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REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN AMERICA: THE IRAQI REFUGEE EXPERIENCE IN UPSTATE, NEW YORK

By Christine M. Fandrich



The Center for Migration and Refugee Studies (CMRS)

The Center for Migration and Refugee Studies (CMRS) is an interdisciplinary center of the American University in Cairo (AUC). Situated at the heart of the Middle East and North Africa, it aims at furthering the scientific knowledge of the large, long-standing and more recent, refugee and migration movements witnessed in this region. But it also is concerned with questions of refugees and migration in the international system as a whole, both at the theoretical and practical levels.

CMRS functions include instruction, research, training and outreach. It offers a Master of Arts in migration and refugee studies and a graduate diploma in forced migration and refugee studies working with other AUC departments to offer diversified courses to its students. Its research bears on issues of interest to the region and beyond. In carrying it out, it collaborates with reputable regional and international academic institutions. The training activities CMRS organizes are attended by researchers, policy makers, bureaucrats and civil society activists from a great number of countries. It also provides tailor-made training programs on demand. CMRS outreach involves working with its environment, disseminating knowledge and sensitization to refugee and migration issues. It also provides services to the refugee community in Cairo and transfers its expertise in this respect to other international institutions.

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Prince Alwaleed Center for American Studies' mission is to further mutual understanding between the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and the United States by producing academic research on MENA-US cultural and political interactions, and by promoting superior education on MENA-US relations for AUC students. CASAR facilitates dialogue on issues involving Egypt, the MENA region, the United States, and the world. The Center also runs an active public outreach program that includes student trips, media programs, public conferences, and colloquia with Egyptian universities.

After the 2011 Arab uprisings, the MENA region remains in need of human and economic development. Due to the central political and economic role the United States plays in the MENA region, a more sophisticated understanding of American history and culture remains essential to international engagement in both the private and public sectors. The contribution of scholars working in the MENA region to the detailed and judicious study of the United States will be essential to this engagement. Knowledge of American cultural motifs and historical themes may afford students additional venues and methods for a variety of future careers. Mastery of issues related to American culture and history is valuable to students studying in a range of fields, including history, arts, finance, marketing, economics, English, journalism, sociology, and anthropology. It is our belief that American Studies can also assist students who aspire to work in the international private sector, since familiarity with American history and workplace culture is highly valued by employers.



Preface

The plight of Iraqi refugees is one which had the world's attention for many years, yet has recently been overtaken in many ways by other more recent conflicts and resulting waves of displacement. This does not mean, however, that the challenges faced by millions of displaced Iraqis, scattered throughout the Middle East and the world, have been resolved. On the contrary, it means that these challenges will be compounded by absence from the limelight and by decreased mobilization and attention on the part of policy-makers, the media, donors, activists and scholars.

In this context, Christine Fandrich's MA thesis on Refugee Resettlement in America: the Iraqi Refugee Experience in Upstate, N.Y, submitted to the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies (CMRS), comes as a welcome addition to the study of Iraqi refugees and their plight for several reasons. The thesis re-focuses attention on the large numbers of displaced Iraqis who remain stranded in a protracted refugee situation and whose prospects for finding durable solutions in the immediate future remain uncertain. In so doing, the thesis reveals the high skill levels of Iraqi refugees, which set them apart from general refugee populations and are at the origin of specific integration questions. The thesis also highlights the interplay between the international and domestic resettlement arrangements and the gaps that may exist in between them. Lessons can be drawn from it by all actors concerned with maximizing the utility of resettlement and with strengthening its implementation. Resettlement only applies to a small number of refugees worldwide but it remains an essential and invaluable durable solution envisaged by the international refugee regime. Finally, the thesis provides a valuable analysis of the structures put in place by the United States Refugee Admissions Program and their consequences for the full integration of all refugees, and not only for the Iraqis among them.

This final reason has prompted CMRS and the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Bin Abdulaziz Alsaud Center for American Studies and Research (CASAR) to jointly publish the thesis in the new Cairo Working Papers on Migration and Refugees series. In addition to all readers, researchers and policy-makers concerned with Iraqi and Middle Eastern refugees, this publication should also be useful for those interested in the United States policy on refugees. CMRS and the Alwaleed Center are part of the American University in Cairo (AUC)'s School of Global Affairs and Public Policy (GAPP).

With the Cairo Working Papers on Migration and Refugees, CMRS aims at publishing innovative research on migration and refugees in the Middle East, Africa and globally. The series is open for well established as well as for young researchers from AUC and from the regional and international research community.

Through the joint efforts of faculty members and students, CASAR promotes research on matters of national, regional, and international concern related to the Center's objectives. CASAR's research program is based on the conviction that

Arab international engagement will benefit from a sophisticated understanding of American history and culture due to the global political and economic role of the United States. This thesis' analysis of the unique situation of Iraqi refugees and the United States Refugee Admissions Program is highly relevant to broader political issues within Arab-American engagement. It is for this reason that CASAR is proud to join CMRS in supporting the publication and dissemination of this important study.



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ABSTRACT

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN AMERICA:THE IRAQI REFUGEE EXPERIENCE IN UPSTATE,

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This study will document the experiences of Iraqi refugees resettled in a small Upstate, N.Y. city in order to examine resettlement and integration outcomes regarding this population. Research regarding Iraqi refugees and their resettlement before and after the 2003 US-led invasion are few, and therefore this case study will contribute to the literature on Iraqi refugees after resettlement. This study will find that previous theories of integration are inadequate to fully explain the integration of Iraqi refugees as these theories do not take into account: 1) pre-arrival/home related factors; 2) post-arrival/host related factors; and 3) individual motives and intentions of the refugee. These three factors regarding Iraqirefugee resettlement and integration will be evaluated. Host related factors will include: social services; employment; adjustment; and future plans. Home related factors will include: the effects of war; Saddam Hussein's 'Republic of Fear' and the effects on the Iraqi people; the American involvement in Iraq; and Iraqi displacement. Individual refugee motivations and intentions will also be highlighted to show how these forces interact with the various pre- and post-arrival circumstances. This discussion will attempt to demonstrate how pre- and post-arrival factors as well as individual refugees' decisions and motivations converge in various ways, thereby producing unique integration outcomes for the Iraqi community. It will also question the ability of the United States Refugee Admissions Program to effectively re-establish refugee lives in America.



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Secondly, I would like to thank my wonderful family for their support and humor. They will forever remain my source of strength and happiness. My life has been sustained by the years of laughs and love. For these reasons, my accomplishments and education have been made possible. I owe them to all of you.

Finally, I would like to thank the Iraqis who agreed to participate in this research. It is my greatest hope that I have articulated your positions honestly and accurately. May God bring you, your families, and your country peace, prosperity, and joy.

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Introduction and Methodology

This research is a case study of Iraqi refugees and immigrants resettled in Syracuse, New York through the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). 'Iraqi refugees' will refer to both Iraqis who were granted refugee status and were subsequently granted resettlement in the United States and Iraqi Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders granted resettlement in the US (those Iraqis who worked for or on behalf of the US Government in Iraq). The purpose of this study is to document the experiences of the Iraqis interviewed in order to gain an understanding of the complexities of the resettlement process for both the Iraqi refugees and immigrants resettled to the United States and for the receiving communities. The study further attempts to describe the benefits and challenges that resettled Iraqis and receiving communities experience due to the new inflow of this population. The aim of this study is to evaluate the refugee resettlement process in America in order to ensure that the most successful resettlement experiences occur for both the refugee/immigrant and for the receiving communities. Furthermore, the importance of the study lies in the fact that very few studies have been conducted which have focused on the resettled Iraqi refugee population after the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq (additionally, few of such studies exist before the 2003 invasion).

Data for this study was collected through personal interviews with the participants and myself and, if needed, an Iraqi-Arabic interpreter. An interview questionnaire, interpreted into Iraqi-Arabic, was given to the participants beforehand, which included the Consent to Participate in Research and the questionnaire. The Consent to Participate in Research included: a paragraph which outlined the scope, purpose, and aim of the study; a statement which affirmed the right of the participant to decline to give any information that was deemed inappropriate and the confirmation that the interviewer would not use such data in the study; a confidentiality statement which affirmed that all information regarding the interview would be kept confidential, unless otherwise agreed upon; and a statement which affirmed the right of the participant to withdraw from the study and have all information obtained from the interview removed from the study. The questionnaire included 17 questions which inquired about the process of resettlement in Syracuse, N.Y., from pre-arrival to arrival, and finally to resettlement experiences and plans for the future. (See Appendix for questionnaire.)

The majority of interviews occurred within the participant's home with both the husband and wife responding to interview questions. Usually, both the husband and wife were present for the interview. In three interviews, however, husbands were interviewed without the wives present. In other instances where the participant was a widow/widower, or had never been married, I interviewed these persons alone. Interviews were casual and conversational, usually lasting for over an hour. Few interviews were brief (lasting thirty minutes) and many occurred over a time period of four or more hours.

Chapter 1. An Overview of Refugee and Iraqi Refugee Resettlement

I. Refugee Resettlement: The History and Trends Worldwide

A. Refugee Resettlement: A Brief History


Throughout history, refugees have fled conflict, war and persecution. They have searched for safety in countries of asylum, usually without the official assistance of governments or organizations. The first official attempts by governments and organizations in assisting refugees began in 1921 when the League of Nations created the first High Commissioner for Russian Refugees in response to the revolution in Russia and the subsequent civil wars, as well as in response to the Armenian Genocide and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.¹ In 1930, the Nansen International Office for Refugees replaced the Commission, and in 1933, the High Commission for Refugees Coming from Germany was created in response to the high volume of refugees fleeing Nazi Germany. Over the subsequent years, the mandates of these commissions changed and expanded to include other populations of refugees. Following World War II, the United Nations replaced the League of Nations and created the United Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on January 1st, 1951 in response, and to address specifically, the refugee crisis created by World War II. After 1967, the UNHCR's mandate was broadened to protect all refugees. The UNHCR, however, is not the only agency responsible for the protection of refugees. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) also assists refugees, albeit Palestinian refugees only. Following the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict, UNRWA was established on December 8th, 1949 to carry out relief and works programs for Palestine refugees. The UNHCR, however, "normally takes up the case of Palestinian refugees only when they are outside UNRWA's area of operations."² The discussion in this section will focus mainly on the efforts of UNHCR, as this is the body responsible for the majority of refugee resettlement efforts in the world today.

According to the UNHCR, there are three main durable solutions for refugees: voluntary repatriation to the country of origin; local integration in the host country; or resettlement when repatriation or integration is not feasible. UNHCR views resettlement as the last option for refugees, and favors voluntary repatriation over other options. Resettlement of refugees will be focused on in this section. In order to qualify for consideration for resettlement, the UNHCR considers those who meet both the following: those who are refugees as defined by UNHCR's mandate and who meet the UNCHR guidelines and criteria.³ UNCHR claims that resettlement is an option for the most vulnerable refugees. Resettlement, moreover, is based on need,

1 Gibney, M. (2010). *Global refugee crisis*. (2 ed.). Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, LLC. 7

2 The United Nations and Palestinian Refugees. (2007, January). Retrieved from <http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2010011791015.pdf>

3 UNHCR uses the following criteria to decide if a refugee is eligible for resettlement: when there is no other way to guarantee the legal or physical security of the refugees concerned in the country of first asylum; this includes a threat of refoulement [forced return]; survivors of torture and violence, where the conditions of asylum could result in further trauma or where appropriate treatment is not available; persons with medical needs, in particular life-saving treatment that is unavailable in the country of first asylum; women and girls at risk, where there is a real risk that they could be exposed to sexual or gender-based violence; children and adolescents, where a best interests determination supports this; elderly refugees who may be particularly vulnerable and for whom resettlement appears to be the best solution, generally due to family links; when it represents the only means to reunite refugee families who, owing to refugee flight or displacement, find themselves divided by borders or by entire continents; when voluntary repatriation or local integration are not available or feasible in the foreseeable future.



not on: “a desire for it on the part of refugees or of any specific actors such as the host State, resettlement States, other partners and UNHCR staff.” UNHCR states that: “the refugee definition, properly applied, leads to exclusion of people responsible for serious criminal, including terrorist, acts.”⁴ Once refugees have been identified for resettlement, UNHCR submits these cases to receiving countries for review of their case. If the case meets the qualifications, guidelines, and laws of the receiving government, the case is granted resettlement. Ultimately, governments decide which refugees may access resettlement to their countries. Most countries have their own and unique programs for the resettlement of refugees. The EU is also considering establishing a Joint European Union Resettlement Program. The UNHCR subsequently works with governments and various NGOs/IGOs to resettle the refugee into a receiving country.

As mentioned, the refugee crisis after WWII created the existence of UNHCR and its subsequent efforts at finding solutions for refugees through resettlement. The first populations to be resettled by UNHCR were refugees from Eastern European countries, which occurred mainly in the United States. Following WWII, refugee resettlement reflected the Cold War environment policies of the time, and tended to focus on populations fleeing the Soviet Union. In continuation of this pattern (war followed by refugee flows), refugee resettlement reflected the Vietnamese War and many refugees from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia were resettled, especially within the United States and Australia. Following this large wave of South East Asian refugee resettlement in the 1970s and 1980s (and particularly, the levels of fraud that accompanied this resettlement) resettling countries tended to decrease spots available for resettlement each year. According to the UNHCR, whereas “one in every twenty of UNHCR’s global refugee population was resettled in 1979, the ratio fell to less than one in every 400 by 1994.”⁵ In the 1990s and early 2000s, refugee resettlement also reflected various internal conflicts and civil wars occurring at the time. For example, the Bosnian War, and the civil wars in Burma, Rwanda, Columbia, Somalia, Liberia, the Ivory Coast, Sudan, and others all created large outflows of refugees whom were resettled in countries around the world.

To date, the largest refugee population in the world is the Afghani refugees. Due to the Soviet and US invasions, in 1979 and then in 2001 (by the US), approximately 1.7 million Afghani refugees now live in Pakistan, and over one million live in Iran. This population, however, has not been resettled in large numbers. The two US-led wars against Iraq, the Gulf War in 1990 and the US invasion in 2003, also produced the second largest refugee population in the world today (although, the second invasion in 2003 is mostly responsible for the Iraqi refugee crisis today). There are approximately 1.7 million Iraqi refugees spread out across the Middle East. Today, Afghan and Iraqi refugees account for almost half of all refugees under UNHCR’s responsibility worldwide. Due to the above military interventions, the United States has played a considerable role in creating the world’s largest refugee populations.

Developing countries currently host four-fifths of the world’s refugees. Pakistan was host to the largest number of refugees worldwide (1.9 million), followed by Iran (1.1 million) and then Syria (1 million).⁶ Other sizeable refugee populations include those from Somalia, Congo, Burma, Palestine, and Sudan. The Palestinian refugees, like the Afghans, have been resettled in small numbers.

4 Frequently asked questions about resettlement. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/4ac0873d6.html>

5 Resettlement learning programme: Revision 2011. (2011). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/4ae6b9b2.pdf>

6 Unhcr global trends 2010. (2011). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/4dfa11499.html>

B. Refugee Resettlement: Recent Numbers and Characteristics

In 2010, the UNHCR estimated that there were 43.7 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, the highest number in 15 years. Of these, 15.4 million were refugees: 10.55 million under UNHCR's mandate and 4.82 million Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA. The overall figure also includes 837,500 asylum-seekers and 27.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs).⁷

In regards to the 10.5 million refugees of concern to UNHCR, only about 1 per cent is submitted by the agency for resettlement.⁸ Out of all the countries in the world, twenty-five resettle refugees at varying levels. The United States resettles the largest number of refugees each year, with Canada, Australia and the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden) resettling large numbers as well. Latin American and other European countries have been resettling refugees in smaller numbers. In recent years, these countries include: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Iceland, Ireland and the United Kingdom. Since 2007, 13 new countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Portugal, Romania, Spain, and Switzerland) have agreed to accept a limited number of resettlement submissions from UNHCR. Japan, the newest country of resettlement, began its pilot resettlement program in 2010. UNHCR notes that the level of cooperation on the world stage for refugee resettlement has been increasing as the "base of resettlement has been significantly broadened in the last five years, from 14 resettlement States in 2005 to 25 resettlement States in 2010."⁹ Even though there have been higher levels of cooperation, the UNHCR claims that the number of refugees resettled each year has remained the same (around 80,000) and that approximately 805,500 people are in need of resettlement. "Resettlement needs therefore continued to outpace available resettlement places by a factor of 10 to 1."¹⁰

The number of countries of asylum from which resettlement took place increased from 80 in 2008 to 94 in 2009, as well as the number of countries of origin from 68 in 2008 to 77 in 2009. The regions which host the largest numbers of refugees with resettlement needs are: Asia and the Pacific (427,466); Africa (261,514); the Middle East and North Africa (76,652); the Americas (20,423); and Europe (19,480).¹¹

In 2009, the UNHCR submitted 128,588 refugees to States for resettlement. The largest populations referred for resettlement were: Iraqi (36,067); Burmese (30,542); and Bhutanese (22,114). The UNHCR referred the following numbers of submissions to these top three countries: USA (102,586); Canada (6,985); and Australia (5,638). Out of the 128,588 submissions, 84,657 refugees departed for countries of resettlement. The largest populations that departed for countries of resettlement were: Burmese (24,784); Iraqi (23,089); and Bhutanese (17,428). The countries that accepted the most refugees for resettlement were: USA (62,011); Australia (6,720); and Canada (6,582). The resettlement criteria upon which refugees were admitted included, in decreasing order: legal and physical protection needs; lack of local integration prospects; survivor of violence and torture; woman-at-risk; medical needs; family reunification; older refugees; and children and adolescents.

⁷ Unhcr global trends 2010. (2011). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/4dfal1499.html>

⁸ Resettlement . (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a16b1676.html>

⁹ Frequently asked questions about resettlement. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/4ac0873d6.html>

¹⁰ Frequently asked questions about resettlement. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/4ac0873d6.html>

Table 1. UNHCR Resettlement Submissions in 2009: by Country of Asylum, Country of Origin, and Submissions to Countries of Resettlement

Country of Asylum	Submissions	Country of Origin	Submissions	Country of Resettlement	Submissions
Nepal	22,139	Iraq	36,067	USA	102,586
Thailand	19,879	Burma	30,542	Canada	6,985
Syria	18,888	Bhutan	22,114	Australia	5,638
Kenya	10,904	Somalia	19,838	Germany	3,603
Malaysia	10,228	DR of Congo	5,023	Sweden	2,462
Jordan	8,920	Afghanistan	2,440	Norway	1,707
Turkey	6,744	Palestine	1,971	UK	1,166
Ethiopia	6,014	Eritrea	1,554	Finland	993
Lebanon	3,000	Ethiopia	1,477	Denmark	861
Tanzania	2,306	Sudan	1,351	Netherlands	838
All Others	19,536	All Others	6,181	All Others	1,719
TOTAL	128,558	TOTAL	128,558	TOTAL	128,558

***Information obtained from UNHCR website ¹²**

In Asia and the Pacific, there are two main countries of origin for the majority of refugees in need of resettlement: Burma and Bhutan. The majority of Burmese refugees are located in Thailand followed by Malaysia, and most, if not all Bhutanese refugees are located in camps in Nepal. In Africa, there are three main countries of origin for the majority of refugees in need of resettlement: Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Ethiopia. Kenya holds the largest number of refugees awaiting resettlement, followed by Ethiopia and Djibouti. UNHCR will continue to give priority for resettlement to Eritrean, Somali, and Sudanese (Darfuri) refugees, especially as most of the protracted refugee situations in Africa involve these populations. In the Middle East and North Africa, the main country of origin for refugees in need of resettlement is Iraq, and over 90,000 have been submitted for resettlement since 2007. Refugees from Palestinian origins are the second largest group of refugees in need of resettlement in the MENA. In Europe, Turkey holds the most refugees in need of resettlement (16,930) as a number of Iraqi (and less so, Iranian) refugees sought refuge in this country. The majority of refugees resettled from the Americas include refugees from Colombia and Cuba. Chile and Brazil have also resettled numbers of Palestinian refugees from Jordan and Syria.

¹² Information compiled from: Frequently asked questions about resettlement. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/4ac0873d6.html>

Table 2. UNHCR Departures in 2009: by Country of Origin, Country of Asylum, and Country of Resettlement

Country of Asylum	Submissions	Country of Origin	Submissions	Country of Resettlement	Submissions
Nepal	17,442	Burma	24,784	USA	62,011
Thailand	16,835	Iraq	23,089	Canada	6,720
Syria	10,383	Bhutan	17,428	Australia	6,582
Kenya	7,509	Somalia	5,354	Germany	2,064
Malaysia	6,043	Eritrea	2,420	Sweden	1,880
Jordan	5,625	DR of Congo	2,414	Norway	1,367
Turkey	4,486	Iran	1,710	UK	969
Ethiopia	2,626	Afghanistan	1,477	Finland	710
Lebanon	2,402	Burundi	1,031	Denmark	675
Tanzania	1,326	Ethiopia	876	Netherlands	488
All Others	9,980	All Others	4,065	All Others	1,191
TOTAL	84,657	TOTAL	84,657	TOTAL	84,657

*Information obtained from UNHCR website ¹³

In 2010, UNHCR submitted over 108,000 refugees for consideration by resettlement countries. The largest numbers came from the following nationalities: Iraq (26,700); Burma (24,400); and Bhutan (11,400). Of these, 73,000 were accepted for resettlement in 28 different countries. The largest nationalities resettled were: Bhutanese living in Nepal (14,800); Burmese living in Thailand (11,400); and Burmese living in Malaysia (8,000).¹⁴ UNHCR further notes that in 2010, the “landmark figure of 100,000 Iraqi refugees submitted for resettlement since 2007 was reached.”¹⁵ Out of 72,942 refugees resettled in 2010, the countries that accepted the most submissions for resettlement were: USA (54,077); Canada (6,732); and Australia (5,634).

Table 3. Probability of being Granted Resettlement in 2009 (by country of origin)

Country of Origin	Total Submissions	Country of Origin	Departures	Probability of Resettlement
Burma	30,542	Burma	24,784	81%
Iraq	36,067	Iraq	23,089	64%
Bhutan	22,114	Bhutan	17,428	79%
Somalia	19,838	Somalia	5,354	27%
DR of Congo	5,023	DR of Congo	2,414	48%
Afghanistan	2,440	Afghanistan	1,477	61%
Ethiopia	1,477	Ethiopia	876	59%

*Information obtained from UNHCR website ¹⁶

¹³ Information compiled from: Frequently asked questions about resettlement. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/4ac0873d6.html>

¹⁴ Resettlement. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a16b1676.html>

¹⁵ Frequently asked questions about resettlement. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/4ac0873d6.html>

¹⁶ Information compiled from: Frequently asked questions about resettlement. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/4ac0873d6.html>

Table 4. UNHCR Resettlement Submissions and Departures by Criteria in 2009¹⁷

Resettlement Criteria	Submissions	Departures
Legal Needs and Physical Protection	49,608	36,158
Lack of Local Integration Prospects	40,694	26,472
Survivor of Violence and Torture	22,520	12,138
Woman-at-Risk	9,809	6,122
Medical Needs	3,896	1,992
Family Reunification	842	935
Older Refugees	622	514
Children and Adolescents	567	310
Unspecified	0	16
TOTAL	128,558	84,657

*Information obtained from UNHCR website ¹⁸

Table 5. Expected Resettlement Needs by Region of Asylum: 2011 and Beyond

Region (including sub-regions)	Total Number of Refugees
Asia and the Pacific Central Asia (865) East Asia and the Pacific (109,046) South Asia (39,555) Southwest Asia (278,000)	427,466
Africa East and Horn (237,103) Central Africa and Great Lakes (10,025) Southern Africa (12,901) West Africa (1,485)	261,514
MENA The Middle East (74,460) North Africa (2,192)	76,652
The Americas	20,423
Europe	19,480
TOTAL	128,558

*Information obtained from UNHCR website ¹⁹

In 2011, the UNHCR expects that most refugees will arise from Asia and the Pacific and from Africa, with the Middle East and North Africa following as has been the case in previous years. For the year of 2012, the UNHCR estimates global resettlement needs of 172,196 refugees, and a grand total of 805,535 will be in need of this solution in the coming years.²⁰

¹⁷ Information compiled from: Frequently asked questions about resettlement. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/4ac0873d6.html>

¹⁸ Information compiled from: Frequently asked questions about resettlement. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/4ac0873d6.html>

¹⁹Unhcr projected global resettlement needs 2011. (2010, July). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/4c5acc3e2.pdf>

²⁰Resettlement learning programme: Revision 2011. (2011). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/4ae6b9b92.pdf>

Table 6. Number of Refugees who Departed Countries for Resettlement in 2010

Country of Resettlement	Departures in Persons
United States	54,077
Canada	6,732
Australia	5,634
Sweden	1,789
Norway	1,088
United Kingdom	695
Finland	543
New Zealand	535
Germany	457
Netherlands	430
All Others	962
TOTAL	72,942

***Information obtained from UNHCR website ²¹**

II. Resettlement of Iraqi Refugees

In this section, a brief history of modern Iraq will be discussed in order to provide the conditions in which Iraqi refugee flows were generated and to provide a glimpse into home country experiences that many Iraqi refugees have encountered. Aspects of modern Iraqi history that have had a lasting effect on the Iraqi people, such as Saddam Hussein's 'Republic of Fear' and the effects of the Iran-Iraq war, the Gulf War, and the 2003 US-led invasion, will be discussed. Iraqi refugee flows to first countries of asylum will be mentioned followed by a section regarding the numbers and trends of Iraqi refugee flows and resettlement.


A. A Brief History of Modern Iraq

Recent Iraqi history is turbulent and brutal. Iraqi refugees today grew up in an environment of fear, war, and repression. For the majority of their lives, Iraqi refugees lived under the rule of Saddam Hussein. Saddam, however, did not come to power in a vacuum, nor did his Ba'ath regime learn the tools of torture and fear after Saddam ascended to power. This political culture of repression and fear developed earlier after the British invasion. The effects of this history will be entertained here.

Before WWI, Iraq was under the control of the Ottoman Empire. During the war, the Ottoman Empire decided to join on the side of the Central Powers in October 1914, thereby sealing its fate as the Central Powers lost leading to the destruction of the Ottomans and their vast territorial empire. Following the Sykes-Picot Agreement, which divided Syria and Lebanon to France, and Palestine and Iraq to Great Britain, Great Britain subsequently invaded the three Ottoman provinces of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul (three distinct entities with various religious and ethnic components) and consolidated the state after the San Remo Conference in April 1920.

Opposition to direct British rule began to foment, and in June 1920 armed revolt broke out and both Shia and Kurds fought for independence. Consequently, Britain searched

²¹ Frequently asked questions about resettlement. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/4ac0873d6.html>




for a better way to govern Iraq, implementing in November 1920 a government ruled by Iraqis with British supervision. In March 1921, Britain decided at the Cairo Conference that Iraq would become a kingdom ruled by the Hashemite Amir Faisal. King Faisal was enthroned in August of that year which set in motion the long history of Sunni-minority domination over Iraqi politics.

At this time, the Kurds were laying the groundwork for their own autonomous state in the north of Iraq. The British, furthermore, were also concerned that the Shia were becoming confrontational in regards to the British. A strong anti-foreign and nationalist movement also formed due to the pro-British policies of the Iraqi government and monarchy. Different segments of the population began to mistrust the government and were suspicious of British interests in Iraq, especially after oil was discovered and treaties were signed. Strikes and public demonstrations occurred. In 1932, after signing a declaration promising to guarantee the rights of foreigners and minorities (Yazidis, Kurds, Turks, and Christians all appealed to the British for international protection), the League of Nations declared Iraq a state. Faisal's Sunni Kingdom, however, was fraught with problems as it experienced resistance from the Shia and Iraqi minorities. After King Faisal's death, his son King Ghazi became enthroned in 1933. Government actions against the Shia, Assyrians and Kurds confirmed the view of the monarchy as repressive and controlled by Sunni. Various revolts occurred and were suppressed, and opposition movements against the monarchy formed. The prime minister, Yasin al-Hashimi, also became more repressive of political activity, and hinted at remaining in power.

A dramatic change was necessary to tear down the establishment. In 1936, Hikmat Sulaiman, with his backer General Bakr Sidqi and the military, staged Iraq's first coup and became prime minister. Sulaiman's 'Iraq First' policies, however, instilled objections from the growing Arab nationalist sentiments within the government and army. As opposition to this government formed, particularly within the military, Sulaiman became more repressive. After the assassination of Sulaiman's strongest supporter, Bakr Sidqi, by an Arab nationalist soldier Sulaiman resigned in August 1937. In the wake of the resignation, the army, led by Sunni officers, became the most powerful force in the country, controlling the monarchy of King Faisal II, who succeeded his father King Ghazi after he died in a car accident in 1939. At this time, Britain entered WWII and became increasingly concerned about pan-Arab influences within Iraq, particularly as pan-Arabs were in talks with Nazi Germany and the Axis Powers. To complicate matters further, in April 1941, Prime Minister Rashid Ali al-Kailani overthrew the Hashemite monarchy in an anti-British coup. Subsequently, the British invaded and promptly reinstalled the monarchy. In many cases, the Kurdish and Shia leaders assisted with the British attack. In 1945, the regent to the king, Abdallah, called for a parliamentary system with political parties, and in 1946 Nuri al-Saidi became prime minister. He was forced to resign in 1947, however, after police forces fired on striking oil workers in Kirkuk. The Kirkuk Massacre brought into power Salih Jabr as the first Shia prime minister. Yet, after Salih signed a treaty in 1948 with Britain that negotiated a twenty-year agreement allowing Britain to have air bases in the country, protests and riots occurred and he was also forced to resign bringing Nuri al-Saidi back into power.

22 Phebe Marr claims that Iraq's signing of the Baghdad Pact: "brought the Cold War to the Middle East and embroiled Iraq in a constant succession of foreign policy problems at a time when it needed to concentrate on the home front. It revived a heated anti-Western campaign in the area that Iraq, with its anti-Western opposition, did not need. The challenge to Nasser's leadership initiated a cold war between Egypt and Iraq aimed at the elimination of either Nasser or Nuri. The intensity of this struggle swept over all other issues aside for the next four years." Marr, P. (2012). *The Modern History of Iraq*, 3rd ed. Westview Press: Boulder. 75.




Over the next few years, the government's controlled elections and suppression and exclusion of political activities; the signing of the Baghdad Pact (a Cold War treaty with the UK, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and Turkey, with the US joining later);²² the Suez Crisis; and a federation with the country of Jordan led to opposition, especially within the younger ranks of the military. Repression ensued, and political parties and freedoms of the press were brought under tighter controls. Iraq's federation with Jordan, and the subsequent Iraqi government's order for the Iraqi military to march to Jordan to protect Jordan's Hashemite kingdom from revolts sealed the fate of the monarchy in Iraq. A group of young officers called the Free Officers overthrew, and killed, the monarchy in July 1958, bringing Abd al-Karim Qasim, and his deputy prime minister, Abd al-Salam Arif, to power. Although the new government was representative of all political, ethnic and minority parties, Qasim and Arif held control over the military and security functions of the state.

From 1959-1963, pan-Arabism grew in popularity, and revolts and potential coups occurred. Due to the social and economic policies of the government, opposition also began to form within Shia and Kurdish groups. The government also found itself isolated from neighboring countries due to its focus on Iraqi unity, tensions with neighboring Iran and Kuwait, and strengthened relations with the Soviet Union. Qasim, focusing more on Iraqi unity and communism, began to purge pan-Arab sympathizers from the government. Ba'athi sympathizers were also purged after a Ba'ath-led assassination attempt against Qasim's life.

Another military coup occurred in February 1963 which brought to power Abd al-Salam Arif and his Ba'athi and pan-Arab regime. Qasim and his allies were killed. After Arif died in a helicopter crash in April 1966, his brother Abd al-Rahman Arif succeeded him. The Arab defeat in the 1967 war brought on more dissensions within the military and military officers called for an election, yet Arif refused. In July 1968, the military Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party organized a coup and Ahmed Hasan al-Bakr, rival to Arif, became president, thereby banishing all non-Ba'athist allies.²³ Saddam Hussein, friends with al-Bakr, became vice-president of the Revolutionary Command Council. Communists, Nasserites, dissident Ba'athists and former politicians were arrested, and thousands of Communists were killed. Other purges took place in the government and military to ensure that absolute loyalty was given to the Ba'ath party. The Ba'ath seeped into everyday life, replacing political parties and opponents throughout the country. As relations with Iran deteriorated, and after a senior Shia figure refused to condemn Iran at al-Bakr's request, al-Bakr's government arrested Shia leaders, expelled and arrested Shia religious students, and confiscated Shia land. Purges and arrests of other religious leaders, both Sunni and Shia, occurred throughout the 1970s. A war was also fought between the Kurds and the Ba'ath.

Systems of economic patronage were put in place during this time period whereby the proceeds of the state went to solidifying the power of the Ba'ath regime. The provision of food subsidies was also put in place to ensure control. Land, especially that of political opponents, was confiscated and redistributed to those in power, and regulation of crops and fertilizer was put under the state, further entrenching systems of patronage. With land under control, business enterprises were also subsumed as the government gave contracts and licenses to those who obeyed the regime. The

²³ For more on the early days of the Iraqi Ba'ath party, see: Makiya, K. (1989). *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq*. University of California: Berkeley.



nationalization of the Iraqi oil fields and the Oil Crisis in 1973 brought large revenues to the regime (around \$8 billion in 1975), further entrenching systems of dependence and patronage and creating client networks across Iraq. Saddam, at this point vice-president, greatly benefited from this boom, and he used the funds to enlarge the Revolutionary Command Council and his own supporters. He also gained power as he controlled the state's internal security apparatus with leaders loyal only to Saddam. He used these security forces to arrest and kill opponents of the Ba'ath party. He also began to use Islamic symbols during this time period to include religious leaders into his client network. These positions allowed Saddam to gradually subsume more power until he was able to take control of the Ba'ath in July 1979 after forcing al-Bakr to resign. Saddam announced a plot to overthrow the government that led to the execution of over sixty party members. Saddam's ascent to power set-off a killing spree that murdered over 500 party members and led to the purge and demotion of others. Saddam, instilling fear and obedience, came to power through violence and manipulation teaching others that all power would come from Saddam. The Ba'ath party became a countrywide party, and individuals who supported Saddam became wealthy and privileged through patron-client relationships.²⁴

As this brief discussion of Iraq's formative years demonstrates, recent Iraqi history has been riddled with turmoil, repression, and violence. From 1918 to 1979, Iraq was invaded by Great Britain (twice); saw the institution and dissolution of various monarchs; experienced multiple regime changes; underwent multiple coups; experienced civil strife and ethnic/religious conflict; and witnessed the violent rise of the Ba'ath party and Saddam Hussein. Iraq's turbulent history, however, became more distorted and perilous after Saddam. Political actions taken by Saddam, and later by the United States created the repressive and isolated environment in which most Iraqi refugees lived. Some of the main facets of this world will be discussed below.

1. The 'Republic of Fear' and the Effects on the Iraqi People


KananMakiya, who wrote Republic of Fear, claims that Saddam and the Ba'ath party developed fear into an art form that terrorized the Iraqi people while also making them complicit in the crimes of the party. Makiya describes this world as Kafkaesque:

“one ruled and held together by fear. In this world, the ideal citizen became an informer. Lies and ‘analysis’ filled public discourse to the exclusion of everything else. Fear...was not incidental or episodic, as in more ‘normal’ states: it had become constitutive of the Iraqi body politic...The special problem of the Ba'athi violence begins with the realization that hundreds of thousands of perfectly ordinary people were routinely implicated in it.”²⁵

The means of Saddam's power came through kidnappings, disappearances, torture, murder, and genocide. The regime used branding, cutting off of ears and other body parts, executions, public hangings, and other public displays of cruelty to instill fear and obedience into the population. As Max van der Stoel, Special Rapporteur for the United Nations on Iraq, stated in 1993, the abuses of the Iraqi Ba'ath were “of

24 For more on Iraqi history, see: Marr, P. (2012) *The Modern History of Iraq*, 3rd ed. Westview Press: Boulder; Abdullah, T.A.J. (2011) *A Short History of Iraq*, 2nd ed. Longman: Harlow; Dawisha, A.I. (2009). *Iraq: A Political History from Independence to Occupation*. Princeton University Press: Princeton; Stansfield, G. R. V. (2007). *Iraq: People, History, and Politics*. Polity: Cambridge; Tripp, C. (2007). *A History of Iraq*, 3rd edition. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge; and Davis, E. (2005) *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq*. University of California Press: Berkley.

25 Makiya, K. (1998). *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq*, University of California: Berkley and Los Angeles, xi.



an exceptional character- so grave that it has few parallels in the years that have passed since the Second World War.”²⁶ Many scholars compare the level of brutality and violence in Saddam’s Iraq to that of Hitler and Stalin, but also point towards something uniquely repressive.²⁷ He implanted himself deep within the society. He had ‘image builders’ to think of ways to plant his image and words into the everyday homes and minds of the Iraqi people. For example, *The Political Dictionary of Saddam Husayn* and *The Complete Writings of Saddam Husayn* were published in the 1980s and these sayings and images were endlessly reproduced in the media and throughout the society. Throughout Iraq, he was referred to as the ‘Iraq of Saddam Husayn,’ ‘Saddam of the Arabs,’ the ‘Saddam of Conquest,’ the ‘Father of the New Iraq,’ and ‘Baba Saddam’ (Daddy Saddam). He would use Islamic religious images like the sword, or the images of Ali and Hussein in order to appeal to the Sunni and Shia. He would also compare himself to Salahadin, a Kurd, in order to appeal to the Kurds. Bengio notes that Saddam’s use of religion and his endless repetition and self-promotion was a ‘rape of language.’ Iraqi society was forced to not only be exposed to Saddam’s brutality and ruthlessness, and to submit to his supreme power, but also to pretend to support him whole-heartedly out fear for the safety of their lives. Iraqi society was required to subsume the role of Ba’athi citizen and to repeat back in front of all to see the ideologies of the regime. Even in private homes, parents would say to their children: “Baba Saddam, Baba Saddam” out of fear that their children might accidentally ‘inform’ on the parents. Every day, lies were lived and believed. In the end, as Makiya claims, “For a quarter century, the polity has been built on distrust, suspicion, conspiratorialism, and betrayal, values with which it has infected everyone. Every Iraqi today, whether in the opposition or outside it, carries the marks of that victimhood deep inside.”²⁸

In relation to Saddam’s rule by fear, over the course of thirty years Saddam and his Ba’ath party provoked ethnic divisions and became responsible for the displacement, disappearances, and deaths of millions of civilians. Following trends seen in Iraqi history since the British occupation and earlier regimes, Saddam Hussein consolidated his support in an elite group of Sunni loyalists. Patron-client networks were strengthened, and many Sunni politicians, businessmen, and religious men benefited from their loyalty to Saddam. This led to revolts and ethnic conflicts throughout Iraqi history, including the repressions of the Shia and Kurds in the 1970s during regime consolidation;²⁹ the genocidal al-Anfal campaign against the Kurds in the 1980s; and the repression of the Shia and Kurdish rebels during the Gulf War. After the Gulf War, Saddam instigated sectarianism and tribalism in order to hold on to power. As Graham-Brown notes that fundamentally, “the fault lines in Iraqi society remain, and the encouragement of primordial loyalties – to family, clan, religion and ethnic group – during the 1990s will probably leave their mark on social and political relations.”³⁰

26 Makiya, K. (1998). *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq*, University of California: Berkley and Los Angeles, xiii.

27 Makiya, K. (1998). *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq*, University of California: Berkley and Los Angeles; Baram, A., Rohde, A., and Zeidel, R. (2010) *Iraq Between Occupations: Perspectives from 1920 to the Present*, Palgrave Macmillan: New York, and Bengio, O. (1998). *Saddam’s Word: Political Discourse in Iraq*, Oxford University Press: New York.

28 Makiya, K. (1998). *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq*, University of California: Berkley and Los Angeles, xxx.

29 The attempted assassination of the Prime Minister, Tariq Azziz, by Shia militants led to the executions, and expulsions of more than 40,000 Shia to Iran. As Tripp notes, before the Iran-Iraq war, “the Iraqi government had expended considerable effort on encouraging division amongst the Shi’a, using government patronage amongst the clerics, separating off and expelling those Shi’a it labeled as ‘Persian’ because of their family origins and...stressing both Iraqi and Arab identities to distinguish Iraqi’s Shi’a from those of Iran.” Tripp, C. (2007). *A History of Iraq*, 3rd edition. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. 237.

While acknowledging that generalizations for the entire Iraqi population should not be made, the opinion here is in agreement with other scholars who note that: “the depths of division within Iraqi society and repeated cycles of violence during its modern history have heavily shaped Iraq’s political culture and social mores.”³¹ Iraqi refugees have been exposed to these divisions since the occupation of the British and throughout the occupation of the United States and after. It is the above history of fear and repression; uncertainty and insecurity; and division and ethnic/religious strife that could help to explain the issues within the resettled Iraqi refugee community and the conflicts which ensue after resettlement (to be discussed in Chapter 4).

2. The Effects of War: The Iran-Iraq War, the Gulf War, and the 2003 US-Led Invasion

Shortly after Saddam gained control over Iraq, Ayatollah Khomeini came to power bringing Shia domination over Iran. As Iraq was majority Shia, and as Shia militants had attempted to assassinate the Iraqi deputy prime minister, Tariq Azziz, Saddam started to view his Iranian Shia neighbor as a threat and declared war against Iran in 1980.³² The war lasted for eight years, finally ending in a stalemate in 1988.

