Tol, Xeer, and Somalinimo: Recognizing Somali and Mushunguli Refugees as Agents in the Integration Process

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Dedication

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Abstract

The problem with how to approach the integration of refugees is both conceptual and practical. Not only do researchers in the field define “integration” differently, but also those who define and develop policies relating to integration tend to approach the issue in different ways. In current anthropological literature, empirical studies about integration have tended to adopt a “top-down” approach to the concept of integration and, therefore, to focus on structural and organizational aspects of the integration system. There is little research that focuses on the “voice” of refugees and even more of a dearth of research that studies them as active participants in their own integration process.

Integration impacts upon both the refugees and the host community and requires the willingness of both groups to adjust. This does not mean an abandonment of roots and native cultures; rather it is a process of building bridges and reshaping identities to accommodate the transnational realities of the modern world. As a host community, Luckenville is experiencing what other host communities first experienced when a huge influx of refugees suddenly came and ended up as neighbors, community members, and colleagues at work. Government institutions and local community agencies have not been prepared and have experienced many challenges when dealing with service provision to the Mushungulis and other Somali refugees. Lacking an infrastructure that is able to provide cultural and linguistically appropriate services to the new Americans who do not speak English as a first language, the host community of Luckenville has struggled to ensure that the Mushungulis and other Somali refugees have the tools necessary to help them integrate as community members and as citizens.

By understanding tol, xeer, qabils, and Somalinimo, I propose how the Mushungulis and other Somali refugees can draw upon their culture, identity, kinship (tol), the social contract (xeer) between the qabils (commonly translated as “clans”) and their “Somaliness” (Somalinimo) to help them cope with the integration process as active agents and social actors as opposed to victims as they are often portrayed. This building of social capital needs to be done not only between qabils in the Somali community but between the Mushungulis and the larger Somali community as well. Together with conducting interviews with a cross-section of service providers and members of the host community of Luckenville and the Twin Cities, my research demonstrates how host communities can perceive and participate in the integration process by redefining new meanings of community and building intra-ethnic communal social capital.

By building on previous research, this dissertation adds to the anthropological literature and addresses gaps in theory and practice that have not viewed refugees as agents in their own resettlement process and which have rarely paid attention to the impact of refugee resettlement upon members of host communities. It also proposes new recommendations that can help the integration and resettlement process so that refugees and host communities can build mutual understanding and create trust upon which full acceptance and belonging in the community depend on.
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Chapter One-Introduction: Welcoming the Mushungulis to the United States of America

Different countries’ policy contexts and ideological traditions yield different approaches to protection and resettlement. These policies are often developed in a vacuum, without the inclusion and the participation of the refugees in the development of them, and often they do not result in the outcomes of self-sufficiency sought by the different governments. Therein lies the problem with these policies. My research sought to look at outcomes of the American refugee policies as well as resettlement policies and programs and suggest an approach which would reflect a formal universal approach to integration and incorporation versus a haphazard, informal, and residual approach.

It is important to note here that the American model of integration of refugees has been based on the ideology that shapes the American social welfare system: resettlement assistance is short-term, focused on self-sufficiency as soon as possible, and is implemented at the local level. The Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration administers the refugee resettlement program in conjunction with the Citizenship and Immigration Services of the Department of Homeland Security and the Office of Refugee Resettlement of the Department of Health and Human Services. The government of the United States of America shares responsibility for resettlement by contract with Voluntary Resettlement Agencies (VOLAGs) which directly provide resettlement services. This program is implemented through a public/private partnership. Resettlement services are provided for ninety days although refugee cash assistance and refugee medical assistance are available for eight months and the focus is on getting the refugees to achieve economic self-sufficiency within sixty days.

These services are in jeopardy, however, as federal funding to the Office of Refugee Resettlement has been consistently cut since 1985 (McHugh 2000). Decreased funding means reductions in case management staff and services as well as limited spending on resettlement training and language programs serving new arrivals and those in the process of resettlement. Reduced resources for assistance also put at risk the language proficiency, employment, physical and mental health; housing and community
needs of resettling refugees, and threaten the achievement of integration and incorporation (Vernez 2002). The need for responsive policies is heightened at this time as resettlement slots diminish annually, based on concern over poor resettlement outcomes, rising resettlement costs, and national security (Vernez 2002). My study will demonstrate that this reduction directly impacts local resettlement agencies that offer critical services to refugees, imperiling integration and incorporation.

My interest in the “Somali Bantus” or the Mushungulis as they prefer to be called, Somalis, and refugee cultural orientation programs took me to Luckenville, the pseudonym I use for a small town in the Midwest of the United States of America, and Nairobi, Kenya. I also conducted research in the Twin Cities – Minneapolis and St. Paul. I will henceforth use the term Mushungulis to refer to the Somali Bantus. In all the sites, I observed, participated in events, and interviewed refugees. Speaking with a variety of sets of actors involved in integration, I gathered information to help me understand the refugee resettlement experience.

I now begin with a brief history of the Mushungulis, who together with other Somalis are central to my research. Between the years of 2003 and 2005, 12 thousand Mushunguli refugees relocated to the United States of America. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the Mushungulis were brought as slaves from Tanzania and Mozambique to Somalia. They were marginalized in Somalia. The Mushungulis did not belong to any Somali Qabil, nor did any Somali Qabil protect them (Declich 2005). In 1991, during the civil war in Somalia, the Mushungulis were displaced to Kenya and about three thousand and three hundred of them; it is estimated, escaped to Tanzania, back to the lands of their ancestors. The Mushungulis who fled to Kenya settled first in Dadaab refugee camp. They were then relocated nine hundred miles and a three day road trip across Kenya to the rural, dry environment of Kakuma refugee camp. In 1999, the United States of America designated the Mushunguli refugees as “persecuted.” The process of immigration to the United States of America had begun, though slow, due in part to conditions of insecurity and violence in the camp at Kakuma.
I first heard about the Mushungulis during a meeting with government officials from Utah. During a discussion on new Americans, one official gave the example of the “tribe of Africans” who had come to Salt Lake City and how some people did not want them there. She said her church was involved in sponsoring a family, but she did not know much more about them. The Mormon Church was a sponsoring agency and had invested quite a large sum of money in resettlement services and programs for the Mushungulis. However, because of the lack of interpreters, mutual assistance associations and community-based organizations that served the Mushungulis specifically, and the lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate services in institutional and community entities, many of the Mushungulis left for other cities that had Somali communities thriving in them. It is important to note here that the Mushungulis also were resettled in other cities such as Raleigh in North Carolina, Lewiston in Maine, and Brattleboro in Vermont. They were looking for co-ethnic communities that could help them with social and support networks. And without knowing it at the time, some were even on their way to Minnesota.

Part of the problem with refugee resettlement policies is that they do not pay attention to the particulars of the refugees being resettled. Refugees are considered a monolithic group often to the detriment of the refugees themselves. By not paying attention to the uniqueness and discreteness of the different refugee populations, they are often blamed for not successfully integrating and becoming self-sufficient. How are they organized? Do they have the language and employment skills to help them integrate quickly and seamlessly? Which wave of refugee resettlement is this? Educated, urban, and professional refugees are found in the very early waves and they are more likely to succeed than subsequent waves where refugees come from rural areas and have fewer skills to offer the host communities and receiving societies where they eventually resettle (Kunz 1981). Having spent time with the Mushungulis and Somalis, I have found this to be true and that there have been many assumptions made about refugees, but especially for this particular refugee community - many of them wrong and based on ignorance, fear, and prejudice. Being black, African, and Moslem and coming from a country that still receives negative publicity on a daily basis, the general public has based its judgment
of this community on public media and I believe that this has hampered integration
outcomes for the Mushungulis and Somalis. Refugee policies tend to regard refugees as
a monolithic group with similar needs, issues, concerns, and with similar “deficits.”
Nothing could be further from the truth. My research clearly shows that the Mushungulis
are a complex and proud community and their relationship with other Somalis is
organized in fluid and dynamic ways with close connections to their country of origin. In
this dissertation, I have decided to use vernacular terms in Af-Maay and Somali as
opposed to commonly accepted English terms when describing the Mushungulis and the
Somalis. Specifically, I use the term “Qabil” as opposed to “clan” because the latter is a
loaded word and fraught with misunderstanding and confusion. It can even be considered
an ethnocentric term given the context of the Somalis. A “clan” is a group of people
united by actual or perceived kinship and descent. Even if actual lineage patterns are
unknown, “clan” members may nonetheless recognize a founding member or apical
ancestor. The kinship-based bonds may be merely symbolical in nature, whereby the
“clan” shares a stipulated common ancestor that is a symbol of the “clan’s” unity.
“Clans” can be most easily described as “tribes” or “sub-groups of tribes.” “Clans” and
“tribes,” when used to define and describe the Somali community are terms of linguistic
imperialism (T. Dunnigan, personal communication, February 2010). And while portions
of the definition of “clan” may apply to Somali social organization and structure, you will
find that the term “Qabil” in Somali is much more rich, fluid, complex, and dynamic than
the term “clan” depicts in the anthropological literature. For the Somalis and the
Mushungulis, the “Qabils” are an asset as opposed to a deficit which is how most
Western anthropologists, policy makers and service providers view “clans” and is how
most of them believe the Somali community to be organized. Part of the contribution I
hope to make to the literature is to demonstrate how the “Qabils” are a critical element in
Somali and Mushunguli cultures and one that allows them to be active participants in
their resettlement process with positive integration outcomes. I now turn to the
theoretical concepts and frameworks I used to help organize and situate my study.
Theoretical Frameworks, Concepts, and Studying Refugee Resettlement and Integration

In this study, I used a connectionist model of ‘culture’ which provided a working understanding for the ways in which cultural meaning is derived from shared experiences, leading to the development of sets of schema that create a common ‘culture’ (Strauss and Quinn 1997: 6-9, 50) as refugees tried to integrate into their new host country. In my opinion, what creates a common culture include: a geographic sense of belonging and place; identity and ethnicity; discrimination, racism and prejudice; religion; social capital; and globalization, transculturation, and the Diaspora. I now explore, describe and develop the similar schema of culture mentioned above I found in my interviews with the different refugees.

Chambers (1994) and Turton (1993) talk of the nomadic experience of wandering without a fixed home, which implies another sense of “home,” where there is no one place that can claim the role of one’s identity. Looking at the other dimension where one feels at home, geographical belonging, one can see that this, too, might take different directions from ethnic identity; for example, when Somalis and Mushungulis express feeling most at home in the United States of America and feeling estranged in Somalia at the same time as they have a clear sense of being Somali. This can also be seen among those who feel at home in many places, having a looser attachment to them all, but still seeing themselves as Somali or Mushunguli.

An important guiding factor towards a sense of “home” in these narratives of location is where refugees, in this case, Mushungulis and other Somali refugees, wanted to live when they have children. Some wanted their children to belong to only one place, whereas others see the possibilities and the dynamics of belonging to two places, or to many places, and some want to explicitly protect their children from too much Somali influence. In her study of Cypriot youths in Britain, Floya Anthias (2002) concludes that these youths seem to see themselves as the “other” in the contexts of both Cyprus and Britain as something they can never be accepted as: “These are simply seen as facts” (2002: 510). In the stories that I will present later on, it is clear to see that where the Somalis felt the most “other” varied greatly. Some felt most “other” in Somali settings;
others felt most “other” among Americans. But common to all of them was the clear sense of ethnicity – some had a positive identification of being Somali, whereas others saw it, as did the youths that Anthias studied, as something they could not avoid being. Similarly, they all agreed that they would never become American in the cultural sense.

Harald Eidheim (1987) defines assimilation among the Sami people as a strategy where the individual Sami comes to see himself or herself as a Norwegian. For immigrants and refugees, the issue is not to come to see oneself as Norwegians, Singaporeans, or Americans, but rather to come to see oneself as at home in the host country or country of resettlement. For young Somali women, feeling at home in the United States of America might be related to issues such as gender roles, future and place, but not to ethnic identification as such. Thus, ethnic identity, everyday practice, and geographical belonging do not need to follow in the same direction. Fangen (2006) has shown that young adult Somalis who actually try and adopt a Norwegian identity often tend to define themselves as Somali after a while, because they are always ascribed a Somali identity by other Somalis or a foreign identity by Norwegians. Thus, the reason for the slight degree to which the Somalis and Mushungulis living in the United States of America change into the national identity of the respective countries, the United States of America or Norway, is that they see this as an impossible identity solution so long as there are prejudices regarding the inclusion of Somalis in the American national group.

Ethnicity is a concept variously used to mean belonging, cultural practice, tradition, religion, and identity. There are different schools of interpretation regarding this concept; the primordial underlines the natural and unchangeable quality of identity and ethnicity, whereas the circumstantial underlines the fluid, temporary character of ethnicity and identity. This fluidity and temporariness includes the understanding of both cultural practice and geographical belonging as well as the thematization of ethnic identity, thus enabling a new understanding of the concept of ethnicity, one that perceives both the solid, fixed quality and the processual, context-dependent quality as acting in conjunction. It is clear that while some of the refugees I interviewed felt American,
many wanted to hold to their Somaliness. And some even felt “mixed” and really just “wanted to belong,” somewhere, anywhere.

When distinguishing between different aspects of identity and ethnicity of the Somali and Mushunguli refugees in the United States of America, I saw that some parts are naturalized and thus more stable, whereas others are more fluid and change according to circumstances. One possible way of dealing with the different aspects could be to distinguish between the person’s more naturalized ethnic identification, which is often expressed in statements such as “I am a …,” that is, a definition that is often expressed in terms of descent. The stability of this definition is related to its being the source of identity ascription from others, such as when refugees and immigrants from the same country of origin – in this case Somalis – a people from the majority group or host community and receiving society (Americans in this instance) continue to define a person as Somali, and thus it might be difficult to stop defining oneself as one as well. Subjective ethnic identification, on the other hand, is expressed in sentences such as “I feel like an “X”,” but which could include a “Y” (Eriksen 2002: 22), such as when the person defines her or himself as Somali American, Somali, or Mushunguli. Such subjective identifications point to the more fluid character of ethnicity and identity.

Following Abu-Lughod (1991), I strove to find the interconnections between all parts of daily experience and practice, while highlighting the unique context in which these connections are lived. Abu-Lughod’s (1991) method for ethnographic writing responded to unequal power relationships between researchers and participants, and the privileging of certain ‘authoritative’ voices because of the supposed objectivity that comes through the construction of generalizations. Abu-Lughod found that ethnography does not need to concern itself with macro-processes in order to gain legitimacy in the scientific discourse, but can use lived experiences to show, “…the actual circumstances and detailed histories of individuals and their relationships [which] would suggest that such particulars…are also crucial to the constitution of experience” (1991: 153).
With the instances of ‘silencing’ which appear in academic work and in refugee resettlement policies where refugees are perceived as needy and passive, I found it imperative to share the perspectives of each participant and allow their voice to be heard, while recognizing my role in interpreting and constructing the texts. In addition, an ‘ethnography of the particular’ offers valuable insights which can be used to explore and challenge theoretical models (Abu-Lughod 1991:154). Appadurai’s (1990) five dimensions of global cultural flows, ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, and ideoscapes evoked images of scenery which have no boundaries; which may appear distinctive, but which relate to all the other elements. Appadurai called these dimensions the “…building blocks of what (extending Benedict Anderson) I would like to call imagined worlds…the multiple worlds that are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe” (1990: 325). Like Abu-Lughod (1991), Appadurai emphasized that his framework of “scapes” does not provide an objective analysis of given relations, but rather, reveals “deeply perspectival constructs”, conditioned by a host of influences and positions, which find their final locus in actors, who “both experience and constitute larger formations” (1990: 324-325).

Rangan Chakravarty and Nandini Gooptu (2000) understood the ‘flows’ of images across such mediascapes to be the result of certain historical processes and moments, structured by institutional imperatives of “power, domination and control” (2000: 90). Appadurai’s (1990) mediascapes refer to both the distribution of communicative technologies and the images created by production. Appadurai viewed media as providing a “repertoire of images, narratives, and ethnoscapes to viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of news and politics are profoundly mixed” (1990: 326). Appadurai’s (1990) attention to the productive, transmissive, and receptive aspects of media develops earlier approaches that focused ethnographically on either the forces of production or the ways in which people interpreted and transformed texts.
Understanding these “scapes” and “flows” will allow us to understand the experiences of the resettlement experience by both the refugees themselves and the members of the host community and receiving society.

Immigrant and refugee populations in new gateway cities impact nearly every facet of life for the residents and institutions of these cities. Hackenberg and Kukulka’s (1995) ethnographic study of Garden City, Kansas, highlights the strains new refugee and immigrant populations place on primary health care. In this small beef packing town, beef plants have impacted health care by attracting many poor refugees and immigrants to work in an industry in which injury rates are very high. The large number of poor immigrants and refugees strains primary health care services, especially because most of the doctors do not accept Medicaid.

Schools also face significant challenges in new, rural immigrant gateway cities Kandel and Parrado (2005). The rapid increase of school-aged refugees and immigrants in schools in new gateway cities leaves some schools scrambling to meet the needs of this large student population. Using case studies from Mississippi and North Carolina, Kandel and Parrado (2005) find that these challenges come from the language barriers and the transience of some students who leave schools when their parents find work in other locales.

Research on new gateway cities examines how immigrants and refugees influence the context they encounter. Recent research also looks at the dynamics of change in the new gateway cities. Millard and Chapa’s (2004) ethnographic and demographic analysis of several rural Midwestern cities and towns explores the social, political, economic, and religious dynamics resulting from the influx of refugees and immigrants from around the world. Millard and Chapa (2004) and several other researchers find that relations between whites and refugees and immigrants are a mixed bag. Immigrants and refugees report blatant forms of discrimination in nearly all aspects of life, but the authors also cite significant efforts on the part of the communities to improve relations between members of the host community and receiving society, who are white, and refugees and
immigrants. They also describe a growing second generation that is often caught between the immigrant and refugee experience of their parents and the “Anglo” experience of their peers. This was evident in my interviews with the refugees in the United States of America for both Luckenville and for the Twin Cities in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Prejudice, broadly defined, is the acceptance of negative stereotypes that relegate groups of people to the category of “other” (Sniderman 1993: 102). Racism is the extension of prejudice to an ideology or belief system that ascribes unalterable characteristics to the “othered” groups. Such belief systems are used to justify negative attitudes and social avoidance of out-groups (See and Wilson 1988). Prejudicial beliefs can also enhance a sense of positive group distinctiveness (Sniderman, et al. 2004). Conversely, perceived threats to cultural unity are both a product of prejudice and a source of reinforcement for prejudicial beliefs. Such “symbolic threats” to national identity have a long history in the United States of America. As Amato and Amato (2000) have noted, immigrants and refugees arrive as strangers and their primary motivation is to work, and this is encouraged by the case workers working with them so that they can attain self-sufficiency as quickly as possible. This all-consuming focus and their low levels of English language ability and education pose formidable challenges to community integration. Together, language barriers and socioeconomic class differences relegate many refugees and immigrants to a permanent category of outsiders. In the words of Lamphere (1994), integration and change occur in the context of specific institutions where newcomers and established residents interact and have differential access to power. Interactions between Euro-Americans and refugees and immigrants usually occur in formal settings where relationships are defined and circumscribed by role relations such as manager-worker, owner-tenant, or teacher-student. These scripted roles establish individuals of European-origin as the ones who hold the power and immigrants as those at the bottom of the social hierarchy. As Hochschild has succinctly stated,
“Americans find it very difficult to sustain their dedication to equality when it is defined as anything more robust than a thin equality of opportunity synonymous with liberty... People define their group as people like them in some crucial way, and they seek justice, here defined mainly as greater equality, for that group. They perceive those outside the group more dimly and care less about whether justice is done to them, or they sometimes perceive outsiders as threats or even enemies, who must be stalled or defeated in order for justice to be done” (2006: 44).

Research has shown that in towns with large meat packing and processing plants, the role of contact in promoting empathy may be reduced if white workers feel that they have been displaced by immigrants (Fennelly 2008). The end result is that many Euro-Americans may have friendly relations with some individual immigrants, while simultaneously harboring resentment and supporting broad negative stereotypes of groups. Such attitudes appear to be a manifestation of what a number of social scientists have described as ‘ambivalence’ (Alvarez and Brehm 1997), or internalized conflict over racial policies.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the ambivalent concerns at the time related to the integration of European immigrants (Castles 2003; Nevins 2003; Conzen, et al. 1992). Higham (1995) describes how notions of racial superiority and exclusiveness that characterize racism were developed in the 19th century and emerged in the early 20th century as fully formed nativist ideology. Contemporary nativists compare the difficulties experienced by recent waves of immigrants—particularly Latinos— with the mythical success of previous generations of Euro-Americans (Huntington 2004). These contrasts feed stereotypes that attribute to contemporary immigrants a lack initiative and talent. Both historically and currently, concern over perceived linguistic challenges to English as the national language constitutes an important component of refugees’ and immigrants’ symbolic threat, both as a determinant of prejudice and as a justification for pre-existing xenophobic attitudes. A related symbolic threat in Luckenville and other rural areas and cities in the United States of America is what might be termed “rural nostalgia” (Fennelly 2008). Rural nostalgia is the belief that demographic changes are a primary cause of the demise of pristine rural areas. Part of this nostalgia has to do with notions of ethnic solidarity, or what Tausch describes as a “normative, self-reliant
European-American community” (1998: 100). The sentiment is notably prevalent in rural areas where increases in immigrants and refugees coincide with other dramatic economic and social changes, such as losses of population, school closings, and the displacement of small and mid-sized farms by large agri-businesses (Fennelly 2002; Amato and Amato 2000). Rural nostalgia and xenophobia are fomented by anti-immigrant groups who couch their opposition to immigration in the cloak of social and environmental protection.

In addition to symbolic and linguistic threats and rural nostalgia, economic threats growing out of a perceived competition for scarce resources represent an important source of negative attitudes toward out-group members (Fennelly and Federico 2007; Esses 2001; Stephan, et al. 1999). Perceptions of economic threat are also particularly strong among those who adhere to a “Protestant Work Ethic” that attributes low status to a lack of self-reliance and hard work (Oyamot, Borgida, and Fischer 2005; Esses 2001; Reyna 2000; Levy 1999). In contrast, persons of higher socioeconomic status feel less threatened by economic competition from refugees, immigrants, and other minority group members (Burns and Gimpel 2000).

Shandy and Fennelly (2006) and Leitner (2004) have found that Muslim Somalis and Christian Nuer from southern Sudan in a Midwestern town encounter similar structural obstacles to social and economic integration, but that their religious affiliations lead to sharply different opportunities and cultural strategies. At first glance, and to many residents, Sudanese and Somali immigrants in the Midwestern town have much in common. Both populations are fleeing civil conflict in East Africa. Both are 'Blacks' in a predominantly white town in the Midwest of the United States of America. They have similar education levels and jobs, and may appear to have similar options for integration. However, religious differences produce important distinctions between the two. Religion is a key variable influencing Sudanese and Somali interactions with each other, and with the community at large, and religious differences have important implications for their resettlement and integration into society in the United States of America. Unlike other immigrant populations (for example, Haitians studied by Stepick 1998; or Mexicans
studied by Chavez 1992), many African refugees do not have extended family in the
United States of America. In these situations churches and mosques serve as important
institutions helping immigrants to meet basic needs. For the Somalis this means finding
ways to hold Islamic services and to follow practices that separate them from their
Christian neighbors. The Sudanese, sharing a common religion – Christianity – with the
members of the host community had better resettlement outcomes as opposed to the
Somalis. Being a part of church congregation had distinct advantages which I will
discuss later.

Luckenville shared many of the traits that were described in the Midwestern town
where Shandy and Fennelly (2006) did their research. In fact, the Somalis in both sites
shared many of the structural barriers that were illustrated by them. There was no Islamic
mosque in Luckenville, and Somali residents there had to congregate for prayer in locally
rented spaces, or travel sixty miles to attend mosques in Minneapolis. This difference
further reduced the attachment of Somalis to the local community. However, the Somalis
did visit the churches in Luckenville to receive assistance from time to time. This cross-
cultural integrative function of the church in this rural community raised a tension and a
predicament for the Somalis as they realized that they were receiving help from explicitly
Christian organizations. Social distance between Somali and European residents was
strongly reinforced by some Christian rural residents who viewed Muslims as
“unchurched” (in the words of one rural pastor). Since September 11th, 2001, negative
perceptions of followers of Islam are even more charged and residents of the host
community and receiving society that lived in Luckenville often conflated the lack of
English proficiency, Islam, food, dress, customs, traditions, and cultural practices into the
notion of lack of initiative and motivation or the will to work or the lack of the
“Protestant Work Ethic.” Some believed that the Mushungulis and other Somali refugees
were just plain lazy.

The role of ethnic identifications in promoting and cohering transnational social
movements is a central feature of many of the accounts of globalization which became
prevalent in the last two decades. Globalization, although a hotly contested concept, can
be seen in general terms as the concrete structuration of the world as a whole (Robertson, 1990), as this involves the levels of the world economy, international migration, transnational organizations, social movements, and “hybridized” forms of culture flow (Hirst and Thompson 1999; Castles and Miller 1998; Cohen 1997; Waters 1995). Appadurai (1990), again, emphasizing the cultural significance of globalization, has drawn attention to the radical disjunctures between the different forms of culture flow which characterize the global political economy: mediascapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, ideoscapes, and most significant for my research purposes, the ethnoscape, “By “ethnoscape,” I mean the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and persons constitute an essential feature of the world, and appear to affect the politics of and between nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree” (1990: 297). Separatist movements or nations without states are typical features here.

The focus on the role of “new ethnic identifications” had significantly broadened the debate on globalization and migration in the 1990s and has raised the issue of cultural identity as a central question for social theory (Hall 1992). There is a clear parallel between Wong’s (1991) heuristic use of Otherness and the more conventional analysis of the experience of exile in terms of liminality, which again refers to an indeterminate present locked between an inaccessible past and future. In this respect, the figure of the Stranger neatly codifies the experiential ambiguity which may be commonplace among refugees. The concept of Diaspora, while making reference to the losses of exile also acknowledges the potential creativity which may be unleashed by displacement (Hammond 2004). A more nuanced account of the “refugee experience” is necessary which can account for both the losses and the gains of exile and also steer analysis toward broader issues raised by contemporary international migration (Hammond 2004: 109). Of particular relevance here are current debates on the role of ethnicity and cultural identity and their renewed significance in the context of globalization. The Somali Diaspora is wide and transcends many countries and continents. While the fact that refugee communities possess a cultural identity that transcends borders may not be a particularly new idea, the level of interaction and communication now possible between
members of a displaced community are unprecedented (Kennedy and Roudometof 2001). This identity is a central feature in the experience of refugee groups and can influence the processes of resettlement and integration in a host community.

Related to this is the uniqueness of Somali social structure and organization. Organized along *Qabils* and “*Qolos*” which are Arabic and Somali words for “clans,” the Somalis I interviewed were trying to rekindle and refocus kinship ties and the social contract into positive social capital as opposed to the negative which drove them into the Diaspora in the first place. While many researchers, both Western and Somali, have framed the two main pillars of Somali social organization and structure, kinship and social contract – *tol iyo xeer* - as negative social capital which caused and continue to feed the Somali conflict and argue for its dismantlement, I argue that the Mushungulis and the Somali have to revise and reframe kinship and the social contract within the environs of the Diaspora. Putnam has described social capital as, “refer(ing) to features of social organization such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (1995: 65). His exploration of the concept drew upon ‘civic engagement’, which he viewed as a precursor to social capital. While his ideas of ‘civic engagement’ involved such activities as voter turnout, religious institution membership, newspaper reading, participation in public forums and in private organizations such as choral societies and bowling leagues, I believe that for the Somali community, *Qabils* need to re-engage members both within and without. They need to focus on education, employment, health care, women’s rights, infrastructure and children which include both human and cultural capital.

Human capital as defined by Becker (1993) involves investment in training, education, or work experience, all of which ultimately increase one’s potential for financial compensation. Cultural capital, developed extensively by Bourdieu (1979), is defined as high cultural knowledge that ultimately contributes to the owner’s socio-economic advantage. Social capital is distinguished from these other forms of capital in that it refers specifically to relationships of trust embedded in social networks (Light 2004). Gittel and Vidal (1998) have conducted important work in developing typologies
of social capital. They described bonding and bridging as key forms of social capital. Bonding capital is understood as bringing closer together people who already know and have some affinity with each other. This, in my opinion, is clearly true for the Somali community. Conversely, bridging capital denotes the connecting of people or groups not previously interacting. Encapsulated within this concept of bridging capital are several possible modalities. The first is that of bridging within a community of people with diverse interests (Gittell and Vidal 1998). Again, I believe, this applies to the different qabil families within the Somali community which were at war before migrating into the Diaspora. The second, more broadly used concept of bridging involves the building of links between the particular community and mainstream society which can only help with positive integration outcomes (Briggs 2004; Gress 2004; Vidal 2004). Light (2004) argued that social capital can also be potentially transmuted into economic capital, and hence the development of social capital is particularly pertinent in economically depressed areas. I would stretch that argument to include economically depressed and war-torn countries like Somalia. If Somalis in the Diaspora can re-establish kinship ties and the social contract into positive social capital and get the different “Qabils” to bond and bridge together, it can only help the current conflict in Somalia and help restore lasting and sustained peace. It will also help with integration process as members of the host community and receiving society will see a flourishing community intent on helping itself and contributing positively to the neighborhood or community as a whole.

Resettlement policies and programs reflect the ideologies of host countries as to what they believe about the needs of refugee populations. The policies and programs, however, reveal little insight into the perspectives of refugees and offer little foresight into the achievability of integration and incorporation over time, equating refugees’ needs with those of general immigrants despite significant findings to the contrary (Humpage 2001; Korac 2001; Rynearson 2001; Barnes 1997). Although resettlement policies and programs are designed to incorporate refugees into host societies, rather than facilitate assimilation and adaptation, a devastating result is vast numbers of resettling refugees who face increasing economic and social marginalization that thwarts their integration into the host country. A lack of integration not only affects the wellbeing of the refugees
being resettled but saddles host countries as well with considerable economic and social costs.

My study also looked at how the members and service providers of these host communities were affected by and experienced the integration of refugees and immigrants as a function of the whole resettlement process. Resettlement is the process by which refugees are given permanent legal residency in a host country. That is, they cannot be forced to return to their country of origin even after the conflict ended. They are accorded the major benefits and entitlements possessed by citizens of the host country, and have the right to apply for citizenship after a certain period of time. Permanent resettlement is used when there are grave threats, either in the country of temporary asylum or the country of origin. Refugee integration and incorporation is defined as participation in the host country’s economic, social, political, cultural, and political domains (Korac 2001; Krahn, et al. 2000; Takeda 2000; Valtonen 1999, 1998, 1994; Barnes 1997).

There are two main parties involved in integration processes: the refugees, with their characteristics, efforts and adaptation, and the receiving society, with its interactions with these newcomers and their institutions (Penninx 2001). It is the interaction between the two that determines the direction and the ultimate outcome of the integration process. These two, however, are unequal partners. The receiving society, in terms of its institutional structures and the way it reacts to newcomers, has much more say in the outcome of the process. That process of integration of refugees is thus not—as is often supposed—only taking place at the level of the individual refugee, whose integration is then measured in terms of housing, employment, education, and social and cultural adaptation to the new society. It also takes place at the collective level of the refugee group as well as the host community at large.

Whereas achieving integration and incorporation means active involvement in the host country society in multiple ways, the primary objective of most host countries, and especially the United States of America, for refugees is singular: economic self-
sufficiency. For my research, the definition of integration includes “language, lifestyle, cultural identity, and attitudes as they are maintained or transformed by the experience of coming into contact with another culture” (Miller and Chandler 2002: 28). Refugees are not provided with adequate and effective tools, however, to achieve short or long term self-sufficiency, let alone tools to help them learn the language, lifestyle, culture, and behavioral attitudes needed to help them succeed in their new host country. Restrictive government policies regarding foreign qualifications, inadequate support and funding for labor market training, and ineffective, often under-funded and overcrowded facilities for language instruction and acquisition during the resettlement period all contribute to refugees being funneled into the low-wage service sector of the labor market or the public welfare system. Increasing economic marginalization and growing reliance on public assistance endanger support for refugee admissions as well as funding for domestic resettled refugee programs.

As part of my research, I also conducted research in Nairobi, Kenya, where I observed the cultural orientation sessions conducted by the Joint Voluntary Agency (JVA). These refugee cultural orientation sessions prepared the refugees for life in the United States of America. At the times when I observed in these training sessions in March 2008 and October 2009, all of the refugees came from either Somalia or Ethiopia. These sessions were conducted in a rushed, confusing, and haphazard way and the trainers were ill equipped to provide them with a more developed and thorough preparation due to the lack of funds. Unfortunately, there are no formal cultural orientation sessions for members of host communities and receiving societies which prepare them for receiving refugees and immigrants which should complement these sessions overseas. And if there are, they are usually delivered by church groups with good intentions but with information about the refugees derived from the media. As I have alluded to before, refugees have become a deterritorialized entity (Appadurai 1990) and yet constitute an essential feature of the world and can affect the politics of and between nations. They do so by creating or maintaining social meanings and identities, which if members of the host communities do not share them can be contested, and lead to problems of integration.
The Scope and Organization of My Research

The first half of my study focused on a pair of Mushunguli families who came to the United States of America in 2005. The Mushungulis were chosen for two main reasons: (1) they were one of the largest groups recently resettled in the United States of America; and (2) their memories of home and the refugee camps as well as their experiences of resettlement were relatively recent.

However, my key informants changed over the course of my research. One family left almost at the start of the research and the other left just over midway. The economic climate in both the small cities did not allow for them to find gainful employment. Also, these cities were non-traditional gateway cities that did not have a lot of resources available to them to offer other refugees and immigrants, let alone Mushungulis who lacked any English proficiency and did not have any technical job skills that were sought after by employers and were very dependent on their case worker(s) for help and navigation. In fact, both families had left their initial point of disembarkation, Salt Lake City, after eight months to find better services and opportunities. This, despite the fact that Salt Lake City was much larger than either of the two cities that the families had decided to migrate to secondarily. I eventually ended up interviewing other Somali refugees that managed to fill in gaps in the research that the two Mushunguli families created by leaving the two cities and my research. I am confident that the story of the Mushungulis still rings clear in my research as they are a part of the larger voice of all refugees and immigrants that have arrived to the United States of America and indeed other host countries around the world.

Research in refugee resettlement experience has shown that a myriad of factors influence and affect this process which in turn influences and affects the integration and incorporation of refugees into their host countries. These analyses have shown that all refugees, regardless of ethnicity or country or origins face these same factors (Korac 2005, 2001; Agger and Strand 2004; Al-Sharmani 2004; Kusow 2003; Gray and Elliott 2001; Takeda 2000; Krahn, et al. 2000; Valtonen 1999, 1998, 1994; Barnes 1997; Faist
1997; and Harrell-Bond and Voutira 1995). I have arranged these factors into individual, institutional and ideological factors and will explain them in detail in a later chapter. When refugees face the challenges generated by these individual, institutional, and ideological factors, their lives can evolve in one direction or another according to personal and situational context. My goals included researching these challenges to see if they would hinder or facilitate the participation in economic, social, cultural, and political domains, shaping integration and incorporation. Whether and/or how resettlement policies and programs address these challenges produced by multilevel factors is critical to obtaining knowledge of how to better facilitate integration and incorporation.

Research context

Contributing to the individual, institutional, and ideological systems are an individual’s life events; for refugees, life events in the forced migration context are often traumatic and/or stressful. Most resettlement researchers look at the pieces of refugee resettlement separately and ignore the individual in context; doing this neglects the integrative characteristics of the resettlement experience and refugee integration. Previous resettlement studies have focused only on certain aspects of the resettlement process and integration, providing fractured pictures (e.g. Takeda 2000, looked at economic and psychological integration; Krahn, et al. 2000, looked at economic integration; Barnes 1997, looked at social integration). Several examples point to this incomplete picture. The first example is Berry’s acculturation model (1992). While Berry’s model provides a holistic view of identity during resettlement, his conceptualization is limited to an individual’s personal strategy and does not give attention to structural forces in the host country that influence resettlement outcomes, regardless of strategy.

Korac (2005), Agger and Strand (2004), Al-Sharmani (2004), Kusow (2003), Gray and Elliott (2001), and Valtonen (1999) build on Berry’s (1992) model by incorporating personal strategy and one aspect of societal context into an integration model, transforming Berry’s modes of acculturation into resettlement outcomes vis-à-vis integration. They do this by examining the extent to which a refugee participates in the
economic, social, cultural, and political domains of the host society and uses these levels of participation to indicate whether the refugee has become marginalized, separated, assimilated, or integrated. Achieving integration requires full participation in all four domains of societal participation. Furthermore, recognizing the importance of relationship to the country of origin, Korac (2005), Agger and Strand (2004), Al-Sharmani (2004), Kusow (2003), Gray and Elliott (2001), and Valtonen (1999) include “a degree of ethno-cultural integrity” (Agger and Strand 2004: 172) in their models, ethno-cultural integrity meaning the retention of cultural identity from the country of origin. However, they configure the refugee’s relationship with the country of origin to the cultural domain, overlooking its pervasiveness throughout all four domains.

My study of the Mushungulis and other Somali refugees contributes to the field of refugee resettlement by extending the adaptations of Korac (2005), Agger and Strand (2004), Al-Sharmani (2004), Kusow (2003), Gray and Elliott (2001), and Valtonen (1999) through greater attention to multilevel and multidimensional factors affecting integration and more meaningful incorporation of involvement with the country of origin. The extension focuses on the integral qualities of individual, institutional, and ideological factors that facilitate or hinder integration (i.e., how they function as protective or risk factors), how they function together to influence participation in the formal and informal life of the host country, and how that influence shapes integration. Individual factors lie within the purview of the refugee in that he or she must work through or address each factor, such as language proficiency issues, employment challenges, and so forth. As institutional and ideological factors are outside individual control, in order to achieve integration, the refugee must deal with the ramifications of these factors, such as discrimination and host country context. This process shapes a refugee’s participation in the four ecological domains of societal life.

A Multi-Dimensional and Relational Model of Refugee Integration in Resettlement

Below, in Figure 1-1, is a detailed description of the study model, a multi-dimensional and relational model of refugee integration in resettlement. There are three
levels of factors that shape refugee integration: individual, institutional, and ideological. Individual factors are issues that challenge refugees on an individual level while institutional factors are settings that play an important role in the resettlement process, and ideological factors are larger systems-level issues of discrimination and host country context.

Multi-Dimensional and Relational Model of Refugee Integration

For the individual factors specifically, although it was recognized that some of these factors might have been more pertinent to some refugee participants than others, all seven areas discussed above were explored. The direct examination of mental health issues, however, was abbreviated. While one must recognize the debilitating nature of mental disability and its impact on integration, that knowledge must be balanced with the possible dangers of perpetuating a stigmatizing, disempowering discourse.

Institutional settings that offer programs and services for refugees are factors that play significant roles in the resettlement process and influence integration. Such settings
formally aid refugees in the process of integration by making available and/or providing access to resources, services, and programs for resettlement. Institutional settings include (a) Voluntary Resettlement Agencies or VOLAGs (voluntary and municipal), (b) public welfare agencies, (c) ethnic community organizations including mutual assistance associations or MAAs and community-based organizations or CBOs, (d) religious congregations, and (e) private for-profit entities.

Ideological factors are challenges at the systems and national level. Systems and national-level issues consist of discrimination, including credibility, and host country context, which is composed of national refugee policy, the nation’s social values and welfare ideology, the social welfare system’s goals and the national economy.

Refugee resettlement research has illuminated four ecological domains in which participation during resettlement has been found to indicate integration. The economic, social, cultural, and political domains reviewed were refined further for the purposes of my study in order to concentrate on interactions between refugees and members of the host country as well as between refugees and members of their own and other ethnic communities and to evaluate the quality of refugees’ participation from their perspective.

Participation in the economic domain was conceptualized as a refugee’s relationship to the labor market. The economic domain was evaluated using a range from none to partial to full to allow for varying participation levels. This was particularly relevant for individuals whose participation consisted of receiving public assistance or being under employed, that is, only being able to work part-time when full-time employment was desired or not receiving a livable wage from work (Harewood 1981).

Participation in the social domain was conceptualized as being a part of intra-group and community relationships and interactions (Korac 2005; Agger and Strand 2004; Al-Sharmani 2004; Kusow 2003; Gray and Elliott 2001; Valtonen 1999, 1998; Faist 1997; and Harrell-Bond and Voutira 1995). Intra-group relations and interactions were those with family and friends. Participation in community or intergroup
relationships consisted of being involved in organized activities that were arranged by either refugee or non-refugee groups whose membership is composed of refugees and/or non-refugees.

Following Korac’s (2005) conceptualization of integration as dialogical, for the cultural domain, activities that bring refugees and host country-born citizens together in the act of familiarizing each other with their respective cultures was included, in addition to activities that specifically promoted the culture of the country of origin and those that involved refugees in the culture of the host country. Activities that familiarized and involved refugees and host country-born citizens with their respective cultures included attending sporting events and nonreligious holiday celebrations, and sharing literature, film, art, and other cultural artifacts.

In the political domain, participation was conceptualized as civic activism or awareness. Maintaining a level of political activism or awareness of issues in the country or origin (as well as the host country) was included to assess the extent to which the refugee was preserving connections with his or her country of origin. Maintaining ties to the country of origin was a key part of the conceptualization of integration being used in my study. The ways in which resettlement individual, institutional, and ideological factors shape participation in the economic, social, cultural, and political domains underscore the complex process of integration.

Thus, in order to understand this multifaceted phenomenon, my study took a holistic approach by drawing on sources to focus on key factors found to shape resettlement and influence integration as experienced by the Mushungulis and other Somali refugees. Furthermore, the refugee is always at the center of the integration process. Therefore, my study’s working definition of refugee integration focused on individual involvement in the host country’s ecological domains. Additionally, participation in all four domains in the host country included elements that related to the country of origin as well. Integrating into the host country does not necessitate detachment from the country of origin; rather, integration in the host country includes
refugees’ having relationships to the country of origin, and those relationships can exist in each ecological domain. Refugees’ identities are reshaped by the synthesis of conceptualizations of self and involvement and interaction with both the host country and their country of origin. Therefore, for the purposes of my study, refugee integration was defined as a refugee’s participation in the host country’s economic, social, cultural, and political domains while maintaining a relationship with his or her country of origin (Korac 2005, 2001; Agger and Strand 2004; Al-Sharmani 2004; Kusow 2003; Gray and Elliott 2001; Takeda 2000; Krahn, et al. 2000; Valtonen 1999, 1998, 1994; Barnes 1997; Faist 1997; and Harrell-Bond and Voutira 1995).

Using the multidimensional and relational model of refugee integration in resettlement was critical for understanding the different ways in which individual, institutional, and ideological factors combined to shape the Mushungulis’ resettlement outcomes. This model guided the research questions to assist in the exploration of those multidimensional and relational factors and influences in resettlement and discover what facilitated or hindered the achievement of integration. The model depicts the integrative nature of the model. Factors that facilitated or hindered refugee integration were divided into individual, institutional, and ideological categories. The arrows connecting the individual, institutional, and ideological factors illustrate how they are shaped by integration by the extent to which they functioned individually and/or in concert as protective and/or risk factors, shaping a refugee’s life trajectory toward integration (Rousseau, et al. 1998; Rutter 1987).

On the right side are domains of participation. Participation within that domain is represented by an arrow connecting to the resettlement outcome of integration. Refugee integration is represented by the four-sided box on the right side of the model where each side represents one of the four ecological domains. Part of the conceptualization of integration includes the preservation of economic, social, cultural, and/or political ties to the country of origin. This relationship to the country of origin is represented by the shaded section of the ecological domains.
Becoming a part of a host country is a transformative process that requires space for the fusion of selves. The self from the country of origin does not disappear but is a durable strand together with the refugee self and the self in the host country in the helix of new existences. Holding to the self from the country of origin requires a stronger relationship with the country of origin than “a degree of ethno-cultural integrity” (Agger and Strand 2004: 172) implies. Additionally, the models by Korac (2005), Agger and Strand (2004), Al-Sharmani (2004), Kusow (2003), and Gray and Elliott (2001), and Valtonen (1999) limit ideological factors to the national economy, not taking the larger societal and policy context into account. I next turn to the methods I used in acquiring my information and data. Again, using the model described above, my aim was to understand refugee resettlement as experienced by the Mushungulis and other Somali refugees. I next turn to the methods I used to gather my data.

Methods

This section describes the main study methods and how the answers to my questions were analyzed in later chapters. My qualitative exploration of refugee resettlement is in essence a case study. Following Cresswell’s definition, a case study is used “to explore in depth, a program, an event, an activity, a process, or one or more individuals” (2003: 15). The Mushungulis’ case of resettlement in a small city in the Midwest was time and activity bound, providing opportunities for gathering in-depth information using various data collection methods (Stake 1995). Case study methods include interviewing, participant observation, analyzing events during the course of life lived and experienced, and document analysis (Marshall and Rossman 1999).

Qualitative methods were chosen for several reasons. Qualitative methods are important tools in eliciting refugees’ personal experiences during resettlement because they allow interviewees to give voice to their own thoughts and feelings in their own way. A dialog with refugees in their own context of this study provided them with an opportunity to share their perspectives. Evoking personal and intimate accounts of refugees’ lives through individual interviews, the study illuminated elements in
participants’ self-narratives that provided insight into how they lived their lives and elucidated the complex process of refugee resettlement (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber 1998).

As Mushunguli and Somali refugee resettlement is not a topic about which much is known, and what is known is often filtered through the lens of a Western framework which can be ethnocentric, qualitative methods conformed well to the exploratory nature of the study, allowing for creation of new categories to emerge from the data (Padgett, 1998). However useful data from quantitative refugee studies may be, they have not illuminated the experience of being a refugee (Agger, et al. 2000); particularly the ways in which being a refugee affects one’s ability to participate in the host country’s economic, social, cultural, and political domains. Moreover, there is a limited exploration of the influences of the state’s social protection and welfare systems on how they create admission and resettlement policies and how these policies in turn affect refugee integration (Korac 2001).

Qualitative methods are especially appropriate for sensitive-topic studies such as the exploration of refugee issues. As Padgett notes, using “a standardized, closed-ended interview would be inappropriate or insensitive” (1998: 8) for issue areas where respondents need to articulate their experiences in their own style and own words. This is particularly applicable when respondents are recounting traumatic experiences, including cases of physical and/or emotional trauma.

Using a qualitative approach can also increase the opportunity to have more personal and interactive communication and diminish the typical power relationships present in conventional research. In this study, this was accomplished by creating a research partnership with the Mushunguli family, other Somali refugees and others in the resettlement community. I worked with them to familiarize myself with Mushunguli norms and created an interview schedule that was culturally appropriate. Guidance from the partnership helped me create an atmosphere in the interviews in which the participants felt comfortable introducing issues of concern to them which might not have
been directly addressed in the interview schedule. This was an important consideration as refugees as a group are marginalized and often experience feelings of powerlessness.

Integration has previously been approached from the “top-down,” a disempowering approach for refugees with a sole focus on the structural and organizational aspects of one country’s integration system (Korac 2003: 11). Actively listening to refugee perspectives creates a partnership that can be a model between the host country and the refugees that can, in itself, promote integration and empower a traditionally powerless group. By juxtaposing refugee perspectives and policies, the study compared “lived experience” with policies on paper, thus making a contribution to refugee policies and programs.

The conceptual foundations of qualitative research are shaped by the philosophy that underpins it. All research is based on philosophical assumptions about what is real (ontology) and how we know (epistemology). Qualitative research is underpinned by a subjectivist ontology and a subjectivist epistemology, which means individuals create their own subjective realities and there is an inter-related and inter-dependent relationship between the knower and the known (Depoy and Gitlin 1998). There are four conceptual dimensions of qualitative research that reflect these philosophical assumptions and create the distinctive nature of qualitative research. They are context specific, emic perspectives, iterative nature and power relations.

Context Specific

The first dimension of qualitative research approaches is that they are context specific and capture context-bound narratives. This dimension is important in assisting us to understand the “life world” of the research participants and the myriad influences upon it. The use of context-bound narratives in qualitative studies facilitates understanding of the complex relationship between what people do, their life experiences, and the contexts in which they live.
Emic Perspectives

Second, qualitative approaches provide what is referred to as an emic or insider’s perspective and experience. An insider’s perspective is crucial in understanding the meaning of constructions of an individual, group, or community in relation to a specific phenomenon. In this case, the specific phenomenon would be the refugee resettlement process and integration.

Iterative Nature

A third important feature of qualitative research is that it is iterative in nature, allowing for new and at times unexpected findings to emerge. As compared with a hypothetico-deductive approach, qualitative research, through its exploratory approach and data-responsive processes, is particularly important in sensitive areas of research.

Power Relations

The fourth dimension of the conceptual foundations of qualitative research relates to power relations. Power relations are part of any research project. In research adopting a qualitative research approach participants or informants have an opportunity to have ownership or control over data and findings. In participatory action research, for example, participants can also become stakeholders in potential changes emerging from the qualitative research. Power relations in qualitative research are markedly different from those in quantitative research approaches. Quantitative researchers operationalize concepts in order to measure them. As a result, in quantitative studies, the concepts are framed from the perspective of the researcher, leading to the question “whose voice is speaking?”

Given the many inequities and the power differential that refugees and immigrants experience as they undergo the resettlement and integration process, these four distinct conceptual dimensions of qualitative research were among the factors that influenced my decision to adopt a qualitative approach to the exploration of integration and the refugee resettlement process. I also decided to use life-history research as a specific qualitative approach because I sought to understand and learn the trajectory of
the Somali Bantu experience both as citizens of Somalia and as refugees in camps before arriving to the United States of America as new Americans. This was true for the other Somali refugees that I interviewed as well.

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Life history research was first used as a qualitative approach by psychologists for understanding human experience and how people construct their lives. It has also been a primary methodology in anthropological fieldwork (Atkinson 1998). For my research, the narrative approach adopted by life-history research rendered it particularly suitable for understanding the refugee experience. A narrative approach uses narratives, the stories people tell about the things they do. Developed from the study of the form and content of narratives, the narrative approach uses the sequential nature of narratives and the cohesive role of narrative plots to reflect on experiences that people recall (Grbich 1999; Bruner 1986; Ricouer 1985). Narratives are the basic medium through which humans speak and think and, as such, narratives are uniquely suited for comprehending human lives in culture and in time (Freeman 1997). The relatively recent increase in the use of narrative approaches in various fields, as noted by Frank (1996), is understandable given that narratives render the human experience meaningful, and display human existence as situated action (Polkinghorne 1995).

