allocate social power. This section will highlight the impact socio-cultural factors have on these ten women at the initial phase of their resettlement stage in various aspects of their lives.

Language. Lea says that she came to a town of 50,000 people in Wisconsin, and there weren't many families that spoke their native language. Lea, her mother and her older brother had to be very creative to communicate with their host family:

We came here not knowing anyone, barely speaking English. Chris (son of the sponsor) spoke a little bit of German. My brother, my mother and I spoke German. Judy only spoke English. My mom knew barely anything. I knew very little, the basics, like numbers and colors. My brother knew the most. Judy still shares the story of how she and my mom would sit on the balcony and when Judy would see a squirrel she would point and say "squirrel...squirrel" and my mom would say "vjeverica....vjeverica" (squirrel in Bosnian), and that was how they would communicate. I remember them asking me "do you want a soda?" And I kept saying "no...no...no." One day I thought to myself "well, why don't you say 'yes' and see what happens." Then, again, they asked me if I wanted a soda and I said "yes" and I got a soda. That was how I started learning the language. My brother would get annoyed with us because we would always ask him to come and translate. (Interview, January 6, 2017).

Una, who was the only child, said that she barely started learning English in school, and her mom spoke some British English but her dad did not speak any English. Emina recalls, "I remember helping my parents find an apartment, filling out job applications. I remember not knowing the difference between an employee and an employer. I spoke English the most of my family members but not that well. I hated my accent. I thought it was the devil!" (Interview, January 5, 2017). Lejla remembers how

difficult it was to start their lives over without speaking English, “I didn’t speak the language and my grandma was terrible. She was illiterate in her native language. We had to coach her every time to sign her name so she didn’t forget a letter” (Interview, January 5, 2017).

When the women talked about not speaking the English language when they resettled to the United States, the English language as an obstacle stood out as the most prominent theme that emerged through the testimonies of these ten women. Women included their accents, or their perception of having an accent as a part of the language obstacle.

Nostalgia. What makes the adjustment process more difficult is that obstacles “intersect and occur simultaneously” (Roxas, 2008, p. 21). Social relationships to their country and compatriots as well as identification with their native country has a significant impact on how these women adjusted to their new surroundings (Kunz, 1981). Because most the women had an abrupt parting with their friends and family in their native country, these women were aware that they were not able to return to their homelands but nevertheless missed their friends and family that stayed behind in Bosnia. Emina recalls her first few months in the United States, helping her parents build a new life, “that time was exciting for me as a child but also very sad because I missed my brother, my grandparents, and other family members” (Interview, January 5, 2017). Una, Azra and Lea said that their parents occasionally talked about eventually moving back to Bosnia, which made them even more homesick. Una reveals:

Sometimes I would hear my parents talk to each other how they are going to move back to Bosnia once they earn some money and I finish school. This made me miss home even more, and it perpetuated instability in my life. (Interview, January 7, 2017)

Lea shares a touching story attempting to achieve several things at once.

For example when we first came, I had a strong feeling of wanting to go back. I missed my friends, family. I can't describe it. I didn't want to be here, and you didn't want to be here. I couldn't concentrate on my new school because I missed everybody so much. I couldn't get used to this new life and school. (Interview, January 5, 2017)

Lea's narrative brings different obstacles to life that she faced during her initial integration stage. Like Lea, all women faced various obstacles at once, which made integration more difficult. These women felt homesick because of their rather unexpected uprooting that forced them to leave behind their home, their friends and family.

Role Reversal. All these women, who during their arrival to the United States ranged from ages 6 to 23, experienced role reversal in their families where they were given the responsibility to speak or do things on their parents' behalf. Emina recalls:

Because as a child my English was better than my parents' English. I remember helping my parents find an apartment, filling out job applications, etc.. All those responsibilities fell on me. My uncle and aunt spoke English but limited English, so sometimes they couldn't help either. The roles between my parents and me reversed very quickly. (Interview, January 5, 2017)

Lea remembers a conversation she had with a Bosnian friend of hers during their high school years:

I lived close to some other Bosnians. So my friend, who is also Bosnian, would do much more for her family. She was very frustrated one day and said to me "we never got to be children! We never got a chance to enjoy childhood because we were there to take care of them. I could relate to her." (Interview, January 6, 2017)

Lamija, who came to the United States as a teenager states that her responsibility to her parents started when the war in Bosnia broke out. She recalls saying that she was lucky to have taken private English lessons. "I did everything from day one. I translated

for my parents since the war started in 1993. In the United States I found them jobs, paid all the bills until they learned English and were self-sufficient,” Lamija proudly recalls (Interview, January 3, 2017). These women indicated that they needed to be strong young “adults” because they needed to fend for themselves and their family. Moreover, each story echoes additional obstacles these women faced as students in high school and college. However, all unanimously agree that obtaining a college degree was the most significant and life-changing decision they made in their lives.

Obstacles Relating to Integration Within a new School: “School was supposed to be my safe place.”

Schools are not neutral institutions (Roxas, 2008). Schools play key roles in reproduction of cultural capital. While schools are not the source of this inequality (Sullivan, 2002; Tzanakis, 2011) schools perpetuate social inequality because of their significant role in society (DiMaggio, 1982). Thus, because of their central role, schools are vital players in the cultural struggles between social classes (Bourdieu, 1986). Cultural capital “facilitates educational success, and that educational success actually is associated with occupational advantage (Bourdieu, 1986). Evidence suggests that educational capital is as much a vehicle of social mobility as of social reproduction. (Sullivan, 2002, p. 154). Since schooling is, a social and political process (Bourdieu, 1986) schools are places in which status and culture matter (Erickson, 1975 as cited in DiMaggio, 1982, p. 189).

When the participants talked about their initial experiences in their schools, the most prominent theme that emerged through the narratives of these ten women was the sense of not fitting into the culture at school or being misunderstood by teachers and staff

for not understanding their hardships. It was either their sponsors, caseworkers or other good hearted community members who enrolled most of these women in school. At the time of their enrollment, all except for Senka were elementary, middle school or high school students. Many women were then enrolled in school during the middle of the school year due to their arrival time.

Feeling Alienated. Particularly during their initial years in school, most of these women felt isolated or had the sense of “not fitting in” because of the lack of English proficiency or their refugee status. Ajla remembers an awkward moment in class:

Even though I was very young when we came, learning a new language was hard. So in class, someone asked me if I was a refugee and I was like “I don't have an idea what a refugee is.” So, the teacher had to come up to me and say, “you are a refugee.” (Interview, January 4, 2017)

Una recalls her initial experiences in school:

I came here in the middle of 7th grade, and cliques had already started to form. Everyone had friends and I had no one. There were no Bosnian kids so I was forced to learn English fast. It was me and this Russian kid. We moved here during the same time and there was this special education teacher who didn't have much work so she helped us every day for two hours that semester with English. (Interview, January 7, 2017)

All women were able to relate to Emina’s experience negotiating cultures within her school:

Attending regular classes was not the best for me socially because when I was in ESL and those other classes I was with other immigrants. Most of them were Latinos and I felt comfortable. I felt they were similar to me. They didn’t speak much English, so they spoke Spanish with me. I felt more comfortable with them. My regular classes were very white American, maybe one or two African Americans. Occasionally, one immigrant or sometimes I was the only immigrant in the room. So socially, it was very different. I hated my accent. I thought it was the devil. I was very uncomfortable even though education wise, the quality of my education increased, because I was in much better classes but I did not like it socially. (Interview, January 5, 2017)

Azra came to the United States at a very young age and picked up English fast. However, she was placed in an ESL class due to her status as a refugee. Azra remembers feeling humiliated because she knew she had more potential but instead was placed in an ESL class that was below her English language abilities:

I remember sitting in ESL class and thinking to myself “these people think we’re idiots,” “they think we don’t know anything.” For example, the teacher was telling me to stand up and sit down and asked me whether I knew what certain things mean. The most basic things, like showing a ball and asking me “what is this?” I obviously knew, and I said “that’s a ball!” I just wanted to master English and learn as much as I could to not be in ESL anymore. Even as a 10-year-old, I remember thinking, “this is beneath me. I am so much smarter than this and they’re treating me as if I don’t know anything.” (Interview, January 2, 2017)

Mia’s experience in school started on a negative note. However, things improved as she learned English and became the best student in her 7th grade English class. Mia recalls:

Third grade was awful. Third grade was horrible. (pause) I remember because it was full of emotions. So, I was 9 & 1/2 years old and I believed that I would never learn English. I genuinely believed that it was impossible for me to learn English because, we had a dictation exercise, and one of my schoolmates was supposed to tell me a sentence, and I was to transcribe it. The first word was the word “the” and all I heard was a “d” (as it would be pronounced in Bosnian) so I wrote the letter “D”, and she erased it and wrote “the” and I was like “I’m done. I can’t do this.” It was really hard. But then it got better in 6th grade. You know we had ESL classes at school. Sometimes it would be as much as half a day spent in ESL. We had a wonderful ESL teacher. Although, I remember vaguely. I remember repetition and pictures. I don’t remember being engaged but I guess something worked. (Interview, January 8, 2017)

Cultural capital consists of fluency with the dominant culture in a society (Bourdieu, 1986). In the case of these women cultural capital was rather absent during their initial educational experience (Kunz, 1981; Bourdieu, 1986). Azra’s experience illuminates the implication a refugee status has on individuals within schools and the society. Despite Azra being fluent in English, and her ability to comprehend everything

the teacher asked her, she was kept in English as a Second language classes because of her immigration status. Azra's inability to advance to regular courses due to her status as a refugee not only prevented her from succeeding academically but also affected her emotionally.

Bullying. The early experiences in schools were not pleasant due to these women being "different" as Una describes talking about her experiences in her new American school. Una further elaborates stating by different she means that her English proficiency was below theirs, that she wasn't able to make friends because of her English and because the kids knew she was foreign (Interview, January 7, 2017). This led to Una feeling ostracized in her school. As a newcomer, coming with no cultural capital (Kunz, 1981), Una was perceived by her peers as someone who did not share their language and culture, and someone who was not an equal member of the society. Mia who was Una's age tells a very similar story of being bullied in school. This is Mia's story:

English was really hard (forced laughter). I remember going to school. I came in the middle of the school year, which is even more traumatizing because everybody already knew each other. People just looked at me. They made me say bad words. Some kid bullied me and I don't think I realized it was bullying until I could actually process that it was not OK. It wasn't until my complete survival mode started to calm down. That's when I realized it wasn't alright. It was hard. It was really scary. (Interview, January 8, 2017)

Lea, who is a year younger than Una and Mia shares a humiliating experience with a classmate during class. "A girl in my class asked me "did you guys live in huts?" I don't think my teacher said anything. I was so embarrassed. That just gives you the feeling that you don't fit in anywhere" (Interview, January 8, 2017).

Emina was a high school freshman when she started her educational endeavors in the United States. She tells her story in excruciating pain:

And then 9/11 happened. That was crushing in so many ways. One, that America was my safe place and that the safe place was no longer a safe place (pause). September 11th took that away from me. My school was supposed to be my safe place. Second, a really strange thing was that I went from being a genocide victim as a terrorist...a perpetrator. That was terrible! I learned to handle the way we were treated in Bosnia and now we were thrown into this! I was very confused, and devastated. As someone with white skin, I could blend in easier but I am never going to say I'm not Muslim just because I could. I know that many people chose to do that from my community. I know the reasons why they did it but I would never do it. On 9/12, I was waiting for my friend, and this classmate from my drum class, a white American, passed by me. She usually never talked to me but that morning she stopped and said "Emina I have a question, are you going to kill me?" and I was like "excuse me?" In my head, I didn't know what to think. She went on and said, "isn't Bosnia next to Afghanistan: aren't you people all the same?" And I didn't say a word. I was so shocked. I couldn't even process it. I couldn't believe that this was happening here in America. I remember going to a guidance counselor, and he just brushed it off. He didn't even address the issue. He just dismissed it. So that was a life shaping moment, and that will always be with me. (Interview, January 5, 2017)

For these women, school played a vital role in not only their educational success but also their ability to integrate into their new communities. As New Americans, the initial struggles to fit into the American school culture made it difficult for these women to feel optimistic about their educational success and their overall wellbeing. Moreover, the support outlet such as teachers and staff play a significant role in the overall wellbeing of students. However, despite the unpleasant initial experiences in school, the women turned to books to deal with their current and past unfortunate situations. Schools provided permanency, something these women did not have for most part of their young lives. Thus, stability allowed them to rebuild control of their lives (Mosselson, 2002a).

Educational Experiences in College

Higher Education: "College was always something I planned to attend."

The diverse hardships these women faced during the Serb aggression in their native country, and the insecurities exile provided, sparked a hope that they will finally

be able to become in charge of their lives again. Although the schooling experiences were not always positive for these women, one steady theme throughout their narratives voiced the belief that education would help them create a sense of self-sufficiency. Despite knowing that their road to college would not be a smooth one, all women had expressed their wish to go to college and pursue a degree to be in charge of their lives again.

Mosselson (2002a) states that through education, refugees are able to gain control of their lives. Furthermore, education is a means of enabling refugees to effectively acculturate in their new country as well as become self-sufficient, which provides avenues for social engagement, enhancing refugees' social and cultural capital (Ager & Strang, 2004). These factors are linked to social power within society (Kunz, 1981; Bourdieu, 1986).

On the question what role education plays in their life, all women said that education plays a very important role in their lives. Through their narratives, these women illuminated their desire to pursue a college education, referring to education as a gate toward stability and upward mobility. The overarching message was that college was always something they planned to pursue. Furthermore, that the question was not whether they are going to pursue college but how they are going to accomplish it despite the obstacles that may prevent them from pursuing their education. Selma and Senka both said that going to college was never a question for them.