The Iran-Iraq war generated enormous loss of life and human suffering. It is estimated that 200,000 Iraqi lives were lost, with a further 400,000 wounded, and 70,000 taken prisoner. As the Kurdish rebels in the north lent support to Iran during the war, the regime implemented the al-Anfal campaign from 1986-1988 whereby chemical weapons and other methods were used to eradicate the Kurdish population. Chemical weapons were used, villages were destroyed, and Kurds were placed in camps. When Iranians attempted to assist those in the town of Halbja, the regime responded by killing over 5,000 residents with chemical weapons. Roughly 80 percent of Kurdish villages were destroyed.³³

The economic effects were similarly devastating. The war cost Iraq roughly \$350 billion,³⁴ and the country found itself in over \$80 billion worth of debt. Iraq paid for the war through borrowing and depleting foreign currency reserves (\$85-90 billion worth in foreign grants and loans).³⁵ This reduced Iraq’s foreign currency reserves from \$30 billion in 1980 to \$3 billion in 1982. Oil revenues also fell from \$26 billion in 1980 to \$9 billion in 1982.³⁶ Economic development, agricultural production, and oil production came to a halt. Schools, hospitals, mosques, and universities were destroyed. In all accounts, it was “the largest and most brutal war of the twentieth century” and the “great sacrifices the Iraqis were forced to make during the war with Iran made many realize that, although the regime could offer extensive material benefits, as it had done until 1983, it could also cause tremendous human and material suffering.”³⁷

30 Graham-Brown, S. (1999). *Sanctioning Saddam*, I.B. Tauris& Co. Ltd.: London, 255.

31 Bengio, O. (1998). *Saddam’s Word: Political Discourse in Iraq*, Oxford University Press: New York, 53.

32 For more history on the Iran-Iraq War, see: Donovan, J. (2011). *The Iran-Iraq War: Antecedents and Conflict Escalation*. Routledge: New York; Johnson, R. (2011). *The Iran-Iraq War*. Palgrave-MacMillan: New York; Workman, T. (1994). *The Social Origins of the Iran-Iraq War*. Lynne Rienner Publishers: Boulder.


33 Tripp, C. (2007). *A History of Iraq*, 3rd edition. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. 236.

34 Johnson, R. (2011). *The Iran-Iraq War*. Palgrave-MacMillan: New York.193.

35 Johnson, R. (2011). *The Iran-Iraq War*. Palgrave-MacMillan: New York.10.

36 Tripp, C. (2007). *A History of Iraq*, 3rd edition. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. 226-227.

37 Davis, E. (2005) *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq*. University of California Press: Berkley. 198-199.



With his prestige in question, Saddam reshuffled party members, and installed members of his family and tribe into positions of power in order to curb any opposition. In this climate, the systems of patronage were difficult to maintain as state resources had been expended. In order to gain more revenues, Saddam requested that Saudi Arabia and Kuwait forgive its \$40 billion in financial debt. Saddam also tried to persuade both countries to limit their production of oil in order to raise the price. These countries refused.³⁸ In the end, Saddam looked for an easy way out of the problems he had plunged his country into. After accusing Kuwait of exceeding its OPEC levels of oil production, thereby increasing the price of oil, and drilling into Iraqi oil fields, Iraq invaded Kuwait on August 2 1990 in the hopes of controlling the Gulf oil market.

Saddam's actions in Kuwait immediately brought upon a total economic and trade embargo through UN Security Council Resolutions 661 in August 1990, and US-led military action, Operation Desert Storm, against Saddam's regime in January 1991. "Within the span of six weeks, the air bombardment had destroyed more of Iraq's economic infrastructure countrywide than had the eight years of war with Iran."³⁹ Not only did the US drop tons of bombs on Iraq, it also used depleted uranium (DU) weapons that have caused cancers and illnesses within the Iraqi population as well as in US soldiers. According to the UN Under-Secretary General, Martti Ahtisaari, the bombings had relegated modern Iraq into a "pre-industrial age."⁴⁰ Iraqi financial losses were estimated at \$232 billion.⁴¹ As Iraq's infrastructure crumbled, Iraqi living conditions became deplorable: thousands became homeless; roads and bridges were destroyed, thereby limiting transportation; power outages and poor communications were daily occurrences; and poor water purification and waste removal led to thousands of illnesses.

During this time period, and with the view that Saddam had been weakened by the wars and with the belief that the US would support them, numerous revolts occurred in February and March 1991. The Shia rebellions were ultimately repressed, thousands were killed, and 50,000 refugees fled to Saudi Arabia and Iran. The Kurds also took the opportunity to rebel against Saddam, yet these were also suppressed and hundreds of thousands of Kurds fled to Turkey and Iran. Nearly 2 million people had either fled the country or their homes within a few days.⁴² As Davis notes: "The 1991 Intifada [uprisings] left great physical and emotional scars on Iraqi society. Not only was Iraq's infrastructure further damaged, but at least a hundred thousand Iraqis were killed or wounded, in addition to those already killed in the Gulf War."⁴³ This suppression led to UN Security Council Resolution 688 that created the no-fly zone over northern Iraq in April 1991.

American policy towards Iraq after the Gulf War was "sanctions" and "containment."

38 Tripp, C. (2007). *A History of Iraq*, 3rd edition. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. 242.


39 Tripp, C. (2007). *A History of Iraq*, 3rd edition. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. 251.

40 Armove, A. (2000). *Iraq Under Siege: The Deadly Impact of Sanctions and War*, South End Press: Cambridge, 60.

41 Otterman, M. and Hil, R. (2010) *Erasing Iraq: The Human Costs of Carnage*. Palgrave Macmillan: New York. 27.

42 Tripp, C. (2007). *A History of Iraq*, 3rd edition. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. 247-248.

43 Davis, E. (2005) *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq*. University of California Press: Berkeley. 227.



The sanctions had catastrophic effects on the Iraqi population. The embargo cut off most food supplies, and industry and agriculture production ceased. In addition, UN Sanctions prohibited Iraq from selling oil, and from the import of fertilizers, agricultural machinery and pesticides or parts for restoring electricity and water purification. The Iraqi population suffered greatly, and in 1996, Saddam agreed to UN Security Resolution 986 that allowed the export of oil for food.

The health of the Iraqi population was severely impacted by the sanctions as Iraqis faced hunger, malnutrition, and infant mortality (UNICEF reported that over 5,000 children died each month due to the sanctions⁴⁴). In total, UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Dennis Halliday, commented that total deaths were well over one million people.⁴⁵

As the Iraqi dinar became increasingly devalued (in 1990 three dinars were worth \$1, but in 1997 it took over 1,900 dinars to equal \$146), Iraqi salaries plummeted, and many Iraqi families couldn't afford daily necessities. By September 1998, the UN Department on Humanitarian Panel estimated that 4 million Iraqis lived in poverty.⁴⁷ Iraqi society languished, and the government ration system was inadequate. As Davis notes:

“Because government rations only covered one-half to two-thirds of a typical family's monthly nutritional requirements, most white-collar employees and workers were forced to find additional employment. Many families sold their possessions to buy enough food to survive. Medicines were in short supply, which meant that even simple illnesses often became serious...Infant mortality rose. Many schoolchildren lacked books and pencils.”⁴⁸

Furthermore, in 1999, the United Nations observed: “massive deterioration in basic infrastructure, in particular the water supply, and waste disposal systems.... The World Food Program estimates that access to potable water is currently 50 percent of the 1990 level in urban areas and only 33 percent in rural areas.”⁴⁹

Armove notes, moreover, that the sanctions denied Iraqis: “billions of dollars worth of computer equipment, spare parts, medical equipment and medicines, books and periodicals, all necessary elements to sustaining human life and society.” All sectors of Iraqi society degenerated during this time period, and the sanctions had the effect of turning “Iraqi's attention on sheer survival.”⁵⁰

In this environment, tremendous strain was placed on the state budget, and food shortages, inflation, and unemployment were widespread. Corruption was rampant, and black markets were formed in order to bypass sanctions and obtain goods. As the salaries of civil servants had become worthless, bribery became commonplace.

44 Armove, A. (2000). *Iraq Under Siege: The Deadly Impact of Sanctions and War*, South End Press: Cambridge, 61.

45 Armove, A. (2000). *Iraq Under Siege: The Deadly Impact of Sanctions and War*, South End Press: Cambridge, 67.


46 Al-Jawaheri, Y.H. (2008) *The Gender Impact of International Sanctions: Women in Iraq*. Lynne Rienner Publishers: Boulder. 6.

47 Al-Jawaheri, Y.H. (2008) *The Gender Impact of International Sanctions: Women in Iraq*. Lynne Rienner Publishers: Boulder. 7.

48 Davis, E. (2005) *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq*. University of California Press: Berkley. 232.

49 For more on the impact of sanctions, see: Armove, A. (2000). *Iraq Under Siege: The Deadly Impact of Sanctions and War*, South End Press: Cambridge; Graham-Brown, S. (1999). *Sanctioning Saddam*, I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd.: London; and Al-Jawaheri, Y.H. (2008). *Women in Iraq: The Gender Impact of International Sanctions*, Lynne Reiner Publishers, Inc.: Colorado.

50 Cordseman, A.H. and Hashim, A.S. (1997) *Iraq: Sanctions and Beyond*. Westview Press: Boulder. 155.



Aruri noted of this time that: “An increasing number of Iraqi professionals are being relegated to driving taxis, while the lower classes fall prey to severe exploitation.”⁵¹ Theft, bribery, begging and prostitution were results of the sanctions, and crimes increased throughout Iraq.⁵² An Iraqi girl who kept a diary of her experiences in Iraq during this time period noted that: “An egg costs 60 dinars – even during the war a dozen eggs only cost 4 dinars! ... People are living by stealing and cheating.”⁵³ In other words, as Graham-Brown noted, Iraqi “individuals and families...have used whatever means at their disposal – savings, help from relatives abroad, connections with influential people, the black market or support from their ethnic and religious community – to make a living” during the time of sanctions.⁵⁴

Operation Iraqi Freedom, the US-led invasion of Iraq, in March 2003 further plunged Iraq into a hellish nightmare. After the American invasion in March 2003, the exchange rate depreciated, as \$1 was equal to 3,000 Iraqi dinars.⁵⁵ From 2003 to 2011, the Iraqi Body Count group estimated that between 104,035-113,680 Iraqi civilians were killed after the US invasion.⁵⁶ Due to the US invasion in 2003 and subsequent civil war, 2.4 million Iraqis left Iraq and 2.7 million were displaced within Iraq.⁵⁷ It is estimated that the war has cost the Iraqi economy \$12 billion dollars.⁵⁸ (Further details regarding the US invasion and the effects on the Iraqi people can be found below in the discussion regarding Iraqi refugees. For more on Iraqi life after the 2003 invasion, see *The Iraqi Refugees: The New Crisis in the Middle East* by Joseph Sassoon.)

Due to this turbulent history outlined above, Iraqis have fled their country in search of sanctuary abroad for over fifty years. The nature of these outflows and the numbers of Iraqi refugees around the world today will be documented below.

B. Iraqi Refugees

Resettling countries have been receiving Iraqi refugees for around fifty years. In the 1950s, Israel granted approximately 130,000 Iraqi Jews passports to Israel. As many Iraqi Jews were persecuted after the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, the majority of the Jewish population left during this time period. England also began receiving flows of Assyrian Iraqis in the 1960s after the Iraqi monarchy fell. The Assyrians were supported by the British and subsequently were persecuted after the monarchy was overthrown. Neighboring countries – specifically Iran, Jordan and Syria – have also absorbed large Iraqi refugee flows due to ethnic and political violence, and the various wars in recent Iraqi history. Europe, Australia, Canada and the United States have also received various waves of Iraqi refugees (whether resettled by government policy or granted asylum) who had been political or religious refugees or those who had been persecuted by the regime of Saddam Hussein. The most recent waves have fled the violence created after the US invasion in 2003 whereby 2.4 million Iraqis left Iraq and 2.7 became internally displaced.

51 Arno, A. (2000). *Iraq Under Siege: The Deadly Impact of Sanctions and War*, South End Press: Cambridge, 31.

52 Cordseman, A.H. and Hashim, A.S. (1997) *Iraq: Sanctions and Beyond*. Westview Press: Boulder. 144-146.

53 Otterman, M. and Hil, R. (2010) *Erasing Iraq: The Human Costs of Carnage*. Palgrave Macmillan: New York. 29-30.

54 Graham-Brown, S. (1999). *Sanctioning Saddam*. I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd.: London, 179.

55 Al-Jawaheri, Y.H. (2008) *The Gender Impact of International Sanctions: Women in Iraq*. Lynne Rienner Publishers: Boulder. 7.

56 Information retrieved from the following Iraqi Body Count website: <http://www.iraqbodycount.org/>

57 Otterman, M. and Hil, R. (2010) *Erasing Iraq: The Human Costs of Carnage*. Palgrave Macmillan: New York. 62.

58 Sassoon, J. (2009). *The Iraqi Refugees: The New Crisis in the Middle East*. I.B. Tauris and Co. LTD: New York. 130.

During the Iran-Iraq war, hundreds of thousands of Iraqi Shia Arabs fled the country to Iran, and some were forced to leave Iraq as they had Persian origins. Shia and Kurds also fled after reprisal attacks by Saddam Hussein. It is estimated that between the Gulf War and the US invasion (1990s-2000s), one to two million Iraqi refugees left the country, most of which were comprised of Shia and Kurds. Of those that left, 277,000 Iraqis applied for asylum in the West, mainly Europe and the US, and others fled to Jordan (250,000), Iran (200,000), Syria (40,000), and tens of thousands to Lebanon and Turkey. Over one million were also internally displaced during this interwar period, mainly due to Saddam's persecution of the Kurds.⁵⁹ In 2003, the UNHCR stated that over 400,000 Iraqi refugees were spread out across 90 countries, with nearly fifty percent (204,000) living in Iran.⁶⁰

Iran	202,100	Norway	8,200	France	1,600	Romania	380
Germany	50,900	Canada	6,000	Italy	1,100	Spain	330
Netherlands	26,100	Saudi Arabia	5,100	Jordan	940	Kuwait	300
Sweden	25,900	Switzerland	2,600	New Zealand	830	Hungary	260
US	19,100	Finland	1,900	Greece	620	Belgium	230
Denmark	12,600	Lebanon	1,800	Turkey	590	Pakistan	210
UK	12,000	Austria	1,800	Bulgaria	510	Yemen	200
Australia	10,000	Syria	1,700	Indonesia	430	Ireland	130

***Information obtained from UNHCR website ⁶¹**

After the Gulf War, many Western countries experienced sharp increases of asylum claims from Iraqi refugees. For much of the 1990s and early 2000s, Iraqis were the largest single group of asylum seekers arriving in industrialized countries. From 1997 to 2001, the majority of Iraqis were granted asylum in Germany (33,670); the Netherlands (12,310) and Sweden (12,340).⁶² From 1991 to 2002, the majority of Iraqi refugees who were officially granted resettlement through government programs in Western countries were resettled in: the United States (32,010); Canada (13,410); Australia (14,170); and Sweden (4,910). These numbers do not include the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees who fled to neighboring countries like Iran, Jordan, and Syria.

59 Otterman, M. and Hil, R. (2010) Erasing Iraq: The Human Costs of Carnage. Palgrave Macmillan: New York. 56-57. For more accounts of Iraqi refugee stories during this time period, read Otterman's Erasing Iraq, Chapter 2 on Refugee Voices.

60 Unhcr preliminary repatriation and reintegration plan for Iraq. (2003, April). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/3ea9554e4.html>

61 Iraqi refugee and asylum-seeker statistics.(2003, March). Retrieved from: <http://www.unhcr.org/3e79b00b9.html>

62 Unhcr worried about effect of dire security situation of Iraq's displace. (2006, October 13). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/452fa9954.html>

Table 2. Iraqi Asylum Applications and Decisions in Major Industrialized Countries (1997-2001)

Asylum Country	New Asylum Applications	Total Recognized
Germany	59,100	33,670
Netherlands	25,700	12,310
Sweden	20,200	12,340
United Kingdom	18,400	8,120
Italy	13,600	970
Switzerland	13,000	2,400
Greece	10,200	780
Denmark	9,500	7,650
Norway	7,500	3,260
Australia	5,300	4,040
United States	3,600	3,040
Canada	1,600	1,030
Bulgaria	1,500	500
France	1,400	730

*Information obtained from UNHCR website ⁶³

Table 3. Resettlement of Iraqi Refugees (1991-2002)

Country	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	TOTAL
USA	840	3,400	4,610	4,980	3,480	2,530	2,680	1,410	1,960	3,150	2,470	460	32,010
Canada	270	1,170	2,230	1,340	1,160	1,140	1,150	780	690	1,160	1,130	920	13,410
Australia	-	-	1,330	950	2,250	1,520	1,440	1,500	1,390	1,100	550	2,140	14,170
Sweden	440	1,580	110	650	540	-	330	270	150	340	250	250	4,910
Netherlands	-	230	220	460	470	390	120	30	10	10	110	20	2,070
Denmark	40	160	250	170	330	250	290	200	130	60	70	210	2,160
New Zealand	200	100	10	220	320	140	270	240	170	50	80	220	2,020
Norway	-	-	200	20	-	-	620	220	180	90	130	170	1,630
Finland	-	-	-	-	-	-	340	-	120	150	90	110	810

*Information obtained from UNHCR website ⁶⁴


In regards to the most recent outflows of Iraqi refugees, Joseph Sassoon notes in his book, *The Iraqi Refugees: A New Crisis in the Middle East*, that:

“The well-off and educated were amongst the first to leave (similar to other countries which witnessed violence or fundamental changes of regime), followed by the middle class. The most vulnerable and poor (again as in other countries) stayed behind because they lacked the resources to leave. Most of the earlier refugees were Sunnis and non-Muslim minorities, but as violence spread across the country, large numbers of Shia were also left with no option but to leave. By 2006, the refugee movement encompassed all religions and sects.”⁶⁵

63 Iraqi refugee and asylum-seeker statistics.(2003, March). Retrieved from: <http://www.unhcr.org/3e79b00b9.html>

64 Iraqi refugee and asylum-seeker statistics.(2003, March). Retrieved from: <http://www.unhcr.org/3e79b00b9.html>. For year 2002, see: Statistics on displaced Iraqis around the world. (2007, April). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/461f7cb92.html>

65 Sassoon, J. (2009). *The Iraqi Refugees: The New Crisis in the Middle East*. I.B. Tauris and Co. LTD: New York. 5.



As Sassoon notes, the first Iraqis to leave were those who had the resources to do so. Shortly before the war officially began, the first to flee Iraq, mainly to Syria and Jordan, were senior Ba'ath party members and their families. "These wealthy Ba'ath members were dubbed 'Mercedes Refugees' by the diplomatic community and the press."⁶⁶ In Syria, these members were deemed by UN officials and Western diplomats to be less than ten percent of the Iraqi refugee population in 2005 (some 700,000 refugees at this time).⁶⁷ These Ba'ath party members brought billions of dollars to Jordan and Syria, and bought up real estate in the cities of Amman and Damascus. Many former Ba'ath members were also thought to have fled to Yemen after the fall of Saddam.⁶⁸ The vast majority of refugees who fled Iraq during the initial years of the war were Sunni Iraqis.⁶⁹ A sizeable proportion of Iraq's intelligentsia –doctors, engineers, educators, lawyers – also fled to mainly Jordan and Syria during this time period, bringing large sums of money and skills.

A few months after the US invasion, Iraqis began to flee for neighboring countries due to certain events. In May 2003, as one of the first objectives of the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority was de-Ba'athification, hundreds of thousands of Ba'ath party members and affiliates lost their jobs (although, not everyone who lost their jobs were regime supporters as many were forced into military positions; the majority of the military were Shi'i; and many people joined the Ba'ath to gain access to higher salaries). On May 16, 2003, the first order of the CPA bared anyone from the top four ranks of the party from public sector employment (about 30,000 people).⁷⁰ The second order, the Dissolution of Iraqi Entities, eliminated the Iraqi military (385,000 people); the Ministry of the Interior that included the police and internal security forces (285,000 people); and the 50,000 member presidential security force.⁷¹ Many associated with the Ba'ath became "the leading edge of the first wave of Iraqi refugees."⁷² Shortly after the invasion, over 1,000 Iraqis fled to Jordan.⁷³ "The [de-Ba'athification] policy...alienated much of the Sunni community and contributed to the growth of the insurgency on the summer of 2003."⁷⁴ Furthermore, as the police and security forces were dissolved and security became nonexistent, tens of thousands of dangerous criminals escaped from prisons across Iraq (in addition to the tens of thousands of criminals granted amnesty by Saddam right before the war began).

Sectarian violence also led to the exodus of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees. As the CPA had disbanded the military and police forces in 2003, and as foreign and domestic extremists were intent on compromising the US mission in Iraq, the country descended into unbridled violence and crime. Sunni Islamic extremists rushed into Iraq with the distinct plan of destabilizing the government in order to defeat

66 Sassoon, J. (2009). *The Iraqi Refugees: The New Crisis in the Middle East*. I.B. Tauris and Co. LTD: New York. 36.

67 Wilson, S. (2005, February 3). Iraqi refugees overwhelm syria; migrants who fled violence put stress on housing market, schools. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/washingtonpost/access/788007771.html>

68 Sassoon, J. (2009). *The Iraqi Refugees: The New Crisis in the Middle East*. I.B. Tauris and Co. LTD: New York. 97.

69 Sassoon, J. (2009). *The Iraqi Refugees: The New Crisis in the Middle East*. I.B. Tauris and Co. LTD: New York. 57.


70 Marr, P. (2012). *The Modern History of Iraq*, 3rd ed. Westview Press: Boulder. 267-268.

71 DeFrwonzo, J. (2010). *The Iraq Wars: Origins and Consequences*. Westview Press: Boulder. 162.

72 Schwartz, M. (2005) Iraq's Broken Pieces don't Fit Together, *Asia Times*. Quoted in Otterman, M. and Hil, R. (2010) *Erasing Iraq: The Human Costs of Carnage*. Palgrave Macmillan: New York. 64.

73 Unhcr's operation in Iraq update.(2003, September). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/3f77f8454.html>

74 Cordesman, A.H. (2010) *Iraq's Insurgency and the Road to Civil Conflict Volume 1*. Praeger Security International: Westport. 48.



the Americans by stoking sectarian violence and turn Iraq into a Sunni conservative state which would protect the Arab world from Shi'i (Iranian) influence. By 2005, there were 40-50 extremist groups working in Iraq.⁷⁵ The extremists attacked the Shi'a and Kurds, as well as the Sunnis associated with the US government. Shia militias were created to defend against the insurgents and for reprisal attacks. Shia militias were also created to defend Iraq against the US invaders – most notably Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi militia. Tensions also arose within the same sects as Shia and Sunni fought with elements within their own sects.

After the Al-Askari mosque was bombed in February 2006, Iraq descended into civil war. Endless killings and kidnappings occurred. Suicide bombs, IED explosions, and street warfare became daily occurrences. Violence soared across Iraq. "Ethnic cleansing forced many Iraqis to relocate into areas where they were in the sectarian or ethnic majority or flee the country."⁷⁶ Sectarian cleansing and segregation became pronounced, and rates of displacement increased. It was found that 70 to 80 percent of the population was found to have left their homes during this time period,⁷⁷ and it was estimated that 425,000 Iraqis fled the country.⁷⁸ By June 2006, the US Committee for Refugees estimated that 889,000 Iraqis had fled the country since the beginning of the war.⁷⁹

Due to the insurgents' and militias' targeted kidnappings and assassinations, thousands of highly skilled and educated Iraqis also fled their homes to find sanctuary in neighboring countries. By 2006, Iraq lost 40 percent of its professional class. Between 2003 and 2006, 380 university academics were killed. Approximately 3,000 academics fled the country. From 2003 until the end of 2006, 455 medical workers were targeted and killed, and 7,000 medical workers fled the country during the same time period.⁸⁰ Since the start of the war, approximately 20,000 medical professionals fled the country, and only 1,500 of these have returned to Iraq.⁸¹

For those who fled to neighboring countries, these Iraqis may have escaped with their lives, but they have also struggled for survival in countries like Syria, Jordan, Egypt and Yemen. A recent study conducted on Iraqi refugees in Syria found that 14 per cent of Iraqis fell below the poverty line of \$1 per day, and 41 per cent were living on less than \$2 per day. The study found that Iraqi refugees have high "levels of dependency on remittances, pensions, and UN support" and that uncertain "legal status and inability to work in the formal sector are principal concerns among the Iraqi population in Syria." Furthermore, Iraqis are selling non-food items, and child labor has been used in order to gain income.⁸² Similar experiences can be found in Jordan. Many Iraqis have expended their life savings and are working illegally in Jordan without any rights.

75 Cordesman, A.H. (2010) *Iraq's Insurgency and the Road to Civil Conflict* Volume 1. Praeger Security International: Westport. 53.

76 Cordesman, A.H. (2010) *Iraq's Insurgency and the Road to Civil Conflict* Volume 1. Praeger Security International: Westport. 1.

77 Tripp, C. (2007). *A History of Iraq*, 3rd edition. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. 294.

78 Unhcr update on the Iraqi situation (2006, November). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/45631dec2.html>

79 Cordesman, A.H. (2010) *Iraq's Insurgency and the Road to Civil Conflict* Volume 1. Praeger Security International: Westport. 266.

80 Cordesman, A.H. (2010) *Iraq's Insurgency and the Road to Civil Conflict* Volume 1. Praeger Security International: Westport. 465.

81 Sassoon, J. (2009). *The Iraqi Refugees: The New Crisis in the Middle East*. I.B. Tauris and Co. LTD: New York. x.

82 Doocy, S. and Burnham, G. (2011). Household Economy and Livelihoods among Iraqi Refugees in Syria. *Journal of Refugee Studies*.24(4).

Without access to residency or citizenship, many Iraqi refugees live in fear of being deported. Furthermore, Iraqi children are not permitted to attend public schools and some children have been without education for years. Many Iraqis in Jordan “had high hopes of getting to Europe, North America or Australia.”⁸³ In most countries, UN refugee status is given to those who are deemed in need of protection. Not all Iraqis are granted refugee status, and even those who are granted protection are not necessarily safe as the governments disregard UNHCR documents. Conditions in countries of first asylum continue to deteriorate, and many Iraqis cannot find employment, and crime and prostitution are prevalent.

By 2009, the UNHCR estimated that the largest number of Iraqi refugees lived in Syria, without approximately 1.2 to 1.4 million Iraqis residing in the country. Jordan had the second highest number, with 500,000 to 600,000 Iraqi refugees residing in Jordan. Approximately only nine percent of refugees in Syria were registered with the UNHCR, and only eight percent were registered with the UNHCR in Jordan. The majority of Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan are Sunni; the majority of Iraqis in Lebanon are Shi'i; and the majority of Iraqis in Turkey are Christian.

Table 4. UNHCR Registrations and Estimates of Iraqi Refugees in the Middle East in 2009

Country of Asylum	Number Registered	Number Estimated
Syria	122,554	1.2-1.4 million
Jordan	47,910	500,00-600,000
Lebanon	8,257	20,000-30,000
Egypt	9,932	20,000-40,000
TOTAL	188,653	1.74 million-2.07 million

*Information obtained from UNHCR website ⁸⁴

Table 5. Breakdown of Iraqi Population by Religion (those registered with UNHCR by August 2008)

Country	Sunni	Shi'i	Christian	Islam Unspecified	abean-Mandean	Yezidi	Other
Syria	58%	19.5%	14.5%	2.9%	4%	0.7%	0.6%
Jordan	59%	27%	12.5%	N/A	0.7%	0.2%	0.6%
Lebanon	20.9%	44.2%	34.6%	0.2%	-	-	0.1%
Egypt	N/A	N/A	2%	96%	N/A	N/A	2%
Turkey	22.6%	7.8%	63.9%	3.8%	0.2%	1.3%	0.5%

*Information obtained from UNHCR website ⁸⁵

In 2011, UNHCR published the Statistical Report on UNHCR Registered Iraqis and Non-Iraqis that documented numbers of Iraqi refugees registered with UNHCR in Iraq, Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, and the GCC countries from 2007 up until October 2011. This report showed that 176,694 Iraqi refugees were actively being

83 Sassoon, J. (2009). The Iraqi Refugees: The New Crisis in the Middle East. I.B. Tauris and Co. LTD: New York. 36.

84 Information compiled from the following UNHCR website: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/473023482.pdf>

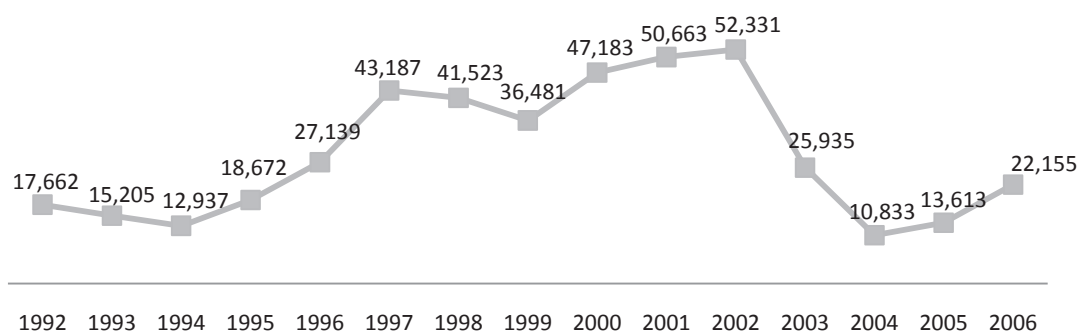
85 Iraq situation update.(2008, August). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/491956a02.html>

assisted by UNHCR by the end of September 2011. The largest populations of Iraqi refugees living outside Iraq have been, since 2006, in decreasing order: Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, and the GCC Countries.⁸⁶

As conditions in countries of first asylum started to deteriorate, many Iraqi refugees viewed resettlement in a third country as a means of achieving safety and stability. Some Iraqis decided to travel to Western countries in search of asylum, and others registered with the UNHCR in order to gain benefits and a chance at resettlement. In regards to Iraqi asylum claims, statistics from 36 industrialized countries for the first six months of 2006 showed a fifty percent increase in Iraqi asylum claims over the same period a year before. In 2006, Iraqi asylum applications were highest in three European countries: Sweden (8,950); the Netherlands (2,765); and Germany (2,065).⁸⁷

Throughout the 1990s and before the US-led invasion in 2003, resettling countries were resettling on average 5,000 Iraqi refugees per year (Table 3 and 7). Before 2002, the United States resettled the majority of Iraqi refugees, with Canada and Australia resettling sizeable populations as well. After the invasion in 2003, Australia resettled the majority of refugees from 2003 to 2006. During this time period, Australia resettled 5,470 Iraqi refugees; Canada (1,860); and the USA (770). From 2007 to 2009, resettling countries around the world increased their resettlement of Iraqi refugees. During this time period, the United States resettled the largest number (33,526), with European countries (5,562) and Canada (2,855) resettling large numbers as well. (A note must be made regarding the numbers of Iraqi refugees resettled around the world. Numbers were mainly obtained from various articles on the UNHCR's website. These numbers do not include official government statistics or all asylum claims granted to Iraqi refugees. These numbers are provided here as a general overview of Iraqi resettlement. Chapter 3 will discuss US attempts at resettling Iraqi refugees in more detail, and official numbers of Iraqis resettled in the US will be provided.)

Table 6. Iraqi Asylum Applications submitted in 38 Industrialized Countries, 1992-2006



*Information obtained from UNHCR website ⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Statistical report on unhcr registered iraqis and non-iraqis. (2011, September 30). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4e92a86d2.html>

⁸⁷ Unhcr worried about effect of dire security situation of iraq's displace. (2006, October 13). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/452fa9954.html>

⁸⁸ Iraq situation update.(2008, August). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/491956a02.html>

Table 7. Resettlement of Iraqi Refugees 2003–2006

Country	2003	2004	2005	2006	TOTAL
USA	300	70	200	200	770
Canada	530	720	520	90	1,860
Australia	1,940	1,560	1,850	120	5,470
Sweden	90	30	60	80	260
Netherlands	10	–	–	–	10
Denmark	–	–	–	–	–
New Zealand	300	30	120	–	450
Norway	60	–	–	10	70
Finland	20	10	–	–	30

*Information obtained from UNHCR website ⁸⁹

Table 8. Departures of Iraqi Refugees (2007–2009)

Country	2007	2008	2009	TOTAL
USA	2,530	14,480	16,516	33,526
EU	726	278	4,558	5,562
Canada	164	993	1,698	2,855
Australia	66	792	1,401	2,259
Other	148	495	322	965

*Information obtained from UNHCR website ⁹⁰

In 2009, the UNHCR submitted 128,588 refugees to States for resettlement, of which 36,069 were Iraqi refugees. Out of the 128,588 submissions, 84,657 departed for resettlement countries. Out of the 84,657 that departed, 23,089 were Iraqi refugees. In other words, approximately 28% of the total refugee resettlement submissions in 2009 were Iraqi, and approximately 27% of the total number of refugees who departed for resettling countries in 2009 due to these submissions was also Iraqi. As Table 9 shows, Iraqi women refugees were granted resettlement in 2009 based on the ‘Woman-at-Risk’ criterion at a higher rate than other refugee women. Furthermore, Table 10 shows that Iraqi refugees had the highest number of persons granted resettlement based on the ‘Medical Needs’ criterion in 2009.

Most of the Iraqi refugees resettled in 2009 were resettled in the United States. Some European countries allowed a one-time increase in the number of refugees it resettled in order to resettle Iraqi refugees. For example, in 2008–2009, Australia increased its number of available resettlement slots by 500 places. In 2009, France increased its numbers by 1,200 and Germany increased by 2,500 to help resettle Iraqi refugees. Belgium, Luxembourg, and Italy also increased numbers in 2009 for this purpose.⁹¹

90 International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), 10,000 refugees from Iraq: A report on joint resettlement in the European Union, May 2010, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4c971b8d2.html>

91 Unhcr projected global resettlement needs 2011. (2010, July). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/4c5acc3e2.pdf>

Table 9. UNHCR Submissions and Departures under Woman-at-Risk Criterion 2009

Country of Asylum	Persons
Syria	2,184
Jordan	832
Thailand	820
Kenya	942
Malaysia	236
Nepal	699
Turkey	298
Iran	504
Ecuador	314
South Africa	318
All Others	2,662
TOTAL	9,809

*Information obtained from UNHCR website ⁹²

Table 10. UNHCR Resettlement Submissions and Departures under Medical Needs Criterion in 2009

Country of Asylum	Persons	Country of Asylum	Persons
Iraq	933	Turkey	689
Somalia	750	Nepal	716
Burma	343	Malaysia	164
Bhutan	698	Kenya	374
DR of Congo	322	Ethiopia	256
Palestine	144	Syria	226
Liberia	79	Iraq	200
Sudan	119	Thailand	170
Afghanistan	94	Egypt	79
Iran	95	Uganda	126
All Others	319	All Others	896
TOTAL	3,896	TOTAL	3,896

*Information obtained from UNHCR website ⁹³

UNHCR noted that in 2010, the “landmark figure of 100,000 Iraqi refugees submitted for resettlement since 2007 was reached.”⁹⁴ In 2010, UNHCR submitted a combined total of over 108,000 Iraqi refugees for consideration by resettlement countries. In 2010, 26,700 Iraqi refugees were submitted for resettlement consideration.

92 Information compiled from: Frequently asked questions about resettlement. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/4ac0873d6.html>

93 Information compiled from: Frequently asked questions about resettlement. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/4ac0873d6.html>

94 Frequently asked questions about resettlement. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/4ac0873d6.html>

Table 11. Iraqi Refugee Resettlement Submissions by the UNHCR


Country of Asylum	2008 Submissions	2009 Submissions	2010 Submissions till May 21st 2010	2011 Resettlement Needs	2011 Resettlement Capacity
Syria	13,554	18,398	5,458	20,000	14,900
Jordan	9,417	8,442	2,851	3,600	3,600
Lebanon	3,709	2,847	1,028	2,200	1,748
Libya	0	109	168	420	420
GCC Countries	132	267	133	310	310
Egypt	555	345	88	300	300
Yemen	200	151	4	0	0
Israel	0	5	0	0	0
Turkey	5,122	5,291	1,124	2,200	2,200
Others	27	205	172	439	439
TOTAL	32,716	36,069	11,026	33,006	23,917

*Information obtained from UNHCR website ⁹⁵

III. Summary Chapter 1 has provided a brief description of refugee resettlement, in general, and of Iraqi refugee resettlement, in specific. As mentioned, in 2010, the UNHCR noted that there were approximately 1.7 million Iraqi refugees, making the Iraqi refugee population the second largest refugee group in the world. In 2011, only 176,694 Iraqi refugees, or 10% of the total, were assisted by the UNHCR. Although exact data regarding Iraqi refugee resettlement could not be precisely obtained, estimates of refugees resettled in Western countries from 1991 to 2009 could be obtained. From 1991 to 2002, the United States resettled the largest number of Iraqi refugees (31,960); Australia the second largest (14,170); and Canada the third (13,140). From 2003 to 2006, Australia resettled the largest number of Iraqis (5,470); Canada the second (1,860); and the US third (770). Finally, from 2007 to 2009, the US resettled the largest number of Iraqis (33,526); the EU second (5,562); and Canada third (2,855). Between 2003 and 2009, therefore, the United States resettled the large majority of Iraqi refugees (34,296). The actual number of Iraqi refugees resettled in the US, however, is much higher (over 72,000), as will be discussed in Chapter 3.

This chapter also explained how the most recent waves of Iraqi refugees were formed after the US invasion in 2003. The first waves of Iraqi refugees were comprised of “Mercedes refugees,” or former senior Ba’ath party members as well as the wealthy intelligentsia. These populations brought billions of dollars to Jordan and Syria. The second wave was created in May 2003, when the Coalition Provisional Authority, led by US military and Iraqi governmental leaders, implemented its first policies ordering the de-Ba’athification of the country and the dissolution of the military. Hundreds of thousands of Ba’ath government and military members and regime supporters found themselves unemployed (not everyone, however, who lost their jobs because of this order supported Saddam Hussein). Many associated with the Ba’ath became ‘the leading edge of the first wave of Iraqi refugees.’ De-Ba’athification led to the breakdown of the police and security forces that resulted in increased looting and violence. Foreign and domestic Sunni extremists also flooded the country with the intent of destabilizing Iraq through sectarian strife. Various militias were created to defend against the extremists and for reprisal attacks. Increasing sectarian violence

95 Information compiled from: Unhcr projected global resettlement needs 2011. (2010, July). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/4c5acc3e2.pdf>



led many to flee. After the al-Askari bombing in February 2006, 70-80 percent of Iraqis left their homes during this time period. After the al-Askari mosque bombing, thousands of highly skilled professionals were also targeted, and many were kidnapped or assassinated. Tens of thousands of Iraq's best and brightest fled the country during this time period, and only a few have returned. As Sassoon noted, Iraqi refugee flows were initially composed of the well-off, mainly Sunni, classes (the Ba'ath and the intelligentsia) who were most able to flee. As the violence increased, all sectors and religions began to flee; yet, those who did not have enough resources to escape remained in their communities or became displaced within Iraq.

Chapter 1 also provided a brief description of modern Iraqi history, as to present various home-related factors which many Iraqi refugees experienced, as well as a literature review regarding Iraqi refugee resettlement. Aspects of modern Iraqi history that have had a lasting effect on the Iraqi people, such as Saddam Hussein's 'Republic of Fear' and the effects of the Iran-Iraq war, the Gulf War, and the 2003 US-led invasion, were discussed.

The above summary of Chapter 1 has highlighted the key aspects of the Iraqi refugee crisis and Iraqi refugee resettlement that will assist in the analysis of Iraqi refugee experiences documented in interviews in Chapter 4. It has also provided a summary of various home-related factors, including the history that Iraqi refugees experienced and their flight from Iraq, and provided a basis for which factors may impact Iraqi refugee integration in the US.

Chapter 2. Refugee Resettlement and Integration: A Literature Review

Most scholarly research conducted on refugee resettlement focuses on the integration of newcomers into host societies. Such research is centered within the European, Australian, Canadian and American contexts. First, a discussion about “integration” will be provided, followed by a discussion of the following themes that emerge within this literature: employment; issues regarding access and use of services; health and recovery; participation within host and home society groups; and gender. Finally, a brief history of Iraq will be provided followed by a literature review regarding Iraqi refugee resettlement specifically.

I. Integration

Many social scientists (and governments) have attempted to define and debate the concept of integration. These attempts have typically focused on the interaction between the host country and its newcomers: immigrants and refugees. Historically, this type of research has evolved and changed over the years. Interaction between host society and newcomers has been given many names: assimilation,⁹⁶ adaptation,⁹⁷ acculturation,⁹⁸ integration, and multiculturalism.⁹⁹ Most research regarding this interaction, specifically between host society and refugees, has focused on the concept of integration. Some scholars have defined and elaborated upon the definition and concept of refugee integration, and others have criticized the notion of integration altogether. Others have carried out case studies demonstrating the obstacles and successes of refugee integration. These endeavors will be discussed below.

Within refugee resettlement research, integration is a concept with varying definitions and components. In fact, many scholars have echoed the sentiment that integration is a “chaotic concept” which has differing meanings depending upon the context of integration, and is one without a “single, generally accepted definition, theory or model.”¹⁰⁰ Even though the concept has been debated, some scholars have defined the term as it relates to refugee resettlement.

Although integration is usually a lengthy process, Mansouri, Leach and Traies define integration as the early stage of resettlement:

“wherein newcomers are able to functionally participate in all dimensions of society as a result of practical needs being met. Integration is not measured by

96 Assimilation means the assimilation of a minority group within a dominant culture. See: Gordon, M. (1964). *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins*. New York: Oxford University Press; Portes, A. and Zhou, M. (1993). *The New Secondary Generation: Segmented Assimilation and its Variants*. *Annals of the Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 530, 74–96. Reinsch, P. (2001). *Measuring Immigrant Integration: Diversity in a European City*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

97 Adaptation is the gradual process of conforming to prevailing cultural norms.

98 Acculturation is the process of cultural adaptation that occurs when two or more differing cultural groups interact with one another. Acculturation occurs in various degrees. See: Berry, J. W. (1988). “Acculturation and Psychological Adaptation among Refugees” in *Refugees: The Trauma of Exile*; Miyares, I.M. (1997). *Changing Perceptions of Space and Place as Measures of Hmong Acculturation*, *The Professional Geographer*, 49(2), 214–224.