Life history research is distinct among narrative approaches to qualitative research. In the life-history approach, the narratives used are life stories. Life stories are
particular narratives used to reconstruct and interpret whole lives to obtain a comprehensive, over-time view of people’s experiences (Frank 1996). That is, they can be used to understand not only one life across time, but how individual lives interact with the whole. For this reason, life stories, in my opinion, are very appropriate for understanding the trajectory of the refugee experience and for understanding the personal, social, economic, historical, and geographical influences that shape those experiences. I used the life story approach to uncover experiences and feelings of refugeedom as I interviewed my key informants, the adults of the Mushungulis family, as well other Somali refugees and other refugees that lived in Luckenville.

The purpose of my interviews was to elucidate significant themes and patterns embedded in the refugees’ stories and to identify social, historical, political, and economic events that had influenced their experiences as they navigated the bureaucracy of refugee resettlement programs and policies and as they traveled to America to become citizens. Such themes and patterns were subsequently explored in depth in these individual interviews as the refugees told their stories. In all my interviews, life-story data was collected and data clarification was possible during the second interviews where the refugees had the opportunity to member check their stories, modifying or expanding them as they wished. The data gathered from the interviews were narratively analyzed and interpreted from a refugee perspective.

Luckenville, a small town in the Midwest of the United States of America, was chosen as a case study site. The research was conducted from June 2007 through October 2009. I also did additional research in February 2010. Research partnerships were established with representatives of the non-profit and service provider community as well as the Mushunguli family and other Somali refugees in the United States of America. The Mushunguli families were introduced to me by Somali colleagues at Hennepin County. Most of the meetings and interview sessions with them were either conducted at community centers, the voluntary resettlement agency, coffee shops, and in their homes. Collaborating with stakeholders and sharing decision-making at each stage of community-based research has been shown to enhance the validity of the entire research
enterprise (Lamb-Parker, et al. 2000). These partnerships oversaw the research at the sites as well as assisted in ensuring that the interview procedures and questions were culturally appropriate and meaningful.

In total, I interviewed twenty eight refugees, including Abdoul and Mabruka, the Mushunguli couple, and made sure that all of the other Somali refugees were representative of the six major Qabils present in Luckenville and the Twin Cities. I made sure of this by asking the elders and by asking the interpreters that worked with me. I have used pseudonyms for them, the other refugees and the name of the town. I conducted a minimum of two interviews with each refugee which lasted about three hours each. There were many refugees that I spent more time with, especially the Mushunguli couple, among others. In total I conducted sixty interviews. I also spent time observing events, ESL classes, refugee orientation classes which were held in Nairobi, Kenya, job orientation sessions, and eligibility interviews. I also accompanied staff to home visits. I also interviewed service providers and staff from mutual assistance associations that served refugees and these totaled about thirty interviews. These were conducted in both Luckenville and the Twin Cities in Minnesota.

I communicated with the representatives of the non-profit and service provider community by electronic mail to discuss issues of sampling, interview questions, appropriateness of questions, and participant observation activities prior to my arrival. I chose Luckenville for three main reasons: (1) it was not a typical gateway city that had experience with resettling large numbers of refugees and immigrants; (2) the Mushunguli family I was introduced to, lived there; and (3) there was a large number of other Somali refugees and immigrants who had migrated there secondarily because of job opportunities. I worked with numerous representatives of schools, faith-based agencies, voluntary resettlement agencies, law enforcement, community-based organizations, and health and human service providers. Periodic meetings with the partners were used to discuss sampling issues, questions for interviews, the appropriateness of the questions, and the appropriate activities for observation. The partners agreed to help with the recruitment of other refugees and immigrant groups to meet and talk with. They also
agreed to help recruit a male and female Somali interpreter who could speak Af-Maay. However, most of the interviews with Abdoul and Mabruka were conducted in Af-Maxaa. None of the families and the interpreters was compensated in fiscal terms. I did, however, from time to time buy meals and beverages for the interpreters and groceries for the families. The voluntary resettlement agency I worked with had a long history of involvement in refugee and immigrant resettlement in the city and while it did not have a contract with the United States State Department and the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement, it did have smaller contracts to provide services from the Minnesota Department of Human Services to refugees and immigrants.

The two Mushunguli families I started my research with left at different points of time. One family left in 2008 and the other in 2009. I had to supplement my research by interviewing other Somali refugees in Luckenville. Also, working with interpreters presented problems as the refugees sometimes did not feel comfortable expressing themselves to me through them. If I had had the time I would have learned the Somali language and Af Maay as well. It was clear to me that the refugees and the interpreters used words to describe themselves and concepts of organization and culture that were “given” to them by resettlement officials, service providers, and others. Many of the frameworks described to me by them used terms and references that they thought would allow me to understand them better. This is the same linguistic imperialism that I referred to earlier in the chapter. I communicated with them in English which woefully lacked the exact descriptions that either Somali or Af Maay would have afforded me. Learning the language would have been extremely helpful. There was also the problem of Qabil issues that I had to overcome initially. Many did not want to talk explicitly about Qabil and especially through interpreters. However, over time, I managed to negotiate and come to an understanding with the elders and others so that they would share information with me. In fact, it was conversations with colleagues at Hennepin County that actually allowed me to grasp the complexity, the dynamism and the essence of the Qabil system to Somali culture and identity. Another huge problem was the fact that I was working full time in the Twin Cities. This meant that I could only get to Luckenville during weekends and on holidays. It would have been much easier for me if
I had been a full time student or had had a sabbatical from work and was living with the families and refugees I was researching. Still, I managed to work through these problems. Initially, I did not think that collateral issues surrounding September 11th, 2001 would present themselves but they did and again, I had to overcome their fear and distrust by being as transparent and as honest as possible which took a lot of work and relationship building.

Next, I would like to outline the chapters in the dissertation. In these chapters I explore in greater detail the themes above especially as they pertain to the voices of the refugees in Luckenville and the Twin Cities in Minnesota and the United States of America.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter Two briefly visits some of the themes that lead to a state of societal collapse and the effective dissolution of state and society in Somalia. I try and answer the question: what went wrong in Somalia? I also situate the Mushungulis in Somalia during the crisis. The dominant historical narrative of Somalia has favored northern populations of ethnic Somalis to the neglect of minority voices and I try to offer an overview of southern Somali history from the perspective of minority populations, especially the Mushungulis. The roots of the Somali crisis lie in a fundamental mismatch between the pastoral basis of social relations and the organizational requirements of centralized state power.

Chapter Three describes refugee cultural orientation which is the education provided to refugee newcomers to the United States of America to help them acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed in early resettlement. In fact, all the cultural orientation programs for refugees around the world have been designed and developed by one organization, the Center for Applied Linguistics. The purpose of refugee cultural orientation is to help refugees acquire the information and skills necessary to gradually adapt to a new society and culture. Refugee cultural orientation helps refugees incorporate elements of American culture into their own system of values and beliefs.
Chapter Four describes the refugee resettlement process in Luckenville and the United States of America. It looks at the historical context which provides a foundation for the understanding of refugee resettlement in the United States of America and includes a review of international protection mechanisms and American refugee policies and programs, the influence of social welfare ideology, and background on the resettlement program itself. The chapter also covers the story of the Mushungulis’ resettlement and indeed the resettlement of all other refugees in the United States of America and describes this story of triumph over adversity.

Chapter Five explores the dynamic relationship between nonprofit organizations and government institutions in the context of social service delivery and its effects on the construction of citizenship in Luckenville and Minneapolis-St. Paul, and how this affects refugee resettlement. In this chapter, themes discussed include the ways in which government institutions at both the federal and state levels and local nonprofit organizations in Luckenville and Minneapolis-St. Paul coordinated to address refugee resettlement and associated concerns beginning in the 1990s with the arrival of the first East African refugees from Somalia and Ethiopia.

Chapter Six examines the impact of the Diaspora and significance of Qabil identities for Somalis in Luckenville and the Twin Cities and the different ways in which this influences the process of refugee integration. It explores both the continuing significance of Qabil for Somalis and the degree to which Qabil identities may be undergoing change. This links to a central theme in the study of diasporas concerning the manner in which cultural identities are both maintained and transformed as a result of displacement and migration.

Finally, Chapter Seven, the Conclusion, discusses and provides (a) an integration overview, (b) a discussion regarding the revision of the study model, (c) a summary of the major findings in my research, including the influences of language and employment, the centrality of social interactions, and the importance of national affiliation, (d) strengths and limitations of my research, and (e) recommendations that might improve
the resettlement and integration process for refugees. It also looks at the future of the Somali community in Luckenville and the United States of America and offers hope that unless it re-defines kinship ties and the social contract between and within the *Qabil* and with other minority groups like the Mushungulis, and learns from other refugee and immigrant communities that arrived before them, the outcomes for integration might take longer to achieve and be more difficult to realize.
Chapter Two – The Fall of Somalia and the Flight of the Mushungulis

Map of Somalia (UNDP Somalia 2005)

The description of the Somali civil war as a war between Qabils obscures the very important ways in which control of resources lies at the heart of the conflict. In this chapter I analyze the origins and development of the crisis, locating it in the growth of state-mediated tensions between agriculture and pastoralism which eventually lead to the collapse of the Somali state. Caught in these tensions are the Mushungulis, or the
“Somali Bantus” as they known internationally, as they flee Somalia, creating a new identity in the process based on history and language. The Mushungulis, as I will explain in this chapter, have been known by other names given to them by Somalis. As a part of their flight, they temporarily live in dedicated refugee camps because of their particular status which lead to their persecution and, finally, after much deliberation by refugee resettlement officials, resettle to the United States of America.

Somalia and Its Collapse

Over the past two decades the nature of the Somali crisis and the international context within which it is occurring has been constantly changing. It has mutated from a civil war in the 1980s, through state collapse, Qabil factionalism and “warlordism” in the 1990s, to a globalized ideological conflict in the first decade of the new millennium (Besteman 2007: 4). Unfortunately, the term “warlord” is another example of linguistic imperialism that has been coined to describe leaders and their styles of leadership in Somalia. “Warlord” has been framed through the lens of an ethnocentric Western framework and is again wrought with misunderstanding and confusion. In Somalia, males who are “aggressive, belligerent, independent, and filled with panache as well as sophistication are called hal-karaan – a capable man of leadership or in an ironic way, belaayo – which means disaster or catastrophe to his enemies” (Mohamed 2007: 229). Males in Somalia aspire to be hal-karaan or belaayo as these are seen as admirable traits.

In this time the international environment has also changed, from the end of the Cold War to the ‘global war on terror,’ which impacts directly on the crisis and international responses to it. This poses a problem for Somalis and international actors working to build peace. Initiatives that may have appeared to offer a solution in earlier years may no longer be applicable and there is a risk of fighting yesterday’s war or building yesterday’s peace. This section traces the evolution of the Somali conflict and some of the continuities that run through it.
The collapse of the Somali state was the consequence of a combination of internal and external factors (Dare 2005; El-Solh 2005, 1995; Doornbus and Markakis 1994; Ahmed I. Samatar 1994; Lewis 1994, 1983; Rogge 1993; Drysdale 1992; Cohen 1991; S. Samatar 1991). Externally there were the legacies of European colonialism that divided the Somali people into five states, the impact of Cold War politics in shoring up a predatory state, and the cumulative effect of wars with neighboring states, most damagingly the 1977-78 Ogaden war with Ethiopia (Zohlberg, et al. 1989; Laitin and S. Samatar 1987). Internally, there were contradictions between a centralized state authority and a fractious kinship system and the Somali pastoral culture in which power is diffused (Ahmed I. Samatar 1988). Next came the Somali National Movement (SNM) formed in 1982 that drew its support from the Isaq Qabil. The SNM insurgency escalated into a full-scale civil war in 1988 when it attacked government garrisons in Burco and Hargeisa. In the early 1990s, the government responded with a ferocious assault on the Isaq Qabil, killing some 50,000 people and forcing 650,000 to flee to Ethiopia and Djibouti (Brittain 1992; Cohen and Goulbourne 1991).

Somalia’s collapse was hastened by the ending of the Cold War (Leys 1994; Lewis 1993). As Somalia’s strategic importance to the West declined, the foreign aid that had sustained the state was withdrawn. Without the resources to maintain the system of patronage politics, Siyad Barre, the President of Somalia who assumed this position through a military coup, lost control of the country and the army (Lyons 1994). In January 1991, he was ousted from Mogadishu by forces of the United Somali Congress (USC) drawing support from the Hawiye Qabil in south central Somalia ((Kapteijns 1994; Ahmed I. Samatar 1994).

State Collapse, Qabil War, and Famine 1991-1992

Somalis use the word burbur (catastrophe) to describe the period from December 1991 to March 1992, when the country was torn apart by Qabil-based warfare and
factions plundered the remnants of the state and fought for control of rural and urban assets (M. Duale, personal communication, February 2010). Four months of fighting in Mogadishu alone in 1991 and 1992 killed an estimated 25,000 people, 1.5 million people fled the country, and at least 2 million were internally displaced. In the midst of drought, the destruction of social and economic infrastructure, asset stripping, ‘Qabil-cleansing’ and the disruption of food supplies caused a famine in which an estimated 250,000 people died (Kapteijns 1994; Ahmed I. Samatar 1994). Those who suffered most came from the politically marginalized and poorly armed riverine and inter-riverine agro-pastoral communities like the Mushungulis in the south, who suffered waves of invasions from the better-armed militia from the major Qabils (Besteman 2007; Cassanelli 2005; Declich 2005; Lewis 2000; Lyons and Ahmed I. Samatar 1994).

External responses to Somalia’s collapse were belated because other wars in the Gulf and the Balkans commanded international attention. The Djibouti government tried unsuccessfully to broker a deal in June and July 1991. United Nations diplomatic engagement began only in early 1992, when a ceasefire was negotiated between the two main belligerents in Mogadishu, Ali Mahdi Mohamed and General Mohamed Farah Aideed (de Waal 1998; Abdullahi 1995; Bolton 1994; Mayall 1994; Searle 1992). A limited United Nations peacekeeping mission – the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) – was unable to stem the violence or address the famine (de Waal 1998; Abdullahi 1995; Bolton 1994; Mayall 1994; Searle 1992). Signs that war was radically restructuring the state came in May 1991 when the SNM declared that the northern regions were seceding from the south to become the independent Republic of Somaliland (Gill 1992).

Humanitarian Intervention

The Somali civil war erupted at a time of profound change in the international order, as global institutions, with the United States of America at their helm, shaped up to managing an era of ‘new wars’ and ‘failing states’ (Bradbury 1997: 59). Somalia was to become a laboratory for a new form of engagement when the international community
responded with a humanitarian and military intervention on an unprecedented scale (Bradbury 1997).

In December 1992 the outgoing administration of the United States of America authorized the deployment of armed forces of the United States of America to support the beleaguered United Nations mission in Somalia (Bradbury 1997; Bolton 1994; Mayall 1994). Under the leadership of the United States of America, UNOSOM mustered a multinational force of some 30,000 troops. Ostensibly launched for humanitarian reasons, the intervention also responded to the challenge that the collapsed Somali state posed to a supposed ‘new world order,’ proclaimed by President George W. Bush at the end of the Cold War (Bradbury 1997: 62). UNOSOM dominated Somali politics for the next three years (Bradbury 1997; Bolton 1994; Mayall 1994). UNOSOM turned world attention to a neglected crisis and assisted in saving lives by securing food supplies. It facilitated some local agreements that improved security, reopened Mogadishu airport and seaport, and supported the revival of key services and the creation of local non-governmental organizations. It also provided employment and injected huge resources into the economy to the benefit of a new business class.

However, the mission failed to mediate an end to hostilities or disarm factions. United Nations-facilitated peace conferences in Addis Ababa in 1993 and Kenya in 1994 did not engender a process of national reconciliation and state revival (Lewis 2000; de Waal 1998). The mission has been criticized for fuelling the war economy, causing a proliferation of factions and shoring up warlord power structures. Before long UNOSOM itself became embroiled in the conflict with General Aideed, leading to the infamous shooting down of Black Hawk helicopters from the United States of America in Mogadishu and the subsequent withdrawal of the armed forces of the United States of America (Lewis 2000; de Waal 1998). Some argue that the seeds of militant Islamist movements were planted in this period (Lewis 2000; de Waal 1998). Osama bin Laden, then based in the Sudan, denounced the United Nations mission as an invasion of a Muslim country.
Governance without Government

UNOSOM’s humiliating departure from Somalia was followed by international disengagement and a decline in foreign aid. Its departure in March 1995 did not lead to a revival of the civil war, however. Local political processes that had been ‘frozen’ by the intervention resumed and Qabils and other factions consolidated the gains they had made during the war (de Waal 1998; Abdullahi 1995; Bolton 1994; Mayall 1994; Searle 1992). In some areas communities drew on traditional institutions, such as elders and customary law (xeer), to end violent confrontations, renegotiate relations between groups and establish local governance structures as a transitional step to developing public administrations and regional and trans-regional polities.

The most successful and sustained of these processes took place in the secessionist Somaliland state (Lewis 2000). Elsewhere, the Rahanweyn Qabils of the Bay and Bakool regions created a Governing Council to administer their regions (Lewis 2000; Bradbury 1997). Although this did not survive for long after UNOSOM, it established a precedent for the decentralized administration of those regions. In 1998, the Puntland Federal State of Somalia was established in the northeast as an autonomously governed region (Lewis 2000; Bradbury 1997). In 1999, the Rahanweyn Resistance Army (RRA), with Ethiopian backing, won control of Bay and Bakool regions and also established an administration (Lewis 2000; Bradbury 1997).

In southern Somalia a variety of institutions emerged, including two ‘governments’ in Mogadishu, councils of elders, district councils and Sharia courts, which provided forms of ‘governance without government” (de Waal 1998: 17). While fragile and uncoordinated, these structures produced an incremental improvement in security, so that by the late 1990s the situation in much of Somalia was described as ‘neither war nor peace’ (Lewis 2000). These developments were driven by a convergence of internal and external interests. There was an internal demand for security, regulation and order from business people, civil society groups and people in the Diaspora (Casanelli 2005). This was underpinned by economic recovery, stimulated by
Diaspora remittances, and renewed inter-\textit{Qabil} cooperation and the resumption of inter-regional trade. Somalis took advantage of the lack of government and the global deregulation of trade to establish successful businesses, including money transfer and telecommunications entities (Besteman 2007). Their participation in \textit{Salaf}i commercial networks, and an increase in Islamic charitable funding, spurred the growth of Islamic organizations including welfare charities, \textit{Sharia} courts and Islamist movements (Besteman 2007; Cassanelli 2005; Declich 2005).

\textbf{Building Blocks and Regional Initiatives}

The disengagement from Somalia of Western governments resulted in the diplomatic initiative passing to regional states and in particular to Ethiopia. Addis Ababa’s engagement was driven as much by geo-political, security and economic interests as by concern to end Somalia’s political turmoil (Africa Watch 2000). Ethiopia was especially concerned by the growth of an armed Islamist group in Somalia, \textit{Al Itihad Al Islamiya}, with regional ambitions. Ethiopian forces attacked and destroyed \textit{Al Itihad} camps in the border areas during 1997. At the same time, Ethiopia brought Somali factions together at Sodere and attempted to broker an agreement (Africa Watch 2000).

Egypt, Libya and Yemen and the Arab League also made endeavors to broker settlements, but reconciliation in Somalia was actively hindered by competition between these initiatives (UNDP Somalia Report 2000; Africa Watch 2000). After 1998 the breakdown in relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea gave a new impetus to the destabilization of Somalia. Eritrea supported Somali factions opposed to those aligned with Ethiopia, introducing a new element of proxy war to an already crowded arena (UNDP Somalia Report 2000; Africa Watch 2000). In the late 1990s regional rivalries were reflected in different approaches to state building. The model favored by Ethiopia and briefly supported by Western donors was the so-called ‘building-block’ approach (UNDP Somalia Report 2000; Africa Watch 2000). Taking a lead from developments in Somaliland and Puntland, the RRA administration in Bay and Bakool regions and an all-Hawiye peace conference in Beletwelyn in 1999, the approach sought to encourage the
emergence of regional authorities as a first step towards establishing a federal or confederal Somali state (UNDP Somali Report 2000; Africa Watch 2000).

Donor and development organizations hoped to encourage the process by rewarding the areas of stability with ‘peace dividends’ of aid (UNDP Somalia Report 2000: 11). Critics of the approach contended that it had limited applicability in the south, encouraged secessionism and was designed by foreign states to keep Somalia weak and divided. The alternative approach, supported by Arab countries, advocated reviving a centralized Somali state through a process of national reconciliation and the formation of a national government (UNDP Somalia Report 2000; Africa Watch 2000).

Competing regional interests led to rival peace conferences sponsored by Ethiopia in Sodere in 1996 and by Egypt in Cairo in 1997. These produced two regional administrations: the short-lived Benadir Administration supported by Egypt and Libya; and the government of the Puntland Federal State of Somalia (Africa Watch 2000). The Benadir Administration collapsed when its leadership failed to agree on modalities for reopening Mogadishu seaport, while in Puntland a combination of community-driven political processes and strong leadership produced a functional administration (Africa Watch 2000).

Somalis were also divided over the right approach. As the multiple Qabil-based factions merged into larger regional and trans-regional polities in the late 1990s, they also mutated into broader political coalitions. One such coalition centered on Mogadishu and the sub-Qabils of the Hawiye Qabil-family. Although the Hawiye had failed to reconcile with each other and Mogadishu remained a divided city, political, business, civic and religious leaders supported the revival of a strong central state in which they would dominate the capital (UNDP Somalia Report 2000). The other coalition, backed by Ethiopia and led by Puntland President, Abdullahi Yusuf, was dominated by the Darod “Qabil,” was anti-Islamist and favored a federal state. In 1999 international support for the building block approach ended when the government of Djibouti initiated a new national peace process (UNDP Somalia Report; Africa Watch 2000).
The Return of Government - Arta Process

International diplomatic efforts were re-energized in 2000 when the Djibouti government hosted the Somalia National Peace Conference in the town of Arta (UNHCR Somalia Report 2001). The ‘Arta process’ achieved an important political breakthrough in August 2000 by producing a Transitional National Government (TNG) that commanded some national and international support. This was due, in part, to an innovative peace process that consulted with Somali society beyond the usual faction leaders. It also adopted a system of fixed proportional representation of Somali Qabil families in the conference and in government based on the so-called ‘4.5 formula’: an equal number of places were allotted to each of the four major Somali Qabil-families, and a ‘half place’ to ‘minorities’ and to women (UNHCR Report 2001: 9).

The TNG became the first authority since the fall of Siyad Barre to fill Somalia’s seat at the United Nations and regional bodies. It was supported by the United Nations and several Arab states but it failed to win the backing of Ethiopia or the confidence of major donor governments (M. Duale, personal communication, February 2010). In Somalia the TNG did not follow through on the reconciliation efforts begun in Arta and became associated with the powerful Mogadishu Qabils and the business class, which included Islamists (UNHCR Somalia Report 2001). The TNG was opposed by a coalition supported by Ethiopia, called the Somali Restoration and Reconciliation Council (SRRC) in which Abdullahi Yusuf had a leadership role (UNHCR Somalia Report 2001).

In the climate of international insecurity that followed the 9/11 attacks on the United States of America, the failed state of Somalia attracted renewed interest as a potential haven and breeding ground for international terrorists. The TNG’s reputation suffered as the growing influence of Islamic Courts and Islamic charities increased suspicions about its links with militant Islamists. To some Somalis the return of government provided the best opportunity for Somalia for a decade, and they criticized Western governments for failing to adequately support it. The experience of TNG also
demonstrated the difficulty of securing a lasting agreement in Somalia that does not address the interests and needs of both internal and external actors.

The IGAD Initiative

The mandate of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) was revised in 1996 to include the promotion of peace and security, in addition to fostering regional cooperation and economic development. IGAD had supported past Somali reconciliation efforts by Ethiopia or Djibouti (IGAD Report 2003). In 2002 IGAD took up the challenge of reconciling the TNG and the SRRC, each supported by an IGAD member state. The influence of external actors was apparent during the two-year reconciliation conference facilitated by Kenya. The Transitional Federal Government (TFG), which succeeded the TNG in November 2004, saw Somalia’s leadership shift from the Mogadishu-centered, Hawiye and Islamist dominated coalition to the federalist, Darod and Ethiopian backed coalition, with Abdullahi Yusuf chosen as the transitional president (IGAD Report 2003).

Substantial financial support for the TFG was anticipated with the inauguration of a World Bank and United Nations Development Program Joint Needs Assessment of the country’s rehabilitation and development requirements (IGAD Report 2003). But like its predecessor the TFG fell short of being a government of national unity. Power was concentrated in a narrow Qabil coalition and Abdulahi Yusuf was viewed as a client of Ethiopia. His immediate call for a military force from the African Union (AU) to help him establish his authority in the capital alienated his slender support base in Mogadishu (IGAD Report 2003; Africa Watch Report 2003). Without dogged international financial and military support the TFG would not have survived either its internal divisions or the rise of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) in 2006.
The Islamic Courts Union

An important feature of the past two decades has been the emergence of a variety of Islamist movements seeking to establish an Islamic state in Somalia (M. Duale, personal communication, February 2010). These range from traditionalist Sufi orders, to progressive Islamist movements like Al Islah, and Salafi, and Wahhabi inspired groups like Al Itihad Al Islamiya pursuing a regional or global agenda (M. Duale, personal communication, February 2010). Their significance came to the fore in April 2006 when a coalition of Islamic Courts, the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), in alliance with other Qabil militia, ousted a coalition of “warlords” (the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter Terrorism) from Mogadishu that had been backed by the government of the United States of America (M. Jibrell and M. Duale, personal communication, February 2010).

The ICU won public support for creating an unprecedented degree of security in the capital and quickly established a presence across most of south-central Somalia. It seemed to offer an alternative political system that could deliver services and security to the population, in sharp contrast to the failing authority of the TFG (M. Jibrell, personal communication, February 2010).

When mediation efforts by the Arab League failed to forge an agreement between the parties, Ethiopian forces, with implicit backing from Western governments, entered Somalia in December 2006 (M. Duale, personal communication, February 2010). They forced out the ICU and installed the TFG in Mogadishu. The United States of America’s air force attacked retreating ICU forces in an unsuccessful effort to kill Al Qaeda operatives allegedly harbored by the ICU (M. Duale, personal communication, February 2010). The ICU leadership took refuge in Eritrea where, with other opposition figures, they established the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS) that mobilized support against the Ethiopian occupation (M. Duale and M. Jibrell, personal communication, February 2010).
In early 2007 a small contingent of AU peacekeepers (the AU Mission in Somalia – AMISOM) was deployed to Mogadishu to protect the Transitional Federal Institutions (TFIs). But over the next two years efforts by the TFG and Ethiopia to impose a ‘victor’s peace’ provoked violent resistance from a mixture of Qabil militia and remnants of the militant wing of the ICU – Harakat al Shabaab (‘the youth movement’) (M. Duale, personal communication, February 2010). During 2007 alone fighting between the TFG and the insurgency resulted in the displacement of up to 700,000 people from Mogadishu, and the economic base of the Hawiye in the city was weakened. The Ethiopian occupation rallied support to the resistance within Somalia and in the Diaspora, helping to radicalize another generation of Somalis (M. Jibrell and M. Duale, personal communication, February 2010).

**Djibouti Talks**

During his four years in power, Abdullahi Yusuf’s government failed to implement any of the transitional tasks of government. By inviting Ethiopia to intervene militarily against the ICU, it lost all semblance of legitimacy and was unable to establish its authority over the country (UNDP Somalia Report 2005). When United Nations-mediated talks between the ARS and the TFG in Djibouti agreed on a timetable for Ethiopian withdrawal in late 2008, Abdullahi Yusuf resigned paving the way for the creation of a new TFG under the presidency of the former Chair of the ICU, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed (UNDP Somalia Report 2005).

The withdrawal of Ethiopian forces and the establishment of a new ‘unitary’ TFG created an opportunity to establish a moderate Islamist government in Somalia that had considerable backing from Somalis and the international community (UNDP Somalia Report 2005). Nine months later Somalia found itself in even greater turmoil. Al Shabaab denounced the Djibouti agreement as a betrayal by the ARS. Under the leadership of Ahmed Godane, who is widely held responsible for organizing suicide bombs in Hargeisa and Bosasso in October 2008, Al Shabaab declared its support for Al Qaeda (World Bank Report 2005). The TFG has to date proved itself incapable of
building a coalition to combat Al Shabaab and Hizbul Islamiya forces that control much of south central Somalia (M. Duale, personal communication, February 2010). The international community responded by increasing support for the TFG, including the provision of arms by the government of the United States of America.

The three years from 2006-08 were catastrophic for Somalis. Military occupation, a violent insurgency, rising jihadism and massive population displacement has reversed the incremental political and economic progress achieved by the late 1990s in south central Somalia. With 1.3 million people displaced by fighting since 2006, 3.6 million people in need of emergency food aid, and 60,000 Somalis a year fleeing the country, the people of south central Somalia face the worst humanitarian crisis since the early 1990s.

During the civil war, the minority groups of Somalia were among the most vulnerable and victimized populations in the country. These groups did not have any militia as most major Somali Qabils did. Generally, members of the various minority groups were and still are unarmed and they were very often victims of the killings, lootings, rapes, abductions, exclusions, displacements and other forms of aggression committed by members of the major Somali Qabils-based militias. This was and still is the case in parts of central and southern Somalia. Some of the minority groups sided with, or had been forced to side with, various militias during the civil war years and some also sided with, or had been accused of having sided with, the regime of Somalia's former dictator Siyad Barre. When war anarchy broke out in central and southern Somalia, these minority groups faced severe retribution and acts of revenge from the militias that had been fighting the Siyad Barre regime. Some of these minority groups were even subject to waves of attacks by successive militias (Besteman, 2007; Cassanelli 2005,1995; Declich 2005, 2000). One such group was the Mushungulis or as the world called them - the “Somali Bantus.”
Situating the Mushungulis or “Somali Bantus”

Constructions of race and class in Africa are related to so-called 'tribal' warfare in the continent. The use of the word 'tribe' is inappropriate in discussing Somali kinship because in the anthropological literature from the seventeenth century onwards 'tribe' meant small, centralized or acephalous groups, each with unique characteristics such as territorial boundaries, distinct origin and language (Lewis 1961: 4). A more appropriate nomenclature is the division of Somalis into corporate political groups: Qabil-families, Qabils, sub-Qabils, primary lineages, and dia-paying groups (Lewis 1961).

By drawing connections among race, class, and violence, I try and contribute to the building of a comparative theoretical analysis of the global disintegration of nation states and the politics of terror. In particular, this section tells the story of the Mushunguli and their historical and continued persecution by the dominant Qabils and sub-Qabils of Somalia. As the dominant historical narrative of Somalia favors northern populations of ethnic Somalis to the neglect of minority voices I offer an overview of southern Somali history from the perspective of minority populations. It is my hope that this historical narrative will orient the reader to an otherwise muffled history and give context to the experience of the Mushungulis through civil war, refugee passage and resettlement.

The Mushungulis or as the world refers to them, “Somali Bantus” are a minority group that the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) evaluated as vulnerable and gave refugee status in the aftermath of the Somali civil war in 1990. For the most part, they are the descendants of people captured in the East African interior during the 19th century Omani slave trade and sold to Somali elites and Benadir plantation owners to work as slaves. Through escape, maroonage, manumission, and emancipation ex-slaves of diverse East African tribal groups settled in the riverine landscape of southern Somalia and founded villages with a significant degree of independence from dominant ethnic Somali society beginning as early as 1840. Indeed, the widely held perception of Somalia as a “homogenous population of cattle-and-camel
herders” is historically misinformed in that it neglects to include the thousands of farmers
who have lived in the once fertile riverine valleys for generations (Besteman 1996b: 43).
Although free from slavery in the strict sense, these populations never enjoyed equal
status in Somali society and were subject to acts of physical and social violence without
consequence to their perpetrators. Ethnic Somali populations viewed them as ethnically
inferior and expressed this in belief and actions both physical and political.

In Somalia, the Mushungulis were excluded from the political process and subject
to state bullying, as I will explore later. At the end of the 19th century a consciousness of
shared otherness emerged and preceded various movements and strategies to participate
in Somali society in the 20th century. The precarious nature of negotiating Somali society
and dominant Qabil structure made identity among the ex-slave population a highly fluid
tool, at times the only one at hand, to be used to survive in a hostile and violent
environment.

Terms of Identity

In much of the literature about Africa, the very concept of “tribe” or “clan” has
been largely criticized for being inadequate, imprecise, and a result of colonialists’
Although the meaning of the words “tribe” and “clan” may still be unclear, such
classification and especially when using Somali frames of references like Qabil,
apparently, is nonetheless useful in order to confer some control and order as well as
allow people who trust each other to identify with each other as consanguineal or affinal
kin. Nevertheless, the use of such classifications definitely reinforces certain criteria of
hierarchy of lineages. Somalis from a pastoral background are known to be subdivided
into patrilineages and the process of self-identification may strengthen patrilineal ties,
even among those Somali groups for which such ties are not otherwise very important.

Since the early 20th century, the Bantu in Somalia have been referred to by many
different identifying terms. “Wagosha” is a term that links “gosha,” a Somali term for
forest with wa the Bantu prefix for people (Besteman 1999: 121). By 1957, Italian
ethnographer Cerulli referred to the “Wagocia” as a “tribe” of ex-slaves. More recent scholarship (Besteman 1999, 1996; Menkhaus 1996, 1989; Declich 1995a, 1995b) uses the term “Gosha,” referring both to the geographical area as well as the people living there. Jareer is a racial construction, literally meaning “hard hair”, signifying the tight curls of hair associated with African ancestry. In Somalia, the term jareer is used in opposition to Jelic, meaning the softer smoother hair of those with Arab ancestry. In practice, the terms jareer and jelic extend beyond hair type to include body type and facial features. The oppositional classification between jareer and jelic is based on physical characteristics although not all those in principle who should look like jelic because of Qabil affiliation have a clear resemblance of jelic. In fact, if ideally intermarriages between jelic and jareer do not occur, in practice during the centuries several dynamics, among which some have been described above, have fostered an intermingling of the members of groups in different ways according to the geographical and political circumstances. This oppositional classification, therefore, is an imprecise one but remains a sensitive issue in terms of identity for the Somali people. It takes a positional meaning depending on the geographical and cultural context in which it is mentioned. Declich writes,

“For somebody living along the Jubba River, a jareer who had sleek hair because of one his or her ancestors might be considered slightly an outsider if not proving special commitment with the jareer’s way of life. On the other hand, the very fact of living among the jareer makes such a person a jareer in the view of the jelic. The jareer are believed to come from agricultural families, whereas the jelic are most often of pastoralist origin.” (2000: 27)

Ethnic Somalis wishing to degrade the Mushungulis have called them adoon or habash, literally meaning “slave” (Besteman 1999: 121). Also used in degradation, the term ooji (“today” in Somalized Italian) left over from the days of Italian colonialism refers to the perception of ethnic Somalis that the Mushungulis are unable to think beyond the day at hand. Currently, most Mushungulis in the United States of America self identify as “Somali Bantu” and this is certainly true for the Mushunguli couple I interviewed who had ancestral ties to the Zigua and referred to themselves as Wazigua, or Mushunguli, a
term thought to be an adaptation of Zigua (Van Lehman 1993). “Mushunguli” is how the “Somali Bantu” couple I interviewed referred to themselves and out of respect to them, I have decided to adopt this term of reference when referring to the “Somali Bantus.” However, Mushunguli is also used by some sources as a gloss for the jareer ethnicities in the Gosha region, confusing the use of this inner-Mushunguli distinction (Li, et al. 2002). This series of terms, while referring to the people who eventually were resettled internationally as the “Somali Bantus” captures different aspects of an individual and community’s character and yet none seems completely sufficient. Besteman writes,

“The position of the peoples of the Jubba valley – as not a clearly delimited ‘ethnic group,’ nor an easily defined ‘race,’ nor a ‘class’ within a particular hierarchy of labor relations, nor a ‘lineage,’ nor, certainly, a ‘tribe’ – belies the facile simplicity of these terms for explaining political realities in contemporary Africa” (1999: 234).

Indeed, the terms do not hold well in the contemporary refugee experience either. The Mushungulis are almost always referred to as the “Somali Bantus.” The term “Somali Bantu,” used extensively by the United Nations, international aid organizations, resettlement agencies, and the government authorities of the United States of America, and the Mushungulis themselves, is the most recent addition to a growing list of identifying terms, having gained use only since the mid 1990s. Generally “Somali Bantu” includes the populations descended from Bantu speaking ethnic groups brought to Somalia in the 19th century. Up until and still after the official (but unenforced) outlawing of Qabil politics by the Barre regime in the 1970s, Somali society overtly categorized and classified people according to their genealogy and conscription to the genealogy of others. Names and identity were of utmost importance. “Somali Bantu” is the most recent categorization, for use in identity politics by those inside and outside the classification. The following historical account is drawn from the work of prominent Somali scholars and oral histories given by the Mushunguli couple I interviewed.
The “Bantu” or Mushungulis in Somalia

The use of the term “Bantu” to designate aspects of ethnic identity originates with the advent of colonization and European interest in Africa. The term was applied to a diverse range of ethnic groups speaking related languages that most often were not mutually intelligible. Mazrui likens the term to the use of “Germanic to refer to speakers of related languages that include English, German, Dutch, among others” (2004: 2).

The origins of the Bantu language are believed to be in what is now known as Eastern Nigeria and bordering areas of Cameroon. Approximately four thousand years ago migrations of Bantu speaking people moved east and south, spreading far into southern and eastern Africa, bringing with them knowledge of agriculture, metal working, and a settled lifestyle. The northern extent of the migration follows a west to east line crossing the Democratic Republic of Congo and central Uganda before dropping south, around the central plains of Kenya and northern Tanzania, and then heading north along the Kenyan coast and into the southern river valleys of Somalia (Cooke 1998).

Mushunguli settlements incorporated existing groups of non-Bantu speakers who adopted Bantu linguistic and cultural characteristics. Linguistically, “’Bantuness” is an expansive multi-ethnic umbrella that covers a wide range of groups – from West to East Africa, from Central to South Africa, - groups that need not share any genetic affiliation” (Mazrui 2004: 2).

Although narratives presented by refugees, refugee aiding Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the general media cite Omani slave trade as the source for people with Mushunguli heritage in Somalia, historical and ethnographic evidence suggests earlier sources of Mushunguli cultural influence in the Horn of Africa that were present in Somali society before the slave trade. Knowledge of these early Mushunguli settlers in what is now known as Somalia, how far to the interior they reached, who they encountered, and how these groups interacted is disputed in academic circles (Turton 1975).
The timing of Mushunguli and Somali migrations and expansions of territory is unclear (Eno 2005; Turton 1975), however it is clear that both groups inhabited the southern riverine area before the 18th century. Eno (2005: 34) lists the Shidle, Shawelle, Hintire, and Eile, as farming groups of “Bantu-speaking origin” that maintained distinct communities in the Shabelle region predating the Omani slave trade. Research conducted by Eno (2005), Menkhaus (2003, 1996), and Cassanelli (1982), all point to an “indigenous” farming population of Bantu-speaking origin that settled before the expansion of pastoral Somali nomads to southern Somalia. Relations between Mushunguli farmers and Somali pastoralists before the 19th century were symbiotic to an extent. While there is evidence of some enslavement and subjugation of these farmers by Somalis, a system of alliances and “economic interdependence” based on the exchange of agricultural products for animal products maintained a modicum of equality (Eno 2005: 85). Nevertheless, these “first peoples” (Menkhaus 2003: 2) were stigmatized and further marginalized in the colonial era of plantations and slaves.

This era roughly spans 1840-1950 beginning with the Omani Empire's acquisition of the Benadir coast and ending with the United Nations’ protectorate after the Italian loss in World War II. Difference in historical accounts of the past between individuals and dominant narratives is well known in anthropology. Communal understanding of history is contingent on the relationship with the past, present, and future held by that community. With this in mind it is important to remember that in personal narratives of Mushunguli history, the chronicle of slave origins predominates. This was evident in the stories and events that Mushunguli couple related to me.

Slavery and the Slave Trade

Although slavery is a “traditional institution” in Somalia (Eno 2005: 84), slave importation did not begin in earnest until the 19th century when the Omani sultanate developed the outpost island of Zanzibar as the stronghold for the Indian Ocean slave trade. Coastal Somali Benadir purchased slaves from Omani-Arab traders to sell to inland Somali pastoralists and to work on grain plantations along the Shabelle River. While small numbers of slaves entered Somalia over land, the majority of slaves were
imported through the coastal cities of Marka, Brava, Kismayu and Mogadishu. These economic centers of slave trade to the southern Somali coast also served as distribution points for East African slaves en route to further points in Asia. The importance of these ports and the strong ties between Benadir Somalis and Arab Omanis led to the 1842 incorporation of the Benadir coast into the Omani East African Empire to “secure the area from local factional fighting for control” (Eno 2005: 84).

Slaves traded by the Omani-Arabs were taken from East African interior areas in Tanzania and Mozambique. Local agents of the Sultan, in collaboration with local African slave dealers, captured slaves for export on the Tanzanian coast. Sources of slaves were raids and groups captured as prisoners of war. Oral histories related by Mushunguli with Yao, Nyasa, Mogindo and Makua ancestry (Besteman 1996b) and written accounts describe 400 mile marches from the Lake Malawi area to the coastal cities of Tanzania and then on to ships for export and eventual sale (Van Lehman and Eno 2002). Van Lehman and Eno (2002) report that the slave trade along with the introduction of a cash economy on the Tanzanian coast destabilized traditional inter-tribal security and economic structures that sustained individuals and their tribes in times of drought. Due to this loss of traditional social safety networks and a multi-year drought in the late 1830s, northeastern Tanzanian coastal tribes including the Zaramo and Zigua experienced a period of starvation. Omani-Arab slave traders taking advantage of the regional starvation falsely offered the coastal tribes wage labor opportunities in foreign lands. In the hope of staving off starvation many Zaramo and Zigua accepted the offers only to be sold as slaves when they arrived to their destination. One of these destinations was the Benadir coast of Somalia where once sold they worked the same plantations as the slaves from the interior.

By 1840 Somali plantations produced sorghum, maize and sesame seeds for export to mercantile centers throughout the Indian Ocean. Products brought from the interior included ivory, cattle, hides, clothes, and gum. Like other economies throughout the world at this time, demand for the production of goods could not have been met
without slave labor. Cassanelli (1982) estimates of the total import of slaves to Somalia during the 19th century to be at 50 thousand.

**Maroonage and the Gosha: A Separate Geographical Space**

The years around 1840 marked the beginnings of marooned communities in the riverine areas of southern Somalia. These settlements afforded ex-slaves a degree of independence and self-government until Italian and British colonists controlled the region in the early 1900s. Before European colonization the Gosha were able to establish a distinct political and geographical space; a space that was created as separate from dominant Somali society, literally and figuratively reinforcing the distance between the two groups. Grasslands, deserts, and arid fields dominate the geography of Somalia. These features typify the vast majority of Somalia’s geography and reinforce the general understanding of Somalia as a “nation of pastoralists,” herding livestock in the plateau that rises to the east (Lewis 1969: 4). However, the southern region of Somalia is home to a different pattern. The Jubba River cuts through the arid land. Dense forests envelope the rivers, marking a distinct change in the geography. In the mid 19th century the forest and river acted as an ecological space, or “environmental niche” (Menkhaus 1996: 135) where ex-slave marooned communities established a regional grounding. The fertile riverbank and flood plain soils were highly suited for agricultural use, and an infestation of tsetse flies, which are lethal to cattle, made the area unsuitable for ethnic Somali pastoralists. The dominant perception of the region is laid to bear in the colloquial name “Gosha”, which is translated as “unhealthy forest” (Besteman 1999: 62). The Gosha was described as “nearly impenetrable” according to accounts from the time, providing dense cover to southeast Africans escaping slavery (Menkhaus 1996: 135). Gosha is also one of the names used to refer to the people living in the area and is bound to the dominant perception in Somalia of the Mushungulis as dirty and unhealthy (Besteman 1999).

Indeed, Gosha, as used to describe people, has led Somalis and Mushungulis to include the Shabelle river area in the “Gosha area” as Gosha is nearly synonymous with **jareer**. Historically, the Gosha did not include the Shabelle as it was the developed home to the plantations where the original Gosha settlers fled. I believe it is included now because the term refers to a population of people rather than geographical features exclusively.
Map of The Jubba River and Valley (UNDP Somalia 2005)
Settlement of the Gosha

Two distinct periods of settlement are apparent in the historical account of Gosha settlement. Early settlers were ex-slaves escaping from plantations founding maroon villages and defended from incursion and destruction. These early settlements retained strong ties to east African culture and identity. The second pattern consisted of slaves that for various reasons, including age of capture and length of enslavement, brought influence from ethnic Somali culture. Both settlement groups are included in the current Mushunguli cultural identity.

Oral history and early colonial documents report that the first marooned community was founded by a group of Zigua who had escaped from Benadir plantations after less than three years in bondage. The forested areas on the banks of the river were unsettled; according to Besteman, there was “no evidence” of previous farming populations in the mid-nineteenth century (1999: 62). Once the first settlement of Zigua was established slave groups of other ethnicities came to follow. Throughout the latter half of the century a “constant and increasing stream of runaway and manumitted slaves” migrated to the valley to find refuge (Besteman 1996b: 45). In 1865, population records estimate a population of four thousand ex-slaves living in the valley. In 1895, the population had increased to between 25 thousand and 40 thousand in seventy-five settlements. At the beginning of the 1900s abolition decrees drove large numbers of ex-slaves to move to the valley (Besteman 1999, 1996b; Menkhaus 1996). In this era of settlement, maroon villages were founded and maintained along east African ethnic lines. Yao, Nyasa, Mogindo, Makua, Zigua and others maintained “ethno-linguistic” identity and village structure (Menkhaus 1989 cited in Besteman 1999) while using Swahili for inter-village communication (Besteman 1999: 64). Eno (2003) lists a total of nine autonomous communities of ex-slave origin on the Jubba River at the beginning of the 20th century. Villages were hesitant to take new settlers especially if they were of another ethnic group. Besteman (1999) cites the age of the slaves at the time of capture and length of servitude as conditions for the maintenance of east African identity.
“Cultural, ethnic and linguistic distinctions were particularly strong among slaves who had been taken as adults for the slave trade. The most intense example of this is the Mushunguli (Zigua originally from Tanzanian territory), who retained their Bantu language and sense of ethnic distinctiveness through the 1980s” (Besteman 1999: 64).

The concept of Zigua separateness continues to this day among the “Somali Bantus” in the United States of America. While maintaining separate ethnic identities, the ex-slave population also acted with a sense of collective self-interest. Between 1870 and the late 1890s the Gosha region enjoyed a strong degree of political autonomy. A collective identity known as “reergoleed”, translated by Menkhaus (1996) as “forest people”, throughout the various villages contained the foundations of the region as an independent space for the Gosha (1996: 84). Menkhaus (1996) reports,

“The emergence of a body of customs governing land allocation and access; the development of well-defined social and political structures of authority within the community; and the creation of a diversified and productive system of agriculture which permitted the Gosha to enjoy protection against famine and which yielded surplus grain for trade with the Arab trading outposts of the Sultanate of Zanzibar” (1996: 136-137).

The reergoleed also occasionally united as a military force to ward off attacks. These political units retained independence from the confederacy. Despite their collective interests, village and ethnic rivalry is reported as a feature of the internal dynamics of the region (Menkhaus 1996). At the turn of the 20th century the lower Jubba River was home to a loosely bounded collection of separate “ethno-linguistic” villages, negotiating trade alliances directly with local and international trade partners, at times fighting internally but uniting and defending themselves externally as an independent organization and geographical sphere. The evidence suggests a double consciousness of individual east African ethnic group as well as a shared identity as maroons outside of the Somali society. In the second period of settlement the development of client relationships that hint of patronage and adoption with Somali Qabils created an integrated but permanently subordinate place for the Mushungulis. Ama buur ahaw ama buur ku tirso (“Either be a mountain or attach yourself to one”) is a
Somali saying signifying that if you are a minority group in Somalia like the Mushungulis, you attach yourself to a strong clan (Abdoul, personal communication, November 2008).

In the Somali tradition, minority groups and weak and scattered clans who are driven to seek protection from the stronger clans can enter a protection status with them. The protecting clans naturally expect something in return. Such alliances based on contractual agreements between weak and strong clans are known as *gaashaanbuur*, meaning “pile of shields” (Abdoul, personal communication, November 2008). Hence, minorities can seek protection by attachment to stronger lineages by joining a *gaashaanbuur* coalition. There exist varying degrees of adoption and incorporation within stronger lineages. Declich writes,

> “Patronage in Somalia is a relation in which groups of people seek an agreement of mutual dependence although one becomes a patron and the other a client. A patronage relationship, for instance, occurs when agriculturalists give to a certain lineage or clan of pastoral people exclusive rights to river access points close to their village; in exchange for such exclusive license, the agriculturalists may receive an annual payment in animals and a permanent protection against the intrusion of other foreign shepherds who might not respect their cultivated fields while approaching the river access points” (2000: 20).

Declich (2000) goes on to describe adoption between agriculturalists and pastoralists. The adopted formally renounced their birth lineage and *Qabil* and promised to accompany the adopter’s *Qabil* and lineage in peace and war forever (Lewis 1969). This also entailed the transference of blood compensation rights and duties from one’s original group to the adopter’s *Qabil* and lineage (Lewis 1969). Despite the general understanding of what Somali society is, there have been very complex ethnic interactions between pastoralists and agriculturalists in the last centuries. These complex ethnic interactions were due to the fact that the Mushungulis do not belong to Somali lineages and are considered to be second class citizens. Declich writes,
“Adoption was widespread among the Somalis. This was an agreement through which the adopter (a Qabil, a lineage, or one of the family of the lineage), under request, took complete responsibility for the protection of the adopted; the adopted (person or group), on the other hand, was to refrain from jeopardizing the peace of the adopter group” (2000: 21).

In fact, especially before colonial times, a patron and client relationship was one of mutual support in different economic activities or for the control of a territory rather than one of domination of a group over another. Until the present time a “distinction is made between those born into a Qabil and those who have become members by adoption” (Helander 1988: 133). Many Mushungulis would readily identify themselves with the non-Bantu Qabil that they are attached to, and a Mushunguli from such a group will say, for example, that he or she is a Rahanweyn or Digil or other sub-Qabils belonging to the same Qabils. Such a person considers his or her identity as totally incorporated into the non-Mushunguli Qabil with which he or she is affiliated. Migration and intermarriage can also result in a situation where a Mushunguli will not identify himself or herself as belonging to one of the Mushunguli groups. The lesson is that adoption of weak clans does occur, and it is possible to move the stronger clans into compromise with their traditional position. When this happens, the stronger clans may even pay mag or blood money for the adopted minority groups and weaker clans. Adoptions also involved people of those occupational castes considered inferior to the others. An analysis made by Cerulli (1964) pointed out that people from low castes were descendants of those subdued during the successive invasions of the Horn of Africa in the last few centuries.