A Rare Opportunity. Several of the women say that college education was something that their mothers weren't able to pursue in their native countries, and that they wanted to make their mothers proud by accomplishing what their mothers weren't allowed to. Lea said that what motivated her to pursue a college degree was not their

financial instability but the fact that she wanted to accomplish something her mother never had the opportunity to do:

My mom had always wanted to go to college but she didn't have the option. Here, I've been given the opportunity to pursue college. Had we stayed in Bosnia I think this opportunity would have been taken from me. I have been given an opportunity and shame on me if I don't use it. College has always been on my radar. (Interview, January 5, 2017)

Azra shares a very compelling story about why she chose to pursue college:

I come from a family of very strong and proud women but also extremely uneducated women because they were not allowed to go to school in Bosnia. My mom had four sisters. So there are five of them and only the youngest of the five got to go to school. And they always say it was only because, at that time, my grandpa was so old that he essentially didn't care anymore. But when my mom was growing up, she was taken out of school in 4th grade. Later, I think she took some kind of remedial courses, for a couple months where she got the equivalent of an 8th grade education but that was as far as she was allowed to go. So I grew up listening to my aunts and my mom talking about how they wished they had the opportunity to go to school and how that was taken from them. They wished you know (pause) women were supposed to be homemakers, to take care of the children. Anyway, my grandpa had a lot of land in Bosnia. He would say to his daughters "help us out with the land, and work on the crops and everything else, and help your mom out at home with cooking and cleaning but you're not going to go to school and you're not going to "da mi pametuješ", which means "to be a smart ass". So I just remember, even as a young girl, thinking that it was unfair. I didn't realize how unfair it was until I was much older. But I think her experience has always motivated me to pursue an education. I always felt like "my mom couldn't do it because she wasn't allowed to do it, so I'm going to do it and I'm going to show my mom that she is smart!" (Interview, January 2, 2017)

When the women talked about pursuing a college degree an opportunity that they may not have had in Bosnia, they also talked about a college degree to be a "badge of honor" for their parents, especially their mothers, many of whom never had the opportunity to pursue college themselves. Indeed, a college education was a rare opportunity for these women. This subtheme became the most protruding theme that emerged through the narratives of these ten women.

Voice. The right to speak and to have one's voice be heard attributes to linguistic capital, which in turn is linked to social standing (Bourdieu, 1986). Several participants indicate that having a voice in the community is very important to them because it gives them a more respected place within the society. Lejla explains that her college education enabled her to come out of her "silent phase" and engage with her peers in her community. (Interview, January 9, 2017). Emina who has experienced discriminated based on her religion in Bosnia during the Serb aggression, explains her reason for obtaining a college education:

I don't know how this came to me because my parents never talked about it in this way but I think that everything that was happening to us was because we (Bosniaks) didn't have enough educated people. When you look around all the positions of power in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosniaks did not hold the respectful positions. Because we weren't educated we couldn't have people in those positions and therefore this was happening to us. I told myself "I'm not going to school for myself. I'm going to school for my country, for my people, for all of that." (Interview, January 5, 2017).

Senka says she pursued her education to gain knowledge and to be able to intelligibly connect with her community:

So, education to me is extremely important. So, education plays a very big role in my life because both my husband and I have made some big sacrifices and we continue to make big sacrifices in order to obtain a formal higher education. (Interview, January 3, 2017)

Senka adds that knowledge allows her to contribute to her family and community in more effective ways. Lamija adds that an education provides her with essential tools that she can distribute to her children. Lamija sees education as a tool that opens the doors toward a work where you can play an equal part in the society:

I think education is crucial to my existence. Period. I try to instill that in my children. Every single conversation I have with my family, it's really striving for each other and better ourselves because we don't know it all so we have to

constantly learn and I love that. Education is the key to success. Education is the key to preventing discrimination. It is the key to preventing genocide. You have to not be ignorant; you have to be educated, wholeheartedly. You are a better person for it. (Interview, January 3, 2017)

Through the narratives of the women, it a subtheme of voice emerged as an outcome of gaining or reclaiming their voice through their college education. In their interviews the women used their voices that they have gained through education to describe what it felt like to have no voice as a refugee. In addition, through their stories the women stated having gained a voice, and these women contributed to their social standing and community involvement.

Equalizer. Experiencing various adversities in her life, Lejla claims that education was a great source of self-confidence for her. Lejla says that “At a time when I felt really insecure, I didn't know the language very well. And education was a way to affirm to myself that I was a worthy human being. Education played a huge role in that” (Interview, January 9, 2017). Both Senka and Lamija say that education was a gateway toward equal opportunities. Lamija states, “Education for me is an equalizer. Education is a tool that I can use to reach what before education was unreachable” (Interview, January 3, 2017). Azra also views education to be a gateway toward opportunity and equality within her society:

I view education as a great equalizer. It gives someone who has nothing (pause) someone who comes from a really humble background an opportunity to rise up both socially and economically and have a better quality of life. It also opens up your eyes to the world. (Interview, January 2, 2017).

In addition to being able to effectively contribute to their communities, these women saw education as a tool for equality. Through their narratives, these women expressed being respected within their host communities as well as their own communities, which in turn

boosted the participants with self-confidence, worthiness, and independence (Mosselson, 2002a).

Stability. Una describes how education provided her with an opportunity to succeed. Like all these women, Una needed confidence, continuity and stability:

Education gives you something to fall back on, something that you have, something that you've earned, that you worked hard for. It gives you stability. Education not only gives you confidence but it gives you a stepping stone to bigger and better things, and what you do with it is your choice. You look at the world in a different way. Education helped me achieve a lot. It offered me security and I don't mean financial security. With education comes a different way of life. With education, you get a job that you usually would not ever get without the degree. This is why education is important for me. (Interview, January 3, 2017)

Ajla explains what role education has on her as a woman with Bosnian roots:

I always think about the women in Bosnia who have a really hard time leaving relationships. They may not be abusive relationships but like bad situations. The inability to leave has to do a lot with their lack of education because these women just don't have the financial stability. That is huge for me because (pause) I am well aware of my culture and how degrading it is to women in a sense. So education was super important for me in that sense and that I wanted to have my independence and not have anyone be able to tell me what I could and couldn't do, so to speak. (Interview, January 4, 2017)

Through the interviews, a theme of stability emerged conveying that stability for these women meant "permanency", something that they can fall back on. All women agreed that stability does not necessarily correlate with financial security but rather with safety. Women said that the war inflicted much instability in their lives that education helped them regain stability in their lives.

Normalcy. Emina says that she turned to education to distract herself from the hardships. Emina says that education is a part of her identity (Interview, January 3, 2017). Ajla's perspective is that education gave her the continuity during her rather unstable

time in her life. Ajla who is now a practicing attorney, speaks positively of her educational opportunity:

Education is everything to me. I am where I am today because of education and the support I received. It is the reason who I am today. I can live on my own and I don't have to worry about my future. Now, I give back to the educational community, (Interview, January 4, 2017).

Mia's reason for why she pursued her education echoes Ajla's motivation to earn a college degree. Mia proudly says:

I want to be of use. I really want to dedicate my education and myself to something that's going to be beneficial for people, something that is going to help people get up from the mud and do something for themselves. Maybe due to my personal experience, I feel that there is so much wasted potential out there, especially with kids that are most vulnerable and live in poverty or live without parents and don't have that support network. I mean, I am a caseworker. I work for the state. I work for the people that are struggling and need public assistance. But I also want to work on a larger scale; work on policy to maybe change welfare. I want to use my language skills to affect change on a global scale. I feel fulfilled. Finally, I feel accomplished if I do something that's making me an integral and productive part of the society. (Interview, January 8, 2017).

Through interviews, it became evident that the war inflicted multifaceted hardships onto the lives of these women. The stories revealed that what the war had taken away from them, that education instilled back into their lives, enabling these women to establish routines and provide regularity in their lives. Education as a routine provided predictability in their lives, and that predictability allowed the women to feel protected.

Healing. Several women, including Emina and Lejla state that education helped them heal from what they have witnessed and experienced during their childhood. Lejla says that education helped her heal from the grim memories of war. Lejla explains how education contributed to her healing, "Education helped me get over some of the things I've experienced during the war. My graduate studies allowed me to understand why my

family acted in the way they did during the war” (Interview, January 9, 2017). Emina turned to books to forget about her time during the war. Lejla explains how education helped her heal:

My Masters in Social Work (sigh) I felt that it helped me process what happened during the war and afterwards. Many things started to make sense to me the way the way my family members acted, you know, the way that they reacted. I don’t necessarily see my education as a way to make money as much as I used to think when I was a child. Now I see it more like an enrichment. My education doesn’t correlate with how much money I make. (Interview, January 9, 2017)

Through the conversations, a subtheme of healing emerged because the women talked about how education helped them understand some of the things that happened to them during the war. Women indicated that education provided knowledge, and allowed them to heal. From the narratives of these women, education emerged as an imperative tool to establish their wellbeing in their new country (Sinclair, 2002; Mosselson, 2002a; Ager & Strang, 2004).

Pride. Through their stories these women paint a portrait of pride having achieved their dream of earning a college education. Many women demonstrate a sense of duty to make their parents proud by achieving a degree because their parents have done everything for them to provide them a better and safer future. Lamija says that receiving a college degree makes her proud because she is able to show their parents that all their sacrifices were worthwhile. Lamija explains, “It’s just a sense of pride, a duty to my parents and to myself to get that diploma. I didn’t seek out a degree for financial stability. I went for it because of stability, independence and a sense of pride” (Interview, January 9, 2017). Lejla adds:

I jumped to the books because I thought that this is the only way that I can make money for my family. Not that my parents ever put that mentality on me (pause)

that I have to support them but they didn't have any other safety net, you know. So me and my sister needed to be their safety net. (Interview, January 9, 2017)

Many stories revealed the pride women carried being able to obtain a college education. The women were proud not only of having the opportunity to pursue a college education but also to make their parents and the rest of their family proud. Their sense of pride proved to be multi-sided, where they are not only proud of themselves and their accomplishments but also want to make their parents and family proud for what they have been able to accomplish. The women expressed how their parents were deserving of their accomplishments because parents have sacrificed much in order for them to have a prosperous future.

Multicultural Identities. A process in which individuals who give up their native culture, in exchange for the host culture is commonly known as assimilation. Acculturation entails a process where individuals become a participant in the host culture while at the same time maintain their native cultural identity (Berry, 2001). The women in this study were able to create multicultural identities, where they were able to become fluent in both cultures. Through their narratives, women expressed that education allowed them to learn and tap into different cultures. Over time, these women had the ability to navigate multiple cultures. All the women say that they were able to navigate their native culture and their host culture simultaneously. Experiencing two cultures concurrently, empowered these women to reap the benefits of both cultures, enabling them to form a new identity: multicultural identity. Ajla explains how she created her new identity being a Bosnian-American:

I think the positive side is being a Bosnian-American you get to select the good things from both cultures. I am very communal; I am very family oriented. I like to think that I am friendly and social, and very welcoming; you know all of the

good things Bosnian hosts are good at. But I also think that the American culture has some really positive things too. They are philanthropic. They are much healthier, and they focus on some different things. And my favorite part is picking and choosing, which parts of each culture will make this perfect little Bosnian-American experience. (Interview, January 4, 2017).

Emina also says that as Bosnian-Americans, these women can take the best from both cultures to be successful. She explains:

I am proud to be a Muslim Bosnian-American. I am very proud of that, and I realize that in itself is a privilege. I don't think that you need to let go of being a Muslim or being a Bosnian in order to be an American. I think those definitely co-exist very fluidly and peacefully. The America that I love is waking up in the morning, having Bosnian coffee with my mom, going to an Italian bakery for lunch, meeting up with my Jewish friends, going to a Mosque, walking down the street going into an art gallery or an art exhibit. To me, that's the beauty of America. That's the America that I love. That's my America and I don't want that ever taken away. And if it were any different, then America wouldn't be America to me. It would be a different place, a place that I don't like. I don't want it to be like Europe. (Interview, January 5, 2017)

According to the narratives, multiple instances displacement exposed the women to various cultures and languages, which enabled them to experience and to learn about different cultures. Women expressed that the exposure to their host culture and their native culture facilitated an intermixing of cultures and languages, where the women were able to reap the best of both cultures. Being able to fluidly navigate multiple languages and cultures simultaneously enabled a blending of identities. All women stated that their identities enhanced their social upward mobility.

Cultural and Social Capital. Refugees are individuals who hold little social power in their new country (Kunz, 1981). Thus, their familiarity with the dominant culture in the United States is limited (Bourdieu, 1973; Kunz, 1981). Both children and parents lack the cultural and social capital, In other words, these ten women and their families immigrated to the United States being unacquainted with the American culture, customs,

and the English language. Their initial period upon resettlement was difficult because of the knowing cultural cues, and norms. College provided these women with skills that make them valuable in the culture, enabling them to integrate more effectively. Lea explains how higher education allowed her to integrate into her host culture:

I remember taking Business Etiquette class in college. Taking some of those classes that taught you to have a firm handshake or to introduce yourself in a certain way were very beneficial for my overall integration and success. People would joke about that class but for those who didn't have anybody else to tell them these classes were extremely important. These classes allowed me to fit into the corporate culture. (Interview, January 6, 2017)

Selma reveals that being unfamiliar with the American culture and the higher education system hindered her from being able to negotiate her financial situation with an academic institution:

I took out a loan to go to Penn State. And It was not until later when I found out I could have gone to the Financial Aid office to negotiate my tuition fees when I was accepted at Penn. Neither my mom or I knew we could do that. So I paid whatever I was told to pay. (Interview, January 3, 2017).