99 Multiculturalism is the promotion and acceptance of multiple cultures within a society. See: Castles, S. 1997b. ‘Multicultural citizenship: the Australian experience’ in Bader, V. (ed.) *Citizenship and Exclusion*. London: Macmillan; Weil, P. and Crowley, J. (1994). *Integration in Theory and Practice: A Comparison of France and Britain*. *Western European Politics*, 17(2), 110–126.

100 Various scholars quoted in: Ager, A. and Strang, A. (2008). *Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework*. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 21, 167

the length of time spent in the resettlement country, but rather, by qualitative and quantitative markers that indicate whether newcomers are able to ‘gain a sense of control over their lives,’ ‘feel more comfortable’ in their new environment and have a stake in the host society.”¹⁰¹

Valtonen also recognizes that full participation is a requirement of refugee integration; however, she adds that a refugee need not renounce their cultural identity in order to integrate. She defines refugee integration as: “the ability to participate fully in economic, social, cultural and political activities, without having to relinquish one’s own distinct ethnocultural identity and culture.”¹⁰² She discovers four conditions conducive to integration: emancipation (freedom from oppression), parity (valorization of resources and credentials), interdependence (social bonds and reciprocity) and cultural integrity (being able to shape the pace and terms of cultural adjustment). (See Figure 1) Ager and Strang have also found key components of refugee integration within resettling societies. Ten domains of integration, grouped into four categories (Markers and Means; Social Connections; Facilitators; and Foundation), were discovered. (See Figure 2) The markers and means of integration are: employment, housing, education, and health. These domains are the basics of refugee integration. With employment comes an avenue for participation in the new society. Appropriate housing brings a place to feel settled. Education prepares people for employment and gives them an arena to interact with other host society members thereby building social networks needed for integration. Good health and access to healthcare are also necessary for active participation in society. The social connections of integration are: social bonds (family and other ethnically, nationally, or religious groups which help refugees feel settled and give refugees a voice), social bridges (with other communities making the refugees feel ‘at home’ and welcome), and social links (with the structures of the state which allow the refugee to access services). These are the links with the society that stimulate and foster integration. The facilitators of integration are: language and cultural knowledge (for economic integration and participation in society), and safety and stability (for sense of belonging and well-being). Finally, the foundation of integration is rights and citizenship. Becoming a citizen means gaining certain rights and responsibilities which are shared with the society at large and which allow for full and equal participation.

Figure 1. Voltanen’s Conceptual Framework for Refugee Integration ¹⁰³



¹⁰¹ Mansouri, F., Leach, M., and Taies, M. (2006). Acculturation Experiences of Iraqi Refugees Resettled in Australia: The Impact of Visa Category. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 27(4), 395.

¹⁰² Voltonen, K. (2004). From the Margin to the Mainstream: Conceptualizing Refugee Settlement Processes. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 17(1), 74.

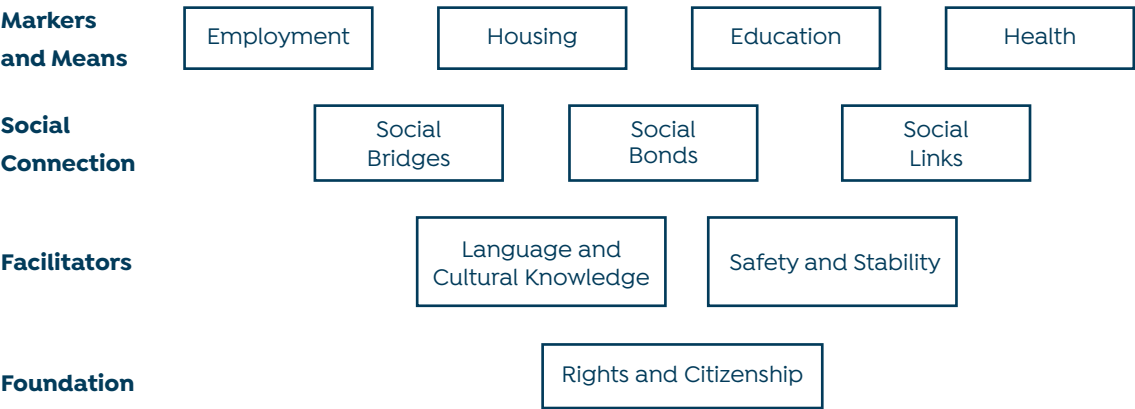
¹⁰³ Voltonen, K. (2004). From the Margin to the Mainstream: Conceptualizing Refugee Settlement Processes. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 17(1), 87.

Other scholars also found one or more of the components mentioned by Ager and Strang’s model in their discussions of refugee integration, as noted below. For this reason, Ager and Strang’s work on integration will be a main point of reference when comparing the findings of this Iraqi study.

Social bonds were found to be a key component to integration in Larsen’s work on newly arriving refugees in Denmark. She found that relatives and co-ethnics can have an integrative effect as they introduce the newly arriving refugees to the society and educated them on how to navigate the new culture and society. She states that: “Not being surrounded by a network of kinsmen nor having the opportunity to form new family-like relations with co-ethnics within one’s local surroundings can therefore seriously affect the ability of refugee families to establish a new life.”¹⁰⁴ Other scholars tend to focus on one aspect of refugee integration; for example, economic integration. Khulman developed a theoretical model that attempts to predict the economic adaptation of refugees in relation to six factors:

- a) Demographic characteristics, like gender, age, ethnicity, educational attainment, and household composition;
- b) Flight experiences, like cause of flight, type of movement, and attitude toward displacement and native country;
- c) Experiences within the host country, like economic conditions, ethnic composition, and attitudes towards refugees within the host society;
- d) Policy characteristics, like international, national, regional, and local policies and their implementation;
- e) Residency characteristics, like length of residence and secondary migration; and
- f) Non-economic characteristics, like adaptation stresses and acculturation experiences.¹⁰⁵


Figure 2. Ager and Strang’s Domains of Integration ¹⁰⁶



104 Larsen, B.R. (2011). Becoming Part of Welfare Scandinavia: Integration through the Spatial Dispersal of Newly Arrived Refugees in Denmark. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 37(2), 333.

105 Kuhlman, T. (1991). The Economic Integration of Refugees in Developing Countries: A Research Model. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 4.

106 Ager, A. and Strang, A. (2008). Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 21, 170.



Potocky-Tripodi expands upon Khulman's model of refugee economic adaptation in her studies of various refugee populations resettled in the United States. She found that of the factors discussed by Khulman, demographic characteristics (education, gender, marriage status, ethnicity, household composition) had the greatest influence on economic adaptation.¹⁰⁷ She claims that the other components of Khulman's model "that are specific to the refugee resettlement experience (e.g., acculturation, adaptation stresses, reactions of the host society) are not supported by the data in regard to economic status."¹⁰⁸ In a 2004 study of refugees resettled in San Diego and Miami-Fort Lauderdale, Potocky-Tripodi reconfirmed her theory that demographic characteristics (human capital, education, and gender) had greater impacts on economic status than social capital. Education was found to be the greatest factor.¹⁰⁹ Demographic characteristics, therefore, are integral factors of refugee economic integration for both scholars mentioned above. While Khulman found that other factors outside demographic characteristics which effect economic integration (flight experiences; experiences within the host country; policy characteristics; residency characteristics; and non-economic characteristics), Potocky-Tripodi concludes that demographic characteristics trump all other factors regarding the likelihood of refugee economic integration.

Demographic characteristics were also used to explain economic disparities between resettled refugees and native-born residents. Connor found a "refugee gap" between refugees and immigrants in the United States. He claims that refugees: "on average, have less English language ability, less educational experience, different forms of family support, poorer mental and physical health, and generally reside in more disadvantaged neighborhoods than other immigrants."¹¹⁰ In regards to employment, he found economic disparity for occupational level as well as earnings. (Many studies, however, also noted that levels of income do not remain low; levels of income and employment for refugees tend to increase over time.¹¹¹) Refugees, moreover, were found by Connor to: have less education abroad as well as less education (about half as much) than immigrants; be less likely to have a spouse in the home; have a higher amount of minor children in the home; and live in neighborhoods with more migrants, as opposed to non-immigrant migrants, as they migrate to where other co-ethnics live. Waxman also finds a gap between refugees and other groups in his study of refugees in Australia. He discovers factors outside of demographic characteristics that impact the economic integration of refugees. Such factors were: types of support networks; recognition of credentials obtained abroad; the cultural gap between the sending and receiving country; racial discrimination; and refugee motivations and expectations.¹¹² Blume, Gustafsson, Pedersen and Verner likewise

107 Potocky-Tripodi, M. (2003). Refugee Economic Adaptation. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 30(1), 63-91.


108 Potocky-Tripodi, M. (2003). Refugee Economic Adaptation. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 30(1), 84.

109 Potocky-Tripodi, M. (2004). The Role of Social Capital in Immigrant and Refugee Economic Adaption. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 31(1), 59-91.

110 Connor, P. (2010). Explaining the Refugee Gap: Economic Outcomes of Refugees versus Other Immigrants. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 23(3), 377.

111 Picot, G. and Hou, F. (2003). The Rise in Low-Income Rates among Immigrants in Canada. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, Business and Labour Market Analysis Division; Galloway, T.A. and Aaberge, R. (2003). Assimilation Effects on Poverty Among Immigrants in Norway. Oslo: University of Oslo, Department of Economics, Memo No. 07/2003; and Blume, K., Gustafsson, B., Pederson, P., and Verner, M. (2007). At the Lower End of the Table: Determinants of Poverty among Immigrants to Denmark and Sweden. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 33(3).

112 Waxman, P. (2001). The Economic Adjustment of Recently Arrived Bosnian, Afghan, and Iraqi Refugees in Sydney, Australia. *International Migration Review*, 35.



found that demographic characteristics explained economic disparities, such as low income and limited economic mobility, between refugees and native-born residents in Denmark and Sweden. They also found that welfare benefits varied between these two countries, and that this also accounted for varying levels of refugee poverty. They concluded that: “a significant part of the difference in aggregate immigrant poverty rates reflects differences in composition by country of origin and differences in the structure of benefits to families with children.”¹¹³ In regards to this last point on varying welfare systems, Mestheneos and Ionnidi documented similar findings in their study that gathered the integration experiences of refugees resettled in 15 European Union member states. They found that EU member states that resettle refugees have varying economies, welfare systems, and attitudes towards migrants, and therefore have differing levels of integration.¹¹⁴

Another factor discussed by scholars in regards to refugee integration is the notion that refugees are agents in control of their own resettlement. Valtonen notes that: “while institutions have direct impact on the resettlement and integration process, refugees are ultimately the central agents in resettlement, and hence their own priorities and goals have influence upon their style of engagement with the surrounding society.”¹¹⁵ Likewise, Valtonen’s 1998 study on Middle Eastern refugees resettled in Finland found that refugees have their own ideas of what integration means to them. For example, their main goals were: to work; have places to study; and to maintain their culture.¹¹⁶ Similarly, other scholars recognize that refugees are agents in their own resettlement, but also that the host society impacts how refugees can be agents. For example, Mestheneos and Ionnidi discovered that: “the individual personality of the refugee, how they reacted to the loss of their country, family, social status, and how these personal traits were encouraged or discouraged by the national social structural context in which they found themselves living” had an impact on how refugees chose to resettle. Therefore, refugees were agents in their own resettlement, but were also impacted by forces working within the host society.

Related to home/host country circumstances and integration, Kunz’s theory of exile and resettlement finds that both forces need to be taken into account when explaining refugee integration. He finds that refugees have particular ‘vintages.’ For example, there are three: 1) majority-identified refugees who strongly identify with and who have a strong attachment to the nation they left behind; 2) event-alienated refugees who are ambivalent towards the nation they left as they were marginalized or discriminated against; and 3) self-alienated refugees who for their own ideological reasons do not identify with the nation left behind. However, Kunz states that host society factors will also affect refugee integration as refugees “rarely fully remain captives to their past.” Such factors include: 1) cultural compatibility between background and the society; 2) population policies; and 3) social attitudes

113 Blume, K., Gustafsson, B., Pedersen, P.J., and Verner, M. (2007). At the Lower End of the Table: Determinants of Poverty among Immigrants to Denmark and Sweden. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 33:3, 373.

114 Mestheneos, E. and Ionnidi, E. (2002). Obstacles to Refugee Integration in the European Union Member States *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 15(3), 311 and 313. Valtonen, K. (1998). Resettlement of Middle Eastern Refugees in Finland: The Elusiveness of Integration. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 11(1).

115 Valtonen, K. (1998). Resettlement of Middle Eastern Refugees in Finland: The Elusiveness of Integration. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 11(1), 41.

116 Valtonen, K. (1998). Resettlement of Middle Eastern Refugees in Finland: The Elusiveness of Integration. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 11(1), 56.

(See Figure 4).¹¹⁷ The type of ‘vintage,’ coupled with host related factors, therefore, could have impacts on integration depending upon which orientation the refugee has with the home country as the: “larger the number of vintages a refugee settler wave is composed of, the more likelihood there is of divisive refugee politics after settlement.”¹¹⁸

Finally, some scholars criticize the discussion of refugee integration altogether and claim that integration efforts (both scholarly and political) are inherently conformist and problematic. McPherson, using her discussion with nine refugee women in Australia as a basis, argues that after 9/11 the debate in refugee resettlement changed from one of multiculturalism to a discussion about integration. She positions integration: “as a normative framework which represents ‘different’ refugees as problematic,” and one that marginalizes refugees’ voices in favor of dominant social and cultural norms.¹¹⁹ She claims that integration is promoted as a middle option between assimilation and multiculturalism, but in reality it is a concept and policy of conformance. She calls for social cohesion through knowledge of the self (both citizen and refugee) and a re-questioning of the refugee as a ‘deficient’ citizen as opposed to one with potential.

Figure 3. Kunz’ Host Related Factors regarding Integration




In the end, it appears that refugee integration truly is a “chaotic concept” as outcomes differ depending upon multiple variables within the refugees’ home and host country experiences. In the natural, and in some social, sciences, chaos theory is used to explain subtle changes in initial conditions that yield varying outcomes. Most commonly, the ‘butterfly effect’ is used to demonstrate that the undetectable flap of a butterfly’s wing could initially cause a tornado. Usually, the mixture of warm and cold winds explains tornados. Yet, scientists are unable to infallibly predict the occurrence of a tornado due to these minor disturbances in initial conditions. Perhaps similarly, refugee integration can be said to possess generally recognizable conditions for occurrence, yet predicting such occurrences can be difficult given the minor differences within refugees’ experiences. As the studies mentioned above demonstrate, refugee integration depends upon multiple pre-arrival and post-arrival factors, and most importantly that instances of refugee integration occur based

117 Kunz, E.F. (1981). Exile and Resettlement: Refugee Theory. *International Migration Review*, 15(1/2), 42.

118 Kunz, E.F. (1981). Exile and Resettlement: Refugee Theory. *International Migration Review*, 15(1/2), 49.

119 McPherson, M. (2010). ‘I Integrate, Therefore I am’: Contesting the Normalizing Discourse of Integrationism through Conversations with Refugee Women. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 23, 548.



on the refugees' perceptions of both forces. Pre-arrival factors, notably mentioned above by Khulman, Kunz, and Valtonen, could include demographic and personality characteristics and flight experiences. Post-arrival factors, like those mentioned by Ager and Stang, and Mestheneos and Ionnidi, could include social services and opportunities available in the host society; varying conditions for social interaction; economic conditions; and policy characteristics. Finally, as Waxman and Valtonen find, refugees ultimately decide if and how they integrate. In this view, the refugee; the home country; and the host country all present characteristics that will affect integration. The following discussion will present common themes found within the integration literature.

II. Refugee Resettlement: Common Themes within the Literature

As mentioned, most research conducted on resettled refugees, whether in Europe, Canada, Australia or the United States, focuses on integration of newcomers within host societies. Within this integration research, common themes emerge within the literature. The following themes will be discussed below: employment; issues regarding access and use of services; health and recovery; participation within home and host society groups; and gender.

A. Employment

In many studies, employment has been shown to be a key indicator of refugee integration. Valtonen, in her study of refugees resettled in Finland, found that: "Income from employment is key to a good standard of living and provides a material resource base to reinforce other types of participation, e.g. education, recreation. Employment is also a source of contact with out-groups and gives scope for networking and building social capital into the wider community."¹²⁰ Social contacts, furthermore, can both foster employment and be gained from employment. As Takeda found, social support fostered employment as newcomers are often helped with assistance from friends, relatives, and organizations to find employment.¹²¹ Social contacts can also be formed once the refugee gains employment. Valtonen notes: "Those who remain unemployed from the outset of resettlement, or for long periods of time, are at risk of becoming socially excluded from the mainstream, since, for newcomers, the main source of regular social contact with other groups is often through the workplace."¹²² In the end, employment was found to be an indicator of integration as it provided income and social contacts.

The literature shows, however, that resettled refugees face a number of challenges in regards to finding employment within their new countries (also discussed above). Oftentimes, refugees encounter problems in the following areas: refugees experience higher rates of unemployment and underemployment; refugees tend to gain employment in low-skilled professions, regardless of actual skills; many have unrecognized work skills or training from the country of origin; many highly skilled/educated refugees have credential recognition problems; refugees lack host country

120 Valtonen, K. (2004). From the Margin to the Mainstream: Conceptualizing Refugee Settlement Processes. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 17(1), 74.

121 Takeda, J. (2000). Psychological and Economic Adaptation of Iraqi Adult Male Refugees: Implications for Social Work Practice. *Journal of Social Science Research*, 26(3), 7.

122 Valtonen, K. (1998). Resettlement of Middle Eastern Refugees in Finland: The Elusiveness of Integration. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 11(1), 45.

work experience and references; and refugees have poor language skills and limited education which hinders their job prospects.

One study in Finland found that refugee unemployment was at times three to four times greater than the native population.¹²³ Likewise, Valenta and Bunar, found that unemployment levels are three times higher for refugees than for native Swedes or Norwegians, and that refugees occupy most low-income/low-status jobs.¹²⁴ The state of being unemployed was not only financially difficult for refugees, but also emotionally difficult. Some refugee groups experienced shame for not being able to provide for their families and had difficulties accepting government welfare assistance even though in most cases the assistance was the only financial assistance available.¹²⁵

Many scholars also found “steep occupational downgrade” among highly skilled/educated refugees. Voltanen states that highly skilled refugees in Finland: “rarely obtained any employment corresponding even roughly to their qualifications, in spite of engaging equivalency procedures to gain Finnish competence.”¹²⁶ Many scholars have noted that a large barrier to employment for those with skills and education is the lack of recognition of degrees combined with preferences by employers to hire local people. Since the 1990s, scholars have been making arguments that: “Procedures and requirements surrounding accreditation have been acknowledged to be factors deterring integration of professional refugees.”¹²⁷ In the end, skills tend to be untransferrable, and if highly skilled refugees want to work in their fields, it could take years. Family situation and a person’s age were also factors that deterred some refugees from studying. Valtonen found receiving societies, to be: “deficient in mechanisms to utilize human capital which has been otherwise considered an asset in resettlement.”¹²⁸

In most cases, and especially in the United States, for refugees who found employment, employment is concentrated in a few industries (services and hospitality; manufacturing; and trade) and that male refugees are overwhelmingly concentrated in manufacturing, while female refugees are concentrated in services and hospitality. Allen called this concentration “ethnic niches.”¹²⁹

A Swedish study, however, demonstrated that the higher the levels of education and vocational training in the host country, the higher levels of employment integration. It concluded that: “foreign-born individuals have a higher probability of employment with a vocational and host country education as opposed to a general and home

123 Valtonen, K. From the Margin to the Mainstream: Conceptualizing Refugee Settlement Processes. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 17(1), 74.

124 Valenta, M. and Bunar, N. (2010). State Assisted Integration: Refugee Integration Policies in Scandinavian Welfare States: the Swedish and Norwegian Experience. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 23(4), 470.


125 Al-Rasheed, M. (1994). The Myth of Return: Iraqi Arab and Assyrian Refugees in London. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 7(2/3), 213.

126 Voltanen, K. (2004). From the Margin to the Mainstream: Conceptualizing Refugee Settlement Processes. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 17(1), 79-80.

127 For lack of validation of degrees, see: Mestheneos, E. and Ioannidi, E. (2002). Obstacles to Refugee Integration in the European Union Member States. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 15(3), 315; and Jupp, J., McRobbie, A., and York, B. Settlement Needs of Small Newly Arrived Ethnic Groups. Center for Immigration and Multicultural Studies, Australian National University. Valtonen, K. (1998). Resettlement of Middle Eastern Refugees in Finland: The Elusiveness of Integration. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 11(1), 45.

128 Valtonen, K. (1998). Resettlement of Middle Eastern Refugees in Finland: The Elusiveness of Integration. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 11(1), 46.

129 Allen, R. (2009). Benefit or Burden? Social Capital, Gender, and the Economic Adaptation of Refugees. *International Migration Review*, 43(2), 349.



country education.” Employment rates were also higher for men and women who migrated when they were 10 years old or younger, and lower for those who were 26 years or older at the time of migration and obtained their education in the home country.¹³⁰

B. Issues regarding Access and Use of Services

The literature also discusses refugees’ access to and use of services within the host society, with the emphasis on social welfare services, and education and job training/recertification (access to health care will be discussed in the section Health and Recovery, below). The effectiveness and quality of these services for refugees is also evaluated within the literature. Finally, other studies document the use of services when compared to native-born populations, as well as the rates of use for refugees.

Generally, most resettlement countries provide welfare assistance (cash stipends, rent payments, access to food, health care, and social services, etc.) to newly arriving refugees. Welfare benefits differ from country to country, and even from State to State within the US. Issues surrounding refugees’ access to these welfare programs and social services are heavily documented in the literature. In the EU, refugees have difficulties in accessing the social services available to them. One study noted that: “Despite the presence in all *EU+ countries of organizations, public and private, designed to help refugees, many in all Member States reported finding difficulties in accessing them and the information they provided.”¹³¹ Of the refugees resettled in Finland, Valtonen found that the refugees lacked information regarding the structure and organization of the formal institutions of the new society. She states that: “Such information is critical for grasping the parameters of their membership in the society, and for gauging the scope of opportunity for exercising ‘substantive’ citizenship.”¹³² Other studies have shown that refugees have limited access in regards to education. Voltanen found that very few refugees were admitted to Finland’s universities in her study of Iraqi, Iranian and Vietnamese refugees, stating that this rate of access “could mean that persons of immigrant/refugee background will be underrepresented in professional occupations for a considerable period.”¹³³ This lack of access also led some refugees to articulate a negative resettlement experience.¹³⁴

Likewise, studies in the United States showed the challenges refugees face in accessing welfare support and human services, especially as most refugees arrive with limited English language proficiency.¹³⁵ One American study also noted that providers of federally funded social services are not always aware of their legal responsibility to

130 Dahlstedt, I. and Bevelander, P. (2010). General Versus Vocational Education and Employment Integration of Immigrants in Sweden. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 2(8).


131 Mestheneos, E. and Ioannidi, E. (2002). Obstacles to Refugee Integration in the European Union Member States. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 15(3), 317.

132 Voltonen, K. (2004). From the Margin to the Mainstream: Conceptualizing Refugee Settlement Processes. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 17(1), 77.

133 Voltonen, K. (2004). From the Margin to the Mainstream: Conceptualizing Refugee Settlement Processes. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 17(1), 82.

134 Valtonen, K. (1998). Resettlement of Middle Eastern Refugees in Finland: The Elusiveness of Integration. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 11(1), 43.

135 Comerford, S.A. (2006). The Challenge of Providing Culturally and Linguistically Accessible Human Services in Rural and Increasingly Diverse Communities: A Case Example from a Small New England State. *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, 4(3); and Nam, Y. (2011). Welfare Reform and Immigrants: Noncitizen Eligibility Restrictions, Vulnerable Immigrants, and the Social Service Providers. *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, 9(1).



provide linguistically and culturally appropriate services thereby further reducing access to such services.¹³⁶ In many cases, welfare support is the only means of survival for families trying to recreate their lives. When access to services is limited, severe stress and anxiety can occur. One study showed that immigrants (refugees included) experienced depression and suicides when faced with losing their welfare benefits.¹³⁷

Other studies evaluated the effectiveness and quality of the social services provided and/or available to refugees with most conclusions being negative. Regarding effectiveness of social welfare programs, many scholars have found that such programs do little to expel the inequalities between native and foreign-born. In Europe, Valenta and Bunar conclude that regardless of extensive state assisted integration measures (and the benefits of a generous welfare state, in particular housing and employment): “refugee integration policies in Sweden and Norway have not succeeded in equalizing the initial inequalities between refugees and the rest of the population.” Despite generous welfare programs, refugees lagged behind native-born populations in relation to health care, education, and housing quality.¹³⁸

In relation to quality of services, many studies show that refugees are resettled into inadequate housing that can have negative effects for integration. Mestheneos and Ioannidi found that public housing for refugees, due to affordability, was located in low-income, poorly educated, and high-crime areas which: “further tends to brand refugees as being in a category of dependence and inferiority, and hinders them from making friends with people sharing the same class and educational background and providing appropriate friendship and support.”¹³⁹ One female African refugee in Glasgow noted: “I come here as a foreigner...and what do you do? You send people to the bad area with the junkies and criminals, and in the end of it...You begin to wonder what sort of people live in this country.”¹⁴⁰ Carter and Osborne also found that many refugees in Winnipeg were resettled into declining urban areas with high rates of poverty, crime, and unemployment due to affordability and proximity to social service providers. The authors find that: “Access to adequate, affordable housing is an essential first step in their resettlement and integration process. Good housing is a basis from which newcomers look for jobs, language training and other services they need to get established in their new country.” Citing a Canadian Policy Research Network study, the authors state that there is: “ample evidence to suggest poor housing circumstances inhibit integration and lead to poor health, educational and employment opportunities and attempts to rebuild social and family life.”¹⁴¹

Moreover, studies in Europe and the US also show that refugees have become frustrated with the quality and ineffectiveness of language and employment training

136 Comerford, S.A. (2006). The Challenge of Providing Culturally and Linguistically Accessible Human Services in Rural and Increasingly Diverse Communities: A Case Example from a Small New England State. *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, 4(3), 112.


137 Nam, Y. (2011). Welfare Reform and Immigrants: Noncitizen Eligibility Restrictions, Vulnerable Immigrants, and the Social Service Providers. *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, 9(1), 14.

138 Valenta, M. and Bunar, N. (2010). State Assisted Integration: Refugee Integration Policies in Scandinavian Welfare States: the Swedish and Norwegian Experience. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 23(4), 463.

139 Mestheneos, E. and Ioannidi, E. (2002). Obstacles to Refugee Integration in the European Union Member States. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 15(3), 314.

140 Ager, A. and Strang, A. (2008). Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 21, 171.

141 Carter, T.S. and Osborne, J. (2009). Housing and Neighborhood Challenges of Refugee Resettlement in Declining Inner City Neighborhoods: A Winnipeg Case Study. *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, 7(3), 309.



available in the countries of resettlement. For example, Middle Eastern refugees in Finland found a “sense of futility” in taking job readiness classes and frustration when the classes did not lead to jobs.¹⁴² Also, the author noted that even though job-seeking was high among the refugees, and that the resettlement program offered by the state of Finland provides readily accessible labor market training and Finnish language training, “for most of the individuals, the outcome of extensive preliminary preparation for joining the labour market was unsatisfactory and disappointing.”¹⁴³ In regards to the services provided by resettlement agencies in the US, a study on the Karen refugees resettled in the United States found that resettlement agencies were “conspicuously absent” in the post-resettlement phase and that few services are provided in the American system. Furthermore, shelter is located in affordable, usually inner-city dwellings, where crime rates are high; healthcare was free, yet lack of communication and transportation were obstacles to receiving care; education was available for children and adults, yet the quality of ESL learning was poor; and most adults work in ‘blue-collar’ positions, regardless of skill sets. They found that: “refugee experience substantial difficulties in the initial stages of their resettlement, in part due to the lack of institutional support available to them. However, after approximately a year of resettlement, many refugees in our study sample have begun to integrate successfully.”¹⁴⁴

Other studies showed that limited amounts of welfare assistance given to refugees were also inadequate. One study on Cambodian and African refugees in Philadelphia found that refugees were “compelled” to work to supplement inadequate funds from welfare. (It should be noted that the welfare system in the US is not intended for long-term support, and therefore the goal is to encourage people to work as soon as possible.)¹⁴⁵

Regarding use of social services, some studies show that refugees use assistance at higher rates than native-born populations. One study conducted in Denmark showed that immigrants (refugees included) tend to use welfare assistance at higher rates than native Danish residents, and that immigrants from developed countries (other European countries) used less assistance than immigrants from less developed countries. The authors also found that immigrants from less developed countries aged more than 35 at migration experienced a welfare dependency rate of 64% compared to 46% for immigrants from less developed countries aged less than 20 at migration. The age at migration, therefore, was found to be: “an important determinant of welfare dependency - especially among immigrants from less developed countries.” In addition to the country of origin being one factor in welfare dependency rates, conditions in the host country at the time of arrival were also found to be causes of welfare dependency, for example the unemployment rate. Education in general was found to have a positive effect on immigrant performance in Denmark.¹⁴⁶

142 Valtonen, K. (1998). Resettlement of Middle Eastern Refugees in Finland: The Elusiveness of Integration. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 11(1), 46.

143 Voltonen, K. (2004). From the Margin to the Mainstream: Conceptualizing Refugee Settlement Processes. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 17(1), 79.

144 Lockwood-Kenny, K. (2011). A Mixed Blessing: Karen Resettlement to the United States. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 24(2), 218.

145 Pheffer, M.J., (1997). Work versus welfare in the ethnic transformation of a Philadelphia labor market. *Social Science Quarterly*, 78.

146 Blume, K., and Verner, M. (2006). Welfare Dependency among Danish Immigrants. University of Aarhus, Aarhus School of Business, Department of Economics Working Papers. Retrieved from http://www.hha.dk/nat/wper/06-6_kbjmv.pdf

Other studies in the US have shown that immigrants tend to “cluster” in States with higher welfare benefits in order to maximize their income. Borjas’ 1999 study claimed that: “interstate differences in welfare benefits generate strongmagnetic effects on the immigrant population.”¹⁴⁷ Other scholars find overall trends in “human migration” in the US, whereby all peoples are migrating within the contiguous 48 states. These studies showed that out-migration in the US was caused by various factors, as opposed to welfare ‘clustering,’ such as: rates of unemployment; income rates; access to social and cultural amenities; and climate.¹⁴⁸ (Secondary migration will be further explained under the Section Participation, below.)

C. Health and Recovery

Many, but certainly not all, refugees arrive in the countries of resettlement after living for years or even decades in refugee camps where sufficient medical care is scarce. Most, if not all, are fleeing from some form of violence and trauma. These factors have led to a prevalence of physical and mental health problems amongst refugees. Physical health issues include: nutritional deficiencies, intestinal parasites, dental and visual problems, bodily defects, and tuberculosis. Mental health issues include: anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, paranoia, and grief.¹⁴⁹ These issues are compounded by that fact that many refugees tend to have limited language proficiency and cannot access health care easily due to communication problems.¹⁵⁰ Takeda found that language proficiency in the host society is correlated with psychological adaptation. He notes that an inability to communicate in the language of the host society can lead to stress, frustration, and psychological adaptation problems.¹⁵¹ For other refugees, some had preconceived notions and taboos about receiving medical care, especially mental care, and these factors tended to prohibit them from seeking treatment.¹⁵²

Health issues also arise after resettlement, as refugees struggle to adjust to new societies; societies which are oftentimes drastically different than their own. With resettlement, refugees experience helplessness, disorientation, dependency, insecurity, and feelings of loss (of culture, status, homeland, and loved ones) and

147 Borjas, G.J. (1999). Immigrants and Welfare Magnets. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 17(4), 635.


148 The main source of this claim came from the study (which also includes findings from other studies): Rebhun, A. and Raveh, A. (2006). *The Spatial Distribution of Quality of Life in the United States and Interstate Migration between 1965-1970 and 1985-1990*. *Social Indicators Research*, 78(1).

149 There is a large volume of literature on this topic. For a few examples, see: Porter, M. and Haslam, N. (2005). *Predisplacement and Postdisplacement Factors Associated with Mental Health of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons: A Meta-Analysis*. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 294, 602-612; Silove, D., Sinnerbrink, I., Field, A., Manicavagasar, V., and Steel, Z. (1997). *Anxiety, Depression and PTSD in Asylum Seekers: Association with Pre-Migration Trauma and Post-Migration Stressors*. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 170, 351-357; Steel, Z., Silove, D., Phan, T., and Bauman, A. (2002). *Long-Term Effect of Psychological Trauma on the Mental Health of Vietnamese Refugees Resettled in Australia: A Population-Based Study*. *The Lancet*, 360, 1056-1062; Marshall, G.N., Schell, T.L., Elliot, M.N., Berthold, S., and Chun, C.A. (2005). *Mental Health of Cambodian Refugees Two Decades after Resettlement in the United States*. *American Medical Association*, 94.

150 Studies on immigrant access to health care show that limited English language capacity can lead to lower levels of health care due to poor communication. See: Derose, K.P., J.J., and Lurie, N. (2007). *Immigrants and Health Care: Sources of Vulnerability*. *Health Affairs*, 26, 1258-1268; Feld, P. and Power, B. (2000). *Immigrants Access to Health Care after Welfare Reform: Findings from Focus Groups in Four Cities*. Washington, D.C.: Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured; Drummond, P.D., Mizan, A., Brocx, K.A. and Wright, B. (2011) *Barriers to Accessing Health Care Services for West African Refugee Women Living in Western Australia*. *Health Care for Women International*, 32 (3), 206-224; and Grigg-Saito, D. (2010). *Long-Term Development of a Whole Community" Best Practice Model to Address Health Disparities in the Cambodian Refugee and Immigrant Community of Lowell, Massachusetts*. *American Journal of Public Health*, 100(11).

151 Takeda, J. (2000). *Psychological and Economic Adaptation of Iraqi Adult Male Refugees: Implications for Social Work Practice*. *Journal of Social Science Research*, 26(3), 6.

152 For example, see: Pavlish, C. L., (2010). *Somali immigrant women and the American health care system: Discordant beliefs, divergent expectations, and silent worries*. *Social Science & Medicine*, 71(2);



sadness.¹⁵³ Adapting to a new culture becomes especially difficult for refugees whom either had an idealized view of resettlement countries due to poor orientation by resettlement agencies before flight, or whether due to romanticized views of countries of resettlement regardless of orientation prior to flight. Certain studies have found that refugees were given poor orientations, and were told that their new lives would be easier after resettlement as they would be given housing, food, cash, medical assistance, and employment. Many were surprised about the length and quality of such services, which typically failed to provide the refugees with adequate services. On the opposite, one study notes that most Burmese refugees arriving in the US understood the challenges they would face in America; yet they also had: “an idealized expectation of life after resettlement, and that this contributes to feelings of distress and depression when the actual experience does not match their hopes.”¹⁵⁴

Social contacts have shown to relieve some of the psychological stress experienced by resettled refugees. These contacts can help to further adaptation to a new society. Social support for refugees can: 1) encourage cognitive changes (self-esteem, confidence, taking responsibility for themselves); 2) change emotional behaviors (like depression); and 3) serve as a safety net.¹⁵⁵

Other studies show that highly skilled/educated refugees have a particularly difficult time in adapting to their new environment. For example, for highly educated/skilled refugees in Northern European states, it was found that: “many cannot adjust to their loss of social status. Only a few are willing or able to start again. This involves learning the local language to the level of educated people in the host society and re-qualifying or learning a new skill as a way of achieving and regaining some of their lost social status.” This study also found that younger refugees can adapt more easily, and parents also ‘defer’ integration to their children hoping that the lives of their children will be better in the host society.¹⁵⁶

Recovery can also depend upon the mental faculties and initiative of the refugees themselves. For example, one study found that: “Those with a high motivation to succeed in a host society are likely to learn the host culture and language quickly and, as a result, to have successful psychological and economic adaptation.”¹⁵⁷ Similarly, other studies have found that the personality of the refugee has effects on integration. For example, Mestheneos and Ioannidi note that: “Some refugees are good social strategists and have personalities which enable them to reach out to others, to feel optimistic and able to adjust even if they too have been through traumatic experiences. Others are trapped in past lives and traumas and cannot easily find ways out of their current situation.” Likewise, some are able to make connections with others, and some are unable.¹⁵⁸

153 Much is written on this topic. A few examples include: Carswell, K. (2011). The relationship between trauma, post-migration problems and the psychological well-being of refugees and asylum seekers. *The International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 57(2); Berry, D. G. (1999). Refugee acculturation and re-acculturation. In A. Ager (Ed.), *Refugees: Perspectives on the experience of forced migration*. London: Pinter; Castles, S., & Miller, M. J. (1993). *The age of migration: International population movements in the modern world*. New York, NY: The Guildford Press. Mestheneos, E., & Ioannidi, E. (2002). Obstacles to refugee integration in the European Union member states. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 15(3), 304–320.

154 Lockwood-Kenny, K. (2011). A Mixed Blessing: Karen Resettlement to the United States. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 24(2), 219.

155 Takeda, J. (2000). Psychological and Economic Adaptation of Iraqi Adult Male Refugees: Implications for Social Work Practice. *Journal of Social Science Research*, 26(3), 7.

156 Mestheneos, E. and Ioannidi, E. (2002). Obstacles to Refugee Integration in the European Union Member States. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 15(3), 312.

157 Takeda, J. (2000). Psychological and Economic Adaptation of Iraqi Adult Male Refugees: Implications for Social Work Practice. *Journal of Social Science Research*, 26(3), 6.

158 Mestheneos, E. and Ioannidi, E. (2002). Obstacles to Refugee Integration in the European Union Member States. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 15(3), 316.

D. Participation within Host and Home Society Groups

A large portion of the literature on refugee resettlement mentions refugees' participation within their new societies and how this participation impacts integration. Refugees participate at various levels and in numerous ways, both within the refugee community and within the host society. Furthermore, participation can be restricted or promoted depending upon cultural background or geographical location of the refugee, as well as attitudes regarding immigrants within the host society.

In regards to refugee participation within the refugee community, many scholars note that refugees tend to form ethnic or community organizations to fill the information gap left over from state-sponsored refugee resettlement programs and to foster mutual interests whether cultural, social, economic, or political. Metheneos and Ioannidi claim that: "Refugees with their active participation in their own advocacy bodies and as advisors are good agents in facilitating integration."¹⁵⁹ Some studies demonstrate that refugees tend to form their own organizations in order to find avenues of participation. Voltanen found that refugees had formed ethnic organizations to voice concerns over equality and the well being of the community; to gain participation in public life and with the institutions of society; and to gain knowledge where an information gap had formed about a wide range of issues.¹⁶⁰ Al-Rasheed found similar activities within the Iraqi community in London. However, she states that the formation of ethnic communities within the Iraqi community: "reflects the deeplyrooted divisions within the country of origin, which they have succeeded in reproducing in London," thereby presenting challenges for integration.¹⁶¹

Integration can also be promoted or restricted depending upon the level of participation within one's own refugee community/ethnic group. Many studies also showed an expressed goal of cultural retention among refugee groups, with refugees attending social, ethnic, and religious activities. Voltanen found that some refugee families "prefer to live in their own cultural world, adhering to religion and culture with greater tenacity than previously" which she claims is a "coping strategy or the search for an integral from of reference." Networking within the ethnic community was viewed as having an empowering role in integration. However, the study also found that an "extreme degree of cultural retention is often coupled with lower participation in public mainstream society."¹⁶²

A large portion of the literature also focuses on refugee participation in the political sphere within the host society. These political actions can be related to domestic political matters ¹⁶³ and/or political matters in the country of origin.¹⁶⁴

159 Mestheneos, E. and Ioannidi, E. (2002). Obstacles to Refugee Integration in the European Union Member States. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 15(3), 318.


160 Voltanen, K. (2004). From the Margin to the Mainstream: Conceptualizing Refugee Settlement Processes. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 17(1), 82.

161 Al-Rasheed, M. (1994). The Myth of Return: Iraqi Arab and Assyrian Refugees in London. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 7(2/3), 218.

162 Voltanen, K. (2004). From the Margin to the Mainstream: Conceptualizing Refugee Settlement Processes. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 17(1), 84.

163 Togeby, L. (1999). Migrants at the polls: An analysis of immigrant and refugee participation in Danish local elections. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 25(4).

164 Antwi-Boateng, O. (2011) The Political Participation of the U.S.-Based Liberian Diaspora and Its Implication for Peace Building. *Africa Today*, 58(1).



Ignorance and racism, along with alienation from the host society were found to hinder refugee participation within host society groups. Mestheneos and Ionnidi's study on integration experiences in the European Union found that: "Many refugees, being themselves from the better off and educated sections of their own country, confront these attitudes with dismay, feeling hurt and surprise." They also found 'social impenetrability' that even after years of being resettled refugees still had no native-born friends in their host countries, and that most contacts occurred in the work place.¹⁶⁵ The same study mentioned how some refugees are reluctant to become involved (especially women) in certain activities because they may be gossiped about. Therefore, the cultural proclivities of one's cultural background may also inhibit participation within host society groups.

The lack of participation within both host and home society groups can explain rates of secondary migration in Europe and the United States (See Figure 3). Secondary migration occurred for various overlapping reasons: access to jobs; higher wages in other regions of the country, and for community and family reasons.¹⁶⁶ Some scholars have suggested that migration chains and social capital theory can help to explain these movements.¹⁶⁷ Almost all studies find that refugees are motivated to migrate in order to be become connected with other established co-ethnic communities and to find job opportunities.

In Sweden and Norway, secondary migration of refugees was due to: "lack of social integration, difficulties obtaining employment, a desire to live in multicultural urban environments, and wishing to live in the proximity of relatives, friends and well-established ethnic communities."¹⁶⁸

Research conducted in the United States mentioned similar findings to those in Europe. Karen resettled in the United States had high rates of out-migration, and secondary migration tended to form around pre-existing ethnic and kinship networks. After speaking with friends and family in other parts of the US that were more affordable and where jobs were plentiful, many families out-migrated.¹⁶⁹ Regarding African refugees in the US, Mott found that, in America,:


"secondary migration can occur among refugees who are not represented by earlier migrants albeit, and are not necessarily in culturally-comfortable or economically viable communities, and/or not near other family or community members...In this instance, well-studied mechanisms come into play such as wage/job opportunity differentials, culture, community, family, and migration chains."¹⁷⁰

The refugees and asylees who participated in his study noted lack of social networks and economic opportunities (this includes affordability of housing and necessities like health insurance and public housing; and availability of job possibilities), family ties, access to education, and safety as the main reasons for leaving the first State of resettlement. Participants also mentioned that sending remittances back home was

168 Valenta, M. and Bunar, N. (2010). State Assisted Integration: Refugee Integration Policies in Scandinavian Welfare States: the Swedish and Norwegian Experience. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 23(4), 475.