Several different kinds of groups have been assimilated to such low castes on the basis of their jural inferior situation; such groups have incorporated people practicing special jobs considered vile and suspect. These include blacksmiths, wood workers, potters, tanners, magicians, shoe makers, hunters and gatherers and sometimes fishermen (Cerulli 1964). A common characteristic of the occupational castes is that they have established long term patron and client relationships with one of the predominant lineages in the area where they live. Such relationships entail consuetudinary agreements with the patrons as regards payment of blood wealth, dispute resolution and marriage rules which vary from group to group (Lewis 1969; Cerulli 1964). Basically, because their
specialized work is necessary in any lineage, people from such castes usually have long term relations of adoption with stronger Qabils. Moreover, they are not in a large number nor have the strength enough to defend themselves alone (Lewis 1969; Cerulli 1964). If that protection from the particular Somali Qabil which is the patron disappears, they are at the mercy of their new “masters.” Another aspect of vulnerability among the minority populations in Somalia is that there is no national government with institutions to protect the Mushunguli against the militias and individual Somalis.

As adopted people, low castes could not take up political initiatives but enjoy some sort of protection depending on the lineage or Qabil of their patrons. In the past, low caste people and slaves held different legal status (Cerulli 1964) which varied according to lineages and geographical areas. However, real blood compensation was paid for the deaths of low caste people and this was regulated by their patrons (Cerulli 1964). They could not inherit, had no legal rights and were literally at the very end of the social scale, underneath the low Sab castes (Abdoul, personal communication, November 2008). Their descendants could be promoted in cases of mixed marriage where the father was Sab or Somali, but only if the father recognized the offspring. While it would be impossible to dwell on the analysis of all such jural differences, it would be enough to say that, despite conspicuous differences within their legal status at the beginning of the 20th century, low castes, freed slaves and slaves held an unequal and inferior jural condition as compared to those considered ethnic Somali (Lewis 1969, Cerulli 1964). During the 20th century this local system of distinction and social stratification, initially based on a need for regulating access to natural resources as well as for managing specialization of occupations, has been modified and divisions have been stressed as reinforced to fit within different ruling systems.

In the last decade of the 1800s British and Italian colonial control in the horn of Africa reached the Jubba valley. Expanding north from Kenya, the British took control of regions west of the Jubba (known as Jubaland), dominating the southern Ogaden Somalis in the process (Besteman 1999). Italian colonists controlled east of the Jubba in Italian Somaliland. Settlement patterns under the European colonial period changed the
character of the Jubba valley as an influx of ex-slaves with cultural ties to Somali Qabils and adherence to Islamic religion moved to the Gosha. These major migration shifts began after European pressure on the colonies forced declarations of abolition at the turn of the century (Eno 2003; Besteman 1999). Thousands of ex-slaves left the Shabelle region plantations to join the Jubba settlements. This manumitted influx of “Somalized” (Besteman 1999:66) ex-slaves increased the connections between the Gosha and ethnic Somali society. Colonial control enabled a period of relative peace between the Gosha villages, new settlements of slaves manumitted by colonial decree, and the pastoralist Somalis. Besteman reports, “The majority of these slaves has been kidnapped as children or were born into slavery” (1999: 66).

Having lost the connection to, or never having established one with their east African identity, the Somali Qabil of their masters acted as a surrogate for tribal and cultural identity. Many of these villages maintained client relationships with the Qabil of their previous masters providing a modicum of protection from other pastoral Qabil attacks. The influx of Muslim ex-slaves to the Jubba River area in the thousands is a strong reason for the rapid spread of Islam to the lower Jubba in the 20th century. In addition to increased Muslim presence, the formation of religious brotherhoods known as jamaacooyin, offered material support and religious teaching, and the missionary efforts of Sheikh Murjan, all supported the adoption of Islam by the Gosha villages (Besteman 1999). Islamic practice was further encouraged due to the religion’s associations with freedom in Somalia. Justifications for slavery in Somalia have been made along religious grounds as a Muslim may keep a non-believer as a slave. However, Quranic law prohibits the enslavement of other Muslims (Besteman 1999, 1996b; Declich 1995).

Largely, Qabils that adopted Mushunguli families as clients in Qabil affiliation were in the Digil and Rahanweyn Qabil families (Lewis 2000, 1969). In the structure of Somali Qabil lineage, the Digil and Rahanweyn Qabils are in a position of low status, partially due to their knowledge and practice of agriculture, a trade that is culturally looked down upon by Somalis unlike pastoral nomadism. Client relationships to low
status *Qabils* associated with farming and agricultural practice kept the Mushungulis in a position of double subordination regardless of developing ties to the mythical “pastoral democracy” of Somalia (Lewis 2000: 137). It is important to understand that all these names are appellations and not tribes, since the Somali deny the Mushungulis any genealogy that would legitimize their presence in the South of the country.

Despite the strong cultural effects of Somali language and Muslim religion in the Jubba valley, aspects of Mushunguli identity were maintained. The importance of ties to farming land, village and territory superseded *Qabil* alliances. Village councils sustained authority in the allocation of land and acted communally in reparations to other villages and *Qabils*. The payment of *dia*, or blood money, is central to inter-*Qabil* stability and is used to maintain a balance of justice. When a Mushunguli individual was made to pay *dia* to another, the village where the individual resided took responsibility. “Territorial ties are emphasized much more among Jubba Valley villagers than among their nomadic Somali neighbors” (Besteman 1996b: 54). In traditional Somali society *dia* payments are lineage based (*Qabil*) rather than based territorially (village).

Colonial interest in Somalia impacted the Mushungulis in three important ways. First, British policy and actions directed to end the traffic of slaves in the Indian ocean by the Omani Sultanate later followed by the conclusion of formal slavery practice in Somalia dictated by colonial decree at the turn of the 20th century freed any Mushunguli left in slavery, at least legally (Eno 2003: 86). Second, the imposition of racial organization in Somalia formalized the separation between Gosha settlers and Somali society. European understanding of race along with forceful petitions of Somali “*Qabil*” leaders to not be associated with “pagan tribes” created a multilevel approach to managing the Somali population. A 1922 letter written by ethnic Somali elders to the Chief Native Commissioner of British Somalia is quoted in Besteman,
“The government officials who have visited our country know we are descendants from Arabia, and this we have already proved and we can prove we assure you we cannot accept to be equaled and compared with those pagan tribes either with our consent or by force even if the government orders this we cannot comply with, but we prefer death than to be treated equally with these tribes for as the government knows well these tribes are inferior to us and according to our religion they were slaves who we used to trade during past years” (1999: 119).

The third impact was that the inferior status of the Gosha people resulted in their being targeted in programs of conscripted labor to work on colonial plantations that were built on the desirable farmland Italian authorities had seized. First attempts in colonial plantation economy were stalled by labor shortages; since there was enough fertile land close to the Jubba, the Gosha populations continued farming plots of their own rather than join a wage-labor system. Increases of Italian troops in southern Somalia in the 1930s made a forced labor program possible.

The plantation economy and labor conscription was rationalized by a “program of pseudo-scholarly revisionism on the nature of indigenous production and culture” that sought to “discredit the productivity” of the Gosha farmers (Menkhaus 1996: 142). Thus, the effect of the plantation economy was to remove farmers from the most productive lands, and force them to work on large-scale farms that were built on the land they once tilled. After the defeat of fascist Italy in World War II, Somalia was under the direction of an Italian trusteeship closely administered by the United Nations. Forced labor programs were ended. In this brief window between Italian colonial rule and Somali independence in 1970, Jubaland leaders sent the United Nations a formal request to annex the Jubba region to neighboring Kenya or, “institute a federal constitution according full regional autonomy as a means of avoiding Somali hegemony” (Menkhaus 1996: 146) showing awareness of the value of the land, regional identity, and international politics. Independence, however, never became reality for the Jubba region as growing national and international interest in the resources of the Jubba valley pushed to retain control of the land.
I believe that analysis of the creation and enactment of Somali statehood and its impact on the Jubba valley is useful in understanding how Mushunguli populations were highly vulnerable when the state began to collapse in the 1980s leading to the civil war of 1990-1991. Programs of state development under Siyad Barre’s military government served to disenfranchise southern communities. Cleavages between the north/central districts and the south were exacerbated by actions that, while observed by the international community to be in the economic and social interests of the state, negatively impacted the lives of local Jubba Valley communities. National literacy campaigns and land development in the interest of the state are two strong examples.

The Somali language is part of the language group known as Lowland Eastern Cushitic, a sub-group of the Cushitic language family (Griffiths 2003). Within the Somali language there are two main regional dialects: Af Maay, already introduced, spoken in the south and Af Maxaa which is the northern dialect. Hierarchical structure mirrored in regional linguistic difference was exacerbated by the adoption of Af Maxaa as the national language in 1972. Af Maxaa, now known as Somali among the Mushunguli population, is the dialect spoken in central and northern regions of Somalia.

Concurrently, the government adopted a Latin orthography and began an uneven campaign of literacy throughout the country. The choice to privilege Af Maxaa alienated and isolated southern communities who spoke Af Maay, effectively removing them from political dialogue.

While major media sources developed narratives of the civil war that focused on Qabil conflict as the source of violence (Besteman 1996a), a major source of conflict seemed buried in the story. Land, the resources of the land, and access to money flowing from international development projects were the prize of political control. Economic development projects supported by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank created an increased value for land in the river valley.
Menkhaus cites two major methods leading to land alienation among the Jubba river settlements; first is the “establishment of several large state farms” continuing the conglomeration of previously small tracts of independent farmland started with colonial plantations; second is the “widespread practice of land grabbing by outside speculators manipulating recent land registration laws to acquire property rights in the valley” (1996: 147). Indeed, land laws adopted in 1975 allowed “well-placed” civil workers in the capital to register up to 100 hectares of land in their names; land that had been farmed for generations by Gosha settlers. The appropriation of over 16,327 hectares, 5,200 of which was under active cultivation, was made without compensation. Consultants making feasibility studies of the projects failed to consider the impact on local populations (Menkhaus 1996). Farmers who were able to register their land were alienated as well. Security on one’s farm was negligible as “competing claims of registration by more powerful interests easily overrode [villager’s] title to the land” (Menkhaus 1996: 148). Appeal to decisions by government authorities were met with threats, jail, and at times torture (Besteman 1999; Menkhaus 1996).

For Gosha inhabitants, the increased interest in riverine land ironically transformed the Jubba valley from a place of safety and independence, due in part to its undesirable attributes (farming lifestyle, tsetse fly infestations), to a place of alienation and violence as national and international development interests created the space as desirable to people in dominant societal positions. “For the riverine farmers, their land had suddenly become as valuable as their labor had been in the eras of slavery and colonial plantation agriculture” (Cassanelli 1996: 20). Once again the Mushungulis in the Jubba valley were disenfranchised from the few resources they had.

**Civil War in the Jubba Valley**

The fall of Siyad Barre’s authoritarian regime and the subsequent power struggle that followed disproportionately harmed the Mushungulis. The destruction and violence is well documented elsewhere, however the general features are worth repeating. As
warring militias and bandits crossed southern Somalia in tactical advance and retreat, they looted and razed Mushunguli communities, taking whatever they wanted. Repeatedly, heavily armed soldiers who needed supplies to keep fighting emptied stores of food kept by riverine agriculturalists. Women were systematically raped in front of their husbands and fathers. Lawlessness prevailed. People attempting to escape violence fled south toward the Kenyan border where they were taken to refugee camps in Dadaab. For most Mushunguli refugees, this camp was their temporary home for over eight years before moving to refugee camps in Kakuma for the beginning and final completion of the resettlement to the United States of America.

Changes in the Jubba valley over the 160-year settlement were immense. What had been productive maroon communities settled by ex-slaves had been utterly transformed into a “death trap” (Besteman 1999; Menkhaus 1996; Declich 1995a, 1995b).

“The transformation of Jubba valley space in the context of state-making, nation-building, and donor-financed ‘economic Development’ directly contributed to murderous militia activity, environmental destruction, and the virtual annihilation of agricultural productivity in the very area targeted to provide for Somalia’s future” (Besteman 1999: 225).

Violence was an outcome of a century and a half of oppression and inequity. The influence of global forces on this particular group of people is undeniable; classic features such as heritage, language, phenotype, and historical relationship to geography support the communal identity of the Mushungulis. In addition, more recent features such as international development, nation building, and international aid also have a significant effect. With the exception of international aid, I have detailed the influence of the above. I now turn to the refugee camps in Kenya where the encounter with structures of international aid began a process resulting in the creation of a new ethnic identity.
“Somali Bantu” Identity Formation in Kenya

Those that fled Somalia endured over 10 years in Kenyan refugee camps. During this period the Somali “Bantu” ethnic term and identity emerged through a synergistic process between the needs of international aid organizations and the needs of the population of southern Somali agriculturists. Foundations for the emergence and rapid acceptance of such a term were present in the years of oppression experienced by populations labeled as jareer in southern Somalia but the term and its direct association to the Bantu linguistic family can be traced to interactions with international relief agencies during and after the 1990 civil war.

First mentions of the Somali “Bantu” are found in reports assessing the food security of vulnerable groups in southern Somalia during the famine following the civil war. Menkhaus, a participant in a research trip organized by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), states that reports filed at that time made reference to “The ‘Bantu’,” as “short hand for the Somali farmers with black African physical features” who were experiencing a disproportionate amount of the food shortages” (2003: 3). This gloss was picked up by international news reporters and used to describe the racial features of the Somali famine. The particulars of food allocation in southern Somalia left the lower status Bantu at the mercy of a distribution system managed by the very “Qabil” networks and structures that marginalized them in Somalia. International relief agencies began to realize that ethnic Somali “Qabil” elders had little concern for the welfare of low status groups, such as the Bantu, at times despite shared Qabil affiliation. Again Menkhaus writes,
“Among the mainly western relief workers, a sense of outrage grew at what appeared to be the complete indifference of ethnic Somalis to the suffering of weaker groups such as the Bantu. The anger was not only directed at the young gunmen from ‘outside’ clans such as the Haber Gedir and Marrehan who diverted food aid from starving Rahanweyn; it was also directed at the clan elders of the Rahanweyn and other Somali clans who demonstrated no particular interest in insuring food aid reached low caste members of their own clans. The outrage eventually led to a chorus of calls for armed intervention. But the question ‘how can you starve your own people?’ which was sometimes directed by reporters at militia and clan leaders was based on a false premise. The Bantu and other low-status groups were not ‘their own people;’ in the particular logic of clan and lineage-based societies, these groups were ‘others,’ adoon, for whom they bore no responsibility” (2003: 3).

In the camps close to Dadaab, the fact that the Mushungulis are considered to be a different sort of people from pastoralist Somalis allowed camp authorities to identify them as one vulnerable group. Otherwise, they would risk not receiving benefit to be distributed. If the Mushungulis were mixed or hidden among other Somalis, they would risk starvation because their food would be simply looted. Due to their ill-regarded descent, they have been poorly treated by other Somalis in Somalia and in the camps, and as mentioned above, have become a preferred target of bandits.

The realization by international aid organizations and news reporters of the causes of uneven food distribution made it clear to these outside groups that “Qabil” affiliation was trumped by ethnic heritage when people were confronted by matters of survival. Aid organizations in southern Somalia classified the “Somali Bantus” as a “vulnerable group” based on this knowledge leading to their classification as refugees by the UNHCR. This classification was adopted and used in Kenyan refugee camps. As refugees from the civil war flooded into Kenya, camps controlled by the UNHCR filed reports listing the numbers of “Somali Bantu” refugees present in each camp (Declich 2000). By October 1992, Kenya hosted approximately 412,000 registered refugees, and it was estimated that another 100,000 unregistered refugees were living in the country. More than 300,000 of these were Somalis (Gallagher and Forbes Martin 1992). And in March of 1994, 128,144
Somali refugees were hosted in three camps in the Dadaab region of Kenya. Of these, 10,143 were listed as members of the “Bantu” minority (Declich 2000).

Declich writes that to her contacts in these camps, “The category ‘Bantu’ was completely unknown… [they] had never heard the word ‘Bantu’ before, and [they] said ‘we are now Bantu, we, the Zigula, are called Bantu here in the camp” (2000: 27). The label of “Bantu” had no precise meaning aside from singling out those who did not belong to Somali patrilineages, and thus, was a sort of device used by the humanitarian agencies in order to identify these particular kinds of beneficiaries (Declich 2000). On the other side, those who were called “Bantu,” even if they had never defined themselves as such before then, for the first time in the camps met vested interests in being pulled together under the same umbrella name (Declich 2000).

In the volatile and dangerous environment of the Dadaab camps in northeast Kenya, minority groups joined together under the “Somali Bantu” identity, strengthening their political voice. Refugees classified as “Bantu” settled together in sections of the camps consolidating themselves both as autonomous from ethnic Somali groups and as a distinct political unit. In order to defend themselves, the “Bantu” had to arrange to reside next to each other in the three camps, and autonomously fenced their quarters with thorny shrubs to constitute fortified compounds (Van Lehman 1993). Moreover, they made bows and arrows and kept stores of stones to scare bandits and thieves who for this reason became afraid to approach their compounds. Indeed, while in the Dadaab camps the Somali “Bantus” drafted a constitution pledging to “promote stability and harmony amongst the community,” signifying the understanding of the multi-ethnic aspect of the community, and “maintain law and order as well as respect for human rights” (Lie, et al. 2002). In this newly found cohesion the “Somali Bantu” petitioned for third country resettlement as a full group.

When the government of the United States of America accepted 12 thousand “Somali Bantu” refugees for resettlement in 1999, the political and economic advantages of “Bantu” identity were clear. Tension between the Mushungulis and ethnic Somali
populations only increased after the announcement of resettlement to the United States of America. Ethnic Somalis had already been known to “steal the final item of value from the Somali Bantus by claiming “Bantu” identity in attempts to win asylum” (Menkhaus 2003: 4). And after the government of the United States of America’s announcement this pattern of thievery only became more prominent. Screening processes in Dadaab involving a series of interviews, which included the use of dialect test, became necessary to deduce and document who was eligible for resettlement under the government of the United States of America’s decision. The UNHCR reported that at the first interview approximately 10 thousand interviewees, just under half, were turned away as fraudulent (Li, et al. 2002). Desperation in the ethnic Somali community at times turned to violence against the Mushungulis and this still continues to this day in Somalia.

Conclusion

The history of the Mushungulis, and indeed that of other minority dia-paying groups in Somalia, is a violent one which has included slavery, maroonage, manumission, adoption, patronage, clientism, and the creation of a new identity. Indeed, the Mushungulis have been known by other names imposed upon them by Somalis and the colonial powers. While not considered “Somali,” they are yet an import community in the riverine areas of Somalia where they have a special relationship with the sab or “lower” Qabils. All traditional Somali relationships are governed by two dialectically related principles: kinship and social contract (Lewis 1961). These relationships include the ones the Mushungulis have with the other dominant Somali Qabils, especially the ones who practice agriculture and are lower, as it pertains to status, in the hierarchy of “Qabils” in Somalia. Whether this exact hierarchical relationship is exported to the Diaspora in the United States of America was one of the issues that I studied when I conducted interviews with the Mushungulis and other Somali refugees in the United States of America.

Although kinship has received a great deal of attention in the literature produced about Somalia since the collapse of the state in 1990, the social contract has not. Yet it is
hardly possible to understand kinship fully without taking into account the social contract, which is the legal charter, so to speak, of the kinship system. The kinship system is based on blood relation, but the ties that bind blood relatives are grounded on social contract - on a public system of rules publicly negotiated. Kinship is the first principle of Somali politics. But the second principle - the social contract - is equally important, because it establishes the rules of kinship (Mohamed 2007). What I have tried to do briefly here is to describe the social contract vis-à-vis the Qabil structure that the Mushungulis, a dia-paying group and a part of the jilib, or foundation, are situated within in Somalia. While the Mushungulis are not considered “Somali” and are not a part of the Qabil hierarchy, the patron-client and adoption rules form xeer or social contract between them and the sab or “lower” Somali Qabils.

Abdi Ismail Samatar expressed the view held by many scholars when he wrote, "In the absence of an organized indigenous agency which can establish peace and carry out such an agenda in the immediate future, the Somali people must rely on the international community to save them" (1994: 92). Samatar and others believed that xeer or social contract has become separated from traditional blood-ties due to the manipulation of political elites vying for the control of state resources and hence the violence, though historical, has continued to this day in Somalia and, sometimes, even where the Somali Diaspora exists. This is especially true for the Mushungulis if they are to succeed in the United States of America. They, together with other Somali “Qabils,” have to substitute the patron-client and adoption relationship and re-invent new kinship ties and the social contract in the Diaspora. I will explain this further in Chapter Six.

In the next chapter, I describe the refugee cultural orientation sessions that Mushungulis and other Somali refugees receive as they prepare to come to the United States of America. Cultural orientation sessions are meant to explain how life is lived in the United States of America. Understanding the important components of life in a new country will be critical to them if they are to navigate life successfully in a new host country, achieve self-sufficiency and contribute positively to their new communities.
Chapter Three–Life in the Refugee Camps and Cultural Orientation for Immigration

Many refugees leave their homes under hurried, chaotic, and dangerous conditions. When civil war began in their countries of origin, refugees describe how they “scattered” or “ran into the bush,” and, as a result, how they were separated from family members, some still to this day. Many refugees do not know when, if ever, they would be able to return to their countries or see their family and friends again. This made leaving family and friends behind particularly painful. In many cases, there were no family and friends left in their home countries. In this chapter, I recount my experiences and some of the stories told to me by the refugees as I spent three sessions (two in March-April 2008, and one in October 2009) in Nairobi, Kenya, observing and participating in refugee cultural orientation sessions that helped refugees prepare themselves to come to the United States of America. These sessions were conducted by the Joint Voluntary Agency (JVA) - Nairobi, the international arm of the Church World Services.

In casual conversations, people use the word *refugee* to refer to someone who has fled his or her home, whether to escape war, natural disaster, economic hardship, or political persecution. But in the world of refugee assistance, the term has a precise legal definition. Whether a person is granted refugee status depends on why he or she fled the home country. According to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, held by world governments in Geneva in 1951, a refugee is 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."

This definition includes people who have experienced persecution because of political beliefs or religious activities or because they are members of a particular ethnic group. The definition does not include people who are fleeing economic hardship nor victims of earthquakes, famines, floods, and other kinds of natural disasters. These people may be deserving of humanitarian assistance or they may be admitted to the
United States of America as immigrants, but they are not considered refugees. The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees established the legal standards for refugee protection, and the United States of America has signed the agreement. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), established in 1951, is the branch of the United Nations charged with the international protection of refugees. The United States Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) of 1952 authorizes the admission and resettlement of refugees to the United States of America.

Refugees flee conditions in their home countries and find temporary asylum in refugee camps or communities in neighboring countries. There, the UNHCR interviews them to decide whether they should be granted refugee status and thus qualify for UNHCR protection. The UNHCR also seeks to find what it calls a \textit{durable solution} for any refugee situation. There are three durable solutions: (a) voluntary repatriation to the home country; (b) integration into the country of asylum; and (c) resettlement in a third country, such as the United States of America. For most refugees, the best solution is to return home as soon as it is safe for them to do so. If that is not possible, the second-best solution may be to integrate them into the country of asylum, where social and cultural conditions are generally similar to those of the home country. Only when these two solutions are not possible does the UNHCR consider the solution of resettlement to a third country, such as the United States of America.

Refugee cultural orientation is the education provided to refugee newcomers to the United States of America to help them acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed in early resettlement. In fact, all the refugee cultural orientation programs for refugees around the world have been designed, developed, and implemented by the Center for Applied Linguistics, a private non-profit organization based in Washington, D. C. “The purpose of refugee cultural orientation is to help refugees acquire the information and skills necessary to gradually adapt to a new society and culture. Refugee cultural orientation helps refugees incorporate elements of American culture into their own system of values and beliefs” (Center for Applied Linguistics 1982).
Communities that receive refugees report that effective refugee cultural orientation is needed to help refugees integrate and adapt to their new life in America. Recognizing this, the government of the United States of America and its partner non-governmental organizations provide both pre- and post-departure refugee cultural orientation, making orientation an on-going process. Although government-funded refugee cultural orientation is not comprehensive, it is an important first step in the successful resettlement of refugees. Overseas refugee cultural orientation is provided by a variety of international and United States of America-based organizations as well as by some embassies of the United States of America in countries around the world. All refugees above the age of 15 are eligible for refugee cultural orientation. In addition, some programs periodically conduct classes for refugee children and youth.

Most refugee cultural orientation programs rely on a mix of local, international, and American staff, some of whom may be bicultural and bilingual. Depending on the availability of trainers and interpreters, the language(s) spoken by refugees, and the size of the group, refugee cultural orientation will be delivered in English (with or without the aid of an interpreter), in the refugees' native language, or in the refugees' second language (other than English).

Based on United States of America’s State Department guidelines, eleven essential topics are addressed by the majority of overseas refugee cultural orientation programs: pre-departure processing, the role of the resettlement agency, housing, employment, community services, education, health, transportation, money management, the rights and responsibilities of refugees, and cultural adjustment. The particular topics to be covered in individual refugee cultural orientation training cycles depend on the number of hours that trainers have at their disposal and on the needs and characteristics of each group being trained, such as their literacy levels, their exposure to modern urban living, and the support network they are likely to have in the United States of America. The refugee cultural orientation sessions can last anywhere from two to thirty hours.
Preparing refugees for life in the United States of America requires the concerted effort of both overseas and American-based refugee cultural orientation trainers and staff. The refugee cultural orientation continuum is especially effective when both overseas and domestic orientation help refugees establish realistic expectations, gather knowledge, and develop relevant skills and attitudes. While this might be the ideal outcome for refugees and new Americans, whether these refugee cultural orientation programs actually establish realistic expectations, gather knowledge, and develop relevant skills and attitudes is highly debatable. Funding for these programs have been cut drastically both in the United States of America and overseas. While some of the goals, aims, and objectives were achieved during these sessions, you will note that many refugees actually ended up being more confused than before when trying to understand what it took to live like and become an American citizen.

Each session I observed in Nairobi, Kenya lasted a total of eighteen hours spread over three days. During these sessions and with the help of Ethiopian and Somali interpreters provided to me by the JVA, I interviewed some refugees, who came mainly from Somalia and Ethiopia, as well as trainers conducting these sessions. I found that many of the stories were very similar – stories of confusion, pain, loss, guilt, shame, anger but ultimately also of hope and optimism. The refugees also struck me as being very resilient. Refugees fleeing under chaotic conditions had to leave their possessions, and sometimes loved ones, behind. They lost their homes, assets, and support networks. They also described what their lives were like before and after the war. According to one refugee, “In Somalia I lived in a house; my father had a private business which was taken away by the government. Then, my grandfather was burned alive, my aunt was shot. I escaped to Djibouti and then went to Kenya. It was hard to live. My husband left me” (March 2008).

One Mushunguli man was forced to leave on his own, without his nine children or wives. His was an interesting case, as he was not accorded P2 status (which signifies a persecuted or targeted group) like the rest of the Mushungulis that had been resettled to
the United States of America earlier in 2005. According to the officials at the JVA, there could have discrepancies in his answers when interviewed by officials of the Department of Homeland Security and thus his credibility, at that time, was questioned. However, upon an appeal, he had been determined to be a credible “Somali Bantu” refugee and was thus being admitted to the United States of America under P2 status. According to this refugee,

I have problem since civil war. Military comes to city. I am farmer. They are taking my food. I slept separately from my family. I escaped myself. It was too hard for us all to escape. We are like slaves in Somalia. (March 2008)

Some refugees were forced to run from country to country to escape imprisonment or death. Some were unable to escape imprisonment. An Oromo man from Ethiopia explained,

In 1992 I was deported back to my home from Libya [where he had been taking classes at the university]. My family had been deported while I was gone. I was then in danger in Ethiopia, so I went back to Libya. The Ethiopian government called me, and wanted me to go back to Ethiopia to be killed. The Libyans arrested me because I was involved in OLM [The Oromo Liberation Movement]. I was jailed, tortured; hit over the head with a rifle unconscious [he shows me the scar on his head]. They told me I was anti-government. My sight was impaired in jail. They then put me under house arrest from 1993-1998. I went to jail again, was released in 2000. In 2002 the head of our party showed me a list of wanted people; I was on it. I asked for protection. I was told to get out of Ethiopia. I found registration to the US on the Internet [got a student visa] and tried to get out but couldn’t. They asked for too much money. I eventually made my way to Kenya. (March 2008)

Persecution and forced movement disturb refugees’ “ontological security.” Healey defines ontological security as “a person’s understanding of their place within their worldview and with which they feel comfortable” (2006: 261). The refugees’ lives were torn out from under them. Their sense of security; their ability to care for; protect
their family; and to hold a job was destroyed. There was no more ontological security as
chaos and mayhem had replaced comfort and stability. Experiences in refugee camps
further disturbed this sense of security.

Life in the Refugee Camps

One of the stages in the refugee experience, refugee camps, has received
relatively little analysis. A fair amount of descriptive material exists, and a few scholars
have examined the impact of the camp experience on behavior, but there is no system of
classification of camps nor models of the crucial elements of the camp experience.
Created in a situation of emergency as a protective device intended to provide for the
physical, food, and health safety of all kinds of survivors and fugitives from wars, at a
minimum level and at a distance from the existing socio-economic areas, refugees camp
agglomerate tens of thousands of inhabitants for periods that generally last far beyond the
duration of the emergency. The most important characteristics of the camps are:
segregation from the host population, the need to share facilities, a lack of privacy, plus
overcrowding and a limited, restricted area within which the whole compass of daily life
is to be conducted. This gives the refugees a sense of dependency, and the clear signal
that they have a special and limited status, and are being controlled.

The individuals brought together in refugee camps are there solely because they
have the recognized status of victims. This justification of their presence and of the
existences of the camps makes them, from a humanitarian standpoint, nameless, in the
sense that no identity referent is supposed to affect the support provided to the physical
maintenance of the victims – security, health, food. This care is aimed at persons
belonging indifferently to factions, regions, or states which may be friendly or hostile.
Thus, refugee camps induce the social and political non-existence of the refugees.

It is during the camp experience that the enormity of what has happened finally
strikes home to the refugee. The focus is on what has been lost. Besides the suffering,
trauma, and persecution already endured, and the loss of loved ones, the refugee must
now face up to the loss of homeland, identity, and his/her former life. It is the fact of
finding oneself in a strange, unpredictable predicament, for which one has not been
prepared, that provokes the questioning of one’s own threatened and traumatized identity.
A new life in a strange land awaits. Anxiety, fear, frustration, and emotional disturbance
appear, and often the refugee regresses to a more infantile state, loses his/her willpower,
and becomes apathetic, helpless, or manic and aggressive. The refugee loses structure,
the ability to coordinate, predict and expect, and his basic feelings of competence.

Research has proven that refugee camps have an effect on mental health
(Hammond 2006). The problem of idleness dominates life in the camps. This problem,
closely correlated to the feeling of abandonment, affects everyone, but more directly
those who had a recognized, more or less official, job before the exodus, and therefore
more men and former urban dwellers.

“The moral suffering and even the psychological
pathologies linked to the lack of occupational activity
assume an important place in the texture of individual
daily life… Many refugees who, after nine years of exile
and camp living, consider themselves as physically and
mentally imprisoned, homeless, and hopeless and who
commonly talk of suicide, the refugees endlessly express
above all feelings of powerlessness and uselessness”

It is possible to mitigate this effect by shortening the stay, reducing camp size so
that there is a sense of community, providing dwellings that are bright and private rather
than gloomy warehouses, allowing contact with the outside world, and by reducing
dependency through participation. In the fifty years since this advice was given it has
been only sporadically followed (Hammond 2008). Refugee camps are a major feature of
today’s refugee experience. Roughly fifteen million refugees are in some type of camp
situation (UNHCR Report 2007). Little is actually known about the origins and
background of the refugees, or about the actual problems and workings of the camp.
There is an economic and social life in these camps which workers are not aware of,
knowledge of which may be very important in order to plan rationally and to avoid
egregious errors. It is my strong impression that a short period of direct observation and
participation in camp life by an anthropologist can pay considerable dividends.
Unfortunately due to refugee unrest, bourgeoning numbers in both Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps where Somali refugees are housed, and the lack of appropriate safety protocols, I was not able to visit either of these camps. Visiting the camps would have allowed me to open paths for ethnographic investigation into a new space of life which no one imagined, only a few decades ago, would figure among the legitimate field sites and topics of anthropology. My information about the camps is gleaned from the refugees I interviewed in Nairobi, Kenya.

Of the eighteen participants interviewed (six in each session), all had spent a significant period of time living in one or more different refugee camps; they spoke at length about these experiences. The refugees described life in the camps as being hard; some compared the conditions to that of a jail.

Problems were acute because there were always new people arriving. They spent their days searching for wood to make fires and cook food. Children went to school, though some refugees reported that they had to pay to enroll their children. And, in fact, a few of the participants attended high school in the camps. Adults also took classes some times. But this was rare. We were all too depressed. In fact, we sent the kids to school so that we could worry about the future and the people we left behind without the children causing us any trouble. The United Nations gave out rations of food to each family – families stood in line for rice, corn, soybean oil, corn meal and buckwheat. (March 2008)

According to a refugee who had stayed in the Hagadera camp in Kenya, families received 3 kilograms of maize, 250 milligrams of oil, and a small amount of salt for one month. There was no meat and no vegetables. Refugees also reported receiving kerosene from the United Nations once a month, in addition to a small amount of wood. During the day, refugees were able to leave the camp to collect wood in the bush, but the conditions were not safe, so many chose not to. Women and children who went out to collect firewood were often raped and killed. And if men went out to look for firewood, their fate was similar. The United Nations, in some cases, did not help with water. Another refugee who had been in Hagadera camp noted as well,
Water was expensive, and you need it for your bath in morning and evening, to cook, to clean. Many times, we could not clean ourselves because we could not afford to. It is very hot there. (March 2008)

Refugees reported eating only once a day, every 24 hours. The refugees complained about getting buckwheat at times instead of rice – the United Nations told them that buckwheat was more nutritious than rice (Refugees International 2003).

A refugee from Somalia described the Hagadera refugee camp in Kenya, along the Somali border,

The refugee camp is divided into sections. Each section is a block of 120 families with a fence around it. There were 80 something blocks. The fence has 2 or 3 doors – they are closed at 6:00 p.m. The United Nations staff goes to their compound at night and is safe. They offer services to refugees and then hide from them. All United Nations vehicles are escorted by the police. (March 2008)

Habibah, a Somali refugee, talked about the different “blocks” in the camps. The UNHCR erects fences of thorns and barbed wire, several miles long, to mark the perimeters of the camps and, within them, to enclose the “blocks” (Agier 2002).

“The blocks were originally areas of two or three hectares containing 100 to 150 shelters housing 300 to 600 refugees on average but overcrowding has increased these numbers. The refugees are grouped together in the various blocks according to their place of origin, ethnicity and sometimes their clan of origin, and are generally referred to in broad ethnic terms (Somalis) or in terms of nationality (Ethiopians or Sudanese)” (Agier 2002: 325).

While Habibah was Somali, she lived in the Ethiopian block with her husband who was from Ethiopia. This was the only case of intermarriage between nationalities/ethnic groups that I heard about during my interviews in Nairobi. While not
rare in the United States of America, it was indeed uncommon in the refugee camps
(Mark Cassini, personal communication, March 2008).

The immediate concern of most of the refugees was being able to feed and protect
their families. One refugee reported that there was no food at all, just “crumbs.”
According to her,

I used to sit around in the refugee camp. I stayed to myself
and fed the children – this is all I worried about. There was
not enough food, and no rice. It was difficult, but it had to
be enough [food] and we told ourselves that we were full.
It was hard on the children. (March 2008).

Refugees, particularly the ones that lived in Dadaab and Kakuma camps in Kenya,
talked about the “bandits and bullets” present not only outside the camps but in the camps
as well. One woman reported being raped by militia in the Dadaab camp in Kenya. She
also noted that she did not receive any medical or counseling services whilst at Dadaab.
She considered herself lucky that she did not get pregnant. Otherwise, even her refugee
status might have been under review. Often the culprits were the Kenyan police or
military. According to one man who spent a long time at Kakuma refugee camp,

The Kenyan police are the biggest problem – they check your
clothes, take everything. For example, a guy raped a wife and
daughter and the next day you find out that he was a police
officer. Sometimes militia come at night and take food...
Kenyans come in with guns and take everything. Even our
women. (March 2008)

Refugees that were able to earn money while living at the camps in Kenya
reported giving a percentage to the Kenyan police. According to the male Mushunguli
refugee, when asked about the camps,
I don’t want to even think about it. Kenya border guards beat us, took our money away. There was no communication, free speech. The refugee coordinator saw what happened to the Bantu, and said that he would place us in the US. The US does not come to camp and choose people. They did not choose me at first. They say I lied. The UN does not want to close off camps. People who have money come to the US. Those with no money stay in the refugee camps. (March 2008)

Some refugees in the camps, particularly young men, were sometimes forced to enter the military; and at times forced to go and fight their “own people.” One refugee, who had lived in a camp in Eritrea before escaping to Kenya, cried as she told her story,

When we just got there they accepted us warmly, they gave us a tent. But they put the kids in the military, forcefully. They were treated badly because my sons speak Amharic [they could not speak Tigrinya]. They took three of my sons and one of my daughters. They tried to escape. One of my sons died of disease trying to escape. The military came to visit me and asked me where my sons were. I said, “They are with you.” They arrested me. I had no idea where my kids were. They kept me for two days and then let me go. They threatened me. I was stressed and fearful, so when I got a chance to go to Kenya, I did. Three of my children escaped to Sudan – from Sudan they went to Libya, then crossed the Mediterranean to Italy. One of my daughters is in London, one son is in Italy, and one son is in Sudan. They are overage, so I could not file for them to come to America. I was hopeless. But I hope that they can come to America to visit me. (March 2008)

The refugees had spent years in the camps. In fact, according to the staff at the JVA, they were still processing Somali refugees who had been in both Kakuma and Dadaab camps since 1991 (David Weaver and Sarah Krause, personal communication, October 2009). Some individuals were able to find ways to make a little money. Refugees reported working for the UNHCR, selling maize, baking and selling bread, and making rugs and selling them while living in the camps. Individuals met others, at times got married, and even had children in the camps. When the weather was nice (hot/dry), they would stay outside and exchange news about the civil war(s), learn about people who had died as the women cooked and cared for the children.
Rumors are also rife in these camps (Mark Cassini, personal communication, March 2008, and David Weaver and Sarah Krause, personal communication, October 2009). According to Sarah Krause there was a rumor about certain wealthy Kenyans passing themselves off as refugees,

While making their way through the D.C. airport, the [Kenyan] ambassador and his nephew spotted a group of students from the nephew’s elite school in Nairobi. It turned out the privileged youths had managed to pass themselves off as Somali refugees and were on their way to new homes and a new life in Minnesota. (October 2009)

This scenario could not have happened as the interviews to determine one’s status as a refugee are very stringent and are carried out at four different times to verify accuracy and credibility. If there is even a hint of fraud or dishonesty in the interviews, officers often delay the processing of the case to do further checking (David Weaver, personal communication, October 2009). The case of the Mushunguli man stated above reinforces this point.

The refugees also talked about the poor medical care in the camps. At times, refugees would have to travel long distances for medical care. According to a refugee from Ethiopia who lived in Hagadera camp near the Somali border, “My brother’s wife was giving birth to twins. She delivered one, but then had to be taken to the hospital. It took her 5 hours to get there, so she and the baby died” (October 2009). Other refugees noted that the major reason refugees go to the hospital is because they are hungry. Many respondents complained of sanitation issues in the camps. According to one refugee who had been in Dadaab camp,

It was too congested, over 300,000 people. People got sick. My children got sick at the camp; many people got sick and died. Some were living well in the refugee camp, but 85 percent the people suffered because of sanitation issues. It was not clean, there were no toilets, and people got sick. I got a little sick. (October 2009)
It is important to note here that when Dadaab camp was first built in the mid-1990s, it was intended for no more than 90,000 refugees. Today, with over 8,000 refugees arriving from Somalia on a monthly basis, Dadaab camp houses close to 300,000 refugees (Sarah Krause, personal communication, October 2009). This is because of the total breakdown of state and infrastructure in Somalia and the fact that the Islamist factions that control most of the southern portion of Somalia are warring against each other and innocent victims and residents of Somalia are experiencing the collateral casualties and are escaping to safety on a daily basis. Because of overcrowding in many of the refugee camps, especially in Kakuma and Dadaab, rates of incidence of tuberculosis are on the increase, as well as other airborne infections. Fortunately, or unfortunately, depending on your viewpoint, Kenya has been experiencing a drought for the last year and half. However, with the El Nino rains expected between October, 2009 and March 2010, public health officials at these camps are worried about outbreaks of malaria and water-borne diseases such as cholera, typhoid, and dysentery which can have a devastating impact on the camps with their overcrowded conditions (Sarah Krause, personal communication, October 2009). Despite conditions in the camps, refugees generally expressed more appreciation than anything, and rarely complained. According to one refugee, “People couldn’t complain – who could they complain to?” (October 2009).

Many refugees reported feeling safe because of the United Nations security forces present in the camps, despite stories of violence (stabblings and murders) that they had heard from others. Others discussed horrific events that occurred to them or their family and friends while living in camps. There was one story of an uprising in another camp in Kenya that was told to me by several refugees. According to one refugee,
People started chopping Amharas, cutting off their arms! When we went to the police at the end of the road they said that because we are Amharas they couldn’t do anything. It was scary. They caught one Oromo fellow from Ethiopia and the police said they would deal with him; I don’t know if he got away. Then, in 2002-2003, there was another riot on the camp. Amharas went on a rampage and closed down the police station. There was no security in the camp for two months. No law or rules. Later they reopened the police station. (October 2009)

Similar stories about suppression of Somalis and conflict in the other camps in Kenya were told. As a result of the conflict in some of the camps, interviews for refugees were moved out of the camp and into the city of Nairobi. This led to additional pre-screening interviews to see if there was a “real need,” (David Weaver, personal communication, October 2009) and therefore delays in the processing of cases. Refugees expressed frustration about this change. In fact, one young man’s biggest complaint about the resettlement process was that he had to go for an interview very early in the morning as a result of this change because there were so many people to compete with. He would take a bus to the immigration office at this time. Then, he would wait with others until it opened when the resettlement officials showed up for work. Some people would wait in line all day only to be turned away.

Cultural and language barriers made life very difficult for some refugees. According to one Somali woman who had lived in a refugee camp,

In Kenya they spoke Swahili and English and some other dialects. I did not understand anything because of the different dialects. It seemed like it was a crazy, foreign country. They spoke English. I had to move around. I learned a little Swahili, which helped. It was a whole new experience. There was a language barrier in Kenya. They spoke many languages, but only had one refugee school in the area. We were forced to learn the new languages, Swahili and English, because the national exams were in that language. (October 2009)
For one refugee, language barriers led to his unlawful imprisonment,

I didn’t understand people. I could not speak Swahili at first when I got to the refugee camp, so they locked me up for 9 months. For the first three weeks there was no food, no access to medical care, nowhere to bathe. God saved me! I got used to it after 3-4 months. I was confident I would get out. I knew I hadn’t done anything wrong. Many Somalis were in the jail; I couldn’t stand the torture. (October 2009)

Some spoke about how this language barrier, at times, uniting Somalis from different Qabils. Qabils which had previously been rivals in Somalia got along so that they could band together against the Kenyans and others. For example, according to one refugee,

There was a cultural and language barrier – the Kenyans and the refugee officials were not receptive. They claimed that refugees had done stuff. We spoke Somali and were Muslim! Somalinimo! During this time in the camp, different clans from Somalia got along, and sympathized with each other. We were scared – we were sometimes afraid to become a part of the society. In the camps, there was no conflict between clans or people of different thinking – we were one. But this was not the case in Somalia. Actually, people from different tribes, clans, and religions are united in the camps. Muslims and Christians went to meetings together, but prayed separately. There was no chaos between different groups except against the Kenyans and their police. (October 2009)

From the quote above, nationalities become ethnicities in the relational sense. Whereas the Somali stories of war and flight are marked by “tribal” or “clan” oppositions and violence, and whereas reference to the nation has been severely shaken in the Qabil conflicts, the term “Somali” refers, as it were, to a local nation. These ethnonyms do not erase former affiliations, but become quite real, operational terms, for as long as the camp lasts. Thus, in the configuration of an “ethnic chessboard” specific to the refugee camps, each affiliation takes on meaning and position in relation to the other “pieces” in the board – competing, antagonistic, or allied (Agier 2002: 334).
Agier (2002) has also argued that refugee camps create identity, both ethnic and non-ethnic, even more than they reproduce, maintain, or reinforce ethnicity. He has found camps are just as relational and dynamic an experiment on and with identity as that which marks refugees who are not “processed” by humanitarian agencies. The Mushungulis are an example of “strengthened particularisms” (Agier 2002:334). In Kakuma Refugee Camp he observed,

“On the ethnic chessboard of the camp as a whole, they gradually achieved autonomous recognition, as apparently separate from the Somali grouping. The official designation given to them simply by the letters ‘SBR’ (Somali Bantu Refugees) and they spoke to the camp authorities as a ‘minority.’ The camp enabled them to shed a devalued and devaluing intra-ethnic position” (Agier 2002: 334).

In contrast, the Mushunguli refugee who was mentioned earlier did not describe such instances of unity in the refugee camps in Kenya. For example, according to him,

The refugee camp was very hard. People hated each other. People from different clans fought. The other Somalis were not very nice. They thought they were back in Somalia. (March 2008)

In fact, many of the Mushungulis were regarded as outcasts by the dominant Somalis. The dominant Somalis displayed an arrogant, disdainful, and domineering attitude toward the Mushungulis that often went as far as physical violence (Agier 2002). In fact, many Mushungulis lived separately from the others with their enclosures clearly demarcated by barbed wire, thorny and spiky bushes and high fences which expressed the many behaviors of fear, rejection, withdrawal and self-defense (Agier 2002: 326).

Such a strategy of emancipation from previous domination and ethnic separatism in the new context of a refugee camp is potentially a challenge to existing ethnic dominations which makes possible a transcendence of ethnicity. In this case, refugee camps do not reinforce ethnicity but, on the contrary, clash with it by putting it in the context of relativizing alternatives (Agier 2002). The “chessboard” which is the refugee camp that Agier (2002: 330) refers to above is no longer strictly ethnic in its rules, but
more broadly relational. It tends to modify the appearance and the role of the “pieces” themselves (Agier 2002: 330). It is composed of an ensemble of situations of contact which can sometimes be marked by aggressiveness and even serious violence. These situations nonetheless stage new exchanges, learning processes and linguistic and cultural translations that call into question the ethnic boundaries established at the outset.

Those refugees that did not live in camps described living in cities, renting homes, struggling to find a job and to get enough food to support their families and, at times, relying on money sent to them from families in the United States of America. As in the camps, life in the city was hard. According to a Somali refugee that had lived in Nairobi, “Life in Nairobi was hard, horrible. I got a protection letter from UNHCR. They gave me 1,500 shillings a month (about US$20). Police officers took money from me. They search people and take money. Life was hard” (October 2009). However, another Somali refugee that also lived in Nairobi did not feel quite as strongly, “I did not stay in a refugee camp. Life in Nairobi was a good place but the problem was with the police. I personally did not have an instance with the police. I felt safe, but did not want to stay there” (October 2009).

All refugees reported leaving Africa as a result of civil war, though they were targeted for different reasons because of their race, ethnicity, or political affiliation, among other reasons. As I have mentioned above, some watched family and friends get murdered as they ran from their homes; some were raped, imprisoned; many barely escaped death. Overnight, their lives changed; refugees left beautiful homes, businesses, and communities for refugee camps. Duress, stress, and trauma had taken a toll on their ontological security. In fact, in many instances, their sense of the present and future was destroyed. There was no more logic to their lives. Refugees’ lives were torn out from under them. Experiences in refugee camps further disturbed the individuals’ sense of security. At times the conditions in the camps were not much better than the conditions they were escaping; the refugees told stories of rioting, violence, rape, and corrupt security forces. Some refugees, including Somalis, reported that those from different “clans,” “tribes,” and backgrounds united; however, by contrast, the Mushunguli man
noted that “tribal” and ethnic conflicts were brought from his home country to the camps. While struggling to get enough food and trying to protect one’s children, refugees, though, found ways to make life within these camps seem “normal.” Children attended school; some even married and started families while living within the refugee camps. Some refugees reported living in camps for over fifteen years before finally being granted permission to come to the United States of America.

The Refugee Cultural Orientation Session in Brief

While their paperwork is being processed by officials from the UNHCR and the United States of America’s State Department’s Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) and the Department of Homeland Security, many refugees are expected and strongly encouraged to attend refugee cultural orientation courses. While the training courses are not mandatory, attendance at these training sessions is part of a checklist, which includes health assessments, background security checks, and other assessments, that a refugee has to have completed before he or she can be processed as a “legal” refugee.

The PRM coordinates these courses together with the JVA. The goal of orientation efforts is to ensure that all refugees receive basic information before their departure to the United States of America. The orientation efforts also ensure that refugees are prepared for the changes they will experience during the initial phases of resettlement and that when they arrive in the United States of America, they have a realistic view and expectation of what their new lives will be like, and together with the knowledge that they are entitled to certain services, that they have certain responsibilities to themselves and the community as well. The following section describes, and critiques, the orientation process that participants underwent before resettling to the United States of America.

The original length of these classes varied. Up until five years ago, 2005, there were three, five, and seven day refugee cultural orientation sessions. And depending on how long it took to process the refugee, he or she was encouraged to attend the
orientation session that lasted the longest as it provided the most complete and most thorough material. However, due to lack of funds and resources, the PRM and the JVA have decided to condense the classes into three days. While the length of the orientation course was not related to the refugee’s country of origin, it was interesting to note that all of the Somali Bantus attended a seven-day orientation session. A training and programming officer at the JVA, who also came to the United States of America as a refugee, stated,

Orientations used to be different lengths. It depended on how close your flight was. If your flight was in three days, they gave you a three-day orientation. My orientation was supposed to be a week total; but I left before it was over; I only stayed three days. Orientations are also held at the refugee camps. Whenever there is a critical mass of refugees that have been referred to us by the UNHCR, we do circuit rides to all the camps to conduct training sessions. These are expensive of course, as a team has to fly out together with training materials and supplies. You are observing one in Nairobi because UNHCR has referred these refugees to us in Nairobi. Having it here in Lavington, Nairobi, makes it difficult for some refugees especially if they live far away. (October 2009)

The three sessions I observed covered topics on travel, education, finance and budget, and rights and responsibilities. After observing these sessions, I realized how confusing it must have been for the refugees. Even the staff trainers lamented that they had to go through an incredible amount of information in a very short time and many of the refugees could not even pinpoint the highlights of each of the units during the reviews after each topic unit. Also, critically, none of the sessions paid attention to the differences that each state has in terms of housing, education, and eligibility requirements for benefits. All the trainers could do was to generalize each of the topics and even then, much of the time was spent explaining concepts that had no relevant meaning to the refugees at the time. Being involved in the domestic side of resettlement, it was clear to me that a complementary domestic cultural orientation session that was specific to each state would have been more relevant and meaningful to the refugees. Many of the refugees did not understand the information and hence, could not ask relevant questions which would have helped the discussions and learning.
After the three-day sessions, I spent time asking the refugees to see if they could recollect what they had learned and to see if they had actually retained information after such a whirlwind course. The next section reports on this.