Through the accounts of the ten women, findings suggest that being able to navigate the facets of the academic system for Bosnian refugee students is highly dependent on their and parents' understanding of what type of knowledge is valued within the society and the schools. Moreover, the ability to build networks with others in the community who can help with access to educational resources and academic support is essential for the women and their parents (Bourdieu, 1973).

Progressive Capital: "I first and foremost feel a responsibility toward the Bosnian community, because it's our own."

According to Bourdieu (1986) once gained, cultural and social capital can be transmitted, invested, saved or utilized in order to obtain other resources (as cited in

Saraceno, 2014). The women use their cultural capital to serve as bridges between the American and Bosnian cultures. These women are also progressive leaders and role models by participating and “giving back” to their community.

Cultural Brokers. Over time, after gaining cultural and social capital through education, which opened an entryway to building social networks, all these women were able to bridge from one culture into the other. Being able to navigate from their native culture to their host culture, the ten women play an integral part in connecting their host culture with their native culture within their communities. Through their narratives, it is evident that the women engage in both communities. Furthermore, they point out that being connected to both cultures and communities is essential to their existence.

Emina explains why it is important for her to be involved in multiple communities:

It is important for me to be involved in multiple communities. In a way, I am a connector between those different communities. I go to a mosque where there are 90 different languages spoken. I am very active with the homeless issue and with the women’s rights issue. I am very active with the refugee issue. I am very active on the Syrian issue. So I’m involved in many things like fundraising, protests, campaigns, working with the Syrian community here. I have a good relationship with my many communities. So again, I am a connector between the communities because I feel that it is important to inter-connect. When I see someone, especially from our Bosnian community that they’re doing something amazing, doesn't matter what the field is, I'm posting it on social media, cheering them on. (Interview, January 9, 2017).

Ajla shares that the combination of being part of both cultures and her professional occupation being as an attorney, enables her to be an active and respected community member of the Bosnian and the American community:

I am one of the few Bosnians who has a very professional services role and who is active in the Bosnian community. You know there are a lot of Bosnians who have professional services roles but just don’t have time to be active in the community but that has just always been one of my priorities. (Interview, January 4, 2017).

Azra states that being “fluent” in her native culture and her host culture allowed her to break out of her native cultural norms that used to not permit women to pursue their educational and professional aspirations:

It shows what you don’t know and how important it is to be aware of your own ignorance in many ways and it makes you more open and more willing to try new experiences. I just think it’s a way not just toward social mobility but also for personal growth because unless you learn about other cultures and other experiences and all it is really hard to know yourself. And to me I always felt like it was my ticket to freedom and it was a way to prove my worth and my way to show that I can contribute and that I can add value to an organization and to a community. (Interview, January 5, 2017)

These women essentially belong to both cultures and communities, and their multi-communal abilities allow them to be cultural brokers within their homes and in their community. According to Djuraskovic & Arthur (2009) an individual has the ability to be a cultural broker when he or she retains his or her cultural identity but also becomes “fluent” in a host culture. These ten women are vital members of their community because their cultural knowledge contributes to the overall growth of their communities.

Giving Back. These women take initiatives within their multiple communities because of their ability to be cultural brokers but also because these women see their duty to give back or as some women call it “pay-it-forward.” Selma says that by being able to pay-it-forward to the younger generations she is giving back to her community. Some of these women have the ability to be more directly involved while others take indirect approaches to engage in their communities due to time, work responsibility and other constraints. Lea explains the impact she has on her communities:

First, education shaped me and I have the power to help shape my community. Even though, I’ve not been as active as I want to be in the community because work has always taken precedence. But I have a huge interest in being involved and in giving back, primarily something with educating about the war, or refugees. I know there will be some time where I will take a more active role and

I know that my educational background will have a huge impact on how I affect my community. I've gone back to my college where I got my undergraduate degree and I've given speeches there about how I made it. First, if it wasn't for that education, I wouldn't have my career and secondly this would be the same story. So it is the combination of the two that has really allowed, me to be different. I want my story to be a story that is worth listening to and that others are inspired by. (Interview, January 6, 2017)

Azra explains how she gives back to her community using her profession as an attorney:

I think my legal education will give me a unique perspective and a unique ability to navigate some of the problems that our community may face in the future and to navigate the legal landscape in terms of what we need as the community. I hope to be able to help with that. (Interview, January 2, 2017)

Una gives back to the Bosnian community by directly being involved with the youth. Because she had to figure out many things relating to school on her own, she wants to give back and make it easier for the Bosnian youth. Una's hope is to help the younger generation reach their potential, so she takes an active role by taking students to school counselors, and college orientations:

So I went with a Bosnian kid to a school counselor and to a college orientation event. I like to help in that way. That is how I contribute to the community. As someone who has an MBA, I know the importance of education. I like to help anyway and it doesn't have to be school related. I also like to help the younger people because many times our parents don't understand what we're going through, and our kids don't really want to bother their parents with it. We tend to keep to ourselves. So I like to give them a different outlook. Even if there is a job opportunity, I like to tell them so they know that there is something better that they can pursue. (Interview, January 7, 2017)

Lamija's primary role in the Bosnian community for the past 23 years was to be someone they could rely on in term of translating, driving to a doctor's office, and looking for a job. Lamija explains:

I am the only court certified interpreter in Connecticut. We were the first family in New England to come here but now that most of the people are kind of self-sufficient, so my responsibilities have relaxed a little bit. Currently, what I'm doing is education and public speaking. I've also helped sponsor Bosnian refugee families during the late 90s. In terms of the American community, I'm really trying to educate about the genocide. I'm more of an educator really. Most people know me as that. (Interview, January 3, 2017)

Selma who now takes care of a toddler says that while she was working on her doctoral degree, she was very involved in a local after school program. Selma recalls:

I worked with students from 7th to 12th grade. A few were older than 18 years and had to finish high school. Those students worked on an online education to get a diploma. I worked there as a volunteer for about six years. I would go to the center and help with homework. And there were young women who needed to have a mentor, so I worked with them. We went on field trips and we went ice-skating and so on. (Interview, January 7, 2017)

Senka, who has two young boys, and is currently finishing her Bachelors in Health Administration says that she is looking forward to take a more active role in her community once she completes her education. For now, Senka helps at her son's school and does advocacy work through her job:

I participate in my children's school, you know, school functions. If they need a volunteer parent to go to the museum or if they need someone to bake some cookies, I will bake some cookies. Unfortunately, that is as much as I can do for right now being in school, working, and raising a family. I do a lot community based programs through my work. We are not the richest of the states, so we have a lot of underserved and underprivileged population, so I guess I do a lot of that through my work. (Interview, January 3, 2017)

Each of the ten women say that they are now established in their communities and are very involved. As their stories revealed, all women engage in leadership and advocacy work in their communities. They use their academic credentials and their professional skills to contribute to their communities.

Role Models. Because these women are involved in different communities, they are not only cultural brokers but also role models. Many of these women said that being a role model brings much responsibility. These women solidly said that they want to be good role models to their children and the rest of their community. Emina explains that her professional position and her advocacy work bring great responsibilities:

Our generation was such a struggle because we didn't have resources but now I am mentoring a few Bosnian girls and others as well. So they will come to me and ask "can you help me with my college application?" Or "can you write me a recommendation letter?" And I love doing this for them no matter how busy I am. This is so necessary to do. They look at you and say, "look at her, she has a degree in Accounting so I can get a degree in Accounting", and I can help them in the process and empower them. (Interview, January 5, 2017)

Lea shares her story working with three teenage girls:

I've mentored three girls. Two girls in one setting and one girl in another setting. They were all around 15 and 18 years old at that time and in a separate discussion, they talked about how I am a role model for them because I've shown them what's possible. And they admired my drive, my independence. Also, a couple of the girls from the younger generation from the Bosnian community consulted with me and asked me questions such "how did you choose your major?" I think I've shown them different possibilities in a community where there are not that many Bosnians. All three girls are attending college now. The young girls are amazed by how young I am and how far I've come and where I've come from. So a lot of the discussions are career and education related discussions with the Bosnian and American community. (Interview, January 3, 2017)

Many women who had a younger sibling felt the same way Azra did about being a role model for their sisters. Azra says:

Between my sisters and me, I am the oldest (laughs) so I felt the responsibility to set a good example. But not just them but all the Bosnian kids in the city who were looking up to me because I got into a very good school. I felt like I was paving the path for all the future generations of Bosnians. (Interview, January 2, 2017)

Throughout their narratives, the ten women demonstrated being positive role models because of their purposeful engagements within their communities. Their narratives point out that the women intentionally use their academic and professional knowledge to engage in community work. As educators, lawyers, policy makers, etc. these women were able to use their skills and knowledge because that type of skills and knowledge are of value by the broader society (Bourdieu, 1986).

Leaders. Furthermore, because these women are involved in different communities, being cultural brokers and being a role model also comes with a leadership role. Their education and knowledge as well as their profession enables these women to be leaders in their communities. Many of the women say that their leadership role is not optional. They say that because of their past, they feel that it is their duty to take on a leadership role. Azra explains her responsibility to take on a leadership role in her community:

I first and foremost feel a responsibility toward the Bosnian community, because it's our own, and it's people that I relate to the most and people that have been through similar experiences like I have. So when you broaden it from that aspect I also think about the community of women, especially women and not just here but all around the world. What can we do for young girls to feel empowered and to feel motivated and to want to do something for themselves. So those two things overlap for me. My goal for the Bosnian community in Chicago is when my kids are growing up I want them to have established networks and resources and people they can talk to and learn how to be successful here. So I like to build (pause) I like to be a part of creating a strong Bosnian community in the United States. Part of the reason is why I am a part of the Bosnian-American Professional Association (BAPA) in Chicago is to enhance our community. I look at the Jewish Orthodox community here in Chicago and I see how united they are and how strong they are. In many ways, I hope to create that within our own community. In terms of women in our community in general and our Bosnian women, we threw a women career panel last year where we had women in different career sectors talk about the unique challenges that they're facing, and challenges that women in general face. Helping as to how to work through those challenges, support one another, and be there for one another is important to me. I

hope to continue to be a part of that. To help grow a stable Bosnian female community. (Interview, January 2, 2017)

Lea and Emina, from a religious standpoint want to educate people around what a Muslim can look like. Lea, who does not practice her faith, feels that there is a need for her to educate people about her religion. “I am not very religious and I'm the first one to admit that but I want to show people that Muslims are just like everybody else.” Lea states (Interview, January 6, 2017). Emina says that she constantly puts herself in a leadership role creating awareness of the genocide that was caused in Bosnia by the Serbs due to hate and lack of education. “I’ve always done community work and genocide awareness on the side, and I spent a lot of time doing this through volunteer work” (Interview, January 5, 2017). Lamija also takes an active part in creating refugee awareness. She explains how education allowed her to step into this role:

If I wasn’t educated I wouldn’t be able to express myself well enough to get the message across. It is important to be aware of international affairs so they don’t happen to you (as in plural). If I wasn’t educated I think I couldn’t participate in the community to the degree that I do. It would isolate me even more. And I think if I wasn’t educated people would see me as another “ignorant refugee” who comes here. I would just perpetuate the myth that we’re not educated, and that we don’t necessarily care about education, that we use and abuse the system. (Interview, January 3, 2017).

According to the women, once the women gained formal knowledge as well as cultural knowledge of their host country, they were able to become active members of the society, who intentionally used their credentials and skills to “give-back” to their communities (Bourdieu, 1986). As cultural brokers, these women were also positive role models and leaders within their host community as well as their Bosnian/Bosnian-American community.

Obstacles in Higher Education: “I heard of St. Louis University because it was down the street and I heard of Harvard, and everyone has heard of Harvard.”

These Bosnian-American women who went to primary and secondary schools upon resettlement shared their obstacles, which influenced their lives, however, it did not prevent them to follow their dream to pursue a college education. Nevertheless, their dream was met with other sets of obstacles that these women faced during their college years. It is important to note that their obstacles in college were multilayered. Given that, these women overcame the obstacles they stumbled upon in college, it is important to learn from their encounters.

Standardized Exams. Women who were in high school and had the wish to pursue college struggled with the standardized examinations because they would not score a high enough score to be accepted to some college. Furthermore, many of these students were outstanding students who excelled in AP classes during their high school years, with GPAs of 3.8 and above. These standardized test scores did not reflect the knowledge of these young women. Azra explains her struggles with standardized tests and how it doesn't represent her overall knowledge and intellect:

I especially struggled with the standardized test (pause) with the ACT exam and the written portion of it. The multiple choice of it had to do with vocabulary and grammar and spelling and literature and being able to read and I always felt like with English being my third language, it was a little harder to catch on. So that was something that I felt I always (pause) and even to this date, there are things that are obvious to a native English speaker but to me, I have to work very hard to make sure that the comma makes sense where it is...and to use verbs in the right places. See, because in German, it is entirely backwards and that is where I learned to read and write. (Interview, January 2, 2017)

When Lejla reflected on her college experience, in particular the beginning stages; she struggled with the ACT, a standardized test that she was required to take in order to

apply to college. Lejla explains that standardized tests give her anxiety because they do not represent her knowledge. Lejla reflects:

I started studying for the ACT in my sophomore year of high school. I took it three or four times and any time it came to the reading section I was terrible at it. Eventually, my eyes would just get tired during the test. I was not used to filling out bubbles, and how to eliminate answers, etc. That was a huge hurdle for me because it didn't reflect what my grades were. I was ranked 3rd in my class in high school but my ACT didn't reflect that. (Interview, January 9, 2017)

As individuals who came as refugees to the United States, these women did not hold any capital because most of these women and their families did not speak English or understood the American culture (Bourdieu, 1986). Cultural capital consists of fluency with the dominant culture in a society, which includes the ability to understand and know how to navigate the United States school system, speak the Language of the host nation and being fluent in the host culture. These women being fairly new to the United State were not familiar with standardized exams, and were still mastering their English skills. These women were high achievers in school, they were quick learners, and were also very determined toward their academic studies, however, their abilities did not reflect in those high stakes exams.