169 Lockwood-Kenny, K. (2011). A Mixed Blessing: Karen Resettlement to the United States. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 24(2).

170 Mott, T.E. (2010). African Refugee Resettlement in the US: The Role and Significance of Voluntary Agencies. *Journal of Cultural Geography*, 2(1), 7.



a motivation for secondary migration, as refugees wanted to move where the cost of living was low and where jobs are available to send the most money home. (As seen in Figure 5, California, New York, Texas, Georgia, Virginia, Illinois, and Minnesota are states with the largest out-flow of secondary migrants.) Furthermore, Grey, in his research on refugee resettlement in the State of Iowa, finds that many refugees left their first State of resettlement for Iowa because of the availability of jobs, especially in the meatpacking and agricultural industries.¹⁷¹

Voluntary Agencies (VOLAGS), the entities involved in the refugee resettlement process in the US, also played a role in indirectly encouraging out-migration. For example, Mott notes that: “the quality of services provided by local VOLAGs in Columbus has been a pull factor bringing secondary migrants there. Thus, the quality and nature of the assistance received may be considered a likely important reason for the variations in resettlement across communities.”¹⁷²

Secondary migration also occurs as refugees tend to look for improved housing conditions outside of urban areas. In Canada, Carter and Osborne note that safety, security, and affordable housing were all motivators for secondary migration outside of urban areas.¹⁷³ In the end, rates of refugee participation, both within the refugee community and host society, can affect integration. Participation within the refugee community can both positively and negatively affect integration. For example, refugee communities can provide access to information and services, and avenues for voicing opinions and concerns. However, becoming too culturally entrenched in one’s refugee community could also hinder integration as this extracts refugees from the larger society. Furthermore, in attempts to participate in a more ethnically and culturally harmonious environment, refugees have migrated to areas where they can participate within their own refugee community. Refugees have also migrated to areas where they can more fully participate within the host society, by relocating to areas with better social and economic opportunities. The lack of participation in one geographical region may or may not produce integration other regions as refugees migrate to find the best possible life solutions.

E. Gender

Most studies address gender issues within larger studies of integration, and few have focused specifically on the issues that refugee women encounter in their new societies. A few studies, regarding Muslim refugee women resettled in Australia, focused solely on the experience of Muslim refugee women’s experiences. McMichael focused on Somali refugee women resettled Melbourne. This study found that Muslim refugee women face increasing discrimination because of their religious background that led to negative resettlement experiences and difficulties in adapting. They also summarize the findings of other studies on Muslim refugee women in Australia. The study mentions the work of Bouma and Brace-Govan who found that: “While men had to go out and learn enough English to get jobs, some women felt isolated, unable to deal with the strange language and friends with whom to share shopping ventures left them confused, frightened to go out in public and feeling disoriented.” Other

171 Grey, M.A., (2006). ‘State and Local Immigration Policy in Iowa. In: G. Anrig, Jr. and T.A. Wang, eds. *Immigration’s New Frontiers: Experiences from the Emerging Gateway States*. New York: The Century Foundation Press, 33-66; Grey, M.A., (2006).

172 Mott, T.E. (2010). African Refugee Resettlement in the US: The Role and Significance of Voluntary Agencies. *Journal of Cultural Geography*, 2(1), 19.

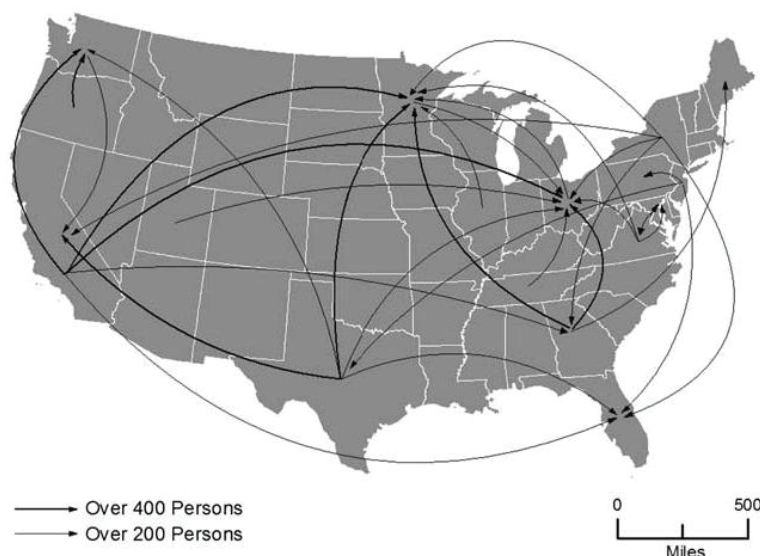
173 Carter, T.S. and Osborne, J. (2009). Housing and Neighbourhood Challenges of Refugee Resettlement in Declining Inner City Neighbourhoods: A Winnipeg Case Study. *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, 7, 319-320.

studies found that Muslim refugee women experienced barriers to participating in English classes, due to transportation, discomfort with attending co-ed classes, lack of permission from husbands, and discouragement from peers. They also found that such women had difficulties finding employment, especially highly qualified women.¹⁷⁴ However, there have been other studies that mention that, given that job training and free childcare is provided, for women refugees, “employment was a very empowering dimension of the integration process.”¹⁷⁵

Cultural factors were also found to inhibit refugee women from participating in employment in the US. Allen found differing rates of economic integration between refugee women with access to co-ethnic social capital and those without access. Refugee women without access to co-ethnic social capital tend to make more in wages than those with access because:

“social capital may have positive effects on the economic outcomes of male refugees and negative effects on the economic outcomes of female refugees, because of different expectations regarding reciprocal obligations for men and women and because of community norms that regulate the behavior of men and women differently.”¹⁷⁶ In short, women with access to social capital were hindered, in an economic sense, by social capital as it prevented them from abandoning social norms and working outside the home.

Figure 4. Secondary Migration Flows in the US, 2000-2005¹⁷⁷



Many studies have been conducted on refugee women’s health and the health needs of this population. Many findings include: loss of status, isolation and marginalization, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder.¹⁷⁸ Particularly, refugee women face the struggles of raising children on their own, as many are widows. After resettlement,

174 Casimiro, S., Hancock, P., and Northcote, J. (2007). Isolation and Insecurity: Resettlement Issues Among Muslim Refugee Women in Perth, Western Australia. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 42(1), 58.

175 Voltonen, K. (2004). From the Margin to the Mainstream: Conceptualizing Refugee Settlement Processes. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 17(1), 80.

176 Allen, R. (2009). Benefit or Burden? Social Capital, Gender, and the Economic Adaptation of Refugees. *International Migration Review*, 43(2), 338.

177 Mott, T.E. (2010). African Refugee Resettlement in the US: The Role and Significance of Voluntary Agencies. *Journal of Cultural Geography*, 2(1), 16.

this can become a daunting task as many have few work skills, and they need to learn the native language, work, and look after the children.¹⁷⁹ Refugee women were also found to experience barriers to accessing health care. For example, a study in Australia found that refugee women had low rates of accessing medical care due to: “shame or fear of what family and friends might think, fear of being judged by the treatment provider, fear of hospitalization, and logistical difficulties.”¹⁸⁰ Other studies focus on rape and physical abuse of resettled refugee women. One scholar noted that women refugees can become victims of abuse and sexually-based crimes as: “the additional stress of resettlement in a new culture, often leads male refugees to resort to domestic violence as a way of reestablishing control and gaining power.”¹⁸¹

Similar to general studies outlined above, a study conducted on Bosnian refugee women in the US found that many were highly skilled and educated and that they experienced feelings of loss of status and prestige when they could not find employment in their fields. Moreover, the study found that coping mechanisms included: family, spirituality expressed as non-organized religion, and the availability of community social support services.¹⁸²

III. Literature regarding Iraqi Refugee Resettlement

Although Iraqi refugees have been resettling in countries of asylum since the 1950s, very little has been written in regards to Iraqi resettlement. Some studies focus on the Iraqis who left during the Gulf War in the early 1990s. Other studies focus on Iraqi refugees who have been resettled post-US invasion in 2003. An almost exhaustive summary of this research is provided below.

As Iraqis enjoyed high levels of education in their home country, some studies document the challenges that highly educated Iraqis experience in countries of resettlement. Some studies show that even though Iraqi refugees come from skilled backgrounds, many have difficulties finding employment. Al-Rasheed conducted a study on Iraqi refugees and immigrants in London in the 1990s. She found that Iraqi professionals faced unemployment more so than other refugee groups because they had more education and they did not want to take manual-labor jobs that were associated with embarrassment, and loss of prestige and status. She also found that the Iraqi community in London viewed their stay in Britain as temporary, and were thereby less likely to develop an employment commitment to the host society.¹⁸³

Similar to Al-Rasheed’s findings, Takeda also found that Iraqi males who had higher

178 Halcon, L. (2010). Evaluating Health Realization for Coping Among Refugee Women. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 15(2), 408-425; Matsuoaka, A., Sorenson, J. (1999). Eritrean women in Canada: negotiating new lives. *Canadian Woman Studies*, 19(3); Brown, C. (2010). Vietnamese Immigrant and Refugee Women's Mental Health: An Examination of Age of Arrival, Length of Stay, Income, and English Language Proficiency. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 38(2); Sossou, M. (2008). A Qualitative Study of Resilience Factors of Bosnian Refugee Women Resettled in the Southern United States. *Journal of Ethnic And Cultural Diversity in Social Work* 17(4). Kagotho, N. (2010). Predictors of Pap Test Utilization Among Legal Permanent Resident Women. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 8(2); and Janevic, T. (2011). Maternal education and adverse birth outcomes among immigrant women to the United States from Eastern Europe: A test of the healthy migrant hypothesis. *Social Science & Medicine*, 73(3).


179 Neita K., Herman, A., and Alim, F.A. (1999). Waiting for "Sharciga": resettlement and the roles of Somali refugee women. *Canadian Woman Studies* 19(3). Warriner, D. (2004). Multiple Literacies and Identities: The Experiences of Two Women Refugees. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 32 (1/2).

180 Drummond, P.D., Mizan, A., Brocx, K.A. and Wright, B. (2011) Barriers to Accessing Health Care Services for West African Refugee Women Living in Western Australia. *Health Care for Women International*, 32 (3), 206-224.

181 Friedman, A. (1992). Rape and domestic violence: The experience of refugee women. *Women & Therapy*, 13(1-2).

182 Sossou, M. (2008). A Qualitative Study of Resilience Factors of Bosnian Refugee Women Resettled in the Southern United States. *Journal of Ethnic And Cultural Diversity in Social Work* 17(4).

183 Al-Rasheed, M. (1992). Political Migration and Downward Socio-Economic Mobility: The Iraqi Community in London. *New Community*, 18(4), 537-550.



levels of education also had increased economic problems in the US. Most highly educated Iraqis quit their low-paid jobs due to frustration, while less educated Iraqis were more willing to take manual jobs. Takeda found that: “many educated Iraqi refugees tried to obtain jobs suited to their skills or education, this has been rarely achieved because of lack of English language proficiency and lack of proof of occupational skills, licenses or diplomas.” This sentiment among the highly educated made them more dependent upon welfare. Furthermore, the study found that Iraqi families often move to other states shortly after arrival to seek better welfare benefits.¹⁸⁴ Generally, however, as the length of stay in the US increased, so did the likelihood that Iraqis found full-time employment.¹⁸⁵ It should be noted here as well, that Iraqis were found to feel ashamed by accepting welfare assistance. Al-Rasheed found that Iraqi Arab refugees felt like they were ‘parasites’ “which flourish on charity.”¹⁸⁶ Another scholar writes of the Iraqis in Finland that the: “dependency role was disquieting to the unemployed who experienced the lack of a ‘productive’ social role and felt having ‘my hand out’ to be unacceptable and degrading.”¹⁸⁷

For highly skilled Iraqi refugees, however, few opportunities exist to regain some of their loss status. As one study showed, employers relegate Iraqis, as well as other highly educated refugees, to undesirable jobs due to non-recognition of qualifications and discrimination on the basis of race and cultural difference. This study confirmed “the existence of the segmented labour market, where racially and culturally visible migrants are allocated the bottom jobs regardless of their ‘human capital’”¹⁸⁸

In 1998, Al-Rasheed conducted a second study on both Assyrian and Arab Iraqi refugees in London. She examined the predominance of the ‘myth of return’ among Iraqi Arab refugees and the absence of the myth of return among Iraqi Assyrians. Her study claimed that: “the crucial factor which encourages or discourages the development of such orientation towards the homeland is the refugee’s relationship with his home country and its population.”¹⁸⁹ She utilized Kunz’s theory of “refugee vintages” to show the differences between the two groups and therefore the absence or presence of the myth of return. Iraqi Arabs who fled to Britain were considered as majority-identified refugees as they belonged to the majority Arab population of Iraq, and the Iraqi Assyrians were considered event-alienated refugees as they belonged to a persecuted or discriminated against minority group. According to Al-Rasheed, Iraqi Arabs regard their exile as temporary because: 1) return to Iraq does not seem impossible (once political changes occur, Iraqi Arabs will return); 2) the relationship between Iraqi Arabs and the homeland is one of affinity; and 3) the homeland gives them an identity and a sense of belonging.¹⁹⁰ This orientation towards the homeland

184 Takeda, J. (2000). Psychological and Economic Adaptation of Iraqi Adult Male Refugees: Implications for Social Work Practice. *Journal of Social Science Research*, 26(3), 8.

185 Takeda, J. (2000). Psychological and Economic Adaptation of Iraqi Adult Male Refugees: Implications for Social Work Practice. *Journal of Social Science Research*, 26(3), 8-16.


186 Al-Rasheed, M. (1994). The Myth of Return: Iraqi Arab and Assyrian Refugees in London. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 7(2/3), 213.

187 Al-Rasheed, M. (1994). The Myth of Return: Iraqi Arab and Assyrian Refugees in London. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 7(2/3), 213.

188 Colik-Plesker, V. and Tilbury, F. (2006). Employment Niches for Recent Refugees: Segmented Labour Market in Twenty-First Century Australia. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 19(2).

189 Al-Rasheed, M. (1994). The Myth of Return: Iraqi Arab and Assyrian Refugees in London. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 7(2/3), 217.

190 Furthermore, he states Iraqi Arabs, even after years in exile, still desire to return and have a “total orientation” towards the home country. Al-Rasheed documents various discussions that occurred within the Iraqi Arab community. Some of their experiences are as follows: “I feel I am a guest in a big house. I am waiting for my day of departure. Meanwhile, I do not take notice of events around me. These belong to the people of the house.” “I did not choose to come to Britain. My circumstances led me to flee Iraq. It was a coincidence that I ended up here. I cannot live here forever. One day I will go back to where my roots are. I cannot be a British Iraqi.” “I know my exile will not last forever. It is a passing moment in my life. I will return to my country, to where I belong. This depends on political changes.”



has implications for the Iraqi Arabs' relationship with the host society, as it leads to economic downward mobility, and to marginality and encapsulation. Iraqi Assyrians, on the other hand, regard their exile as permanent due to their status as a minority group in Iraq. The Assyrians studied: 1) had no relatives left in Iraq; 2) severed their contacts with Iraq; 3) never held important property in Iraq; and 4) consider themselves to be from Mesopotamia and not Iraq, thereby having a homeland that is difficult for them to return. Furthermore, the Assyrians see an affinity between Assyrian and British culture (freedom, respect for minority rights, Christianity) and so feel closer to Britain than Iraq. Al-Rasheed notes that: "while Iraqi Arabs see themselves as 'guests,' and 'parasites,' waiting to return home, Assyrians regard themselves as settlers, who have finally found a home where they could start a new life."¹⁹¹

Mirroring the findings of al-Rasheed in the 1990s, a 2007 study of Iraqis resettled in Michigan found that minority groups were less likely to entertain a myth of return to Iraq, while the majority-identified Iraqi Arabs were more likely to entertain this myth. The study found that: "Iraqi Arabs in general espoused the 'Bad America' view, while Chaldeans, Turkmen, and Kurds – minority groups in Iraq – adopted the 'Good America' stance."¹⁹² Iraqi Arab refugees, furthermore, viewed their stay in America as temporary, as a "holding tank until they can take back their lives in Iraq." This population also felt duped by US organizations they met in the refugee camps who told them that they would be provided with assistance in America only to find out that such assistance only lasts for up to eight months after which they were on their own. They felt that their lives in America were not respectable, as the US organizations had promised.¹⁹³ Studies conducted on Iraqi refugees have also shown that Iraqi refugees can bring home-country divisions into the host country. As mentioned earlier, Al-Rasheed found that Iraqi refugee organizations prevalent in London were demonstrative of the divisions within Iraq. Another scholar echoed this finding stating that: "Ethnic, religious and political divisions accompany refugees into resettlement. Within...the Iraqi community in Turku, cleavage and factionalism rule out effective group cohesion."¹⁹⁴ Similarly, a 2007 study conducted on Iraqi refugees in Dearborn, Michigan found that:

"The Iraqi community...is not a cohesive unit. In addition to the divisions resulting from class, education, economic status, political convictions, and ideological beliefs, Iraqis are divided along the lines of ethnicity. Three subcommunities live in the area: the Arabs, the Kurds, and the Chaldeans. Each has its own community centre, voluntary associations, and clubs. Upon arrival in Detroit, refugees are drawn toward their own ethnic group and voluntary associations."¹⁹⁵

Likewise, other studies in the US have found that Iraqi refugees are not part of a cohesive unit. Takeda calls Iraqis a: "unique refugee group."¹⁹⁶ He found that even though family members helped psychological adaptation and Arabic friends helped

191 Al-Rasheed, M. (1994). The Myth of Return: Iraqi Arab and Assyrian Refugees in London. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 7(2/3), 216.

192 Shoeb, M., Weinstein, H.M., Halpren, J., (2007). Living in Religious Time and Space: Iraqi Refugees in Dearborn, Michigan. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 20(3), 451-452.

193 Shoeb, M., Weinstein, H.M., Halpren, J., (2007). Living in Religious Time and Space: Iraqi Refugees in Dearborn, Michigan. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 20(3), 452-453.

194 Valtonen, K. (1998). Resettlement of Middle Eastern Refugees in Finland: The Elusiveness of Integration. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 11(1), 50.

195 Shoeb, M., Weinstein, H.M., Halpren, J., (2007). Living in Religious Time and Space: Iraqi Refugees in Dearborn, Michigan. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 20(3), 446.

196 Takeda, J. (2000). Psychological and Economic Adaptation of Iraqi Adult Male Refugees: Implications for Social Work Practice. *Journal of Social Science Research*, 26(3), 16.

economic adaptation, “cohesiveness and mutual support within the Iraqi community in the country...are not very strong because of the distrust engendered by the repressive regime of Saddam Hussein.”¹⁹⁷

However, other studies show that adjustment can be facilitated through the use of Iraqi networks. In regards to cultural adjustment, a study in Dearborn, Michigan found that Iraqi refugees were finding ways in which to cope with the stress of resettlement. The authors also found that Iraqi men empowered themselves by comparing their plight and exile to that of the Prophet Mohammed, while women felt disorientation and despair due to the “collapse of their social world.” Both groups had to reevaluate their identities and felt like they needed to protect their culture from Western values while ‘living between a good and a bad America.’ A study in Canada found that Iraqi men adjusted to Canadian life by using social support systems with other Iraqis as opposed to services delivered by the state. It claimed that: “The degree to which Iraqi refugees adjusted successfully was linked to their access to informal support systems and the Iraqi community rather than as a result of their experiences with an integrated, responsive settlement service delivery system.”¹⁹⁸ Iraqi culture was also found to be crucial to identity in Iraqi refugees in Canada. For example, one study showed that: “a strong identification with Iraqitraditional values continues to exist regardless of gender, ethnic group, age, years in Canada, level of education and country where educated.”¹⁹⁹ Another study in Australia showed that Iraqi refugees accessed Iraqi ethnic community organizations to find employment.²⁰⁰

The literature review also reveals that home country forces and host related factors often clash in the Iraqi refugee situation. Al-Rasheed described the tension between the refugees who had a strong homeland orientation and the host society, especially when the host society was participating in activities considered harmful to the homeland; for example, Iraqi Arabs living in Britain while Britain was engaged in the Gulf War against the Iraqi regime. Speaking of Iraqi Arabs, Al-Rasheed found that: “While many welcomed the Western attack on the Iraqi government, the majority resented the fact that it could only be done through an invasion of their homeland... today many looking back on the war can only see that it was an attack on the country and its people, regardless of the announced intentions of the Western powers at the time.”²⁰¹ Similarly, the study in Dearborn found that Iraqi Arabs “view the United States as dominating the Muslim world and seeking to globalize its immoral culture.” Furthermore, they “find the hardships caused by the US-sponsored United Nations sanctions on Iraq and the 2003 US-led invasion of their country as further evidence of America’s intentions to steal their resources and eliminate Islam.”²⁰²

Related to this tension between home and host country, other scholars find incidents of racism against Iraqi refugees in their new communities. In 2000, Takeda found

197 Takeda, J. (2000). Psychological and Economic Adaptation of Iraqi Adult Male Refugees: Implications for Social Work Practice. *Journal of Social Science Research*, 26(3), 16.

198 Michalski, J. (2001). The Challenges of Resettlement among Male, Government-Assisted Iraqi Refugees in Canada. *Journal of Social Work Research and Evaluation*, 2(2).

199 Abdulahad, R., Delaney, R., and Browniee, K. (2009). Valuing interdependence: An examination of Iraqi Canadian acculturation. *International Social Work*, 56(6).

200 Colik-Plesker, V. and Tilbury, F. (2006). Employment Niches for Recent Refugees: Segmented Labour Market in Twenty-First Century Australia. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 19(2).

201 Al-Rasheed, M. (1994). The Myth of Return: Iraqi Arab and Assyrian Refugees in London. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 7(2/3), 211.

202 Shoeb, M., Weinstein, H.M., Halpren, J., (2007). Living in Religious Time and Space: Iraqi Refugees in Dearborn, Michigan. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 20(3).

anti-Arab and Anti-Iraqi sentiments in American society that negatively impacted the adaptation of Iraqi refugees in the US. He notes that Iraqis were discriminated against twice: first, because they are from the country of the Gulf War; and second, because they are (or are perceived to be all) Arabs, with the Arab stereotype including “the perception of them as terrorists who threaten peace and security, participants in a male-dominant society, anti-American, uncivilized, ruthless, barbaric, crazy and cunning.”²⁰³ (He mentions that the Gulf War and the 1993 World Trade Center bombing exacerbated these stereotypes). Regarding Iraqi refugees in Australia, one study found that: “Most had direct experiences of racism, prejudice or cultural misunderstanding... both men and women felt that aspects of their culture were devalued by non-Iraqi or non-Muslim Australians.”²⁰⁴ Similar findings were made in a study of Iraqi refugees in Australia: racism was experienced and the hijab was seen as a symbol of terrorism.²⁰⁵

Numerous studies regarding the mental health of resettled Iraqi refugees have also been conducted.²⁰⁶ Of the Iraqi refugees resettled in Finland after the Gulf War, Valtonen found that: “Psychological stress was a topic brought up most frequently by the subjects who had been displaced by events in the Gulf conflict and civil war in Iraq.... Individuals were still adapting to unexpected twists of fate after the long period of political repression.”²⁰⁷ In a 2002 study, Jamil found that when compared to other non-war Arab immigrant patients, Iraqis exhibited more PTSD and overall health problems.²⁰⁸ A study on Iraqi refugees in Australia found that for Iraqi refugees with family still in Iraq, symptoms of PTSD were greater than those who did not have family in Iraq.²⁰⁹ Furthermore, a 2010 study in Indiana found that 14% (of 501 participants) of Iraqi refugees met the clinical definition of PTSD, and that more women than men showed these symptoms. Married, divorced or widowed refugees had higher levels than single or separated refugees.²¹⁰ Other studies mentioned effects of post-migration on the health of Iraqi refugees. One study concluded that: “lack of work, family issues, and asylumprocedure stress had the highest odds ratios for psychopathology.”²¹¹ The effects of perceived racism after arrival were also found to correlate with physical and mental health symptoms in Iraqi refugees.²¹²

203 Takeda, J. (2000). Psychological and Economic Adaptation of Iraqi Adult Male Refugees: Implications for Social Work Practice. *Journal of Social Science Research*, 26(3), 5.

204 Mansouri, F., Leach, M., Tales, M. (2006). Acculturation Experiences of Iraqi Refugees Resettled in Australia: The Impact of Visa Category. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 27(4), 399.

205 Mansouri, F., Leach, M., Tales, M. (2006). Acculturation Experiences of Iraqi Refugees Resettled in Australia: The Impact of Visa Category. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 27(4), 399; and Colic-Peisker, V. (2009). Visibility, settlement success and life satisfaction in three refugee communities in Australia. *Ethnicities*, 9(2).

206 Gorst-Unsworth, C., and Goldenberg, E. (1998). Psychological Sequelae of Torture and Organized Violence Suffered by Refugees from Iraq. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 172, 90-94; Jamil, H., Hakim-Larson, J., Farrag, M., Kafaji, T., Jamil, L.H., and Hammad, A. (2005). Medical Complaints among Iraqi American Refugees with Mental Disorders. *Journal of Immigrant Health*, 7, 145-152; Laban, C.J., Gernaat, H., Komproe, I.H. Van Der Tweel, I., and De Jong, J. (2005). Postmigration Living Problems and Common Psychiatric Disorders in Iraqi Asylum Seekers in the Netherlands. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 193, 825-832. Sondergaard, H.P., Ekblad, S. Theorell, T. (2001). Self-Reported Life Event Patterns and Their Relation to Health among Recently Resettled Iraqi and Kurdish Refugees in Sweden. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*; 189 (12).

207 Valtonen, K. (1998). Resettlement of Middle Eastern Refugees in Finland: The Elusiveness of Integration. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 11(1), 55.


208 Jamil, H., Hakim-Larson, J., Farrag, M., Khafaji, T., Duqum, I., Jamil, L.H. (2002). A Retrospective Study of Arab American Mental Health Clients: Trauma and the Iraqi Refugees. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 72, 355-361.

209 Nickerson, A. (2010). The impact of fear for family on mental health in a resettled Iraqi refugee community. *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, 44(4).

210 Kira, I.A. (2009). The Effects of Post-Retribution Inter-Group Forgiveness: The Case of Iraqi Refugees. *Peace and Conflict*, 15(4).

211 Laban, C.J., Gernaat, H., Komproe, I.H. Van Der Tweel, I., and De Jong, J. (2005). Postmigration Living Problems and Common Psychiatric Disorders in Iraqi Asylum Seekers in the Netherlands. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 193, 825-832.

212 Kira, I.A. (2010). The Effects of Perceived Discrimination and Backlash on Iraqi Refugees' Mental and Physical Health. *Journal of Muslim Mental Health*, 5(1).



Regarding education, a few studies have been conducted on Iraqi refugee children and their access and performance related to education. In Albany, New York, Iraqi refugee children were found to have better learning outcomes when placed in learning environments similar to that in home country. Another study in El Cajon, California documented efforts of two school districts to help Iraqi refugee children ‘catch-up’ by assisting them in obtaining high school diplomas and helping their parents learn English.²¹³ Other studies have also been conducted on Iraqi refugee adolescents and their perceptions of violence when compared to African American adolescents.²¹⁴

Other topics in the literature include the situation of Iraqi refugee women. One study focused on widows and the special problems they face after resettlement. Widows are struggling, especially in the US, as the emphasis on employment and becoming self-sufficient weighs heavily. Most of these women come from traditional backgrounds where motherhood and house duties took precedence, and where women rarely worked outside the home (this is not to say that Iraqi women never worked outside the home, many did, but typically not those from traditional backgrounds). These factors have caused anxiety for many Iraqi widows who lack language, skills, and childcare.²¹⁵ Other studies on Iraqi refugee women have showed that women reconstruct images of marriage with status and security, as these two values have been lost in exile.²¹⁶

IV. Summary

Chapter 2 provided a literature review regarding refugee resettlement with integration as a main component of this research. Varying definitions, concepts, and components of refugee integration were given. Most studies, especially Ager and Strang’s, focused on host-related integration factors, such as: employment; access to services; social connections with home and host society groups; and rights and citizenship. For this reason, Ager and Stang’s key components of integration will provide a main point of reference for comparing integration findings of Iraqi refugees in this study (Chapter 5). Other studies focused on pre-arrival characteristics, such as: demographic characteristics; flight experiences; priorities of the refugee; and personality characteristics of the refugee. In the end, integration was found to be affected by the individual priorities and characteristics of the refugee; home-related factors; and host-related factors. Issues found in the literature regarding Iraqi refugee resettlement included: lack of employment amongst the highly educated Iraqi refugees due to non-recognition of credentials or the inability to find jobs which matched skill sets; the subsequent loss of prestige and status; the ‘myth of return’ among some Iraqi refugees and the feelings of ‘temporariness’ in relation to the their stay in the host country; feelings of shame in accepting social welfare services; evidence of home-country divisions within the country of resettlement; the use of social networks for support; tensions between the refugees and the host-country, especially when the host-country was involved with military actions against Iraq; racism; health concerns; and gender issues.

213 Nykiel-Herbert, B. (2010). Iraqi refugee students. *Multicultural Education*, 17(3); and Zehr, M. (2010). U.S. Schools Searching for Ways To Help Iraqi Refugees Catch Up. *Education Week*, 29(5).

214 Black, B.M. (2009). Definitions of Violence: African-American and Iraqi Refugee Adolescents’ Perceptions. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 14(4).

215 (2010). A Shabby Welcome. *America*, 201(3).

216 Al-Rasheed, M. (1993). The Meaning of Marriage and Status in Exile: The Experience of Iraqi Women. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 6(2).

Chapter 3. The United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) and Iraqi Resettlement to the US

Since 1975, the United States has resettled nearly 3 million refugees.²¹⁷ Chapter 2 will describe the process of resettling refugees within the United States. In the first section of this chapter, a description of the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) will be discussed. The agencies responsible for determining the resettlement process along with their responsibilities in resettling refugees will be mentioned. The second section will define who is eligible to gain access to the USRAP and the agencies responsible for facilitating this access. The final section will describe Iraqi refugee resettlement to the United States. (Chapter 3 will describe Iraqi refugee resettlement to Syracuse, N.Y. in more detail.)

I. The System of Refugee Resettlement in the United States

The Executive Branch, the Department of State and its agency the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM), and the Department of Homeland Security and its agency the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (DHS/USCIS) are the main domestic agencies involved in determining how refugees are resettled to the United States.

As for the Executive Branch, Section 207 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) assigns the President the role of determining the number of refugees to be admitted to the US each fiscal year that are justified by humanitarian concerns or national interest. The INA requires that the President have ‘appropriate consultation’ with the President’s cabinet-level representatives and with the Judiciary Committees of the House of Representatives and Senate to:


“review the refugee situation or emergency refugee situation, to project the extent of possible participation of the United States therein, to discuss the reasons for believing that the proposed admission of refugees is justified by humanitarian concerns or grave humanitarian concerns or is otherwise in the national interest, and to provide such members with the following information...”²¹⁸

As part of this consultation process, each year, the President submits a report to the House of Representatives and the Senate, which contains the Administration’s proposed refugee ceiling and allocations for the upcoming fiscal year. Following congressional consultations on the Administration’s proposal, the President issues a Presidential Determination by the start of the new fiscal year setting the refugee numbers for that year.

Generally, a refugee must be outside of their country of origin (or for stateless individuals, outside their country of habitual residence). The President of the US, however, may

217 Protecting the Persecuted: The Successes and Challenges of Safeguarding Refugees. (2011, October 26). Retrieved from: <http://www.state.gov/j/prm/rls/rmks/2011/176337.htm>

218 That following information from section 207(e) of the INA is:“(1) A description of the nature of the refugee situation; (2) A description of the number and allocation of the refugees to be admitted and an analysis of conditions within the countries from which they came; (3) A description of the proposed plans for their movement and resettlement and the estimated cost of their movement and resettlement; (4) An analysis of the anticipated social, economic, and demographic impact of their admission to the United States; (5) A description of the extent to which other countries will admit and assist in the resettlement of such refugees; (6) An analysis of the impact of the participation of the United States in the resettlement of such refugees on the foreign policy interests of the United States; and (7) Such additional information as may be appropriate or requested by such members.”



allow ‘in-country processing’ to determine that certain individuals within their country of origin or habitual residence to be considered for USRAP. Similarly, a US ambassador may also request that persons be considered for USRAP, yet this process requires the Department of State to consult with DHS/USCIS. In other cases, and ambassador may recommend a person to be considered as a “Significant Public Benefit Parole” (SPBP), which is a program administered by DHS. Also, for the FY 2011, the president has requested an unallocated reserve of 3,000 unallocated admissions numbers for additional refugees from any region (this requires that Congress be notified if used).

The Department of State’s Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) is responsible for coordinating and managing the United States Refugee Assistance Program (USRAP). One of its responsibilities, in consultation with DHS/USCIS and other agencies, is to help determine which individuals and/or groups will have access to refugee resettlement in the US, meaning who will be allowable for resettlement under one of the three ‘Processing Priorities’ (to be discussed below). Another responsibility of PRM is to manage the refugee processing efforts of designated agencies to refer refugee cases to Refugee Support Centers, or RSCs, (formerly known as Overseas Processing Entities, or OPEs) for refugee processing. UNHCR refers the majority of cases to RSCs for refugee resettlement in the United States (others include US embassies and authorized NGOs).²¹⁹ RSCs,²²⁰ located in designated non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations (IOs) and US embassies, pre-screen applicants to determine if they meet the necessary qualifications to enter the USRAP (to be discussed below) and to prepare the case for DHS/USCIS interview. RSCs are funded by the Bureau’s Admissions Office to prepare the paperwork on refugee cases before the refugees are interviewed by DHS/USCIS for final refugee resettlement adjudication. If approved, RSC staff helps the refugee complete processing by requesting a “sponsorship assurance” from a resettlement agency in the U.S.; scheduling the refugee for a medical examination; ensuring a security name check has been done; and finally arranging travel through the International Organization for Migration (IOM).²²¹


Ultimately, however, DHS/USCIS determines if an applicant can be admitted to the US as a refugee in accordance with criteria set forth in the INA (PRM and the RSCs, as noted above, are allowed to make only preliminary decisions). In one of the final steps to being admitted as a refugee through USRAP, DHS/USCIS officers conduct a “non-adversarial, face-to-face interview of each applicant designed to elicit information about the applicant’s claim for refugee status and any grounds of ineligibility” (criminal, security, public health concerns) and “considers evidence about conditions in the country of origin and assesses the applicant’s credibility and claim.”²²² All applicants are also required to undergo background security checks. PRM, through its overseas processing entities initiate name checks, and PRM-contracted Refugee

219 The US aims to provide resettlement consideration for 50 percent of the cases referred by UNHCR. In 2009, the US resettled 73 percent of the cases referred by UNHCR. (2010). Proposed refugee admissions for fiscal year 2011 Retrieved from <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/148671.pdf>(pg. 3)

220 IN FY 2010, PRM had cooperative agreements with Church World Service, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, and International Rescue Committee to work as RSCs in Ghana, Austria, Kenya, and Thailand. IOM and the International Catholic Migration Commission also helped to support refugee processing in Jordan, Russia, Nepal and Turkey. In Cuba, the US government operates its own admissions program at a US government facility.

221 All travel for refugees and certain Special Immigrant Visa holders who gain access to the USRAP must have their travel to the US arranged by the IOM. The IOM provides loans to cover the cost of travel to the US. This is typically \$1,500.00, and the refugee becomes responsible for repaying the loan within 6 months after arrival in the US. Refugees typically begin receiving bills three months after arrival. If the refugee is unwilling or unable to pay the loan upon arrival, the credit score of the refugee will be negatively affected.

222 (2010). Proposed refugee admissions for fiscal year 2011 Retrieved from <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/148671.pdf>(pg. 17)



Processing Centers (PRCs) examine the name checks. DHS/USCIS reviews the results of biographic and biometric analyses. In addition to these security checks, certain refugees, like Iraqis, must pass a Security Advisory Opinion security clearance. This clearance is based on classified information, and can take anywhere from six months to a year to be completed. According to a 2009 Government Accountability Office report, 53% of Iraqis approved for resettlement to the US were awaiting completion of the SAO clearance.²²³ (As of 2011, DHS has started to implement additional security checks for all refugees called Interagency Security Clearances. The implementation process of these new clearances has brought refugee arrivals to the US almost to a halt in the first six months of 2011. To be discussed further below.)

Those whose security clearances are approved are sent for medical screening exams and voluntary cultural orientation. According to the Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2011, the Department of State: “strives to ensure that refugees who are accepted for admission to the United States are prepared for the significant life changes they will experience by providing cultural orientation programs prior to departure for the United States. It is critical that refugees arrive with a realistic view of what their new lives will be like, what services are available to them, and what their responsibilities will be.”²²⁴ Every refugee approved for USRAP, therefore, receives Welcome to the United States, a resettlement guidebook, which provides information about the initial resettlement period in the US before the refugee arrives. The Department of State also sub-contracts companies to provide one-to-three day cultural orientation classes (some groups may also receive video presentations). This orientation is voluntary.

After a case has completed all of the above post-adjudication steps, and travel has been arranged by IOM in the form of travel loan (or cash if the applicant can pay), the case is sent to one of 360 resettlement agencies in the United States for resettlement. In FY 2010, PRM entered into cooperative agreements with 10 voluntary agencies (VOLAGS)²²⁵ to provide initial resettlement services for new arrivals (as noted above, RSCs will receive ‘assurances’ from one of these VOLAGS allowing the RSC to forward the case to the US). These 10 VOLAGS in turn filter refugee cases to over 360 affiliates across the US. These affiliates agree to provide the new arrivals with Reception and Placement (R&P) benefits, or ‘basic needs’ and ‘core services,’ which are clearly defined in the cooperative agreement. These cooperative agreements set the standards and requirements for R&P benefits which the below mentioned groups are eligible.

The purpose of the Cooperative Agreement ²²⁶ is to provide financial support to agencies for partially covering the costs of resettling refugees in America (currently, each of the approximately 360 affiliate agencies receive \$1,800.00 per refugee


223 <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d09120.pdf> (pg. 33)

224 (2010). Proposed refugee admissions for fiscal year 2011 Retrieved from <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/148671.pdf>(pg. 17)

225 The 10 VOLAGS are: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB); International Rescue Committee (IRC); Church World Service (CWS); Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM); Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS); Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC); Kurdish Human Rights Watch; Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS); World Relief Refugee Services (WRRS) and US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI). The Chaldean Federation of America also has an application pending to become a VOLAG.

226 The following link provides an example of the basic terms of the cooperative agreements that VOLAGS and resettlement agencies enter into. Even though it is an example, the actual agreement is exactly the same. The agreement can be found at: <http://www.state.gov/g/prm/rls/text/140242.htm>

227 At least \$1,100.00 is used by the resettlement agency to meet the requirements of the agreement, and no less than \$900.00 is given to the refugee or spent on behalf of the refugee (Section 8.E of the 2010 Cooperative Agreement concerning funding).



resettled ²²⁷). The goals of the agreement are to ensure that refugees are provided with basic needs support and core services during the initial resettlement period,²²⁸ and to assist the refugees in becoming self-sufficient.

Section 8.C.4 of the Cooperative Agreement requires resettlement agencies, for a period of no less than 30 days, to provide or ensure that refugees are provided with the following basic necessities:

1. Decent, safe, and sanitary housing;
2. Essential furnishings;
3. Food or a food allowance and other basic necessities;
4. Necessary clothing;
5. Assistance in accessing health screening and appropriate health programs;
6. Assistance in applying for social security cards;
7. Assistance in registering children for school;
8. Transportation to job interviews and job training.

Section 8.C.5 of the Cooperative Agreement requires resettlement agencies to ensure that certain services are provided within the first 30 days after arrival. Most pertinent to the refugee are:

1. Airport reception (the refugee is met at the airport and taken to a fully-furnished home where culturally appropriate, ready to eat food and seasonally appropriate clothing are provided);
2. Community and Other Orientation;²²⁹
3. Health Orientation and Access to Services;²³⁰
4. Creation of a Resettlement Plan, and Employment Orientation and Access to Services.²³¹


The above basic necessities and core services must be fulfilled by the resettlement agency in accordance with the Guidelines for Participants and Operational Guidelines attached to the Cooperative Agreement as Attachment B and C. The Operational Guidelines provides the minimum standards for R&P services. Time frames for completion of core services, including reception, intake and orientation, assistance with access to services, home visits, health, and resettlement plans, are also given in

²²⁸ The R&P period means an initial 30-day period that can be extended up to 90 days after arrival should more than 30 days be required to complete R&P Program requirements.

²²⁹ Including: the role of the Recipient and any other individual or group assisting in sponsorship; public services and facilities; personal and public safety; public transportation; standards of personal and public hygiene; the availability of other publicly supported refugee services; personal and household budgeting and finance; information on permanent resident alien status and family reunion procedures; the legal requirement of each adult refugee to fully repay his or her IOM transportation loan in accordance with the established payment schedule; and the legal requirement to notify the U.S. Department of Homeland Security of each change of address and new address within ten days.

²³⁰ Including: provide each refugee unit with a general orientation to the health care system in the resettlement area, including health assessment services available through state or local public or private health programs; Assist refugees (other than those with Class A conditions, covered below in paragraph f) to obtain a health screening within thirty days of arrival; Encourage and assist refugees as soon as possible after arrival to obtain immunizations as required for adjustment to permanent resident alien status one year after arrival; Assist refugees in accessing appropriate providers of continued therapy or preventive treatment for health conditions affecting the public health; and in the case of a refugee who fails or refuses to receive health screenings, provide additional information and counseling to the refugee, including an explanation of local health regulations and practices, and document the circumstances and action taken in the casefile.