The refugees who participated in the refugee cultural orientation classes reported learning through instructors, books, and videos. When asked, generally, what they learned in these classes prior to their departure for the United States of America, the refugees responded in a variety of mixed ways which led me to believe that the sessions were more confusing than helpful. One said, “I learned about the entire America” (October 2009).

A majority of the refugees interviewed noted that the orientation classes were helpful, and that, for example, “it gave me an idea of what to expect.” And while many noted that they could not think of other information that they should have been taught; some noted that it barely touched upon issues that they would confront once in the United States of America. According to a Somali refugee,

It was good. It was helpful. They gave me a book. I am not so good in reading so I don’t understand it at all. But I will ask my friends for more information. My friends will give me good information and help. (October 2009).

Some had strong feelings about the inadequacy of orientation classes. For example, according to another refugee,

It was not good. They did not talk about everything. Refugees need to know more about America. I am lucky that I have some family in America. They told me more than the orientation classes and the trainers. My family in America told me not to worry. Everything will be taken care of when I get there. (October 2009)

Some refugees were unable to remember what they had learned in their orientation classes because of their age (too old to remember), memory problems, or trauma. Others were unable to understand what they were being taught because
interpreters were not good. This was in the third orientation session that I attended in October 2009. There were two interpreters available, a Somali and an Ethiopian who spoke both Amharic and Oromo for this session. The first two sessions in March of 2008 had two Somali interpreters (neither of which spoke Af Maay and had to speak with the Mushunguli man in Af Maxaa) and a trilingual Ethiopian interpreter who spoke Oromo, Amharic, and Tigrinya. Several refugees felt particularly disadvantaged because of their background. According to the Mushunguli refugee,

Since I have come to Nairobi I have not seen problems. But, as a Bantu I did not get school back home. So, I need more orientation. I don’t understand everything. I know in America, there will be much to learn and I hope not to make mistakes. If I do I hope they do not send me back to Somalia. (March 2008)

A few refugees felt that they had an advantage because they had already been introduced to life in the United States of America, either through close family and friends or had been able to catch glimpses of life through the media like television and music videos. An Ethiopian man said, “It was helpful, but I knew more than the trainers” (October 2009). Others noted that it is the “connections” in the United States of America that are the most helpful. A younger Somali refugee said, “It was not so helpful to me because I already know everything. My family and have friends have told me already everything. I think if you do not have connections there, it can be very hard” (October 2009).

Training and programming officers at the JVA told me those refugees that were resettled before 2000 probably did not receive orientations because they left Africa before the refugee cultural orientation sessions were implemented on a consistent and organized basis. Some political refugees were also excused from attending the sessions as they were in danger of being killed or targeted even during transit in Nairobi and had to get out of Africa quickly. The VOLAG responsible for resettling them would then be responsible for conducting the refugee cultural orientation at the city of disembarkation in the United States of America. Asylees who sought that status whilst in the United States
of America under another status were not expected to attend any refugee cultural orientation sessions either.

From my discussions with the staff, they have found that these individuals’ expectations were either too high or too low. And it often varied if the refugees came from a rural part of their country of origin or city. A common phrase heard by staff was, “I hear that in America, women, cats and dogs have more rights than men” (Sarah Krause, personal communication, October 2009).

Many did not expect it to be hard, but also realized that during this time of admission to the United States of America, they were filled with happiness, euphoria, and hope and those expectations might have to be changed. They had survived the war and the persecution, and the life in the refugee camps and all were just happy that they were not back in the refugee camps. They were alive and were the “lucky” ones. In contrast, an older woman from Somalia noted what the Kenyan police at the refugee camps told her, “The police told me that in America, people will enslave you; you will wash horses in the farms and clean white peoples’ bathrooms; you are crazy to go there” (October 2009).

Some told me that they would try to learn on their own, for example, by reading about the United States of America on the Internet. All reported that they did not know enough about the United States of America before the refugee cultural orientation sessions; and that they should have received a basic orientation before departing the refugee camps. However, all agreed that it would impossible to know everything about a country in short time. One honest Ethiopian girl said, “I have no clue what to expect” (October 2009).

This I believe was what everyone was experiencing or thinking after the refugee cultural orientation sessions but was too afraid to express it. There was too much information presented in a very short time and with every one of the refugees
experiencing a range of emotions, it would have been very difficult for them to learn and retain the information that was presented to them, especially without the context for it.

Conclusion

Refugee camps very often find it hard to maintain their integrity, in other words to ensure the protection and neutrality of the spaces they demarcate. According to Rufin, they can be,

“turned into training camps for routed armies or the haunts of arms traffickers and suffer internal control by exiled ethnic or religious powers, violent incursion by armies from their countries of origin or strategies of forced return on the part of the national authorities. They can also be transformed into humanitarian sanctuaries: within this framework, a camp can be a rear base open to guerilla forces, protected not only by a border, but, above all, by the presence of a mass of civilian refugees, looked after by the international community, and the refugees may become successively the shields and targets of localized military operations, even when the great majority of them remain composed of civilian populations playing no part in the conflict” (1996: 28).

The examples cited by Agier (2002) show that refugee camps may provide a new setting and an innovative framework to affect identity, even if the social and identity changes are predicated on collective suffering and interpersonal conflicts that are in no way specific to this context. Refugee camps may also engender experiences of hybrid socialization that are not only multi-ethnic but also plural, in which *Qabil* strategies criss-cross ethnic strategies and the latter overlap with the “strategies of the humanitarian organizations of the global sphere” (Agier 2002: 336). Some organizations in the refugee camps want to encourage dialogue, integration, inter-ethnic encounters, and cultural learning, while others seek to avoid contacts, perceived as conflict. When conflicts arise, they are stopped in their tracks by forced return or transfers to other camps (Sarah Krause, personal communication, October 2009). The policing of an emergency situation makes refugees camps spaces of pure waiting without a subject, to which are opposed subjectivization that appear in initiatives aimed at recreating work, in
movements, in meetings, even in the conflicts themselves. Being human, winning back this minimum of identity, of being-in-the-world, which war and exodus endanger, therefore consists for each refugee in redefining his or her place by taking advantage of the ambivalence of the life of the camps, between emergency and duration, the here-and-now and the long term, the settlement of physical or social death and the recommencement of life. This recommencement of life begins as soon as refugees leave the camps and begin the process of documentation and cultural orientation sessions in Nairobi.

The cultural orientation sessions that I observed were lacking in content, depth, and specificity. It seemed to me that a large part of who the refugees were and how they got to be refugees were was neglected in the refugee cultural orientation sessions. Many of them, in their stories, had told me how they had had to adapt, learn and grow while escaping the horrors in their countries of origin. During this phase, I believe, there was a reservoir of self-sufficiency that could have been tapped to provide other refugees in the class with the tools that they might have used in the United States of America during the resettlement phase rather than discuss topics in generality. In short, the refugee cultural orientation sessions could have been used as a learning environment to encourage the refugees to share and learn the strategies that some of them might have used in negotiating a new environment and culture. Also, from some of the comments made, with the Somali refugees, there were still clan issues that presented themselves in the refugee camps which made life more difficult, especially for the Mushunguli refugee and his family.

According to the Center for Applied Linguistics, the primary objectives of the refugee cultural orientation programs are (1) to provide refugees with accurate information about life in the U.S. and the resettlement process; (2) to help refugees develop realistic expectations about resettlement, (3) to assist refugees in developing the awareness and skills necessary for successful adaptation to their new society, and (4) to address refugees' concerns and questions before their departure for the United States. While this may have been the objectives, the goals of achieving them were not realized. I
believe that the cultural orientation sessions presented too much general information without allowing the refugees to absorb and retain the material.

The refugee cultural orientation program is founded on the belief that refugees coming to a new country have a far better chance of integrating successfully if they acquire information concerning the receiving country before arrival. New information and skills can curtail unrealistic expectations and reduce adjustment problems later on. In addition, it is the experience of the refugee cultural orientation staff at the JVA that successful resettlement depends on establishing realistic time frames for accomplishing those goals based on accurate information about resettlement and integration into host communities and receiving societies in the United States of America. Refugees feel empowered by participation in the orientation process as they express their learning needs and take an active role in the acquisition of new skills. So while all the refugees noted that refugee cultural orientation sessions were helpful, many noted that there could have been more information made available. However, when I asked what that might be, none could not think of other information that they could or should have been taught. Some did note that their orientation sessions barely touched upon issues that they would confront once in the United States of America.

Refugee cultural orientation program trainers, who work with a wide range of nationalities, have found that they must be sensitive to and familiarize themselves with aspects of the cultures of all the different groups represented in the program. The staff recommended that ESL teachers in the United States of America may benefit from these broad-based recommendations made by them which include (1) be aware of the influence of culture on people's belief systems, values, and behavior, including your own; (2) be aware of and sensitive to verbal and nonverbal communication rules across cultures; (3) be able to identify cultural viewpoints that may be barriers to effective teaching; and (4) make sure that your style of communication and teaching is not culturally inappropriate.

While I observed mainly Somali and Ethiopian refugees getting oriented to life in the United States of America, there are thirty or more African nations from which refugees might come to the United States of America and they may encompass a wide
array of religions, cultures, and social practices. ESL teachers in the United States of America should therefore be careful not to make generalizations about African refugees but should seek out opportunities to learn about the specific groups represented in their classrooms. There should be coordinated activities to promote linkages between overseas refugee-processing centers and domestic refugee programs.

With any refugee cultural orientation session, it would be very difficult to pay attention to the minutiae of everyday life in another country and that is why these linkages between overseas and domestic refugee cultural orientation programs are so critical. Then, attention can be paid to the different states that these refugees were being resettled to so that state specific information can be delivered in a fashion that follows the outline that has already been developed. Also, an evaluation of the program needs to be developed so that the trainers can assess whether or not the materials are effective. This might have to be conducted in the United States of America through the VOLAGs. To me, the refugee cultural orientation sessions seemed haphazard and at best, and gave a very bare outline as to what to expect in the United States of America and at worst, only served to confuse the refugees even more.

In the next chapter, I discuss resettlement of the Mushungulis and other Somali refugees to the United States of America. Having participated in the refugee cultural orientation sessions, I will be able to see if the refugee cultural orientation sessions did indeed adequately prepare refugees for their new host countries, communities, and receiving societies and if clan issues are still an issue in the United States of America for the Mushungulis and other Somali refugees. And if so, I wanted to learn how they would affect integration during the resettlement process.
Chapter Four - Resettlement in the United States of America

More than 60 thousand Somalis and about 12 thousand Mushungulis were resettled in America as a result of Qabil warfare in Somalia. While resettlement in the United States of America guarantees safety from armed conflict, it does not guarantee a stress-free passage to the restoration of a normal life. The goal, however, for the Mushunguli family, other Somali refugees and indeed all refugees from all the different communities in the United States of America was to regain some measure of what they had lost materially without becoming dependent on welfare and a burden on society. This led them to work long hours, often in multiple jobs. They were successfully integrated into their own communities, and many were able to buy a house within five to seven years. Their success in the face of great challenges can be attributed to their resilience as well as “a good back,” a Somali metaphor describing a hard worker.

Ironically, the refugees’ achievements were inadvertently supported by the stringent self-sufficiency requirement of the refugee resettlement program in the United States of America. The majority of the refugees endured trying times, particularly in the first year, which was marked by adversity, confusion, poverty, exhaustion, and regret. However, their unwavering faith in the United States of America as a land of immigrants and their ability to one day fully belong in American society was very similar to immigrants and refugees through the ages that arrived in America looking for new opportunities and chances. This allowed many of the refugees I talked with a positive outlook on the future. The story of the Mushungulis’ resettlement, and indeed the resettlement of all other refugees in the United States of America, was more a story of triumph over adversity. Of course, there were many setbacks but by and large many of the refugees felt that their children would be able to enjoy the greatest benefit of coming to America as opposed to them.

My examination of the refugee resettlement process in Luckenville is divided into three sections. I first describe the foundation for the understanding of refugee resettlement in the United States of America and include a review of international protection mechanisms and American refugee policies and programs, the influence of
social welfare ideology, and background on the resettlement program itself. Next, I
describe where the fieldwork occurred. Last, I discuss the major findings that emerged
from my research.

According to the 1951 United Nations’ Convention relating to the Status of
Refugees, refugee status was limited to persons who became refugees due to events that
occurred before January 1st, 1951, primarily to address the needs of European refugees
from World War II. The 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees removed the
time limitation. According to the Protocol, it requires states to agree to apply Articles 2
through 34 of the 1951 Refugee Convention to all persons covered by the refugee
definition without reference to time or geographical limitations (UNHCR, 2000). One
hundred and forty two countries have signed the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention
and/or its 1967 Protocol. Signatories recognize persons as refugees based on the
definitions contained in these and other regional instruments.

Most adherents to the 1951 UN Convention also recognize the 1969 Organization
of African Unity (OAU) Refugee Convention definition (1969) of a refugee as “every
person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events
seriously disturbing public order [who seeks] refuge in another place outside his/her
country of origin or nationality” (UNHCR, 1997, page 52). Regional instruments such as
the OAU Convention and the 1984 Cartagena Declaration expanded that mandate to
include persons who have fled because of war or civil conflict, making them eligible to
receive refugee status. With refugee status, one has the right to safe asylum as well as to
the same rights and basic help as any other foreigner who is a legal resident of the host
country, including certain fundamental entitlements of every citizen. Individual who
possess “refugee” status have basic civil rights, including the freedom of thought, of
movement, and freedom from torture and degrading treatment (UNHCR, 2000).

In order to eligible for resettlement in the United States of America, a person must
meet the United States’ definition of a refugee found in Section 101(a) 42 of the
Immigration and Nationality Act, which is basically aligned with the definition in the
1951 United Nation Convention. Additionally, a refugee must meet the following criteria: (1) be among those refugees determined by the President to be of special humanitarian concern to the United States of America; (2) be otherwise admissible under United States law; and (3) not be firmly resettled in any third country (UNHCR, 1998).

Five primary pieces of legislation have significantly influenced the current state of refugee resettlement in the United States of America: (1) the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, (2) the Refugee Act of 1980, (3) the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986, (4) the Immigration Act of 1990, and (5) the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996. Although these acts contain protections for persons fleeing persecution, they were also designed, in my opinion, to help keep foreigners out rather than to open opportunities for entry into the United States of America.

Although the adults in the Mushunguli family and the other refugees in my research did not come to the United States of America as asylum seekers (they had been granted refugee status before arrival), asylum seekers whose cases are approved are then eligible for resettlement program services.

The Influence of Social Welfare Ideology

Social welfare policies in the United States of America tend to be evaluated and supported based on their ability to enhance personal independence in the form of individual economic self-sufficiency and to reduce dependence on public assistance. The individualistic framework maintains that individual self-interest, with minimal interference, will ultimately benefit all (Piven and Cloward 1993). The intention of the process of checks and balances is to eliminate excessive or unreasonable demands or actions made by individuals. Any assistance provided by the State for people in need, aside from being thought of as the last resort (after family and the local community), is believed to encourage dependency and be detrimental to both recipients and society. Additionally, state-provided assistance must be kept less than market wages to ensure a greater attachment to the workforce than to aid receipt (Piven and Cloward 1993).
Central to the individualist ideology is that success and failure are attributed to individual characteristics rather than structural features. Success is independence, a manifestation of virtue, while dependence – relying on the support of others – is failure (Katz 2001). Failure, if not a temporary situation or condition in the pursuit of success, is evidence of immorality and is punishable (Katz 1996). A host country’s social values greatly influence public and private attitudes toward the receipt of public assistance needed by refugees, particularly during the transition into the host country. There can be tension when refugees’ social values clash with those of the host country, thus challenging refugees’ ability to integrate into this society.

Since 1981, cash and medical assistance for refugees has decreased steadily from thirty-six months to eight months (van Selm 2003). Even at the reduced time period of eight months, there are those in the United States of America who feel that eight months of support is excessive. Social welfare opponents believe that providing support to refugees (and unemployed American citizens) discourages long-term self-sufficiency and will only serve to smooth their transition from resettlement program benefits to public assistance (van Selm 2003). Public welfare agencies become involved in resettlement when the resettlement programs have ended and refugees are still in need of assistance. Refugees are eligible for social insurance (Social Security and Unemployment Insurance) and public assistance programs (Minnesota Family Investment Program (at the federal level this is know as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF], Food Stamps, and Women, Infants and Children programs. This also includes the Medicaid program) under the same criteria as American citizens.

Although the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement has a number of social integration and welfare-related policies and programs, none of these is implemented directly. As van Selm noted in a survey of public-private refugee resettlement partnerships in Europe and the United States of America, the American government’s limited public involvement in providing what in Europe are considered “publicly desirable welfare needs” is intentional (2003: 170). Having voluntary resettlement agencies, community-based organizations and numerous mutual assistance associations
execute the various program and policy objectives is another example of the devolution of responsibility from the federal to the state and local levels. Further complicating their tasks, voluntary resettlement agencies are funded on a per capita basis but often the funding is not in synchrony with the arrival of refugees. Funding that is used for current refugees is often per capita funds given for those previously resettled. After September 11th, 2001, when the resettlement program was frozen, there was a period of time when the voluntary resettlement agencies were scrambling for resources (M. Cassini, personal communication, April 2008). The lack of a secure, continuous funding source for refugee resettlement is an example of the conflicted relationship between assistance and self-sufficiency inherent in the residual American social welfare system.

Background on the Resettlement Program in the United States of America

The United States of America has a long tradition of granting refuge to those fleeing persecution. Since World War II, more refugees have found permanent homes in the United States of America than in any other country (UNHCR, 1998). The Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) in the Department of State provides per capita funding which provides refugees with cash, health, and housing assistance based on need (United States Government 2004). Implicit in the residual American system, however, is a belief that the assistance should be temporary; otherwise it is considered counter-productive based on a concern that refugees could become dependent on public assistance. Refugees in the United States of America are eligible to receive cash assistance for up to eight months.

The primary goal of the United States Resettlement Program is for refugees to achieve economic self-sufficiency as quickly as possible. This goal greatly influences the States’ missions regarding refugee resettlement. For example, in Minnesota, the overall objectives of the State Refugee Coordinator’s Office which deals with Refugee Resettlement Programs are: (1) assisting refugees to attain self-sufficiency as soon as possible after arrival; (2) providing culturally and linguistically appropriate employment and support services; (3) coordinating cash and medical assistance with employment and support services to promote early employment and economic self-sufficiency; (4)
assuring effective use of available public and private resources, and (5) assisting voluntary resettlement agencies, refugee community-based organizations and mutual assistance associations in developing greater organizational capacity to enable them to take on a more significant role in the resettlement and adjustment of refugees as well as promoting economic development opportunities in refugee communities where possible (G. Avenido, personal communication, March 2009).

At the federal level, PRM administers the refugee resettlement program in conjunction with the Citizenship and Immigration Services of the Department of Homeland Security and the Office of Refugee Resettlement of the Department of Health and Human Services. These federal entities contract with local voluntary resettlement agencies and other community-based organizations and provide financial support to partially cover refugees’ reception and placement expenses (United States Government 2001). It is then the voluntary resettlement agencies and the community-based organizations that have the responsibility of providing resettlement services as well as information and referrals about employment opportunities, vocational training, education, language classes, personal safety, public facilities and services, personal hygiene practices, health care, and information about legal status, citizenship, and family reunification procedures, for a minimum of ninety days after the arrival of the refugees. American refugee cultural orientation programs covering these topics are supposed to be offered overseas before arrival but in practice are woefully short on information and in specificity to actually provide any valuable information (G. Avenido, personal communication, March 2009).

Fieldwork in Luckenville and the Twin Cities

The next section describes the physical characteristics of the environment in which resettlement services were provided and where resettlement took place. Refugee and key informants interviews as well as interviews with representatives of non-profit organizations and human and social services were conducted as well. I also conducted participant observation from June 2007 though October 2009. This included visiting
homes, interviewing refugees and the Mushunguli couple, attending refugee orientation sessions, and participating in training sessions together with the refugees and in their life events such as marriages, citizenship ceremonies, and travels to the Twin Cities and vice versa. These are the descriptions of the fieldwork sites: refugees’ homes, a community center where resettlement services took place, coffee shops and outside locations in a park. I also interviewed representatives from the non-profit and human and social service providers’ communities and these occurred in their offices or at local coffee shops.

I will start with describing the home of Abdoul and Mabruka, a married Mushunguli couple. I have used pseudonyms for them and indeed all other refugees quoted in this and other chapters. They lived near the downtown of Luckenville. They lived with their three children in a rented two bedroom apartment in a non-descript apartment complex. There were other refugees and immigrants that lived in the apartment complex but the majority of the renters were students that attended the local university and other adults from the host community. Prominently featured in their homes, and those of other Somali refugees, was the Quran on a special stand.

The voluntary resettlement agency through which most of the refugees had transited was located in the downtown of Luckenville. While Abdoul and Mabruka had not been processed through this agency, they continued to receive assistance as their case was transferred from Salt Lake City, Utah to Luckenville. The two-story structure that housed the agency was adjacent to a church just off the main street. The agency is within walking distance of local government buildings as well as a public library. Typical of many voluntary resettlement agencies operating under constrained budgets, space was tight. Resettlement caseworkers had small cubicles downstairs where they met clients. The lunchroom also served as a conference room, orientation space, and general meeting area for caseworkers and clients coming with multiple family members.

Because of space constraints at the resettlement agency, English as a Second Language (ESL) and the more advanced English Language Learner (ELL) classes and employment orientations were held in a senior citizens’ center a few blocks away on the
main street. Just before classes began, refugees from various parts of the world, including Abdoul and Mabruka, would be lingering outside the gates of the center on the sidewalk, some having a final smoke before starting class. These classes were composed of any newly arriving refugees and older resettled refugees, regardless of background or mother tongue. That resulted in many side conversations in various languages as the instructor tried, oftentimes with difficulty, to engage each client and help them on the assigned tasks.

**Succeeding in the United States of America**

This section will discuss major findings from my interviews with other Somali refugees, including my key informants – Mabruka and Abdoul, participant observations, and interviews with representatives from the non-profit and human and social service provider communities. Many of the other refugees lived in both Luckenville and the twin Cities. I also bring in information from applicable refugee documents related to the four key areas in which refugees delineated as central to the achievement of integration: (1) culture and integration/acculturation issues; (2) employment and education issues; (3) social support; and (4) citizenship and advocacy.

**Culture and Integration Issues**

For my research, the definition of integration includes “language, lifestyle, cultural identity, and attitudes as they are maintained or transformed by the experience of coming into contact with another culture” (Miller and Chandler 2002: 28). In resettlement, refugees find themselves in a different cultural environment, having lost relationships as well as property from the country of origin, and long for home (Miller and Chandler 2002). Both Abdoul and Mabruka and the refugees in my research who were not planning to repatriate to Somalia had an overwhelming desire to regain in the new country what had been lost in the old, both materially, emotionally, and psychologically, and create a space for themselves in a new culture. This section will explore how Abdoul, Mabruka, and the other Somali refugees attempted to integrate into American society and restore normalcy to their lives in areas which they deemed the most important: employment, social support, and citizenship and advocacy. In each area, there
is a possibility for their interpretation of normalcy. They may find a job, although not in their field of expertise or training; they may recreate social networks and restore or strengthen ties with family members who have resettled in the same host country or, after, the conflict has ended, visit family members who remained in the country of origin; and may become citizens of the host country with rights equal to those born there. Just as these other elements combine to create integration and the possibility for a normal life, integration and a return to normalcy in the cultural arena is possible but in a different way that might not have expected. An adaptation has taken place where identities are transformed and exist in a third space; a new identity is formed in the juncture of the self in the country of origin and the self in the host country. Because of the individual, independent nature of this transformation, cultural integration is more likely to occur than integration in the social, economic, and political domains.

Traditional migrant literature in the United States of America has contained stories of assimilation struggles of the newly arrived (Rodriguez 1981; Galarza 1971; Chan 1960). In today’s American immigrant literature, however, portraits are of immigrants and refugees resisting assimilation and instead creating, negotiating, and promoting this neo-ethnic space (Lehrer and Sloan 2003; Jen 1996, 1991; Mukherjee 1988). Within that resistance, they promote a hybridity that is not the integration of two worlds but the transformation into a new entity. This is reflective of the experiences of both foreign-born Americans as well as that of their children born on American soil. These writers have challenged what “American” means, changing the definition to make space for multiple interpretations where each is given significance and reshaping the discourse on American culture.

Abdoul noted that “everybody here in America came from somewhere…I mean, not [necessarily] as refugees, but from somewhere, looking for something.” This was a common refrain from the other refugees as well when asked how they felt about living in the United States of America and whether they felt a part of American culture. Many refugees called attention to family members and friends living in Western European countries like Germany and Denmark, noting that in those countries it was nearly
impossible to be considered German or Danish and that people living there for
generations who had come there as refugees or immigrants would always be considered
“outsiders” or “others.”

In the United States of America, the national foreign-born population (defined as
not US citizens at birth) is approximately 11.7% (Larsen 2004). The United States of
America, particularly in parts of the Midwest where many of the Somali refugees
resettled, is characterized by substantial ethnic and religious diversity. Even though
refugees felt at times that they stood out, primarily because of skin color, dress, language,
and religion, they still held to the perception that America is an inclusive country. At
their workplaces, they were surrounded by other immigrants and refugees and many had
daily contact with people who had not been born in the United States of America.

Many of the refugees I interviewed, including Mabruka and Abdoul, lived in
Kenya in refugee camps before being resettled to the United States of America. During
the war in Somalia, Kenya provided temporary asylum for more than 250 thousand
Somalis. In fact, it still does and this has caused quite a bit of stress between the Kenyan
government and the United Nations as the government wants to either repatriate the
Somali refugees back to Somalia or strongly encourages the United Nations to help seek
resettlement for the refugees in third countries. Much of this is precipitated by the fact
that the Kenyan locals feel that the refugees receive better treatment from the own
government and the rest of the world than them. Most of the Somalis living in Kenya could
not repatriate to Somalia because of Qabil wars and persecution or because their home
towns were now in parts of the country controlled by rival Qabils different from their
own. Also some had married local Kenyans and did not want to leave family behind.

In one of my early discussions of “equal rights” with the refugees, instances of
discrimination because of their ethnic or religious background, or their dress, or even
their religion soon came up. Abdoul had had a tense exchange with a customer in the
retail store where he worked shortly after arriving in the United States of America.
Although he was upset by the woman’s comments, he drew strength from his perception that this woman may not have been in the United States of America for very long either.

I was on the register. Lady came and was different color… I say color, but I don’t care for color. She was upset about some price and I tried to explain her and of course she could not understand my accent or my English and pronunciation and everything and I don’t know what happened. She was talking and I was listening and smiling until she told me, “Go back to your country!” When she told me this thing, I almost start crying at the register, and told her, “Shut Up!” I never told anybody “Shut Up!” especially customers…you know what is this to tell customers to shut up? You are losing your job, even [though] she hurts you. When [the customer] left, [my manager] called me into office and said, “Abdoul, you know that you shouldn’t tell her ‘Shut Up!’” “Yes, I know! You can fire me, you can do whatever you want, but she’s not supposed to tell me to go to my country! She’s not the one who decided where I am going! Probably she is not from this country!” (December 2008)

It was one of Abdoul’s first instances when he came face to face with discrimination from possibly another refugee or immigrant. While this was not uncommon, many of the other refugees brought up other instances of racism, discrimination, and prejudice by members of the host community and receiving society. Still, from others’ experiences, inter-communal racism did exist and was based on perceptions and preconceptions of skin color, religion, and race.

Refugees were not the only ones with preconceptions. They also had to contend with American stereotypes of Somalis who also could distinguish between Mushungulis and other Somali refugees. Many refugees noted they did not feel purposeful prejudice since they had arrived, but they were often confronted with stereotypes that they found offensive. However, in her descriptions of her frustrations, Mabruka showed the very same prejudice and lack of knowledge of the culture and living conditions of the Mushungulis and African Americans – the exact sentiment with which she was frustrated:
Only thing what I didn’t like in beginning is what people thought about Somalis… That they are African people from the jungle who don’t know what’s electricity. They didn’t know us, and if I wanted to turn on TV, somebody jump in front of me – Oh Boom! It’s going to explode – I didn’t like that. Because people did know how we lived in Somalia… some people, not educated people. I thought, people don’t know a lot about Somalia or Kenya so they didn’t know where Somalia is, they didn’t know Somalia and Kenya is in East Africa, they didn’t know how we lived. Like toilets, my God! They showed me how to flush a toilet even though we had so much more than some people who is born in America and live all life [in America] like the blacks. But they didn’t know that. They didn’t saw how we lived there, and that makes me uncomfortable in beginning. We are Bantus not the Somalis who didn’t go school or work or lazy or are very poor. (April 2008)

From the above quotes, both Abdoul and Mabruka have expressed feelings of intra-communal prejudice based on skin color and ethnicity. This could be developed from preconceptions that they might have of Latinos and Africa-Americans before arriving in the United States of America. Still, it is not uncommon for new American groups to pit themselves against each other as they compete for scarce resources. I next turn to a key component of the integration process – language.

Language

Although refugees agreed on the importance of learning English on arrival and the necessity of knowing English for long-term economic and social well-being, teaching English to newcomers is not a priority of the refugee resettlement program in the United States of America. The goal of the American resettlement program is self-sufficiency within sixty days after arrival. Therefore, the focus of resettlement programs is on helping refugees obtain employment as soon after arrival as possible rather than achieve English language proficiency. Having some familiarity with English through visual and print media and so forth before arrival was an advantage for the Somalis resettling in the United States of America. Of the twenty-four Somali refugees that I interviewed, including Abdoul and Mabruka, only three of them were somewhat fluent in English (about 13%) and this was largely due to the fact that they came to the country at a young
age, about ten years of age, and they were in their twenties during the time of my research.

Learning English is often neglected in the interest of working right away. There is a general expectation of people working in the resettlement arena that refugees will learn English on their own, through communication with English speakers in the workplace or English classes taken during non-working hours. And if English was not learned in these instances, situational English was really all refugees needed to learn to get a job and become self-sufficient. Although a few managed to work and go to school to learn English, the trend among refugees showed struggles with this, voicing their frustrations regarding having to work right away without having the opportunity to learn basic English skills. Many, like Habiba, found it difficult to attend English language classes before or after their time on the job.

I wish that when we came here we had the chance to go and learn English. When we came here, we were put right away in a company to work. We didn’t know how to say anything. That was very hard, because we couldn’t say “Hi!” or “Bye!” Then caseworker [from the voluntary resettlement agency] would scold and say bad things like, “Well, people don’t want to work…People don’t want to learn English.” But how you supposed to learn over time when you always working so hard? No time! No energy! You cannot learn English after you are tired, you just don’t have time. There is not time to go to bathroom even! I started at one school, all the people are there kids. I feel ashamed. I could not learn. Shame and tired. That was it. (April 2008)

One voluntary resettlement agency caseworker, T. Tuzlukovic, who had come as a refugee herself from Kosovo, also acknowledged and echoed the difficulties faced by refugees who need to learn English but had to work full time.
Most people did not know much English. Most of them couldn’t attend ESL or ELL classes, because there’s no financial support for refugees. They have to work two, three, four jobs to survive and they are getting minimum wage salary if they don’t speak English. So if you have three or four children, and Somalis and many other refugees coming to Luckenville came with families, you really end up working seven days a week for twenty-four hours a day!

(July 2008)

In Luckenville, Minneapolis-St. Paul, and indeed in other parts of the Midwest, the priority to work and get employed is first and foremost on the agenda of refugee resettlement programs and the government entities. This is often at the expense of learning the language sufficiently well enough which can not only help the other domains of social, cultural, and political associated with integration but also in the economic and employment domain as well.

All resettlement programs are supposed to offer some type of language course or provide a referral to ESL or ELL classes offered in other agencies or organizations, like the Minnesota Literacy Council. The extent to which refugees are actually able to participate in these classes is largely based on agency funding. As described above in the background section on the resettlement program, voluntary resettlement agencies, community-based organizations, and mutual assistance associations all receive funding based on each refugee that they resettle.

No intensive programs were offered by the voluntary resettlement agency or other resettlement programs to provide refugees with English language skills that could enable them to eventually move from manual labor (assembly work in factories, in warehouses, or in meat processing plants) to better paying jobs that were more in line with their skill sets obtained in Somalia and Kenya. Many refugees felt strongly that there should be government-supported time for refugees to take intensive language classes upon arrival, linking ability to communicate and the ability to look for jobs outside the manual labor pool. One refugee, named Najma, who was interviewed with an interpreter felt that an
intensive English course would have improved how she was treated as well as the type of job that she could get:

For six months, if I went to school everyday for 5 hours, right now, I would be speaking [English] and I would feel different at the job. We would be treated differently…we would get better jobs. That’s the most important. If there was a system that gave us just six months to focus on language and to gradually do it, it would be so much better. But when you are thrown to work, it is such a shock. Everything else is a shock to you and you are supposed to take it. Including language. Nobody came here to live off the government, expecting that they should just have a free life here. They came here to work, but it would be better for everybody if they could have a jump start, some help. Some people have education too. May be not books but “land” knowledge and machines. And they cannot use it right now. It would be so much better if they could. Everybody would benefit from it but because you don’t have language, it is almost like you have no education. (May 2008)

This lack of English proficiency not only denied refugees opportunities on the labor market, but it also contributed to their inability to advocate for themselves regarding the resettlement process and social welfare benefits. For many in the field of refugee resettlement work, refugees who do not speak the language of the host country are referred to as “voiceless.” Through an interpreter, one refugee commented that “it would be better if we had known the language and what was available out there…know our rights” (May 2008). He felt his lack of English interfered with his ability to even know what to ask for – he noted that he wanted to call the voluntary resettlement agency during his first year to ask about various things, but did not know enough English to feel confident picking up the phone and making the call. At that time, the agency settling his family did not have a caseworker who spoke his language.

Whereas some refugees were most focused on the economic implications of limited English proficiency, some felt its social constraints. Refugees also noted their feelings of social isolation from members of the host community in Luckenville due to a lack of English. When asked about advice for newcomers or improvements to the
refugee resettlement program in the United States of America, all refugees responded, “Help to learn the language.” Coming to a new country can be disorienting; this disorientation is made worse when one is coming as a result of being forced from one’s home country. Without language, independence and eventually normalcy would be impossible for these refugees. Unlike other ethnic groups in the United States of America, where there are service providers and resources more readily available in their language (e.g. Spanish and Hmong), and this group of participants did not have wide access to Somali language materials especially in non-traditional gateway cities. They struggled linguistically until they were able to reach a comfortable level of English proficiency where they could be communicated and understood. This might also be reflective of inappropriate linguistic and cultural services available in non-traditional gateway cities for refugees and immigrants like Luckenville. Still, Somali was always spoken at home between parents and between parents and children, and definitely between grandparents and children. Even, if as some parents noted, their children were speaking Somali to each other, Hani, another refugee, noted that she tried to make her home “Somali” only in order to give herself some peace of mind and some “down time” (June 2008).

Living in the United States of America, “The Somali Way”

According to refugees, Somalis have a distinct mentality that has contributed to some material success of so many refugees in such a short timeframe. They spoke about specific paths that were particularly Somali, and that, if chosen, would result in greater achievement than that achieved by Americans born here. In fact, quite a few refugees felt that they could achieve more than the African-Americans could and be the new “blacks” of America. It was this Somali approach to life that enabled some refugees to buy houses after a short time, even though they had come to the United States of America with few financial resources and were unable to utilize their knowledge and experience in the employment domain. Like countless refugees, and immigrants, both documented and undocumented who come to the United States of America every year refugees recalled how they took whatever job was offered initially, regardless of the type of job, physical
demands, time of shift, or location. Many worked multiple jobs in order to restore their families’ material status in as short a time as possible. Ilyas stated,

We all ready to have a normal life, like other people in America…If you look [at] this house, maybe this house looks better all around than many others of people who were living here fifty years, a century…or longer! We are mainly hard working people. We [are] used to work. I think pretty smart people, because children of Somali people who are going to school…most of them are the best students. I am really proud. (August 2008)

Part of the Somali way meant trying their very best to not apply for public assistance for cash (some received Medicaid) or if it were a financial necessity, only relying on it for a short period of time. While all the Somali refugees I interviewed had finished with their eight months of refugee assistance, eight of them were enrolled in state public assistance program for families. With new regulations persons on welfare are only eligible for public assistance for a total of sixty months over their lifetime. During this time, they are given assistance for housing, food, employment and health and are supposed to be actively searching for jobs or training opportunities that would provide them with new skills for new job opportunities.

While Somali refugees tended to use the social welfare system beyond the initial eight month refugee resettlement period a few years after, they, by and large, tended to get off the system to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities, like driving taxi-cabs, opening up restaurants, starting up dry-cleaning services as well as cleaning services. As a group of refugees utilizing the public benefits system they were the quickest to get off the system and get on the road to self-sufficiency (G. Avenido, January, 2009). Actually, by and large in Minnesota, refugee and immigrant families tend to spend a shorter time on welfare than families from the dominant culture in the host community and receiving society. On average, refugee and immigrant families are on public assistance for about thirty-six months.
Integration Challenges by Age

There were different integration challenges for different age groups. The sample was basically divided into those who came as children and adolescents and those who came as adults. For refugees who came at an early age, integration and acculturation challenges became intertwined with challenges of adolescence. The importance of being accepted by peers and not standing out – typical concerns in adolescence – were felt even more acutely by the younger participants. For example, Ali, whose father had been killed in the war, resettled with his mother, leaving all other family behind. He started going to high school full-time on arrival, and also started working to help with household expenses. He spent what little free time he had with Somali friends on the weekends, but during the week in school and at work, he was alone. Ali described having a hard time adjusting in the first year, wanting to shed his Somali vestiges, especially his “high water” polyester slacks (which signified religiosity) and his language, in order to fit with his American classmates and co-workers:

You have to be like the other people that you are with. Can’t be different. If you have all the people around you, speaking same language, dress same, something, you have to be same as them. You cannot be different. What happens when you are different? Nobody wants to talk with you then. Sometimes they are joking about skin color, color of skin and my clothes. They don’t like to eat goats and make noises of goats around me or when they pass me. (November 2008)

As with Ali, who “couldn’t be different,” for the younger refugees a pragmatic way of coping with integration and acculturation issues was to assimilate to a certain degree rather than integrate. Assimilation is defined as a situation where an individual gives up his or her own identity and accepts that of the host community and receiving society (Berry 1992). Ismeta became a citizen of the United States of America the week before her first interview with me. She wore an American flag pendant around her neck, which she called her “lucky charm.” Throughout the first and second interviews, she noted that she still spoke with an accent, which frustrated her. She spoke enviously of her younger sister, “The younger you are, the better it is for you. My sister, you cannot
even tell that she is not an…American. She dresses and looks Black! Just the way she talks and dresses, the accent, everything” (December 2008).

Younger refugees did not embrace full assimilation however. Most noted that when they had children, they would want them to speak Somali and to be aware of their cultural heritage. The coping mechanism for those who came as adults was reconciling their loss of homeland, property, and way of life in Somali and to a certain extent in the refugee camp at Kakuma with their resettled lives in the United States of America. Aziz expressed succinctly what many others had voiced, “We still have mostly Somali culture, because we grow up over there…First 30-40 years of life you cannot forget, just like that, even though some parts are very bad, you cannot forget it…because you grow there” (January 2009).

**Being Muslim in the United States of America**

What it meant to be Muslim in the United States of America even in 2008 and 2009 was inextricably linked to what it meant to be Muslim in light of September 11th, 2001, the Iraq War and the re-escalation of the war in Afghanistan. All the Somali refugees I interviewed were Muslim; and some were more orthodox than others. Abdoul and Mabruka were more Orthodox than most of the refugees I interviewed. Although they did not feel as welcome as other refugees who were Christian, like the Sudanese Nuer or Amharas from Ethiopia or even the Liberians and other refugees from West Africa, Somalis felt relatively secure before September 11th, 2001. After the terrorist attacks by an extremist Muslim group, Al Qaeda, the lives of Muslims in the United States of America changed forever and changed dramatically.

Some wanted to show the difference between Somali Muslims and those from the Middle East. During one interview, a refugee enthusiastically pointed to a picture of his family in an attempt to liken Muslim ideals and values to those of American ideals and values, and to indicate that “We are like you. We love our families and we love our
friends” (June 2008). He felt that it was crucial to demonstrate his affinity with the West and dissimilarity of his views from those Muslims from the Middle East. Esma said,

Somalis show Americans another way of Muslim people.
We are Muslims but we are different. Somalis hate war!
We are here because of war! And before Barre, in 1960s,
Somali women never cover hair! We used to be the most modern Muslims in all Africa. (January 2009)

Shariff, an older gentleman who used to be a pilot in the Somali Air Force and had been sent to Italy and Russia to study engineering and was still able to converse in those languages, had been involved in politics in Somalia before the regime of Siyad Barre. However, after the war in Somalia, he was disgusted with Qabilis and vowed never to be in politics and government again. He had been in another refugee camp called Dadaab by himself while his wife and two children were in Kakuma Refugee Camp. He was sickened by the anti-Muslim fervor and mood in the United States of America after September 11th, 2001. He said:

In Somalia we were all Muslims but we still had problems with each other. The Qabil warfare and the warlords killed the culture and the beauty of my country. Different Somalis hate you for being who you are. They want to kill you. They want to kill your wife and kids. You do nothing wrong to them. So we escape and come to America. We are really happy and really free and then after September 11th, 2001, it was the same again. It was “Muslim, Muslim, Muslim…” Again, people hate for who I am and I never do anything wrong to them or their families. (January 2009)

At the outset of the war in Afghanistan and then Iraq, Somali refugees felt themselves under fire as Americans looked for scapegoats. Somali refugees were made to feel defensive about their faith, and resisted Americans’ call for allegiances. Many were faced with co-workers who wanted them to “choose sides.” Esma, frustrated that most people she worked with did not know where Somalia was (including some who thought it was part of Saudi Arabia), tried not to be provoked by people with whom she worked. In the end, she felt that this highlighted her feelings of “otherness” in the United States of America, and wanted to separate herself from the problems that the United
States of America was facing, commenting ultimately that this situation was not of concern to her.

Somalis in Luckenville longed for the peace and calm before the war in Somalia and definitely before the tragedy of September 11th, 2001. Even in the refugee camp, at least life was peaceful and ordered by routine. The Somali identity had reflected “a synthesis of the historical and cultural experiences of all the clans living on common territory where the different sources of Somalis’ identities were acknowledged and even emphasized” (Ahmed. I. Samatar 1995: 33).

The diverse ethnic and religious composition of the United States of America and the feeling that “everyone has come from somewhere” mentioned above could be a central reason why Somalis living in the United States of America had a greater opportunity for cultural integration than those settling in Western Europe and elsewhere. For the Somali refugees that I worked with, it seemed to me that the heterogeneous, multicultural environment of the United States of America was more conducive to the creation of a third space for their identities than a society which is homogeneous. Although many of the refugees did not feel fully a part of the United States of America and recognized that they had also changed with respect to their selves that existed in Somalia and in the refugee camp, there was a general feeling that if normalcy could be achieved, it would be here in the United States of America. This perception was created from conversation from family and friends who had resettled elsewhere.

Key to preserving culture was transmitting Somali norms and traditions to the children. The most frequently mentioned ways of maintaining Somali culture in the United States of America were ensuring that children had knowledge of their origins, maintaining the Somali language in the home, preserving family ties as they had existed in Somalia, and Islam. In most cases, this did not present challenges for the refugees. However, some refugees feared that without active preservation, their history and culture would melt into a more general “American” category, losing its distinctive Somali character. Some refugees had wanted to create an organizational entity to assist in
cultural preservation and maintenance. Like the Confederation of Somali Communities in Minnesota (CSCM) at the Brian Coyle Center in Minneapolis, refugees in Luckenville wanted to make a permanent home for all cultural and religious activities. Part of the aspirations for the center was to make a portion of it into a mosque where madrassah (religious) classes could be held for children to maintain their ties to Islam and the Somali way of life. However, because of limited funding and the fact the numbers of the Somali refugees were not big enough and too spread out in the area unlike other cities like Minneapolis and St. Paul, plans for the center had stalled. Besides financial constraints, time was also a factor and they were unable to realize their dream.

Some refugees thought it was difficult to resist the lure of American culture, particularly its focus on money. As noted in the section on social interaction, reciprocity was central to the Somali way of life. Several refugees noted with disdain the way some Somalis integrated into American capitalism, and how that capitalism overshadowed and reshaped personal relationships. Somali reciprocity and generosity, also known as “kharam,” was a characteristic that may not endure over time. Many refugees noted that they assisted other Somali refugees in their initial years in the United States of America. However, it is uncertain whether that aspect of Somali culture will be passed down to the younger generation, who are being socialized in American individualism.

The integration of elements of American culture is not confined to those that are positive or neutral. American racism also integrated into the thinking of some refugees. Whereas discrimination was present in some interviews, the comments were few and made by two or three refugees. Their target was Muslims from Europe whom they felt to be “pariahs” as they drank alcohol and were not religious enough in the eyes of the refugees because the women did not dress conservatively enough and smoked publicly. Arab Muslims were another target and because of September 11th, 2001, these refugees felt that they deserved to be profiled by the police. Even though the Somalis appeared to be biased, their remarks were also part of an attempt to distinguish their Muslim identity from that of the Middle East who were “terroristic” and those from Europe who had
“defiled” Islam with their interpretation of the Quran. However, the same refugees and others made discriminatory remarks toward African Americans born here.

1. Cultural Integration

In many countries that resettle refugees and immigrants, there is currently an open debate as to whether assimilation would generate more positive outcomes for the future of immigrants as opposed to integration (Bernstein 2004). In conversations with families and friends, the refugees did understand that in other countries in Western Europe, immigration was not a historical fact as in the United States of America. Abdoul echoed the general perception that the United States of America was a “land of immigrants” and that one could incorporate his or her Somali identity into what it meant to be American. The country’s diverse cultures were seen as a substantial advantage to living in the United States of America – enriching rather than threatening.

While some were familiar with the term “integration,” for those unfamiliar with the concept of integration, I offered the definition that I was using for my research: participation in the host country’s economic, social, cultural, and political domains while maintaining a relationship with the country of origin and its culture. The refugees related to the definition and responded to the question. Regardless of definition, cultural integration was occurring in the United States of America. It was occurring in a dialogical way because of the unique American environment that allowed for, and in some parts of the country, enabled neo-ethnicity. Because the definition of an ‘American” is subjective, refugees were better able to integrate their Somali identities from home with their idea of “American” to form a new identity, be it Somali American, or American Somali, or Somali living in the United States of America.

Refugees felt that all definitions were equally valid and accepted, both by themselves and by American society. The reconfiguration of their identity was a major step in the achievement of integration and the restoration of normalcy. In the cultural domain, it would be a normalcy in a new form – not the normalcy as it had existed in Somalia but one reconstituted from “melted” versions of former selves. While this new
form was somewhat easy to get used to, it was the comfortable one of old, when in Somalia.

2. Employment and Education Issues

Participation in the labor market is central to a refugees’ ability to be in integrated economically and socially in the host country. Particularly in the United States of America, having a job and contributing to the country’s economy monetarily and not relying on public assistance is directly linked to one’s self-esteem and value. In addition to providing the necessary income, employment can also create connections with actors in other areas, widening one’s participation in other social settings (Valtonen 1998). Those who are unemployed for prolonged periods are at risk for social exclusion from mainstream society, considering that for refugees early in the resettlement period, the primary source of steady contact with other groups is usually through one’s job (Korac 2001; Valtonen 1994). Participants cited five central barriers to obtaining stable, satisfactory employment in the United States of America: (1) non-recognition of the qualifications from Somalia and other countries in Africa; (2) no process for evaluation and subsequent re-training; (3) inability to complete their education begun in the refugee camps or in Nairobi at a level appropriate to their ability; (4) inadequate English proficiency; and (5) types of jobs available. Additionally, there was little support for advanced study. This was especially true for foreign-trained professionals like medical doctors, lawyers and teachers from Africa.

Entry into the job market in the same field or same level as worked in the country of origin is rare. Disregard for the validity of foreign qualifications is a common grievance of resettling refugees (Mestheneos and Ioannidi 2002; Krahn, et al. 2000) and is seen as a serious barrier to integration. Because it is difficult to obtain official documents, integration into economic and social domains is challenging (Derwing and Mulder 2003). Having left their home country in haste, refugees generally do not bring transcripts or diplomas with them and the process of getting these documents from their country of origin is not only time-consuming and difficult but sometimes impossible if educational institutions have been shut down (Korac 2001). Without efficient
mechanisms to evaluate refugee credentials, significant human capital, which should be considered an asset in resettlement, is lost (Valtonen 1998).

The most influential policy in the United States of America affecting refugee resettlement involving adult refugees is the “self-sufficiency within 60 days” directive. Many of the refugees did not have any formal education, let alone post-secondary and or professional degrees. And many of the refugees did not have any other work experience except farming and manual labor. They were expected to take the first job offered and often found themselves in On-The-Job Training. Many of these jobs were production line jobs and meat-processing jobs. These jobs mired them in low-wage sectors of the job market from which upward mobility is difficult (Korac 2001), especially without host-country language proficiency. Having a job related to one’s training in Somalia was central to the refugees’ understanding of integration and their desire of regaining a “normal life.”

Some resettling refugees had their studies interrupted by the armed conflict in their country of origin. As a result, students who became refugees in their late teens are legal adults once they reached the resettling host country. In the United States of America, if a refugee is a legal adult upon arrival, the primary goal becomes employment rather than continuing his or her education. Refugee employment included formal (salaried, taxed work) or informal (“under-the-table,” untaxed work) work as well as self-employment. However, there was a great amount of dissatisfaction with employment in the United States of America. Similar to findings from other studies examining refugee employment (Franz 2003; Korac 2003; Duke 1996), most refugees who were employed worked long hours at low-wage, low-skill jobs. Many lacked health insurance for themselves and other family members. For those who did not have health insurance, the mission of keeping their family covered motivated them to stay in manual jobs rather than leave their current job to try and get a job more suitable to their skills and experience from Somalia. Many refugees were working at multiple jobs in order to maintain “a normal life” financially. The trend among refugees was employment in jobs
that were unrelated to their educational credentials. Nearly all married refugees indicated that they were both working, as two incomes were necessary for survival.