Applying to Colleges. Lejla further explains that she didn't know how to go about applying to college. Lejla says, "I didn't have anybody to help me navigate applying to colleges. I didn't visit any colleges." (Interview, January 9, 2017)

Ajla's experiences resonate Lejla's experiences bridging from high school into college. Although, a few women had parents who were college educated in Bosnia and Herzegovina, their parents were not able to help them navigate the school system in the United States. Both Lejla and Ajla did not have anyone to take them on campus tours. Thus, their options to apply to colleges were very limited. Ajla recalls:

One thing I will say that I didn't realize until much later is that not having anyone who had gone to college in the United States was hard because when I was applying for college and I heard of two schools, right. I heard of St. Louis University because it was down the street and I heard of Harvard, and everyone has heard of Harvard. Those were the two schools I applied to. (Interview, January 4, 2017).

According to Bourdieu (1986) cultural capital consists of fluency with the dominant culture in a society. Refugees on the other hand, are minorities who hold little social power (Kunz, 1981). They typically find themselves in countries where they do not speak the language of the host country fluently (Kunz, 1981). Thus, refugees have difficulty taking part in the society, or have an understanding of how to navigate societal facets, including education. In this case, both Ajla's and Lejla's experiences resonate with the struggles of the other eight women. At the beginning of their educational journey, especially when it came to bridging into higher education, these women struggled to understand and navigate the process of bridging into college. These ten women stated that no one in their immediate family was able to help them with college applications, scholarships, and other steps that were necessary to take in order to enroll to college. Not only was the language and culture new to these women and their families, but the educational system was foreign to them. These women and their families lacked that cultural capital. However, because of the support system that is comprised of their parents, teachers, and their host community, these women were able to find their way to college, and succeed academically.

Advising/Guidance. Ajla also adds that she would have benefitted from a guidance counselor or anyone who was able to introduce her to different colleges, help her apply for scholarships and assist her with other financial demands. Ajla adds, "I didn't have any guidance into what good schools were, what scholarship were, what

fellowships were, none of that. That was one of the definitely hardest obstacles for me because I was learning it for the first time” (Interview, January 4, 2017).

Lea remembers her frustrations transitioning from high school to college:

I remember when I was in high school and it was time to apply for FAFSA and all the kids were like “oh, yeah, my mom is doing that for me”, and I’m thinking to myself “my mom doesn't even know what that is....you know...can you relate?” (Interview, January 6, 2017)

Una also states that guidance from her teachers, counselor and other professional staff in her high school would have helped her tremendously. Una says her biggest obstacle is that she didn’t have anyone to support her in school and that she had to figure everything out on her own but she also states that she learned much from her experiences.

Azra adds that she thought the advisors at the private university didn’t know how to work with students who came to study at the university on a need scholarships. Azra explains:

I thought that the counseling services at the university itself were inadequately or poorly prepared for people like me because they didn’t know how to advise me. I went to talk to them about law school, and my counselor, he just put me down. I remember, he said “I don’t understand, you got Bs and Cs your first year, how do you expect to go to law school? Do you understand how hard it is to get into law school?” And I thought to myself, “I am wholly inadequate for this.” And then he asked me about my personal life and what I had to do. I told him how I’m basically working full-time and he was like “that explains your grades, and you shouldn’t be working” and (pause) just like feeling the disconnect or how disconnected he was from the reality of my life. He couldn’t advise (pause) he didn’t have the tools to help me because I was entirely different I’m guessing from most of the people he advised. He was like “well, you need to quit your job and focus on school” and I remember thinking “well, that isn’t an option for me because then I can’t pay for my tuition.” Like I do realize that this is a private institution and all the other kids get all their moms and dads to write like \$50,000 checks a year for tuition. And I am here on a needs based scholarship. Even paying a small amount that I have to pay was a lot for me. (Interview, January 2, 2017)

Lea states that it was very difficult for her to select her major for her future career path. Lea says that she didn't know she could consult with a counselor, or that there was a career counselor available at her school. Lea elaborates explaining her struggles:

When you have to pick a major or when you need to know what a career path looks like and not having anybody that can advise you is bad. So I would hear from my classmates about how their parents advise them. Even in business school where I was getting my Bachelors one said "my dad is on a business trip in Korea and he has always suggested that I do this or that I try this, or that I go for a degree in this..." And I never had that, and I don't think I even knew how to ask for it. Now that I know to ask people for their experiences about things...now I constantly ask. But when you are 16 years old and you're trying to pick a college and a major, are doing so through a lens of a 16 year old who has been in the United States for 4 years, and really doesn't know anything. You know, "what did I know?! And who could sit there and advise me and help me? It's not like my mom can be like "when I was in the business world...." See, there was none of that in my family. In high school, I was like "yeah, I want to go to college" and "what are you going to do with the rest of your life?" "I have no idea!" There was nobody to help me figure it out. (Interview, January 6, 2017).

As refugees, these women found themselves in a country where everything was different, including the school system, the cultural expectations, and the language (Kunz, 1981).

These incompatibilities hindered these women to navigate through education system effectively. Furthermore, cultural differences between the women and their school advisers contributed to the obstacles these women faced.

Information for Parents. Many women stated that they didn't know to ask for guidance in school and were not able to ask for guidance at home. Unlike her native-born peers, especially those women who went to law schools or business schools found themselves at a loss because their parents weren't in that particular field and therefore couldn't ask for their advice. Una who went to a local business school in her town says:

One thing I want to point out is that it was not just the guidance that I needed but I wish my parents had some sort of guidance or understanding of the education system. Sometimes I'd have question and my mom couldn't help me. My dad was a little more informed because later he did go to school here but my mom had no

clue. I wish someone had my back. Someone who I could turn to when there was no one to turn to. (Interview, January 6, 2017).

Azra says that she wasn't able to go and talk to her parents about her college experiences. She says her grades were affected by her not being able to effectively navigate college:

I believe my grades suffered my first and my second year of college because I didn't know what I was doing. Like I said earlier, college was entirely new to me and I had no one to prepare me for. My parents had no idea. Even though I was applying to school, had it not been for my great counselors and my pre-law teacher who helped me write my essays and explained the college process, I probably wouldn't have gotten into law school. I might have ended up in community college and that would have changed my trajectory a lot, I feel. (Interview, January 2, 2017)

Since the participants did not have any roots in the United States, learning everything as they went through the process was difficult. The parents of the participants, possessed even less cultural knowledge, and that prevented them from being able to help their daughters. Because the parents could not advise their own children when it came to their educational success, these women heavily relied on their teachers and the school staff. However, many teachers and advisers in particular could not relate to these women and therefore weren't able to provide effective student support.

Financial Constraints. When Selma started her college endeavors at Penn State, she didn't know that she could negotiate the tuition cost with the university. Selma decided to study at Penn State because it was a very good school and her mother was in favor of it. Selma explains:

I was accepted to a college where everything was paid for me including books but at Penn State I needed to pay. So later, I found out you could go to the Financial Aid office to negotiate with them on the price. But at that time I didn't know that and I had to pay whatever I was told. So I had to take out a loan. (Interview, January 3, 2017).

Una adds that her wish was to go to a good school but she could not due to financial constraints. Una recalls:

I wanted to go to the University of Wisconsin but to me that was not an option because we were fresh refugees. My parents couldn't pay that much money for me to go to school. My barrier was that I couldn't dream. I couldn't dream to go to an ivy league school. I kind of had to take the best option that was here in my neighborhood. (Interview, January 7, 2017).

Mia adds how she missed various opportunities to enrich her skills and knowledge because of financial constrictions. Mia said she did not know she could apply for grants or scholarships. Mia recalls, "there was this study abroad in Turkey but I couldn't you know. My teacher said "you would be perfect." I was only getting student loans because I had no other choice. I did get some financial aid from FAFSA" (Interview, January 7, 2017).

Coming to the United States with only a bag, and if lucky a suitcase of belongings, and already carrying a burden of debt from the airplane tickets that needed to be repaid, these women explained that financial constraints posed as a significant obstacle in their educational pursuits. Their parents, who worked entry-level jobs, especially during their initial years of resettlement, mostly were not able to contribute financially to their daughter's educational endeavors. All women took up work throughout their high school and college to help pay for their education and to contribute to their family.

Work. While in high school or college, work is something to which all participants can relate. Many women worked because their financial situation at home was not allowing them to pursue college, taking into account that their parents worked menial wage jobs. Some women worked to support their parents financially. While most

women indicated having to work during their high school or college years as an obstacle to their academic success, Lamija and Senka implied that a job wasn't necessarily a major obstacle. She saw the obstacle as an opportunity where she could pay her own school expenses and at the same time help her parents.

You know when you come to the U.S. you get some Food Stamps for the first few months. But I was so proud of myself because I got a job two weeks into it. I had a job! I was so happy! I didn't have to rely on public assistance. I was so proud of myself. (Interview, January 3, 2017)

Azra adds that she has worked since high school:

I was sixteen years old, there was this internship program at a local bank, and I started working as a teller while I was in high school. I remember my friends were going to hang out after school, and go to the mall or play a sport. And was like "I am out of school and I'm going to work part-time at the bank". It was a two-year program and when I graduated, I was eligible for real employment. So I continued to work part-time at that bank through college. But as I went to college, my responsibilities at the bank grew because I had more experience as well and I kept getting promoted to the point where I was working like 30-35 hours per week and going to school full-time. That was a lot. I would stack all my classes into two days and would all day full-time for the rest of the day of the week. But I think that taught me a lot about working hard and how to separate my time and how to manage everything. (Interview, January 2, 2017).

Working during their high school and college years was something to which all women in this study were able to relate. Each woman juggled work and school. The women provide intense accounts of their abilities to squeeze in a full-time job while they pursued college full-time. Azra among all other participants talks about fitting in work during her high school and college years. However, the women also noted that some of their obstacles such as working a part-time or a full-time job while pursuing college full-time, taught them important lessons, and shaped who they are today.

Cultural and Social Incompatibilities Among Peers. Bourdieu (1986) argues that cultural and social capital are symbolic forms of capital, which may be collected, just like

economic capital. Thus, they carry social power in ways economic power grants its holders higher position in society and higher privilege (Bourdieu, 1986). According to Bourdieu (1986) Cultural capital is formed by “experiences in one’s home, which constitute cultural resources that may be used to assert one’s position in a social field—conferring social advantage to some individuals over others, much like economic capital” (deCarvalho, 2001 as cited in Clark, 2007, p. 61). The women felt that their cultural and financial background was not on the same level as those of their native-born peers. Unlike their American peers, these women had no roots in the United States. Several women mentioned that throughout high school and in college they, to a point, fit in academically but that they did not quite fit in socially. Emina describes her experiences in high school and says that she felt the same in college about being an outstanding student and feeling more connected to other minority students in school. Emina explains:

In high school, I tested out of ESL and I went to a regular class. I also took AP Chemistry. However, socially that was not the best for me because when I was in ESL and other classes I was with other immigrants, and obviously most of them Latinos. I felt comfortable and I felt they were similar to me. They didn’t speak English, so they spoke Spanish with me. I felt more comfortable with them. My other classes were very white American, maybe one or two African Americans occasionally, one immigrant or sometimes I was the only immigrant in the room. So socially, it was very different. I was very uncomfortable, even though education wise, the quality of my education increased, because I was in much better classes but I didn’t like it socially. (Interview, January 5, 2017)

Azra’s experience in high school and college echoes the experiences of Emina:

I had that additional road block and I had a hard time making friends at this private university because I felt like all the kids around me were (pause) like they just came from entirely different backgrounds and lives. They were entitled and they didn’t have to work, and they just got everything handed to them. And I had to go out and get everything that I want myself. (Interview, January 3, 2017)

Arriving to the United States without any cultural and social capital had a two-fold impact on the women. Even after a certain amount of time living in the United States, the women faced obstacles connecting to their peers in school due to the cultural and social incompatibilities. Despite their advanced English skills, and their academic excellence, these women experienced difficulties connecting to their host culture and their compatriots because they did not possess the appropriate cultural and social capital as the majority of their native-born peers. Thus, the women sought out and connected with the peers who shared similar backgrounds.

Social networks. All women stated that they lacked social networks at the very beginning of college. It was in college, more specifically through student groups, that some of these women started forming connections. Emina and Mia for example, became members of student organizations and started connecting with people. Emina explains how the student organizations that she actively participated in opening doors for meeting influential people and kindled her passion for human rights advocacy:

Being able to participate in a student group impacted my life positively. I was able to form social networks through the student organizations. They provided me with the opportunity to get to meet some influential leaders in my community, and they enabled me to contribute to my community through advocacy (Interview, January 5, 2017)

Lamija elaborates on the fact that not having roots in this country made it more difficult for her and her family to effectively integrate. Lamija says:

Another real barrier for me was the lack of connections because my parents didn't grow up here. See, in Bosnia everyone knew my father. He was very well known and had connections. Here all of my friends would get certain scholarships from like private organizations because their parents knew someone but my parents obviously didn't have that. Or even when it came to a job. As simple as employment. It was difficult. That was a barrier. Not growing up here and not having roots in American prevented me at certain times from improving financially and educationally. (Interview, January 3, 2017)

Similar to their high school experiences, at first the women had difficulty connecting with their college peers because of their dissimilarities. Again, in college, despite their English language fluency, these women struggled to navigate the higher education system due to a lack of social capital. Through the accounts of the women, it became evident that once these women were connected to peers on campus who shared similar interests, that these women started forming social networks and in turn increased their social capital.