²³¹ Provide employment orientation to each employable refugee assigned to the Recipient under this agreement, including discussion of the importance of self-sufficiency in American society, the local job market, job counseling and training programs; Assist each employable refugee to enroll in such appropriate job counseling, placement, and/or training programs as are available in the community; Develop and implement during the first thirty days a resettlement plan with each refugee in the resettlement unit. For each employable refugee, the principal objective of the resettlement plan shall be assisting the refugee to obtain early employment. The resettlement plan for each refugee in the case may be documented on the same form; Monitor implementation of the plan throughout the R&P period.



the Operational Guidelines. All basic necessities and core services must be provided within 30 days of arrival (excluding extenuating circumstances). As one of its required services, refugee resettlement agencies assist the refugees in obtaining support from their local Departments of Social Services (or more broadly known as Welfare).

The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), within the Department of Human Services, provides the local Welfare offices with funding for the refugee for eight months after arrival. This funding is used to provide the refugee with cash assistance, Food Stamps and Medicaid for eligible refugees (those usually 200% below the poverty line). After eight months, the local Department of Social Services will begin providing these services if the refugee is eligible. As each state sets the levels of assistance it provides to individuals and families, each state level of assistance varies drastically. For example, a family in Alabama consisting of one parent and two children, with no income, would receive \$164.00 monthly. In New York, the same family would receive \$577.00.²³² ORR also provides funding for state and local agencies (including refugee resettlement agencies) for job preparation, English classes and child care services.

The refugee usually does not have a choice where they are sent within the US, although having family members in certain states can guarantee that the applicant is sent to that part of the US. If the applicant is a recipient of a Visa 92/93, that person will be sent to the location of the primary applicant already in the United States. Special Immigrant Visa holders are allowed to choose their location of resettlement, if there is a contact person living in that area. Placement decisions of the refugee consider the location of an individual's family members, potential medical needs, and the sponsoring agency's capacity to accept and provide for refugees and SIV holders. II.

Who is Eligible for Resettlement through USRAP?

In order to resettle refugees in the United States, the US government must first decide on the criteria that qualify an individual or group for resettlement. In order for a refugee to be brought to the United States through the USRAP program, the government has determined that an applicant must meet the following requirements: 1) be outside the US; 2) not be firmly resettled in a third country; 3) meet the definition of a refugee, set forth in the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) and be admissible under US law;²³³ and 4) qualify under one of the refugee 'processing priorities,' or be the beneficiary of a Visa 93. The first and second requirements, that the refugee applicant be outside the United States and that they not be firmly resettled in a third country, do not require explanation. The remaining requirements for refugee resettlement through USRAP, however, will be explained below.

Meeting the US Definition of a Refugee

The Refugee Corps, which is within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and its component agency The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), is responsible for interviewing refugee applicants and adjudicating applications for refugee status. In order for an applicant to be approved by DHS/USCIS as a refugee, the applicant must meet the definition of a refugee as stated in the INA. Section 101(a) (42) of the INA defines a refugee as:

²³² For specific provisions of State programs, see: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/data-reports/annualreport5/chap12.htm>

²³³ Section 212 of the INA sets criteria that make an applicant inadmissible to the US. For example, health related grounds; criminal related grounds; or security related grounds. Some of these grounds may be waived or refugees may be exempt.

“(A) any person who is outside any country of such person's nationality or, in the case of a person having no nationality, is outside any country in which such person last habitually resided, and who is unable or unwilling to return to, and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of, that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, or

(B) in such circumstances as the President after appropriate consultation (as defined in section 207(e) of this Act) may specify, any person who is within the country of such person's nationality or, in the case of a person having no nationality, within the country in which such person is habitually residing, and who is persecuted or who has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. The term ‘refugee’ does not include any person who ordered, incited, assisted, or otherwise participated in the persecution of any person on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.”²³⁴

The US government’s legal definition of a refugee differs slightly, therefore, from UNHCR’s legal definition of a refugee.²³⁵ In both definitions, the applicant must meet the persecution requirement (have a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion). The US definition, however, broadens the scope of eligibility as it includes individuals who are outside their country of habitual residence (stateless people) and also because the US definition does not require an applicant to cross an international border in order to be determined a refugee; the applicant can be processed within their country or country of habitual residence (if the President specifies such persons as being eligible).

Qualifying under one of the Processing Priorities: P-1, P-2, & P-3


In addition to meeting the INA definition of a refugee, the applicant must also qualify under one of the processing priorities. Only three priorities of cases have access to USRAP. These are:

Priority 1 (P-1): Individual cases referred to the program by virtue of their circumstances and apparent need for resettlement; Priority 2 (P-2): Groups of cases designated as having access to the program by virtue of their circumstances and apparent need for resettlement. Includes two models of access: open or predetermined; Priority 3 (P-3): Individual cases from eligible nationalities granted access for purposes of reunification with anchor family members already in the United States. (Now closed)

234 Immigration and nationality act.(n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.f6da51a2342135be7e9d7a10e0dc91a0/?vgnnextoid=fa7e539dc4bed010VgnVCM1000000ecd190aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=fa7e539dc4bed010VgnVCM1000000ecd190aRCRD&CH=>

235 The 1951 Refugee Convention which established UNHCR defines a refugee as someone who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country."

236 Referrals of North Koreans and Palestinians require State Department and DHS/USCIS concurrence before being granted access to USRAP.



P-1 “allows consideration of refugee claims from persons of any nationality,²³⁶ in any location, often with compelling protection needs, for which resettlement appears to be the appropriate durable solution.”²³⁷ These cases are referred to the USRAP by the UNHCR, a US embassy or a designated NGO. UNHCR and NGO referrals are given to a Regional Refugee Coordinator, who forwards them to the Overseas Processing Entity (OPE) for case processing and scheduling of the DHS/USCIS interview. A US ambassador can also make a Priority 1 referral for persons still in their country of origin. P-2 includes “specific groups... identified by the Department of State in consultation with DHS/USCIS, NGOs, UNHCR, and other experts as being in need of resettlement.” Typically, PRM, in consultation with DHS/USCIS, determines the criteria for access.²³⁸ The process “includes consideration of whether the group is of special humanitarian concern to the United States and whether members of the group will likely be able to qualify for admission as refugees under U.S. law.”²³⁹ Priority 2 groups have two models of access to the program: open access or predetermined access. Open access allows individuals to access the program on the basis that they meet the eligibility criteria of the group. Eligible applicants may approach USRAP at any of the processing locations specified as available for the group to begin the application process. OPEs are responsible for making a preliminary determination for Priority 2 access before the case is sent to DHS/USCIS for interview. Predetermined access is a group designation that is usually based on a UNHCR recommendation, and confirmed by PRM and DHS/USCIS. Once this group is determined, the referring entity (usually UNHCR) sends biodata of eligible refugee applicants for processing.


Certain Iraqi and Afghani recipients of Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) are also eligible to be resettled through this P-2 category. These individuals are eligible to receive R&P benefits, but only if they choose. For example, an Iraqi or Afghani SIV holder may be brought through the USRAP through P-2, but they may decline to receive the above benefits. This means they would not have a refugee resettlement agency in the United States be responsible for their case. The SIV holders would be responsible for accessing housing, services, etc. by themselves.

This type of visa is open to two categories of Iraqi and Afghani nationals (and their spouses and unmarried children under 21): 1) Iraqi/Afghani translators who worked for the US Armed Forces; and 2) Iraqi/Afghani nationals who worked for or on behalf of the US government. The first category includes Iraqi and Afghani nationals who

237 FY 2011 Refugee Admissions (8)

238 For FY 2011, in-country processing programs for Priority 2 include: Former Soviet Union (Jews, Evangelical Christians, and Ukrainian Catholic and Orthodox religious activists identified in the Lautenberg Amendment, with close family in the United States); Cuba (human rights activists, members of persecuted religious minorities, former political prisoners, forced-labor conscripts (1965-68), persons deprived of their professional credentials or subjected to other disproportionately harsh or discriminatory treatment resulting from their perceived or actual political or religious beliefs or activities, and persons who have experienced or fear harm because of their relationship – family or social – to someone who falls under one of the preceding categories); Iraqis Associated with the United States (employees of the U.S. government, a U.S. government-funded contractor or grantee, and U.S. media and NGOs working in Iraq, and certain family members of such employees, as well as beneficiaries of approved I-130 (Immigrant visa) petitions). The following groups which are outside of their country of origin which are currently being processed as Priority 2 groups are: Ethnic Minorities and others from Burma in camps in Thailand (individuals who have fled Burma and who are registered in nine refugee camps along the Thai/Burma border and who are identified by UNHCR as in need of resettlement); Ethnic Minorities from Burma in Malaysia (ethnic minorities from Burma who are recognized by UNHCR as refugees in Malaysia and identified as being in need of resettlement are eligible for processing); Bhutanese in Nepal (Bhutanese refugees registered by UNHCR in camps in Nepal and identified as in need of resettlement); Iranian Religious Minorities (Iranian members of certain religious minorities are eligible for processing and benefit from a reduced evidentiary standard for establishing a well-founded fear of persecution, pursuant to the 2004 enactment of P.L. 108-1990); Iraqis Associated with the United States (employees of the U.S. government, a U.S. government-funded contractor or grantee, and U.S. media and NGOs working in Iraq, and certain family members of such employees, as well as beneficiaries of approved I-130 (Immigrant visa) petitions); Eritreans in Shiselba (Eritrean refugees (except those Kunama who previously went through refugee processing) who were registered with UNHCR in the Shiselba Camp prior to August 7, 2008, or who were registered in the former Wa'alaNhibi Camp and re-registered or re-validated in the Shiselba Camp in November 2004); Darfuri in Chad (vulnerable Darfuri in Chad who are registered with UNHCR and identified as being in need of resettlement).

239 (2010). Proposed refugee admissions for fiscal year 2011 Retrieved from <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/148671.pdf>(pg. 9)



worked with the US Armed Forces as translators/interpreters for at least twelve months. Section 1059 of the Defense Authorization Act of 2006, entitled “Special Immigrant Status for Persons Serving as Translators with United States Armed Forces,” authorized an annual cap of 50 SIV visas per fiscal year. An amendment to the law in 2007 increased the number of visas to 500 per fiscal year for years 2007 and 2008. In FY 2009, the number of visas reverted back to 50 per year.

The second category includes Iraqi and Afghani nationals who worked for/on behalf of the United States government for at least twelve months. For Iraqi nationals,²⁴⁰ Section 1244 of the Defense Authorization Act of 2008, entitled “Special Immigrant Status for Certain Iraqis,” authorized the creation of 5,000 special immigrant visas annually for Iraqi employees and contractors for fiscal years 2008 through 2012 who have been employed on or after March 20 2003. The Iraqi national must have been employed for a period of no less than one year, and experienced or is experiencing an ongoing serious threat as a consequence of their employment with the United States Government.²⁴¹


As a result of Section 525 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008, Afghani and Iraqi Special Immigrant Visa recipients are eligible for the same Reception and Placement (R&P) benefits as refugees admitted under USRAP. The SIV visa recipient acknowledges at the time they apply for the visa if they wish to receive or decline these benefits. Anyone who accepts these benefits must have their travel arranged by the IOM (to be discussed below). All Iraqi and Afghani SIV recipients are admitted to the US as permanent residents (green card holders).

P-3 “includes members of designated nationalities who have immediate family members in the US who originally entered the US as refugees or where granted asylum.” Spouses, unmarried children under 21 and parents qualify for this program. P-3 nationalities are designated at the beginning of each fiscal year by PRM in consultation with DHS/USCIS. Usually, to determine such nationalities, PRM reviews UNHCRs annual assessment of refugees in need of resettlement, and considers repatriation efforts and US foreign policy interests. In March 2008, however, Priority 3 processing was suspended due to high rates of fraud, and in October 2008, PRM stopped accepting Affidavit of Relationship (AOR) forms. The Proposed Refugee Admissions for FY 2011 noted that when the Priority 3 access opens in the future, it will likely include DNA testing for biological relationships. In the future, Priority 3 access will be granted to individuals from: Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burma, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Cuba, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Republic of Congo, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Uzbekistan, and Zimbabwe.

Visa 93: Refugee/Asylee Relative Petition (Form I-730)

240 For a detailed view of the requirements for this type of visa see Special Immigrant Visas for Iraqis: Eligibility and Procedures, at: http://iraqirefugee.us/wp-content/files/siv_training.pdf

241 The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008, accessed at: http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=110_cong_bills&docid=f:h4986enr.txt.pdf



This type of petition is used to resettle a spouse or unmarried children under the age of 21 of a refugee or asylee in the US. Within two years of admission, a refugee or asylee may file this petition. The beneficiary of this program would derive their refugee status from the refugee applicant in the US. In contrast to P-3 processing, parents are ineligible, and the beneficiaries may either be in the country of origin or in other locations.

Visa 93s are given to relatives of refugees, and Visa 92s are given to relatives of asylees. USRAP counts Visa 93s in its admissions numbers, but does not count Visa 92s. Visa 92 holders, like all other categories listed above, are eligible for Reception and Placement (R&P) benefits after arrival in the United States.

Asylum Seekers/Visa 92s (not included in USRAP admissions numbers)


Asylum seekers and their relatives who qualify for a Visa 92 are eligible to receive R&P benefits, but these individuals are not counted in the USRAP admissions numbers. They are mentioned here in this chapter only because they have access to the same benefits as the other categories noted. To be granted asylum in the US, the applicant must meet the US definition of a refugee and apply for asylum within one year of their arrival to the United States (unless there are extraordinary circumstances, and must be admissible under law.²⁴²) There are two ways of being granted asylum in the US: the affirmative process and the defensive process. To obtain asylum through the affirmative asylum process you must be physically present in the United States. You may apply for asylum status regardless of how you arrived in the United States or your current immigration status. This applicant may reside in the US without being detained while the application is pending. A defensive application for asylum occurs as a defense against removal from the U.S. This results from either a denied affirmative application for asylum or where apprehended within the United States without proper legal documents or were caught by border police trying to enter the US without proper legal documents and were found to have a credible fear of persecution or torture. Any person who is granted asylum is eligible to receive R&P benefits.

(Other categories of immigrants are also eligible to receive R&P benefits, but no Iraqi in Syracuse has entered the US through one of these categories. These categories are: Cuban/Haitian Entrants; Victims of Trafficking; Survivors of Torture; and Amerasians. Amerasians is the only category from this group that is included in the USRAP admissions numbers.)

III. Iraqi Refugee Resettlement to the United States

Iraqi refugee resettlement to the United States has been occurring since the early 1980s. From 1980–88, thousands of Iraqi refugees fled due to the Iran-Iraq war, followed by the same outflow during the Persian Gulf War of 1991. The first large group of refugees from Iraq was resettled in the United States following the Gulf War in 1991. Thousands of Iraqi refugees, many belonging to the Kurdish ethnic minority and those

²⁴² Applicants are not considered to be asylum seekers under the Section 208 of the INA if: (i) the alien ordered, incited, assisted, or otherwise participated in the persecution of any person on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion; (ii) the alien, having been convicted by a final judgment of a particularly serious crime, constitutes a danger to the community of the United States; (iii) there are serious reasons for believing that the alien has committed a serious nonpolitical crime outside the United States prior to the arrival of the alien in the United States; (iv) there are reasonable grounds for regarding the alien as a danger to the security of the United States; (v) the alien is 5/ described in subclause (I), (II), (III), (IV), or (VI) 2/ of section 212(a)(3)(B)(i) or section 237(a)(4)(B) (relating to terrorist activity), unless, in the case only of an alien 5/ described in subclause (IV) of section 212(a)(3)(B)(i), the Attorney General determines, in the Attorney General's discretion, that there are not reasonable grounds for regarding the alien as a danger to the security of the United States; or (vi) the alien was firmly resettled in another country prior to arriving in the United States.



associated with the U.S. government, were resettled in the United States between 1992 and 1997. Iraqi asylum claims started to rise from 167 in 1992 to 2,351 in 1997.²⁴³ Also, in 1996, the US government airlifted 6,600 Kurdish and Iraqis to Guam for refugee resettlement processing.²⁴⁴ From 1983 to 1997, the US admitted 31,900 Iraqi refugees for resettlement, the majority being placed in Texas, California, Michigan and Illinois.²⁴⁵

A. Iraqi Refugee Resettlement after the 2003 Invasion

In March 2003, the US-led war against Saddam Hussein began. As a direct result of the increased violence and insecurity, millions of Iraqis fled their homes to other parts of Iraq or to neighboring countries, mainly Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. Millions of Iraqi refugees remained outside the country, hoping to one-day return to Iraq. For those who thought return would be impossible, or for those who thought they would have a better chance at life elsewhere, thousands of Iraqi refugees registered with the UNHCR in order to be resettled in a third country.

Criticism in America began to mount as the situation became increasingly difficult for Iraqi refugees. In March 2006, The Iraq Study Group, a bi-partisan committee of Congress people and former government officials, was convened to assess the American invasion in Iraq and its consequences. The actual report, entitled The Iraq Study Group Report –The Way Forward, A New Approach, was released in December 2006 and it was the first comprehensive analysis at the effects of the US-led war in Iraq. The report mentioned little information and advice concerning the refugee crisis, but it did state that: “The number of refugees and internally displaced persons within Iraq is increasing dramatically. If this situation is not addressed, Iraq and the region could be further destabilized, and the humanitarian suffering could be severe. Funding for international relief efforts is insufficient, and should be increased.”²⁴⁶ In December 2006, and mentioning the release of the Iraq Study Group Report, Senator Edward Kennedy posted an opinion column in the Washington Post entitled: “We Can’t Ignore Iraq’s Refugees.” In the article, the Senator stated that: “There is an overwhelming need for temporary relief and permanent resettlement. Last year, however, America accepted only 202 Iraqi refugees, and next year we plan to accept approximately the same number. We and other nations of the world need to do far better.”²⁴⁷

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007 (which began in October 2006) offered limited openings for Iraqis to be resettled in the US. Section 1059, entitled ‘Special Immigrant Status for Persons Serving as Translators with United States Armed Forces,’ allowed certain Iraqi nationals (and their spouses and children) to obtain special immigrant visas (SIVs) and to therefore live as permanent residents in America. Yet, the numerical limits on visas to be issued each year were capped at 50 per fiscal year. The majority of Iraqi refugees, however, did not have access to the United States resettlement program.


243 The Triennial Comprehensive Report on Immigration (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.uscis.gov/USCIS/Resources/Reports%20and%20Studies/tri3fullreport.pdf>

244 The Triennial Comprehensive Report on Immigration (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.uscis.gov/USCIS/Resources/Reports%20and%20Studies/tri3fullreport.pdf>

245 The Triennial Comprehensive Report on Immigration (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.uscis.gov/USCIS/Resources/Reports%20and%20Studies/tri3fullreport.pdf>

246 Iraq Study Group Report (2006). Retrieved from <http://www.usip.org/ISG/Index.html>

247 Kennedy, E. (2006, December 30). We can't ignore Iraq's refugees. The Washington Post. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/12/29/AR2006122901066.html>



In January 2007, Senator Kennedy chaired the first Congressional hearing on the issue of Iraqi refugees and the US responsibility to help them. The hearing, entitled “The Plight of Iraqi Refugees,” heard testimony from government officials and humanitarian organizations about the needs of this population. Following this hearing, the State Department announced that it would allow 7,000 Iraqi refugees for resettlement. The State Department also announced in February 2007 that a Task Force on Iraqi Refugees would be created in order to address the immediate needs of Iraqi refugees. In May 2007, furthermore, a bill was sponsored in the House of Representatives entitled “The Responsibility to Iraqi Refugees Act of 2007.” The purpose of this bill was to provide special immigrant status for certain Iraqis and to assist Iraqi refugees. The bill mainly sought to increase the number of SIV visas per fiscal year to 15,000; to increase the capacity to provide humanitarian assistance; and to increase the number of Iraqis resettled in the United States to 20,000 for the remainder of FY2007 and FY 2008 for certain persecuted Iraqis.²⁴⁸ The bill, however, did not become law. In the same month, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced and implemented enhanced background and security checks for Iraqi refugees applying for resettlement in the United States. This process was the first step in speeding up Iraqi refugee processing. It also announced that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) officers had interviewed Iraqis in Jordan, Syria, Egypt, Turkey and Lebanon. In spite of these developments, in June the Senate introduced a bill entitled “The Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act” which sought to create 5,000 SIV visas for Iraqi nationals who worked for the US, and to expedite the resettlement process.

Coinciding with these efforts, in September 2007, Secretary Rice appointed Ambassador James Foley, in a newly created position, as Senior Coordinator for Iraqi Refugee Issues, in the State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration and Lori Scialabba as the newly created Senior Advisor for Iraqi Refugee Affairs in the Department of Homeland Security to replace the Iraqi Refugee Task Force. Their positions were created to improve interagency cooperation on the Iraqi refugee crisis. Specifically, they were tasked with identifying and overcoming obstacles to reaching the goal of resettling 12,000 Iraqis in FY2008.

Pressure began to mount as the numbers of Iraqi refugees admitted into the US remained low. The List Project to Resettle Iraqi Allies, an organization that attempts to assist Iraqis who worked for the US mission in Iraq gain access to US resettlement, was formed in June 2007. It believes that: “the United States Government has a clear and urgent moral obligation to resettle to safety Iraqis who are imperiled due to their affiliation with the United States of America.”²⁴⁹ It was formed due to the slow processing of Iraqi refugees who worked on behalf of the US mission in Iraq. In September 2007, furthermore, Human Rights Watch wrote a letter to Ambassador Foley and Lori Scialabba, appealing for DHS and DOS to expedite Iraqi refugee processing. Ambassador to Iraq, Ryan Crocker, also sent a strongly worded cable in September 2007, entitled “Iraqi Refugee Processing: Can We Speed It Up?”²⁵⁰ to the Department of State as he became frustrated by the delays in refugee processing. His frustration mainly concerned the delay in processing for Iraqis who worked for the US

248 The House of Representatives, (2007). Responsibility to Iraqi refugees act of 2007 (H.R. 2265 [110th]). Retrieved from website: <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/billtext.xpd?bill=h110-2265>

249 Information compiled from the following List Project website: http://thelistproject.org/withdrawal/?page_id=413

250 Brian Crocker’s cable from the American Embassy in Baghdad. (2007, September). Retrieved from <http://www.rcusa.org/uploads/pdfs/Crocker%20Cable%20202,%209-07.pdf>

government.

In spite of these and various other criticisms, the main reasons why large-scale Iraqi refugee resettlement to the US did not occur were many. As the former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees and Migration, Ellen Sauerbrey, noted in January 2007, Iraqi processing was slow due to the fact that the US must evaluate the population and identify the most vulnerable before resettlement. The US, in most cases, must also wait for refugee referrals from the UNHCR. Furthermore, and most importantly, mechanisms needed for substantial resettlement out of the region were not in place.²⁵¹ In a September 2007 interview, Sauerbrey further explained that: "There was no infrastructure in place to do multiple interviews that are required under law for refugees."²⁵² Also, because of concerns about terrorism, Iraqi refugees need to pass a "particular security protocol" before entering the United States. She stated that these processes are time-consuming, but once set in place, they quickened the pace of Iraqi refugee resettlement.²⁵³ Another delay in resettlement occurred in Syria, where the government failed to grant visas to officials from the Department of Homeland Security who needed to interview Iraqis before they could be accepted for resettlement.²⁵⁴

In February 2008, the Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act, championed by Senator Kennedy in 2007, was included as part of the National Defense Act of 2008, and it began official attempts by the US Government to overcome obstacles hindering resettlement of Iraqi refugees. The act required the Department of State, in consultation with DHS, to set up processing mechanisms and to expedite processing of Iraqis for resettlement to the US. Section 1243 also determined the priorities for Iraqi resettlement to the US, specifically for persecuted Iraqis and for those who worked for the US Government or an organization closely related to the US mission in Iraq. The act broadened, therefore, the eligibility requirements for SIV visas to include not only translators (as the National Defense Act of 2007 had) but also those who worked in an The act further required the State Department to designate a Senior Coordinator for Iraqi Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in the Baghdad embassy to oversee processing for the Iraqi refugee resettlement in the United States. Also requested was the designation of Senior Coordinators in the embassies of the United States in Cairo, Amman, Damascus, and Beirut, to oversee resettlement of refugees and are "processed in an orderly manner and without delay."²⁵⁵

The act further required that the Secretary of State consult with government officials within countries with significant Iraqi refugee populations (including Iraq, Jordan, Egypt, Syria, Turkey, and Lebanon) and with the UNHCR to determine resettlement of the most vulnerable members of the Iraqi refugee population.²⁵⁶

251 Kennedy, E., & Sauerbrey, E. (2007, January 14). Interview by D Elliot [Web Based Recording]. Senate hearings will study iraqi refugee crisis. , Washington, DC. , Retrieved from <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6855404>


252 Lohr, K. (Performer) (2007). Iraqi refugees begin to arrive in atlanta [Web series episode]. In Morning Edition . Washington, DC: National Public Radio. Retrieved from <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=14360698>

253 Lohr, K. (Performer) (2007). Iraqi refugees begin to arrive in atlanta [Web series episode]. In Morning Edition . Washington, DC: National Public Radio. Retrieved from <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=14360698>

254 Tavernise, S., & Rohde, D. (2007, August 28). Few iraqis reach safe us havens despite program. The New York Times. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/29/world/middleeast/29refugees.html?_r=2&pagewanted=2

255 The House of Representatives , (2007). The national defense authorization act for fiscal year 2008. Retrieved from website: <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h110-1585>

256 The House of Representatives , (2007). The national defense authorization act for fiscal year 2008. Retrieved from website: <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h110-1585>



Despite these improvements, criticism remained. On January 22, Representatives Alcee Hastings and John Dingell sent a letter to President Bush requesting an additional \$1.5 billion in funding in the Fiscal Year 2009 budget to aid Iraqi refugees and IDPs. On February 5th, several Congresspeople sent Secretary Condoleezza Rice a letter which noted: “concern over the lack of attention and resources that have been focused on Iraqi refugees and internally displaced populations (IDP), and the failure of the United States to implement a long-term plan to address this humanitarian crisis in the region.”²⁵⁷ In February, the Subcommittee on The Middle East and South Asia and the Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight of the House of Representatives held a briefing entitled “Iraqi Refugees: Can the US do More to Help?” which brought together members of Congress, the UNHCR and the IOM. The meeting discussed the situation on the ground in refugee-hosting countries and identified further the needs of the Iraqi refugees. The briefing was highly critical of the Bush Administration in their efforts to resettle Iraqis.²⁵⁸

One month later, the same two committees convened a second hearing entitled “Neglected Responsibilities: The U.S. Response to the Iraqi Refugee Crisis.” Testifying were members of the Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security. This hearing was a follow-up of sorts to see if the DOS and DHS had accelerated Iraqi refugee processing. Although the Committee members noted some improvements, most committee members were very critical of the lack of leadership from the Bush Administration and the slow processing of Iraqis.²⁵⁹

Ambassador Foley, however, dispelled some of these criticisms as he mentioned the creation of an in-country processing center in Baghdad; an agreement with the Syrian government which increased the number of visas for DHS interviewers (for most of 2007, the Syrian government refused visas); and increased cooperation with the UNHCR to receive steady referrals. He also stated that Overseas Processing Entities (now called RSCs) didn’t exist in these countries, and they only became fully operational at the end of 2007 and the beginning of 2008.²⁶⁰ Lori Sciabbala, the Special Advisor to the Secretary of Homeland Security for Iraqi Refugees, also tried to assure the subcommittees that the government was working as promptly as possible to resettle 12,000 refugees in FY 2008. She noted that her agency had created a robust interview schedule (over 8,000 in the first half of the fiscal year). She also noted that they have run multiple security checks for Iraqis concurrently to reduce time. As a result of these measures, “the total processing time for Iraqi cases is significantly less than it is for other refugee groups worldwide.”²⁶¹

In May 2008, the same committees convened yet again another hearing entitled “No

257 Reps. Hastings and Dingell call on secretary rice to layout long-term plan for Iraqi refugee crisis. (2008, February 5). Retrieved from <https://forms.house.gov/dingell/110/080205Iraqirefugees.shtml>

258 In B Dellahun (Chair).Iraqi refugees: Can the us do more to help?. (2008). , Washington, DC. Retrieved from http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/hearing_notice.asp?id=947

259 In H Berman (Chair).Neglected responsibilities: The us response to the Iraqi refugee crisis. (2008). Joint hearing before the subcommittee on the middle east and south asia and the subcommittee on international organizations, human rights, and oversight. Retrieved from <http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/110/41229.pdf>

260 In H Berman (Chair).Neglected responsibilities: The us response to the Iraqi refugee crisis. (2008). Joint hearing before the subcommittee on the middle east and south asia and the subcommittee on international organizations, human rights, and oversight. Retrieved from <http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/110/41229.pdf>

261 In H Berman (Chair).Neglected responsibilities: The us response to the Iraqi refugee crisis. (2008). Joint hearing before the subcommittee on the middle east and south asia and the subcommittee on international organizations, human rights, and oversight. Retrieved from <http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/110/41229.pdf>

Direction Home: An NGO Perspective on Iraqi Refugees and IDPs.” Likewise, most committee members criticized the delays in Iraqi refugee processing. Representative Ackerman called the Bush Administration’s attempts at Iraqi refugee resettlement “pathetic” as the numbers admitted were still low compared to the need.²⁶²

Due to the enactment of the Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act, however, processing of Iraqi refugees for resettlement began to improve. In 2008, over 150 USCIS officers conducted 29 circuit rides to the Middle East to interview more than 23,000 Iraqi refugee applicants. PRM also increased the number of full-time personnel assigned to the embassy in Baghdad and Amman, and established a refugee coordinator position in Damascus, Syria to increase staffing in the Middle East to manage the Iraqi refugee admissions program. An in-country processing center was also created in Baghdad to handle the increasing number of Iraqis within the country eligible for refugee resettlement to the US. Numbers of Iraqis admitted for resettlement in the US increased. Ultimately, 13,823 Iraqi refugees were admitted to the United States, exceeding the admissions goal of 12,000 Iraqis. These efforts also led to an increased pipeline of Iraqi refugees to be resettled in FY 2009. In relation to the amount of Iraqis resettled in 2007 (1,608), the numbers for FY 2008 reflected almost an eight-fold increase. In 2008, USCIS also developed a standard procedure to process biometric data for Iraqi nationals and certain non-Iraqi applicants seeking refugee or asylum status, through additional U.S. Government databases.²⁶³ Nearing the end of FY 2008, the Department of State Senior Coordinator for Iraqi Refugee Issues Ambassador James Foley and Homeland Security Senior Advisor for Iraqi Refugees Lori Scialabba released a joint statement which noted that: “Both DOS and DHS are committed to continuing efforts to resettle vulnerable Iraqis and, barring unforeseen adverse developments in the region, expect to significantly increase the number of Iraqi refugees admitted to the U.S. for permanent resettlement in FY 2009.”²⁶⁴ Ambassador Foley noted in September 2008 that 17,000 Iraqi refugees would be resettled in the US in FY 2009.

In fiscal year 2009, the numbers of Iraqis admitted to the US grew significantly. Even so, criticism of the admissions process remained. In January 2009, The Center for American Progress, a progressive research and advocacy organization, criticized the US Government for not doing enough to help the Iraqis who worked for the US government. The report, entitled Operation Safe Haven Iraq 2009: An Action Plan for Airlifting Endangered Iraqis Linked to the United States, advocated for an emergency airlift to the American bases in Guam or Kuwait to process and resettle the 30,000–100,000 Iraqis who worked on behalf of the US mission in Iraq.²⁶⁵

In regards to the Iraqi SIVs who had already been resettled in the US, Congress passed the National Defense Authorization Act of 2009. Section 1235 authorized the Secretary of State and Defense to jointly establish a temporary program to offer employment

262 In H Berman (Chair). No direction home: An ngo perspective on iraqi refugees and idps. (2008). Retrieved from <http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/110/42160.pdf>

263 USCIS Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2008. Retrieved from <http://www.uscis.gov/USCIS/Resources/Reports/uscis-annual-report-2008.pdf>

264 Joint statement by department of state senior coordinator for iraqi refugee issues ambassador jamesfoley and homeland security senior advisor for iraqi refugees loriscialabba. (2008, September 12). Retrieved from <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.5af9bb95919f35e66f614176543f6d1a/?vgnextoid=54ca12804a75c110VgnVCM1000004718190aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=68439c7755cb9010VgnVCM10000045f3d6a1RCRD>

265 Ondiak, N., & Katulis, B. (2009). Operation safe haven iraq 2009: An action plan for airlifting endangered iraqis linked to the united states. The Center for American Progress. Retrieved from http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/01/pdf/iraqi_refugees_execsum.pdf

266 The House of Representatives, (2008). Duncan hunter national defense act for fiscal year 2009. Retrieved from website: http://www.dod.gov/dodgc/olc/docs/2009NDAA_PL110-417.pdf

to Iraqi SIV holders as translators, interpreters, or cultural awareness instructors who had been resettled in the US.²⁶⁶

Throughout 2010, however, the situation of the Iraqis who have helped the US in Iraq was still at the forefront of debates. In July 2010, the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, an independent US Government agency which contributes to US policy, convened a hearing entitled “No Way Home, No Way to Escape: The Plight of Iraqi Refugees and Our Iraqi Allies.” This hearing was convened to highlight the situation of Iraqis who assisted the US Mission in Iraq as the drawdown of US forces occurs. Senator Benjamin Cardin decried the fact that only 2,154 SIV visas for such Iraqis had been issued. He noted that: “All of these Iraqi allies are targeted for assassination by organizations like al-Qaida in Iraq and will systematically be hunted down as the military withdraws.”²⁶⁷ Kirk Johnson, creator of the List Project, also had some remarks to the committee. In his statement, he made a correlation between the Vietnamese who helped the US during the Vietnam War and the Iraqis who helped during the latest war in Iraq. He claimed that the US had left them both behind. He asked: “Why...are only a few hundred out of the 19,000 Iraqis admitted to the U.S. last year from my list? I wake up each morning struggling to make sense of this.”²⁶⁸

In light of these criticisms, the National Defense Authorization Act of 2011, which became law on January 7 2011, included Section 1239 which requires the Department of Homeland Security to submit a ‘Report on Certain Iraqis Affiliated with the United States.’ The Act requires DHS to develop a strategy, using the report it creates, to expedite the processing of SIVs as the US withdrawals from Iraq. In the report, DHS should include: 1) the number of Iraqis who were or are working for the United States Government in Iraq or for an organization related to the US mission in Iraq; 2) the number of Iraqis who have applied for resettlement in the US and the status of their applications; 3) the number of Iraqis resettled in the US with SIV visas; and 4) the approximate number of Iraqis killed who worked on behalf of the US mission in Iraq.²⁶⁹

B. Statistics of Iraqi Refugees Resettled in the US

Even though US attempts to resettle Iraqi refugees had a rocky beginning, the process has dramatically improved since mainstream efforts began in 2007. Official data on the numbers of Iraqis admitted to the US since the war began in 2003 could be obtained for FY2003 to December 31, 2011. Official data on Iraqi refugee admissions since the war began in March 2003 does not include, however, reasons for persecution (whether fleeing the Iraq war or previous persecution claim before the war). Even so, the numbers of Iraqi refugees admitted from FY2003 until December 31, 2011 will be included. In total, the US has resettled 63,263 Iraqi refugees within this time period. The United States has also admitted a total of 4,840 Special Immigrant Visa holders to the US between FY2008 and December 31, 2011. When the numbers of SIV holders is added to the number of refugees admitted, the total becomes 68,103 Iraqi refugees admitted to the United States for resettlement. By December 31, 2011, the US States with the largest populations of recently arrived Iraqi refugees are: California (14,837

267 In B Cardin (Chair). No way home, no way to escape: The plight of Iraqi refugees and our Iraqi allies . (2010). Retrieved from http://www.csce.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=ContentRecords.ViewTranscript&ContentRecord_id=483&ContentType=H&ContentRecordType=H&CFID=71350416&CFTOKEN=24643407

268 In B Cardin (Chair). No way home, no way to escape: The plight of Iraqi refugees and our Iraqi allies . (2010). Retrieved from http://www.csce.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=ContentRecords.ViewTranscript&ContentRecord_id=483&ContentType=H&ContentRecordType=H&CFID=71350416&CFTOKEN=24643407

269 The House of Representatives, (2010). National defense authorization act for fiscal year 2011. Retrieved from website: http://www.dtic.mil/congressional_budget/pdfs/FY2011_pdfs/HASC_III

Table 1. Iraqi Refugee Admissions: FY2007–December 31, 2011

Year	FY2003	FY2004	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	FY2008	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012 10/1/2011– 12/31/2011
Number of Iraqis Admitted to the US	298	66	198	202	1,608	13,823	18,838	18,016	9,388	826

*Information obtained from the US Department of State and Department of Homeland Security²⁷⁰

Table 2. Iraqi SIV Holders Admitted to the US

Year	FY2007	FY2008	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012 10/1/2011– 12/31/2011
Number of SIVs Admitted	0	438	1,557	2,000	618	227

*Information obtained from the US Department of State and Homeland Security²⁷¹

Iraqis who claim asylum are not admitted through the USRAP, but they are considered refugees and should be included in the numbers of Iraqi refugees resettled in America. Official data on Iraqi asylees was obtained from the Department of Homeland Security for FY2003–FY2009. Likewise, this data does not mention if the reasons for asylum were related to the Iraq war that began in 2003 or persecution claims unrelated to the war. In total, since the war began in 2003, 4,026 Iraqis have been granted asylum (2,381 affirmatively; 1,645 defensively, which means the applicant was in removal proceedings from the United States).²⁷²

Table 3. Iraqis Granted Affirmative Asylum

Year	FY2003	FY2004	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	FY2008	FY2009
Number of Iraqis	325	161	192	179	392	588	544

*Information obtained from the US Department of Homeland Security²⁷³

Table 4. Iraqis Granted Defensive Asylum

Year	FY2003	FY2004	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	FY2008	FY2009
Number of Iraqis	197	115	94	191	276	408	364

*Information obtained from the US Department of Homeland Security²⁷⁴

270 Information retrieved from the following State Department website: <http://www.state.gov/g/prm/rls/c26837.htm>; <http://www.state.gov/g/prm/rls/152074.htm>; Information retrieved from the following Department of Homeland Security website: <http://www.wrapsnet.org/Reports/AdmissionsArrivals/tabid/211/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

271 Information retrieved from the following State Department website: <http://www.state.gov/g/prm/c25771.htm>; Information retrieved from the following Department of Homeland Security websites: http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/yearbook/2009/ois_yb_2009.pdf; <http://www.wrapsnet.org/Reports/Archives/tabid/215/language/en-US/Default.aspx>; <http://www.wrapsnet.org/Reports/AdmissionsArrivals/tabid/211/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

272 Information retrieved from the following Department of Homeland Security website: http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/yearbook/2009/ois_yb_2009.pdf

273 Source: Department of Homeland Security 2009 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics. http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/yearbook/2009/ois_yb_2009.pdf

274 Source: Department of Homeland Security 2009 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics. http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/yearbook/2009/ois_yb_2009.pdf

In sum, when the number of Iraqi asylees is added to the number of Iraqi refugees and SIV holders, the total number of Iraqi refugees who have been resettled in the United States since 2003 becomes 72,129. Admittedly, this number is inaccurate as: 1) the number could include Iraqis resettled in 2003 before the war began on March 20 2003; 2) official data can be found for Iraqi refugee arrivals only until December 31, 2011 and do not include those who possibly arrived after; and 3) the number does not include asylee claims for FY2010 through FY2012 as these numbers are unobtainable.

Table 5 shows the numbers of Iraqi refugees referred to the USRAP (through international organizations, NGOs, or embassies) between FY2007 and May 25, 2011. It also shows the numbers of those referred who were granted interviews with USCIS; the numbers of those interviewed who were granted approval for resettlement in the US; and the numbers of those approved who actually were admitted into the United States. Usually, the numbers of those approved is higher than the number of those admitted as some refugees change their minds, or because a medical or security clearance, or travel arrangement expires and the refugee must renew their clearance/travel arrangement before coming to the US.

In FY2007, 12,098 Iraqi refugee referrals were made to USCIS. Of these, 4,437 (37%) were interviewed. Of those interviewed, 2,909 (66%) were approved, and of those approved 1,608 (55%) were admitted to the US.

In FY2008, 28,769 Iraqi refugee referrals were made to USCIS. Of these, 23,862 (83%) were interviewed. Of those interviewed, 18,674 (78%) were approved, and of those approved 13,823 (74%) were admitted to the US.

In FY2009, 49,276 Iraqi refugee referrals were made to USCIS. Of these, 29,096 (59%) were interviewed. Of those interviewed, 25,238 (87%) were approved, and of those approved 18,838 (75%) were admitted to the US.


In FY2010, 46,106 Iraqi refugee referrals were made to USCIS. Of these, 28,844 (63%) were interviewed. Of those interviewed, 24,727 (86%) were approved, and of those approved 18,016 (73%) were admitted to the US.