Voluntary resettlement agency case workers are pressured to find quick employment for refugees so that they can be counted as “self-sufficient.” As a result, refugees are often steered into jobs that are seasonal and temporary or other positions which are inadequate for long-term employment (that is, employment that does not offer health care coverage and other benefits). The most important charge of most voluntary resettlement agencies, especially those who contract with the state or the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), is to provide job placement for refugees, thereby preventing “welfare dependence.”

Refugees in Luckenville were employed in various sectors: (1) for profit, private companies, (2) nonprofit organizations, and (3) self-employment (owning their own businesses). Of the twenty-four refugees, twenty were employed or employed and studying, enrolled in an associate’s degree programs as well as in English Language Learner classes or English as a Second Language classes. More than half of the employed refugees were in low-wage and low-skilled jobs in the private, for-profit and nonprofit sectors. Although such jobs are the most widely available to refugees, in economic downturns, refugees employed in such positions are the most vulnerable to layoffs.

For nearly all the participants, the jobs in the three sector categories above were their first jobs. In the few cases where the jobs were second jobs, they were the same job type as the refugee’s first job (that is, the refugee did not change the job type from first to second job). In December 2008, in one voluntary resettlement agency, half of the refugees who had been placed in retail warehouse work had been laid off, with no further job prospects (M. Jibrell, personal communication, December 2008). Only one quarter of the employed refugees in this group were working in skilled and/or clerical positions.
For-profit, private sector entities offer various types of assistance to voluntary resettlement agencies. Whereas assistance can include employment, language, and cash assistance, in-kind donations, and capacity building, my research found that the typical type of assistance was the provision of entry-level jobs and in-kind donations. Although the jobs available tend not to be the most stable, partnerships with the for-profit, private sector do produce employment opportunities, providing a positive benefit for economic participation. Community as well as national businesses partnered with voluntary resettlement agencies, providing employment opportunities, particularly in the hospitality, retail, meat-processing, and manufacturing industries. Voluntary resettlement agencies’ relationships with local employers enable them to find jobs for refugees quickly – usually jobs that do not require English. These relationships sometimes provide the only employment opportunity for refugees that do not have any English proficiency.

Some refugees who find barriers to jobs in the marketplace turn to self-employment. In response to the challenge of restricted access to economic opportunities, ethnic small businesses are one of the few ways a refugee can achieve economic and occupational mobility (Lam 1996). Refugee self-employment not only benefits the individual refugee but can provide jobs for other refugees. Some refugees expressed the opinion that the low wage and low skilled jobs offered to refugees were purposeful on the part of the government because the government of the United States of America needed a tractable labor pool to fill jobs that native born citizens did not want (Piven and Cloward 1993). Historically, refugees are susceptible to marginal employment – taking temporary jobs or jobs with minimal safety, which are not highly sought after by the native-born population (Duke 1996).

Voluntary resettlement agencies acknowledge the difficulties in finding employment for refugees from which they have a chance for upward mobility. For many of the refugees I interviewed, employment in the United States of America remained a struggle involving jobs with few prospects of advancement, the lack of or insecure health benefits, and the need to work more than one job. When economic participation is tenuous, integration is elusive. Thus, it is important to look at statistics on refugee
employment critically. As shown earlier, eighteen out of the twenty-four refugees were
employed. On closer examination, however, the quality of their employment was
relatively low, and their relationship to the labor market more fragile than the refugees
would have wanted.

3. Social Support

Social interactions are part of what enables us to function as human beings in
society. Integral to the refugee experience, however, is dislocation. Not only were the
refugees physically removed from their countries of origin, but their prior networks
providing social, economic, cultural, and political sustenance were either impaired or
destroyed (Korac 2003). Nuclear and extended families were separated, with some
members having been killed in the conflict or resettled in different countries. In
resettlement, social support has been found to be significant in the process of integration
(Lanphier 2003; Mestheneos and Ioannidi 2002; Korac 2001; Takeda 2000; Rousseau, et al.
1998; van Hear 1998). At the individual level, social support is defined as the
informal assistance, compassion, and information that are available and accessible from
family, friends, kin, community, and ethnic groups (van Hear 1998; Thompson 1990).
Social support at the institutional level contains the same elements as those in the
individual level, but it is formally provided by the institutions such as ethnic community
organizations, voluntary resettlement agencies, public welfare agencies, and
congregational entities (Dorais 1991).

A central part of the process of survival in resettlement is re-creating social
networks that were damaged or lost as well as reconciling that loss (Korac, 2003). All
refugees that I interviewed acknowledged the centrality of the help that they had received
during the first several years in this country. Support came from various sources: (1) the
Somali family, (2) the wider Somali community and *Qabil* membership, (3) church
sponsorship, and/or (4) from the resettlement program and the local voluntary
resettlement agency.
The Somali Family

How does one recreate social connections if one does not speak the language of the host country and is unfamiliar with its systems? The primary fount from which to draw support are one’s compatriots from one’s country of origin, bound together by a common language, culture, and history. Of the twenty-four refugees that I interviewed, all resettled with at least one family member and had a sponsoring family (Minnesota up until 2009 was family re-unification state and did not resettle individuals, or free cases. In order for an individual or family to resettle in Minnesota, they had to have an anchoring family here which would help defray costs. At the beginning of 2009, Minnesota started resettling free cases.). Twenty refugees were parents, bringing their children with them. Having at least one family member and anchoring family members during the resettlement process was a great support to the refugees. Particularly for the refugees who were parents, there was a strong focus on the welfare of the children who, for all, seemed to provide a primary motivation to persevere. As Abdoul noted,

I am come here for living and take care about my children and give chance for us and my children. Something be better. That is point for my life because I am here not because I like too much America. I don’t hate it, but I don’t like too much. (June 2008)

When some of the refugees arrived in the United States of America, they were greeted and helped by family member who had fled Somalia a short time before. Many were thankful that they had had relatives who had come previously and had a difficult time, and that their own relatively easy acculturation and adaptation was in large part due to the struggles of and lessons learned by other family members. Among those who arrived in the United States of America before others was Salma, who had to leave Somalia during the war and make her way to Kenya because her son needed emergency medical treatment. She noted that she struggles with being here, and when she came, there was no one to help (because she was resettled in another state which allowed free-cases), unlike when her sister Asima arrived. Salma reflected,
For me, I don’t ever want to leave my country. Never. I want to stay always in my country. But was time I have to go. And I came here and it was terrible. It was terrible. Everything is different. Everything is different. The country, the people, the houses, the streets, the jobs, the schools. The weather is so cold. Even the smells are different. And still I no like something here. Still if you live in one country for so long and then come to another country. It is hard. Africa is much nicer than America. Africa and Somalia is my home. (July 2008)

Having access to this type of practical and psychological support by family present in the host country has been found to decrease mental health problems among refugee victims of sexual violence (Schei and Dahl 1999) and decrease stress levels which in turn reduce the intensity and likelihood of mental illness in the refugee population (Valtonen 1998; Rousseau, et al. 1998; Schwarzer, et al. 1994).

The Wider Somali Community

Although some refugees resettled with nuclear and/or extended families relatively intact, many refugees’ social networks had been decimated by war. Refugees who lack social support can struggle with loneliness, isolation, and, as a result, marginalization. As Miller, et al. (2002) also found, refugees who were used to multiple social interactions and relationships on a daily basis grappled with their disintegration. Qabil membership also helped alleviate some of the early pains associated with refugee resettlement and is definitely an integral part of the social support and network system. I will discuss this in further detail in Chapter Six.

Social support includes formal as well as the informal assistance, compassion, and information that are accessible from family, friends, community, and ethnic groups described above (van Hear 1998; Thompson 1990). Having available support from relatives, friends, and the local community can provide opportunities for assistance with housing, transportation, and employment and help in addressing various resettlement issues and relieving social isolation, critical to achieving integration. Many refugees described how they assisted other Somalis resettling in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area,
driving them to the Department of Motor Vehicles to get their driver’s licenses or recommending safe neighborhoods with low rents or planning baby showers for pregnant new Somali-Americans. One refugee, Azra, described her feelings about helping newly arrived Somalis, even if they were not friends from before the war or from the same Qabil.

They got no troubles now. Because we are here. If they have trouble, they just call us. For two years [ago], a family came here, not from Mogadishu, but close to my city before the war… I am still helping those people…They are here for over a year now. (August 2008)

Explaining the integration of refugees from Somalia, Bestemann (2004) focused on the characteristics of refugee social networks and the role the networks played in the achievement of self-sufficiency is a short timeframe. Bestemann (2004) found that these social networks were critical to the adaptation of refugees in the North-East of the United States of America, the host community. The networks were conceptualized as sets of interpersonal linkages formed by kinship, friendship, religion, and shared national, ethnic, Qabil, and cultural origins that connected refugees and members of the host country that had resettled previously. Portes (1995) found that these networks represented an important source of social capital. Central to Somali social capital is the idea of reciprocity, generosity, or kharam. Many refugees noted that in the United States of America, they were continuing the Somali tradition of helping family, friends, and neighbors. Refugees spoke of assistance that they would give their family, friends, and others in the community, not expecting financial compensation but anticipating that they would be recipients of assistance at some point in the future. Many were disappointed by what they felt was an emphasis on monetary compensation in American culture, which seemed to eclipse the achievement of reciprocal relationships. Others felt that they needed to supplement the services provided by providing more comprehensive information, giving newly arrived refugees an informal orientation relevant to their experience. Somali refugees described how they compensated for gaps in services provided by the voluntary resettlement agency and the program. In some instances, refugees felt that the agency and the program had severely neglected resettling Somali refugees, and they reached out to help in the initial period out of necessity.
Church Sponsorship

Sponsorship refers to formal assistance by an organization for a limited period of time and usually includes housing assistance, cash assistance, and in-kind donations, such as English Language tutoring, furniture, and so forth. Sponsors are usually religious organizations, such as religious congregations but they could also include anchoring families. While these entities take responsibility for helping refugees, they are different from the voluntary resettlement agencies. The voluntary resettlement agency finds the sponsoring church for a resettling refugee family. This takes most of the responsibility for the family off the voluntary resettlement agency. In addition, religious congregations have access to greater resources than the voluntary resettlement agencies and therefore provide refugees with access to a significant source of social capital (Portes 1995). Congregations are not governed by a federal mandate so their assistance can last for as long as they have the resources and desire to help.

Sponsorship organizations serve an important purpose: they replace the social networks that the refugees had to abandon upon leaving Somalia and the refugee camps of Kenya. Sponsors were friends, advocates, and mentors, filling positions that normal social networks provide. Missing the connection that sponsorship provides, one refugee, Ilyas, remarked how difficult it would be to find a job upon graduation because he did not have anyone to recommend him – meaning someone who had known him for years and was connected to employees in the area. In Somalia, and other parts of Africa, getting a job in the civil service is a prestigious pursuit. However, most of the candidates employed by the government are recommended by members of a social network organized along Qabil ties, kinship ties, and other connections. Ilyas goes on to state:

It is hard finding your first job without a network. Nobody knows you. Especially in America! Yes, you have been in the United States of America for some time but the first job is always a question of knowledge and trust, and there is no uncle to know you and recommend you. In Africa, who you know is important for that first job. (July 2008)
Somalis resettling in the United States of America with congregational sponsorship had the advantage of such a network. Included in the loss of one’s homeland is the loss of social capital in the form of support and assistance from family, friends, and the Somali community, as discussed above. Sponsoring churches provided that. Church sponsors can be very organized and have a lasting impact. Various committees – employment, food, clothing, furniture, medical, education, transportation, and business and finance – are created to determine sponsored family needs (Lutheran Social Services, Minneapolis, Minnesota 2009).

While many of the refugees that I interviewed in Luckenville were not sponsored by a church or a religious organization, Abdoul and Mabruka were, as they initially were resettled in Salt Lake City where the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is a huge benefactor to refugee and immigrant communities as well as marginalized and disenfranchised neighborhoods where residents are poor and have a lower socio-economic status. Many Mushungulis were resettled to Salt Lake City. According to them, none of the Mushungulis voiced any discomfort with being sponsored by a Christian entity. They did not recount feelings of discomfort nor instances of proselytizing on the part of the Mormon Church, even though sponsorship is part of the Church’s outreach ministry and mission. According to the Director of Human Services for the state of Utah, the Church is a great partner in helping the state to pay for programs that target refugees and immigrants and other communities of color (S. Marsh, personal communication, August 2008). Many of these programs are expensive and have mandated timelines to end but with the help of the Church, these timelines can be circumvented.

Both Abdoul’s and Mabruka’s experiences with the Mormon Church were positive. Whereas the sponsoring relationships were more intensive initially, they still had frequent contact with the Mormon families in the congregations, whom they considered close friends, “like family.” Sponsors also act as advocates and helped families navigate the complexities of various American systems. The Mormon Church sponsors for Abdoul and Mabruka and the children were key advocates in helping them
get their Social Security cards. In addition to this cash assistance, for Mabruka and Abdoul especially, the sponsors also cared for their children while they went to English classes, tutored their eldest child in English, counseled them on the importance of hard work, saving money, and learning English. To support Abdoul’s goal of achieving financial independence – a key component of his idea of a normal life – the sponsors also helped Abdoul navigate the Department of Motor Vehicles to get the information that he needed to apply for his commercial driver’s license to be a truck driver.

Those sponsored by families, at times, were in a more difficult position than those with no sponsor at all. The three refugees who were sponsored by family members noted that the voluntary resettlement agency expected that their sponsoring relatives would provide all the assistance. In each case, this was an economic burden on the sponsoring family. Hassan, sponsored by a family member, recalled, “Since I was sponsored by my sister, I didn’t get so much help because it was expected for my family to help me out” (October 2008).

Usually sponsoring family members cannot offer the same level of resources as a sponsor that is a religious congregation. According to the caseworkers at the voluntary resettlement agency, if refugees have family here, those family members are relied upon heavily, even if those family members feel it is a great financial burden. This was clearly demonstrated about two years ago when the remaining 15,000 Hmong refugees in Thailand were resettled to parts of California, Minnesota, Wisconsin and the Carolinas. The Hmong that came to Minnesota were sponsored by family members and when the economy started taking a turn for the worse, many of the newly arrived refugees were taken to Mary’s Place, a homeless shelter, for their housing and medical care because the sponsoring anchor families could not afford to take care of them (G. Avenido, personal communication, March 2009). These cases received media attention and brought the issues facing sponsoring families and the financial burdens they face when sponsoring relatives from refugee camps into the forefront.
Contributing to a sense of resentment is the fact that the decision over who gets to be sponsored is arbitrary, dependent on whether there is an available sponsor when the family arrives. When there is an available sponsor, the voluntary resettlement agency makes the decision, based loosely on how much they think the sponsored family will take advantage of the sponsored period (that is, to learn English, to save money, to get on-the-job-training, among other things). Some years ago, I observed an initial home visit for a family from Russia (which was not involved in the study). The sponsoring church was a large, relatively wealthy one in the suburbs of the Twin Cities in Minnesota. The duration of assistance to this one Russian family was going to be about five years. The assistance was composed of rent-free housing for five years in a middle-income neighborhood within walking distance to some of the most highly rated schools in the state as well as close to supermarkets, other stores, and job opportunities. The sponsoring church provides members who will help the family with finding jobs and with documentation. Before sponsoring the Russian family, this church had sponsored a Bosnian family. It is not surprising that assistance of this type is seen as equivalent to winning the lottery. After the five years of assistance, the sponsored family was able to buy their own house because of the money they had saved.

For refugees resettled in the United States of America, those who were sponsored by a church had better outcomes in terms of employment (sponsored refugees were employed at jobs that required some skills and were paid above minimum wage), language (sponsored refugees had better language skills in terms of spoken communication and comfort level with English), and social support (sponsors provided practical and emotional support and advocacy as well as on-going friendship after the initial assistance period) than those who were not. Additionally, these sponsored refugees had better overall experiences of resettlement, particularly in their initial years in the United States of America.
4. *Citizenship and Advocacy*

For nearly all the refugees I interviewed, there was a general reluctance to get actively involved in politics relating to American or Somali issues. However, this did not mean that they were not interested in what was happening in both countries. Korac (2003: 416), who did a fascinating study on refugees from the former Yugoslavia in Italy, explained this phenomenon by noting that “refugees from the Former Yugoslavia belong to a generation of people brought up in an undemocratic political system [and] their experience from the first multiparty political elections in Yugoslavia when nationalistic parties came into power was deeply disappointing.” Abdoul, who had suffered from inter-*Qabil* warfare and was targeted for being a Mushunguli, made a concerted effort to avoid politics after coming to the United States of America:

> I was victim of politics. All Somali Bantus not like politics and soldiers who run Somalia. After what is happened, I don’t want to think about politics, what is now…I don’t want to think about that kind of things. Politics is bad. Kill too many people. Too many innocent people. (November, 2008)

Participation in the political domain was primarily confined to issues of citizenship, a belief in the importance of advocacy, and staying apprised of (but not actively participating in) politics and current events in Somalia. Of the refugees I interviewed, five of them were citizens, twelve were planning to apply, and seven refugees had no plans to apply.

The most common reason for relinquishing refugee status for American citizenship was a pragmatic one: the ease with which they would be able to travel, including traveling back to Kenya and perhaps even parts of Somalia like Puntland and Somaliland. It was almost impossible to travel with simple travel documents and there were many difficulties associated with travel documents such as being more closely scrutinized by airport security and immigration and customs officials and not being able to leave airports during stopovers.

As in all countries, only citizens are able to vote. Refugees are eligible to apply for citizenship after living in the United States of America for five years. The group that
planned to apply consisted of two groups: (a) those that had been in the country for five years but had not applied yet and (b) those that had lived in the country less than five years and were awaiting their five-year anniversary to apply. One refugee in the first category who was receiving Supplemental Security Insurance (SSI) benefits felt that his benefits would be safeguarded if he were an American citizen and was seeking to help from a caseworker from the voluntary resettlement agency to complete his application.

There was little active participation in the political sphere; only two participants described their interest in politics during their interviews. Ilyas, a student at a local college in the city in the Midwest was interested in both American politics especially with Barack Obama winning the presidential race and in politics in his home country of Somalia. Egal, a member of the Somali parliament before he had to flee and had been recruited to play a role in establishing the Transitional Government before it was ousted by an Islamic coalition of clans. Egal mentioned that there was a small group of Somali men who had established an online community that advocated for a unified Somali state. This was virtual community; he noted that this group does not hold formal meetings and that his communication with fellow members is done solely via e-mail and when he travels to the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. The remaining refugees, many of whom felt that they were integrated according to their own definition, did not express much interest in the political sphere (This was not the case with the dominant Somali community in the Twin Cities which had an active group of Somali men very involved in the politics of both the United States of American and Somalia). This finding is supported by Korac (2003: 416) who found that the “need and willingness to become a part of the community and social fabric of life is not always associated with the need to participate in the political sphere, even at advanced stages of the integration process.”

Many refugees who had no plan to apply for citizenship felt secure with their refugee status, which ensures permanent legal residency and the right to work. Several male refugees specifically noted that they were nervous about the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, and wanted to wait for citizenship until the specter of a military draft had passed. One refugee felt that obtaining American citizenship would move her away from
Somalia in a psychological sense. Hani laughed about her procrastination when talking to a resettlement caseworker, “I am scared to remember [remind] her to bring the papers, I don’t know why. I feel like if I get citizenship here in America, I lost something.” (December, 2008)

For Mabruka, the decision not to seek or consider applying for her citizenship would be a loss. Mabruka was the only refugee who explicitly included political involvement in her conceptualization of integration. She felt that political involvement increased one’s connection to the host country, restoring normalcy in two critical ways. First, refugees would be more likely to be politically active if they were more proficient in English. There was no involvement by refugees in advocacy or community groups either related specifically to Somalis or more generally to refugee and immigrant groups. For example, refugees had no knowledge of the advocacy efforts of the Somali-American Democratic Alliance which was an active advocacy group in the Twin Cities or the Confederation of Somali Communities in Minnesota situated in Minneapolis and the resources that could be assessed for the community. The inability to communicate in a common language coupled with the difficulty in defining common needs due to intergroup prejudice could be the contributing factors to the lack of collaboration. For example, many Somalis took great pains to culturally separate themselves from the Oromo Muslims from Ethiopia. In fact, many East Africans distanced themselves from Somalis who felt that they were giving Americans a bad impression of Africans. Second, political involvement could help restore normalcy by aiding in the transformation from a “they” point of view to a “we” perspective. Ilyas, states,
Knowing the language, being able to read the newspaper… that’s integration. Definitely knowing English really well and then, also caring, taking part in the life of the government. A lot of people who resettle here, they are like, ”They! They! They!” They don’t have the concept that they can be part of “They” and try to influence stuff. Get your citizenship! Go and vote! Go if there is a neighborhood meeting, but again that’s language. How is somebody supposed to go to a neighborhood meeting [without language]? I know there are neighborhood meetings in our area, but my girlfriend’s parents can’t go. I think they would love to voice their concerns or whatever if they knew enough English. [Integration] is not necessarily eating hamburger and fries and stuff or American food or living in American ways. It’s staying who you are, but kind of participating more than just living there. I think a lot of people are starting to feel like it’s not “They,” it is “We.” I noticed my two younger sisters say “We.” The other night my sister said, ‘Oh yeah, we were so mean to people of Cuba!’ I am like, ”Who’s ‘we’?” It’s so interesting. I don’t think all of us feel “We” yet. (December, 2008)

Half of the refugees were planning to seek American citizenship and become part of the “we.” The refugees I interviewed saw citizenship in the host country as a vehicle which could move them further toward integration and achieving some semblance of normalcy. There was a widespread confidence among participants that American citizenship would mean they were Americans, if they so chose that identification. Like Mabruka who called the American flag pendant around her neck her “luck charm,” many refugees who were citizens or who were planning to become citizens saw citizenship as a kind of talisman that would not only guarantee their legal status (even though their refugee status guaranteed civil and political rights apart from the right to vote), but would also entitle them to full membership in American society.

The Resettlement Program and the Local Voluntary Resettlement Agency

This section will discuss ways in which the resettlement program affected social support and its subsequent influence on integration, the refugees’ evaluation of the resettlement program, and the refugees’ recommendations for improvement.
Although the availability of both formal and informal social networks has been found to be essential to resettlement (Lanphier 2003; Korac 2001; van Hear 1998; Lam 1996), the key role of social networks borne out of interactions within the Somali community in “providing refugees with a framework for an active reconstruction of life” should not be understood as a substitute for a government strategy to facilitate integration (Korac 2001: 24). Most of the refugees that I interviewed were sponsored by family members and a two of them were sponsored by religious organizations like the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. This meant that the sponsors bore the financial burdens as well as technical assistance burdens. Although Korac (2003) found that the lack of an integration policy may be beneficial for some resettling refugees because of the spontaneous social networks that can arise in its absence, she cautioned against using those positive aspects as justification for the lack of a holistic integration program. Her point is important for the integration program in the United States of America. The improved outcomes of those refugees who were sponsored by churches and family members points to the critical need for those types of interventions that approximate those services provided by the sponsors rather than shifting more responsibility or resettlement from contracted agencies to volunteer sponsors.

The two main areas in which the resettlement program had the opportunity to facilitate social interaction for the participants were in language and employment. Additionally, the resettlement program could have taken a more active role in facilitating the refugees’ interactions with the immigrant community and the wider American community. The social and economic benefits that cascade from proficiency in English are countless. Language was a key component of the restoration of normal life, and yet one which the resettlement program treated as an “extra” when time and funding were available. Part-time or full-time work is seen as a way to introduce refugees not only to the economic sphere of the host country but the social as well. However, those who started work with little or no English skills recalled not having much opportunity to interact with co-workers because of the language barrier, stifling opportunities for them to re-grow the branches of their social networks.
In an effort to support the refugees’ job searches, the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement provides a match grant, started in 1979, which is implemented by the local voluntary resettlement agencies and complemented by public welfare agencies. Refugees must attend at least four consecutive employment orientation sessions once a week for ninety minutes. Although the employment orientation program is primarily for match-grant recipients, others may join in. Refugees also have “homework” such as going to the library or the Workforce Centers (which are situated across the state). Match-grant recipients receive cash that is meant to support them while they are looking for a job. They receive $200 per person per month for filling out applications and looking for jobs for up to a total of three months. This is an alternative to receiving public assistance. If one is a part of the match-grant program, one cannot receive public assistance.

Match-grant participation does not count against the five-year limit of receiving public assistance. Although the match-grant program was implemented after most of the refugees I interviewed had arrived, none of them had participated in it. This caused frustrations within the voluntary resettlement agency. However, it was clear that poor communication and outreach and the refugees’ lack of awareness of the program illustrated an on-going theme of a lack of coordination between VOLAGs and the government. Many refugees I interviewed did not know how the voluntary resettlement agency worked, what they should have expected from the organization and caseworkers, and what was expected of them. What was seen as a rigid bureaucracy caused further alienation to the point where many refugees preferred to attempt things on their own rather than call the agency. At the time of arrival as well as at the time of the interviews (2008-2009), there was no local Somali mutual assistance association in Luckenville. The resettlement program, locally, did not take advantage of the myriad Somali refugee mutual assistance associations in the Twin Cities which consisted of advocacy groups as well as community and cultural organizations which empowered refugees to join their voices with other refugees on a wider scale to advocate for their rights and benefits.

All the refugees, including the women, voiced their desire to have increased contact with Americans. Omar, a senior, recalled his desire for a program for seniors to
have a forum where their unique challenges could be discussed and addressed. There was no such program in Luckenville or even in the surrounding areas. These refugees were precluded from joining other senior programs in the community because of their limited English-language proficiency and limited access to transportation.

Refugees described a rich social life in Somalia and in the refugee camps of Kenya. Characteristic of a more communal environment, they visited neighbors on a daily basis. Work often ended in the early afternoon and they would have time to spend with family and friends, and they helped each other without expecting financial compensation. Informal social interactions were a central part of their earlier lives, a part of normal life for them, and they missed them acutely. This sense of normalcy was not elusive for all participants, however. Farid, who had been sponsored, noticed when a shift took place, marking the restoration of normalcy for him,

My co-workers call me friend. It is not like Farid from Somalia. I am not Farid from Somalia but friend who work together. I am worker together with team. For me, it feel really good. My position here...sometimes it is like normal again. (November 2008)

It is this “normalcy” that many of the refugees I spoke to, strived for. For some, they were on a path to achieving it and for others, it was elusive.

Conclusion

I will now provide an overview of the resettlement experience for the refugees. The refugees resettling in Luckenville had a positive perspective regarding integration. All of them indicated that they would remain in the United States of America permanently but would visit Somalia if peace ever prevailed over time. Their belief that the United States of America is a land of immigrants was comforting and reinforced their belief that the United States of America would provide countless opportunities. For many, however, these opportunities were reserved for their children. Refugees who were parents noted that their primary motivation was their children; their sole purpose after bringing their families to the United States of America to guarantee their safety was to
ensure that their children received a good education and would have a chance at the American dream.

Despite the belief in opportunity and the possible attainment of the American dream, some refugees described feeling used by the American government as a source of cheap labor. Overall, according to the study definitions, of the twenty-four refugees I interviewed, seven were characterized as integrated, eleven were characterized as separated, two were characterized as partially assimilated, and four were characterized as partially marginalized. Refugees were categorized based on the extent to which they participated in the economic, social, cultural and political domains as well as the nature of that participation. Types of participation within each category varied. It is important to note that although some participants were more entrenched in a particular category than others; these categories were used flexibly as resettlement is a process and assessments were made at a particular point in time. The choice of outcome category was based on a synthesis comprised of domain indicators as well as the quality of participation in each domain.

The seven refugees characterized as integrated were all fully participating in each domain. Two of the seven refugees had been sponsored by a church. In the economic domain, the refugees’ full-time employment provided opportunities for interactions with Americans in the workplace. In the social domain, refugees had generated friendships with Americans, primarily with sponsors, in addition to those made in the job setting. All seven refugees had extensive contacts within the Somali community as well, offering social support to those newly arrived and/or to other Somalis in need.

In the cultural domain, five of the seven refugees were actively involved in activities that brought Somalis and Americans together. These activities included participating in sports with Americans, spending leisure time with Americans, and participating in college-sponsored forums that included Somalis, Americans, and other students of foreign backgrounds. All spoke Somali in their home to their family members. All but one were fluent in English. Only four had been back to Somalia
(Somaliland and Puntland) to visit. The other three noted that they were planning to visit at some point in time in the distant future but cited expense as an obstacle. Being integrated and being Muslim could be attributed to the multicultural, religiously diverse environment in the United States of America. Despite the aftershocks of September 11th, 2001, all felt that they were able to be full members of society regardless of the ethno-religious background.

There was very limited participation in the political domain among the refugees I interviewed. The most involvement was demonstrated by the refugees in the integrated group. All refugees were apprised of Somali current events and political issues through Somali media while six out of the seven refugees were aware of American issues as well. One refugee in this group was actively involved in political activism around American issues related to refugees. The refugees in this category were American citizens out of the total of five in the sample I interviewed. The remainder noted that they were planning to apply for citizenship in the near future.

Eleven of the twenty-four refugees in the sample I interviewed were categorized as separated. By Berry’s (1992) definition, separation was a situation where individuals maintained traditional cultural values but had minimal aspirations to participate in the host society. Although this group maintained traditional cultural values and felt isolated from mainstream America, the state of separation seemed a temporary stop for them. In a demonstration of the elasticity of these categories and the range of experience within them, even though they did not have intergroup relationships at the time of the interviews and were basically segregated from American society, all the refugees in this category seemed to want greater contact with Americans and felt that integration was an attainable goal.

There was varying participation in each domain, but the one-sided, Somali-only nature of their resettlement was clear. In the economic domain, ten out eleven participants were fully participating. Only one, however, was employed in a field related
to his professional training in Somalia. The rest had experienced downward occupational mobility and were relatively dissatisfied with their current employment.

Those who were employed noted that they had little opportunity to make friendships on the job, as evidenced by minimal participation in intergroup relationships in the social domain. The only refugees who had some contact with Americans were the three who had been sponsored. Although they had relationships with sponsors, after the sponsorship period ended, contact was infrequent. All refugees noted that their relationships were primarily with other members of the Somali community.

In the cultural domain, there was no real involvement in activities bringing together Somalis and Americans. Four participants had limited English proficiency which greatly hindered and limited their employment possibilities as well as relationship possibilities with Americans. Two spoke no English and were dependent on others for all English communication. All participants celebrated Somali holidays providing for opportunities to gather together periodically. Four refugees had noted that they celebrated Thanksgiving. Just over half of this group had returned to Somalia at least once to visit family and relatives. The trend in this group was to watch and read Somali-language media, such as Somali news on public television and the broadcast stations, Somali-language newspapers, and news in Somali on Somali websites.

In the political domain, all these refugees were staying apprised of political issues and other current events in Somalia. None noted any interest in American issues or current events except for personal news related to Barack Obama. Only one refugee was an American citizen. There was no participation in political activism in any form related to American issues. There was one refugee who was politically active as it related to Somalia.

There were only two refugees who were characterized as partially assimilated. Berry (1992) described assimilated individuals as those who give up their own cultural identity entirely and accept that of the host society. These two refugees did not give up
their Somali identity entirely, hence the characterization as partially assimilated.
Although their length of time in the United States of America was different (one refugee had been in the country for three years and the other for ten years), both seemed to be moving in the direction of assimilation. Both were Somali females and were 21 years old. A major theme in their interviews had been the challenges they faced fitting in when they arrived in the United States of America. As a coping strategy, both tried to shed their Somali identity in the public sphere.

Both of these refugees were fully participating in the economic domain. One was also studying full time. In the social domain, both refugees had intra-group and intergroup relationships. Both, noted, however, that because of limited time, they did not have much extra time for socializing. In social interactions, one of these refugees kept her Somali friends and American friends separate.

The cultural domain was an area which showed the partial quality of their assimilation. They maintained their role within the Somali family, but outside it, they wanted to hide aspects of their Somali identity, particularly their accent when speaking English. One refugee noted that because she spoke English all week at work and at school, she found it increasingly hard to communicate with her mother, with whom she lived, who only spoke Somali. Neither refugee had been back to Somalia for a vacation and neither mentioned any plans to go. This could be attributed to the financial expense, although other participants, including those who seemed in financial straits, still mentioned visiting as a future goal.

In the political domain, participants were current on American issues and events rather than Somali ones. One refugee was an American citizen, while the other planned to apply on her fifth anniversary in the United States of America. There were four refugees who were characterized as partially marginalized. Marginalized individuals are those who are isolated from both the host society as well as the cultural and ethnic group from one’s country of origin (Berry 1992). The refugees’ marginalization was seen as
partial because there was still some connection to the Somali ethnic group although it was minimal and infrequent.

Only one refugee in this category was actively involved in the economic domain. He was self-employed as a taxi-cab driver and also owned a cleaning business. He was the only employee, however, (though his wife helped him on occasion), and found the work and long hours exhausting. Two refugees were unemployed but looking for work. The fourth was unemployed but receiving Social Security Income (SSI) for health reasons and was not looking for work. The existence of these refugees was focused on their subsistence needs; their financial struggles overshadowed participation in the other domains. All four worried a great deal about being able to take care of their families and three of the four who were parents were particularly concerned about their ability to maintain health coverage for their children.

In the social domain, there was no participation in intergroup relationships. There was some degree of participation in intra-group relationships for three of the four refugees. For two refugees who were orthodox Muslims, their intra-group relationships were primarily with other Somalis at the mosque. As there is a smaller number of Mushungulis in general in the United States of America, the opportunities for wider social involvement within the dominant and larger Somali community was limited. The third refugee, also an orthodox Muslim, attributed his minimal social interaction to constant work. The fourth refugee was isolated from both Somalis and Americans as she was overcoming some health issues related to the war in Somalia. Her isolation from Americans stemmed from the fact that she was home-bound and was not working, and therefore interacting, with them at the job site. Her isolation from her own ethnic group could be partially attributed to her non-involvement in Somali holiday celebrations and prayer sessions at the mosque, a common gathering time for most Somalis.

In the cultural domain, no refugees in this group were involved in activities that brought together Somalis and Americans to facilitate cultural exchange and understanding. For three of these, this was a function of language. They were unable to
communicate effectively in English and had difficulties with written English. Two refugees celebrated holidays in the Somali tradition. The third refugee in this category was bitter about his experience in the United States of America and seemed to isolate himself from her family and a handful of Somali friends. As noted in the social domain, the fourth refugee noted that she did not celebrate Ramadan or other Somali holidays. Nearly all the refugees described Somali holidays as important socially as well as culturally the year as they would gather together with friends and family. Other important social and cultural events were weddings and the birth of babies. The fourth refugee did not have this experience which increased her isolation from her own ethnic group. Although interested in American culture, her primary contact was through printed and television media that did not involve any interaction. There was only one refugee in this group who stayed current with Somali and American politics and other social/cultural events. As will be discussed later, however, his participation was one-sided because his lack of English proficiency confined his involvement to reading and watching television and lacked any type of interactive element or component. None of these refugees was an American citizen.

All the refugees in the sample I interviewed believed that the chance to be a part of American society was present. It might take several years plus the acquisition of citizenship and increased English proficiency for some, but integration and beyond that, normalcy, was definitely attainable not only for their children but for themselves. Nearly all the refugees, regardless of employment status or language proficiency, believed that forward movement was possible in the realm of being a full member of the United States of America. Some refugees wanted increased contact with Americans and faced language challenges but there was not the sense of despondency regarding genuine integration opportunities that there was among their friends and family members who had resettled in other countries. Refugees knew that a Somali name was not a barrier to employment in the United States of America as it was in other countries. Refugees who had achieved integration felt confident as Somalis in American society, at times giving a sense that they dared someone to question their right to be in the United States of America. Those who were separated according to the research definition did not feel that
it was a permanent state. Even those who were marginalized felt a part of the United States of America based on their legal status if not their economic, social, and cultural participation.

In the next chapter, I discuss the tension that is inherent in partnerships that mutual assistance associations and community-based organizations have with government entities in providing services to the Somali and Mushunguli refugees, among others. I discuss the hegemony of the self-sufficiency paradigm that all the actors in refugee resettlement have been yoked with by the local, state, and federal government. Ultimately, this focus on self-sufficiency and employment has a negative effect on refugees trying to integrate in the social, cultural, and political domains associated with the integration process.
Chapter Five-The “Rules” of Refugee Resettlement in Luckenville and Minneapolis-St. Paul

In this chapter, I focus on the restrictions that grassroots organizations and co-ethnic associations in Luckenville, Minneapolis-St. Paul, and indeed all of Minnesota, face when serving and resettling new influxes of refugees like the Somali and Somali Bantu refugees. Indeed, this may be true for all organizations serving other refugees, immigrants, and new Americans. Many of these organizations have vision and mission statements that focus on helping new Americans navigate the system and achieve self-sufficiency as quickly as possible. While this may be the case, once these entities enter into a partnership with the government, there are rules and procedures to follow that hinder and affect services and ultimately, sometimes, prohibit refugees, immigrants, and new Americans from achieving the very goals that these entities have set out to achieve and that is to help integrate refugees into host communities and receiving societies. Many of these entities are not able to serve the refugees unless there is a clear connection between services and the achievement of self-sufficiency. Consequently, many refugees waste time in looking for other organizations to serve them and hence lose their “eligibility” and therefore cannot be served as they have “timed out.”

Shadow States and Opportunity Structures

The “shadow” state refers to a context in which the opportunity structures of the nonprofit social service sector are regulated by the state. In its relationship with the state, Wolch (1990) sees that the nonprofit sector can become a tool of state policy and an instrument that legitimates the state. Alternatively, nonprofit organizations may also provide new opportunities for democratic participation and thus, challenge, reshape, or transform government policy. Wolch (1990) also notes that the relationships between government and nonprofit sector that are characteristic of the shadow state are “not uniform over time or space. Strong national contrasts as well as local conditions lead to uneven development of the shadow state” (Wolch 1990: 739). In order to understand the local formation of opportunity structures for nonprofit organizations in a specific geographic locale, it is important to account for several factors, including the historical
division of labor between state and voluntary sector, patterns of charitable giving, and the political ideologies of local elites (Wolch 1990).

Here, it is important to note that government institutions shape the opportunity structures for nonprofit organizations that participate in programs designed to assist refugees with entering and becoming part of the American society. I focus on the years between the late 1990s and the mid 2000s in Minneapolis-St. Paul, during which government institutions and nonprofit social service organizations coordinated and mobilized to help incorporate one of the largest and unexpected arrival of East African refugees, predominantly Somali and Ethiopian, who came to America in the wake of civil war within Somalia led by the regime of Siyad Barre and the subsequent war between Somalia and Ethiopia over disputed territories, especially Ogaden.

Social service organizations, mutual assistance associations (MAAs), and community-based organizations (CBOs) that work with state and federal level government institutions to provide services to refugees are required to follow service mandates set by the government. For example, it is the case today that social service organizations involved in refugee resettlement must document that each refugee with whom the organization works has been provided a particular set of services that have been mandated by the Office of Refugee Resettlement. Under this arrangement, nonprofit social service organizations assume the responsibility for assisting refugees, but the organizations must provide services to refugees in a specified way, which is set up by the government partners. Participating in refugee resettlement has specific implications for the kinds of projects nonprofit social service organizations, MAAs, and CBOs pursue and the strategies by which organizations attempt to achieve such projects.

Refugee resettlement refers to the process of assisting refugees with assuming roles as members of their newly adopted communities. This process is one of conditioning refugees to be productive members of society and able-bodied persons capable of assuming the mantle of American citizenship. Refugee resettlement thus includes treatment of the health of refugees – including tuberculosis evaluations and
vaccinations against debilitating diseases and includes even psychological counseling for post traumatic stress disorder – and temporary public assistance for food and household reproduction. Refugee resettlement also includes treatment of refugees as persons who will become productive and contributing members of their community. Accordingly, the resettlement process involves English language education, cultural orientation, and job placement. As I will demonstrate, however, the ultimate goal of refugee resettlement is to help refugees become employed and economically independent and self-sufficient as soon as possible.

In Minnesota, as well as in other places, refugee self-help organizations, also known as MAAs, have become important as local nonprofit service providers in the refugee resettlement process (Miyares 2001; Mason 1999). As a type of “immigrant organization,” the MAA has historically been an instrumental force in socializing new Americans into membership roles in the host community and receiving society (Moya 2005; Schrover and Vermeulen 2005). In the context of refugee resettlement in the United States of America, MAAs have worked very closely with government institutions (Bloemraad 2005).

The arrival of the East African refugees in Minnesota also represented the first influx of substantive numbers of people from Somalia and Ethiopia in the Twin Cities as well as in the state of Minnesota. This first influx also taxed and overburdened the social service, health and human services and educational arenas as there was no infrastructure in place to serve them. The refugee community organizations that formed in order to assist co-ethnics with making a successful transition to life in the United States of America thus began by operating in a context in which governance tasks were assumed by civil society (including church and community based organizations) as well as government institutions.

Considering these government-nonprofit arrangements, it is important to note that since 1980, the government of the United States of America has steadily decreased its fiscal commitment to refugee resettlement. Prior to the Refugee Act of 1980, the federal
government funded refugee resettlement program with no time limits. The 1980 Act introduced eligibility limits, as refugees were initially given thirty-six months to become economically self-sufficient, that is, financially independent. With incremental financial cutbacks, this was reduced to eighteen months in 1986, then twelve months in 1988, and then eight months in 1992. By 2005, refugees were given three months of federally-funded assistance (which can be extended another three months by petition), after which states become responsible for refugee assistance. It should be noted, however, that refugees, like citizens, are provided with a full five years of eligibility for state-run welfare programs.

In May 1995, the first refugees from Somalia were accepted by the United States of America and many resettled in Minneapolis-St. Paul. The arrival of the refugees to the area began as a trickle, but reached a steady stream by the end of the 1990s and the early 2000s. Many of the first refugees had heard about the generous benefits that Minnesota provided to refugees and immigrants and soon spread the word to family and friends. Through secondary migration, even greater numbers of refugees settled there (Miyares 2005). By the year 2003, approximately 60 thousand Somali refugees lived in Minnesota with most concentrating in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

As a matter of national policy, the government at the federal level was concerned to have this group resettled quickly with the immediate and primary goal of making certain that the refugees became self-sufficient, primarily for the purpose of ending the refugees’ dependence on forms of public assistance. The first wave of Somali refugees, which was made up of the elites from military, business and government sectors who were able to process application forms and cite instances where if they were to return to Somalia would be persecuted, experienced little difficulty with resettlement (Bloemraad 2005; Smith, Tarallo, and Kagiwada 2002). Observers of the process described these refugees as among those with relatively high levels of education, familiarity with Western culture, experience living in urban environments, and skills amenable to a wage economy as important to their relatively successful resettlement (Bach and Caroll-Seguin 2005; Fass 2005). In short, the initial wave of Somali refugees found employment
relatively quickly and did not remain dependent on forms of public assistance for very long. Later waves of refugees did not share in this success as they were not made up the elites of society.

The Somali refugees, especially the Mushungulis, arriving after 2003 were not well prepared to adjust to life in the United States of America. The second wave of refugees, who are often referred to as “camp people,” came from the rural areas of Somalia and lacked exposure to Western culture and urban environments (Bloemrad 2005; Smith, Tarallo, and Kagiwada 2002). Many had not even been to Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia. These people, nonetheless, were directly or indirectly victims of Qabil genocide between the different warring Qabils across Somalia. As the success of Siyad Barre’s regime created in disposing of Qabils and sub-Qabils that were opposing him became known, the United States of America (and indeed the rest of the world) had to re-evaluate its role in receiving refugees from Somalia. If you were not part of the ruling Qabil of Isaq and its sub-Qabils, you were treated as persona non grata.

The refugees in the second wave and subsequent waves mostly practiced agricultural and nomadic livelihoods in Somalia, which did not prepare them well for assuming work in the manufacturing and service industries in Luckenville and the Twin Cities. Furthermore, most of the refugees in the later waves were not literate in their native languages and experienced great difficulty in learning English and adjusting to the new modes of communication. Most of the refugees that we have today in Minnesota, including Luckenville and Minneapolis-St. Paul, arrived during these second and subsequent waves and this included the resettlement of the Mushungulis.

Consequently, the employability and potential for refugees’ economic independence came to be seen as an issue of public concern that needed to be addressed by public institutions. In response to the low employment rates and high rates of welfare dependence associated with the second and later waves of Somali refugees, especially the Mushungulis, political and civic leaders in the state began to characterize refugees as an economic problem. This was around 2004 and 2005 (G. Avenido, personal
Grassroots organizations, CBOs, and MAAs were initially called on to provide informational and referral services to help their co-ethnics find and enroll in community-based language and job education programs. The role of the MAAs expanded as the city and local entities charged with refugee economic self-sufficiency struggled with finding effective solutions to the refugee resettlement problem. Government specialists and social welfare experts located the source of the problem in refugees’ language and cultural differences, as well as the inflexibility of the traditional social service delivery systems. Consequently, the state government and nonprofit organizations looked to the refugee communities for insight and advice (G. Avenido, personal communication, March 2009). The incorporation of refugee communities into decision-making culminated in two specific changes in refugee resettlement policy.

First, it expanded the role of refugees as employees in nonprofit organizations participating in the resettlement process. For example, the International Institute of Minnesota, a voluntary resettlement agency (VOLAG) in the Twin Cities, revived the “Refugees in Search of Employment” program which was initially created in the 1980s to help with the South East Asian refugees which flowed into the Twin Cities in the late 1970s. This program hired “biculural workers”, that is former and current refugees fluent in English and who had become self-sufficient, to help unemployed refugees look for employment and to communicate with prospective employers with the intention of creating jobs for refugees. J. Borden, who was involved in the planning, development, and implementation of the earlier program, stated,
It had a staff of eight Americans and refugees and a support network of seventy volunteers tied directly to one hundred churches and community based organizations and indirectly to another nine hundred related religious organizations and associations. Besides being able to link with a large number of potential church-going employers who might be more willing to hire Somali than church avoiders, the project also based its effort on the assumption that every refugee possessed marketable skills. The problem was to pinpoint the skills (for example, washing dishes, cleaning floors, among other skills), to convince the Somalis that these were indeed “skills,” to locate employers needing these skills, to counsel the Somali with respect to work practices on the job, and to assist employers with adjusting to new kinds of workers and employees. (December 2008)

The success and cost-efficiency of the “Refugees in Search of Employment” program led the state government to encourage the other nonprofits engaged in refugee resettlement to employ these “bicultural workers.” Similarly, some MAAs presented bicultural workers as an effective way of delivering services to refugees.

Second, MAAs were also called on to incorporate as nonprofit organizations and provide social services, especially in job-training and placement, that government saw as crucial to the resettlement process. Consequently, the inclusion of MAAs in service delivery was a key part in the government’s strategy to address the cultural and linguistic deficiencies in the existing social service delivery system. Mutual Assistance Associations were sought out, in part, because of the belief that their ability to provide social services in a culturally and linguistically responsive way would address some of the shortcomings in the existing social service delivery system.

In summary, while government assumed the role of planner, financier, and coordinator for refugee resettlement, nonprofits including MAAs, became sub-contractors and service providers. Participation in the refugee resettlement process brought these organizations into a complex web of federal, state, and county institutions and involved them in procedures designed to regulate who received assistance, how much, and for how long.
The Self-Sufficiency Paradigm

Self-sufficiency refers to a status of independence where, ideally, refugees would adapt to the host community and receiving society to the point of not needing any form of private or public assistance. Leaders from government institutions, the nonprofit sector, and refugee communities presented self-sufficiency as the paradigmatic achievement for refugee resettlement. Self-sufficiency emerged as the touchstone ideology among political elites involved in refugee resettlement. There was not always agreement among these parties as to what exactly self-sufficiency entailed, however. From the government’s perspective, self-sufficiency referred to primarily financial independence, where refugees would become participants in the labor force and earn enough wages such that they would no longer rely on any form of public assistance. Yet, among some refugee communities and some in the nonprofit and refugee resettlement sector, there was also interest in casting self-sufficiency as a form of self-reliance, which would be achieved when new Americans would not need to rely on institutions or organizations to negotiate the demands of everyday life. Thus, while workforce attachment was identified as an immediate and practical goal to realize financial independence, language skills, and familiarity with American culture also emerged as important in achieving self-sufficiency.

In this context, self-sufficiency is a status that individuals achieve. This status was (and continues to be) viewed by government institutions, nonprofit organizations, refugees, and immigrants as a practical prerequisite to becoming an American citizen. This perspective is evident in many documents concerning refugee resettlement in Minneapolis-St. Paul, and it is worthwhile to reproduce it here. For instance, a 1999 policy statement from the Minnesota Consortium (a public-private endeavor to coordinate government, nonprofit, and community efforts to help the refugees) declared that “it is the ultimate goal of this project to give assurance that each Minnesota Somali family and/or individual will be provided the necessary education, training, services, and assistance to become fully employed, competent, and productive citizens.” This illustrates a general sentiment reproduced by government, nonprofits, and refugee leaders.
who maintained that economic self-sufficiency is central to the integration of refugees into American society.

**Government-Nonprofit Relationships and the Quest for Self-Sufficiency**

In this section, I discuss the ways in which one nonprofit organization – the Confederation of Somali Communities in Minnesota (CSCM), a Somali mutual assistance association – was incorporated into the government-orchestrated social service delivery system that was created to assist Somali refugees with becoming self-sufficient. I am particularly interested in exploring the administrative tension surrounding the meaning of self-sufficiency and how it was enacted in practice. Broadly speaking, the integration of the MAAs into the social service delivery system was seen by government agencies at the state level as an important step in helping refugees to achieve economic self-sufficiency. On the one hand, MAAs were seen as well-positioned to help refugees adjust and become independent. On the other hand, integration of the MAAs was presented as “the right thing to do” to respect the Somali refugees’ self-determination and cultural differences (G. Avenido, personal communication, January 2009). Either way, social service system integration resulted in MAAs taking responsibility for providing a series of social services aimed at helping refugees become self-sufficient. Mutual Assistance Associations assumed this responsibility as much as it was pushed onto them. Nevertheless, in this process of integration, MAAs were conditioned to fit into the social service delivery system. This is to say that integration led to the standardization of social service programs, the professionalization of staff, and ultimately to contention over the substance and meaning of self-sufficiency. With the case of CSCM, I explore how integration contributed to changes within the organization and, to some extent, changes within the social service delivery system.