Not Going out of State to Study. Several women dreamt of pursuing college out of state but weren't able to do so because of several factors including, financial constraints, and family obligations. Lea explains why she went to a local college in her town:

I thought I should go to school locally because my younger brother suggested I stay close to mom. So last minute I applied to a college in town, which is also a twenty-minute drive. I just couldn't leave her. So I love who I am today. I love who I have become today. And I wouldn't have it any other way. But back then I felt very limited by my connection to her and to her being alone, and me feeling guilty. (Interview, January 6, 2017)

Azra's parents were also not in favor of her studying out of state so she enrolled in a university in her state. Azra describes how not going out of state affected her:

I think socially fitting-in was far more difficult in a place like my private university because I didn't live there, and I would go there long enough for class and leave to go to work. So I didn't spend much time on campus other than when I was required to be there for class. So I didn't have the traditional college experience so to speak because I wasn't focused on making friends and connections or having a good experience while I was there. It was just like "get in and get out so you can go back to work." And when my 18-month younger sister was applying for college, I was just really encouraging her to find a school where she would love to go and actually live on campus and that was like groundbreaking in our Bosnian community. (Interview, January 2, 2017)

In the case of these women, not going out of state to study as it was done by most of their native-born peers, almost all women applied to colleges and universities in the city close

to their home. The choice to study locally was determined by their financial capabilities, the role reversal factor, but most importantly by their cultural traditions to stay close to family. Their collectivistic cultural values prioritized the wellbeing of the family, particularly parents and the elder family members. While the majority of women wished they could have gone out of state to study like their native-born peers, they do not see that obtaining a degree locally hindered them from obtaining a successful career.

Transcripts. Senka is the only participant who came here as an adult. During her temporary exile, Senka completed high school and enrolled in a university in Germany. She was in her third year of college when she resettled to the United States with her parents. Senka had every intention to immediately continue her college education in the United States, however, the fact that she couldn't transfer many of her courses from Germany discouraged her aspiration to continue college. Senka recalls:

What was discouraging was that I wasn't able to transfer many of my credits from Germany. And that was one of the things that set me back because I started to go to a University in Utah, and went through all the initial testing and what not, and had all my transcripts. And then they're like "you have no grades. And I told them "No, I don't. It's a university. You either pass or you don't pass. There are no grades." Then they asked, "What was your score?" I told them, "It was a research paper, I don't know what you want me to tell you?" Anyway, having to start all over, was what set me back a little bit. That is maybe the only thing that set me back where I could have been in a different spot in my life than I am now had I been allowed to simply continue instead of having to start over. And I was just trying to complete my degree in German and English. I gave up on that. I have to admit. I was very discouraged at that point, and I gave up. (Interview, January 3, 2017)

While nine women resettled to the United States either during elementary school age or during high school, Senka was the only participant who arrived in the United States with almost half of her undergraduate degree finished from Germany. After Senka arrived she expressed an interest in resuming her college studies in the United States, however,

because she was only half-way through her degree studying the English and German languages, the majority of her courses were not able to be transferred because of the dissimilarities in the grading system and curriculum requirements. The inability to transfer her college credits from Germany required Senka to start her undergraduate studies all over again in the United States. The incompatibility between the educational systems in Germany and the United States set Senka back, evoking the sense of not being accepted by the society and the educational system, despite her English fluency skills, and her other assets that she brought to her new county.

The Glass Ceiling. Several women states that because of their difficult past, their adverse experiences as refugees, and their socio-economic standing in their new communities, they created a perception that they were not good enough for college. In addition, because of their native language and culture were not of much worth in their new society, many of these women felt that they are not worthy. Azra sums up nicely what some of these women felt like in college:

Although, I am finishing my law degree this spring from a respected law school and I already have a job secured. I am aware that I am in a class of 200 + law students that are graduating this year and probably under 10% of us have jobs. The majority of kids are graduating and are looking for work while being in six-figure debt. But I do think that by some miracle I was able to achieve what most people go law school to do and I am proud of that. (Interview, January 3, 2017)

Senka states by saying that she realizes now that her major obstacle was her perceived glass ceiling:

After some time, I started asking myself, “Where is my glass ceiling? How far can I push this?” So I started to look at my “glass ceiling” and there was a perceived ceiling. I realized there is no glass ceiling for me. I can go as far as I want to go. But the perceived ceiling of me not having a certain degree resonated. Not that I can’t make it. I can stay on the same path and still be successful but that path is going to have some bumps in, and I’m going to have to prove myself, whereas if I continue to do what I’m already doing, meaning gain education, that that

perceived ceiling shatters. That's why I decided to go back to school. That is where I am. I am actively going to school and loving every minute of it (laughs). I'm finishing my Bachelors in Healthcare Administration. My husband wants to push me to finish my Masters right after my Bachelors, and that it likely what I will do. (Interview, January 3, 2017)

Having experienced the atrocities of war, and witnessing the multifaceted adversities once resettled to the United States, these women saw themselves as second-class citizens who did not have appropriate knowledge and the right tools to succeed in their new country. In addition, being deemed different throughout the majority of their lives had a major impact on their psyche. As a result, the majority of women created this unseen obstacle for themselves called the "class ceiling" where they did not believe in themselves, their knowledge, and their skills. Despite these women being very brave and very bright, and very determined to succeed, they felt that they were not good enough for college because of how they have been perceived in their past. It was only after pursuing an education, did the women realize that the skills and the knowledge that they have gained enabled the women to shatter the perceived "glass ceiling" that hindered them from rising up the ladder in their communities, and the professional world.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

“Never comfort yourself with the thought that because the worst things imaginable are happening to those other people they cannot happen to you”

- Beverly Allen, *Rape warfare: The hidden genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia, 1996*

This concluding chapter serves four main purposes. First, I present the summary of the study. Second, I deliver the conclusions of the study. Third, I discuss the implications of the study conducted on Bosnian women in higher education. Fourth, I provide recommendations for practice.

Summary of Study

In this study, I examined the experiences of ten Bosnian women who came to the United States as refugees in higher education. The power of social media enabled me to reach out to Bosnian non-profit organizations, who helped me recruit participants from across the United States for my study. In addition, the software application Skype, enabled me to engage in an audio-visual contact with the ten women from across the country. The goal was to explore the effect college education has on Bosnian women who resettled to the United States as refugees, and how education affected their self-sufficiency and overall integration into their new communities. Precisely, the study aimed to explore how socio-cultural factors enabled and constrained the ability of Bosnian women to navigate the facets of higher education, and how those factors affect their self-sufficiency and overall integration into their new communities.

While adequate literature on refugee students in primary and secondary schools exists, and a small amount of scholarship in the area of refugees in higher education is available, only a scarce amount of research on refugee women in higher education exists. Even more limited is the scholarship on Bosnian women in higher education who came to the United States as refugees. The significant contribution of this study is the distinctive experiences of the Bosnian female population who resettled to the United States as refugees.

Chapter 1 provided an extensive introduction to the Bosnian population. It also offered an overview of women from Bosnia during the Bosnian War. Chapter 1 delivered the background and problem statement as well as the purpose of the study, rationale, definition of terms and the research question. This chapter also discussed the limitations and researcher positionality. Chapter 1 also contains my personal narrative. While some research seeks to understand how refugee students experience and navigate higher education, a dearth of research exemplifies the educational experiences of Bosnian refugee women in academia.

Chapter 2 comprised a review of the literature that was presented in three sections. The first section explored the distinctions between refugees and other immigrants. The second section examined refugee resettlement to the United States from historical and political perspectives. The third section focused on the contemporary aspect of refugees attending higher education. Chapter 2 also examined the educational aspect of acclimation pertaining to formal education to explain the role of educational participation as a relevant factor in refugee integration and self-sufficiency.

Chapter 3 portrayed and described the methodological approach utilized, and the reasoning for using qualitative design. This chapter introduced the study participants, and participant recruitment approaches using social media. Chapter 3 also presented the data collected, and described the analysis process.

Chapter 4 describes the research findings. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section introduced readers to the women who played a central role in this study. The second section of the chapter, presented the three main themes that emerged through participants' narratives. Each theme conforms to the research question on how higher education impacts Bosnian women's self-sufficiency and overall integration in the new communities. The three main themes are The Refugee Experiences, Educational Experiences upon Resettlement, and Educational Experiences in College. Presented are also the sub-themes under each main theme.

Chapter 5 is the final chapter. First, I provide a summary of the study. Then, I discuss the research results and their implications. I suggest how the findings may be important for future research, theory, policy, and practice. Finally, I present the recommendations and advocate for specific actions in respect to subsequent research, theory, policy and practice.

Conclusions

The overall research findings demonstrate that higher education generated unique opportunities for the Bosnian women who came as refugees to develop social and cultural capital, which in turn enabled their self-sufficiency and overall integration into their new communities. Numerous uprooted experiences as refugees affected their educational experiences and their disposition toward a college education. However, their support

system, which comprised of the host community, their parents, family and their teachers enabled these women to successfully bridge into college and succeed in higher education. Education provided the women the access to what I named progressive capital, a unique form of social capital, which enables these women to take on active leadership roles as cultural brokers and role models within their Bosnian/Bosnian-American communities. Furthermore, a college education enabled these women to acknowledge their parents' sacrifices and reaffirm their gratitude for providing them with an opportunity to pursue a college education. The findings of the study support the following conclusions:

The Refugee Experiences

While many researchers use theories, such as acculturation or identity theories to analyze the educational experiences, for this particular study on Bosnian women, I blended Kunz's refugee theory and Bourdieu's social and cultural capital. The rationale is that these theories combined provide rich possibilities for better understanding both the importance and value of including Bosnian women to participate socially and culturally in their communities and in schools and the effects this has on their self-sufficiency and overall integration into their new communities. Thus, as the researcher, I invited participants to share accounts about their lived experiences and documented them using narrative inquiry in order to capture their voice.

During my conversations with the ten women, I found that each woman had an ordinary and happy childhood in Bosnia and Herzegovina prior to the war. They led lives filled with family and friends. While these women came from different socio-economic backgrounds and parts of Bosnia, each woman expressed fondness toward their native country. Despite their harrowing experiences and memories of the war, to this day these

women are devoted to their birth country and like to visit Bosnia and Herzegovina and their family in Bosnia when possible.

According to Kunz (1981) the refugees' social relationships to their country and compatriots has substantial impact on resettlement to their new country, in that "some feel more marginal than others toward the society which they leave behind" (p. 71).

Through my interviews with the ten women, I found the Bosnian refugee population falls into both categories: majority-identified and events-alienated refugees. All women indicated they identified with their nation but not with a particular administrative Bosnian government, in this case Republic of Srpska. Both entities in Bosnia, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic of Srpska, have their own administrative governments. Each entity has a prime minister with 16 ministers that hold relative autonomy on local issues such as education, finance, health care, etcetera. Many of the participants came from the part of Bosnia called Republic of Srpska since the Dayton Peace Accord. Thus, they do not associate with the government that expelled them from their homes. Additionally, these women do not yearn to be identified with the government of Republic of Srpska and a portion of their nation due to past discrimination against the non-Serb population and war crimes. I see this as reasonable because to this day, the current government of Republic of Srpska continues to minimize and deny ethnic cleansing and genocide committed in Bosnia by the Serb military during the Bosnian War. Because the Bosnian refugee population does not entirely fit into any of Kunz's (1981) categories but rather exists within the majority-identified and the events-alienated categories, I have termed a new category, *Nationally-Ethnically-Religiously persecuted refugees*. Refugees that belong to this group were persecuted based on their nationality,

ethnic or religious background during the war. All ten women expressed their reason for fleeing their native country was due to their national, ethnic, or religious background.

The expulsion out of their homes was sudden and dehumanizing. The women in my study provided testimonies stating they and their family left their country unwillingly without a clear plan or solution as Kunz (1981) and Potocky-Tripodi (2002) found. All women stated they were abruptly displaced. The women who had fathers were forcefully split, sending them, their siblings, and their mothers into the unknown. Each participant's father was thrown in a concentration camps if he was lucky enough to be spared from execution. Emina's father was forced to stay behind in war-torn Bosnia, because the Serb forces kept track of the names of Muslim males. Emina recalls her father was sent to a concentration camp but was let out after several years of torture. He was so emaciated she could barely recognize him. Una's story reveals that shortly after Una and her mother fled to Germany, Una's father was captured and held prisoner of war for several years. Lamija's father also spent several years in a concentration camp. Out of eight participants who also had a father, seven of them later reunited with the participants in exile. Lea, on the other hand, lost her father. Her father was captured and executed by the Serb forces, and his remains were found in a mass grave. The memories of forced separation from their fathers and other family members are deeply engraved in the lives of these women.