Table 5. Iraqi Refugees by Referral/Interview/Approval/Admittance by USCIS (FY2007-May 25, 2011)

Year	FY2007	FY2008	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	TOTAL
Referrals to USRAP	12,098	28,769	49,276	46,106	29,835	166,084
USCIS Interviews	4,437	23,862	29,096	28,844	15,602	101,841
Approved by USCIS	2,909	18,674	25,238	24,727	12,851	84,399
Admitted to US	1,608	13,823	18,838	18,016	6,526	58,811

***Information obtained from the US Department of Homeland Security/USCIS²⁷⁵**

275 <https://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.5af9bb95919f35e66f614176543f6d1a/?vgnextchannel=68439c7755cb9010VgnVCM10000045f3d6a1RCRD&vgnextoid=df4c47c9de5ba110VgnVCM1000004718190aRCRD>



The number of Iraqi refugee arrivals to the US has decreased since 2010 due to recent security checks implemented by the US Department of Homeland Security. These checks have been implemented due to recent events related to high instances of fraud, and terrorist connections of refugees, mainly Somali and Iraqi refugees. Regarding Iraqi refugees, in February 2011, FBI Director Robert Muller told a house hearing that al-Qadea in Iraq might have used the security gaps in the USRAP to import operatives into the United States. Demonstrating this claim, in May 2011, two Iraqi asylees in Kentucky were arrested for: conspiracy to kill Americans abroad; conspiracy to use a weapon of mass destruction against US nationals abroad; attempting to provide material support to terrorists and the insurgent group al-Qadea in Iraq; and conspiracy to transfer, possess, and export Stinger missiles. One of the asylees, Waad Ramadan Alwad, had built bombs in Iraq that killed Americans. He bragged that his “lunch and dinner would be an American.” He was admitted into the US in 2009 even though his fingerprints were found on an undetonated bomb in 2005. This information was not shared with the vetting authorities (DHS) when Alwad applied for refugee status in America. Alwad told an FBI informant that obtaining a US passport would allow him to travel freely. He said: “I didn’t come here for America. I came here to get a passport and go back to Turkey, Saudi, or wherever I want.”²⁷⁶ In July 2011, the LA Times notes that DHS will now be “rescreening” the more than 58,000 Iraqis who have entered the country as: “lapses in immigration security may have allowed former insurgents and potential terrorists to enter the country.” The article mentioned a federal inquiry into the situation that noted that al-Qadea leaders in Iraq and Yemen are trying to manipulate the refugee system and other immigration systems to access the United States. It further noted that the rescreening began late last year (the end of 2010) and that so far the FBI has been given 300 names of Iraqi refugees for further investigation. (The US since then has also rescreened certain refugees from Yemen and Somalia, which also explains the decline in refugee cases from these countries.) US immigration officials will now have to check Iraqi refugee cases with army-based biometric systems, and other background and security checks. This has created the extremely slow processing of Iraqi cases for admission into the US, even for those who helped the US authorities in Iraq.²⁷⁷ As The Economist noted in an October 2011 article, the processing times for Iraqi refugee will remain slow. It noted that: “About 1,000 soon-to-be immigrants in Iraq were told that they would not be allowed to board flights already booked. Some were removed from planes. Thousands more Iraqi applicants had to restart the immigration process, because their security clearances expired when the programme stalled. Men must now pass five separate checks, women four, and children three.”²⁷⁸

C. After Arrival in the United States: A Brief Snapshot

Mounting criticism of the slow pace of Iraqi refugee resettlement, led by members of Congress, government officials, and leaders of NGOs, helped to push through more concerted efforts at resettling the Iraqi refugee population within the United States. DHS and DOS created programs for Iraqi resettlement in areas where resettlement activities had never existed before. Due to these actions, over 72,000 Iraqis have arrived in the United States since 2003. The question concerning these Iraqis becomes: what happens after arrival?

276 Bennet, B., and Memoli, M.A., 2011. Two Iraqi Refugees in US Charged in Terrorism-Related Case. LA Times, May 30 2011.

277 Bennet, B., and Memoli, M.A., 2011. Two Iraqi Refugees in US Charged in Terrorism-Related Case. LA Times, May 30 2011.

278 International: Lost in translation; American visas for Iraqis. The Economist, Oct 15, 2011 401(8755) 56.

Various reports and newspaper articles have attempted to answer this question. In June 2009, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) published a report entitled: *Iraqi Refugees in the United States: In Dire Straits*. The IRC called the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program "outdated and under-funded" and said it is "resettling Iraqi refugees into poverty rather than helping rebuild their lives in the country that offered them sanctuary."²⁷⁹ The study further found that:

"While there are positive examples of refugee employment and successful adaptation, most Iraqi refugees who were interviewed painted a picture of despair and frustration. Refugees are finding it difficult to find a job and without secure income some are facing eviction from their homes. Without jobs, refugees cannot support themselves and their families on limited public assistance. Many of the Iraqis are traumatized and need additional support in the form of financial assistance, English lessons, employment counseling and access to health care."²⁸⁰

Main concerns noted in the report were: 1) lack of employment and threat of homelessness;²⁸¹ 2) high and unmet expectations of educated Iraqi Refugees; 3) the plight of Iraqi widows; 4) higher rates of physical and mental health problems among Iraqi refugees; and 5) poor orientation prior to and after arrival.²⁸² In reference to the report, IRC President, George Rupp commented: "Few (Iraqis) imagined that they would receive such short-term and limited assistance upon arrival or that they could become homeless in the country that offered them shelter. They deserve better."²⁸³

Countless news articles have also been written on the subject, many with headlines like: "Iraqi Refugees in a Land of No Opportunity" or "US Program Failing Iraqi Refugees." Most articles employ the same criticisms: limited amounts and time to receive financial assistance; eviction notices; great competition for low and high-skilled jobs; and difficulty working in the field of expertise.²⁸⁴ For example, one article noted that: "the refugees said they were told by U.N. representatives that they could get jobs based on their professional qualifications. But they said they have now been told that they should work as hotel housekeepers, an occupation many of them have refused because they deem it degrading."²⁸⁵ One Iraqi refugee family moved to Dallas from Milwaukee to gain access to a larger Iraqi community and warmer weather. According

279 Flawed us refugee admissions program is failing iraqi refugees; recession only makes matters worse - irc commission calls for overhaul of resettlement system. (2009, June 16). International Rescue Committee. Retrieved from <http://www.rescue.org/news/flawed-us-refugee-admissions-program-failing-iraqi-refugees-recession-only-makes-matters-worse>

280 The IRC Commission on Iraqi Refugees. (2009, June). Iraqi refugees in the united states: In dire straits. Retrieved from http://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/resource-file/irc_report_iraqcommission.pdf

281 According to the report: "They all hoped – and many expected – to find employment in their professional field of work. A number of refugees expressed disappointment that the information they received prior to departure for the United States regarding the job-placement services and support they would be given was different from the reality they encountered upon arrival. The minimal or incorrect information given to refugees prior to their arrival left them unprepared for the challenge of resettlement in the United States and the search for employment. As refugees begin to grasp the reality of the job market and the cost of living in America, they realize they need to accept any job as soon as possible, even if it does not make full use of their professional background."

282 According to the report: "A number of refugees expressed disappointment that the information they received prior to departure for the United States regarding the job-placement services and support they would be given was different from the reality they encountered upon arrival. Refugees coming to the United States need an expanded orientation, both prior to their application for the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and after their cases have been approved. A stronger orientation is needed to ensure that the decision to pursue resettlement is an informed one and that those coming to America are apprised of both the benefits of resettlement and the challenges they may face upon arrival."

283 The IRC Commission on Iraqi Refugees. (2009, June). Iraqi refugees in the united states: In dire straits. Retrieved from http://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/resource-file/irc_report_iraqcommission.pdf

284 For more information, see: http://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/resource-file/irc_-in-dire-straits__iraqirefugees_additionalreading062009.pdf

285 Fekeiki, O. (2007, November 8). Iraqi refugees in arizona: Many families find adjustment tough, even though the southwest reminds them of home. The Washington Post, p. A03.

286 Burke, L. (2010, July). Building little baghdad. The Texas Observer. Retrieved from <http://www.utne.com/Politics/Iraqi-Refugees-Building-Little-Baghdad.aspx?page=2>

to the article, one Iraqi male refugee stated of the refugee resettlement agencies: “You come to my country as a refugee,” and “after one month, I don’t help you.”²⁸⁶

The US Government itself has also acknowledged the shortcomings of the USRAP in regards to Iraqi refugee resettlement. In March 2010, the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the investigative arm of the US Congress, conducted a study entitled: Iraqi Refugees and Special Immigrant Visa Holders Face Challenges Resettling in the United States and Obtaining U.S. Government Employment. This report noted that even though the majority of Iraqis resettled in the US have high levels of education, they still face difficulties in finding employment. Furthermore, in reference to legislation enacted by Congress requiring DHS and DOS to create an employment program for resettled SIVs, the report noted:

“State and DOD have not established the temporary program intended to offer employment to Iraqi SIV holders under authority granted the agencies in fiscal year 2009 legislation. Although both agencies have positions requiring Arabic language skills, neither identified any unfilled needs that could be met by employing Iraqi SIV holders through this joint program.”²⁸⁷

In the end, on the one hand, US government officials and NGOs have criticized the slow pace of Iraqi refugee resettlement and have advocated for expeditious resettlement of this population. On the other hand, they have criticized the treatment of Iraqi refugees after arrival in the United States. Increased demand for resettlement of Iraqi refugees into a broken system seems to be counterproductive. Research into the lives of Iraqi refugees in Syracuse, New York confirms the reports above; particularly that Iraqis are being resettled into lives of poverty, frustration, and hopelessness, for some. Not all refugees interviewed, however, are experiencing this degree of distress. Iraqi refugees in Syracuse are also leading highly productive and satisfying lives. These and other findings will be discussed in Chapter 3.

IV. Summary

Chapter 3 has explained the system of resettling refugees into the US through the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). It has described the US agencies involved in resettling refugees and their responsibilities. It has also highlighted the recent history of resettling Iraqi refugees into the US; the various actors involved; and a brief description of post-arrival issues experienced by Iraqi refugees.

In regards to the recent history of resettling Iraqi refugees into the US, Chapter 2 described the mounting national pressure aimed at the Bush administration due to the US Government’s low level of Iraqi refugee resettlement (especially the low level of resettlement for Iraqis who assisted the US mission in Iraq) after the US-led invasion. In December 2006, a bi-partisan group of Congresspeople and former government officials published the The Iraq Study Group Report – The Way Forward that documented the need to address the Iraqi refugee crisis. The same month, Senator Edward Kennedy wrote an op-ed entitled “We Can’t Ignore Iraq’s Refugees” which underscored that the US had only admitted 202 Iraqi refugees for resettlement

286 Burke, L. (2010, July). Building little baghdad. The Texas Observer. Retrieved from <http://www.utne.com/Politics/Iraqi-Refugees-Building-Little-Baghdad.aspx?page=2>

287 The Government Accountability Office, (2010). Iraqi refugees and special immigrant visa holders face challenges resettling in the united states and obtaining us government employment. Retrieved from website: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d10274.pdf>



in 2006. Senator Kennedy went on to chair the first Congressional committee to deal with the crisis in January 2007 entitled: “The Plight of Iraqi Refugees.” In June 2007, the List Project to Resettle Iraqi Allies was created to pressure the US Government to resettle Iraqis who assisted in the US mission in Iraq. In September 2007, Human Rights Watch and the American Ambassador to Iraq wrote letters to DHS and the State Department asking for speedy resettlement of Iraqi refugees.

The government took several steps to expedite Iraqi refugee resettlement to the US. For example, the State Department announced that it would resettle 7,000 Iraqi refugees in 2007; special positions were created in the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department in September 2007 tasked with resettling 12,000 Iraqi refugees in 2008; infrastructure and security measures were put in place to interview and resettle Iraqis into the US; and several National Defense Authorization Acts enacted by Congress took up the issue of expediting Iraqi refugees and increasing the numbers of Special Immigrant Visas to be granted to Iraqis.

Due to the pressure placed on the Administration and the actions of those in the federal government, over 72,000 Iraqi refugees have been resettled within the United States. The question becomes, what happens to Iraqi refugees after arrival? Notably, some of the pre-arrival issues Iraqis faced regarded their shock and dismay at the realities of American life. Many said they were unprepared, as the overseas orientations did not provide the Iraqis with a realistic view of life in America. Some were told that they would have government assistance and would be able to work in their fields, both which turned out to be false for most Iraqis. Post-arrival issues regarded: 1) the lack of employment and competition for high and low-skilled jobs; 2) difficulty working in the field of expertise; 3) plight of Iraqi widows; 4) high rates of physical and mental health problems; 5) poor orientations after arrival; and 6) limited amounts and time to receive financial assistance. After documenting some of these issues in its report, entitled *Iraqi Refugees in the United States: In Dire Straits*, the International Rescue Committee labeled the USRAP “out-dated and under-funded” and claimed that the US was “resettling Iraqi refugees into poverty rather than helping rebuild their lives in the country that offered them sanctuary.” In the end, the US Government worked swiftly, after infrastructure was put in place, to resettle Iraqi refugees into the US. However, it seems as though the Iraqis have been resettled into a system that is unable to resettle Iraqi refugees in away that allows Iraqis to regain dignity. These and other issues will be described in the following chapter on Iraqi refugees resettled in Syracuse, New York.

Chapter 4. Iraqi Refugees in Syracuse, New York

Chapter 4 will address the situation of Iraqi refugees in Syracuse, New York; how they have dealt with the above challenges briefly outlined in Chapter 3; and their plans for their future lives, whether in the United States or elsewhere. First, a description of the city of Syracuse will be given, followed by a brief discussion of what happens to Iraqi refugees shortly after their arrival in Syracuse. The next section will discuss the data as well as document the experiences gathered from interviews. Chapter 4 will provide analysis and conclusions.

I. The City of Syracuse: Statistics and Programs Available to Refugees

The population of Syracuse has been steadily declining since the 1950s as manufacturers and industries have fled the area.²⁸⁸ According to the 2010 Census, the population of the city of Syracuse is 145,170.²⁸⁹ In 2000, the population was 147,306, showing a 1.5% decrease in population over the last ten years. According to the 2005-2009 American Community Survey conducted by the US Census Bureau, the foreign born population of Syracuse was estimated to be 12,472 (8.9% of the population) and 17,414 (13.5%) people spoke a language other than English at home. The median household income was estimated to be \$30,031; the median family income at \$37,485; and the per capita income at \$17,652. Furthermore, the Survey found that 25.1% of families live below the poverty line and 30.3% of individuals live below the poverty line (during this time, the national average for families living below the poverty line was 9.9%, for families and 13.5% for individuals).²⁹⁰ Unemployment rates have equaled or been lower than the national average. The median unemployment rate for years 2001-2008 was 5.1%. The median average for years 2009 and 2010 was 8.4%.²⁹¹

There are three main agencies in Syracuse, New York that assist refugees upon arrival. Both resettlement agencies (the agencies under cooperative agreements with the State Department to perform certain duties for the newly arrived refugees such as finding shelter, etc.) are Catholic Charities (whose VOLAG is United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) and Interfaith Works (whose VOLAGS are Church World Service and Episcopal Migration Ministries). The Refugee Assistance Program (known as the RAP School or BOB School), run out of the Syracuse City School District, also assists refugees after arrival, and it is funded to provide services for refugees such as ESL training, employment, school enrollment, and health referrals, amongst others.

All three refugee resettlement agencies receive Federal and New York State funds for operating costs. In regards to Federal funds, Catholic Charities and Interfaith Works receive about \$1,800.00 per refugee from the Department of State's 'Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA)' account to help cover administrative costs related to resettling refugees. Usually, this grant is divided in half; \$900.00 for the refugee and \$900.00 for the resettlement agency. All three organizations also receive funds from the Office of Refugee Resettlement (operated under the Department of Health and Human Services) for various programs. ORR appropriates funds for the following

288 The population, in years of ten, are: 1950: 220,583; 1960: 216,038; 1970: 197,008; 1980: 170,105; 1990: 163,960; 2000: 147,306; 2010: 145,170.

289 Information retrieved from the following US Census Bureau website: <http://2010.census.gov/news/releases/operations/cb11-cn122.html>

290 Information retrieved from the following US Census Bureau website: http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ACSSAFFacts?_event=&ActiveGeoDiv=geoSelect&pctxt=fph&_lang=en&sse=on&geo_id=16000US3673000&_state=04000US36

291 Information retrieved from the following US Bureau of Labor website: http://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LAUMT36450604?data_tool=XGtable

refugee and immigrant programs: Cash and Medical Assistance (known as ‘welfare’ including cash payments, Food Stamps, and Medicaid, which are available at the local Department of Social Services, as noted above, for eight months of federal refugee assistance); Social Services (ESL and employment training); Targeted Assistance (for areas of large concentrations of refugees); Matching Grant Program (an early employment program);²⁹² and Refugee Health (health assessments).

Table I. ORR Funded Programs in Syracuse, NY

Year	Catholic Charities	Interfaith Works	RAP School	Medical Facilities
FY2009	Refugee Social Services Program \$25,670.00	Data Not Available	Refugee Social Services Program \$541,022.00 Targeted Assistance Program \$437,719.00 Refugee School Impact Program \$205,051.00	Medical Assistance SUNY Hospital \$430,900.00 Medical Assistance Industrial Medicine Associates \$50,000.00 (for NY State)
FY2010	Matching Grant Program \$330,000.00	Preferred Community Grant \$55,726.00 Matching Grant Program \$283,800.00		

***Information obtained from the US Department of Health and Human Services²⁹³**

In regards to New York State funds, the Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (BRIA), under the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance in the New York State government, helps to fund the resettlement agencies by allocating federal funds from ORR and from the New York State budget for several refugee and immigrant programs.²⁹⁴ This Office also helps supervise welfare (Cash and Medical Assistance) funds allocated to refugees upon arrival for families who qualify (this includes Food Stamps, Medicaid, and cash payments). When New York State allocates these funds to refugee families, the Federal government, through ORR, reimburses the state government (refugee health screenings are also refundable).²⁹⁵ BRIA programs available in Syracuse, New York that differs from ORR programs for refugees and immigrants include the New York State Refugee Resettlement Assistance Program (NYSRRAP)²⁹⁶ which is operated by Catholic Charities.

292 Eligible persons in Matching Grant program receive rent and cash payments for a period of 3–4 months along with intense case management and employment services. These services tend to be more beneficial than Welfare assistance. However, only 30% of refugees are able to access the program.

293 Information retrieved from the following Department of Health and Human Services website: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/data/state_ny_ffy09.htm#l

294 Information retrieved from the following website: <http://otda.ny.gov/programs/bria/programs.asp>

295 Information retrieved from the following Department of Health and Human Services website: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/benefits/cma.htm>

296 NYSRRAP funds: “are used to provide enhanced services to refugees, asylees and other immigrant populations eligible for refugee services which will assist such individuals and families to attain economic self-sufficiency and reduce or eliminate reliance on public assistance benefits as a primary means of support.” Information retrieved from the following website: <http://otda.ny.gov/resources/accountability/2010-2011-NYSRRAP.asp>

Table 2. NYSRRAP Grants for Catholic Charities

Year	Amount
FY2008	\$163,705.00
FY2009	\$188,238.00
FY2010	\$103,020.00

***Information obtained from the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Accountability²⁹⁷**

II. Iraqi Refugees in Syracuse: Upon Arrival and Shortly Thereafter

As briefly mentioned, each Iraqi refugee receives a one-time grant from the State Department's Migration and Refugee Account in the amount of \$900.00 per refugee. The resettlement agency which receives these funds typically uses this amount of money to purchase: one month's rent and security deposit for an apartment; food for the first few days until the refugee receives Food Stamps; and other necessities. If there are any funds leftover, they are typically used to pay electric and phone bills, and to provide spending money. As this money generally runs out quickly, especially when there are fewer people in the family, most refugees who arrive in Syracuse are taken to the Department of Social Services to apply for Welfare (Food Stamps, Cash Assistance, and Medicaid) shortly after arrival. For families and individuals who qualify for Welfare, the amounts of funds a family or individual may receive vary depending upon family size, expenses, and income level. For those who have little or no income, most receive the same amounts of assistance until something in their budget changes (employment; births/deaths; etc). Eligible families applying for Welfare in Syracuse usually will receive Family Assistance. This assistance is intended for families with children, and is available for five years (after five years, the family will have to apply for Safety Net Assistance). Safety Net Assistance is intended for individuals or childless families, or for families who have exhausted their Family Assistance. This assistance is available for two years (after two years, vouchers for necessities are offered). Emergency Assistance is also available for families and individuals who are in need of urgent assistance.²⁹⁸ Families and individuals who qualify for the above assistance also qualify for Medicaid (low-income medical insurance) and Food Stamps. Even if people are working, some can still qualify for Medicaid and Food Stamps. As heating costs are extremely high in New York winters, the Department of Social Services also offers Heating Assistance Program (HEAP) for eligible persons. This is usually a one-time grant worth \$450.00. Heating costs, however, can cost up to \$200.00 a month in the winter.

The Department of Social Services in Syracuse has an employment office for employable recipients of Welfare cash assistance called Jobs Plus. The aim of Jobs Plus is to get people off of Welfare cash assistance. Any person who receives Welfare cash assistance and is able to work must report to Jobs Plus. This usually happens 2-3 months after arrival, usually before the refugee has even begun to learn English. The Jobs Plus counselors will require the refugee to perform certain duties and activities that Jobs Plus finds suitable. These duties are intended to be 35 hours per week, as a normal job would be, and are intended to help the refugee to obtain self-sufficiency. If the refugee does not speak English, usually attendance at ESL classes and volunteer

²⁹⁷ Information retrieved from the following website: <http://otda.ny.gov/resources/accountability/>

²⁹⁸ Information retrieved from the following Onondaga County Department of Health and Human Services website: <http://www.ongov.net/dss/temporaryAssistance.html>

work for a total of 35 hours per week will suffice the working requirement. Volunteer work is usually assigned by Jobs Plus, and there is little negotiating. Jobs Plus usually assigns cleaning or volunteering at a church as qualified learning experience. This “working experience” is unpaid. If the refugee does speak English, he or she is told to apply to ten to twenty jobs a week and to keep track of the employers spoken to on a sheet of paper and hand in the sheet of paper every two weeks. These people are also given volunteer work. If the refugee does not follow the plan set forth by Jobs Plus, their cash assistance will be terminated. Clients who do not speak English will also be turned away at the Jobs Plus office if they do not have an interpreter, putting an extra burden on the refugee. Missing an appointment can also lead to having their cash assistance terminated.

In the end, Iraqis in Syracuse usually end up with some form or combination of Welfare assistance within the first few months of arrival. Some are terminated from the assistance as they gain employment or receive other forms of income such as Social Security Disability/Retirement payments. Others remain on assistance for months or years. As the following charts describe, welfare assistance is designed to be limited at the absolute minimum amount of money for a family or individual to survive. It is not intended for long-term assistance. In actuality, it is barely enough to cover most living expenses, if at all. Compared to other areas of the country, however, Syracuse has one of the most beneficial welfare programs in terms of amounts of assistance and length of term-limits. This is mainly the reason why some Iraqi refugee families have left their states of first migration and migrated to Syracuse (to be explained below).

Table3. Estimated Monthly Levels of Cash Assistance in Syracuse

Number of Individuals	1	2	3	4	5	6
Cash Amount	\$354.00– \$457.00	\$475.00– \$582.00	\$591.00– \$698.00	\$707.00– \$814.00	\$829.00– \$936.00	\$918.00– \$1,026.00

***Information obtained from the Onondaga County Department of Health and Human Services²⁹⁹**

The above table shows estimated levels of cash assistance that an individual or family could expect to receive from the Department of Social Services (Welfare) in one month. The amounts are estimated because various factors could change the amount of cash assistance received; for example, the number of children in the family or if utilities are included in the rent.

²⁹⁹ Information retrieved from the following Onondaga County Department of Health and Human Services website: <http://www.ongov.net/dss/foodStamps.html>

Table 4. Monthly Levels of Food Stamps in Syracuse

Household Size	200% of Poverty	Monthly Income Elderly/ Disabled Separate/ Household 165% of Poverty	Maximum Gross Monthly Income 130% of Poverty	Maximum Net Monthly Income 100% of Poverty	Maximum Monthly Allotment
1	\$1,805	\$1,490	\$1,174	\$903	\$200
2	\$2,428	\$2,004	\$1,579	\$1,215	\$367
3	\$3,052	\$2,518	\$1,984	\$1,526	\$526
4	\$3,675	\$3,032	\$2,389	\$1,838	\$668
5	\$4,298	\$3,547	\$2,794	\$2,150	\$793
6	\$4,922	\$4,061	\$3,200	\$2,461	\$952
7	\$5,545	\$4,575	\$3,605	\$2,773	\$1,052
8	\$6,168	\$5,089	\$4,010	\$3,085	\$1,202
Each Add'l	+\$623	+ \$515	+\$406	+ \$312	+ \$150

***Information obtained from the Onondaga County Department of Health and Human Services³⁰⁰**

Iraqi refugees resettled in Syracuse live in two main areas of the city: on the 'Northside' and the 'Westside.' Children of Iraqi refugees living in these areas, therefore, are admitted into the Syracuse City School District. Rents, on average, for apartments in these areas are: 1 bedroom: \$350-\$425; 2 bedrooms: \$450-\$550; 3 bedrooms: \$575-\$650. Some include all or some utility costs, others do not. Iraqi refugees must use the limited amount of funds from Welfare or from other sources to pay these costs.

As mentioned, the two resettlement agencies are under Cooperative Agreements with the State Department to provide specific services in a specific time frame. The VOLAGS of each agency monitor the agency's compliance with the Cooperative Agreement. These services are: "Basic Needs Support," for a period of no less than 30 days, and only up to 90 days, to provide or ensure that refugees are provided with the following basic necessities:

1. Decent, safe, and sanitary housing;
2. Essential furnishings;
3. Food or a food allowance and other basic necessities;
4. Necessary clothing;
5. Assistance in accessing health screening and appropriate health programs;
6. Assistance in applying for social security cards;
7. Assistance in registering children for school;
8. Transportation to job interviews and job training.

300 Information retrieved from the following Onondaga County Department of Health and Human Services website: <http://www.ongov.net/dss/foodStamps.html>



Resettlement agencies must also provide “Core Services,” within the first 30 days after arrival, such as:

1. Airport reception (the refugee is met at the airport and taken to a fully-furnished home where culturally appropriate, ready to eat food and seasonally appropriate clothing are provided);
2. Community and Other Orientation;
3. Health Orientation and Access to Services;
4. Resettlement Plan: Employment Orientation and Access to Services.

As each resettlement agency is obligated to follow these strict guidelines, each refugee must receive the above services in the required timeframes (unless a refugee refuses). Iraqis who come to Syracuse, therefore, enter into the above process. Resettlement agencies are obligated to fulfill all services within 30 days after arrival, and are only obligated to provide these services for “a period of not less than thirty days after arrival,” or until 90 days if the delivery of R&P services have not been delivered. If the resettlement agency has met all of these services within the first 30 days, then it has fulfilled all of its requirements and is no longer obligated to assist the refugee (this does not mean that the resettlement agencies in Syracuse do not assist after 30 days). If it has not fulfilled all services, the agency has until 90 days to do so. After 90 days, the agency is not obligated to help the refugee. This time limit usually presents a problem, especially for those who do not speak English, as many refugees cannot fully navigate the American system without assistance (from the organization, family, friends, etc.) until usually a year, and sometimes even more.

The normal trajectory of events for Iraqis refugees who arrive in Syracuse is the same for other refugees, and this trajectory follows the time frame of R&P services to be provided. Their case manager from either Catholic Charities or Interfaith Works meets Iraqis at the airport, and they are brought to their apartment that has the basic necessities (usually second-hand items, see Appendix A) and a hot meal waiting for them. Usually, food for one or two days is placed in the home by the caseworker whom used the refugee’s initial resettlement money to purchase these items. The next day, the caseworker is obligated to make a home visit and check-up on the family. For the next few days and weeks, the case worker attempts to fulfill all necessary R&P services required by the Cooperative Agreement: health screening; applying for Welfare; obtaining social security card; enrolling children in school and/or adults in ESL classes; provide orientation to the community; job services; and creating a resettlement plan with the refugee. After the caseworker has completed these services, they are no longer obligated to serve the refugee. This is not to say that the refugee resettlement agencies in Syracuse do not assist the refugee after R&P services have been met. Most are willing to help, but they are not obligated to do so.

One of the main appointments the refugees are taken to is the intake appointment at the RAP School (or BOB School). The RAP School is under contract and receives federal funds from ORR to provide ESL classes, enroll children in school, and to set up initial health assessments by one of two providers: Industrial Medicine Associates (which provides immunizations only) or University Health Care Center (UHCC), which provides health assessments, immunizations, and which usually becomes the primary health care provider for most refugees entering Syracuse. The RAP School also allows the County Health Department to use its facilities to give refugees TB tests and other tests. All three medical service providers receive federal grants, as noted above, to provide these services to refugees.

III. Iraqi Refugees in Syracuse: The Data

According to interviews and general knowledge about the Iraqi population in Syracuse, there are approximately 315 Iraqi refugees living in Syracuse. This number is admittedly inaccurate as there have been numerous families who have migrated to Syracuse from other states, as well as others who have out-migrated from Syracuse. There are also a number of families who have given birth to new members of their families. It was difficult to know how many children have been born since interviews were conducted. Also, these children are Iraqi-Americans, and are not refugees and therefore will not be counted in the total numbers of Iraqi refugees living in Syracuse. Out of the 315 Iraqis in Syracuse, there are 57 families (consisting of 270 individuals) and 35 individuals. Over the course of two years, I interviewed 35 were families (consisting of 176 individuals – 3 of these families were led by a single parent, whether father or mother) and 15 individuals. In regards to gender of those interviewed, 98 were males and 93 were females. The following table will describe the age ranges of those families and individuals interviewed. Most Iraqi refugees in Syracuse are between the ages of 1-20 years of age.

Table 5. Age Ranges of Iraqi Refugees Interviewed

Age	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81-90
Number of Persons	41	61	23	24	25	9	5	2	1

In regards to ethnicity, 171 were Arabs; 10 were Kurds; and 10 were Assyrians. In regards to religion, 28 declined to say; 86 were Sunni; 53 were Shia; 14 were SabeanMandeans; and 10 were Christian.

Most Iraqis received some sort of education prior to arrival in Syracuse. Out of 105 individuals who are 18 and over, one person holds a training certificate, 32 people hold a Bachelor's degree (one of these people has two Bachelor's degrees), 4 people hold Master's degrees, and one person holds a PhD. As for the remainder of those 18 and over who do not have advanced degrees, 38 people graduated from High School (8 of which are currently attending college, and three are attending graduate school, yet these people already have advanced degrees), 12 people have primary education, 12 people are currently enrolled in High School, and 3 people have no education. The people who have no education are all female and are over the age of 65.

Table 6. Advanced Degrees by Field of Study

Degree	Certificate	BA	MA	Phd
Aerospace Engineering			1	
Agriculture		3		
Business		1		
Chemistry		1		
Civil Engineering		5		
Communications		2		
Dentistry		1		
Electrical Engineering		4		
English Literature		1		
Engineering				
General Surgery		1		
Information Technology		1		
Islamic Studies		1		
Journalism		1		
Law	1			
Mechanical Engineering		2		
Medicine			1	
Microbiology		1		
Military Sciences		3		
Petroleum		1		
Pharmacology			2	
Physics		1		
Translation		1		

Out of 35 families, 16 had at least one member employed; 11 were unemployed; and 9 were ineligible for employment due to age or medical reasons. Out of 15 individuals, 9 were employed, and 6 were unemployed. Out of the 11 families unemployed, four of these families had heads of household who were in there late fifties; two families were studying to recertify their degrees; and one family was in their early sixties. Out of the 6 individuals unemployed, four were fifty or older.

Table 7. Employment Numbers for Iraqi Refugees

	Employed	Unemployed	Ineligible
Families	16	11	9
Individuals	9	6	

IV. Resettlement Experiences of Iraqi Refugees in Syracuse

This section will highlight the experiences gathered from interviews. Discussions mainly focused on the following themes: social services; employment; adjustment; and future plans.




A. Social Services

Most Iraqis agreed that they did not have adequate assistance after arrival in Syracuse, New York. When asked if all core services required in the Cooperative Agreement had been met, they said yes, but a few also noted that these were mainly the only services that they received. A few claimed that case workers took them on their major appointments, but were not readily available to help them through the process of reading notices from Welfare, setting up doctor's appointments, answering questions about life in America, or help in navigating the system. Many said that they had little guidance on every day issues. One Iraqi said to me that they "Need help now - not 3-4 days after when the case worker has time. Need questions answered now." One man said he is a "blind man", and that he needs someone to show him the way. One man said: "I don't need a refugee agency to give me \$900.00 and then leave. We need someone to take care of us." Most agreed, however, that they had positive experiences with the two resettlement agencies, and that generally the agencies addressed issues appropriately and helpfully.

In regards to access to health care, the majority of Iraqi refugees receive Medicaid as health insurance as part of their Welfare assistance. Most Iraqis interviewed who have had experience using their Medicaid cards expressed deep dissatisfaction with the medical services available through Medicaid. Many medical providers in Syracuse are unwilling to accept Medicaid as a form of health insurance as the government is slow in reimbursing the provider for medical services given to the patient. Patients who have Medicaid, like the Iraqis, are only allowed to choose from a select few providers in Syracuse that accept Medicaid. The problem is, however, that all other families and individuals in Syracuse who receive Medicaid must use these providers as well. The backlog of patients becomes enormous, and most Iraqis have to wait months for routine visits like dental checks, gynecological exams, or ophthalmologist visits. In one case, an Iraqi family had to be taken to a city one and half hours away once a month to receive care that he could not find readily available in Syracuse (the doctor's office in Syracuse told him to wait six months for an appointment). Also, most if not all medical clinics require that the refugee bring his or her own interpreter to the medical appointment if they do not speak English. This has become highly burdensome for the Iraqi refugees, and most end up not going to their appointments if an interpreter cannot be found. Some medical clinics will also use what is called 'The Language Line,' but in most cases clinics have turned away clients who do not have an interrupter with them. When they were able to see a doctor, they explained that the care they received was good. Most were satisfied with the care that they received once they were able to access such care.

In regards to Public Assistance (food stamps and monetary payments low-income families receive from the government) every Iraqi individual and family interviewed noted that welfare is not enough to support a dignified life. (However, one Iraqi mentioned that the Iraqis always have food stamps left over because they lived for years under sanctions and have become accustomed to living within certain means.) They also noted that they are not like Americans who receive assistance - they are refugees with no friends, family, or safety net, and they are starting life from zero and therefore need more assistance than what an American family would receive. Money from welfare, as described in the charts above, is not sufficient to cover all expenses. Some Iraqis received money from families back in Iraq that has caused great shame because of the untenable situation in Iraq. They don't want to ask for money and don't want to reveal how bad the situation is in the United States. Most Iraqi families have access to cash from home, whether from family members or previous personal




savings. The majority has spent most of their savings on living costs in first countries of asylum. The funds are limited, and some say that they cannot access the funds because, if they did so, they wouldn't qualify for Public Assistance in the US. This has led to illegal behaviors, such as hiding funds overseas or not reporting funds to Welfare (to be discussed below). Others said that they didn't have enough time to withdraw funds from their bank accounts as they were given only a few days' notice to leave the country of asylum to be resettled in America. Most noted a fear of bringing in large sums of money into America, and also noted their perception that the US government does not allow refugees to bring a certain amount of money. It is especially hard for a single person to survive off of the money welfare provides.

Many people talked about the difficulties in transitioning from one type of life (decent, dignified standard of living) into a life of poverty and hopelessness. One Iraqi man said that it has greatly affected his health coming here. His wife is ill. Both are depressed and have noticed psychological problems since coming here due to the stress of not knowing where the money will come from to pay bills. They called life here a "nightmare" because they live in fear that they will be evicted, not be able to pay the bills, and that they can't get a job because they lack English. Their future here is uncertain. One Iraqi man commented that his life is:

"a slow death – eating, drinking, sleeping. Don't have constant income, feel like you are living off of charity. This is very shameful. Cannot do anything for yourself. The assistance does not cover the living expenses. How can someone buy a house, invest, open a business? Iraqis are afraid to start anything because they don't know what will happen if they do. Don't have own home or business. Don't feel settled."

Most Iraqi refugees did not expect this kind of life in the United States. They expected that adapting to a new country would be difficult and that there would be challenges, but they never imagined just how difficult, and sometimes impossible, it would be. They claim that the orientations they received before coming to the US did not give them an accurate view of what life would actually be like after arrival. (The orientations are performed by the Cultural Orientation Resource Center, or COR, which is given contracts by the State Department to perform cultural orientations for refugees coming to America.) Some were told that they would be able to work in their fields, others were told that the refugee center would always be there to help, or that the assistance from Welfare would be enough to cover all of their expenses. (COR claims that they do not give refugees detailed information on the levels of assistance rates in the states in which the refugees will be resettled in order to limit secondary migration, as the rates could be higher or lower in certain states. Rather, the refugees are given general information, such as 'assistance will be available.' In the end, the refugees are not prepared for what to expect.) In the first countries of asylum, the Iraqis were given 1-3 day orientations. All Iraqis said that they had very little time between the time they were notified and the time that they actually left for the US (most had about a week to two weeks notification. This made it extremely difficult to get their things in order, to sell their belongings, to close bank accounts, to see loved ones). They weren't told what to bring, that it would be helpful to have all of your transcripts and have them translated. Most said that the situation was much bleaker than what they were told and that few details about the area they would be resettled into were given. The levels of poverty in the US shocked all. One man said to me about his experience with the reality after arrival that: "I could have never imagined this. I'm not going to Somalia, I'm going to America!" Related, one woman asked: "Where is America? Why am I here?"



To be fed only? To live off of other people's taxes? I feel guilty." Most agreed that they don't want to be a burden on American society; rather, they want to contribute to it and be successful- to regain some of the status and dignity lost after the war. The majority of Iraqi families are unfamiliar with living off of "charity" and assistance from others. They have moral dilemmas in taking this assistance from others.

Other families have created strategies for survival through the use of Public Assistance over other options like employment. There were discussions of certain families abusing the Welfare system in order to obtain the greatest amount of assistance possible. In a few instances, families attempted to obtain Supplemental Security Income (for individuals with disabilities due to illness), or SSI, by faking illnesses. They have learned that in order for an SSI application to be approved, one must document the illness and then present the case to the federal government. Strategies for documenting fake illnesses include multiple doctors' visits whereby one claims headaches, chest pains, etc. in order to document the illness within the medical system. Other strategies include calling ambulances multiple times for trips to the emergency room. This makes the "medical condition" appear severe and urgent, which enhances the applicant's chances of receiving SSI. These Iraqis have also learned that they will be excused from the US Citizenship Test (a test that immigrants must take at the end of five years within the US in order to become a citizen) if they are receiving SSI – a double incentive for some to abuse this system. There are also incidents of Iraqis who commit welfare fraud by not reporting or underreporting income to the federal government (income which would decrease amounts of assistance received if reported) or by misusing their assistance. Recently, an Iraqi man was arrested for committing welfare fraud, and the County Commissioner warned that more residents were under investigation.³⁰¹ Iraqis discussing these issues were embarrassed by these incidents that brought shame to their community.

Other families found ways to maximize the amount of assistance through secondary migration. Through friends and social networks, a few Iraqis believed that their financial situation could be improved by migrating to Syracuse, as it is a city with relatively higher welfare rates than other areas in the country. Although many families have migrated to Syracuse, (three families from Alabama, one family from Alaska, one family from Virginia, and another family from a state that the interviewee wished not to be mentioned) two families could be interviewed. Regarding the family from Alabama, the Iraqi man stated that he had moved from Alabama with the rest of his family because of the dismal job opportunities in Alabama, and because public assistance rates in Syracuse were higher than in other parts of the country. Friends in Syracuse relayed this information to the family when they lived in Alabama. He also told me that his father and brother had moved to another State with their families in order to access the job market and even higher rates of public assistance. However, the Iraqi interviewed decided to stay in Syracuse as he found employment and is now able to provide for his family.

Regarding the other secondary migrant family (who did not want his first state of resettlement to be mentioned), this family migrated to Syracuse to access longer and better assistance, and to flee the conflicts between Iraqi families in this state. (This man did not want me to use any of his biographical data. He prefers not to associate with anyone in the Iraqi community.)

301 Ohara, J. (2011, November 17). Welfare fraud raid in Onondaga county nets 41 arrests involving more than \$600,000 in stolen benefits. The Post Standard. Retrieved from http://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2010/11/welfare_fraud_raid_nets_41_arr.html

B. Employment


As mentioned, out of 35 families, 16 had at least one member employed; 11 were unemployed; and 9 were ineligible for employment due to age or medical reasons. Out of 15 individuals, 9 were employed, and 6 were unemployed. Out of the 11 families unemployed, four of these families had heads of household who were in their late fifties; two families were studying to recertify their degrees; and one family was in their early sixties. Out of the 6 individuals unemployed, four were fifty or older. The circumstances regarding Iraqi employment will be discussed to shed light on some the reasons certain Iraqis are employed and others are unemployed.

As mentioned, many Iraqi refugees come from highly educated and highly skilled backgrounds. The main criticism of employment services available to these Iraqis is that most employment service providers are unfamiliar with the recertification and re-licensing processes for doctors and other skilled refugees to begin working in their field. Even if they were more familiar, the cost of recertification/re-licensing is sometimes an impossible barrier to gaining meaningful employment. There are also issues regarding age. Many Iraqis with medical degrees are over the age of fifty and they say that it is difficult to start from the beginning. For example, to become a doctor again in the US, foreign-born doctors have to: pass the Certification from the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (over \$2,000.00);³⁰² complete a residency program of at least three years, regardless of previous experience; pass the United State Medical Licensing exam 3 (\$745.00);³⁰³ and finally, apply for a State license (\$735.00 in NY).³⁰⁴ This doctor said it was heartbreaking for her to realize that after working thirty years in her medical specialty in Iraq, she would be unable to practice here in America. She said that if she wanted to work in her specialty, she would have to attend 5-6 years of American education; an endeavor, she believed, to be impossible at her age. (Although she mentioned that she could become a general physician after her recertification.) An Iraqi pharmacist also expressed that it would cost him \$1,000.00 to take the exam to become a pharmacist assistant. Iraqi engineers face the same barriers, and the exams needed to become licensed are costly. Iraqi engineers, furthermore, noted that Americans were unwilling to accept their experience overseas (even if they had worked with the Americans) and noted that American engineers were unwilling to help them find work in their fields. An Iraqi dentist also confirmed that he was unable to recertify his degree. He then looked for dental assistant work, but was unable to find employment. He said that he needs an “American” degree in order to work here. He now works as a cleaning person in a hotel. Lack of American credentials and work experience were also found to inhibit Iraqis from obtaining certain types of jobs. Many said that it would be an investment in America to help the Iraqis. Most said that they would like an ‘Office of the Professions’ to help highly qualified professionals to find jobs. One Iraqi man recommended a tiered system of resettlement for highly skilled refugees to be created. He noted that: “There needs to be a graded, tiered system when resettling highly skilled refugees, for example, Grade I, II, or III. These could be sent to the places that can help them the most.” In the end, they want help recertifying their degrees so they can help America. They said that there is a free pool of talent that America can use

302 Monetary amount retrieved from the following Education Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates website: <http://www.ecfmg.org/fees/index.html>

303 Monetary amount retrieved from the following American Medical Boards website: http://www.fsmb.org/usmle_apply.html

304 Monetary amount retrieved from the following NY State Office of the Professions website: <http://www.op.nysed.gov/prof/med/medlic.htm#fees>




to better its country that it didn't pay for. One woman asked: "Why else was I brought here? To live on assistance? America will lose every educated person by not giving them a chance to participate in this society. Why did they bring us here?...Why did America choose me?" Some Iraqis expressed that they didn't want to come to the US because other countries (as in Europe, as they believed) are more efficient at resettling and recertifying highly skilled refugees. Refugees, however, are not given a choice in where they are resettled. In the end, both cost and time prohibits or discourages highly skilled Iraqis from working in their fields.