**The Origin of the Confederation of Somali Communities in Minnesota**

The Confederation of Somali Communities in Minnesota (CSCM) was organized in June of 1999 in Minneapolis-St. Paul. The CSCM received its first grant award from the Cedar-Riverside Business Association in 2000 and was staffed by a Somali director and a native-born American assistant and overseen by eleven board members. While
CSCM was structured according to the standards of American nonprofit organizations, it was also purposely organized to reflect the patrilineal authority structures of traditional Somali society. In this board, all members were Somali males who had never run a nonprofit agency or even held professional jobs in the United States of America. However to gain legitimacy and acceptance of the Somali community, the six major Qabils of Somalia had representatives on the board.

Once organized, the overarching mission of the CSCM was to promote the self-reliance and self-sufficiency of the Somali community in Minneapolis-St. Paul. In 2002, CSCM received funding from Minnesota Department of Human Services and private foundations as well as collected membership dues and individual donations. With this funding, CSCM operated programs that provided employment assistance, English classes, legal assistance, Somali-language interpreters, general information and referral, youth counseling, and emergency food and shelter. The Confederation of Somali Communities in Minnesota also organized a yearly soccer tournament, Eid celebrations and supported the preservation of Somali culture in the process of adjusting to American life. It also housed a small prayer room where Muslims could come to pray and held madrassah classes on Sundays. In the early days, the Confederation of Somali Communities in Minnesota recorded over 2,000 members and established itself as a major resource for the Somali community in the Twin Cities.

The Transformation of the Confederation of Somali Communities in Minnesota

As CSCM assumed responsibility (and accepted funding) for providing direct services to refugees, it was also shaped into a formal organization that would be accountable to its government and charitable foundation sponsors. In its first year – and at a formative stage – CSCM was reprimanded by the federal Office of Refugee Assistance for an employment program proposal that focused on staff-driven job development (that is, making arrangements with employers to consider hiring refugees) and placement of refugee clients into an English as a Second Language (ESL) class that met during the day. This plan – and CSCM’s insistence that it could be implemented – drew ire from a federal director of refugee programs. The director of the federal Office
of Refugee Resettlement wrote to the Executive Director directly and also sent a note to the CSCM’s Board of Directors and asked that the leadership change their position or have new leadership installed in the organization. This instance demonstrates the determination of the government to shape MAAs into organizations that both accepted government priorities and followed prescribed programs for service delivery.

The Confederation of Somali Communities in Minnesota officially adopted the government’s position and its program rationale soon after the letter was written. In fact, two weeks after the CSCM Board of Directors articulated a philosophy for the organization that resonated very closely with the government’s agenda. In this way, CSCM adopted a self-correcting approach to its involvement in refugee resettlement. The Confederation for Somali Communities in Minnesota was reshaped by it own devices as much as by federal and state government into an organization that observed the norms and met expectations of the larger social service delivery system. This particular incident signals the administrative struggle over the meaning of self-sufficiency and how nonprofit organizations should operate service programs in order to help refugees become economically independent. In this case, we can see the formal acquiescence of the CSCM to the interests of its government partner.

The alignment of the CSCM with its government partners is not limited to one particular struggle. In fact, as the organization developed, CSCM continued to present its programs in ways that resonated with government agendas. In the publicly-circulated literature, CSCM stated that its individual service programs realized concrete steps towards economic independence. For instance, its literature on youth programs, family programs, communication services, and ESL programs all claim that the services promote greater economic self-sufficiency. Whether CSCM expressed this goal in order to appeal to the interests of funding agencies is not clear (and it is a question for which there are no satisfying answers to be found in archived material or in the interviews I had with current staff and board members).
The Confederation of Somali Communities in Minnesota was also encouraged to develop into an organization that would become a functional part of a larger planned network of social service providers. The changes to the organization occurred in two areas. First, the CSCM was required to adopt record-keeping practices that both allowed the organization’s work to be evaluated and enable the organization to share information about refugee clients with other social service providers. In practical terms, the organization was instructed to develop an accounting system to track management and administrative expenses, record its meeting minutes in English, and generate records of service about who received what services and when, all of which were necessary to create reports to external organizations. Second, the CSCM was conditioned to observe its place in a wider network of social service organizations working with refugees. Beyond information sharing, this meant that organizations had specific roles to play and provided services to individuals who had been properly referred and who were considered eligible according to criteria specified in a service contract. For the CSCM, this meant that they served limited parts of the refugee population and often had to send people to other organization to receive services, or that they had to send people to another organization or government agency if they came to the CSCM without proper references. Thus, the service provider staff at the CSCM also took on deputy roles of administrator as they observed intake and referral procedures and implemented eligibility policies set by the funding agencies.

In order to assume its position in the wider social service delivery system, the CSCM received technical assistance from outside sources for the purpose of shaping the organization into a more professional operation. In some cases the training was sought out by the organization. For instance, in 2002 the CSCM hired a consultant who helped the organization create its first long-term planning document. In this five year plan, the CSCM identified its needs for the future, which included management training for the CSCM leadership, including its Board of Directors, developing its employment and youth programs as “service flagships” in the metropolitan area, formalizing a long-term fundraising plan to diversify its funding sources, and acquiring training for board
members, directors, and staff to ensure “implementation and monitoring of the five year plan.”

In other cases – especially in the earlier stages of development – training and technical assistance was recommended by funding agencies that sought to shape the CSCM into a service provider that could be managed and monitored. In 2004, the United Way sponsored an audit of the CSCM for the purpose of acquiring tax-exempt status, which led to a number of recommendations reported above. Also, in 2004, a government evaluation of the CSCM’s employment program showed lagging performance – meeting only 48% of expected job placements – which led to a recommendation for probation. The evaluators recommended that the CSCM receive technical assistance and have a professional consultant diagnose the problems and implement corrections, which included staff training. While the CSCM was shaped into an organization that would function as a component part of the wider social service delivery system, the organization also affected the ways in which that system operated.

Changes in and Challenges to the Status Quo in the Social Service Delivery System

The effect that the CSCM had on the social service delivery system in Minneapolis-St. Paul during this formative time period can be observed in two areas. First, the CSCM was one of several MAAs that argued for making social service delivery more culturally and linguistically relevant and respectful to refugee cultures, especially the Somalis. Government agencies were generally receptive to, and indeed called for, input from the refugee community on how the process of adjusting to life in Minnesota could be made better. The leadership at the CSCM was active in providing input on this issue. The use of Somali bicultural workers was a widely accepted practice in providing social services to refugees that the CSCM helped develop. Yet, the CSCM also sought to impress the importance of creating culturally and linguistically appropriate services and thereby attempted to steer the meaning of self-sufficiency away from an economic logic.
In brief, culturally and linguistically appropriate services were used to create a social environment that observed and respected the cultural beliefs and practices of the individual receiving services. For example, the CSCM paired clients and service providers based on gender to increase the ability of clients to speak frankly and to observe cultural and religious traditions. This strategy consequently helped to enhance organization’s ability to provide more effective services. Thus, culturally and linguistically appropriate services were presented as adding value to the use of bicultural workers.

Second, the CSCM has, in practice, sought to broaden the meaning of self-sufficiency beyond a narrow definition of economic independence. The Confederation of Somali Communities in Minnesota has presented its programs as contributing to economic self-sufficiency. Yet, several of its programs were designed to help service recipients become independent and self-reliant in a number of senses. For instance, the CSCM’s English as a Second Language program included curricula on (1) understanding America education processes and procedures, (2) helping individuals to acquire knowledge about health, welfare, and emergency systems in the United States of America, (3) understanding basic local, state, and federal laws, (4) understanding and using local public transportation options, and (5) civic engagement and citizenship. Thus, the CSCM was also intent on developing refugees into institutionally independent individuals in addition to fostering their financial independence and on their way to citizenship and being positively contributing members of their communities.

In short, the Confederation of Somali Communities in Minnesota really was trying to provide the Somali and Mushunguli refugees with a domestic and practical version of the refugee cultural orientation program that all the refugees were supposed to have undergone whilst in Nairobi, Kenya. It is difficult to know the extent to which the CSCM was successful in making practical changes to the meaning of self-sufficiency. At the very least, however, the attempt to broaden the meaning of self-sufficiency, as evident in the CSCM’s English as a Second Language program literature, showed that the
activities of nonprofit organizations are not completely determined by government and that there was some pushback to expand the definition of self-sufficiency.

Moreover, nonprofit organizations working on refugee resettlement were, at different times, conditioned by the state government to observe eligibility restrictions, to process the intake and referral of refugees in particular ways, and to recognize the importance of recording data for reasons of accountability and performance tracking. And government agencies and charitable foundations shared a mutual interest in raising bicultural workers to a professional status, since bicultural workers were seen as enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of social services. In the area of refugee resettlement, nonprofit organizations were ultimately fashioned into manageable parts that would function together to provide services that lead to self-sufficiency in a cost-effective manner.

**The Landscape of Social Service Delivery in Minneapolis-St. Paul and Luckenville**

Social service organizations in the Twin Cities and Luckenville can be characterized as mostly locally-based organizations that primarily rely on government contracts, philanthropic foundation grants, and fees for their financial resources. Organizations I surveyed included the Confederation of Somali Communities in Minnesota, Community Assistance for Refugees, Mano a Mano, among others which all served the Somali and Somali Bantu refugees. As a group, these organizations have been operating for many years and receive a considerable amount of funding from both government contracts and charitable foundations. The financial and human resources of these organizations are, not surprisingly, devoted to service delivery. On average, 60% of staff time and 70% of organizations’ operational budget are spent on service delivery. These organizations operate programs that serve a variety of needs and a wide spectrum of populations. First, I draw on the survey responses from the representatives of nonprofit social service organizations that provide services to refugees and immigrants. Second, I draw on interviews with executive directors and senior managers from these organizations. Following Raco (2003: 76), I evaluate how government partnerships
“seek to establish and build subjectivities in and through which government programs and strategies can be operationalized and implemented.”

Minnesota’s Refugee Program Office

As I have discussed earlier, I employ the notion of an opportunity structure to refer to the “rules of the game” that affect the types of agendas and goals that organizations pursue and the means through which organizations attempt to achieve particular outcomes. One of the primary ways in which government institutions affect the opportunity structures of nonprofit organizations is by contracting-out social service delivery to nonprofits. Through the management of social service contracts, government institutions influence the types of issues for which organizations provide services. The efficacy of government institutions in this regard is apparent in the mission and conduct of Minnesota’s Refugee Program Office (RPO), which operates under federal mandate to enact in the state of Minnesota the policies set by the Office of Refugee Resettlement.

According to the mission statement of the Minnesota RPO, the state government’s interest in providing social services to refugees is ultimately aimed at shaping newcomers into functional members of society who have achieved economic self-sufficiency and who can become naturalized. Gus Avenido, Minnesota’s Refugee State Coordinator and executive official in the state’s RPO, explained in an interview that the state achieves this mission though contracting with nonprofit organizations to deliver direct services – that is, services that have tangible results that can be measured and evaluated. In practical terms this means that nonprofit organizations are contracted to provide social services that help refugees obtain jobs, learn English (specifically for the purpose of being productive workers), and place their children in school. As I understand it, the policy concern here is cultivating new Americans into economically independent members of American society who do not become a burden to the public and ultimately become citizens of the United States of America. Less directly, contracted organizations are to make sure that refugees observe the “core values and necessary rights of American culture,” such as child protection laws. One of the service contract administrators for the RPO also shared with me in an interview that the state is careful in choosing the
organizations with which it established contracts. As she explained it, the state looks for “good business partners that have the capacity to work on outcome-based service programs” when establishing contract relationships with nonprofit organizations.

Gus Avenido also explained that the Minnesota state government does not provide funding for programs with the aim of promoting refugees’ community involvement or civic engagement. Declaring that such programs are not amenable to institutionalization, Avenido surmised that the promotion of civic engagement was something that, for example, church groups would do. Instead, the state’s focus lies in developing people to become economically independent, functional and contributing members of society. Through social service contracts, government also affects how social service organizations operate. By accepting government service contracts, nonprofit social service organizations have become responsible for activities that have previously been handled by government agencies. In addition to providing the services, staff in nonprofit organizations must screen prospective service recipients for eligibility and they must keep a record of who receives services, for how long and to what effect. This latter obligation includes making periodic reports to government institutions (or their surrogates) as well as collecting data about the outcomes of service delivery. Governments use such data to appraise how organizations perform in regard to their service contracts.

Charitable foundations also provide grants for service and are consequently similar to government institutions. In fact, the processes of state devolution have proceeded with the expectation that charitable foundations will contribute to providing goods and services that are dismantled by government (Wolpert 1997). While foundations have been given space to take a greater role under devolution, they are not necessarily different in function from government institutions. According to the interviews with state and foundation officials, foundations also mimic government partnerships in regards to performance and reporting expectations of grant recipients, though foundations typically operate in a less restrictive manner. This is not altogether surprising, since foundations have increasingly become the recipients of government
contracts and use these contracts to make subcontracts with local nonprofit organizations (Wolpert 1997).

In order for nonprofit organizations to meet the expectations articulated in contracts and grants for a social service program, many executive directors discussed in the interviews how funding institutions often provide technical assistance to employees of nonprofit organizations so that the paperwork is completed to official specifications. Furthermore, these leaders often discussed how compliance with reporting places considerable burdens on employees in nonprofit organizations, as completing the paperwork for service contracts requires considerable time commitments. The relationship between government and nonprofit social service organizations can thus be conceptualized as a context in which the opportunity structures of nonprofit organizations are influenced by their government partners. Yet, this is not the only type of regulation. One director, M. Rashid, describes another set of restrictions:

Some things we want to do, we’re not allowed to do. In the health program, we believe that one-on-one health education is more effective than just general health education. We want to do one-on-one counseling to reach isolated families because not every family will be able to come [here] as a group. This is especially important if you work with refugees from rural areas like the Somali Bantus. But the Minnesota Department of Health does not want you to do one-on-one health education [in order to conserve finances]. So that is a restriction that we see. If you don’t go by the restrictions, sometimes they deny you the funding. (December 2008)

In this case, the state’s Department of Health regulates how its contract funds may be used by nonprofit organizations. The above quote demonstrates one type of government-enforced restriction that limits the scope of available methods for delivering services. Nonprofit organizations are compelled to follow the state’s prescriptions because, as the director discusses above, there is a sense that non-compliance may lead to a termination of funding.
Regulating Service Delivery

Eligibility requirements are perhaps the most pervasive and profound restrictions that constrain social service delivery. Eligibility requirements are pervasive because they are attached to nearly all forms of government service contracts. Eligibility criteria include age, immigration status, citizenship status, number of months on public assistance, medical diagnosis, location of residence, and, in some cases, sex.

Assessing eligibility requirements thus involves prospective service recipients having to provide specific forms of documentation in order to verify eligibility. Grants from philanthropic foundations for service delivery are generally less restrictive or do not have such restrictions at all. Nevertheless, since most of the organizations that participated in the survey indicated that they carry at least one government service contract, it seems reasonable to argue that nonprofit organizations as a group are faced with observing and enacting eligibility criteria. Herein lays the significance of eligibility requirements. As nonprofit organizations have become responsible for observing eligibility requirements, the restrictiveness of government service contracts can present problems for organizations.

As the interviews show, one problem that nonprofit organizations confront is restricting the delivery of social services to individuals who meet the government-defined eligibility requirements. This circumstance introduces tension putatively to community-based nonprofit organizations that must represent their community and at the same time restrict who among the community can receive job placement services or language training. Moreover, this tension tightens for nonprofit organizations that must also enforce sanctions associated with service delivery. For instance, organizations that provide job training and placement services associated with Minnesota’s welfare-to-work programs also have the responsibility to discipline service recipients who are not making satisfactory progress to becoming employed. For these reasons, many directors of community-based nonprofit organizations perceive government service contracts as limiting the ability of their organization to serve their community (sometimes referred to
as clients) in a preferred manner. One director, O. Sahardeed, described how the restrictions affect his organization’s ability to fulfill its mission:

We have little capacity to help clients who lose a job one or more years after arrival, or people who are stuck in inadequate employment. Our funders require us to focus on new arrivals and people on welfare. We had one former client whom we placed into a decent position, but his employer never came through with healthcare benefits despite several promises to this effect. The client asked for help in finding a better position, but we could only offer some advice and referrals. We could not provide “hands-on” help due to eligibility requirements. This is especially true for arrivals that arrived a few years ago like the Somali Bantus who started arriving in 2005. (December 2008)

As the surveys show, the perception that the restrictions imposed in government contracts present limitations that have become problematic for nonprofit organizations is fairly common. In response to a survey question that asked whether nonprofit organizations were negatively affected by funding rules and requirements, just over half the respondents agreed. These responses came from directors of organizations that provide social services to refugees and immigrants specifically. In describing how the restrictions affected their service programs, a variety of responses emerged from the surveys. The most frequently occurring responses have been discussed previously in the statements of the executive directors stated above. It should be also noted, however, that many executive directors would disagree with the notion that government contracts present limitations or are constraining. Less than half of the survey respondents felt that regulations on use of funds were not limiting. For these directors, their organization’s relationship with the state and other funding institutions is a means to fulfilling their mission – the restrictions and regulations on external funds is simply part of the business of running a nonprofit social service organization. The following statement from another director, T. Wodajo, illustrates this mentality of adapting to a context in which the opportunities of organizations are regulated by government partners:
It’s pretty obvious that the government is our customer. They provide the resources for us to do what they want for the refugees so the refugees will live a better life. But we still have to satisfy our customer. The refugees become the beneficiaries of our customer’s resources, but unfortunately there’s too many that are not eligible…We are very careful when we work on [government] projects to make sure that our operations are in total compliance. While we definitely follow the rules and mind the outcomes that our government customers are seeking, we operate in a manner that’s highly individualized and go way beyond what the government is looking for in providing the services that get counted. (December 2008)

Thus, many directors accept the restrictions and rules placed on service contracts as part of the opportunity to work with government institutions. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that the opportunities that organizations are granted in working with government are limited. These opportunities are limited in that organizations receive resources to work on government-defined goals and policy. The human and capital resources that nonprofit organizations have are, of course, not limited to government contracts. Yet, as the director quoted above indicates, her organization marshals additional non-government resources in order to “go way beyond what the government is looking for.” In contrast to what some may expect of nonprofit organizations, this director indicates that the direct beneficiary of her organization’s non-government resources is the government and not refugees, per se.

Regulating Political Activism

One last way in which government affects the opportunity structures of nonprofit organizations is in the regulation of organizations’ political activities. The so-called “gag rule,” which circumscribes the permissible speech and actions that tax-exempt organizations may deploy, also presents a set of regulations that affect all 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, that is, nonprofit organizations. This nonprofit gag rule limits the nature of organizations’ official speech in matters of electoral politics. According to the rule, nonprofits must maintain a non-partisan stance in both rhetoric and action. Bothwell and Guinane (2004) note that consequences of violating the gag rule have included revocation.
of government funding, audits, and litigation as means to both silence and punish nonprofit organizations. In attending different inter-organizational meetings, I have witnessed representatives from nonprofit organizations react to the specter of government discipline by censoring others and themselves when discussions in the meetings touched on political involvement. One director, at a meeting of mutual assistance associations’ directors, steered the conversation away from discussion on whether or not the organizations should encourage voter registration in preparation for the November 2008 election. As the topic had been raised, the director declared, “This is where we can get into trouble. Nonprofits aren’t allowed to do those things. I don’t want to risk it. I don’t think any of us should” (October, 2008). Ironically, providing information and/or documentation for registering to vote is a permissible activity, I later learned. This director was misinformed about the laws regulating nonprofits as defined in the gag rule.

The Hegemony of the Self-Sufficiency Paradigm

Social service organizations are an important resource in assisting refugees and immigrants with adjusting to life in a new country and place. As one director asserted in an interview, social services are a way to educate new Americans about how to adjust successfully to living in the United States of America. The ways in which social service organizations socialize immigrants and refugees to be functioning members of society is ostensibly open to a number of different visions of democracy and citizenship. In the interviews, many of the directors discussed achieving self-sufficiency as a natural process for all new Americans, including the Somali and Mushunguli refugees, and that it was a matter of common sense for nonprofit organizations to provide specialized services to help immigrants and refugees, who face difficult cultural and linguistic barriers, with this process. Again, this was especially critical for the Mushungulis. The notion of self-sufficiency as a common sense approach speaks to its hegemonic status.

Antonio Gramsci (1971) articulated the concept of hegemony in order to explain, in a Marxist framework, how workers can willingly participate in their own subordination as they consent to and privilege the interests of the capital class. Critical geographers and other social theorists have drawn on the notion of hegemony to explain how particular
projects have attained widespread support at specific moments in history (Agnew 1998; Hall 1996; Taylor 1996, Anderson 1988). I am using the concept of hegemony here to refer to the convergences of interest from multiple quarters of society – including government institutions, nonprofit organizations and refugee and immigrant communities themselves – that gives self-sufficiency a common-sensical, taken-for-granted, or naturalized standing. I do not wish to imply a notion of false consciousness that is embedded in Gramsci’s origination of hegemony. Nevertheless, the concept is useful inasmuch as it focuses attention on “common sense” as something that is not self-evident and therefore ought to be explained.

While a focus on self-sufficiency via work dominates the social service landscape, I should note that there are other foci as well. Empowering refugees and immigrants to negotiate various institutions, a process that I term “systems navigation,” is also prevalent practice. A small cluster of organizations focus their efforts on basic needs, helping immigrants and refugees as well as other categories of people obtain food and transportation. And several organizations affect the adjustment process through advocacy and community engagement.

By separating organizations into these four categories, I am highlighting the dominant trends and understandings in how nonprofit social service providers relate to and affect the adjustment process for refugees and immigrants. This is not to deny the complexity, particularity, and heterogeneity of organizations – certainly, the landscape of social services is a variegated one. In the interviews, however, respondents deliberately articulated the role(s) that their organizations play in the adjustment process. These four categories represent clusters of how directors envisioned the purpose and effect of their organization’s relationship with immigrants and refugees. In terms of understanding connections between the state and nonprofit organizations analyzed below, it will be useful to describe the nature of the categories and the differences between them.

The first category concerns self-sufficiency. Most of the directors with whom I conducted interviews identified achieving self-sufficiency as their organization’s goal in
delivering services to refugees and immigrants. Self-sufficiency is approached in a variety of ways. Self-sufficiency is regularly accomplished through service programs that focus on paid employment. Becoming self-sufficient is not solely accomplished through job training and job placement programs, however. The goal of self-sufficiency or economic independence is further supported through English language training and youth development services. Youth development services focus on molding young second and 1.5 generation immigrants and refugees into educated and responsible persons who are not burdened by gang participation, the responsibilities of being a teen-aged parent, or chemical dependency. The second category concerns what I call “systems navigation.” A few directors indicated that their organizations affect immigrants’ and refugees’ adjustment primarily by assisting them with navigating the different systems and institutions that people confront in everyday life. The systems to which I refer include the healthcare, banking, education, transportation, and public assistance systems. Systems navigation, then, is intended to educate immigrants and refugees with the knowledge needed for making choices that lead to successful adjustment to American life. In this way, systems navigation is crucial to promoting self-sufficiency goals.

Organizations that affect the adjustment by meeting basic needs are in the third category. Some of these organizations in this category provide emergency food and cash assistance as well as access to low-cost clothes and furniture. These organizations operate food shelves and distribute one-time public assistance cash payments to individuals who can show evidence of financial need. These organizations serve the general population, and immigrants and refugees interact with these types of organizations when they seek emergency assistance. By the accounts of the directors, immigrants and refugees comprise a small portion of the total population that receives emergency assistance. In addition to proving material goods and emergency aid, organizations provide financial counseling to aid recipients, B. Diride, an executive director said the purpose of which is to:
guide them to make better decisions and solve the problem; we are not interested in letting it continue. We are an emergency assistance center...If you need help on a regular basis then you need to talk to someone in a government agency to try and help figure out what program [you] will need in the long term. (November 2008)

As this director suggests, basic needs assistance is seen as a resource for individuals to maintain their self-sufficiency in the event of an emergency or crisis. The financial counseling is provided to select individuals who are perceived to be at risk of becoming dependent on institutional supports. In this way, financial counseling is also an important means through which nonprofit organizations assist individuals with becoming economically independent or maintaining their independence.

The fourth category combines two different sets of responses: advocacy and community engagement. These two different ways of affecting the adjustment process are similar in that they are directly concerned with self-sufficiency. In terms of advocacy, organizations affect refugees’ and immigrants’ adjustment process by promoting civil rights issues and by promoting cultural awareness with the host community and receiving society. In terms of community engagement, organizations promote the participation of noncitizen immigrants and refugees in systems of governance. Thus, rather than focusing on development of individuals and economic independence, the organizations in this category affect the adjustment process by focusing on cultural awareness and political participation in refugee and immigrant – host community member relationships. Both cultural awareness and political participation are included in the domains I consider critical to the assessment of integration in the lives of refugees and immigrants. Those organizations that focus on political participation in my research receive the most, if not all, of their funding from non-government sources.

This categorization and overview of the goals of social service programs gives a “big picture” view of the dominant ways in which social service organizations affect immigrants’ and refugees’ adjustment and integration process. The big picture here is that the self-sufficiency paradigm governs the interaction between social service
organizations and refugees and immigrants. Under the auspices of this paradigm, nonprofit organizations shape immigrants and refugees into functional members of society who have the human capital and cultural competency to succeed in employment and, therefore, become economically independent. Furthermore, empowering refugees and immigrants to make choices as independent members of society complements the economic self-sufficiency approach.

Advocating Self-Sufficiency

Generally speaking, non-direct services such as advocacy get short shrift in social service organizations’ activities. There are some exceptions to this, in that some organizations are wholly focused on providing advocacy. The dominant trend, however, is that activities such as advocacy are neither priorities nor a regular activity in which social service organizations engage. One of the principal reasons for this trend is that few funding organizations and institutions provide financial resources for advocacy. As noted previously, State Refugee Coordinator Gus Avenido explained that the state concentrates its funds on direct services that lead to self-sufficiency. For philanthropic foundations, grants for human services are equally focused on direct services that may have measurable outcomes. Those few organizations that do concentrate on advocacy are able to do so because they receive funding from private donations and earned incomes (including interest from investments).

Hence, in a funding environment that is dominated by material support for direct service delivery, most directors of social service organizations are hard-pressed to commit staff time to activities that are not funded or that do not generate income for the organizations. The activities that organizations actually count as advocacy primarily function to improve the effectiveness of direct service delivery. In the interviews with directors, respondents articulated six different definitions of advocacy. They are detailed as follows: personal empowerment, ensuring civil rights, changing regulations, increasing the amount of funding, cultural awareness, and promoting involvement in governance.
The most frequently identified type of advocacy is a personal advocacy in which organization staff represent service recipients when they interact with government institutions and employers. This personal approach is one that supposedly empowers individuals to become self-sufficient. This is to say that many directors consider advocacy as a form of systems navigation. Related to this person-based advocacy as a form of assistance that helps refugees’ and immigrants’ civil rights. Hence, directors describe acting on behalf of service recipients when they come forward with allegations of discrimination in hiring and firing. These two sets of practices help organizations achieve the service outcomes that are identified in service contracts.

Organizations practice advocacy in at least two other ways. One way is that organizations dedicate staff time to promote changes in the rules that govern the use of funds on service contracts and in the amount of funding that is provided in service contracts. These types of advocacy are directed at mitigating the cumbersome regulations and inadequate resources that limit the opportunity structures through which social service organizations operate. Another way is that organizations provide educational services that ostensibly foster greater tolerance and cultural awareness among the members of the host community and receiving society. Organizations also advocate the participation of immigrants and refugees in governance and community affairs. Efforts are underway to educate the larger community about the issues that the Mushungulis have faced and continue to face. These types of advocacy putatively promote interaction, or at least understanding, between refugees and immigrants, and members of the host community and receiving society.

Some nonprofit organizations address issues of substantive membership in local communities, but this issue typically becomes a marginal concern. Instead, a considerable amount of staff time in nonprofit organizations is devoted to delivering direct services and to meeting responsibilities associated with service delivery. As direct services are aimed at promoting self-sufficiency, these services primarily address formal terms of membership. As I discussed earlier, the majority of advocacy activities actually promote immigrants’ and refugees’ formal membership in the host community and
receiving society. Quite simply, there is very little funding available to address issues of social justice and relationality.

**Negotiating Government Partnerships in the Context of the Shadow State**

With the rise of the shadow state, Wolch (1990) hypothesized that asymmetrical relationships between nonprofit organizations and government institutions could develop. One possible outcome of this relationship is the colonization of the nonprofit sector by government institutions. Alternatively, nonprofit organizations can also resist becoming instruments of government policy and provide a space in which to challenge the status quo. Given these divergent paths, it is important in terms of both theory and empirical investigation to consider the ways in which nonprofit organizations serve as a space in which individuals and groups internalize, challenge, or transform government policies. In this section, I explore how nonprofit social service organizations negotiate their relationships with government institutions.

While nonprofit organizations face limitations in their relationship with government institutions, many organizations note that ultimately they are not constrained by these limitations. One of the directors, S. Fahia, states,

> When [members of the community] come, I cannot say “You are not eligible for services.” So we provide the service, but we cannot include them in the reports to the funders. We never reject anybody. (December 2008).

Restrictions on the use of funds are certainly part of the everyday reality that affects how or to whom nonprofit organizations may provide social services. Yet organizations find ways to mediate these restrictions. The ways in which nonprofit social service organizations deal with individuals that are officially ineligible to receive services are instructive for understanding the capacity for and interest in negotiating government and other institutional restrictions. In the interviews I conducted with the directors and the senior managers of nonprofit social service organizations, the majority of them had eligibility requirements for their social service programs, whereas about a third of them
did not. The following discussion considers the majority of the organizations that are concerned with eligibility requirements. At the end of this section, I turn to consider the remaining third that are not affected by eligibility requirements.

Of the organizations that are concerned with eligibility requirements, a number of the directors I interviewed explained that their organization followed a policy of serving every person who comes to them for help. These organizations, in addition to providing services to eligible persons, provide some semblance of assistance to those individuals who seek help but are officially ineligible to receive services. As the director in the quote mentioned above stated, however, staff do not document providing services to such individuals. As a result, this type of extra-programmatic assistance is not reported to funding institutions, since it is outside the scope of service contracts. To be clear, none of the directors who indicated their organization follows a “serve everyone” policy showed any sign of a cavalier attitude toward external funding. Several of the directors, in fact, made it very clear that their organizations observed all terms of their service contracts from government and philanthropic institutions and provided an infrastructure and human resource base that enabled their organizations to help everyone seeking assistance from the organizations.

In some organizations, the “serve everyone” policy is enabled by discretionary funding from philanthropic foundations to provide services to immigrants and refugees who are otherwise not eligible to receive government-funded social services. In most cases, however, organizations enact a “serve everyone” approach in the absence of additional funding. Typically, staff members in organizations following a “serve everyone” policy act as liaisons for the refugees and immigrants who are ineligible for the funded social service programs. Through the course of my fieldwork, I came to understand these extra-programmatic practices as a form of expert volunteerism.

In contrast to this “serve everyone” policy, directors that I interviewed in the remaining organizations that observed eligibility requirements explained that their organizations only served eligible individuals. When confronted by individuals who are
ineligible for their services, these organizations made referrals to other agencies that could ostensibly help the individuals seeking assistance. There were two distinct groups of organizations in this group that served only eligible immigrants and refugees. In the first group, the directors explained that their organizations provided extra-programmatic services to eligible individuals who are receiving services from the organization. In contrast to the “serve everyone” approach, the non-contracted work of organization staff among these organizations is limited to individuals who are eligible for services. The rationale for this approach is captured in the following quote:

In order to help somebody, especially these days, to get a job and settled in the community effectively, a whole lot of resources need to come to the table besides jobs. People need housing, shelters, adequate resources to take care of themselves, child care for their kids…We have to teach them workplace English, how to communicate in an interview, how to communicate in writing on an application, something that is totally foreign to them. We have to teach them that they have to impress and employer in an interview when the language itself in the interview is the largest barrier. Yet they have to go up against American candidates for finding these jobs. So there is a tremendous amount of teaching and supportive services that need to go on. [For example] we are not in the driver’s education business, but we provide driver’s education training for people so that they can get to work. So there is a lot of stuff that ultimately counts in the fact that the person got a job and got self-sufficient…The government also understands who they are working with. They want to know how you can take their one dollar and turn into ten dollars by leveraging other things. (O. SaharDeed, personal communication, January 2009)

As this director indicates, while his organization may be under contract to place refugees into jobs, additional services are necessary in order for that individual to stay employed. And this director further indicates that it is in the organization’s self interest to add value to the government contracts that his organization receives. This particular director went on to explain that the commitment to adding value to the government contract was as much of a concern for achieving the goals of the contract and maintaining a favorable standing with funding institutions as it was for the welfare of the refugee job-seeker.
This director was seeking to reach out to the Somali and Mushunguli refugees in Greater Minnesota. He explained that the need in Greater Minnesota was great and there were hardly any culturally and linguistically competent services available.

In the second group, the directors explained that their organizations did not provide extra-programmatic services. Rather, these directors described a practice of simply following their contracts as they are written. Thus, for these nonprofit organizations, social services are delivered in the manner prescribed by the funding institution and no additional or non-contracted assistance is provided.

Considering all the organizations that operate with eligibility requirements, more than half of them provided extra-programmatic assistance to refugees and immigrants who sought help. For the majority of the organizations the constraints on the use of funds that accompany external funding do not limit the scope and depth of the assistance offered through social services. This is to say that most organizations deliberately negotiate the restrictions on service contracts and grants in an effort to serve their respective communities as best as the organizations can. There certainly are organizations that acquiesce to the terms of the service contracts they receive. Yet, it seems that to not offer extra-programmatic assistance is also a deliberate choice that organizations make. Why an organization decides to follow strictly the terms of a service contract is dependent upon funding, available staff size, service provision philosophy and relative demand for services. Perhaps the greatest influence, however, is the relationship between the organization and the communities they serve.

Social service organizations that operate without eligibility requirements are in this position as a matter of policy. The directors of these organizations explained that they deliberately avoid pursuing sources of funding in which eligibility requirements would be a part of social service delivery. Some organizations achieved this by charging fees for their services while others avoid the eligibility issue by obtaining grants from philanthropic foundations that permit flexible spending. In closing this subsection, it is reasonable to conclude that many, if not most, leaders of nonprofit social service
organizations do not consider their activities to be completely bound by the terms of external service contracts. There is a sense that nonprofit organizations can negotiate the restrictions that accompany external funding. This is significant for assessing Wolch’s (1990) argument about the nature of nonprofit–state relationships in the context of the shadow state. In the next part of this section, I develop further the ways in which social service organizations negotiate shadow state relationships.

Placing the “Community” First

I approached an additional assessment of government – nonprofit relationships by asking directors about how their organizations negotiate the interface between institutional interests and the interests of the communities that they claim to represent and that turn to their organization for assistance. As a group, directors admit that in order to build capacity to provide social services, their organization must obtain some form of external funding. Most directors explain that their organizations approach external funding sources cautiously and that their organization is highly selective concerning the types of grants and contracts for which they apply. Nearly all of the directors disagreed with the notion that their organization was funding-driven. In the interviews, I asked the directors whether working on government contracts changed their organization to be more like government agencies, every director responded with an emphatic “No!” Yet, many conceded that there was the potential for such a change. With several exceptions, the nonprofit directors whom I interviewed explained that in their respective organization, they placed the “community first.”

Responses to several of the survey questions illustrate that most of the directors of nonprofit organizations feel that despite their complex relationships with funding institutions, service recipients, and the wider community, organizations must maintain their autonomy and independence. In one such survey question, I asked the respondents to identify and then rank the three most influential actors or groups that affect the decision-making process in their organization’s social service delivery programs. Based on the responses, it is clear that the organization’s employees and advisors are perceived to be the most influential group. Responses to this question clearly showed that
executive directors, staff members, and board members are perceived to be the three most influential groups when it comes to establishing service policies. Overall the perceived influence of funding agencies was relatively low; however, at least a few of the respondents identified their funding agencies as having the most influence.

I also asked a situational question of the survey respondents that isolates the influence that outside funding has on the types of social services that organizations provide. For the number of organizations that had begun a new service program, I asked the respondents to identify the reasons that best explain why their organizations initiated new services. The availability of new funding sources was the most commonly cited reason, but of respondents who identified this reason, the majority also cited other reasons. One could interpret these results to mean that funding availability is driving the decision to initiate new programs. Based on the directors’ descriptions of being cautious and selective about applying for external funding, however, it seems more reasonable to conclude that the availability of funding is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for most organizations to initiate new social service programs. This is consistent with what I would expect most of the respondents to argue: that their organization places community interests ahead of financial interests.

Nonprofit Organizations as Spaces of Agency

The activities of nonprofit social service organizations are influenced by government funding and its attendant restrictions, but, as I have attempted to demonstrate, the activities of organizations are not completely determined by government influence. Wolch (1990) discusses two divergent trajectories for government – nonprofit relationships created through partial privatization: (1) the transformation of the nonprofit sector into an extension of government bureaucracy or (2) the transformation of the nonprofit sector into an entrée for the public sphere where individuals and groups can critique government policy and challenge the status quo. In evaluating the experiences of nonprofit social service organizations serving immigrants and refugees, including the Somalis and the Mushungulis, in the Twin Cities and in Luckenville, neither of these trajectories applies very well.
Most of the nonprofits that I have examined are financially dependent upon
government institutions and philanthropic foundations, but the notion that nonprofits
have become unthinking appendages of the state apparatus is difficult to support.
Certainly, the self-sufficiency paradigm is in the foreground when it comes to the
socialization strategies of nonprofit organizations, and the self-sufficiency paradigm is
drawn upon by governments in creating public policy for social services. It is important
to also consider that the self-sufficiency paradigm is voluntarily supported, if not shared,
by social service organizations and the immigrant and refugee communities that the
organizations serve. It seems that the self-sufficiency paradigm is hegemonic – that is, it
has become a matter of common sense in what new Americans should do to become
members of the host community and receiving society and in what government and actors
in civil society can do to best integrate them into the United States of America’s system
of democracy. The convergence around socializing refugees and immigrants as self-
sufficient and independent individuals represents a concerted attempt “to actively
constitute new subjectivities to facilitate effective forms of government” (Raco 2003: 76).

Movement toward the privatization of some government functions may in fact
reconfigure power relationships between government and nonprofit organizations, but it
does not eliminate nonprofit organizations’ ability to negotiate, for instance, the
eligibility restrictions for service delivery that accompany public funding. Yet, it is not
apparent that nonprofit social service organizations act as a space form from which
challenges and changes to government policy come. Quite simply, the procedural
burdens that accompany government service contracts and the regulations restricting
nonprofit organizations’ political activism blunt the radical role that Wolch (1990)
predicted would be available for nonprofit organizations. Moreover, the general
agreement between government, nonprofit organizations, and refugees and immigrants on
self-sufficiency as a policy for the incorporation of new Americans does not lend itself to
the creation of a situation in which nonprofit social service organizations as a group
would take up a radical position. Yet, as the study and the evaluation of the
Confederation of Somali Communities in Minnesota in the following section shows, there are micro-political challenges to the practical meaning and substance of self-sufficiency.

I think it is appropriate to conceptualize nonprofit organizations as representing spaces of structured agency in their relationship with government institutions and other benefactors, such as philanthropic foundations. External funding both enables and restricts the social services that nonprofit organizations provide. It is important to note, however, that nonprofits are positioned to negotiate these restrictions in their efforts to meet demands of government interests and the needs and interests from the immigrant and refugee communities that they serve. Certainly, not all nonprofits seek to negotiate these interests and may defer to one or the other, but this should be seen as a deliberate policy and not powerless restraint.

Conclusion

The arrival of the Somali refugees in relatively large numbers in the late 1990s and early 2000s triggered a continued restructuring of the social service delivery system that still affects the ways in which services are provided to refugees, migrants, and immigrants today. Non-profit organizations took on the responsibility for providing direct social services to refugees. In the process of this transfer, nonprofits also took responsibility for exhaustive record-keeping and reporting their work with refugees, which enable and enhanced the government-coordinated social service system that emerged to provide services to refugees.

The use of bicultural workers in providing services to refugees was also established as a de facto policy of service provision. These workers were seen as a valuable resource for enhancing the effectiveness of social services delivered to refugees. Nonprofit organizations, especially MAAs, were identified as having privileged access to bicultural workers, which further cemented their role as direct service providers. Achieving economic self-sufficiency emerged as the ultimate purpose of social services. The cultural and economic differences between Americans and the second (and subsequent) waves of Somali and Mushunguli refugees may have worked to underline the
importance of economic self-sufficiency. Nevertheless, discourses about social services for refugees centered on the achievement of economic independence as the immediate, and ultimate, goal. Hence, the self-sufficiency ideology continued to be a paradigmatic, and, in fact, it continues to be a resource upon which government and charitable foundations draw in regulating social services for refugees and immigrants.

These changes combined to shape nonprofit organizations into more technically sophisticated service providers. The ways in which government agencies coordinated their inter-organizational cooperation and cultivated their observation of service standards helped to transform nonprofits into manageable subjects. In this process, nonprofits were pressured by government and foundations to first and foremost focus on economic self-sufficiency and particularly employment. Organizations were free to pursue other goals. Adherence to the expectations and standards of government service contracts, however, often made it impractical to pursue alternatives or broaden the notion of self-sufficiency. This leads to a final point: the government partnerships that were formed in order to manage refugee resettlement did not advance a privatization scheme, per se. Instead, the relationships between government institutions and nonprofit organizations facilitated the instrumental transfer of responsibility for service delivery to nonprofits. As the analysis in this chapter shows, the government institutions in such partnerships maintained control over service delivery in terms of what services were to be funded and established policy about how services were to be delivered, to whom, and for how long. In this way, government institutions established the rules that governed how nonprofits as well as how charitable foundations were to participate in incorporating refugees and immigrants in general in the host community and receiving society.

By emphasizing self-sufficiency, human development and formal terms of membership in social service delivery, nonprofit organizations shape refugees and immigrants to become citizens. Funding resources from the government contribute to this process by both emphasizing self-sufficiency in service delivery and burdening nonprofit organizations with resource-consuming procedures that limit the ability of the organizations to address issues in addition to service delivery. The activities of social
service organizations are not, however, determined by relationships with government and other institutions that provide external funding.

As I have tried to show in this chapter, relationships with government affect the “rules of the game” for delivering social services that make certain programs, strategies, and intended outcomes thinkable, while others are considered unattainable. The game metaphor does, however, imply that rules can be bent, broken, and can change over time. The analyses in this chapter suggests that some organizations “bend the rules” in certain contexts, such as the enforcement of eligibility requirements. And a longitudinal analysis would, I expect, reveal the ways in which the rules of the game have changed over time as well. These empirical points show a dialectical relationship in the opportunity structures of nonprofits where government institutions outline the rules of the game, which are, in practice adopted, followed (sometimes selectively), and at times resisted. Indeed, the interaction between referee and player can, over time, change the ways the game is played legitimately. Nevertheless, the rules are seemingly stable at specific moments and make certain kinds of actions, ways of thinking, and experiences possible (Rose 1999).

The hegemonic status of the self-sufficiency paradigm in this study illustrates this point and further helps to explain how nonprofits social service organizations privilege refugees’ and immigrants’ formal terms of membership in American society and focus their energies on training immigrants and refugees to become self-sufficient members of society. Hegemony invites counter-hegemony, Gramsci (1971) noted, however. I made note in this chapter of how some organizations do not explicitly follow government regulations and thereby make subtle challenges to the hegemony of the self-sufficiency paradigm. Over time, such practices may catalyze change in social policy, government regulation, and/or the nature of relationships between nonprofits and government institutions. Indeed, over time the micro-politics of government partnerships may spurn change in the “rules of the game” that govern social service delivery which might result in a new legacy of refugee resettlement.
In the next chapter I address the issue of *Qabils* and how they still play and integral role in Somali social organization and structure even in the Somali Diaspora. In this chapter I have alluded to the fact that many of the early MAAs and CBOs were organized along *Qabil* divisions. These, however, had to fold due to the fact that they did not serve the Somali community in its entirety which they had to once entering a government partnership. From Somalia, to the refugee camps of Kenya, and finally even in Luckenville and Minneapolis-St. Paul, kinship and social contract remains the glue that holds the Somali community and the Mushungulis together. While the two can have a very positive effect in creating social capital and support networks, they can also inadvertently have a deleterious effect. And while the refugee resettlement process is already rife with confusion and even pain sometimes, having the weight of *Qabil* hanging over the community can make integration even more arduous and difficult.
Chapter Six: A new Xeer for all Mushungulis and Somalis “Qabis”

"The evocative power of kinship as the axiomatic natural basis for all social co-operation and as the ultimate guarantee of personal and collective security is deeply rooted in Somali society. For the weaker and less successful members of the Somali lineage, kinship is an indispensable source of protection and safety- readily manipulated by their stronger more politically ambitious clansmen for whom kinship is an elastic resource, conveniently and accessible and infinitely negotiable. "Our kinsmen right or wrong" is the basic motto of Somali social life. As the foundation of social co-operation, kinship enters into all transactions between and amongst individuals. There is no significant area of Somali social activity where the influence of kinship is absent” (Lewis 1994: vii).

Mohamed (2007) has argued that tol or kinship is the first rule or principle of Somali politics but the second principle, xeer or the social contract, is equally important because it establishes the rules of clanship. In this chapter, I will attempt to explain the meaning of tol iyo xeer (kinship and social contract) – two powerful pillars that can both undergird and undermine the strength of the Somali community. During the war, kinship ties acquired a new significance, as they helped to determine individual rights to assistance and protection (or the reverse). All Somalis can be identified, whether or not they choose to be, with a single maximal lineage, the origins of which are subject to several interpretations, each linked to an interest in proving genealogical depth and prestige (H. Diriye, personal communication, February 2010). The patrilineal nature of the kinship system is also central to an understanding of gender roles since it awards men the predominant role in Somali society and politics.

My name is Mohamed Jama Dualeh Jibrell Ibrahim Sharmarke Samater Fatah Garad Ali Abdulla Mahammoud Libaan Garad Yusuf Omer Warsangeli Harti Kombe Kabalahlah Jabertert Ismail Darod. My name is made up of my “fathers” names and it gives me my history.
(M. Jibrell, personal communication, February 2010)

Genealogy gives both a collective and an individual identity to members of Somali society. It is also a societal code, serving as the collective memory (M. Jibrell, personal communication, February 200). Please see Diagram 2 reflecting Jibrell’s
Somali genealogy is a flexible and dynamic ideological construct; it cannot be fixed within a rigid scheme, and it is subject to alteration in the interest of *Qabil* groups. *Qabil* affiliation provides collective socioeconomic security, latent in times of peace but activated in response to an external threat or, increasingly, to serve individual political agendas. Although many Somalis, especially younger Somalis, now resist categorization according to *Qabils*, an individual’s refusal to abide by the responsibilities and obligations of kinship can entail unwelcome personal costs and risks.

In the absence of long traditions of state-making and strong or even successful central government, the social and political-economic uses of a genealogical ideology for Somalis are obvious. It is known as *abtirsinyo* or *abtirsimo* which literally means “counting of the fathers” (M. Jibrell, personal communication, 2010). In fact the well-known Somali saying, “*tol waa tolane,*” meaning “agnates (or patrilineal kin) is something joined together,” illustrates this point (M. Jibrell, personal communication, February 2010). While Lewis (1994: 96) has found that in northern Somalia the genealogies contain a very significant basis in fact and can, in fact, usually be taken as “history,” my research has demonstrated that the factual nature of the matter is highly doubtful, due to the multiple associations and assimilations of groups to genealogical lines not their own having taken place, not to speak of even manipulation of the lines (M. Jibrell, personal communication, 2010). I have found that in Somalia and even in Luckenville and the Twin Cities today, the Somali community and its life is organized along alliances and relationships based on kinship ties as they relate to *Qabils* and *Tols.* While old social contracts or *xeer* might not work in the Diaspora, the failure to establish and agree upon new modalities of *xeer* may be having an impact on social organization of the Somali community in the Twin Cities and in Luckenville.

So what is a “*Qabil*?” *Qabil* is Arabic in origin and to my understanding means “clan.” The Somali equivalent is “*Qolo*” and means the same. The six main *Qabil* families in Somalia are the Darod, Hawiye, Isaq, Dir, Digil, and the Rahanweyn. The first four are considered “noble” and “higher” or *samale Qabil* families and the last two are considered “common” and “lower” or *sab Qabil* families.
Family Lineage as Described by M. Hassan

Diagram 1
M. Jibrell’s Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qabil Family</th>
<th>Territorial Division</th>
<th>Qabil</th>
<th>Sub-qabil</th>
<th>Lineage</th>
<th>Sub-lineage (Mag)</th>
<th>Dia-paying Groups &amp; Further Sub-groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Darod</td>
<td>Kabalahlah Jabettet</td>
<td>Kombe</td>
<td>Warsangeli</td>
<td>Omer</td>
<td>Yusuf Garad</td>
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<td>Harti</td>
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<td>Mahamoud</td>
<td>Ibrahim</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Garad Abdullah</td>
<td>Jibrell</td>
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*Diagram 2*
This distinction is mainly based on adaptive strategies employed within Somalia where nomadism and pastoralism, which the noble Qabil families employ, have enjoyed a higher ranking and status than agro-pastoralism, which the common Qabil families practice. The Mushungulis are not considered Somali and hence are not a part of the Qabil system. However, as mentioned in the earlier chapter on the Mushungulis, they have been adopted primarily by the Digil and Rahanweyn Qabils to perform farming tasks and are proffered protection by this patron-client and adoptive relationship.

Each of the Qabil families in Somalia today and even in the Diaspora have a nebulous and tenuous relationship with each other that has been historically determined as it relates to resources – primarily, land and water. In the Diaspora today, this relationship is still the same but the resources are different – political capital, status, and even access to fiscal resources are what determine the relationships. So what is a Tol? A Tol generally refers to an affiliation(s) or a community based on male lines and has a meaning slightly different from Qabil or Qolo, though one’s Tol is again from one’s own Qolo or Qabil. The word literally refers to those who are “stitched” together through a dia or mag-paying group or similar affiliation (H. Diriye, personal communication, February, 2010). According to Diriye,

Yes, Qabil is sometimes used interchangeably with Tol but they are different. Tol affiliates and relationships are closer to me than that of a Qabil. They are my “crew” on whom I can depend on when I am in trouble. (Personal communication, February 2010)

Simply put, Tol affiliations have been determined during the course of history by alliances formed in the process of harsh socio-economic life in conditions of nomadic pastoralism and other politic-economic considerations (Mohamed 2007) both in Somalia and in the Diaspora. The Somali word “Tolnimo” describes an arrangement of affiliations from different Qabils and sub-Qabil groups that organize themselves into political, economic, or social fronts (H. Diriye, personal communication, February 2010). The term "Tolnimo" explains the binding relationship within a primary lineage or what
binds together members of a primary lineage. Sometimes, it is also used in a more
general sense meaning a solidarity or brotherhood between individuals or even Qabils.
Qabil and Tolnimo affiliations are almost always simultaneously a discourse of
antagonism and divisiveness and unity in times of warfare, threat, danger and
opportunity.