Their life in exile brought unique obstacles for these women. Displacement related factors acted as prognostics of the outcomes of refugees in resettlement, and host related factors could predict future outcomes for refugees resettled to a new country (Kunz, 1981). All women expressed that they felt they had no stability in their lives because of their abrupt uprooting. Participants stated that exile forced them to grow up

quickly as children because they needed to take care of themselves and their younger siblings while their parent or parents worked multiple jobs and long shifts. Moreover, the role of being a responsible child was also induced by the role reversal between them and their parents. All women confirmed they felt responsible to take care of their siblings and their parents. Their guardian roles ranged from translating for their parents, filling out paperwork on behalf of them, to providing financial assistance for their family. These women stated they raised themselves as very young children and took on the responsibility to help the family become self-sufficient. Emina echoes the ten stories shared by the participants:

Because as a child my English was better than my parents was, I remember helping my parents find an apartment, filling out job applications. Those responsibilities fell on me. My uncle and aunt spoke English but broken English so sometimes they couldn't help either. So the roles reversed very quickly. (Interview, January 5, 2017)

While these women took on serious responsibilities at a very young age, all women stated growing up fast was not necessarily a negative thing in their lives. In fact, becoming responsible individuals at a young age helped them succeed academically and professionally. Ajla describes how the role of responsibility in her family affected her overall life:

I'm thinking if outsiders would listen to our stories they would be mortified in that they feel horrible for us but I don't think I would have it any other way. I am happy with who I have become. I am happy how driven and motivated I am and how I keep going. And I know it was those circumstances that has shaped who we are. (Interview, January 4, 2017)

These women unanimously concluded that having to hold a position as a responsible child taught them to value education. Participants experienced interrupted education due to war in their native country and during their temporary stay in exile.

Despite instances of bullying, and feeling alienated during their educational experience as newcomers, the findings in my study revealed several women turned to their books to escape trauma, and their unstable lives in their new country. To these women, schools indicated a safe space. Moreover, during their college years in the United States, the role of education remained significant in their lives.

Educational Experiences upon Resettlement

Nonetheless, education in the United States posed unique obstacles for these New Americans. An opportunity to establish a new life in a safe environment may lead to healing and overcoming of traumatic experiences (Potocky-Tripodi 2002; Besic & McBrien, 2012). Furthermore, research on refugees considers education to be a fundamental resource towards the overall social, emotional and economic mobility of refugees (Mosselson, 2002a, McBrien 2005b; Roxas 2011). Obtaining an education is vital toward the overall acculturation, community engagement and healing (Sinclair, 2001 as cited in McBrien 2005b). Moreover, higher education is a means of enabling refugees to effectively integrate in their new country as well as become self-sufficient, which provides avenues for social engagement, enhancing refugees' social and cultural capital (Ager & Strang, 2004).

During the one-on-one interviews, all women revealed they faced obstacles at some point during their educational endeavors in the American schools. Moreover, women who resettled to the United States as children confronted their initial educational hurdles in primary or secondary schools. However, their struggles did not fade once in college. In fact, enrolling in college posed a unique struggle for each of the ten women. Each participant reported challenges bridging into higher education because they did not

know how the education system in the United States worked. None of the parents were able to help, including those parents who had a college education. Unlike their native-born peers, these women and their family had only been a short amount of time in their new country, and were still conquering their new language and culture. Now having cultural capital, which encompasses the factors these women and their families were in the process of mastering, prevented them from effectively navigating the facets of education.

The numerous obstacles these women faced in schools upon resettlement were due to being new in a foreign country while other obstacles were directly related to schools. This study revealed three major “newcomer” student obstacles: language, nostalgia and role reversal. Two main obstacles related to integration within a new school were identified: alienation and bullying. While these obstacles were not identified in any particular order, the interlinking of these obstacles significantly affected their educational experiences negatively.

The process of starting anew in a foreign country with a different language and culture also poses obstacles during the initial years of integration (Moore, 2013). Women unanimously agreed that their English proficiency, or the lack of, was the overarching obstacle, which prompted many unpleasant experiences in school including the feeling of being alienated and being verbally bullied. As refugees, these women held little social power in their new country (Kunz, 1981). Having little social power in turn prevented these women to have their own voice and to speak up. These women realized their standing within society as second-class citizens because their voice was not heard.

With time their English proficiency increased, these women graduated from ESL classes, and were put into regular classes with native-born peers. While the majority of women stated that not being in ESL and other remedial classes increased their quality of education, being in regular classes caused more alienation. Many of the participants found themselves in schools where there were only a few immigrant students besides them, and they felt that they had not much in common with their native-born peers. Furthermore, these women revealed that they felt defeated by not speaking English fluently and felt they had to learn to speak English as quickly as possible. Augmentative societies such as the United States welcome refugees to their country, however with the expectation that they will contribute toward their economic growth (Kunz, 1981). Thus, the expectations are high for newly arrived refugees to master English and become fluent in their host culture (Kunz, 1981). Women felt that English language fluency represented an entry toward inclusion and success in their school and in their community.

Nostalgia played a significant role in their academic journey during the initial resettlement stage. Not only did these women miss their country and family but also their parents enforced the tone of melancholy in their household. The women stated that even though their family had the opportunity to call the United States their permanent home, their parents often talked about returning to their native country, especially during their early relocation to the United States. To this day, none of the parents returned to Bosnia. These women said that hearing their parents talk about returning to Bosnia further perpetuated homesickness and caused a sense of instability during the initial resettlement period.

Regarding role reversal, all women reported experiencing it at the start of their flight, which became more prominent during their temporary exile, and became a part of their lives once they resettled to the United States. Based on their narratives, these women became responsible individuals early into their childhood. They were expected to take care of themselves, their siblings and their parents. The older they became, the more demanding the responsibilities were towards the family, ranging from translating for their parents to becoming their family's guardian to working a job during high school and college to help support their family. However, all ten women pointed out that role reversal also had a positive outcome in their lives in that these women became responsible individuals early on, which prompted them to pursue their academic goals. All women unanimously stated that through role reversal they gained a strong work ethic. In addition, responsibility that these women gained through role reversal influenced their motivation, their academic and professional success, and their overall identity.

During the one-on-one interviews when talking about academic success, all ten women claimed that their parents were the most influential support network. Their stories indicated that parents, despite their unfamiliarity with the school system, encouraged their daughters to pursue higher education. Although their parents did not possess the knowledge on how to navigate the school systems in the United States, they presented the women with moral support, and to some point financial assistance. Parents encouraged their daughters to pursue higher education because they realized early on that education is a gateway toward social and financial mobility within their new society (Bourdieu, 1986). Parents used their own examples working menial jobs, and long hours at companies they

would have otherwise not chosen themselves to encourage their daughters to obtain a college degree to help secure a stable future.

The overall family support, which included parents, grandparents, siblings, and husbands, encouraged these women to finish their high school education and enroll in college. The host community along with the Bosnian community was vital as they supplied support outside of the home, providing these women with informal knowledge they otherwise would not have at home. Their native-born American sponsors influenced these women by taking them to college campuses, by connecting them with other members of their community, by helping them with their college applications, and supporting their overall educational endeavors. The host community presented itself as an outlet for cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). In addition, Bosnian sponsors who had been in the United States for some time helped these women and their parents become familiar with their surroundings and helped them get on their feet. These women started to form “bonded networks” (Strang & Ager, 2010) within their own community and networks within their host community forming social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Teachers, on the other hand, served as a support network within schools that empowered the women to succeed academically and to bridge into higher education.

Education provided these women with various tools that instigated their self-sufficiency and overall integration into their society. Through education, the women gained cultural capital, which promoted their social mobility (Bourdieu, 1986). Within a stratified society, education acts as an imperative tool toward social and economic mobility (Bourdieu, 1986). It is important to note that all ten women had a deep desire to

pursue a college degree, and the question was how they went about succeeding in college given the numerous obstacles, and not whether they would go to college.

Educational Experiences in College

The obstacles Bosnian women faced in college were manifold. The most difficult obstacles bridging into college were taking standardized exams and applying to college. The ability to navigate surroundings effectively is a sign of cultural knowledge, which also indicates social standing within the society (Bourdieu, 1986). As for the ten women, who had fairly recently resettled to a new country that embraces a specific type of linguistic and cultural knowledge, it was difficult to bridge into higher education. Furthermore, because these women encompassed different linguistic and cultural knowledge, as well as other forms of knowledge that was incompatible with the knowledge of their host society, they were not able to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in an effective way.

As indicated, nine out of the ten women went to a high school in the United States prior to enrolling in college. Senka was the only woman who came to the United States half way through her undergraduate studies that she pursued in Germany. For Senka, the inability to transfer her transcripts from universities outside of the United States prevented her from continuing her college education. The incapability to continue her undergraduate studies because her university would not transfer the majority of the college credits earned in Germany created a significant setback in Senka's academic and professional life. Furthermore, each woman expressed her frustration with the lack of advising and guidance by advisors. This was mainly due to the cultural incompatibilities between the women and their advisers (Kunz, 1981). Due to the lack of understanding the

significantly different life experiences of the Bosnian women, advisers failed to provide effective advising services to them. Thus, getting to know students, learning about their pasts and their cultures is imperative for advisers and teachers alike, when it comes to supporting students.

This study revealed that none of the women provided positive accounts when talking about advising and guidance during their high school and college years. Complaints about their advisors ranged from not being able to relate to them, not knowing how to advise the women based on their unique needs, to dismissing their concerns and complaints. Furthermore, all women claimed that there was not an organized effort by advisors and counselors to support their academic endeavors. Each woman said that she relied on either a teacher in high school or a professor in college for support. Although, one woman did state that her counselor in high school helped her once with her paper.

Other obstacles consisted of not having parents who could help these women navigate college because the parents did not know how the education system in the United States worked. As New Americans, not knowing how to navigate specific institutions such as the education and or having parents being able to help, made it challenging to enter the realm of higher education. The ability to navigate the facets of education is an indicator of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Furthermore, such knowledge indicates the social standing of an individual within his/her society (Bourdieu, 1986). For these women, their experiences going through the channels of education, along with the help of their host community is what contributed to their understanding on how to navigate the education system.

In addition, the majority of women expressed the idea of a “glass ceiling” referring to insecurities of not being worthy of going to college. This was particularly the case with the law student who attended a highly respected, private university and the woman who came to the United States half way through her undergraduate degree but had to start her studies anew due to the inability to transfer her college credits.

At the beginning of their college education, all women noted cultural and social incompatibilities among them and their native-born peers. Unlike their peers, these women were fairly new in this country. What set them apart from their peers, was that these women did not have any “roots” in this country, which hindered them from creating social networks. This study revealed that not having “roots” in the United States affected the academic and overall success of these women. These incompatibilities influenced their social networks and academic success (Bourdieu, 1986). However, some women claimed that taking part in student groups and connecting with considerate professors enabled them to engage in creating social networks.

Another significant obstacle is related to financial constraints. As individuals who came to the United States with only the most necessary belongings, these women and their families had a very rough start in the United States. All women said they worked a job to support their family and to be able to continue paying for their tuition fees, while attending college full-time.

Financial capital has a significant impact on cultural capital, indicating the fact financial instability affects social standing (Bourdieu, 1986). Moreover, cultural capital, in some cases has the ability to be converted into economic capital and thus, “may be institutionalized in the form of education qualifications” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 47). In the

case of the ten women, their financial instability acted as a significant obstacle toward obtaining a college education. A blend of financial constraints and the mentality of their native culture to stay close to their family prevented some of the participants from studying out of state like their native-born peers and made it very difficult for the women to obtain a degree. However, despite the many obstacles, the women found safety in education during their most vulnerable time, during and post war. Education provided these women a safe space, where they could turn to books to escape from their unfortunate situations.

The women held a view of the United States as the land of opportunities. Their degree represented a “badge of honor” for their parents because these parents came to the United States with nothing and gave their daughters everything. These women stated they were given the chance to pursue higher education, an opportunity many of their mothers never had. Pursing an education enabled these women to reaffirm their mothers’ worthiness, and indicate gratitude toward the sacrifices their parents made to provide these women a better life. Furthermore, participants reclaimed their pride, worthiness, and a voice through education, which generated healing and stability within the lives of the participants with disturbed childhoods. A focus group that consisted of four women from the study were unanimously able to connect with and reaffirm Lejla’s statement about the positive impact college education had on their lives, “For a time I felt really insecure. I didn't know the language very well. And education was a way to affirm to myself that I was a worthy human being. Education played a huge role in that” (Interview, January 9, 2017). Higher education provided an opportunity for the participants to gain confidence, normalcy and stability. Education has provided these

women security, something that they can fall back on. Education is something that they have earned and that no one can take away from them. This is especially important because these women experienced great loss in their past.

Individuals who experienced adversities and loss, see education as their safety net and a gateway toward security, as well as financial and socio-cultural mobility. This study revealed security does not imply financial security. Security is a means of stability and upward mobility, which leads to self-sufficiency. Education allows those who experienced hardships to look through a special lens. This lens enables refugees to engage in a different way of life, a way where they are able to reap the benefits of this country and give back to their communities. Having gained the cultural capital through education enabled these women to have their voices be heard. Through education, these women felt that they had the right to speak, and to speak on behalf of their native and host community. Their ability to speak up infers to their social standing within their society (Bourdieu, 1986).

However, this approach was only possible once these women gained cultural and social capital through their college education. Moreover, the cultural and social capital gained, enabled the participants to navigate, partake and thrive within various communities. Taking part in communities means to give back to their communities and pay-it-forward to the future generations.

Once cultural and social capital is gained, these women were able to connect to the broader community but helped these women gain access to another capital, which I labeled, progressive capital. Progressive capital emerged from this study, and enabled the women to advocate for and support their Bosnian/Bosnian-American communities. In

other words, the Bosnian women utilized their social capital not only for their own personal and professional upward mobility but also to help their Bosnian/Bosnian-American community prosper. Through their community engagement, and leadership roles, these women emerged as cultural brokers, leaders and role models. The results indicated that these women fondly take on these roles and are proud to be an integral part of their communities.

In her study, Peralta (unpublished) working with refugee students in college has also found that these refugee students become involved in their own refugee communities. She has labeled this cultural capital “Empathy Capital”, which adds to Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth framework. Empathy capital is derived from the experiences lived by refugees which engages them in helping other refugee members. I draw from Peralta's (unpublished) work to label this social capital “progressive capital”. Hence, education was an outlet for cultural and social capital. Social capital emerged through social connections within the school as well as through student groups. Social connections, especially for refugees, provide a great deal of self-sufficiency and aids effective integration. In this study, it was evident that social connections had a multilayered effect on these women and their communities, meaning that the social connections generated new opportunities and encouraged effective integration, as well as extended their options in society. Those opportunities allowed participants to become active members of the society.