Other Iraqis are unemployed because employers are unwilling to hire the overqualified. An Iraqi doctor was rejected when she applied for a nursing job and a teacher's assistant position because she was "too qualified. This is not your place." Many Iraqis end up lying on their applications about their experience so they can get work. Even when they obtain this type of employment, most feel ashamed. One former doctor said that: "It is highly embarrassing to be doing the job that teenagers do." This has led to feelings of shame and hopelessness. For those who are overqualified, many are accepting minimum wage jobs. As many minimum wage jobs do not pay one person enough to support a family, wives are beginning to work for the first time in their lives in industries such as manufacturing or in service industries to help support the family.

The ineffectiveness of federal programs mandated to assist welfare recipients in obtaining jobs was also mentioned as a barrier to finding employment. Jobs Plus, the federal office in Syracuse responsible for placing Welfare cash assistance recipients into employment, attempts to find Iraqi refugees any job as opposed to helping them find jobs which match or are related to their skill sets. Iraqis also mentioned that Jobs Plus was unable to answer questions about recertifying their degrees or with finding jobs in their fields. There is also little language capacity at Jobs Plus to help Iraqis in their job searches. Most Iraqis have said that Jobs Plus treats them like "slaves," forcing them to perform labor or 'unpaid' volunteer work while providing no real services to help them become self-sufficient. One Iraqi woman stated that Jobs Plus threatened to take away her cash assistance if she didn't start her volunteering duties (cleaning a church) one month after giving birth to her newborn. Jobs Plus said that they would provide the child with day care while the woman cleaned the church. Another Iraqi man who was sent to the same church for unpaid "work experience," lamented:

"Why choose only church to clean it? Why don't they take people to learn something new and after that they will be ready for work...Bring refugees here to help them not to send them to work in church."

Another Iraqi commented that Jobs Plus "is not for refugees. Refugees need to be put on the right path and begin their lives first." Iraqis expressed that they have many valuable skills to contribute, but were frustrated because no one assists them or provides them with direction. Jobs Plus, as they say, is a "waste of time." Many Iraqi men expressed the view that they needed assistance and guidance in opening their own businesses. There is also the problem of credit. A few of the Iraqis that attempted to open their own businesses mentioned that they were turned down for loans because they are without credit. One of the main justifications by the US government for giving refugees IOM travel loans is that it gives refugees credit if they make timely payments. These Iraqi businessmen noted, however, that even after a year of paying off their IOM travel loan, no credit had been registered on their credit report at the banks at which they applied. One Iraqi man said: "There is no credit to open a business. Need credit. People who will lend to refugees. If they give a loan to the Iraqis, the Iraqis will help themselves. We don't want assistance. We want to assist ourselves." Some Iraqis have



been able to open their own business. Three Iraqi men were able to open their own Iraqi/Middle Eastern foods store, but they used pooled money from previous jobs and tax return funds to open the business. They also encountered issues in obtaining loans.


Misconceptions held by the host society were also thought to be causes for the lack of assistance and knowledge provided by Americans. Many, if not all, Iraqis see a difference between themselves and other refugees, and wouldn't use the word 'refugee' to describe themselves. "Most people never even lived in houses. We owned many houses. I had three garages!" noted one man. Many said they were treated like children. They said that they are highly educated, but were asked if they knew how to turn on a light switch. One Iraqi was asked if he knew what Pepsi was. Another Iraqi man said to me that "I don't come from a refugee camp." He used to own his own business and manage hundreds of people. He didn't need to be shown how to turn on a light. He wanted someone to help him open up a small business or find meaningful employment that matched his skills.

Iraqis are also abandoning their education and skills altogether and are finding new fields. For example, an aerospace engineer obtained a grant to study computer science at Syracuse University. He obtained employment in this new profession, and he recently purchased a house. There are also former Iraqi military personnel who have found jobs in the non-profit sector helping low-income families. A former civil engineer has also opened his own Iraqi/Middle Eastern store with two of his colleagues.

A few Iraqis find jobs through temporary agencies, but these jobs are unstable, they pay less than if the people did not use the temp agency, and they can be fired at any time. Most Iraqis who experienced working through a temp agency also experienced being laid off from work.

There are also, instances, however, of Iraqis either not accepting jobs or quitting jobs shortly after employment. Some Iraqis find it difficult to find jobs that match or are related to their skill sets, for an example a doctor accepting an office-cleaning job. Others do not want to work and would rather accept money from Welfare. One man asked me what is the sense of working at a job where you "kill yourself" for little money when you can receive money from welfare? There was also a sentiment that Iraqis are "waiting" until Iraq becomes a viable country again so that they can return. Others are unwilling to accept a job they are overqualified for, or because the types of jobs available are strenuous or considered "unsanitary" (like cleaning bathrooms). Others have difficulty adjusting to the American 40-hours-a-week work ethic. This can either lead to the Iraqi refugee quitting or being fired from his/her job. One Iraqi man said that he quit his job because he was living for his job and not his family. Many Iraqis have said that it is difficult to adjust to employment in the United States. In the end, however, the majority of Iraqi households had at least one person working, and most chose to have an independent life as opposed to relying on the government for assistance.

The economic downturn has also affected job prospects for those in Syracuse and in most states in America. As noted in a 2009 article in The Post Standard, Syracuse's local paper: "Two years ago, Catholic Charities and the two other refugee resettlement agencies had no problem placing 90 percent of their clients in jobs within the first three



months of their arrival. In the past six months, officials said, only about 50 percent of refugees have found work.”³⁰⁵

The picture presented above was a distressing reality for many Iraqis to accept. Iraqis were and are disappointed about not receiving a job after arrival. The men, particularly, have become stressed as they have typically been the providers and have worked outside the home. In Syracuse, many find themselves at home with the family with nothing to do. This has created anxiety, frustration, and decreased sense of self-worth. They said that being without work is a “punishment.” Some Iraqi women also find it difficult at first to adjust to a world that forces them to be outside the home and away from their children (as mentioned, Jobs Plus requires recipients of cash assistance to participate in certain activities). Other Iraqi women have traditionally worked outside the home, as teachers or doctors, and they have no problems with working and want to work. However, they want work with dignity.

C. Adjustment


In regards to adjustment, many in the Iraqi community utilized social ties in order to adjust to the challenges of living in a new society. The earliest arrivals tended to become sources of knowledge for later arrivals, and many assisted newer members to the community. The Iraqis, however, tend to form close knit groups based on social/class status, or they choose to remain distant or anonymous or form bonds with non-Iraqis. Iraqis come together for religious festivals and funerals. These are the typically the only events in which a collective support group is formed. Many also expressed that they felt estranged from the American community and said that they are unable at times to adapt to this country because the only people they know are Iraqis. Others mentioned that it was difficult to meet Americans with similar educational backgrounds and interests as the Iraqis lived and worked in low-skilled, low-educated areas and professions. Younger Iraqis, however, were making friendships as school/work life introduced them to like-minded individuals.

Adjustment has also been facilitated by participation in religious organizations. One Iraqi noted that she was grateful for the church as “it treats everyone the same way, not this is a Christian and this is a Muslim.” She found a great community in the church and made many American friends. Without the church, stated this one Iraqi, “life would be impossible.” They gave her food, clothing, furniture, and friendship. She helped organize Syracuse’s first Arabic church, where there is singing and praying in Arabic.

Other Iraqis have decided to create their own ethnic organization. The purpose of the organization was to create a group that could: speak on behalf of all Iraqis; find employment; host cultural and religious events; and serve as a forum for discussion of issues relevant to the community. However, this organization has caused great dissension in the Iraqi community, as the group is strictly organized and run by Sunni Iraqi males, and other ethnic and even gender groups are excluded from leadership roles. The organization has postponed its formation due to these conflicts.

Living arrangements were also found to be a factor in the adjustment of Iraqi refugees in Syracuse. Most Iraqis were initially resettled in homes on one street. This living arrangement was found to be problematic by all Iraqis interviewed. For example, the

305 (2009 April 20). Refugees are finding fewer job opportunities in central new york. The Post Standard. Retrieved from http://blog.syracuse.com/metrovoices/2009/04/refugees_are_finding_fewer_job.html



Iraqis were concerned as they were not living amongst Americans and English is not spoken. They also found it to be sectarian. Several verbal conflicts between Sunni and Shia families have occurred, and these conflicts have spilled over into the schools through the children of these families. A few have mentioned conditions in Iraq as a major sense of contention. One Iraqi man noted that “Baghdad has become Iran,” meaning that Iran has taken over the Shia-led Iraqi government. Many of the refugees said they escaped Iraq to get away from sectarianism; yet in America, the conflicts have followed them. The living arrangements, coupled with unemployment, have also created a “gossip culture” where everyone talks about the other. Jealousies are fomented and misinformation is spread. Furthermore, Iraqis engaging in questionable behaviors (welfare fraud, etc.) spread these ideas to others in the community. In regards to adjustment, therefore, Iraqis have noted that it has been difficult to build a new life when they have been resettled into the old life. The refugees expected to be resettled into America, and not ‘little Baghdad.’ They said that it has caused psychological problems. Most Iraqi refugees have, or are trying, to find apartments in other areas of the city. Most of them state that they want little to do with other Iraqis, and that they want to begin newer, more peaceful (and quieter) lives.

Some Iraqis also expressed concern about the loss of culture, and the adjustment to American life. Some expressed concern that women were becoming “un-Iraqi” by unveiling and going to nightclubs. There was also a concern with some of the men as there have been incidents of sexual harassment against women (both Iraqi and other). One Iraqi man has also been accused of raping an American woman and may be deported.³⁰⁶ One man expressed his shame at the men by stating: “what has happened to them. Have they forgot their country? Forgot their culture?” Most of the Iraqi refugees were deeply shamed by this behavior, and felt that their countrymen were dishonoring the Iraqi community.

Many Iraqis are keeping to themselves particularly due to the negative behaviors seen in the community (welfare fraud, sectarianism, gossip, sexual harassment, etc.). One woman declared: “Never did I see these people (in Iraq) in my life! How did these people get here while my family who are doctors are waiting for years (to be resettled in the US)!” One Iraqi man wondered: “how the most powerful country on earth allow the bad Iraqis in and keep the good out? The UN does not know the refugees!” The man expressing this sentiment, and others like him was concerned that members of the Ba’ath party were gaining admittance to the US and living in Syracuse, and that he was worried that this would cause trouble for the Iraqis who wanted to live peacefully and begin new lives in America. There was also a widespread sentiment within the community that many Iraqis resettled in America are not in fact refugees, but are opportunists who are looking for a ‘waiting area’ until Iraq becomes stable again. Interviewees noted strategies used by others such as writing down your persecution story in order to repeat the same details for US interviewers. Many Iraqis expressed anger that “liars and criminals” reached American shores but “good” Iraqis were left stranded in Iraq and neighboring countries. Iraqis became particularly upset when their friends or relatives who had helped the US government in Iraq were still waiting for Special Immigrant Visas years after they assisted the US government.

306 O'Hara, J. (2012, January 18). Iraqi immigrant faces lengthy prison sentence for rape/sodomy conviction. The Post Standard. Retrieved from: http://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2012/01/Iraqi_immigrant_faces_lengthy.html




D. Future Plans

Given the above experiences, those interviewed were asked what they envisioned for their future lives. The majority wanted to live in America in order to provide for their children. Many parents said that they were grateful to have American education for their children and it made them happy to see their children learning and being accepted into universities. Others commented that their lives were threatened in Iraq, for either working with the US military or sectarian reasons, and therefore America would become their new home, as return seemed unsafe. One Iraqi man, noting both a sense of futility and optimism, said: “there is no hope me and my wife, but there is hope for my children.”

Other responses were quite varied. One man said that he might go back to Jordan to work and keep his family here. Another man said that if there is stability in Iraq, he would go back. Two families mentioned that they would have stayed in Syria if they had any idea that life would be this challenging, and one secondary migrant said that he would have remained in Baghdad had he of known that he would not work in his field or be able to support his family. One of these families said to me: “*American+Dream? What dream? In Syria, we had everything. Here, we have nothing.” Others said they would stay if they can find a good house and a good job that is related to their skills, stating that: “If find a good job, might stay. Or obtain higher degree, and then go back to Iraq.” One doctor actually returned to Iraq after almost two years in Syracuse. Many of the Iraqi SIVs echoed the sentiment that once higher education was obtained they would go back home or elsewhere if no jobs were available. A few families noted that they might leave after obtaining US citizenship, on their belief that: “If you have American citizenship, they will not kick you out of their country.” Others believed that American citizenship would grant them access to higher paying salaries in Iraq or the Middle East on the belief that employers would be willing to pay a higher salary for those with American passports. Most families noted that American citizenship was important. Some relayed that American citizenship is a passport of access, and with it, access to countries and possibilities elsewhere will be much easier to obtain. One said to me that an American passport makes you “untouchable.” Most families noted that American citizenship was important, but this was in relation to situations outside the US and not related to life within the US.

V. Comparison of Iraqis Refugees with Other Refugee Groups

The above data shows that some similarities and differences between Iraqi refugees and other groups of refugees exist. In regards to similarities, all refugees resettled in the US must enter through the USRAP that means that they all receive the same core services by resettlement agencies required by the Cooperative Agreement with the State Department. They all receive the same amounts of monetary assistance from the Cooperative Agreement (approximately \$900.00 per person as a one-time welcome payment). They also have access to Welfare through Public Assistance, Food Stamps and Medicaid, although this varies by state. All refugees who accessed the USRAP also paid for their flight to America with an IOM Travel Loan, and they experience issues related to this loan (not having credit even though they have paid their loans.) Across the US, refugees open their own businesses, yet Iraqis tend to open them quicker than other groups (perhaps due to the availability of funds overseas). Refugees begin their own ethnic organizations and committees. Most refugees deal with loss of culture after resettlement. Many also encounter divisions within their national group that followed them from the country of origin. Former persecutors, and terrorists, have



also entered through the USRAP including Iraqis (Baath party members, as well as terrorists) and Somalis (the Shabaab and Al-Qadea) as well as Palestinian and Yemeni refugees. Many refugees also entertain the idea of returning to their home country.

The main differences between Iraqis and other groups of refugees are demographic differences, specifically in relation to education. In relation to the data collected, 80% of Iraqi refugees were educated at a high school level or higher upon arrival. Furthermore, 36.2% of those had university degrees upon arrival. When combined with the number of Iraqis enrolled in university for the first time after arrival, the percentage of those with higher than a high school education becomes 43.8% of Iraqi refugees. These numbers are greater than any other refugee group. This is not to say that other members of refugee groups are neither highly skilled nor educated. However, the percentage of the population who are highly skilled and educated is much less when compared to the Iraqi refugees. The Iraqis also tend to be wealthier than other refugees, and generally they have access to funds from overseas. Also, most are able to receive money from home. While other groups of refugees tend to send money back home, Iraqis are receiving money from home.


Due to this high level of education, Iraqis also experience loss of status and dignity when their resettlement experience fails to live up to their previous lives. They encounter barriers when looking for employment due to their high qualifications, and they experience employment programs that are unable to assist them because of their high qualifications. When they do find employment, they experience shame and embarrassment in working in menial positions. Some are not accepting jobs due to this loss of status.

There are also behaviors present in the Iraqi community that have not been seen in other communities, for example: sexual harassment and criminal behavior (abuse of the welfare systems has been seen in other refugee groups, like Palestinians and some African groups, but not at the same levels); secondary migration in order to obtain better welfare benefits; and leaving America once higher education/US citizenship is obtained. There is also a general sentiment within the Iraqi refugee community that they themselves are not refugees. They do not view themselves as “coming from a camp,”³⁰⁷ but coming from a country with thousands of years of culture and learning, and one that is highly educated. Iraq, when compared to other refugee producing countries, has historically had higher levels of education, health, and income, than other refugee producing countries.

VI. Summary

Chapter 3 provided characteristics of Iraqi refugees and their resettlement experiences in Syracuse, New York. The data showed that: the refugees were equally divided by gender as 98 were male and 93 were female; 53% of the population (102 individuals) was between the ages of one and twenty; most were Arabs, followed by small numbers of Kurds and Assyrians; the majority were Sunni, followed by Shia, SabeanMandean, and Christian; are highly skilled and educated - 80% of Iraqi refugees 18 years or older were educated at a high school level or higher upon arrival and 36.2% of those had university degrees upon arrival; and most were employed.

³⁰⁷ In the 1990s, some Iraqis did live in camps on the Saudi and Iraqi border, yet this was not a large population. Also, today only half of all refugees come from camps, and two-thirds are living in urban areas.



Chapter 3 also depicted the resettlement experiences of those interviewed. It detailed systems of support they must rely on, such as the refugee centers, social services from Welfare, and social networks, and the challenges they face in accessing such services. Services were also found to be limited and ineffective. Most were shocked with the low levels of support, both social and monetary, received, as they believed their overseas orientations did not prepare them for the realities of life in America. Some chose to obtain services through illegal means in order to support their families as opposed to finding employment. Others preferred to receive government benefits as opposed to working in labor-intensive minimum wage jobs.

Many highly skilled refugees found it difficult to recertify degrees or to work in their professions. Many of the older refugees find it impossible to start over from the beginning. Some refuse to accept jobs that “teenagers do.” Others desire to open their own businesses but have difficulties in doing so due to lack of credit and knowledge about the American system. Some have discovered careers outside of their areas of expertise.

Social relations between some Iraqis were strained due to certain behaviors within the community, and some refugees chose to remain absent from the larger community. In regards to future plans, some were considering returning to the Middle East once education or US citizenship was obtained; others were uncertain, and were waiting to see how conditions in Iraq unfold; and many decided to remain in the United States, especially those who had children.

The above discussion regarding the experiences of resettled Iraqi refugees will be analyzed in the following chapter in order to examine the integration of Iraqi refugees within the resettling community. Challenges for Iraqis as well as the receiving society will be examined.



Chapter 5. The Iraqi Model of Integration: Impacts for Refugees and Host Societies

In this Chapter, the Iraqi refugee experience in Syracuse, NY will be compared to the literature review regarding refugee resettlement and integration. Various aspects of Iraqi integration will be discussed, and implications for the refugees as well as the host society will be provided. Finally, conclusions for the study will be presented.

I. Integration and Iraqi Refugees in Syracuse


As mentioned, the majority of the research regarding refugee resettlement is focused on the topic of refugees and integration. This body of literature and its findings will be compared to the findings of this study. The purpose of this endeavor will be to discern any similarities or differences in order to come about the best way in which integration can be viewed in the Iraqi case. A few questions will arise from this comparison. For example, do integration findings within the research differ from the Iraqi case? If so, is there something particular about the Iraqi refugee that produces different integration outcomes when compared to other studies? Are there findings within this study that apply specifically to Iraqi refugees or to all refugees who are resettled? And finally, can scholars make general statements regarding integration outcomes, or will they find that integration varies depending upon life experiences and host society conditions? To begin, Ager and Strang's framework for refugee integration will be used as a basis for the comparison of the literature to the Iraqi case. Other findings by other scholars will be brought into this discussion as they relate to the framework. Finally, findings unrelated to Ager and Strang's framework will be mentioned in order to present a more comprehensive view of the findings in this study.

Ager and Strang found four categories of integration: markers and means; social connections; facilitators; and foundation. These categories will be analyzed below.

Markers and Means

The first category in Ager and Stang's theoretical framework includes the markers and means of integration: employment, housing, education, and health. Most Iraqis have access to these four components. The majority of households have at least one person employed; housing is affordable, yet not always preferable (as many Iraqis live on one street); all children have access to education, and many adults are attending college (unlike the findings in Valtonen's study on the Iraqi refugees in Finland who failed to gain access to higher education); health care is accessible, yet not always timely. In Ager and Stang's view, the Iraqis should therefore be participating and engaging in the society due to employment, education, and healthcare, and they should feel somewhat settled with appropriate housing.

While these components can be means of integration for many, are they necessarily means for the Iraqi refugees? Many Iraqis have access to all four components, but it is doubtful that they would find themselves integrated. For example, is the quality of housing similar to the quality of housing before flight (i.e., one of the Iraqis recalled that his house had three garages, and the house he has now is the size of one room. Of course, not all Iraqis come from such an affluent background, but most explained that the quality of their homes was better before arrival.) Also, they may have access to health care, but is it the same level of health care they had before arrival? Many Iraqis have noted their frustrations with the healthcare system in the US, especially the long wait times to see a physician (whereas in the Middle East access to health




care was easier.) Most would agree, however, that the education system is beneficial, and they are happy to see their children attending American schools and universities. Some Iraqis, like some of the SIVs interviewed, came for this purpose (to obtain higher education and then return to Iraq or the Middle East for a higher salary, if possible). Would they necessarily be integrated if they plan on returning after higher education is obtained? Furthermore, most Iraqis are employed, but it is doubtful that they would consider themselves integrated due to this employment. As noted, many Iraqis have taken an occupational downgrade and do not feel fully satisfied with employment. It therefore seems that employment, education, housing, and healthcare are not necessarily markers of integration in the Iraqi case.

In relation to Ager and Stang's focus on employment, other scholars have focused on the economic integration of refugees. For example, many scholars found demographic characteristics to be essential to economic integration. Demographic characteristics like age and education can help to explain, to a certain degree, employment outcomes for the Iraqis. For example, out of the 11 families with no one employed, four had heads of household in their late fifties and two had heads of household in their early sixties. Of the six unemployed, four were fifty or older. Typically, the only jobs available are low-wage, labor-intensive jobs, especially for those whose English skills are not advanced. These Iraqis said that it was difficult, given their age, to work in such positions. Most of these people also were educated at a Bachelor's degree or higher. Age, therefore, could be a factor for unemployment (a similar finding was found the Danish study which found welfare dependency 64% for those aged more than 35 years at the time of migration) and demographic characteristics may not always predict employment outcomes.

Education was also an indicator of employment. As mentioned in this study, 80% of those who are 18 years and older upon arrival have a high school education or higher, and this could lead to higher employment outcomes within the Iraqi community when compared to other less educated refugee communities. However, studies by Takeda and Al-Rasheed found that the Iraqis with higher levels of education had the highest unemployment rates, as they did not wish to accept menial jobs. Likewise, in this study, many Iraqis have problems finding work that matches their skill sets, and some were unwilling to accept menial jobs. This has hindered employment prospects, or frustrated some to the point of not working (especially since some were informed before departure that they would be able to work in their previous professions).

There is also a segment of the Iraqi community that is unemployed, and these individuals have widely varying demographic characteristics. Khulman's emphasis on other factors would help to explain these employment outcomes. For example:

1. *Flight Experiences* (specifically, attitude toward displacement and native country): a few Iraqis stated that their living conditions were better overseas and that they were waiting to return. Similarly, Al-Rasheed noted that the Iraqi community in London viewed their stay in Britain as temporary, and were thereby less likely to develop an employment commitment to the host society. This concept could be useful in explaining why some Iraqis in this study choose not to engage in employment as they are awaiting citizenship in the hopes that this will lead to greater gains over seas.




2. *Experiences within the Host Country:* many Iraqis have been unable to recertify/re-license their degrees due to cost or time issues (as many other scholars have found of highly skilled refugees). This has led some to become frustrated, especially when they are not hired for positions they are overqualified for. These people, usually those over fifty years of age, remain unemployed as opposed to working in jobs that are physically demanding, low-wage, menial professions. The recession has also affected job opportunities, and the unemployment rate remains high across the country. This means that there is greater competition for all jobs. Other Iraqis were also prohibited from opening businesses or obtaining small loans because they did not have credit, even though they had paid off the IOM travel loan. Government agencies were also unable to help Iraqis recertify or re-licensure (particularly the cost of doing so) or to find jobs related to their skill sets. Furthermore, limited assistance programs resettled Iraqis into lives of poverty and government dependence, and therefore limit upward mobility.

3. *Policy Characteristics:* The federal welfare program is unable to provide refugees with a fresh start in America as it relegates families to low-income, high-crimes areas; provides limited assistance; and poor job prospects. Some Iraqis chose to remain unemployed in order to receive government assistance as opposed to working. A few chose to migrate to other states in search of higher assistance rates (a finding also made by Takeda of Iraqis in the US in 2000, as well as by Borjas – although, Borjas was speaking mainly of Latin American immigrants to the US). A few others also chose to abuse the system by faking illnesses in order to obtain greater assistance. These individuals had to become familiar with the regulations of this welfare system in order to abuse this system and remain unemployed. Furthermore, the US governmental system is unprepared for resettling highly educated and skilled refugees, as evidenced in the ineffectiveness of its jobs programs (these findings are similar to those found of European/American governmental programs in the literature review). Other Iraqis took advantage of non-profit services in the area and obtained education to start new professions. In regards to international policies, many Iraqis were given general orientations that they felt did not prepare them for the life in America. They did not know to have transcripts, and did not have time to sell their belongings or close bank accounts. (Iraqis also mentioned inadequate orientations in the Dearborn study.)

4. *Residency Characteristics:* secondary migration was a factor seen in the Iraqi community. Some families migrated from other states in order to access better job markets and higher rates of public cash assistance (this finding was also made by Takeda of the Iraqis in the US in 2000). One family was able to access employment in Syracuse after migrating from a state with high unemployment.

5. *Non-Economic Factors:* Adaptation stresses did seem to affect the lives of some Iraqis. The loss of status and prestige; depression; and frustration with the realities of their new lives all caused stress for the Iraqi refugees. As the literature shows, adapting to a new culture can be especially difficult for those who had idealized expectations. Many Iraqis were told that they would be able to work in their fields and that the government would provide enough assistance to maintain a dignified life. The realities, however, did not match with the expectations, and this disappointment could affect integration. Acculturation issues have also affected integration as some of the Iraqi men have been implicated in sexual harassment against women. These types of behaviors are not conducive to productive lives.




Economic integration, therefore, may not always be predicted by demographic characteristics, but rather by a combination of the home and host country factors noted above: demographic characteristics; flight experiences; experiences within the host country; policy characteristics; residency characteristics; and non-economic factors.

In relation to economic integration, many scholars have found economic disparities between refugees and other members of the host society. Connor found a “refugee gap” between refugees and immigrants in the United States as refugees have less education abroad; are less likely to have a spouse in the home; and they have a higher amount of minor children in the home. They also tend to live in neighborhoods with more migrants, as opposed to non-immigrant migrants, as they migrate to where other co-ethnics live. Contrary to the findings of Connor, this study found that the Iraqis have extremely high levels of education when compared to other refugees (and even Americans); and the majority has two-parent households. Many have minor children in the home, but this does not prevent Iraqis from obtaining economic integration. Furthermore, in this study, Iraqis tend to move away from one another, as opposed to migrating towards other co-ethnics. Connor’s research, therefore, does not seem to apply in this case. Waxman also found a gap, but attributed this gap to: types of support networks; recognition of credentials obtained abroad; the cultural gap between the sending and receiving country; racial discrimination; and refugee motivations and expectations. Waxman’s findings on economic integration of refugees relates more to this study as many Iraqis: lack social connections with Americans with like-minded interests and education who could possibly provide social capital; have difficulties in recertifying their degrees which has hindered economic integration; and they have various motivations for working or not working, and some have expectations of obtaining higher education or out-migrating.

Franz also found that individual initiative had a strong impact on economic integration. Takeda, and Mestheneos and Ioannidi also noted that the motivation of the refugee has an overall impact on integration. The individual’s drive to succeed, therefore, could also explain why some tend to be able to find new fields of work (for example, the aerospace engineer and former military officer who began new careers) and make social connections while others do not.

Social Connections

The second category of Ager and Strang’s theoretical model is social connections, which include: social bonds, social bridges, and social links. Social bonds (bonds between Iraqis) have both positive and negative outcomes. Positively, social bonds have created communal support as earlier arrivals have assisted with new arrivals of Iraqis and have served as bases of knowledge. The community has also come together in times of religious festivals or funerals. Negatively, however, division and conflict have been fomented due to some of the attempts at building social bonds; for example, the creation of the Iraqi ethnic organization. Studies by Al-Rasheed, Shueb et al, and Takeda also found evidence of group conflict among resettled Iraqis as they note that resettled refugees can bring such divisions into host societies, and these divisions can be reproduced by the creation of ethnic organizations. In addition, this situation seems to challenge Metheneos and Ioannidi’s claim that: “Refugees with their active participation in their own advocacy bodies and as advisors are good agents in facilitating integration.” In the Iraqi case, a general advocacy body could neither be created nor agreed upon due to the divisions within the Iraqi community itself (Sunni/Shia; male/female; class divisions). Integration was not facilitated through the attempted creation of an ethnic group; it was hindered as conflict was created. Other



Iraqis have also been involved in sectarianism, and therefore social bonds between these individuals seem unlikely.

The Iraqis in this study also tended to form close-knit groups based on social/class status, or they chose to remain distant or anonymous as to keep away from the gossip and troubles of the community. Social bonds within the Iraqi community are important therefore only in the sense when the Iraqis chose which bonds to form. Social bonds between Iraqis therefore do not necessarily need to be present in order for Iraqis to be integrated as some choose not to form these bonds, and others are selective in which bonds to form and which bonds to avoid. This finding seems to challenge Larsen's claim that: "Not being surrounded by a network of kinsmen nor having the opportunity to form new family-like relations with co-ethnics within one's local surroundings can therefore seriously affect the ability of refugee families to establish a new life." In the Iraqi, example, however, most wished to detach themselves from the surrounding Iraqi community due to differences in social/class status or to keep away from problems. Furthermore, being surrounded by co-ethnics can have a negative effect on the refugees' ability to start a new life, as demonstrated in the living situation of the Iraqis. Many experienced living on one street where English was never spoken, gossip was created, and conflicts generated. Furthermore, co-ethnics may not always provide the best links and information on the host society, as they could provide the newcomers with wrong information and negative habits (abuse of the welfare system, conflicts in belief, etc.).

In regards to social bridges (relationships outside the community), Iraqis seem to possess weak bridges, as relationships with other communities rarely exist. Many of the Iraqis live or lived on one street with other Iraqis, and therefore bridges with other communities were not possible. Also, bridges are difficult to form as many of the Americans in the surrounding area (low-income/low-education) as well in the workplace share few similarities with the Iraqis. Even if there are social bridges, these may not necessarily be satisfactory for the Iraqis (i.e., the one Iraqi man who said he thought he was being resettled into America, not Somalia – similar to the African woman in Glasgow who noted that she was resettled into an area with 'junkies' and criminals.) This situation seems to challenge, to a degree, the claim made by Valtonen that: "Employment is a source of contact without groups and gives scope for networking and building social capital into the wider community." This situation could be negatively effecting integration. Some Iraqis, however, have made connections through employment with non-Iraqis and these have led to friendships and access to information. Others, however, were forming social bridges with other communities, especially the Iraqi youth, and others who were employed. These relationships could be providing Iraqis with support and sources of information. I

In regards to social links (relationships with the structures of the state which allow the refugee to access services), most Iraqis have access to services available to them from the government and from the resettlement agencies. For all, however, access does not mean that the quality of services is sufficient (the levels of welfare assistance, employment services, difficulties recertifying credentials, etc.). The majority of Iraqis also feel shame and embarrassment for accepting 'charity' from others, as Takeda and Al-Rasheed also noted, and so the relationship with the state is not necessarily positive (even though they are grateful for assistance). Furthermore, there are those that abuse the system, and this relationship is not conducive to integration. In the end, they may have access to social links, but this does not mean that this is an indicator of integration as the access is insufficient, demeaning, for most, and distorted for those who abuse the relationship.




Facilitators

Ager and Stang's facilitators of integration are: language and cultural knowledge, and safety and stability. Language and cultural knowledge are facilitators, and for the Iraqis with these skills, life is easier as they are able to interact with the surrounding environment. However, English language/cultural knowledge do not presume a higher quality of living. Most Iraqis with English language are highly educated, and these Iraqis are also more likely to be experiencing occupational downgrade and the shame and frustration that accompany this experience. Furthermore, a segment of the Iraqi population chose to use its knowledge of the system in unproductive ways (scamming monetary benefits). In the end, language and cultural knowledge are not always indicators of integration. Most Iraqis are safe, but for those who are living on one street, many would not call their situation stable as conflicts emerge from this arrangement. Furthermore, as Carter and Osborne noted, "poor housing circumstances inhibit integration and lead to poor health, educational and employment opportunities and attempts to rebuild social and family life." These living arrangements could, in the end, have a negative effect on Iraqi integration. Also, the fear of losing welfare benefits did not create a stable environment.

Foundation

Finally, the foundation of integration for Ager and Strang is rights and citizenship. Iraqi refugees enjoy the same rights as other refugees. As they are non-citizens, however, they are prohibited from certain political rights (nominating candidates, voting in elections, holding public office) and other rights (applying for certain jobs in the federal government and petitioning to bring family members to the US). In the Iraqi example, however, obtaining citizenship does not necessarily mean that the Iraqis will fully and equally participate in society, as some wish to leave the United States once citizenship has been obtained. Others may leave after obtaining higher education if they cannot find jobs in America. In a sense, 'the myth of return' mentality was seen in a few participants as some mentioned they would return after citizenship or after certain goals were obtained in America. Unlike studies by Al-Rasheed and Shoeb et al that found that the majority-identified Iraqi Arabs entertained the myth of return while the event-alienated did not entertain the myth of return, this study found that Iraqis from various spectrums (social, class, religious) entertained the myth. The return mentality was also seen to inhibit economic integration as a few were 'waiting things out' until the day they could return as opposed to working and starting a new life in America (Al-Rasheed and Shoeb et al had similar findings). In the end, Ager and Strang make the assumption that refugees plan on remaining in the countries in which they are resettled. However, this is not always the case, as the Iraqi study demonstrates.

Gender was not included in Ager and Strang's model, and a brief discussion of gender and the Iraqi case will be provided here. Due to state welfare policies that require those receiving public cash assistance to engage in certain activities (like employment, volunteering, English classes, etc.) many Iraqi women are beginning to venture outside the home. While some noted that this transition was difficult at first, most have adapted to this new reality. Most Iraqi women enjoyed the English classes provided by agencies in Syracuse, and they attended them frequently. Others have traditionally worked outside the home, and so employment was not a new concept. Widows (and widowers) did tend to have difficulties in raising their children and fulfilling requirements related to the state welfare program (as mentioned in other studies).



As the above comparison attempts to show, Ager and Strang's theoretical framework for refugee integration seems deficient in explaining most aspects of integration for the Iraqi refugees in this study. This is not to say that it is not a good beginning, as Ager and Strang have highlighted factors that inhibit many refugees from obtaining integration. This is to say that the model does not apply entirely in the Iraqi case. First, the model provides a list of components, but does not mention the level of quality of the components or what these components mean to the refugees. For example, employment, housing, and healthcare are not necessarily markers of integration in the Iraqi case. Social connections do not necessarily predict integration outcomes as many choose to form or not form connections, and others distort connections with the state. Facilitators of integration were also present, yet these did not necessarily lead to integration. Finally, the foundation of citizenship does not provide integration as some Iraqis have chosen to leave after citizenship is obtained. In other words, a refugee could possess all ten of the components of integration and not be integrated. The model fails to comprehend what the indicators mean to the refugee. If the indicators are of little significance to the refugee, how can they be integrated based on these indicators?


Secondly, the model focuses on factors acting upon the refugee after arrival and fails to include factors that have already acted upon the refugee before arrival and how these factors relate to integration. These factors have helped to shape the ways in which refugees make sense of their lives, what intentions have been formed, and how they choose to interact with their new society. These scholars, therefore, erase the perhaps decades of existence that refugees have experienced before arriving to the country of resettlement. Their model fails to include this refugee experience, and therefore fails to fully explain the integration of Iraqis found in this study.

As Ager and Strang's model (and the models of many other scholars) fails to include pre-arrival experiences, the model ignores the realities lived by Iraqis since the invasion of the British, the subsequent political and ethnic conflicts, the formation of the Ba'ath party, Saddam's rise to power, and finally the US-led invasion of Iraq and the subsequent worldwide displacement of Iraqi refugees. Perhaps, this history has had lasting effects on the Iraqi population. Saddam Hussein terrorized Iraq for over 25 years, and the system of fear and repression he created indelibly changed the Iraqi people. As Makiya noted, Saddam created a society: "built on distrust, suspicion, conspiratorialism, and betrayal." These values infected the society and "Every Iraqi today, whether in the opposition or outside it, carries the marks of that victimhood deep inside."³⁰⁸ In Saddam's Iraq, Iraqi citizens became complicit in the crimes of the regime, by 'informing' on one another, by spying on their neighbors, or by reporting disobedient activity. Everyone was a suspect, and anyone could be demoted, fired, kidnapped, or killed without reason given. Family members became suspicious of one another. Parents became afraid of their own children. In this environment, lying and deception became an art form in the struggle for survival.

Saddam also fueled sectarianism throughout his reign as the Kurds and Shi'a were persecuted, displaced, and killed. Fundamentally, "the depths of division within Iraqi society and repeated cycles of violence during its modern history have heavily shaped Iraq's political culture and social mores."³⁰⁹ These sectarian wounds were reopened

308 Makiya, K. (1998). *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq*, University of California: Berkeley and Los Angeles, xxx.

309 Bengio, O. (1998). *Saddam's Word: Political Discourse in Iraq*, Oxford University Press: New York, 53.



after the US invasion, and the distrust and hatred engendered throughout this history have followed the Iraqis into countries of asylum.

Endless war and disaster have also plagued the lives of Iraqis for over fifty years. Iraqis have resided in 'survival mode,' living from one war to the next, from one occupation to another, tragedy after tragedy. In the opinion here, this has forced many to become expert 'maximizers' or 'survivalists' as repression and war limited access to daily necessities, and rations from the government were inadequate and salaries insufficient. Some turned to the black market, theft, bribery, and prostitution. Others sold their belongings, and found additional work. During the sanctions, life in Iraq became tentative, and no one knew if what they had today would exist tomorrow. In this uncertainty, Iraqis made a living through any means possible, and the sanctions had the effect of turning "Iraqi's attention on sheer survival."³¹⁰

Life in the country of asylum further led to this survival mentality, as many Iraqi refugees lived (and live) on dwindling savings, are forced to sell their belongings, or worse, enter into prostitution and child labor. UN rations are limited, and many work in unstable, 'illegal' positions as many are prohibited from working. Furthermore, countries of asylum do not provide Iraqis with visas, and so they can be removed from the country at any time.

Pre-arrival experiences for the Iraqis are also heavily influenced by the actions of the United States. The US has been active in Iraqi affairs for over a half a century. During the years of the Cold War, the United States was instrumental in forming the Baghdad Pact of 1955 that committed the nations of Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, the UK and the US into mutual protection if one was attacked by the USSR. It also supplied Iraq with military equipment.³¹¹ Furthermore, during the Cold War, the US supported Saddam Hussein in the war against Iran, a war in which his regime committed genocide and human rights abuses against the Kurds and Shia. In 1992, the US went to war with Iraq and was instrumental in the sanctioning of the Saddam Regime. Finally, in 2003, the US invaded Iraq that has led to the loss of over 100,000 Iraqi lives and the displacement of millions. Perhaps, this history of involvement has affected the Iraqis perception of America, especially as the US has been one of the causes of death and destruction in the lives of many Iraqis, and is perceived to be 'stealing' Iraqi oil. The interaction, therefore, between the home and host society could also affect the lives of Iraqis after they are resettled into their new country of asylum.