Nearly all armed conflicts in contemporary Somalia break
out along Qabil lines. Qabil identities are malleable and can
be shaped by leaders to pursue control of resources and power.
Qabil identities are not the basis for conflict; rather, their
deliberate manipulation creates and exacerbates divisions.
Qabils can serve as destructive or constructive forces as well as
traditional conflict moderators.
(H. Diriye, personal communication, February 2010)

In lineage-based Somalia where Qabils define relationships, Qabil identity is not static
and fixed but is shaped and manipulated according to changing situations. This does not
suggest that Qabils are inherently conflictual but that rather Qabil identities can be
manipulated purposefully to acquire control over resources and power.

Qabil leaders can serve as forces of division and conflict
management by shaping identities that divide or unite. Most
of the time Qabil leadership tends to express what is perceived
as the dominant interests of the Qabil, especially related to
economic gains and political power. This is likely to determine
the extent to which Qabil groups would seek to wage war, as in
the period immediately after the collapse of the state, or pursue
dividends of stability and peace, as increasingly evident in recent
years. The latter has indirectly contributed to many warlords
converting to politicians and businessmen, and seeking non-violent
means to achieve Qabil goals. (M. Jibrell, personal communication,
February 2010)

“Warlords,” elders, and divisive leaders emphasize differences among Qabils and
formulate demands that play on those differences. “Warlords” are instrumental in
invoking loyalty to raise or lower the level of identity from Qabil to sub-Qabil and sub-
sub-Qabil and back again depending on what is most convenient. Different Qabil
identities are used as a tool to mobilize Qabil members when in conflict, and cleavages
are drawn upon to wage war. In this way, *Qabil* and sub-*Qabil* differences can be a force for division and fragmentation, particularly when manipulated for political purposes. So how and when do *Qabils* fuse and fissure? According to M. Jibrell,

Somali pastoralists clash over water resources and urban Somalis over 'political distributions' translated as 'who gets control of government'... In the pastoral world, clashes, skirmishes and outright wars are settled by *Tol* leaders (elders, *Akils*, *Sultans*) that is if they are related through the clan lineage for example, wars between Darod clans or those between Hawiye and other clans. If they are from separate clans like Hawiye and Darod no fusion takes place and it usually ends in ‘détente.’ It has been said in Somali clan parlance that no clan can defeat another clan no matter how small one clan is, which forces them to stop warring. (March 2010)

The last line in the above quote emphasizes the abilities of *Qabils* whether large or small to fuse together to oppose common enemies or *Qabils*. Among non-*Tol* clans there is no sharing of resources in the pastoral world in Somalia. Certain types of *Qabil* conflicts, however, are more prevalent in specific regions. In South-central Somalia, it is common to find pastoralists and urban dwellers seizing the valuable plantations and real estate occupied by agricultural *Qabils* and other weaker *Qabils*. In the aftermath of the civil war, for example, the armed occupation of Rahanweyn lands by raiding pastoral sub-*Qabils* of the Hawiye and Darod, acting independently or as a “militia” of a sub-*Qabil*, have led to violent conflicts. The correspondence of *Qabil* and sub-*Qabil* fault lines with regional divisions has the potential to fuel conflict if development benefits are distributed along geographic lines.

In certain parts of Somalia, the sub-*Qabils* in the remote districts feel that they are disadvantaged compared with the sub-*Qabils* in districts closer to the urban centers, who are the beneficiaries of state assistance and economic activity. This has led to fewer opportunities for sub-*Qabils* in the periphery which then could fuse and could be a catalyst of violent conflicts against other sub-*Qabils* nearer the urban centers. In the
Diaspora, where political capital controls resources, the fusion and fission of Qabils is more complex. M. Jibrell goes on to explain,

In the last few years 4.5 clan distribution of power has been used by interim governments to survive in Somalia. The problem with 4.5 equation is that the Somalis see the biggest “share” to be the Presidency and since a President will be from one clan, they feel the president’s clan will have all the resources. In the Diaspora, alliances between Qabils take place between those who share sentiments of fear from other Qabils. Invariably it is not based on economic interests but political. Fusion takes place between clans who are tol against others - Me against my brother. My brother and me against my cousin and so it goes. The exception in Somalia and the Diaspora are business partnerships. There is a growing emergence of businesses partnerships in Minnesota and Kenya involving the various and diverse clans. (March 2010)

The “4.5 Formula,” referred to by M. Jibrell above came out of the Arta Peace Conferences of 2010. The four noble Somali Qabils would represent the “4” in government and the common Qabils would make up the remaining “0.5” which would also include the minority groups like the Mushungulis and women. This formula is still contentious among Somalis and they are not convinced of the fairness of the representation in government by the major Qabils. The “4.5 Formula” has caused the common Qabils to fuse in opposition to the noble Qabils and no doubt they will separate depending on other interests (M. Duale and M. Jibrell, personal communication, March 2010). Another good example of fusion in the Twin Cities is the fact that a Somali gentleman from the Darod Qabil is running for School Board in Minneapolis. He has gone around asking for the support of the elders of the entire Somali community and the different Qabils so that he can get elected to the School Board. Whether he will be successful remains to be seen but it is definitely a good issue for the whole Somali community to fuse and rally around.

Simultaneously, Qabil leaders are a source of deterrence and traditional conflict management for Qabils, providing protection and support during periods of crisis. In
fact, traditionally, the Qabil system was a moderating force used to bring about reconciliation and cooperation. “The Qabils are an insurance policy and social security system to all Somalis” (M. Jibrell and H. Diriye, personal communication, February 2010).

The highest level of political grouping among the pastoral Somali has been designated by I.M. Lewis (1961) as “clan-families” or Qabil or Qolo families. Widely distributed in space across the Somali region in the Horn of Africa, and with populations sometimes in excess of a million (for example, the Darod), Qabil-families are too unwieldy to act traditionally as political entities. An example, would be how the Isaq sub-Qabils joined forces against the military regime during the civil war, but fragmented into traditional rival sub-Qabil factions after the downfall of the regime in 1991. This is another example of fusion for specific purposes and causes and fission when the specific purpose or cause is no longer important to the leaders of the sub-Qabils or other interests and issues have arisen which make other opportunistic alliances with other sub-Qabils more important.

The symbolic link which binds members of the Qabil-family mainly derives from links to a common remote ancestor who is usually depicted as the central figure in the original creation myth of the group. Those members of the Qabil-family who are able to participate occasionally reinforce social solidarity by organizing large memorial feasts at the tomb of their ancestor. Most importantly, the loose ties which are obtained at this level of social formation are established by an elaborate and extensive genealogy (20-30 generations) in which the living generation counts to the founding eponym. If you look at Diagram 2, Jibrell’s founding eponym is Ismail Darod and his Qabil family is the Darod. This is the “counting of the fathers” or abtirsinyo or abtirsimo which I refer to above. This extensive genealogical reckoning, which acts as a device that defines social relations in the elaborately segmented patrilineal system of the Somali, is learned by rote by each Somali, in early life, under the instruction of his dutiful mother (M. Jibrell, personal communication, February 2010). Moreover, the extensive genealogy of the
Qabil-family is sometimes eternally recorded in venerated texts by religious men literate in Arabic, and today in Somali by educated members of the Qabil-family.

Within the Qabil-family, the next most important social unit has been described by Lewis (1961) as the "clan" or Qabil or Qolo. Traditionally, the Qabil marks the upper level of practical political action and is organized along territorial divisions or space or land. Hence when the situation demands and the common interest of its members are at stake, a Qabil unites its forces against rival and often hostile Qabils. Its political importance is further enhanced by the Qabils territorial tendency whereby each Qabil is associated with a particular area that is frequented by its members. The Qabil is further distinguished by the titular office of Qabil leader which in Jibrell’s case is Kabalahlah Jabertert. For him, there are further Qabils and sub-Qabils named Kombe Harti and Warsangeli. Warsangeli is one of four sons of Kombe Harti and the other sons have sub-Qabils named after them, for example, Majerteen, Dulbahante, and Dishish. Please see Diagram 1. The members of these sub-Qabils are also affiliates and can be a part of the Tolnimo.

In descending order, the next important social segment has been designated by I.M. Lewis (1961) as "primary lineage" or Tol. Within this segmentary system of relatively mobilized groups, the basic political and jural unit is the dia or mag-paying group. Its strongly bound agnatic members commonly count from four to six generations to a common ancestor and can include sub-lineages. Its strength varies from a few hundred to a few thousand persons. Apart from the principle of close agnation which binds members of the dia-paying lineage, its enduring social solidarity is also further cemented by the collective obligation to pay and receive blood-dia - compensation and payments regarding other acknowledged offenses or injustices such as rape, kidnapping or abduction, and adultery.

Here both principles which define social solidarity and political action, agnation and contract xeer, neatly supplement each other to produce a cohesive and stable political
Because it integrates the principles of agnation and contract *xeer*, forces that act as the foundations of stable social solidarity, mutual cooperation and assistance, this group functions as a civil institution which provides the protection and security of the pastoral Somali. From my research, it cannot be considered that *Qabil*, primary lineage and *dia*-paying group, constitute the only possible units of segmentation of the major Somali *Qabil*-families. In practice, the actual levels of bifurcation are much more extensive. This ordered, but outwardly intricate, segmentary social system has the capacity to place each and every citizen in a corporate *dia*-paying lineage where his basic rights are guaranteed and obligations clearly defined (H. Diriye, personal communication, February 2010). Moreover, it establishes social relations between *dia*-paying groups and other levels of political groupings, in a turbulent social situation where alliances need to be created to defend pastoral resources or else retrieve access to pasturage and water usurped by an opponent. According to Mohamed (2007) the *dia*-paying group was the most important corporate political group. “It consisted of people who shared the most important of responsibilities such as the payment of blood money, common defense, and common help” (Mohamed 2007: 226). The *dia*-paying group formed the *jilib* or bedrock or foundation of Somali social organization and is the point at which “a man most frequently acts” (Mohamed 2007: 227). Please refer to the Diagrams 1 and 2 – the *jilib* is the shaded portion of Diagram 1. *Dia* or *mag* is collected only from the men of the *Qabil*. So how is a *Qabil*-family and *Qabil* organized?

Today, the highest level council of elders is known as *Guurti*. Headed by *Qabil* leaders (Sultans or Ugaas), the *Guurti* consists of a body of elders, which represent the lineages of the *Qabils* and *qolos*. Most commonly, a significant number of these representatives are *dia*-paying group leaders, *Akils*, also known as Local Authorities. The *Guurti* of the *Qabils* and large sub-*Qabils* attend to the internal affairs of the groups and represent them in inter-*Qabil*, regional and national peace-conferences and other matters of wider common interest. The *Guurti* play a central role in the peace process, which harnesses the services of the sacred authority of the religious leaders and persuasive power of the distinguished poets. (M. Jibrell, personal communication, February 2010)
These elders, both the guurti and the akils, assumed the important role of maintaining law and order among their kinsmen, and acted as emissaries between them and the government. Elders play an instrumental and influential role in a sub-\textit{Qabil} or community both in Somalia and in the Diaspora. Becoming an elder “is not always based in hereditary status but on a lifetime of earned reputation as effective negotiators, trusted mediators, moving orators, or wise and pious men” (M. Duale, personal communication, February 2010).

**The Elders**

When elders receive reports of impending conflicts involving two \textit{Qabils}, they organize the selection of suitable elders and dispatch them to the site. Often elders are not from the \textit{Qabils} engaged in the fighting. Through an informal negotiation process, elders bring representatives of the fighting \textit{Qabils} to a negotiation tree or to any other environment conducive to talks and mediation. If the need arises, religious leaders are brought into the mediation process as they carry moral authority.

The traditional role of Somali elders in peacemaking is to impose sanctions on any group or individuals who oppose the peace process. This can be done by fining those groups or individuals who violate the peace, and punishing collectively those who refuse to sit in peace negotiations to solve their conflict through dialogue rather than violence. It is also their responsibility to collect and pay \textit{dia} from their sub-\textit{Qabil} members if someone from the \textit{Qabil} kills other \textit{Qabil} members. Likewise they receive \textit{dia} if a member of their sub-\textit{Qabil} is killed by another \textit{Qabil}. This is in accordance with the traditional \textit{xeer} of the Somali people.

In the Diaspora there are usually two types of elders – the educated elite and the traditional elders both of which work together and advise the \textit{Qabil} on all matters.
At the same time, the credibility of Qabil ‘elders’ as peace brokers has suffered dramatically over the past few decades, diminishing their moral authority in the present conflict. Past governments routinely purchased the loyalty of elders with titles or cash, a practice that some clearly hope to revive. In many cases, Qabil elders are the same urban businessmen and politicians who manage the conflict (or even profit from it) and who lack the will or commitment to seek a negotiated solution. Younger men (below the age of 40) may join the elders, whether or not they possess a reputation for wisdom and justice. Not surprisingly, many Somalis have become cynical about the motives and authority of their elders and argue that “afar jeeble” (literally meaning “four-pocketed” and implicating corrupt and greedy) elders need to be removed.

Xeer

Qabil life is governed by the xeer, best understood as Somali customary law. These are the social contracts that bind Qabils and tols into relationships and alliances that are very rarely permanent and “almost convenient” depending on the situation. The xeer is not formally codified but in reality trumps any laws created by the state, especially in Mogadishu today (H. Diriye and M. Jibrell, personal communication, February 2010). Xeer is not really practiced in the United States of America as the rule of law prevails. However, because Somalis in the United States of America are connected to family members in Somalia where xeer and sharia law is practiced, in a sense all Somalis in the Diaspora are still bound by the concept of xeer. Xeer is the set of rules, regulations, and values that form the foundation of Somali society. Xeer can also represent agreements between sub-Qabils that govern their relations and lay out rules for interaction, but not all sub-Qabils have xeer with one another. For example, sub-Qabils A and B, in close proximity to one another, may have a xeer between them, but sub-Qabils B and C, geographically further apart, may not have xeer, as there is little interaction between them (H. Diriye and M. Jibrell, personal communication, February 2010). At any particular time, two sub-Qabils may be allies or adversaries and these relationships are constantly shifting in a “process of fusion and fission between and among Qabils or Qolos, and tol lineages” (M. Jibrell, personal communication, February 2010).
Xeer comprises a set of unwritten conventions and procedures that are passed down orally through generations. These define reciprocal rights and obligations between kin and Qabils, covering domestic matters, social welfare, political relations, property rights and the management of natural resources. Xeer is also more than a contract. It shapes basic values, laws and rules of social behavior. It incorporates aspects of sharia, while the application of sharia in Somalia is also influenced by customary law. Unlike either sharia or secular law, xeer is not universalistic. It is specific to relations between any two Qabils or sub-Qabils, although there are rules that are common to all Somali communities, relating to payment of dia compensation, to marriage practices and to the management of property resources.

As I understand it, xeer can draw on both negative and positive social capital. The Qabil system can be both a stabilizing and destabilizing force. Its potential for destabilization lies primarily in the capacity of the Qabil system to serve as a “conflict multiplier” (M. Duale, personal communication, February 2010). The communal nature of the Qabil system means that an affront to an individual clan member can be interpreted as an affront to the entire Qabil, which draws the entire Qabil into what may initially be a minor dispute.

An individual Qabil member is guaranteed with economic, social and physical security for being born into the Qabil and has to defend the Qabil’s interest. As a result, conflicts between individuals are easily transformed into wider Qabil conflicts. (H. Diriye, personal communication, February 2010)

Thus the potential for conflict escalation within the Qabil context is substantial. The ingrained sense of retaliation within some Qabils can lead to an escalating series of retaliations, and soon enough “a small clash may give birth to a huge conflict that incites the involvement of the whole Qabil” (H. Diriye, personal communication, February 2010). This would be an example of negative social capital. One definition of social capital is the collective value of all social networks, who people know and the
inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other, norms of
certainty of behaviors that lead to mutual gains (Putnam 2000). The strength of the *Qabil*
system and individuals’
commitment to the prescribed responses to certain actions – norms of reciprocity –
heighten the likelihood of violent conflict. Social capital is conventionally regarded as a
positive asset, and in many instances it is but when it serves this function it can be a
divisive element. As Menkhaus observes:

“Somali political culture features a very prominent and elaborate
role for conflict management, in a large measure because pre-
colonial Somalia was a stateless, decentralized, nomadic society in
which conflict between clans over pasture and wells was endemic.
Procedures for managing these conflicts were thus vital as a means
of preventing chronic violence in this anarchic pastoral setting. Not
surprisingly, conflict management and negotiation in Somalia remains
a high art form” (2000: 46).

There is a well developed, relatively structured conflict management mechanism in place.
The *guurti* elders are the judge and jury and their decisions are largely adhered to and
respected. Somalis understand from a young age how conflicts are supposed to be
resolved, the various steps in the process and what can happen if those steps are not
followed.

This widespread understanding of proper conflict management mechanisms is an
element of positive social capital, as the “norms of reciprocity” among certain *Qabils*
preserve a certain sequence of conflict management mechanisms to be employed. Most
people would not consider deviating from the prescribed mechanisms, largely because of
the strong peer pressure in place and societal expectations inculcated in them. This
positive social capital probably prevents a significant percentage of disputes from
escalating into wider conflicts (M. Duale, personal communication, February 2010). This
positive social capital can also be a useful tool in efforts to expand effective conflict
management in the region and in the Diaspora by supporting traditional mechanisms.
Qabils in the Diaspora

While hundreds of thousands of Somalis displaced by conflict sought refuge among their kin in traditional territorial divisions or lands, hundreds of thousands more opted to flee the country as refugees in neighboring countries or to join their relatives abroad. Although Somali migration is nothing new, the impact of this latest exodus has reached all corners of the globe. However distant refugees may find themselves from their homeland, the war is never far away. Expatriate Somalis are under pressure to share their homes and salaries with more recent arrivals. Many send regular cash contributions to family members remaining in Somalia, regardless of their own difficult circumstances. Western governments have been surprised to discover that even Somalis on welfare continue to send remittances to their relatives.

Over here, the Qabils have a social and political role. In events of marriage and death or other tragedies, the Qabils collect money from members to ensure that the family involved has resources available to it. All of us continually pay subsidies to ensure that there is a ready pool of money. That is how we are connected here in Minneapolis and to relatives in Somalia. There is otherwise little interaction between Qabils unless there is a conflict or an inter-Qabil marriage. (M. Jibrell, personal communication, February 2010)

The quote above clearly shows that the politics of diversity - and conflict - have also been transplanted intact to the diaspora. In many countries, Somalis have organized themselves in Qabil-based groups whose views are as polarized (sometimes even more so) as within Somalia. While mosques in the Twin Cities are attended by the various Qabils, each of them has been adopted by different Qabils. In the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood, the apartment towers are controlled by different Qabils which only allow members of the same Qabil to fill vacant apartments. Qabils in this sense look after their own members and further their own interests.
Qabil, collectively, loan members money to buy taxis or start up businesses who then contribute part of their earnings as karan which is a form of fund-raising for Qabil family members either here or in Somalia. (H. Diriye, personal communication, February 2010)

The elders consider karan as an investment in the future of the Qabil and also as a way to incorporate young Qabil members into the fold and to teach them the importance of kinship ties and social contracts with other Somalis, even those they do not directly interact with, both here in the Diaspora and in Somalia. Many have contributed directly to the conflict in Somalia by raising funds for their related Qabils and sub-Qabils in Somalia. Hence when the xawalaads or money-wiring entities were closed after September 11th, 2001, many Somalis were upset for a number of reasons including the inability to send remittances home to family members who really needed the money to survive. Another important way the Qabils help members is during a death.

Land here is expensive unlike in Somalia. When someone dies, the Qabil members use some of the karan to buy a plot of land so that the individual can be buried. This way the family does not have to worry. According to Muslim tradition, we try to bury the body within the same day and money is sometimes not readily available. My father, as an elder, has an extensive e-mail list which includes Qabil members from all over the world from whom he can collect karan from. Somalis even use the karan to pay hospital bills for sick members! (H. Diriye, personal communication, February 2010)

When two related Somali business owners were tragically killed recently in Minneapolis, the elders immediately sent out a message worldwide to ensure that Qabil members contributed karan as quickly as possible to ensure that the plots of land were purchased and the burials were conducted in a timely fashion and paid attention to Muslim traditions and customs. All my informants told me that there were no dia payments to the affected families. In the Diaspora, the rule of law is observed and this component of the xeer is neglected but dia is collected for Qabil members who have been killed back in Somalia.
Even in the refugee camps, Qabils play a role in ensuring that members have food and water. They also help them find or build living quarters nearby other members so that there is protection from the Kenyan police, bandits, and other Qabils. The Guurti help resolve disputes between Qabil members. Inter-Qabil Guurti help with disputes involving other Qabils. But generally, the Qabils unite together against the police, refugees from Sudan and Ethiopia and bandits. (M. Duale, personal communication, February 2010)

The situation of Somalis in refugee camps is somewhat different, since they typically find themselves in a situation in which people of various Qabils’ sub-Qabils, and ethnic groups had to live together as refugees. The camp management provided for their survival and encouraged integrative activities intended to develop a common social life and communication among the refugees. Nevertheless, from the quote above, patterns of Qabil identification and ethnic discrimination tended to persist, despite people’s common experience as refugees.

The Role of Women

While opportunities for economic and social mobility undoubtedly exist, many Somali women find their responsibilities restricted to the domestic sphere, where the possibility for self-development and interaction with other women is often limited.

In Somalia, women are the architects of the nomad society; they both build and own the nomadic hut—an important element of the wedding ritual and the marriage and one of the many activities that women traditionally accomplish together. Although much of this work is heavy, it teaches endurance and self-reliance, and it forges strong ties of sisterhood and loyalty. (A. Hussein, personal communication, February 2010)

Marriage and divorce are important determinants in a Somali woman’s life. Marriage establishes strong connections between families and Qabils and can therefore reflect economic and political considerations. Traditionally, marriage often takes place
between parallel cousins or between members of Qabil families or tol groups with mutual interests.

A girl is ‘given’ to her future husband, and the bride-price is agreed between the bride’s father and the groom’s male relatives. Payment of a bride-price assigns women a relative value of economic worth, considered equally to be a point of honor. (A. Hussein, personal communication, February 2010)

Whatever this value, however, a Somali woman is entitled before marriage to full support from her father, and after marriage to that from her husband. A complex system of reciprocal compensation exists to formalize marriage:

Gabbaati is given to the brothers of the woman at the time she is requested for marriage. Yarad is given to the future father-in-law. In Somalia, camels, horses, goats, material goods, and, in the Twin Cities, sums of money are given by the groom and his people to his in-laws, as a pledge to compensate them for the loss of the daughter and her future children, who become part of the man’s family. Meher is the gift a man gives to his future wife, arranged before the engagement. While payment of meher is sometimes reserved until divorce, it can be paid at any time and may simply be a symbolic token, such as a Quran. Dibaad, which represents roughly the equivalent of a dowry, is usually a part of the yarad, returned to the bride’s family when she moves to live with her husband (although it may also be paid immediately upon receipt of the yarad). The dibaad may also include the nomadic hut and other essential elements of the nomadic household. (A. Hussein, personal communication, February 2010)

A woman who becomes a man’s second (or third, or fourth) wife theoretically has the right to request the same amount of payment as the first wife received. The reality is that these rights are handled quite differently, depending on the economic situation of the future husband, the power and importance of the bride’s family, and the ‘value’ of the woman (A. Hussein, personal communication, February 2010).
The Kinship System and Women

Although the Somali kinship system is principally patrilineal, affinal (maternal) ties retain an important social role. Many Qabils include the names ‘habar’ or ‘bah’, implying that they have evolved from ‘uterine’ alliances between brothers from a common mother (A. Hussein, personal communication, February 2010). Please see M. Hassan’s family in Diagram 1. In the family, the role of the maternal uncle (abti) is believed to be of special significance to a child (A. Hussein, personal communication, February 2010). And at the time of burial, the deceased is generally identified in reference to the mother rather than the father. Unlike a man, a woman’s kinship affiliation will usually change at least once, and sometimes more often, during her lifetime.

A woman is part of the father’s lineage until she is married, then she becomes linked to her husband’s lineage by marriage and, more importantly, by the children of the union. After marriage, she retains her father’s name, but ‘belongs’ in law to her husband through the marriage contract. However, despite her loyalties to her husband and children, she is perceived throughout her life principally as a member of her father’s lineage. In times of conflict, Godobir—the offer of a woman (or women) as spouse to the offended party—was practiced chiefly to strengthen inter-communal ties in the wake of a dispute. It does not happen as much anymore. (A. Hussein, personal communication, February 2010)

From the quote above, it is clear to see that a woman’s multiple clan affiliations can give her a structural role as a peace builder, enabling her to act as a conduit for dialogue between warring parties and to exert pressure on them to keep talking. In the Diaspora, the exchange of women has also been used to repair and heal old wounds between Qabils that were fighting with each other (A. Hussein, personal communication, February 2010).

The eventual ‘loss’ of a daughter to another lineage group is one of the reasons that boys are typically valued more highly than girls. Furthermore, boys can contribute to the size and protection of the Qabil since they share in the mag (dia) obligations of their
group. A woman who gives birth to boys, therefore, earns greater prestige than mothers of girls only.

Somali women have their own “support” systems and often are organized along traditional credit schemes called *hagbad, ayuuta, or shalongo* which sometimes cross *Qabil* lines. This is especially true in the Diaspora. Loans directly from one individual to another are not the only way in which money is lent in Somalia (L. Yusuf, personal communication, February 2010). Women come together to form rotating credit groups. These groups are based on friendship and reciprocal trust. The name of the group is different depending on the area in which it has been formed. Typically a group of women arrange to each contribute a specified sum of money each day (or week or month) to a common fund. Each day a different member takes a turn collecting the total amount, until all members have had a turn. In some groups, the money is only collected by members when there is an emergency for exceptionally large expenditures, like a wedding or a first-birthday celebration of a male child. To the extent that members have access to the lump sum before they have made their full contribution, the system is a form of credit. For those who have access to the lump sum after they have made their full contribution, the system operates as a saving mechanism.

Although their political position is informal and they are excluded from official decision-making, women have created their own way to participate by influencing men’s decisions through *buraanburs* (L. Yusuf, personal communication, February 2010). The *buraanbur*, a type of poem or song, is an important and powerful medium used by women throughout Somalia to express themselves and to share their experiences with other women and to also affect the outcomes of conflicts. Their contribution to public life is restricted to the private influence they wield over their husbands, fathers, sons, brothers, and uncles as they sit together and recite *buraanburs* until the conflicting parties come to an agreement.
Gender Relations in the Diaspora

Gender relations are always complex and given the economic environment, these relations are further stressed. There are high levels of unemployment amongst Somali men. And even those who are employed might not be gainfully employed and some described losing the respect of their wives and children, as it is increasingly women who are the public face of families, taking responsibility for organizing school, housing and welfare issues. It is argued, by social service providers, that this general crisis of masculinity and lack of male mentors is contributing to the high incidence of youth committing offences. For young women in Luckenville, the Twin Cities, and indeed the United States of America, there are emerging significant tensions in relation to balancing their sense of duty and responsibility towards their parents and the wider Somali Muslim community and their desire to have their freedom to make their own choices about clothing, dating, and their futures. This was most clearly expressed in relation to the wearing of the hijab. Many of the young women, particularly those who had lived in Western countries where Somali communities adopt a more liberal approach to their faith, were ambivalent about wearing the hijab. Some of these women managed their identities differently in different spaces according to the people they were with, or whom they may be seen by (A. Hussein, personal communication, February 2010). My interviewees also described an emerging – but hidden — culture of smoking as well as alcohol and drug consumption amongst young Somali women as well as young men.

As Al-Rasheed (1993, 1992) notes, the loss of status for male refugees in the public sphere is well-documented in the migration literature, as is the apparent greater adaptability of women to changed economic and social circumstances (Kulig 1994; Benson 1994; Buijs 1993). What is interesting here is the association of state-dependency, reinforced by the negative connotations of “refugee status” (Zetter 1998), with the loss of the male breadwinner role and what is perceived to be the erosion of the patriarchal Somali family structure, particularly as this concerns the perceived emancipation of Somali women. Again, it needs to be stressed here that there is
considerable variation within households. For those women whose previous experience has been one of dependency on a male wage, the “freeing up” from male authority which state provision allows may result in marriage breakdown and a sense of the ‘disposability’ of men indicated above. For those women with previous experience of economic independence on the other hand, the dynamics are often different. For the men in the refugee sample that I interviewed, most of whom were on benefits and educated by and large to elementary and secondary level in Somalia, the anxieties of under-performance were acute.

Islam

Virtually all Somalis are Muslims. Prior to immigration, many Somali adults took their religion for granted. However, following migration, their faith has become a more important focus of their lives and identities. Many refugees study the Quran and ensure that Quranic education is an important part of their child’s education, and that women dress in accordance with Islam in ways that they would not have done when they were in Somalia. This increased importance of a Muslim identity to Somali refugees stems from the fact that faith provides an important anchor within their broader experience of mobility and dislocation, and provides a means of ensuring that they do not lose their children to an ‘alien’ western individualistic culture. Many of the refugees I interviewed did not want their children to have a ‘rootless’ identity and a confused attachment, or no particular attachment, to Somalia and Islam.

As so often in times of distress, religion has emerged as a source of comfort and reassurance for many Somalis, as well as a valued point of reference that transcends parochial, political, and Qabil-based interests. The importance of shared Islamic values and principles in reuniting this bitterly divided people cannot be overestimated. In those parts of Somalia where peace has been restored, Islam and the sharia have typically been cited as pillars of the new society and its government. In parts of the south, Islamic courts represent first attempts by communities to restore public institutions, law and
order. Throughout the country and in the Diaspora, mosques have played an important role in preaching restraint and tolerance (although some have occasionally played the opposite role) (M. Jibrell, personal communication, February 2010). Despite the depth of Somali belief in Islam and the central place the religion occupies in their perception of themselves, Somalis differ widely in their interpretations and practices (M. Jibrell, personal communication, February 2010). Traditional Somali Islamic beliefs must now coexist with more conservative, politicized versions of the faith. The prolonged period of civil strife and distress in Somalia has opened the door to a new breed of militant Islamists, often sponsored by foreign organizations (M. Duale, personal communication, February 2010).

Currently in Somalia, unlike the conventional Somali factions, the Islamists and their respective organizations have pursued a clear-cut social agenda, winning support through their outreach to a war-weary people. Underpinned by extensive holdings in the private sector, including hotels, xawalaad (money transfer/wiring services), and import-export concerns, the most sophisticated organizations offer medical care, schooling, and training, as well as support to struggling entrepreneurs (M. Duale, personal communication, February 2010).

Islam was meant to unite and not divide. It is perhaps the one entity that unites all Somalis but this is not what is happening in Somalia today. It is not even a Sunni/Shia issue! Today, Islam is dividing all Somalis and creating a new kind of war. (M. Duale, personal communication, February 2010)

In this context it is possible to see how, and why, the identity ‘Muslim’ becomes for many Somalis the most important and consistent way that they have of defining who they are. Tension between the fundamentalists and the proponents of ‘Somali Islam,’ the specific traditional interpretation of Islam according to the Cushitic pre-Islamic religion, which fits very much into the social and cultural needs of Somali society is already sharp (M. Duale, personal communication, February 2010). Many Somalis resent the foreign
roots of the Islamists and the suggestion that their own Islamic beliefs are somehow inadequate. Others resist what they perceive as a clear political agenda to establish a conservative Islamic Somali state. Islam’s potential to overcome Somalia’s divisions and to nurture a lasting peace is thus at odds with the divisiveness and violence represented by competing fundamentalist ideologies. Most disturbing, perhaps, is the overt ambition of the most vigorous movements to reintroduce the kind of centralized, authoritarian leadership Somalis have fought so hard to overthrow.

_Somalimono and Midnimo_

All Somalis, both in Somalia and in the Diaspora, are connected by virtue of the potent cultural unity and nationalism represented by Somalinimo – an identity that has, over millennia, provided the nation with an enviable social cohesion. (M. Duale, personal communication, February 2010)

After the imposition of colonization, Somalis might have developed a sense of awareness of other peoples who were also Muslims who spoke Somali dialects within the country, and who were also oppressed by foreign powers. Therefore, that historical fact might have helped them or forced them to internalize the concept of Somalinimo and Midnimo which probably became much stronger during the struggle for independence (M. Jibrell, personal communication, February 2010). Somalinimo, loosely translated, means “Somaliness” by which Somalis derive their identity. It also refers to the cultural norms, traditions, language, and networks that facilitate collective and individual actions. An important component of Somalinimo is Islam which is the religion most, if not all, Somalis belong to. In fact, fundamentally, what gives Somalinimo impetus is its Islamic character of working in the service of a just cause such as defending the homeland and national identity. Midnimo, loosely translated, means “unity” (Issah-Salwi 2002). Midnimo also unites all Somalis whether they belong to noble and common Qabils or minority groups. While there maybe differences among the clans of Somalia and the other ethnic and minority groups like the Mushungulis, it is Somalinimo and Midnimo that binds all Somalis together (Kusow 2005).
I could say I am assisting some one because of Tolnimo meaning that we are related through Qabil. For me Tolnimo includes anyone from the Darod Qabil. Also, it is the same for those who are related through the Digil, Dir, Hawiye, Isaq or the Rahanweyn Qabils. Somalinimo, on the other hand, binds all Somalis together despite Qabil and tol differences. When I say I assist someone because of Somalinimo, I am helping that person because we are from the same country and religion – Somalia and Islam. It is the one single phenomenon besides Islam that keeps us all hoping for Somalia to turn around and be the country it used to be and can be. (M. Jibrell, personal communication, February 2010)

Somalis are expected to help one another. At any point in time, Somalis can draw upon Somalinimo and Midnimo as another form of social capital within the Somali community and this is especially true when Somalis are faced with troubles, tragedy, or even mishaps. It is a strength that is unique to the Somali community. Somalinimo and Midnimo helps all Somalis adjust to the exigencies of a new life in an alien, and sometimes unfriendly, environment. Somalinimo provides survival skills that are needed to cope with the daily reality of adapting to the “law of the land” (Duale 2005). The skill of keeping the right balance between their cultural “baggage” and the need to integrate into the mainstream society is what Somalinimo instills (Duale 2005). My Somali colleagues tell me that Somalinimo and Midnimo gives them direction and strength in the face of adversity and hardship. For them, there was no doubt that without Somalinimo and Midnimo they could not have coped with their own resettlement and integration process.

Identity

“All of us come to be who we are (however ephemeral, multiple, and changing) by being located or locating ourselves (usually unconsciously) in social narratives rarely of our own making” (Somers 1994: 606).

The Somalis I interviewed negotiate and position themselves within social narratives that are not of their own making, and are often valued or judged in particular ways by the host
community and receiving society, which defines their role as individuals, community members and citizens. These definitions are founded on particular constructions of refugees, Islam and what it means to be an American. At the same time, I was also alert to the ways that Somalis choose to position themselves in relation to these dominant narratives and produce their own personal stories of who they are and where they belong. This involves a consideration of the ways that individuals claim or prioritize some available narratives of identity or disavow and reject others. Of course, these identity practices do not occur in a vacuum, rather identities are situated accomplishments that emerge through specific social practices which are produced in, and through different spaces, at a range of scales from: sites such as the home, and community, through to the nation and the Diaspora.

I am Somali and I am a woman. I am not a victim of my religion. I am proud to be a Muslim. These are the only things I have known in my life. Please don’t judge me. I don’t judge you. I want to raise my family – to be a good Muslim wife and to bring up good Somali Muslim children who pray to Allah and do good for everyone, including Americans. (A. Hassan, personal communication, February 2010)

One consequence from the quote above is that a given identity is not just something that can be claimed by an individual rather it is also dependent, at least in part, on an individual being recognized or accepted as such by a wider community. A further implication is that having a particular identity in different contexts can define individuals as ‘in place’ or ‘out of place;’ as belonging or excluded according to spatial norms and expectations in that space. For Somalis who remember their homeland it is a powerful part of their identities.

Most Somalis encourage their children to speak Somali at home, they eat Somali food, and celebrate Somali festivals and the children strongly identify as Somali. Most of the children, however, left their homeland when they were very young or were born while their families were on the move. As such they have limited, or in some cases, no direct memories of Somalia. Rather, their knowledge and understanding of the country is
largely second-hand, coming from adults in their families who remember growing up there, from their friends who may have visited the country, or from media representations. These young people must position themselves in relation to public narratives about what it means to be Somali that are not of their own making and are predicated on sometimes differing and contradictory accounts of a place of which they have limited or no memory.

Whereas media reporting of Somalia focuses on the civil war, disorder, famine, piracy, suicide bombers, and terrorism, Somali parents tend to offer a more positive representation to their children of a beautiful country and family life, glossing over some of the hardships and violence which they, or relatives, may have experienced.

I have to let my children know that Somalia is not a bad place. It is going through some bad times for sure as there are people being killed. And that we are here because of the killings but there is hope for Somalia. There is always hope. (L. Yusuf, personal communication, February 2010)

The Somalis I interviewed acknowledged their children’s lack of understanding of their homeland and their curiosity to experience it for themselves and so in recent years many families have travelled back to Somaliland or Puntland, on visits where the children can get to know ‘their’ country and its people. On these trips, however, the Somalis I interviewed and even their children to them described feeling out of place and that they did not belong. It is not enough to claim a self-identity, rather, belonging requires that an identity must also be recognized or accepted as such by a wider community. Somalis who have returned on visits described experiences for example of: being stared at; being accused of having a pale skin or not speaking Somali properly or with an accent; and being hassled for money or English lessons.
They are happy to back to Somalia but they also realize that they are very lucky to be in the US. Life is so hard for the children in Somalia. Life is hard for the adults! Continuous war and famine and no hospitals to take care of sick children. Disease is always there and there is no school except madrassahs. (L. Yusuf, personal communication, February 2010)

The Somali adults felt that the return visits have had a powerful impact on their children. Many of them are more appreciative of life in the United States of America, and particularly the educational opportunities they have received. Girls, in particular, recognized that as young women in the United States of America they are not so confined by gender roles and responsibilities and have more opportunities than their counterparts in Somalia. In such ways, return visits gave the children a stronger sense of the value of life in the United States of America. It also cemented their recognition of their new host country as a positive place to live, and in some cases led them to re-consider whether they should self-identify as American as well as Somali. Yet, despite the shock of ‘being out of place’ or not belonging in Somalia, and in some cases losing the ability to communicate effectively in Somali, the children nonetheless continued to identify themselves first, and foremost, as Somali, according to their parents. Younger Somalis are also aware of their “blackness” and many have tried to co-opt African-American culture into their daily living either through music or fashion or even language.

These identifications seek to break the bounded community celebrated in the traditional account of cultural identity. That these identifications are parodic, imitative and partial in nature does nothing to belie the threat which they are seen to pose to the integrity of the Somali imagined identity. A useful contrast has been developed by Gerd Bauman (1997) which may help clarify the issues at stake. According to Bauman (1997), within any ethnic community there will be two major and co-existing approaches to the articulation of communal identities: firstly, there is the dominant discourse of culture, which assumes a homology between culture, ethnic group, and community. From a processual concept referring to the ways in which meanings and symbols are mobilized in the context of social interaction (Hall 1996a), culture becomes reified as the property of a
distinctive ethnic group: ‘ethnic labels are thus validated as referring to actual ‘ethnic groups,’ and these groups are defined with reference to a homogenous and discrete “culture” they are assumed, ex hypothesi, to share” (Bauman 1997: 211).

The mobilization of ethnic groups in terms of shared culture is often, as Bauman notes, effected on the grounds of an already existing “community” (Bauman 1997: 213). Dominant discourses therefore assume that “ethnic minorities must form a community based on their reified culture (Bauman 1997). The second main expression of communal identities, the demotic discourse of culture, is distinctive in that it de-links culture, ethnicity, and community, pointing out to the possibility of trans-ethnic alliances and identifications, or what Back (1996) has referred to as “liminal ethnicities.” In this respect, Bauman (1997) notes the tensions within “ethnic communities” between “culture as reified in the dominant discourse, and culture performed as a process of negotiation within, about and across ‘ethnic communities’” (1997: 221-222). Processes and dichotomies of this sort are clearly evident in the Somali refugee community in Luckenville and the Twin Cities are often, as in this case, expressed in generational conflict and dissent.

Conclusion

As Somalia approaches two decades of “statelessness,” a generation has grown up to know a country riddled with violent conflict and political turmoil. Many Somalis from this era have resettled and grown up in the West. With media reports of a small number of young Somali men going back to Somalia to fight alongside insurgent groups, the position of youth within the Somali Diaspora – caught between their host and their home countries – has come under intense scrutiny by Western policymakers. The issues that propel young Somalis to join groups designated as terrorists by Western governments are complex, relating to identity formation, diverse generational views, and how different generations engage with the homeland (M. Jibrell, personal communication, February 2010).
An estimated one million Somalis of a total population of about nine million are thought to reside outside Somalia, making the Somali Diaspora one of the largest globally, proportionate to population size (IOM Report 2009). Migration is not a new phenomenon among Somalis. It has occurred within the Somali territories for centuries, with extra-regional movement to Western Europe traceable to Somali seafarers who worked on colonial ships in the early twentieth century, a few of whom ended up settling and forming communities in port cities in countries like Britain and Norway (Bradbury 1997; El-Solh 1993). Further Somali migration took place after Somalia’s independence, when Somali students went abroad to study in Western universities, especially Italy, the United Kingdom and even the former Soviet Union (Bradbury 1997; El-Solh 1993). Later in the 1970s a large number of Somalis migrated to the Gulf States to seek employment and other economic opportunities stimulated by the oil boom (Bradbury 1997).

The Somali Diaspora is widely dispersed and experiences of migration and reception differ from one country to another and in different times. This has influenced how Somalis have adapted to their new environments. In countries such as the United Kingdom, Somalis joined existing Somali communities as well as other ethnic Muslim diasporas (El-Solh 1993). Similarly, in the United States of America, Somalis find themselves as part of a wider African diaspora, both Eastern and Western, although they still consider themselves different from other African migrants in that they are both Muslim and refugees. In countries like Denmark, Sweden and Norway, Somalis were simultaneously the first substantial African and Muslim immigrants unlike the Turks and Bosnians, which often brought a host of problems relating to debates on integration and belonging (El-Solh 1993). Identity formation in the Somali diaspora can be influenced by where people end up resettling and which generation they belong to. Identity crisis and issues of belonging affect older Somali generations less, as their connection to Somalia is stronger and their beliefs more crystallized (M. Duale, personal communication, February 2010).
While there is some variation, older Somali migrants have generally reformed along Qabil identities. They have reasserted their Islamic values and embraced their Islamic identity, and they find it harder to integrate (M. Jibrell, personal communication, February 2010). Many of them are socially and linguistically isolated. They constantly look to Somalia and are engrossed by the political dynamics of the homeland, waiting for the possibility to return. The surge in communication systems in today’s globalized era has enabled Somalis to remain connected with their home country and in touch with families dispersed across the world. The nature of the long conflict in Somalia has made it necessary for diaspora Somalis to establish strong networks and to engage in a wide variety of transnational activities. Remittances sent by the Somali diaspora, estimated to be US $1 billion a year, far exceed official aid to the country (World Bank Report 2008). Although most money transfers happen at a household level, they impact at a macro-economic level by supporting spending, which in turn stimulates trade. A smaller but significant amount is invested directly in business, infrastructure and community-based projects in education and healthcare.

The older Somali diaspora has also played an important political role, participating in successive reconciliation processes to form a Somali government as well as supporting the autonomous governments in Puntland and Somaliland. Their involvement in political processes at national and sub-national levels can at different times both fuel conflict and facilitate peace, producing some confusion about their contribution to Somali political discourse.

Younger Somali generations who left Somalia as children or were born and raised overseas have different identity issues and methods of engagement with the homeland. Socialized and educated in Western countries, they often find themselves between two cultures and do not feel a complete part of either. Therefore questions of ‘who are you?’ and ‘where are you from?’ evoke different responses depending on which country they reside in, their relationships with their parents and their understanding of Somali identity.
My own research in the United States of America shows that young Somalis’ understanding of their identities is shaped by their history of mobility. Both those born in the United States of America and those who arrived as children continue to feel the effects of the war in Somalia because it directly affects their families and the ways in which their adoptive country relates to them. Likewise their understanding of what it means to be Somali and of issues like the Somali Qabil structure, which is taught to them by their parents, both shapes and is shaped by their interactions with their family and friends. But, for Somali youngsters in the United States of America, I believe that it is their Muslim identity that is usually the cornerstone of their self-identification. It proves to be a single, permanent and unifying identity. The phrase ‘I am Muslim first and foremost’ is one that young Somalis relate to (H. Diriye, personal communication, February 2010). The incorporation of anthropological interpretations (Besteman 1996) into common sense accounts of Somali identity is interesting, not so much as an example of what Giddens (1976) has called a “double hermeneutic” of social theory and every-day discourse, as of the construction of a highly specialized model of traditional Somali identity.

A person’s identification with their culture can become more entrenched when central elements of it come under pressure or threat, and they can embrace the more controversial aspects of it. In this sense for young Somalis, Muslim identity can take precedence over Qabil and or national identity.

Somali youths’ relationship to Islam can be different to their parents’. They ask questions about their faith and actively search for an Islam that is pure. They search the internet and read books to determine for themselves how to be a good Muslim in a Western society. (A. Hassan, personal Communication, February 2010)

This quest for deep faith may in turn lead some to bond with radical elements whose agenda is not always peaceful. The adaptation of the young can also be seen through the lens of hybrid identity. Through multiculturalism youngsters often create hybrid diaspora
identities, which allow them to identify with many different sub-identities. In the United States of America, many Somali youngsters see themselves as having a fluid nomadic conscience that enables them to embrace different identities – being American, Somali, Muslim, black, a specific Somali Qabil, or an Arab (A. Hassan, personal communication, February 2010). Young Somalis embrace hip-hop culture as well as their Somali and Muslim identities. Young people have their own understanding of and conscious engagement with these different value systems. Managing all these identities and moving between them is a necessary element of being young and of belonging. While some handle this well, others find these transitions between multiple identities difficult and confusing.

Life in the diaspora has placed many families under intolerable stress. The trauma of refugeedom has taken a terrible toll in divorce, suicide, alienation, and religious fundamentalism, but it has also altered—probably irrevocably—the way many Somalis perceive themselves, their families, and their communities. And this is where I believe the Qabils and tols, together with the uniqueness of Somali organization and structure, can play a huge role both here in the United States and perhaps back in Somalia itself.

I truly believe that the future of Somalia lies in the Diaspora. Somalia needs its people to return to it. Dictatorship ruined Somalia. A new era of leadership needs to pay attention to Somalinimo. That which unites us and not divides us. Qabils are crucial as the new leadership must involve all of them but they have to focus on is education, health care, women’s rights, infrastructure, and children. (M. Jibrell, personal communication, February, 2010)

In relation to Luckenville and the Twin Cities, at the most elementary level, Qabil relations were perceived by Somalis in terms of a support network, providing financial assistance and emotional support for recently arrived refugees. This aspect reinforces El-Solh’s (1991) research and interpretation of the role of Qabils, which was conducted in Great Britain, in Luckenville and the Twin Cities and was in fact a pronounced feature of many of the interviews which I conducted.
Lyons and Ahmed I. Samatar (1994), for example, have stressed the erosion of the old systems of *xeer* and the *Umma* and the need for the invention of new cultural forms and identities in Somalia. The degeneration of the old system has resulted in the “alienation of individuals seeking to find meaning and cultural guide posts in circumstances where traditional culture and values no longer relate to their environment” (Lyons and Ahmed I. Samatar 1994: 64). I would propose less drastic measures. I do believe that their identities in the Diaspora cannot help but be affected by their new environments but I do believe that they can adapt old cultural forms such as the *xeer* to reflect new social contracts by identifying critical issues that the Somali community can galvanize around and to revitalize the concepts of *Midnimo* and *Somalinimo*. Mohamed (2007) has argued that the Somali elite both in Somalia and in the Diaspora has waged a vicious war against the traditional Somali *xeer*, arguing that it is backward and that it weakened the nationalist movement and resolve.

“Under the public system of rules of kinship all members of the clan, lineage or dia-paying group participated in the decisions of the group: the formulation and following of rules for the kinship group were social practices in which the whole group participated. The elite had no interest in such a democratic system. They wanted the kinship relation but not the burden of the rules and ethics of kinship” (Mohamed 2007: 245).

In essence what the elite wanted was kinship politics without any of the rules which was what *xeer* provided. However, the social contract was of central importance in Somali politics because it constituted the public system of rules of politics. In my opinion, Somalis need to re-establish this social contract not only between the *Qabils* but also within the *Qabils* and to also include the Mushungulis and other minority groups from Somalia in this new social contract. The *Qabils* are, to put it simply, social capital. They exhibit features of social organization and are very similar to networks with norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit (Putnam 1995). Putnam’s exploration of the concept drew upon ‘civic engagement’, which he viewed as a precursor to social capital. While his ideas of ‘civic engagement’ involved
such activities as voter turnout, religious institution membership, newspaper reading, participation in public forums and in private organizations such as choral societies and bowling leagues, I believe that for the Somali community, Qabils need to re-engage members both within and without in dialogue. They need to focus on education, employment, health care, women’s rights, infrastructure and children which include both human and cultural capital. This is especially important for the Mushungulis.

Human capital involves investment in training, education, or work experience, all of which ultimately increase one’s potential for financial compensation (Becker 1993). Cultural capital is defined as high cultural knowledge that ultimately contributes to the owner’s socio-economic advantage (Bourdieu 1979). Social capital is distinguished from these other forms of capital in that it refers specifically to relationships of trust embedded in social networks (Light 2004). Gittel and Vidal (1998) have conducted important work in developing typologies of social capital. They described bonding and bridging as key forms of social capital. Bonding capital is understood as bringing closer together people who already know and have some affinity with each other. This, in my opinion, is clearly important for the Somali community. Conversely, bridging capital denotes the connecting of people or groups not previously interacting. Encapsulated within this concept of bridging capital are several possible modalities. The first is that of bridging within a community of people with diverse interests (Gittell and Vidal 1998). Again, I believe, this applies to the different Qabil families within the Somali community, including the Mushungulis, which were at war before migrating into the Diaspora. The second, more broadly used concept of bridging involves the building of links between the particular community and mainstream society which can only help with positive integration outcomes (Briggs 2004; Gress 2004; Vidal 2004). Light (2004) argued that social capital can also be potentially transmuted into economic capital, and hence the development of social capital is particularly pertinent in economically depressed areas which may be extended to include economically depressed countries like Somalia. If Somalis in the Diaspora can re-establish kinship ties and the social contract into positive social capital and get the different Qabils to bond and bridge together, it can only help the
current conflict in Somalia and help restore lasting and sustained peace. It will also help with integration process as members of the host community and receiving society will see a flourishing community intent on helping itself, celebrating Midnimo and Somalinimo, and contributing positively to their neighborhood or community as a whole in the United States of America.