One of the major findings that came out of this study is that these women pursued higher education because they had the opportunity and the support system. The support system, which consisted of their host community, parents, family and their teachers,

enabled them to bridge into college. Thus, this study points out that if refugees are given the opportunity to pursue an education these individuals will be more capable of contributing toward the overall wealth of the society and the economy. The women specifically demonstrated how they applied their progressive capital within their communities. By working with the current Syrian refugees helping them adjust to their new surroundings, by teaching newcomers English, by educating about genocide, and by representing communities and businesses in the legal court, these women play a key role in our society. Their professional credentials enabled the women to step up to another level working with the broader community, as well as their Bosnian community.

Additionally, numerous other factors enabled these women to become self-sufficient, including the opportunity to integrate effectively, enabled the women to become cultural brokers, which in turn reshaped the participants' identities. A new form of identity surfaced as a result of being cultural brokers. The new identity allows the participants to be fluent and operate simultaneously in both languages and cultures. Because of their multicultural identity and their naturalized citizenship status in the United States, these women are proud to call themselves Bosnian-Americans. I draw from Miramontez, Benet-Martinez, & Nguyen's (2008) work on Bicultural identity and self/group personality perceptions, and label this new identity "multicultural identities" as this identity encompasses being oneself as a result of a combination of two or more cultures as this is unique to the refugee populations. The significance of multiculturalism and biculturalism among underrepresented groups have been "acknowledged by a number of psychologists such as Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Fowers & Richardson, 1996; Hermans & Kempen, 1998; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993,

but the phenomenon has only recently begun to be investigated empirically”

(Miramontez, Benet-Martinez, & Nguyen, 2008, p. 438).

While school related factors and home-related factors affected the education experiences of individuals, the participants were able to overcome the obstacles with the help of their support networks. Once obstacles were conquered, these women began to reap the full effect of the academic, cultural and social wealth academia has to offer. Education provided a ripple effect for the Bosnian women. Education provided knowledge, stability and leadership, and reclaimed the dignity, and voice of the otherwise voiceless community.

Social media played a key role in participant recruitment for this study. I decided to use social media as a tool to reach out to the Bosnian/Bosnian-American community across the United States. I found a network of Bosnian-Americans on Facebook and I reached out to the Board Directors of the Bosnian American Professionals Association (BAPA) via Facebook. The non-profit organization was eager to assist in the recruitment of participants, and posted a “call for participants” message on their Facebook and Twitter wall. Within two days I had twenty-one Bosnian/Bosnian-American women who emailed me responding to the post expressing their interest in taking part in the study. In fact, I had to stop at the first ten women, which meant that I had to turn eleven women away due to the nature of narrative inquiry and the depth that it demands. However, the women who weren’t able to participate in this study were willing to be considered for future studies on the Bosnian diaspora. Furthermore, other technology used in this study such as Skype, where the women were able to talk to me and see me from the comfort of their homes proved to be an important tool in qualitative research, as well as Atlas.ti

software that allowed for efficient analysis and safe storage of my qualitative data. In today's world, social media has the power to connect qualitative researchers with individuals across the globe. Thus, it should be recognized as a viable tool in qualitative research.

Implications

Based on this study, my purpose is to inform educational policy makers, teachers/staff, communities and the larger society as well as the local and national government officials on refugee policy, about the importance of providing appropriate and effective resources to the refugee population in the United States. What separates this study from other studies on Bosnian refugee students is that as a researcher I am also an insider of the Bosnian/Bosnian-American community. I find it important to note that my work with the Bosnian women did not simply end after collecting my data. In fact, I stay in touch with the ten women via email, phone and social media on a regular basis. Since the study, I have also met most of the women in-person during conferences and Bosnian social events that were held across the United States. Moreover, what makes this study unique is that I examined the impact college education has on Bosnian refugee women who resettled to the United States. Precisely, I investigated socio-cultural factors that influenced and constrained the ability of Bosnian women to navigate the facets of higher education, and explored how those socio-cultural factors affected their self-sufficiency and overall integration into their new communities. This study will help understand the challenges Bosnian refugee students faced in schools and outside of schools. While I studied Bosnian women who came as refugees to the United States, the implications of

this study infer significant information on how to work with current and future refugee students.

Educators, Advisors and Educational Policy Makers

It is vital for educators, educational policy makers, and counselors to understand the unfortunate pasts and the challenges Bosnian female students faced navigating the school system as well as their new surroundings. Through this study, I documented the dearth of research available on Bosnian women in higher education who came to the United States as refugees. This scarcity is in part due to educational researchers grouping Bosnian refugees with voluntary immigrant populations. Moreover, various research on language acquisition lumps refugee students with voluntary immigrant students because English is a new language for these students (Portes & Bach, 1985, Hein, 1993). However, what is not taken into consideration are the core factors such as their background, their socio-economic status, and specific needs that distinguish refugee students from voluntary immigrant students (Mosselson, 2002a, Clark, 2007, Roxas, 2008). Therefore, it is crucial for educators, educational policy makers, advisors and staff alike who work closely with the refugee student population to assess and effectively address the various needs and abilities refugee students have. Until educational experts and leaders genuinely attempt to understand the difference between the two immigrant student populations, there will be no effective, strategized support for either of the student populations.

Researchers studying refugee students in higher education schools need to approach their research asking questions such as what tools need to be provided to these students to enable and enhance their academic success rather than questioning whether

these students have the capacity to pursue an education. It is imperative educational researchers and other refugee researchers study refugees from an asset based perspective rather than a deficit perspective.

Therefore, it is vital for educational policy makers, educators, advisors, and school staff who work closely with refugee populations to understand the challenges these students face in educational settings and provide these students with a safe space within school where they can be safe, learn and prosper. As my study revealed, despite instances of bullying and feeling alienated as during their initial schooling experience, education provided women a safe space, where they could turn to books to escape from their unfortunate situations. Education provided healing, stability and security. Thus, it is imperative for educational experts to understand the histories of Bosnian refugees and refugee students alike, who have experienced expulsions from their native country, and have faced multiple uprooting on their way to safety. In the case of Bosnian refugee students, the horrific events the war in Bosnia brought caused numerous disruptions in their lives, including interruptions in their education. Therefore, simple but effective actions for educators, advisors and staff alike would be to genuinely get to know their students, to learn how to pronounce their names correctly, and to learn a little bit about the students' cultures.

As this study revealed, Bosnian women and their families came to the United States not fluent in English. They were not familiar with the American culture and customs. Thus, while it is imperative for the newcomers to learn English and to become accustomed to the new culture, it is equally important to allow room for these students to preserve their native language and culture. Effective acculturation calls for mastery of

language and culture of the host country while being able to retain native language and culture (Nadal, 2011). A plethora of research on second language acquisition provides evidence that “preserving the linguistic and cultural heritage of the home countries often helps migrant children move ahead in America” (Portes & Rivas, 2011, p. 240). A research study turned into a book titled *Women of Courage: Jewish and Italian Immigrant Women in New York*, presents the significance of preserving the native language for their own benefit and the benefit of their children. The authors Coser, Anker, & Perrin (1999), argue knowledge of diverse “language structures helps the comprehensions of different structures generally, helping people to be more analytical. Once one knows more than one language, one has learned to take distance from a specific linguistic structure, making it easier to develop abstract skills” (p. 33). Thus, in an effort for schools to encourage linguistic and cultural preservation among refugee students, schools should organize cultural events within their schools that represents their entire student population.

To encourage cultural diversity within the classroom, educators should implement Geneva Gay’s pedagogy (2000) on culturally relevant teaching. Culturally relevant pedagogy supports educators use of multicultural literature that represents their students in the classroom. As this study revealed, despite the women’s superb English language fluency, these women felt they struggled to relate to their native-born peers or the curriculum at times. Furthermore, it is imperative educators build on the previous knowledge of refugee students. Roxas (2008) encourages teachers to open up their classrooms to different learning styles. Additionally, educators need to work with refugee students from a strengths-based perspective. In other words, educators need to recognize

and point out the assets and the knowledge refugee students bring with them. Students need to have a safe space in the classroom where they can present their knowledge and skills, even if it is vastly different from the prescribed curriculum. Allowing students to acquire new knowledge but to have the ability to share their previous knowledge with teachers and peers is imperative in creating safe learning spaces. On the administrative level, educational policy makers also need to educate themselves about the refugee students and other minority students they represent. Policy makers and curriculum developers need to create and implement, and encourage educators to use a multicultural curriculum within their schools.

For refugee students, having experienced some form of trauma is a part of their identity. Thus, schools need to provide welcoming and safe spaces for their refugee population on campus. Peralta (2013) encourages universities to create spaces where new and seasoned refugees (those who have been here longer) come together to explore their experiences. Designated safe spaces on campus where students can meet has the potential to create an environment where refugee students can share ideas and learn from one another.

One important aspect of education is to create good citizens and tomorrow's leaders. The majority of research studies indicate cultural participation is linked to educational attainment (Sullivan, 2002). Therefore, a way for educators to integrate refugee students into the broader community is to incorporate community learning into their curriculum. In fact, community learning should be an integral part of the curriculum in primary, secondary and higher education because community learning is valuable for all students. However, refugee students would reap the most benefits because they would

have the opportunity to connect with their community but also with the broader society. An example of community learning could require field experiences where refugee students would be given the opportunity to actively engage in community-based projects at the local and global level. For refugee students, such experiences not only are valuable but necessary because these students have the ability to become cultural brokers and act as bridges between their community and other communities. Therefore, proactive refugee leaders in the community should provide refugee students with the opportunity to visit university campuses to meet the faculty and staff, help them sign up for classes, and apply for scholarships. This will benefit potential or new refugee students and encourage them to pursue higher education.

One aspect of student support that is missed in many research studies on refugees is to focus on supporting the parents. As this study revealed, Bosnian refugee students felt lost and struggled academically because their parents were not able to support and advise them due to a lack of understanding of the school system in the United States. Therefore, it is vital to include the parents in their child's academic life in order to educate parents about the school system, which in turn will enable parents to provide necessary support to their children from home. As demonstrated by Roxas's (2008) study on Somali Bantu male high school students and Coser, Anker, & Perrin (1999) in their study on Jewish and Italian immigrant women in New York, parents play an integral role in the academic achievement of their children. Hence, schools need to create events at schools where the parents are invited and encouraged to attend. This in turn will allow parents to get to know the school and their children's teachers, staff, and other parents. Parent friendly school events, where parents can share their favorite books or stories, will allow refugee

parents and students to feel included, which in turn will display school as safe spaces for their children.

Furthermore, for K-12 teachers, conducting home visits is crucial in order to get to know parents and their student outside of the classroom and learn about their culture. Peralta-Nash's (2003) study titled "The Impact of Home Visit in Students' Perception of Teaching" concludes that in order for educators to support their students' academic success they need to include their parents and family. Peralta-Nash (2003) states "in order to improve the education of culturally and linguistically diverse students, it is fundamental that teachers understand the relationship between pupils' home culture and school learning" (p. 112). Including parents in their child's education creates a ripple effect in the academic and social upward mobility for both the refugee students and their parents.

Like educators, advisors and professional staff alike play an integral role in the academic success of refugee students. Advisors need to take proactive steps to learn about their refugee students on campus. As an opportunity to get to know refugee students, advisors can invite students to their office simply to get to know them. In addition, advisors can let refugee students know what support they provide to the students on campus. By reaching out to refugee students, and by showing the students where their office is located, academic advisors will create a more welcoming environment on campus and encourage students to seek academic advice from the appropriate student support office. By reaching out to students, advisors have the power to alleviate refugee student's academic obstacles and frustrations, which in turn may lead to student retention. Furthermore, advisers should reach out to administrative professionals to encourage their

universities to be more proactive on accepting college credits from accredited universities outside of the United States. This will enable refugees to continue their interrupted education in their new country.

This study demonstrated student groups on campus enabled refugee women to create connections with the broader community. Engaging in student groups, women were empowered to take on advocacy and leadership roles. Creating student groups such as the Boise State Refugee Alliance, that I co-created, not only provides a broad range of support for refugee students in college, but encourages them to connect with their community as well as peers on campus. Involving refugee students in proactive initiatives and providing them with a safe space to express their previous knowledge and unique skills encourages inclusion. Women revealed that being a part of a student group build their leadership skills, and provided them with the access to the Bosnian and host communities. Extracurricular activities encouraged refugee students to engage based on their interests, and enabled refugees to find their voice again.

By understanding the needs and the assets refugee students bring to the American schools, educators, advisors and educational leaders alike, are able to provide tangible tools and engage in actions toward success of the refugee student populations. Frustrations and obstacles could be lessened on both sides if educators, policy makers, and the professional staff were educated about the refugee student populations enrolled in their schools. As conflicts continue to spread throughout the world, with the most current hostility toward the Syrian nation, the continued arrival of refugees in the United States should provide an opportunity for educators and professional staff to learn about their refugee students and encourage other students to reach out to their New Americans as

well. As a result of this study, I am calling all educators, educational leaders and professional staff to work together and to create culturally and linguistically appropriate tools in order to engage, encourage and propel refugee students to succeed.

U.S. Refugee Resettlement Policy

As demonstrated by this study, a focus on education early into resettlement would enable refugees to establish long-term self-sufficiency, which in turn would allow New Americans to meaningfully engage and contribute within their communities. Thus, I am calling upon national and local refugee policy makers to provide more emphasis and funding toward English language instruction for adults over immediate employment of refugees upon resettlement.