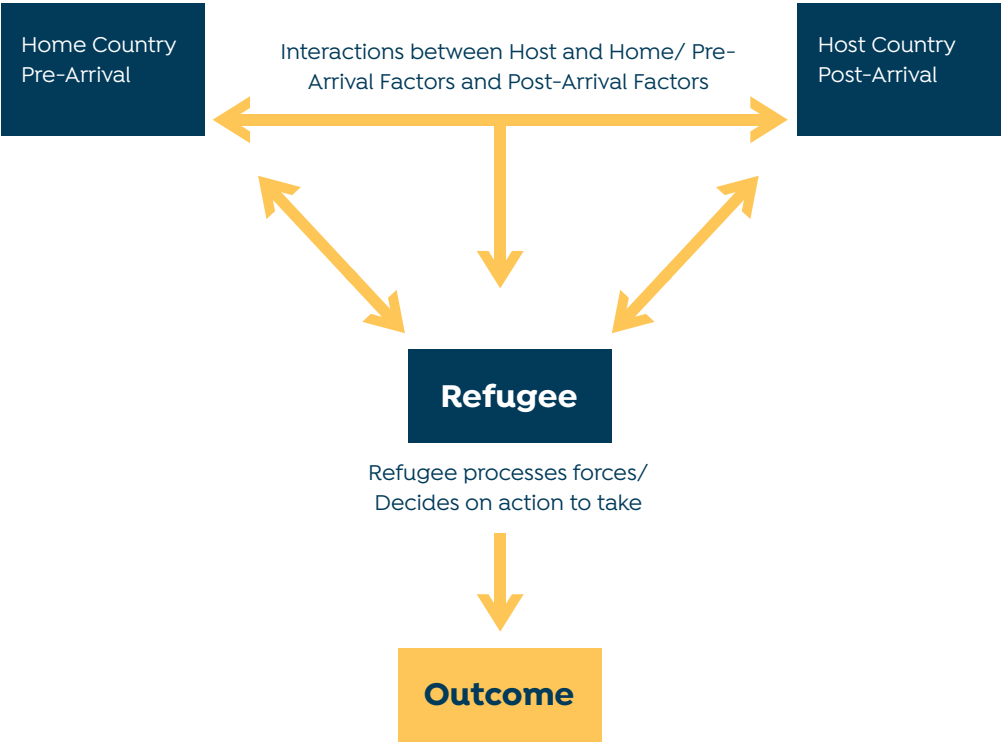
In the end, the pre-arrival characteristics for most Iraqi refugees are turbulent, forcing many into modes of survival. Pre-arrival lives for most Iraqis were filled with uncertainty and insecurity. Iraqis, therefore, had to become expert maximizers, finding ways to stay alive. This survival mentality could affect the ways in which some Iraqi refugees view their positions in resettled countries. Pre-arrival characteristics were also heavily influenced by the actions of the United States, and this may have some influence on the ways in which the Iraqis choose to integrate within America. In this sense, a model of refugee integration which does not take into consideration both pre- and post-arrival experiences, as well as how the refugee reacts with these forces and decides on their own outcomes, will fail to explain integration in the Iraqi refugee community within this study. Perhaps, Figure 1 adequately provides a model of the forces acting

³¹⁰Cordseman, A.H. and Hashim, A.S. (1997) *Iraq: Sanctions and Beyond*. Westview Press: Boulder. 155.

³¹¹ Tripp, C. (2007). *A History of Iraq*, 3rd edition. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. 136.

upon Iraqi refugees resettled within the United States. This model, the various pre- and post-arrival forces acting upon the refugee, and the possible integration outcomes seen within the Iraqi community in Syracuse will be discussed below, along with final conclusions.

Figure 1. Forces Impacting Iraqi Refugee Integration




II. Forces Impacting Iraqi Integration and their Implications for the Refugees and the Receiving Community

With the notion that refugee integration involves the convergence of various pre- and post-arrival factors and individual refugee decisions, what does integration mean when applied to the Iraqi refugees and the receiving community of Syracuse, New York? In other words, what are the implications of refugee integration for the Iraqis and for the receiving community? The model above will be used to evaluate Iraqi refugee integration within the following categories: pre-arrival factors; interaction of pre-arrival factors and host country factors; host country factors; and refugee decision-making.

A. Pre-Arrival Factors and Implications

Before the Iraqis became refugees, the majority were raised, educated and worked in Iraq. As noted, the Iraqi refugee population is highly educated and highly skilled. Approximately 80% of the Iraqis interviewed who were 18 years or older obtained a high school education or higher; 36.2% had obtained university education or higher; and 43.8% had obtained university education or higher or were studying to obtain such education (the percentage has increased since the time of interviews). Of those working in Iraq, previous professions included doctors; dentists; military leaders; engineers; mechanics; teachers; pharmacists; lawyers; business owners; farmers; and other tradecrafts. Almost every Iraqi family had a member in the household, if not multiple members, who were highly skilled and highly educated. In bringing such




a population to the United States, resettling communities have gained a wealth of knowledge and skills that it did not pay for. It has gained vital skills and experience which could financially benefit the community, granted that 'brain waste' is limited and that the refugee intends or is motivated to start anew in the US (to be discussed below). This level of education and skills, perhaps, helps to explain how many Iraqi families and individuals have at least one member in the family employed.

The Iraqis economically impact the community in other ways. Unlike most refugees, the Iraqis are resettled with access to funds from abroad, whether through personal savings or money from family members (it was also mentioned that borrowing money from family members due to economic difficulties in the US was deeply shameful and distressing for those who had to ask). Due to this access, most Iraqis are able to buy modest furniture, household items, necessities, and cars upon arrival. They are also buying homes and opening small businesses. The Iraqis pay taxes, and for those who own businesses, they supply people with jobs. They spend their savings and their paychecks in the community, and they are investing in their new lives.

Some Iraqis also pose economic challenges to the receiving community due to pre-arrival factors. Due to the lifestyle in Iraq, some Iraqis are not used to working an American '40-hour-per-week' work schedule. They had mentioned that the work life was much different in Iraq (two hours for lunch, one hour for praying, etc.). As mentioned in the interviews, some had mentioned that it was difficult to adjust to the employment-focused American culture. Some said they were working for their jobs and not their families. Some Iraqis quit or are fired from jobs due their inability or unwillingness to adapt to this reality. Some Iraqis are also not able to accept jobs that are considered 'unsanitary' due to religious reasons. Others are inhibited, by medical conditions or age, from becoming employed. Those who are unable to work for these reasons, therefore, become economic 'burdens' to the community as welfare assistance is utilized for living expenses.

As described in the section regarding Iraqi history, pre-arrival experiences that perhaps influence integration include the after-effects of Saddam Hussein's 'Republic of Fear' and the decades of war, repression, and social and economic decrepitude within Iraq and first countries of asylum that many Iraqi refugees experienced. In Saddam's Iraq, and especially after the US invasion, sectarianism increased within Iraqi society. This sectarianism has followed Iraqis into resettling communities and has spilled over into the schools and households. It has been a source of contention, and one family moved from another state in order to avoid such issues. Many Iraqis want to begin safer, quieter lives. As one said, they don't want to be resettled into the old life, they want new lives. Initially, this has led to stress and psychological problems, and could impact how Iraqis attempt to start new lives.

The uncertainty and insecurity caused by Saddam's terror and the sanctions, and the devastation of war and displacement have also left effects on the Iraqi people. During this time period, Iraqis became expert maximizers and survivalists, living from day to day through any means possible. If a father had a choice between his children going hungry or lying or stealing, he would choose the latter in order to support his family. Some joined the Ba'ath party in order to obtain higher salaries even though they despised the regime. Others profited from the black market. And others informed on their neighbors and friends in order to obtain monetary payments. Some did worse. Many had their livelihoods taken away for unknown reasons. Family members were kidnapped or killed by the regime. Others were demoted because they wouldn't




support Saddam. War and genocide ruined families and displaced millions. Flight experiences and livelihoods in countries of asylum were also harsh, as many were placed in 'illegal' situations and were forced to do whatever necessary – lie about their identity, prostitution, child labor – in order to survive. This history has impacted the ways in which many Iraqi refugees view their positions in the world. War after war, tragedy after tragedy, has given some Iraqis a viewpoint that everything in life is tentative – that life circumstances could be changed at any moment. Perhaps this helps to explain the behaviors, positive and negative, seen in the Iraqi community after resettlement. Some are looking for monetary assistance in whatever form they can obtain in the shortest amount of time they can obtain it. For example, some are committing welfare fraud in order to obtain monetary assistance. Perhaps they are afraid that the assistance will be taken away, and that they should acquire as much as possible. Other families found the shortest way to make the most amount of money through years of corruption, black market economic dealings, or stealing. Initially, there could be the after-effects of living life in 'survival mode' for an extended period of time that could cause negative behaviors in resettling communities. This kind of survival mentality has benefited Iraqi integration into the US, however, as they constantly and tirelessly seek out the most economically beneficial outcome in all situations. By the first week, most Iraqis will know what grocery provides the cheapest prices, what cell phone has the best deal, which internet company provides the best service, etc., before they know their home addresses. This extreme frugality and thriftiness is directly related to the survival methods learned throughout the sanctions, US invasion and displacement. This type of skill is extremely useful for the Iraqis concerning life in America. This type of behavior could help them save the most amount of money, thereby allowing them to advance perhaps economically and educationally.

Pre-arrival forces that may impact integration in the Iraqi case are also cultural. For example, the Iraqi population highly values education, and most parents are actively involved in their children's learning. They strongly, and typically, encourage their children to enter into the engineering and medical fields. Many Iraqi children outperform their American counterparts, and high percentages of Iraqi young adults have entered into college and universities. The Iraqi population is, therefore, being educated in American schools and they are obtaining American degrees. In the future, they will most likely be entering into the job market with competitive skills.

Other cultural factors that impact integration were gender roles. In Iraq, many women did not work outside of the home and therefore were conflicted and uneasy about being forced by the Welfare system to work outside the home. This does not mean, however, that they have not learned to enter into the workforce. Other Iraqi women were used to working outside the home and thus this requirement did not pose a challenge to becoming economically self-sufficient.

B. Interaction between Pre-Arrival and Host Country Factors

\One example of how the interaction between pre-arrival factors and host country forces influence the ways in which Iraqis integrate into the receiving society is the interaction between the international refugee resettlement regime (UNHCR) and the domestic refugee resettlement regime (the US Government). The UNHCR refers the majority of refugee cases to the USRAP for review and resettlement. As noted in Chapter 1, the first waves of refugees were former Ba'ath members and the Iraqi intelligentsia. The following waves were spurred from sectarian violence. As in most refugee producing situations, the most well-off Iraqis were the most able to flee while




the less well-off became displaced within their country. The well-off former Ba'ath members, the intelligentsia, and those who fled sectarian violence thus became the first refugees to register with the UNHCR and thus to be offered resettlement. The USRAP, and subsequently the Department of Homeland Security, reviewed and approved most of these cases sent to it by UNHCR.

According to the interviews (and the current situation in the United States - the review by the Department of Homeland Security of all Iraqi refugee cases resettled in the US; the drop in Iraqi refugee arrivals due to increased security checks; the admission of Iraqi terrorists through the USRAP) the refugee definition has not been properly applied in regards to the Iraqi refugee population, not by UNHCR nor the USG, and other Iraqi refugees who do meet the refugee definition have been excluded. Worried about former Ba'ath party members entering the US, one Iraqi interviewee wondered: "how the most powerful country on earth allow the bad Iraqis in and keep the good out? The UN does not know the refugees!" Another Iraqi woman claimed: "Never did I see these people (in Iraq) in my life! How did these people get here while my family who are doctors are waiting for years (to be resettled in the US)!" Others claimed that many Iraqis were not in fact refugees - rather, they were opportunists looking for a waiting area until Iraq was restored (an assertion reinforced by the large numbers of Iraqis visiting Iraq to visit friends and family, placing their persecution claims in jeopardy as well as the UNHCR/USG claims that these refugees were 'the most vulnerable' and therefore in need of resettlement.)

The interaction between the international and domestic resettlement regimes, therefore, has led to the resettlement of Iraqis who may be criminals; terrorists; or non-refugee opportunists while many Iraqis who are in fact refugees wait to be resettled, if they get the chance at all. The admission of these types of Iraqis could explain the sectarian issues within the community, and the reasons why some Iraqis chose not to invest themselves within the United States. For Iraqis who are trying to start new lives in America, it has become burdensome to be resettled into the old life, or the old mentality. As mentioned, one family moved from another state to escape these issues. The system, therefore, has impacted Iraqi refugee integration after arrival as it has become difficult for some to begin new lives, and it has resettled others who do not wish to start new lives in America or to become invested in America. Many Iraqi families are waiting to be resettled; yet, they may not obtain the opportunity due to the fraud and the abuse within the system. This could also affect family reunification.

Other interactions between pre-arrival factors and host-country forces that may affect Iraqi integration in the US include the interaction between the governments of Iraq and the United States. As mentioned, the United States has been actively involved within Iraqi affairs for over a half a century. Most recently, it has invaded Iraq that has led to the deaths of over a hundred thousand Iraqis and the displacement of millions. In a half a dozen conversations after the interviews were completed, some Iraqis were asked whether they believed if this history of involvement within Iraq could help explain the abuses of the welfare system within the US - as in, would Iraqis be more willing to take from the US government since the US government has caused much of the destruction seen in Iraq. Some agreed that it was plausible; others mentioned that some refugees held the idea that the US has stolen Iraq's oil and therefore the money they take is like taking money from Iraqi oil revenues; and others said that these people are strictly criminals or people with bad morals who steal. US government interactions with pre-arrival factors may have an effect on the integration of some as a few Iraqis may be willing to engage in illegal activities if they believe that it is warranted due to previous US actions.




Another example of this interaction between pre- and post-arrival factors includes the orientation the US government contracted certain organizations to provide to the Iraqi refugees who were resettled in the United States. As the Iraqis noted in the interviews, the orientations provided information that conflicted with the realities of American life. They also failed to provide enough time to prepare before departure, and to provide useful information that could have helped the Iraqi refugees' adjustment after arrival. For example, some were told that they would be able to work in their fields, others were told that the refugee center would always be there to help, or that the assistance from Welfare would be enough to cover all of their expenses (in reality, they did not want to tell refugees about the amounts of Public Assistance given in each State so that secondary migration to more beneficial States could be avoided). Many felt defrauded. One man said of his experience with the reality after arrival that: "I could have never imagined this. I'm not going to Somalia, I'm going to America!" The reality soon became: it takes a lot of time and money to work the field of expertise; the refugee center is obligated for 30-90 days only to assist refugees; and Welfare rarely provides enough to cover all expenses or provide a dignified life. Some Iraqis have returned to Iraq because of this reality; others have moved from other states to access better rates of public assistance; others lie and try to obtain as much funds as possible. Some Iraqi refugees, therefore, were not brutally prepared for the challenges which would face them during their resettlement in the United States, and this has led to difficulties in adjusting (finding new careers; out-migrating to other States; abusing the Welfare system; or leaving the United States altogether). A few had said they would have never come to America if they had known how challenging life would be in the US, and a few said they would return to Iraq. After the interviews, one Iraqi refugee told me that Iraqis in Syracuse are communicating with those overseas that are awaiting resettlement in the US. These future arrivals will perhaps be more prepared as far as what to expect, and they will arrive with a better sense of how to go about living the life they want to live (for example, they will know to bring translated transcripts; they will understand the welfare system, the steps of recertification, tests necessary to gain admittance into universities, etc.). Future arrivals may have an easier time beginning new lives, therefore, than the first arrivals (which, assumingly, is the case for many refugee groups).

Finally, housing was another center of convergence for various host- and home-related factors that impacted the Iraqis integration within the new society. As mentioned, the resettling agencies initially placed many of the Iraqi families within homes on the same street. This led to the creation of what the Iraqis called 'little Baghdad' where Arabic as opposed to English was spoken (thereby not encouraging refugees to interact with English speakers and learn the language) and where an environment of sectarianism and conflicts had followed from the country or origin to the country of resettlement. These conflicts also spilled over into the schools through the children. It also caused psychological problems and stress, and led many Iraqi families to move away from these areas. Many Iraqis also found it difficult to build meaningful relationships with other groups or Americans in this environment, as it was difficult to find people with the similar educational backgrounds or interests. The housing arrangement may be inhibiting integration, therefore, as poor housing circumstances "lead to poor health, educational and employment opportunities and attempts to rebuild social and family life."

C. Post-Arrival Factors and Implications


Post-arrival factors within federal, State, and local policies were found to have



contributed negative outcomes for the Iraqi refugees in Syracuse, New York. In agreement with the International Rescue Committee's June 2009 report, Iraqi Refugees in the United States: In Dire Straits, the federal refugee resettlement system in the US is certainly "out-dated and under-funded" and it is "resettling Iraqi refugees into poverty rather than helping rebuild their lives in the country that offered them sanctuary." Although the State Department admits there are challenges with the United States Refugee Admissions Program, there do not seem to be programs in place (or being created) which assist the Iraqi population which has a different set of needs when compared to most refugee groups historically resettled through the USRAP. While all refugees deserve more than a resettlement program which serves the needs of refugees for only 30-90 days with limited financial assistance and an overworked, overburdened and underfunded staff, and with access to few local providers who can help the refugees restart their new lives, the Iraqi refugee population, in general, has needs which the refugee resettlement system cannot address. All Iraqi refugees want to regain their former dignity, and the majority wants to begin new lives in the US. They want to open businesses, practice medicine, work as engineers, obtain Master's degrees, and cook Iraqi food in their own restaurants. What resettlement program that is contracted with the Department of State to work with the refugees for only 30-90 days can assist the Iraqi population with such issues? How can a resettlement agency prepare an Iraqi refugee to recertify as a doctor in the United States within three months when the process takes over three years and over \$3,000.00? How can the system teach an Iraqi to open their own business when she or he doesn't have any credit from an IOM Travel Loan which the State Department specifically obliged them in taking for this very purpose and when the Iraqi refugee does not have a social security card, State ID, job, etc. until weeks or months after arrival? (Notably, the Cuban Haitian Entrant Program, run by the Department of Homeland Security, provides any Cuban or Haitian who lands on America's shores six months of support from refugee resettlement programs, regardless if they were firmly resettled in a country of asylum or not – many arrive after living legally, and even obtaining citizenship, in countries like Spain and Canada – and with or without persecution claims.) In the opinion here, the refugee resettlement system is one of the largest host country/post-arrival factors affecting Iraqi refugee integration. The system is ill-prepared to handle such a highly skilled and highly educated population.

In the opinion here, the USRAP has little experience and has paid little attention to such needs as it has primarily resettled refugees from countries within Africa and South East Asia with lower levels of education and resources. This is not to say that there are no refugees from these regions who are highly skilled or educated. This is also not to say that the US has not resettled other populations similar to the Iraqis (perhaps Cubans and Iranians, in terms of levels of education). This is only to say that the system was not designed nor created to adequately deal with the needs of this type of population. It is this system that has primarily caused the following integration-related problems.

First, there is tremendous 'brain waste' when the system cannot support the highly skilled/educated in obtaining jobs related to their professions. Neither the refugee nor the community benefits when kidney specialists, dentists, engineers, physicians, and business owners are doing the work that "teenagers do" or when they are placed into entry-level and perhaps physically demanding, low-skilled/paid jobs. This has led to a few negative outcomes such as: high levels of shame and frustration which have led some to quit their jobs; Iraqis being overlooked for positions because they are overqualified; the loss of highly valuable skills which could benefit the community and




refugees; out-migration to other states and repatriation (as one Iraqi surgeon left as he could not find a single job in the medical profession other than cleaning the floors of a hospital after two years of arrival).

The State Welfare program also contributes to negative outcomes within the Iraqi refugee community. While notably more generous in regards to time limits and levels of assistance (which has become a 'magnet' for a couple of families who migrate specifically for this benefit), welfare assistance does not cover all expenses nor does it provide the refugee for work. The ineffectiveness of Jobs Plus, the office federally mandated to assist the residents of Onondaga County in obtaining jobs, was actually a barrier to finding employment. As mentioned, Jobs Plus: turned away limited English speakers without interpreters (even though they are mandated to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services); attempts to provide 'work experience' through the cleaning of churches or offices; and is unable to provide assistance in recertifying skilled and educated Iraqis or to find employment which is remotely related to the Iraqis' skill level. Such a system subjugates once highly regarded and skilled professionals into lives of poverty and dependence by not assisting them in finding employment. In regards to this ineffective system, one Iraqi physician remarked: "Why...was I brought here? To live on assistance? America will lose every educated person by not giving them a chance to participate in society. Why did they bring us here?...Why did America choose me?" Another man said: "Why choose only church to clean it? Why don't they take people to learn something new and after that they will be ready for work...Bring refugees here to help them not to send them to work in church." (It is not the case that the Iraqis are ungrateful for their chance at a new life. They have realized, however, that the new life they expected has not come into fruition due to the issues being discussed here.) For those who fail to comply with unhelpful and ineffective edicts of Jobs Plus, some Iraqis lose access to their benefits and are therefore left in vulnerable situations. Integration into new communities is certainly not possible with the system described above as the Iraqis are asked to conform to policies which are not designed to assist them achieve economic independence. This could also help to explain the rates of welfare dependence among those families with heads of household in their late fifties and sixties who previously worked as doctors and engineers. They find it extremely difficult to: 1) start from the beginning and recertify their credentials given the length of time it takes to do so in the US; and 2) be forced to work in low-skilled/waged and physically demanding jobs so that they can meet their Jobs Plus requirements. If the system essentially desires for people to become self-sufficient, they should find a way to utilize the skills within the Iraqi community and to find them jobs.

The economic downturn is also a host country factor affecting Iraqi (economic) integration as highly skilled workers have been laid off from work and are now competing with the low and high skilled job seekers for low and middle skilled labor. The job market and employers in America, also highly value American credentials and work experience, and this has prevented even those who are highly qualified from obtaining jobs.

This economic situation can help to explain perhaps the pressures within the host country acting upon the refugee after resettlement. These pressures could help explain: why some have become heavily dependent on welfare; brain waste; out-migration; and repatriation. The Iraqis therefore are not becoming integrated in an economic sense due to these various federal, State and local challenges.



In regards to other host-related factors, many Iraqis were assisting new arrivals initially adjust to life in the United States, and the earliest arrivals became sources of knowledge and support for the new community. Religious organizations were also found to be sources of help for many Iraqis. This support network filled the information gaps when resettlement agencies or others were unable to assist in such matters. Negatively, however, sometimes the information provided from the Iraqi community to the newer arrivals negatively impacted integration prospects (as far as information on how to create welfare fraud) thereby jeopardizing their legal standings in the country of resettlement.

The host country environment also provided grants, for those who accessed such programs, to attend university to learn new skills and therefore obtain new professions. A large percentage of Iraqis 18 and older were also entering into universities for the first time, and Iraqis with advanced degrees obtained in Iraq were also entering into Master's programs. Such 'American' credentials will make such individuals competitive in the job market and will allow many to access higher waged professions (granted, the economic situation in the US remains the same or improves) or to re-enter previous professions held in Iraq and countries of first asylum.


D. Refugee Decision-Making

As other scholars have argued, it is the opinion here that refugees are ultimately the central agents in their own resettlement. It is also the opinion here that refugees become points of convergence between pre- and post-arrival forces, and that within this exchange of factors the refugee makes the decision on when and how or if to integrate within a new society. Within this study, the personalities, intentions, motivations, and relations to home and host factors all played a role in which ways the Iraqis chose to integrate.

In regards to some intentions, some Iraqi refugees decided to resettle in the US to obtain higher education and then repatriate. Many of the single, male SIV visa holders came to America specifically to obtain an American Master's degree and then to return to work in Iraq or the surrounding countries. Some SIV visa holders said they might remain in the US if they found a good job. The skills and expertise learned in America, therefore, might not remain in the US, but would however be utilized in Iraq or other countries. Many of these men were highly motivated to work in order to save money for university, and many had entered into Master's programs after the interviews had been conducted. Others had promised their families that they would return after education was obtained, but this may become increasingly difficult as Iraq has remained unstable and as America is improving economically and as America offers cultural experiences unavailable in the home country.

Given the economic situation described above, others chose to possibly migrate to other countries to work and send money back to their family in the US. While economically such families would be able to support themselves, family separation could place a tremendous stress on such families.

Others are motivated to obtain US citizenship in order to, in their belief, access larger salaries in Iraq and other countries. Others intended on leaving after citizenship was obtained because they believed that American citizenship would make them 'untouchable' and give them greater access to other countries around the world. This idea, if implemented, of repatriating or out-migrating after US citizenship is




obtained poses many problems for the resettling society. For example, Iraqis who are motivated to use the United States as a 'holding tank' until US citizenship is obtained or until Iraq becomes a viable country again will perhaps not become economically or socially invested in their lives in America (as other studies in the literature review demonstrated). They will most likely learn little English, and subsist on government Welfare funds until return is possible (as has been seen in the community). This would be an economic loss for the resettling community. Ultimately, however, the United States prides itself on freedom of choice, and refugees, like anyone else in the US, have the freedom to live as they choose, and to make the decision to leave or stay. Most likely, Iraq will not improve by the time Iraqi refugees have obtained US citizenship given the political crises between Nouri al-Maliki's Shi'i-led government and Tariq al-Hashemi and other Sunni leaders; the issue of Kurdish autonomy in the North and the oil revenues in Kirkuk; and Iranian influence in the Iraqi government and society. Refugees with a 'myth of return,' therefore, may find themselves five years from now 'stranded' in the US with little language skills, no American work experience, and children that have grown-up as Americans and will probably not want to repatriate. Most families are planning on remaining in the US, and they are excited to see their children learning English, growing up in America, being educated in America, and attending US universities.

The individual personality of the refugee has also been a factor in integration outcomes. For example, many Iraqis are extremely motivated, intelligent, and out-going individuals. These Iraqis were able to navigate the new systems of support (Welfare, resettlement organizations, job assistance programs, small business development centers, etc.) that allowed them to come into contact with people who could meet their needs. These Iraqis advanced economically by obtaining grants to learn new skills and new professions, and open-up businesses. Others had the mentality and willingness to start jobs they may have been overqualified for in order to advance with time into larger titles (for example, volunteering at an organization could allow you to obtain employment once an opening became available). Other Iraqis were motivated to provide for their families and so would accept any job in order to do so. Unfortunately, some of the highly skilled Iraqis, after months of searching for jobs related and unrelated to their former careers, gave up due to frustration. Some could not accept the shame in working in jobs that teenagers do, or found it difficult to start from the beginning. Many highly skilled refugees found it difficult to recertify their degrees, given the time and cost requirements, and they found it difficult to find the motivation to start a career (that they had been practicing for 30 years) from the very beginning. Many of these refugees are accessing Welfare funds until they can find jobs. Others, regardless of age, are recertifying their degrees and will be entering the workforce soon as doctors, pharmacists, and engineers. The economic benefit will likely outweigh the initial 'burden' on communities.

III. Final Remarks

This study has attempted to gain an understanding of the complexities within Iraqi refugee resettlement in the United States for the Iraqis as well as for receiving communities. After reviewing the tumultuous history many Iraqi refugees experienced, and after documenting their resettlement experiences in an Upstate New York city, various pre- and post-arrival factors were found to converge at the refugee who then made decisions as to how, when, or if they would integrate into their new community. Many challenges and obstacles within the resettlement process were found to impact integration. In the opinion here, the broader system of refugee resettlement



in America, the USRAP, was found to extremely limit the integration of Iraqi refugees in Syracuse, New York (and quite likely, for most refugee groups, yet in different ways as different populations tend to have different needs after arrival).


The current system of refugee resettlement in the United States does not help to fully reestablish the lives of refugees. As mentioned, resettlement agencies are contracted to assist refugees for 30-90 days. While this time frame may assist refugees in obtaining housing, welfare assistance, English language classes, school enrollment for children, initial medical appointments, and employment orientations/jobs, it does not provide for a proper reestablishment of lives as the three month time frame allows for only a basic overview of life in American, and many events occur outside of this three month time frame. (This is not to say that the employees of resettlement agencies do not help after the 30-90 days, or that they don't strive to re-establish the lives of the refugees. It is to say that resettlement agencies are limited due to the ineffective federal system of resettlement.) As explained, the Iraqis have a particularly difficult time in integrating into society as they want to recertify their credentials, open businesses, buy homes, attend universities, etc., - which take enormous amounts of time and funds. The resettlement system, however, is unable to assist this population with their aspirations. 'Brain waste,' frustration, psychological stress, welfare fraud, out-migration, and repatriation were all found to be consequences of the limited, underfunded American resettlement system. While every refugee group brought to resettling countries will experience difficulties with adjusting to their new lives, governments must take responsibility for the human beings that it is bringing into their countries. It cannot simply be a matter of relocating families and individuals- it is a matter of resettling.

According to the Acting Assistant Director of the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (which administers the USRAP), David Robinson said in October 2011 that:

"As a world leader on these issues, we should acknowledge a sixth challenge: We should strive to practice at home what we preach abroad. So, for example, we have sought to ease the burdens faced by newly arriving refugees in the United States by expanding our assistance to them in their first weeks after arrival."³¹²

The United States resettles the largest number of refugees than any other country in the world. However, it also does the least to provide for refugees after their arrival. While the United States Department of State, which administers the USRAP, has acknowledged there are challenges within the USRAP, it has also ignored the main aspect of its program: resettlement. To 'resettle' means to 're-establish.' It does not mean to provide limited assistance in the first few weeks after arrival. The US Government cannot resettle refugees simply so it can be a world leader in this issue, nor to use resettlement solely as a tool of humanitarian diplomacy to encourage other nations to 'do their part' in the worldwide refugee situation. The US Government needs to do its part in re-establishing the lives of the human beings it brings to its shores - otherwise the United States refugee resettlement program is merely authorized, humanitarian human trafficking. The Iraqis in this study, as do all refugees brought to America, deserve better than a program that relocates as opposed to resettles.

³¹² Protecting the Persecuted: The Successes and Challenges of Safeguarding Refugees. (2011, October 26). Retrieved from: <http://www.state.gov/j/prm/rls/rmks/2011/176337.htm>



All Iraqis want to regain their dignity, and most want to remain in the US and start prosperous lives. But they cannot achieve these aspirations within a system that does not support the reestablishment of refugee lives. An entire generation of refugees could be lost due to this ineffective and outdated system. This would be the greatest disgrace for a country that prides itself on being a world leader in humanitarian affairs.

Appendix

I. Consent to Participate in Research and Questionnaire in English and Arabic

A. Consent to Participate in Research/Questionnaire in English

The research to be conducted is entitled: “Refugee Resettlement in America: The Iraqi Refugee Experience in Upstate, NY.” This study will examine the situation of Iraqi refugees in Syracuse, New York and will document their successes and challenges in America. The purpose of this study is to highlight and identify the problems, if any, with the resettlement process of Iraqi refugees in Syracuse, New York. The hopes of this study are to ensure the best resettlement outcomes for Iraqi refugees, and all refugees, and Syracuse, NY. This research will be conducted for the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies at the American University in Cairo.

The Participant(s) may decline to give biographical data (name, age, etc.) about themselves or their families if they so choose. The Researcher will respect this right and will not use any data that the Participant(s) deem inappropriate.

The Researcher also promises to keep all data confidential. She will not discuss this information with other refugees, co-workers, friends, etc. The information will be used for research purposes only.

At any time the Participant(s) desires to withdraw from the research, the Researcher agrees to remove all information from the study regarding such person(s).

1. Were you given ‘Cultural Orientation’ before arrival in the US, and if so do you think it helped prepare you for life in America? What were your impressions of America before you arrived? What did you think your new life would be like in America? What were your expectations? What were your hopes? What were your fears?
2. Were you given a choice where to resettle? What was your first impression of Syracuse? How would you describe the way you were resettled (by an agency, caseworker)? How could it be improved?
3. What have been the biggest challenges to your new life in Syracuse/America? What are the surprises, disappointments, benefits?
4. If you had known what life would be like for you here before you came to America, would you have left or would you have stayed?
5. Have you been able to find employment? Does your employment match your skill sets, or are you overqualified for your job? Are you working in a new field? Do you find it meaningful? Can you pay your bills with this income?
6. As America can be very expensive, are you having financial troubles here? Most Iraqi refugees spent the majority of their savings before they came to America? Is this true for you, or do you have a little bit of savings to rely on when times become difficult? Are you sending money back home to support relatives/friends? Are relatives/friends sending you money?
7. Do you have family that you are trying to bring here? Would you recommend other Iraqis to come to America?
8. Do you have friends/family in other parts of America? Do you plan on moving near to them or them near to you?

9. What are your plans/plans for your family now that you have come to America? Will you stay in Syracuse, move to another city, move back to the Middle East?
10. What do you miss about your life back in your country, what nostalgia do you have? Do you try to bring these things here?
11. How much is a Green Card/American Citizenship worth to you? Will you leave after obtaining a Green Card? Do you think you will be able to stay in America for five years until you are eligible for Citizenship?
12. What are your experiences with other Iraqi refugees in Syracuse like? Have they helped you in the resettlement process or have you relied on yourself/your family?
13. What are your interactions with Americans like? Do you feel estranged from the Syracuse community? Have you/your family experienced racism or Islamophobia?
14. Do you wish there were more activities for you to do here? Gyms, clubs, organizations? What do you do to pass the time?
15. What are your experiences with ESL classes/training/education system?
16. Has it been difficult to adjust to the American system of laws, education, work, welfare? Have you been able to navigate these systems or are you having difficulties? Has it been difficult to live in/adjust to American culture?
17. Do you find it easy to practice your religion/system of beliefs here (mosque/church/etc.)? Do you think that greater mosque/church/faith group accessibility would help you through the resettlement process?

B. Consent to Participate in Research/Questionnaire in Arabic

هذا البحث بعنوان (ارض الفرص: اعادة توطين في سيراكيوز ، نيويورك). هذا البحث سيتناول اوضاع اللاجئين العراقيين في سيراكيوز ، نيويورك سيوثق نجاحات وتحديات في امريكا.

الغرض من هذا البحث لتحديد المشاكل ان وجدت مع عملية اعادة التوطين للاجئين العراقيين في سيراكيوز ، نيويورك. الامل المرجوا من هذا البحث هو لظمان نتائج افضل للاجئين العراقيين

قد المشارك يختار ان لايعطي معلوماته الاولى مثل الاسماء و العمر او معلومات عائلته. الباحث سوف يحترم حقوق المشارك في البحث ولن ينشر اي معلومات عنه يعتقد انها غير مناسبة.

يعد الباحث بان يبقي كل المعلومات سريه ولن يناقش هذه المعلومات مع اي شخص. المعلومات ستستخدم لغرض البحث فقط.

في حالة رغب المشارك في الغاء مشاركته في البحث، سيقوم الباحث بحذف كل المعلومات لهذا الشخص من البحث

1-هل اعطيت لك دورات تثقيفية عن الحياة في امريكا قبل ان تصل اليها ؟ اذا حدث ذلك ،هل تعتقد انها ساعدتك للتهيأ للحياة في امريكا؟ ماذا كانت انطباعاتك عن امريكا قبل وصولك اليها؟

كيف تصورت ان تكون حياتك الجديدة في امريكا ؟ ماذا كانت توقعاتك؟ ماهي امالك؟ ماذا كانت مخاوفك؟

2- هل كنت مخير في مكان اعادة التوطين ؟ ماذا كان انطباعك الاول عن مدينة سيراكيوز؟ كيف تصف طريقة اعادة توطينك (من قبل المنظمة ومسؤول ملفك)؟ كيف ممكن ان تتحسن؟

3- ماهي اكبر التحديات التي واجهتها خلال حياتك الجديدة في سيراكيوز-امريكا؟ وماهي المفاجئات لك وماهي خيبات الامل؟ وماهي الفوائد؟

4- اذا كنت تعلم طبيعة الحياة هنا قبل ان تأتي الى امريكا، هل ستأتي ايضا او تبقى حيث انت؟

5- هل استطعت ايجاد عمل؟ هل عملك الان يكافئ موهلاتك؟ او لديك مؤهلات اكبر من عملك الحالي؟ هل تعمل في مجال جديد؟ هل هذا العمل ذو هدف؟ هل تستطيع دفع فواتير الماء والكهرباء من خلال دخلك المادي؟

6- الحياة في امريكا مكلفة جدا فهل لديك مشاكل مالية؟ اغلب اللاجئين العراقيين انفقوا معظم مآذخروا من مال قبل ان يأتوا الى امريكا؟ هل هذا ينطبق عليك ايضا؟ او لا يزال لديك مال تعول عليه عند الحاجة؟ هل ترسل اموال لي اعانة اصدقائك او اقاربك في بلدك؟ هل اصدقائك او اقاربك يرسلون لك مال؟

7- هل لديك عائلته تحاول ان تجلبهم الى هنا؟ هل ستصح عراقيين اخريين بالمجيئ الى امريكا؟

8- هل لديك اصدقاء او اقارب في مكان اخر في امريكا؟ هل لديك النية للذهاب والعيش قريبا منهم او بالعكس؟

9- ماهي خططك الان لعائلتك في امريكا؟ هل ستبقى في مدينة سيراكيوز ام المغادرة الى مدينة اخرى او ربما العودة الى بلدك؟

10- ماذا تفتقد هنا عما كانت عليه حياتك في بلدك؟ الى ماذا تحن عما كنت عليه في بلدك؟ هل تحاول ان تجلب تحيي هذه الاشياء هنا؟

11- كم يعني لك حصولك على الإقامة الدائمة في امريكا (الكرين كارت) وكم يعني لك الحصول على الجنسية الامريكية؟ هل ستغادر في حالة حصولك على الإقامة الدائمة (الكرين كارت)؟ هل تعتقد ان باستطاعتك البقاء في امريكا لخمس سنوات حتى تكون مؤهلا لحصولك على الجنسية الامريكية؟

12- كيف تبدوا لك تجربتك مع اللاجئين العراقيين في سيراكيوز؟ وهل ساعدوك في حياتك الجديدة او قد عولت على نفسك او عائلتك؟

13- كيف هيه علاقاتك وتواصلك مع المواطنين الامريكيين؟ هل تشعر بانك غريب في مجتمع مدينة سيراكيوز؟ هل انت او احد افراد عائلتك تعرضوا للعنصريه او معاداة الاسلام؟

14- هل كنت تود لو كان هنالك اكثر فعاليات يوميه تؤديها؟ مثل النوادي والقاعات الرياضية؟ ماذا تفعل في وقت فراغك؟

15- كيف هي تجربتك مع دروس تعليم اللغة الانكليزية والدورات المهنية والتعليم؟

16- هل كانت بصعوبه ما ان تتاقلم مع النظام الامريكيه كالقانون والتعليم والعمل، المساعدات الماليه؟ هل كانت بصعوبه بمكان ان تعيش وتتاقلم مع الحياة الامريكيه والثقافه الامريكيه؟

17- هل تجد انه بسهولة ممكن ان تزاوول ديانتك؟ هل تعتقد ان لو كان هنالك مكان عبادة اكبر او جاليه اكبر بنفس معتقداتك سيكون افضل ويساعدك في الحياة الزوجيه؟

C. Allocation of Iraqi Refugees and SIV Holders by US State³¹³

Destination State	FY 2007		FY 2008		FY 2009		FY 2010		FY 2011		FY 2012		Cumulative Total	
	Refugee	SIV	Refugee	SIV	Refugee	SIV	Refugee	SIV	Refugee	SIV	Refugee	SIV	Refugee	SIV
Alabama	0	0	98	0	106	7	80	10	31	2	0	0	315	19
Alaska	0	0	2	0	0	0	13	0	0	0	0	0	15	0
Arizona	157	0	1,050	29	1,363	82	1,102	100	526	23	40	5	4,238	239
Arkansas	0	0	5	0	6	8	23	0	0	1	0	0	34	9
California	403	0	2,930	56	4,859	197	4,131	225	2,297	71	217	25	14,837	574
Colorado	11	0	184	31	227	44	275	70	76	25	13	3	786	173
Connecticut	7	0	92	4	163	30	133	4	95	7	3	0	493	45
Delaware	0	0	1	0	4	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	8	0
District of Columbia	8	0	18	0	46	4	14	7	15	0	0	0	101	11
Florida	4	0	163	6	295	36	352	64	178	24	20	9	1,012	139
Georgia	15	0	424	1	401	26	379	52	140	8	21	2	1,380	89
Idaho	24	0	252	4	266	22	139	2	79	1	13	0	773	29
Illinois	85	0	942	8	1,195	77	1,057	79	604	47	75	1	3,958	212
Indiana	0	0	18	0	50	1	100	30	52	1	0	0	220	32
Iowa	11	0	117	0	127	13	83	7	32	2	0	0	370	22
Kansas	4	0	67	0	63	2	32	5	13	0	0	1	179	8
Kentucky	6	0	229	7	346	19	409	35	175	7	14	0	1,179	68
Louisiana	0	0	12	0	109	4	70	22	57	0	1	1	249	27
Maine	0	0	3	0	51	0	93	2	44	0	0	5	191	7
Maryland	6	0	161	11	192	28	216	69	123	17	13	6	711	131
Massachusetts	14	0	327	12	592	5	627	31	389	10	23	16	1,972	74
Michigan	526	0	2,529	76	2,336	54	1,988	62	1,464	34	168	0	9,011	226

313 Information obtained from the following Department of State website: <http://www.wrapsnet.org/Reports/AdmissionsArrivals/tabid/211/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

Minnesota	2	0	46	0	104	5	181	21	85	13	0	2	418	41
Mississippi	0	0	5	1	6	0	2	12	0	0	0	0	13	13
Missouri	18	0	171	10	366	48	242	52	131	17	6	6	934	133
Montana	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0
Nebraska	2	0	35	8	49	24	72	13	65	4	0	8	223	57
Nevada	0	0	101	0	112	1	112	7	49	4	12	0	386	12
New Hampshire	0	0	100	0	49	0	95	0	43	5	0	0	287	5
New Jersey	0	0	86	4	143	5	127	11	63	2	0	0	419	22
New Mexico	7	0	60	3	72	1	63	12	43	10	6	0	251	26
New York	30	0	313	13	510	33	586	35	277	9	30	6	1,746	96
North Carolina	9	0	178	4	276	74	253	92	127	17	2	13	845	200
North Dakota	10	0	139	0	108	2	95	8	30	0	6	0	388	10
Ohio	14	0	203	3	362	33	414	37	178	1	3	5	1,174	79
Oklahoma	0	0	23	0	30	15	51	16	32	3	2	0	138	34
Oregon	0	0	77	2	137	3	205	14	82	20	3	0	504	39
Pennsylvania	26	0	283	12	411	41	464	41	171	5	9	13	1,364	112
Rhode Island	4	0	34	2	31	2	22	2	9	0	0	0	100	6
South Carolina	7	0	31	5	36	14	33	7	6	7	0	0	113	33
South Dakota	1	0	58	3	50	1	79	5	8	3	8	0	204	12
Tennessee	18	0	175	12	382	108	535	101	208	26	15	9	1,333	256
Texas	72	0	1,002	55	1,501	327	1,558	417	707	144	59	60	4,899	1,003
Utah	16	0	196	1	256	21	191	13	96	1	5	4	760	40
Vermont	0	0	59	0	27	2	14	3	4	0	0	0	104	5
Virginia	64	0	546	38	566	103	570	113	251	21	10	14	2,007	289
Washington	20	0	232	15	318	30	596	80	265	24	19	13	1,450	162
West Virginia	0	0	1	2	13	0	10	0	1	1	0	0	25	3
Wisconsin	7	0	44	0	119	5	127	12	67	1	10	0	374	18
Report Total	1,608	0	13,822	438	18,838	1,557	18,016	2,000	9,388	618	826	227	62,498	4,840