Somalis in the Diaspora can, together, re-establish the xeer as a commitment to improve the well-being of the entire Somali community. All the forms of payment such as karan and dia can still continue to function as they are but they can add additional foci such as building funds to provide scholarships to all Somali children, girls and boys, to attend school, train women to participate in the workforce, help elders become less culturally and linguistically isolated, and even to improve the infrastructure in Somalia.

“In short, since the colonial period and especially since independence, Somali politics has been hobbling about with one very weak leg (kinship) as the other leg (social contract) withered under the assault of colonial rule and post-colonial hypocrisy” (Mohamed 2007: 247).

I believe that by paying attention to more immediate needs of the Somali community like education, health care, women’s rights, infrastructure, employment, and children, Somalis will not only strengthen kinship ties within and between the Qabils but also rebuild and strengthen xeer. And with tol iyo xeer being strengthened, the Somali community can experience a renewed spirit of Midnimo and Somalinimo which cannot but help the situation in Somalia. I truly believe that successful Somali communities in the Diaspora can provide a peaceful resolution which can be sustained and lasting to the current conflict in Somalia. It will take the efforts of all Somali men and women around the world and in Somalia to do this.

What I have attempted to do, in this and in the previous chapters, has been to examine the refugee resettlement and integration process as experienced by the Mushungulis and other Somali refugees in Luckenville. I have tried to do this by
describing and explaining the trajectory of the refugee experience from flight to resettlement. In describing Somalia in its current state, I have given you the setting as to how chaos and the dismantling of social organization and structure in a nation-state can generate refugees. With situating the Mushungulis in the violent history of *Qabil* dominance in Somalia, I have illuminated a kinship system which is based on social contracts that usually only temporarily benefit the minority groups in Somalia. Unfortunately, the Mushungulis are not a part of the *Qabil* system as they are not considered “Somalis.” However, they have been adopted into a patron-client relationship with two of the *Qabils* – the Digil and the Rahanweyn and this relationship is based on their work as farmers and agriculturalists. These alliances are fluid and transitional and even opportunistic. What is clear is the tension between groups that practice agriculture and pastoral nomadism. Even in the refugee camps of Kenya and in Nairobi, the Somalis have transplanted their organizational culture which has assisted in restoring a certain sense of order and normalcy for refugees. And in describing the refugee cultural orientation sessions, I have portrayed the fact that many refugees but especially the Mushungulis are woefully unprepared for their new lives in the United States of America. In Luckenville, the outcomes for the Mushungulis and other Somali refugees are mixed. Some have integrated well but the majority have problems with learning English and obtaining gainful employment. This is especially so for the Mushungulis who had minimal occupational skills in the first place and could barely speak English. This has resulted in poor integration outcomes for them and others who share the same predicament. Being in this predicament, mutual assistance associations in Luckenville and the Twin Cities are hamstrung in efforts to help them as these entities have to focus and prioritize self-sufficiency. Another setback would be that the Mushungulis are not considered new arrivals anymore as they were resettled in 2005. With the issues of *Qabils* still prevalent in Luckenville and the Twin Cities, the Somali community is reconstituting its identity and reimagining its identity. They need to revisit the concept of *tol iyo xeer* and to incorporate all Somalis, including the Mushungulis, into strengthening, enhancing, and redefining *tol* and *xeer*. I believe that with new forces and pressures that are acting on the community, members will look to other refugee and immigrant
communities that have had similar organizational features and learn to adapt and grow in a positive way in Luckenville, the Twin Cities, and the United States of America.

In the next and final chapter, I discuss my findings in thorough and eventually propose how a fractured community might indeed consolidate even though there might be a perceived loss of culture and tradition to become positively contributing members of their new host community and receiving society as they adopt new customs and practices.
Chapter Seven: Conclusion: New Americans in Luckenville and the Twin Cities

When approaching this study, there were several expectations for the refugees based on refugee resettlement literature, resettlement policies, and current events: (1) employment would be a challenge which was due to host country language proficiency and qualification restrictions, and in the United States of America particularly, because of self-sufficiency constraints; (2) interviews would include descriptions of psychological trauma and its effects on resettlement; (3) the key influences of language and employment, (4) the centrality of social interaction, (5) the importance of believing full membership in the host community and receiving society is attainable, and (6) the ways in which the United States of America’s resettlement policies shape refugee integration.

I started this study with the multidimensional and relational model of resettlement. This model guided research questions to assist in the exploration of the influences in resettlement and facilitators and hindrances in integration. The model was critical for understanding the different ways in which individual, institutional, and ideological factors combined to shape the refugees’ resettlement outcomes. It assisted in understanding why some participants had separation outcomes rather than integration outcomes. Based on the study findings, it is clear that there were some factors which played a stronger, more influential role than others. That is not to say that the other factors were not important and did not contribute to resettlement outcomes. However, when looking for places for intervention, the factors discussed below should be the starting point. Contrary to expectations, gender and mental health issues did not receive the same prominence in the refugees’ conceptualizations of integration and a normal life as language and employment, social interaction, national affiliation, and resettlement policy. A discussion of these two issues follows discussion of the four or more influential factors below.

Language and employment, molded by resettlement policy, were the critical factors that shaped resettlement. All the refugees who were characterized as integrated
by the study definition had these factors as facilitators. On the institutional level, religious congregations made a significant impact on the resettlement outcomes of those refugees they sponsored by providing positive, interactive social engagement and support. There was a major distinction between involvement by congregations and by ethnic community organizations on integration. On the ideological level, resettlement policy and welfare ideology contributed to the types of resettlement programs and benefits offered to refugees. One additional institutional factor, “nature of the conflict,” was added to the model. “Nature of the conflict” was added based on the impact of the traumatic memories or experiences while in and fleeing from Somalia and in the refugee camps of Kenya. “National affiliation” was also added to the model. This referred to the case with which one could relate to the identity of the host country and feel ownership of that identity or the extent or degree to which one could feel his or her identity from the country of origin was a valid, integral part of one’s identity in the host country.

In the model, national affiliation follows integration, influencing the achievement of normalcy. Although it could be considered an institutional factor, its placement was chosen because the achievement of integration precedes normalcy (that is, one cannot be living a normal life with being integrated). Based on these study findings, the multidimensional and relational model was revised. See Figure 7-1 below.
“Normalcy” or restoring “a normal life” was the third addition to the model. Having a normal life was described by the refugees as (1) being employed, (2) being relatively satisfied with the level and nature of employment, (3) having close and casual relationships with neighbors, co-workers, and other members of the host country, (4) participating in Somali traditions, (5) participating in national holidays, (6) being aware of political issues affecting them and their ethnic group as well as issues of concern of the host country, (7) owning a home, (8) being accepted for who they are, and (9) feeling a sense of allegiance or affiliation to the host country.

**Language**

New Americans coming from countries where English is taught as a second language or have English-language backgrounds have an easier time starting off the in the United States of America (Khoo, et al. 1994). This was not the case with the Somali refugees. Those refugees who participated in English classes for a year at least spoke
somewhat fluently or had functional command of English and could communicate somewhat effectively, albeit haltingly. Those who did not complete the courses or who did not attend the courses at all spoke very limited English or none at all. Abdoul and Mabruka fell into this category. American resettlement program materials noted that refugees’ “first goal should be to take any job” (Refugee Service Center 1996: 37) and that “English skills would improve through study and informal contacts with other Americans” (Refugee Service Center 1996: 38). It can be difficult to learn English on the job because the refugees may lack the skills and confidence to even open channels of communication to co-workers (Mertus, et al. 1997).

In their study of the stressors of exile among Eastern European refugees in Chicago, Mertus, et al. found that the inability to speak English resulted in a lack of environmental mastery, underscoring “the importance of linguistic competence in effectively negotiating the environment and particularly in gaining access to important educational and employment-related resources” (2002: 349). Examining English-language learning of Indochinese refugees in the United States of America, Tollefson asserted that the language policy which shaped American ESL courses for refugees was designed to channel them into jobs in the peripheral economy”(1991: 108). My study’s findings were similar, as those refugees who were employed in low-wage jobs had either practically no involvement in ESL courses because they had to work right away or participated in courses that were ineffective, leading to a curtailed involvement. It is assumed by policy-makers and other government officials that those who are successful in learning the language of the host country work hard, while those who finish language courses but do not learn the language or those who do not participate at all are considered to be unmotivated and thus responsible for their own separation and marginalization (Tollefson 1991, 1986). Moreover, from that same viewpoint, responsibility should not lie at the feet of “charity, employers, or the state, but with autonomous individuals taking charge of their lives” (Katz 2001: 31).
Employment

Employment was both an economic and social imperative for participants. Having a job contributed to their development of a new identity in the host country by influencing their general state of well-being and giving their lives structure and meaning (Lavik, et al. 1996). Employment also supported individual competence and self worth (Kivelae 1997). Among the refugees I interviewed, only the jobs of a small minority could be said to be having such a positive influence in their lives. These were the refugees whom I had categorized as integrated. Integrated refugees had started renewed careers rather than working at jobs for subsistence sake. For the rest who were employed, there was relative dissatisfaction with employment. Among those who were unemployed, there was great frustration at the inability to find work. As Korac (2003) found in her study of refugees from the former Yugoslavia that had resettled in Rome, employment was one of the most difficult challenges due to a number of factors, including the tightness of the labor market in the host country, policies that purposefully excluded most refugees from positions or areas of expertise which they had held in their countries of origin, and the refugees’ language proficiency. Just as in Korac’s (2003b) study in Italy, however, regardless of educational background or area of expertise, refugees here most often found work in the lowest paying sectors. This finding was consistent with other studies examining refugee employment in Canada (Krahn, et al. 2000; Tousignant 1997; Dorais 1991), Italy (Korac 2003, 2001), the United Kingdom (Duke 1996), and the United States of America (Takeda 2000), which strongly indicated that unless there is some mediation, such as what occurred with congregational sponsors in the United States of America, most refugees with little to no English proficiency will end up in low-skill, low-wage labor from which there is little upward mobility.

Illustrative of Korac’s (2003b, 2001) discussion of integration as an interactive, mutually adaptive phenomenon, my study found an important difference between the social support of congregational sponsors and that provided within the Somali community. Social support on the individual level has been found to be a key element in
ensuring refugees’ wellbeing in resettlement (Beiser and Johnson 2003; Rousseau, et al. 1998; Breslow, et al. 1997); my study found this as well. There were numerous examples of social support among the Somali refugees which was important to their emotional and financial wellbeing. There was a caveat however. Because *Qabil* identity is still very dominant, the help and assistance I refer to here largely occurred within members of the *Qabils* or intra-*Qabils*. In Kelly’s (2003) study of Somalis in Great Britain, she found that Somali refugees maintained kinship groups, friendships, and networks, but found ‘no community and no feeling of obligation to others” (2003: 46). I believe in order for the Somalis and the Mushungulis to be successfully integrated in Luckenville and the Twin Cities, there is a need to restore *tol iyo xeer* - kinship and the social contract - within and between *Qabil* groups and with other minority groups, like the Mushungulis. *Somalinimo* and *Midnimo* are also important to the success of the Somali community during the resettlement process. Islam is a critical component to the identity of the Somali community. Being allowed to celebrate and observe Islamic traditions will also help them integrate with positive outcomes. All of this, the *Qabils*, *tol iyo xeer* – kinship and social contract, Islam, *Somalinimo* and *Midnimo* are all forms of social capital and support that are critical to the successful integration of the Somali community. My study findings revealed that in order for social support to be influential in integration, the support had to be positive, sustained, and interactive with members of the host country. Social support given by Somalis to each other was important in strengthening the Somali community within the host country but where interaction between refugees and members of the host country was minimal, the refugees felt disconnected to the host community and receiving society than integrated.

The greatest contribution to resettlement was the support of religious congregations in the form of sponsorship. Sponsors provide critical material, information, references for jobs, and financial and emotional support to refugees beginning soon after arrival. In the United States of America, Breslow, et al. (1997) found sponsorship to be vital to the outcome of resettlement for Cambodian refugees resettling in Richmond, Virginia, offering material and emotional support. The differences in outcomes based on
whether or not someone had been sponsored by a religious congregation in my study sample were significant, as discussed earlier. Moreover, the impact of sponsorship was felt in every domain of participation for those sponsored refugees, supporting the achievement of integration. When sponsored, refugees were provided with a substitute social network until they were able to regenerate one of their own. In many cases, refugees’ reformulated networks included their American sponsoring family. Refugee researchers (Mestheneos and Ioannidi 2003; Valtonen 1999, 1998) have discussed inter-group relationships in resettlement in the narrow context of how difficult it can be to create these connections because of stereotypes and other forms of discrimination. Korac (2001) found inter-group relationships to be “important to [refugees’] feelings of connection to and incorporation into the host community and receiving society” (2001: 13). In her study, however, these relationships were confined to the social arena and did not shape refugees’ participation in other domains as the sponsoring relationships had in Luckenville.

One theme that emerged from the interviews was “national affiliation.” The refugees made reference to a phenomenon that described whether or not they believed that they were a part of the host country and whether or not they felt the host country accepted them for who they were. The concept of “national affiliation” was created referring to the ease with which one could relate to the identity of the host country and feel ownership of that identity or the extent to which one felt his or her identity from the country of origin could be a valid, integral part of one’s identity in the host country. National affiliation also turned out to be a significant contributor to whether or not refugees found it possible to move beyond integration and restore normalcy to their lives.

Somalis more often than not blended into their neighborhoods somewhat easily. The refugees recalled some initial curiosity by neighbors but it was almost always friendly and soon after transformed into friendships or benign indifference. When asked whether they had experienced discrimination, most of the participants said no but there were some instances of it, especially at the work place. They did not recall feeling any
discrimination against them because they were refugees. If anything, the Somali refugees felt more distance from other Somalis who belonged to other Qabils. The refugees had firm convictions about their rightful place in American society, even if they did not feel integrated. Just over half of the refugees celebrated American national holidays, besides the Somali and religious holidays, such as the 4th of July and Presidents’ Day and Veterans’ Day in a Somali way. For example, 4th of July celebrations would include Somali rice and goat meat. For Presidents’ Day, they would remember the interview questions that immigration officials had asked them when they were applying for citizenship. And for Veterans’ Day, they would celebrate Somali style especially if they had loved ones serving in the military (there are a small but increasing number of young Somali males joining the military). It is important to note, however, that most refugees did not consider themselves Americans at the time of the interviews, and many conveyed their determination to hold to being Somali. Asima held this view, even though she planned to stay in the United States of America permanently. “I want to be Somali. I can live here, but I take the system I have to take, the rules and everything, but still here (she placed her hand over her heart), I am Somali. I don’t want to change to American” (March 2009).

Exploring the extent to which refugees feel integrated into the host community and receiving society, Shandy (2005) looked at how features in the structural systems of integration failed the refugees from The Sudan such as the lack of cultural and linguistic competencies in schools, government, and service institutions which ultimately failed to help them integrate and lead them to migrating out of Minnesota. Many found that they could not flourish in the state despite the majority of them being Christians. Celic-Peisker (2003) studied features of identity, community, and labor market integration of Bosnian refugees in Australia. My study’s findings were similar regarding the difficulty refugees faced in employment in a host country. As in Australia, refugees here experienced occupational downgrading and were forced to take jobs that did not necessarily ensure long term financial security. Additionally, as in this study, Colic-Peisker (2003) found that Bosnians in their forties and fifties faced a double challenge of
difficulties learning English as well as ageism in hiring. In terms of identity, however, whereas Colic-Peisker (2003: 5) found that Bosnians assumed a sense of belonging from their “whiteness” albeit in a “superficial and temporary way” in what they considered a white, “culturally European,” country, Somalis here did not feel this way at all. Their skin color, dress, language, food, music, religion, and culture set them apart immediately and they had to overcome some barriers initially.

In addition, Colic-Peisker (2003) discussed the importance of community and noted that in his sample there seemed to be “a strong emphasis on family and community connectedness in Bosnian culture, especially in rural areas but also in the densely populated cities where daily contacts with neighbors and relatives are the norm” (2003: 6). I believe that with my findings, this was true for the Somali community as well. In Colic-Peisker’s (2003) study, the discussions, however, revolved solely around connections in the Bosnian community and there was no mention of the attempt to create social connections with Australians. In my study, there was also a sense of community, but, as many of the refugees pointed out to me; it was not solely limited to the Somali ethnic group. Refugees explicitly voiced the desire to have casual, informal friendly relationships with Americans in addition to those in the Somali community. This was especially apparent among the Somali refugees in Luckenville. A sense of belonging was critical to the development of their identity in the host country, and their concept of community encompassed host country nationals as well as the Somali ethnic group. It seemed artificial to them to have to restrict their social interactions with people from only one group. This was especially true for Abdoul and Mabruka who did not want anything socially to do with most of the other Somalis.

Korac (2003) conducted a comparative study of refugee resettlement experiences in Italy and the Netherlands. She interviewed refugees from the former Yugoslavia to ascertain how they configured their existence in Italy and the Netherlands under two different models of integration. There were similarities between the experiences of the refugees from the former Yugoslavia compared with those here (Korac 2003). First,
because there was no initial reception system in Italy, refugees were required to be self-sufficient quickly in order to survive. As in Luckenville, this imperative translated into having to take jobs that were not appropriate to their skills or professional expertise and training and from which moving socially and economically upwards was difficult. The second similarity was the most influential in terms of creating social connections with members of the host country. Many refugees resettled in Italy had made significant social connections with Italians, including intermarriage. These social connections in the Italian case provided more of an opportunity for these refugees to have a sense of national affiliation which could assist in integration and the subsequent restoration of normalcy. Additionally, refugees felt that their relationships “with Italians were characterized by mutual process of learning and shifting within both communities” (Korac 2003: 61). An important difference, however, between Italy and Luckenville is that the majority of refugees were not Italian citizens and were living there under temporary protected status (TPS) which had to be renewed periodically (TPS conferred the right to work).

There is more psychological and physical space in the United States of America for a hybrid identity that is not the integration of two worlds but a transformation into a new entity. Foreign-born Americans as well as their children born on American soil have challenged the classic, European-based definition of American to allow for multiple interpretations where diverse ethnic backgrounds are given significance, reshaping the discourse on American culture. There is room for someone to say, “I want a normal life” because he or she can be an accepted and legitimate part of American society without sacrificing significant aspects of the culture from the country of origin. “Normal life” is one step beyond integration; contributing to its achievement is the degree to which the refugee feels a sense of national affiliation toward the host country.

All countries are faced with the reception and integration of refugees into national society, and approach it differently, based upon social welfare ideology which shapes their resettlement policies. The American model is focused on self-sufficiency within 60
days and provides only short term support. There are several points of discussion regarding the structures of the resettlement policies which contributed to the refugees’ resettlement outcomes. There are two main issues and concerns in the American model and resultant outcomes. Other policy issues will require not only policy but culture shifts. The current resettlement model has national, government and ideological-level entities shaping the implementation of the resettlement programs at the local level. In the United States of America, the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) in the Department of State provides per capita funding to voluntary resettlement agencies for resettlement. The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) directs the development and coordination of national public and private programs that provide assistance to refugees. There are two important points to note in the level of control maintained by the state and the source of funding for programs and services. In the United States of America, resettlement involves services from different sectors: Funding is provided by the PRM for basic resettlement needs, VOLAGs oversee cash and medical assistance, and state and local voluntary resettlement agencies provide specific resettlement services under guidance from ORR. Many refugees in Luckenville were confused about the resettlement program and its benefits. In her study of refugee policy in the United States of America and Austria, Franz (2003) also found a certain level of confusion on the part of resettling refugees, which one of her respondents felt was purposeful and joked that the goal of the American welfare system was to “deny and distract” (2003: 17). As a result of widespread confusion and a lack of knowledge, many did not apply for benefits for which they were eligible, such as Refugee Medical Assistance.

A second important point is the funding source for resettlement services and programs. In the United States of America, the PRM provides resettlement agencies with $740 per capita payment for refugees ($400 for cash assistance for the refugee and $340 to cover resettlement services). During the year, there are ebbs and flows of refugees who enter the United States of America for resettlement. Refugee flows are affected by crises around the world so if severe violence breaks out in certain part of the world, there may be a spike in the need for immediate resettlement. Because funding that is used for
current refugees is often per capita funding given for those that were previously resettled, a large, sudden increase in resettling refugees can easily overwhelm agency resources (G. Avenido, personal communication, March, 2009; J. Borden, personal communication, March, 2009). There are several policy issues which are problematic. Addressing these issues, however, requires policy interventions as well as national culture shifts. These shifts must occur in the minds of policy-makers and the general public in order for there to be lasting and effective change in resettlement outcomes.

The first issue is that refugees are not a monolithic group, even those that come from the same country of origin. Refugees arrive with diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, job skills, levels of trauma, financial savvy and other characteristics which influence resettlement and integration outcomes. Even within a group coming from the same country, in addition to the diverse characteristics mentioned above, there could be ethnic divisions and strains as well, such as in the case of the Somali refugees in my study. These differences are not incorporated into the resettlement policies of host countries and receiving societies, and as result, refugee are treated with policies based on “essentialized notions of identity and culture” (Eastmond 1998: 179). Part of the process of accepting refugees must include a more thorough examination of the population and issues therein that could affect resettlement. The second issue is that integration and social relationships cannot be dictated by policy. Aspects of American culture and ways of life (Korac 2003) strongly influence the extent to which a refugee can achieve what she or he considers a satisfactory level of social integration. In the United States of America, a three stage policy mind shift may be required. First, the refugee should be removed from the traditional position of policy object to a place where she or he is an integral and active agent in resettlement. Second, resettlement itself must also be transformed from a one-way procedure into a two way process with space for adjustment by both refugees and the host country and receiving society. Third, the government through funding at the local level should support cultural exchange activities that reflect this process of mutual adaptation. Without some semblance of mutual accommodation,
refugees will continue to believe that assimilation is the desired resettlement outcome by the government as well as the public.

The third issue relates to shortcomings mentioned above with regard to the persistence of policies which overlook the refugees’ voices. In Luckenville, interventions are not reflective of refugees’ needs and wants. Refugees’ points of view are ignored in policy creation and implementation. Additionally, resettlement program activities do not make refugees feel integrated as they do not give them a strategy to attain a sense of rootedness and wider social inclusion (Korac 2003). Policy interventions are therefore experienced as state measures that do not correspond to what refugees perceive as their integration goals although they are required to participate. Not only is there no solicitation of refugee input, but there is no formal or informal body for refugees, or for that matter case workers and service providers, to join that could provide input into the American resettlement process. In the next section, I make some recommendations that I believe will help refugee resettlement policies in the future and will help refugees integrate better in the United States of America.

Implications and Recommendations for Policy and Practice

This section discusses the individual, the institutional, and the ideological implications and specific recommendations from the study findings for resettlement policy as well as practice for the United States of America. On the individual and institutional levels, implications would reflect an understanding of the importance of within-group differences in refugee groups. On the ideological level, there is a need to reformulate resettlement language and employment policies to reflect those factors’ central roles in integration as well as long-term self-sufficiency. There needs to be advocacy on an ideological level to push for funding to support social connections between refugees and host country citizens’ inclusion in resettlement programming. Specifically, there are individual, institutional, and ideological level implications for
congregational or community sponsorship which could have ramifications on resettlement outcomes.

Recommendation 1 – Focus on the individual refugee in context

A genuine attempt to identify individual challenges rather than treat refugees as a monolithic category with the same needs would contribute to self-sufficiency by highlighting refugees’ individual strengths and bolstering areas where they need assistance. Resettlement policy needs to address the individual needs of refugees, even in the short sixty-day period before self-sufficiency is expected. S. Fahia, a director of a local resettlement agency, noted that the national voluntary agencies who decide where refugees are resettled,

…always look specifically at the ethnic community and send the cases where they know there is a community and where the agency can meet the language and cultural needs of the refugees. (March 2009)

In the Somali case, however, there seemed to be a presupposed monolithic “Somali” category that did not look specifically at the individuals and their needs or the different Qabils, let alone the Mushungulis or the other minority groups that make up the Somali community or the fact that the group was severely fractured and divided. As noted above, however, there was still little recognition of the role Qabil division in how the Somali community was utilized to facilitate integration and how resulting tensions could influence refugees’ adaptation.

There needs to be cultural sensitivity to within group differences on a policy level to support initial physical and psychological space for these different intra-community groups. This is not to say that there should be sustained ethnic or Qabil segregation in the host country and receiving society. On the contrary, conflict resolution should be incorporated on a practice level to work with these groups so that the seeds of discontent in the country of origin are not sown in the host country, obstructing their economic, social, cultural, and political participation.
The Somali refugees had a different approach to mental health issues than the host countries in which they resettled. Trauma generated by events and experiences in Somalia and in Kenya was typically addressed within the Somali community. This could have the refugees’ preference for intra-group handling of these issues but may also have been, as noted above, because of language and cultural barriers, including host countries’ definitions of mental health and processes of helping those with mental health needs. Additionally, voluntary resettlement agencies and municipalities are not set up for screening mild to moderate symptoms of trauma and typically only provide referrals to mental health professionals in known cases of torture, rape, or other serious physical assaults. Psychological and subsequent physical repercussions generated from the significant loss suffered by the Somali participants and refugees and the larger Somali community would suggest a mental health intervention, though one that is culturally and linguistically appropriate and grounded within the community.

I recommend that the Office of Refugee Resettlement [ORR] in the United States of America should ensure that the individual refugee is at the heart of service provision by strengtheneing the program in the following ways:

- Provide resources on the conflict from which the refugee has fled to voluntary resettlement agencies to help them understand the country of origin context of the refugee and provide appropriate referrals to mutual assistance associations and community-based organizations.

- Allocate funding to voluntary resettlement agencies for conflict resolution consultants to meet with refugees from countries of origin where there is intra-group conflict to prevent the continuation of conflict in the host country.

- Incorporate refugees’ perspectives on their own strengths and challenges into their individual “development” plans to ensure that they are a legitimate reflection of their abilities, counteracting agency assumptions based on ethnic affiliation or nationality.

- Allocate funding for the inclusion of professional, culturally and linguistically competent mental health providers (from the refugees’ country of origin, if possible) in all initial intakes with refugees in order to provide a formal, comprehensive mental
health evaluation that incorporates refugees’ own mental health categories and diverse expressions of trauma. Appropriate referrals should be offered, if necessary.

- Encourage schools of social work to provide specialized training for students who will be working with refugees that highlights refugees’ unique needs and provides students with skills and strategies for effective social work practice that sensitizes them to discrimination and cultural differences (Lyons and Stathopoulos, 2001).

Recommendation 2 – Improve refugees’ host-country language proficiency

As initial points of contact, resettlement programs have the opportunity to make an early, significant contribution to refugees’ resettled lives in the area of language learning and employment. Nearly every refugee I interviewed felt that the most important intervention was assistance with language proficiency. This is one area in which refugees and policy makers share a common point of view. It is in how this language need is addressed, however, that the two entities diverge. The patchwork system of language learning in the United States of America reflects the priority of employment over language proficiency. Initial pressure was not on learning English but in getting immediate employment regardless of type of job or opportunities for advancement. The refugees and participants with the highest proficiency levels were either in their early twenties or had been sponsored by a religious congregation because they had more opportunities to practice and speak English. Religious congregations also facilitated the refugees’ access to ESL classes by providing transportation and child care. Additionally, many also provided one-on-one English tutoring for parents as well as children. The demand for ESL programs surpasses availability (Minnesota Literacy Council, 2008).

The result is that a significant portion of the refugee population that has limited to no English proficiency which seriously impairs their integration ability. It can mean more refugees in low-paying employment with little job security or opportunities for advancement, threatening the goal of long-term self-sufficiency. As Tollefsen points out, “when language is a gatekeeper for employment and higher education, it may
become a powerful tool for sustaining inequality and hegemony” (1991: 136). The United States of America needs policy provisions which reflect its commitment to equal opportunity for refugees, if not equal outcome. The ORR should provide support in the following ways:

- Provide funding for voluntary resettlement agencies’/municipalities’ language classes that target refugees’ specific language needs by providing classes for older refugees, those who want to learn conversational skills, those who want language skills for the job market, and those who have difficulty concentrating (because of trauma and/or age).

- Stipulate in their language policy provisions that language courses offered to refugees must incorporate adult language learning techniques.

- Continuous funding not tied to per capita resettlement slots for (a) varied level intensive language classes for refugees based on age and language skills, and (b) a short time period (three months) in which refugees are able to participate in these intensive language courses to provide them with a solid English foundation before they seek employment.

- Continuous funding not tied to per capita resettlement slots for refugees’ participation in community language courses if the voluntary resettlement agency does not offer ESL classes. This funding should be available to all agencies for all refugees regardless of date of arrival.

Recommendation 3 – Facilitate refugee employment that is related to their prior education/qualification from their country of origin.

Important changes are needed on the policy level to facilitate refugees’ employment. There needs to advocacy for a national body able to evaluate refugee credentials received in the country of origin. Valuable resources in the form of human capital are wasted when refugees are forced to take jobs that are unrelated to their professional or vocational expertise. Valtonen (1998) also found that refugees’ skills were being underutilized or not utilized at all in her study of refugee integration in Finland. She noted that these societal losses are due to structural deficiencies regarding
the utilization of human capital which would otherwise have been counted as a resettlement advantage (Valtonen, 1998). The evaluation of credentials need not interfere with the government goal of self-sufficiency in the short term. On the contrary, a refugee might feel more comfortable taking any job right away if he or she knew that his or her credentials were in the process of being evaluated.

More credibility needs to be given to a refugee’s qualifications and/or professional expertise. Providing mechanisms for the evaluation of a refugee’s qualifications gives the host community and receiving society an opportunity to utilize the expertise thus adding to the country’s human capital. Moreover, the acknowledgement of refugee credentials sends a signal to the refugee community that the resources which they bring are valued and seen as legitimate. Thus, the evaluation process could serve to strengthen both a refugee’s prospects of long-term self-sufficiency as well as enhance the opportunity for national affiliation by improving the relationship between refugees and the host country government. In an effort to recognize refugees’ qualifications and preserve human capital, I recommend facilitating employment based on refugee qualifications in the following way:

- A national evaluation body that oversees all disciplines should be created to evaluate the educational and professional credentials of refugees living permanently in the United States of America.

Recommendation 4 – Support relationship-building between refugees and members of the host country.

My research and study findings demonstrated the importance of interactions between refugees and host country citizens not only because they facilitate social inclusion but also because they facilitate employment. On the national and ideological level, social workers and others who provide services to refugees need to advocate for support in creating these linkages. Friendships cannot be legislated, but financial support can be given to organizations and programs that facilitate cultural exchange on the individual level and focus on creating refugee-host country member networks. The
Number of congregations which sponsor refugees is limited, primarily based on the costs involved and the lack of knowledge of what sponsorship involves and entails. Sponsorship is a voluntary activity, usually overseen by congregational missions committees. Participation can ebb and flow on the basis of congregational budgetary constraints. Although the positive outcomes of sponsorship are recognized by the ORR and resettlement agencies (just as voluntary resettlement agency participation in social welfare provision is valued by the government but not fully supported), without effective technical assistance by the resettlement programs and policy mandates providing some measure of financial support, the number of congregations willing to bear the full weight of the costs of sponsorship will continue to be low and, thus, fewer refugees will be able to reap the wide benefits of sponsorship. There is an opportunity to seek direct support activities in President Obama’s current Budget Proposal, which has slated refugee assistance in Faith-Based and Community Programs for an increase in 2010 (Roundtable on Religion and Social Work Policy 2009). The ORR should support linkages in the following ways:

- Create a national grant program for congregations who want to sponsor refugees. Grant applications should be accepted and, where appropriate, funded throughout the year to reflect the continuous process of resettlement.

- Support activities by resettlement agencies and other community organizations which mirror those sponsors in areas where there is no congregational sponsorship.

- Develop a formal cultural orientation program for members of host communities and receiving societies so that they understand their new American neighbors and the reasons as to why they are moving into their communities and neighborhoods. Without a formal program, reports from the media are the only “orientation sessions” that these members receive and the risk of receiving false or exaggerated information is high.

Recommendation 5 – Standardize refugee services nationwide to genuinely provide equality of opportunity for resettling refugees.

This oversight at the national level provides a uniformity of resettlement services that is not present currently in the United States of America. Minimum standards set out
in resettlement policy govern basic needs; other services, such as language courses, are
dependent upon the capabilities of local voluntary resettlement agencies, community
resources, and knowledge of refugees’ specific needs. As a result, refugees resettling in
one area may not have access to the same opportunities as those resettling in other areas,
jeopardizing integration. I recommend supporting the standardization of service delivery
with input from the population served in the following ways:

- Revise the funding structure of the resettlement program so that all the voluntary
  resettlement agencies receive continuous funding for ongoing programs and services
  that serve new and recent arrivals in addition to a per capita allotment.

- Ensure compliance of all voluntary resettlement agencies by conducting periodic
  service evaluations by ORR that focus on short and long-term refugee outcomes to
  make certain requirements are being met for each refugee resettled by the voluntary
  resettlement agency or congregational sponsor.

- Ensure refugee representation in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of
  resettlement services.

Recommendation 6 – Understand the importance and the role that cities, whether rural or
urban, can play in the integration of refugees.

      Cities hold the distinction of organizing and regulating many activities of daily
      urban life that are prosaic, but nevertheless crucial to the social and economic inclusion
      of residents. Some of the most important sticking points in terms of encouraging two-
      way integration between refugees, migrants, and immigrants, and host communities and
      receiving societies revolve around positive encounters between groups in public spaces
      and perceived inequalities in access to public services and goods. The enforcement of
      building codes, management of social housing, police, schools, and transportation
      services, and supporting economic development for a range of social groups and
      communities may not be leading national policy concerns. Such issues, policies, and
      their delivery do, however, make a difference at the scale where social inclusion is lived
      and negotiated on a daily basis.
There are many areas of potential policy intervention that cities can pursue to encourage integration between new Americans such as immigrants, migrants, and refugees and native-born residents and foster urban environments in which inclusion rather than exclusion and conflict are the norm:

1. “Governance” relationships between governments, state agencies, non-governmental organizations and social groups
2. Policies and programs that support fledgling immigrant and minority communities and/or respond to their distinct needs and experiences as they integrate into a new community and society
3. Investments in public goods and services ranging from daycares and community centers to water and sewer systems
4. Urban land-use planning and housing
5. Police services and outreach to minority and immigrant communities
6. Urban transportation and accessibility to employment and services
7. Economic development initiatives that engage local entrepreneurs and seek to diminish rather than exacerbate marginalization and segregation

Illustrations of each of these is possible, but promising examples of progressive actions in governance, housing, and urban transportation is what I will highlight here (Refugee Reports 2003 – 2008). These examples come from around the country and in Canada and can be considered best practices.

Local Politics Addressing Local Needs: Governance Structures

In the last two decades, cities around the world have witnessed movements to democratize local government and increase community and social group involvement in local affairs. Governance, as distinct from government, has become an influential concept in structuring interactions between local government and civil society groups and organizations.

Some city administrations have deliberately cultivated relationships with minority and new American communities and social groups, including refugees, migrants, and immigrants, to enhance their involvement in actions and programs that touch their lives. In Portland, Oregon, as part of the Building the New American Community Project...
(which is funded by the Office of Refugee Resettlement), the city’s Metropolitan Human Rights Center and Office of Neighborhood Involvement, as well as Multnomah County’s Office of School and community Partnerships, have deliberately sought out the active involvement of several refugee and immigrant communities in a number of different initiatives. This collaborative effort to develop governance relationships with new American communities that have limited experience in local politics ad government includes projects that encourage neighborhood economic development, as well as programs that address the needs of school-aged immigrants and second-generation youth and their families.

The Value of Unintended Outcomes: Urban Land Use and Social Integration

Sometimes cities can get lucky and decisions made in response to acute circumstances decades earlier can have unintended benefits for social inclusion in today’s multiethnic metropolitan areas and suburban cities. An example of this comes from Canada. Decisions made about suburban development in Montreal during the 1950s and 1960s, for example, have had largely positive implications for diminishing spatial segregation and building community cohesions among some ethnic groups in the contemporary city.

In response to a crisis in housing availability in Montreal immediately following World War II, the decision was made to encourage the construction of medium-density rental housing and single-family owner occupied housing in neighborhoods on what was then the suburban periphery. The housing crisis eventually subsided and over time, more and more immigrant households settled in these relatively affordable dwellings.

Among immigrants from the Indian subcontinent, for example, extended families use the relatively close spatial proximity of rental and owner-occupied housing to maintain close relationships, even though they are at different stages in settlement and integration processes. Families deliberately search for rental housing in the same
neighborhood as their more well-established relatives so as to maintain social networks that rich in information and support, and furnish links to larger Indian communities, thereby diminishing feelings of social isolation. The relatively close proximity of people from different social classes and ethno-cultural backgrounds in these suburban neighborhoods also has allowed refugees and immigrants to tap into information, employment, and social networks beyond the orbit of their ethnic group.

Networking a Fragmented City: Public Transportation

It is difficult to overestimate the value of public transportation investments in facilitating social inclusion and access to opportunities in cities where employment is scattered in nodes throughout the metropolitan area. Even in a city like Lowell, Massachusetts, transportation is a key factor in integration. The termination of a public bus service immediately following the afternoon rush has been identified as a major impediment to new refugees and immigrants taking advantage of English-language training courses. The One Lowell Coalition of refugee, immigrant, and community based organizations has been extremely effective in highlighting the need for better public transit if the community as a whole intends to integrate immigrant workers into the life of the city.

In a similar vein, significant investment by Toronto and Montreal in subway and bus systems following World War II has been shown to increase significantly the ability of new immigrants to access both employment and public services. Researchers have pointed out that the investments made by Metro Toronto in developing an integrated public transit system did a great deal to sustain social cohesion and interaction in a city that grew rapidly following World War II. In fact, investments in public transportation, coupled with tax-pooling policies among middle class suburban municipalities and the poorer central city, did much to encourage a convergence of population characteristics within the metropolitan region over time.
Successful investments that diminish social inclusion and marginalization must always be adapted to urban change lest the situation deteriorate. In recent decades, low levels of investment in public transit and an absence of direct tax-sharing relationships between new and old municipalities in greater Toronto have contributed to increased segregation. Augmented by a boom in outer suburban employment districts, there has been a growing spatial mismatch between the housing locations of less-well-off residents, many of whom are new immigrants and refugees, and the distribution of employment opportunities. In this respect, Toronto is a city where access to the full spectrum of employment opportunities and urban services is more restricted for the less affluent and mobile. The possibilities for meaningful interaction between the large number of social classes and ethno-cultural groups in this city, which continues to be the primary destination for immigrants, migrants, and refugees to Canada, are also much diminished.

As cities across the world become ever more the focal points of post-industrial economic growth and immigrant settlement, city government, agencies, social groups and organizations of civil society are playing ever more influential roles in shaping social inclusion and integration pathways. In part, this means that cities will take on new policies and programs, and some may assume responsibilities that traditionally have been associated with more senior-level governments in order to respond to the needs, challenges, and opportunities posed by new residents, institutions, and economic activities. It also means that cities must continue to play a role in creating socially inclusive environments by strategically pursuing urban management initiatives that are positive in terms of outcomes but are only indirectly related to refugees, migrants, and immigrants and their settlement and integration. Urban transportation, policing, and housing, for example, are not normally thought of as immigrant and refugee integration programs, even if they seek to achieve greater social inclusion.

Some cities may be able to draw many unintended benefits from decisions made decades earlier as they pursue policies of two-way integration. Other places will struggle within urban landscapes and social environments that seem ill-equipped to capitalize on
the opportunities commonly associated with cultural diversity in a post-industrial economy. Achieving greater social inclusion and equity in both kinds of cities will demand multiple policy “solutions,” for at the heart of this challenge lies the cultural and social diversity, plural circumstances, and fluidity that characterize today’s multiethnic societies.

New gateway cities, in contrast, may also lack the institutional services designed to serve the immigrant and refugee populations precise because there has been no need for such arrangements until recently. As some of the research cited above shows, many new gateway cities lack programs, such as bilingual services, necessary to accommodate the new refugee and immigrant communities. Thus, immigrants and refugees may not have access to institutions and the services in new gateway cities that refugees and immigrants have in more established gateway cities. I can only speculate how these differences influence immigrant and refugee integration, but I believe that comparing new gateway cities to more established gateway cities will yield greater insight into immigrant and refugee integration. I also believe that comparing the experience of refugees and immigrants in these two types of gateway cities along the dimensions I have highlighted here – development of racial and ethnic hierarchies, levels of segregation, and types of institutional services – holds great promise for furthering the understanding of refugee and immigrant integration. It also holds great promise for further longitudinal research with these populations. To this end, Zuniga and Hernandez-Leon’s (2005) edited collection of research on Mexican immigrants in new immigrant destinations will further what social science knows theoretically and empirically, and anthropologists and sociologists will do will to follow this line of research.

Recommendation 7 – Expand and Strengthen the Role of Mutual Assistance Association and Community Based Organizations

There is now an established body of research on community associations and their role in the integration of immigrants, migrants, and refugees in countries of resettlement and settlement (Joly 1988; Jenkins 1988; Rex, et al. 1987). Rex’s general approach has
been highly influential in the interpretation of associations in refugee communities
Rex (1987) explicitly states that the study of community associations is one way of
investigating the question of identity in migrant, immigrant, and refugee communities,
regarding this as part of a broader political sociology concerned with the degree to which
immigrants and refugees as assimilated or withdraw into ethnic enclaves. As he argues:

“It does make some sense then to see the immigrant and
refugee associations and community structure as forming
the intimate small scale group which has moral influence
over the individual and which yet integrates him with a
larger society” (Rex 1987: 17).

He initially suggests four main functions for community associations: overcoming
isolation, material help, defending interest, and promoting culture. He also adds
maintaining links to the homeland, a central feature of contemporary transnational or
diasporic communities and one which is increasingly significant in the field of refugee
studies (Eastmond 1998; Wahlbeck 1998; Shami 1996; McDowell 1996).

The study of refugee community associations has generated some broad conclusions:
Salinas et al (1987) in the European context, for example, note the role of associations in
rebuilding community life and a sense of belonging which has been disrupted by exile.
Associations are also important in empowering refugees, alleviating “boredom and
depression” and in overcoming discrimination or insensitivity in the provision of
statutory services.

Casting the net wider, Dorais (1991) writing on the Indochinese population in
Quebec, Canada, the formation of effective community associations depended on the
existence of well-integrated individuals (upward mobility in the receiving society), core
values (traditions of organization and leadership) and the support of the host community
and receiving society for its success. The most significant variable here was the level of
economic integration although the cultural homogeneity of the group was also cited as
important. Gold (1992) in his comparative study of Vietnamese and Soviet Jews in
California, notes that the absence of community-wide organization and the tendency toward segmentation and fragmentation are typical features of refugee communities. While similar political orientations may unite refugees and foster the formation of associations they may equally lead to division and factionalism. Integration or marginalization is almost equally likely outcomes for refugee communities in Gold’s view (1992). The most significant factor is the “broader context of refugees’ resettlement” (Gold 1992: 23), including as in Dorais (1991) the economic context and the role of state institutions in fostering refugee adaptation and integration.

A central theme in the literature on refugee associations is their role in strengthening or actively creating a sense of ethnic or national identity (Eastmond 1998, 1993; Vasquez 1989). The issues of cultural continuity and of maintaining links with the homeland are central considerations. In this context, Joly (1996) drawing heavily on Kunz’s earlier typological analysis (1981) differentiates between two broad types of refugee community – those with and those without political projects in the home country. In her comparative analysis, Chilean and Vietnamese community organization in Britain and France is contrasted, with the relation to the structure of conflict in the country of origin as a key determinant of the mode of adaptation, integration and resettlement outcome for either group, an approach also adopted by Al-Rasheed (1994). In Joly’s (1996) case, successful adaptation and integration for the Chileans was represented by the maintenance of the political project and belief in the imminence of return. For the Vietnamese, lacking a similar project and alienated from home, integration in the host or receiving community was the main consideration. The significant point is that associational life took on a different form in either case, with politicized home-oriented organizations on the Chilean side and a greater stress on integration for the Vietnamese associations. In the following analysis, this typology is deployed – at a distance and in a critical light – in order to facilitate comparison between the groups examined here: state collapse in the case of the Somalis. However, there are tendencies in the Somali Diaspora in the United States of America, for example, which are actively engaged in the reconstruction process in Somaliland. It needs to be emphasized that sub-group
mobilization and forms of identification are particularly important features of community organization for Somali refugees in Luckenville and the Twin Cities. Relations of power within refugee groups are an important, if neglected, area of analysis in the refugee literature. In addition, rather than contrasting the integration strategies of the groups in the way suggested by Joly (1996), I place a particular emphasis upon the role of associations as public vehicles for the articulation of communal interests and identities. The capacity of particular groups within refugee communities to articulate a “communal voice” may significantly influence their access to resources in the local settlement context.

Conclusion

In working with Abdoul and Mabruka and the other Somali refugees, I became aware of my own personal biases. In working with human and social services, I had used terms of references and language that were imperialistic and colonial. I had become a perpetrator of hegemony over the Somali community. After discussing my work with my advisors, I returned to interview the other Somalis and encouraged them to use their own words and terms of references for themselves. I had begun to listen carefully and found how proud the Somalis were of the culture and community. It was a liberating experience and one that I will never forget. My relationship with the community will continue and I will encourage them to not allow policy-makers and government officials define them or indeed other refugees. I will never again make the mistake of viewing refugees through the lens of a deficit-based and needy model that current social service practice uses. Rather, I will encourage them to define themselves with their own words and actions.

All new Americans, including the Mushungulis and other Somali refugees, go through a process, often long and painful, to adapt to their new home and become an integral part of our society. The process is a continuum, beginning with settlement, when newcomers make the basic adjustments to life in a new country, and moving through to
integration, which is the longer term process through which newcomers become full and equal participants in all the various dimensions of society. Although it is the refugees that do most of the hard work of adapting themselves to their new country, integration is a two-way exchange. This means that the host community and receiving society has a positive responsibility to adapt itself to its new members and offer them full opportunity to contribute the resources they bring with them. Refugees and immigrants, have basic settlement needs: orientation upon arrival, language learning and finding out about access to employment are some of the more important activities during early resettlement.

Refugees also may have some more specific needs because of their experience of persecution. Important sources of information and guidance for refugees are friends, family, faith communities and other new Americans with origins from the same part of the world. In addition, settlement services should be funded by the government and offered by community-based organizations. Mushungulis and other Somali refugees must also struggle against the racism that is deeply rooted in our society. It affects how their contributions are valued and how welcome they feel in their new home. We owe to them to make them feel welcome and to allow them to find space to be either Somali Americans or American Somalis.

So what does the future hold for the Mushungulis and the other Somali refugees as they begin their lives in the United States of America? I believe the answer lies in the youth of these communities. While there is much more work to be done on this, my research has unearthed the complex, intersecting influences on young Somali refugee identity formations. My findings have demonstrated the importance of place or context in shaping how individuals develop and perform their own identities; and in terms of how their identities are read and acknowledged or denied by others. A sense of ‘belonging’ in a country develops where a community has a sense of security and space to define its own identity beyond or alongside narrow prescriptions of national identity. As such, policies that are implemented to support Somali young people to integrate into the United States of America must enable them to retain and develop a strong sense of their own cultural identity and heritage, while also supporting them to access education, services
and similar life opportunities to the rest of the population. Specifically, I recommend that there is a need to:

- Develop more effective processes of preparation and reception to support refugee and children’s entry into schools in the United States of America.

- Provide funding to develop the educational support that Somali MAAs and CBOs provide for Somali young people; to link this more strongly with the American school curriculum; and to enable these community organizations to help Somali parents to understand, trust and engage with their children’s schools.

- Beware of stressing the importance of a shared national identity in policy initiatives because this can have the potential effect of legitimizing negative attitudes by the majority white population towards refugees and immigrants and their cultures.

- Address the persistence of the association of being American with whiteness – which is implicit, if not intended, in new systems for developing American citizenship.

- Promote “meaningful contact” between Somali communities and white majority communities.

- Support and develop community space and capacity building for Somali organizations, because this gives these groups the security to feel they belong to the nation.

- Support community projects to address differences emerging between the genders and generations within the Somali community.

- Train more Somali men as mentors to work with young men in their community.

- Work with faith-based initiatives to help mainstream America understand Islam.

Recent media reports have highlighted instances in St. Cloud where the mainstream community is having issues with the Somali community. There have been hate crimes and racist incidents in the school system in St. Cloud and this has occurred because of ignorance and bias. In Minneapolis, young Somali men have returned to Somalia to fight in the *jihadist* and Islamic wars. There are recent efforts within the Somali communities to engage young men, especially, so that they do not get marginalized and disenfranchised from the mainstream community. These efforts have been led by
Somalis and any help local, state, and federal institutions and foundations can give these initiatives will be appreciated. Many Somali male youth have been dropping out of school and have left their families as they live in stairwells and gather in gangs in the towers of the Cedar-Riverside neighborhoods. Hennepin County, together with other local entities, has begun to address the issues and concerns of these youth. When the youth of the Somali community, and this include both boys and girls, are engaged and are doing well in school, the future of the Somali community will be bright. They will then become the future political, social, cultural, and economic capital of the Somali community.

My study has described the trajectory of the refugee experience from flight to resettlement by using the experience of the Mushungulis and other Somali refugees to illuminate it. It has highlighted *tol iyo xeer* - kinship and social contract - vis-à-vis *Qabil* organization and how the two can play a huge role in the integration experience of the Mushungulis and other Somali refugees. It has also reinforced that for any new American refugee community, language and employment are key components that have to be addressed if they are to integrate into a new host community and receiving society. This is essential to know for policy-makers in government and public administration as they try and seek to improve refugee resettlement practices and programs.

The study of refugees in anthropology can definitely benefit by including their voices and paying attention to them. In both arenas, the inclusion and participation of refugees only serves to benefit and strengthen the disciplines. Attention also has to be paid by both disciplines to two other important sets of actors. These are the service providers working with refugees and members of host communities who play critical roles in helping new Americans integrate. By including their perspectives as well in studying integration, the disciplines will get a holistic and complete view of the resettlement process. Anthropology will benefit when refugees and immigrants themselves become anthropologists to study refugee phenomena and contribute to the field. Government and public administration need to make concerted efforts to become
culturally and linguistically competent by either hiring bicultural and bilingual staff or making sure that interpreter services are available so that the voice of the refugees and immigrants can be heard loudly and clearly.

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