Also, national and local organizations that provide direct services to refugees should involve or better yet, hire refugees within their organizations to encourage inclusion. These refugees have the power to act as bridges between the refugee populations and the broader community. Furthermore, agencies that provide direct services to refugees such as English language centers and resettlement agencies, among others, should introduce refugees to the idea of higher education and create “classes” that inform refugees about the benefits of higher education. These classes should include community refugees who are professionals (i.e., have graduated from college) to share the benefits of attaining an education. Lastly, professionals who provide direct services to refugees must support long-term integration for the sake of everybody’s prosperity.

Hence, national and local refugee policy makers need to change their focus toward long-term integration rather than short-term assistance for newly resettled refugees. Long-term integration enables refugees to become self-sufficient and allows

New Americans to meaningfully contribute to their communities as well as the economy (Dwyer, 2010; Ross, 2012).

Host Community

This study revealed that the host community played a significant part in the self-sufficiency and integration of the Bosnian women who came to the United States as refugees. Because the host community is familiar with their surroundings, it plays a vital role in enabling refugees to explore their new surroundings. Moreover, the host community also has the power to set the tone for how New Americans will experience their new home. Thus, I encourage community members to genuinely get to know their refugee neighbors. Also, I encourage the host community to involve their new neighbors to take active part in the community. A small act of kindness can mean everything to someone who is new and came with almost nothing.

While political groups and media outlets intend to share the views of refugees in a particular way, it is important to understand that these refugees are victims of conflicts and not perpetrators. These people flee their war-torn countries into the unknown, traumatized, in the hopes to hang on to their life and the lives of their family. Anyone can become a refugee. No one is immune from falling into the hands of their perpetrators. Thus, it is integral to positively engage with the newly arrived refugees, and assist them where possible in starting their lives over again in this great land of opportunities.

Recommendations

Based on this study, I suggest the following recommendations for future studies in the field of education. This study has been conducted on Bosnian/Bosnian-American women in the United States therefore the findings cannot be generalized to Bosnian

women across the globe. The findings are specific to the school system in the United States. Furthermore, implications on refugee policy and educational policy pertain specifically to the United States. Therefore, this type of research needs to be conducted in other parts of the world.

This research encompassed mostly traditional refugee students in college. Only one out of the ten women in this study fell into the category of a nontraditional student because she completed her high school degree in Germany. Therefore, additional research needs to be done on Bosnian nontraditional female refugee students in college. There may be key differences that distinguish traditional Bosnian female refugee women from nontraditional Bosnian female students that require specific support.

Research on Bosnian refugee women who started college but did not succeed is needed in order to find out why the women did not receive a degree. This study may reveal other barriers that prevented these refugee students from completing a college degree.

In addition, research on Bosnian male students in higher education who came to the United States as refugees is needed. Findings from studying Bosnian refugee males who attended college may provide additional insights on how to create more effective support services on campus.

While longitudinal studies on Bosnian refugee women in college are rather impossible to accomplish because Bosnians have been in the United States approximately two decades, longitudinal studies on second generation Bosnian-Americans can be conducted as they are in the process of bridging into higher education.

Research is needed on the collective narratives of the Bosnian people about their experiences as refugees in the United States. Exploring collective memories as told by Bosnians is imperative for a more in-depth understanding of the collective identity of the Bosnian refugee population in the United States.

More studies need to be conducted using social media. In our world of technology, social media has the power to connect people from across the world almost instantaneously. Furthermore, it enables researchers to expand their research concepts. Social media acts as a gateway toward reinvention of qualitative research approaches, challenging the frame of how social media is perceived in academic research. With the access to the entire world at the fingertips, social media should be perceived as a viable tool in the field of qualitative research.

Final thoughts, which I would like to conclude this study with is the potential of success that refugees and other underrepresented populations are capable of achieving when provided tangible tools effective support. One of the most significant things I found is when these women were given a chance to get an education, they took the opportunity seriously and a college education. As a result of their education, the women earned powerful positions but they didn't stop there. The women worked hard to climb the ladder in their professional world earning themselves reputable positions such as CEOs of large-scale business in the United States, and they represent our community and business as attorneys in corporate law and immigration law. Furthermore, the women who once came as refugees teach in American schools and educate today's students to become tomorrow's leaders. As businesswomen, attorneys and professors, these women have a significant impact on our society. Their advanced and specialized skills enables them to

have an active presence in their communities. Thus, these women are viable members and play a key role in our society.

When refugees are given a fair chance at an education, they will not only integrate more efficiently and become independent but they will most certainly give back to the society. “It is my hope that the stories of these women will change the frame of how our society perceives refugees. It is a time we as a nation begin to see refugees not merely as liabilities but as assets. Not as burdens but as becoming. And isn't that what this country is all about?” (Sadikovic B. & Sadikovic, R., 2016).

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APPENDIX A

Email Recruitment Letter

Email Recruitment Letter

Dear Potential Participant,

My name is Belma Sadikovic. I am a doctoral candidate at Boise State University. I am conducting research on Bosnian women in higher education. The focus of my study is to explore the effect college education has on Bosnian women who resettled to the United States as refugees. How does education affect their self-sufficiency and overall integration into their new communities?

Requirements for potential participants:

1. Participant is a female and comes from Bosnia (BiH)
2. Participant was under refugee status upon arrival to the United States
3. Participant is a first generation Bosnian (Bosnian-American)
4. Participant is currently enrolled in a U.S. college/university as an undergraduate/graduate student or is an alumna
5. Participant currently resides in the United States

I will be audio recording the one-on-one interview(s) with you, as well as the focus group follow-up conversation. I will also record the follow up interview with you. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. Your participation will be confidential. Only pseudonyms will be used in the research report.

In this email, I have attached a consent form. You will need to sign and return the consent form to me via email or postal mail agreeing to participate. You will need to provide me with the signed consent form prior to the start of the study, which will start the first week in January 2017. Only people who have signed the consent form will be included as participants in the research. No one else will know if you have signed the

consent form. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. My email is belmasadikovic@boisestate.edu or you can call me at (208) 297-9836.

Thank you for your time. I am looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Belma Sadikovic

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT

Study Title: Higher Education: The Impact on Bosnian Women who came as Refugees to the United States

Principal Investigator: Belma Sadikovic

This consent form will provide the information you will need to understand why this research study is being done and why you are being invited to participate. This form describes what you will need to do to participate as well as any known risks, inconveniences or discomforts that you may have while participating. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form, and it will be a record of your agreement to participate. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

- **Purpose and Background**

You are invited to participate in a research study that will explore the effect college education has on Bosnian women who resettled to the United States as refugees. The information gathered will be used to better understand how higher education can contribute toward self-sufficiency and effective integration of Bosnian women who came as Refugees to the United States. You are being asked to participate because you identified as a Bosnian woman who came as a refugee to the United States and either are currently pursuing higher education or have received a college degree.

- **Procedures**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will allow me to audio record and analyze discussions during an individual interview(s), a focus group follow-up conversation, and a follow-up interview all via Skype. If you agree to the above requests, you will be able to participate in the study.

- **RISKS**

Being audio recorded may make you uncomfortable. You also may experience unpleasant memories during the interview. However, you are always free to withdraw your participation at any time.

- **BENEFITS**

Although there may be no direct benefits to you from participating in this study, the information that you provide may help governmental and educational policy makers as well as teachers and our society to better understand how to work with recent refugees and to create more effective policies that will positively affect the refugee population in the United States.

- **EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

Reasonable efforts will be made to keep your personal information private and confidential. Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. The principal investigators and the Boise State University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) may access the data. The ORC monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research participants.

Your name will not be used in any written reports or publications, which result from this research. A pseudonym will be used in any written reports or publications. Data will be kept for three years (per federal regulations) after the study is complete and then destroyed.

- **PAYMENT/COMPENSATION**

There will be no payment or compensation for participation in this project.

- **PARTICIPATION IS VOLUNTARY**

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw from it at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

- **QUESTIONS**

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in this study, you should first contact the principal investigator at BelmaSadikovic@boisestate.edu or (208) 297-9836. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Boise State University Institutional Review Board (IRB), which is concerned

with the protection of volunteers in research projects. You may reach the board office between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday, by calling (208) 426-5401 or by writing: Institutional Review Board, Office of Research Compliance, Boise State University, 1910 University Dr., Boise, ID 83725-1138.

Documentation of Consent

I have read this form and decided that I will participate in the project described above. Its general purposes, the particulars of involvement and possible risks have been explained to my satisfaction. I understand I can withdraw at any time. I have received a copy of this form.

For each of the phases of data collection, please place your initials on the line:

_____ I agree to participate in an individual interview(s) that will be audio recorded and analyzed.

_____ I agree to participate in a focus group interview that will be audio recorded/analyzed

Printed Name of Study	Signature of Study	Date
Participant	Participant	

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent	Date
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APPENDIX C

One-on-One Interview Guide

One-on-One (In-depth) Interview Guide

Date of interview:

Time of interview:

Pseudonym of participant:

Interviewer: Belma Sadikovic, doctoral student

Good Morning/Good Afternoon/Good Evening. Thank you for participating in my study about Bosnian women's higher education experiences, and its implications of self-sufficiency and integration into U.S. communities.

As explained in the recruitment letter and consent form that I sent to you via email, the purpose of our interviews will be to better understand, from your perspective, what effect college education has on Bosnian women who resettled to the United States as refugees. How education affected their self-sufficiency and overall integration into their new communities.

Please know this participation is voluntary. You may decline to answer any question you feel uncomfortable answering.

Please note that there are no right or wrong answers. I will use your words to identify themes and I may quote you by using a pseudonym in my final report. Your participation is confidential. Only I, the principal investigator, will have access to this recorded interview.

In an effort to present accurate data in my final report, I would like to audio record these interviews. I may also take some notes during our conversation. If at any point in time during our conversation, you would like me to stop the recording process, please let me know. Do you have any questions?

To participate in this interview, please say “Yes”, to this question: “Should we start?”

Thank you. Now, let’s begin. (Start recording)

Interview Questions

Demographic/Background

1. What is your age?
2. How do you identify your gender?
3. What is your country of birth?
4. What year did you arrive in the United States?
5. What city and state do you currently live in?
6. How do you identify your race or ethnicity?
7. Are you a first generation Bosnian (Bosnian-American)?

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Background:

1. Tell me a little about yourself and what your life was like in your country of origin.
2. Describe the reasons that prompted you and your family to leave your country.
3. How did you come about resettling to the United States?
4. Tell me about your initial experiences upon resettling to the United States.
5. Is there anything else you would like to share about that time in your life?

Education

6. Tell me about your educational journey in the United States.
7. What circumstances enabled you to commit the time to education?
8. Did you experience any barriers related to school (i.e., employment, childcare, transportation, etc.)? Please elaborate.
9. What are your aspirations/goals in life?
10. What role does education play in your life?
11. Do you think your degree will do anything for you? Your family? Explain.
12. Is there anything else you would like to share about your college experience?

Community/Integration

13. Tell me about your role in the community in which you live.
14. Will your education have any impact on your community?
15. Can you share some of your experiences integrating/acclimating into American society?
16. Is there anything else you would like to share about living in the United States?

Closing Statement

Thank you for spending your valuable time to share your thoughts and experiences. May I contact you again if I need to clarify anything from this initial interview? I would like to remind you that our next meeting will be a focus group. I will

send you a Doodle meeting scheduler in the next couple of weeks to set up the focus group meeting. The meeting may last one to two hours. It was a pleasure to meet with you. Thank you again for your participation.

APPENDIX D

Focus Group Follow-up Conversation Guide

Focus Group Follow-up Conversation Guide

Date of interview:

Time of interview:

Pseudonym of Participants:

Interviewer: Belma Sadikovic, doctoral student

Good Morning/Good Afternoon/Good Evening. Thank you for participating in the second part of my study about Bosnian women's higher education experiences, and its implications of self-sufficiency and integration into U.S. communities.

As explained in the last interview, the purpose of our focus group will be to better understand, from your collective perspectives, what effect college education has on Bosnian women who resettled to the United States as refugees.

Please know this participation is voluntary. You may decline to answer any question you feel uncomfortable answering. There are no right or wrong answers. I will use your words to identify themes and I may quote you by using a pseudonym in my final report. Only I, the principal investigator, will have access to this recorded interview.

In efforts to present accurate data in my final report, I would like to audio record this interview. I may also take some notes during our conversation. If at any point in time during our conversation, you would like me to stop the recording process, please let me know. Do you have any questions?

I would like to remind you that to protect the privacy of focus group members, all transcripts will be coded with pseudonyms and I ask that you not discuss what is discussed in the focus group with anyone else.

The focus group follow-up conversation will last one to two hours depending on the participation of focus group members.

After I analyze and write up my findings, I will follow up with you for clarification and assurance that any quotes I use are accurate.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Thank you. Now, let's begin. (Start recording)

Education

1. Tell me about what prompted/motivated you to attend college.
2. Tell me about your experience with higher education in the United States.
3. What are your thoughts about the process of applying to college?
4. Did any other member in your family receive a college degree? From?
5. Did you find college a rewarding experience? Was it different from high school?
6. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your college experience?

Community/Integration

7. What factors allow a person to effectively integrate/acculturate into American society?
8. How would you define self-sufficiency?
9. What are your goals for the future?
10. Is there anything else you would like to share that I did not ask?

Closing Statement

Thank you for spending your valuable time to share your thoughts and experiences. It was a pleasure to have been able to work with all of you. I will follow up with you after I analyze and write up my findings to make sure I captured your thoughts and experiences correctly.

APPENDIX E

This research was conducted under the approval of the Institutional Review Board at Boise State University, protocol #113-SB16-228.