THEY BRING THEIR MEMORIES WITH THEM: SOMALI BANTU RESETTLEMENT IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

by

Yda Jean Smith

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of
The University of Utah
in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Education, Culture and Society

The University of Utah

December 2010

ProQuest LLC
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

The University of Utah Graduate School

STATEMENT OF DISSERTATION APPROVAL

The dissertation of **Yda Jean Smith**

has been approved by the following supervisory committee members:

Frank Margonis	, Chair	**9/17/2010** Date Approved
Edward Buendia	, Member	**9/17/2010** Date Approved
Sarah Munro	, Member	**9/17/2010** Date Approved
Veronica Valdez	, Member	**9/17/2010** Date Approved
Doris Warriner	, Member	**9/17/2010** Date Approved

and by **Harvey Kantor**, Chair of

the Department of **Education, Culture and Society**

and by Charles A. Wight, Dean of The Graduate School.

ABSTRACT

The Somali Bantu, arriving in the United States after many years in Kenyan refugee camps, face significant barriers to successful integration into American society. Those responsible for managing initial resettlement at the local level were not prepared to provide appropriate assistance to this group. The arrival of the Somali Bantu highlighted gaps in services and the need to significantly improve resettlement practice.

The purpose of this study was to delve deep into the complexities of the resettlement process by investigating the intersection of institutionalized resettlement practice with the personal lived experience of recently arrived refugees. The theoretical perspectives of economic globalization, social capital, and history in person framed this investigation.

A constructivist grounded theory approach was used with data collected through extensive participant observation in addition to interviews with 11 Somali Bantu adults and 11 employees of the resettlement system. During the process, the significance of historically entrenched adversarial relationships with the native Somali community emerged that highlighted the relevance of a history in person framework.

The results of this study reveal that Somali Bantu social support systems, so important to their survival in Somalia, have in some ways remained intact but in other ways have been disrupted by constraints imposed by the environment they now live within. The combination of a lack of human capital in a Western environment, a history

of oppression, and skills acquired in refugee camps to secure sufficient food and other supplies has resulted in mistrust of agency staff and in behaviors of resistance that are both creative and potentially disruptive to those employed to work with them.

This study also revealed that neoliberal economic policies, prioritizing efficiency and accountability, increase competition between agencies, decrease collaboration, and ultimately decrease efficiency of services. Neoliberal policies are in direct conflict with humanitarian agendas and the intent to foster self-sufficiency. Resettlement organizations, both globally and locally, are dispensing their services in a standardized, top-down manner that limits the ability of the system to effectively address the unique needs of a particular group or take advantage of the strengths and assets newcomers to America bring with them.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT..... iii

DESCRIPTIONS OF ORGANIZATIONS
AND USE OF TERMS..... viii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... xiii

CHAPTER

1. THE MONKEYS AND THE TURTLES..... 1

2. THE SOMALI BANTU COME TO AMERICA:
FIRST IMPPRESSIONS..... 4

Disruption to Business-as-Usual..... 7
Limitations in Cultural Orientation Training..... 11

3. THE INTERSECTION OF INSTITUTIONAL POLICY AND
REFUGEE EXPERIENCE: A NEED FOR FURTHER STUDY..... 13

Why Study Somali Bantu Experience?.....16
Intersection of Institutional Structure and Refugee Experience..... 17
Selection and Representation of Theoretical Perspectives..... 20
Representation of Complex Systems..... 24
Conclusion..... 26

4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS..... 28

Research Design..... 30
Methods..... 33
Interviews..... 35
Data Analysis..... 40
Closing Remarks.....43

5. REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN AN ERA OF ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION..... 45

Globalized Neoliberal Economics: Some Countries Prosper While Others Are Left Behind..... 46
Decline of Manufacturing in the United States..... 48
Economic Globalization Forces in Relation to Refugee Resettlement Practice..... 51
Bias Toward Western Knowledge Systems..... 52
Persistence of Institutionalized Marginalization..... 54
Homogenization of Services..... 59
Interagency Competition..... 63
Efficiency and Accountability Trends Dominate Systems..... 65
Discussion..... 71

6. WE ALL BANTU – WE HAVE EACH OTHER..... 73

Social Capital: Continuity and Change with Forced Migration..... 73
Social Capital Theory in Relation to Bantu Experience..... 75
Community Support: Benefits and Limitations..... 85
Social Support in Somalia: "It Would Be Everybody's Problem"... 87
Social Support in Kenya: "Everyone Has the Same Problem"..... 91
Social Support in the U.S.: "We Try"..... 92
Internal Supports and Resource Sharing: Advantageous or Limiting?..... 96
Community Leadership and Conflict Resolution..... 101

7. THE PAST LIVES IN THE PRESENT: THEY BRING THEIR MEMORIES WITH THEM..... 109

History of Bantu Forced Migration and Relocation..... 109
Era of Slavery and Colonization..... 110
State Appropriation of Bantu Land..... 112
Civil War Breaks Out: "Do it or Die"..... 114
Life in the Camps: "And They Still Had Their Guns"..... 116
Relationships in America: "Here it is the Same Thing"..... 121
"And Here There Is Not a Lot of Things to Worry About and There Is a Lot of Things to Worry About"..... 122
History in Person..... 125
Mistrust..... 129
Shifting Identities..... 132

8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS..... 135

Longing for a Better Life in America..... 146
Recommendations and Closing Remarks..... 154

"We Are All Born Without Knowledge" – An Empty Glass and the Desire to Fill it..... 163

REFERENCES..... 165

DESCRIPTIONS OF ORGANIZATIONS AND USE OF TERMS

The acronyms and terms explained below are familiar to those who work in refugee resettlement and are frequently used by those who have lived through a refugee experience. Two terms in particular, "refugee" and "resettlement," are contested in some circles. The term "refugee" is especially problematic. Issues around the use of these terms and how they are used in this study are described below.

British Broadcasting Corporation Radio (BBC)

British Broadcasting Corporation has been broadcasting radio from the United Kingdom since 1922. Most of its services are based in London. Initially broadcast in English, it is now available in 32 languages and is heard throughout the world with an average weekly audience of 188 million people. English language broadcasts are available 24 hours a day. It is a nonprofit organization and is politically independent and commercial free. http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio

Catholic Community Services (CCS)

Catholic Community Services has offices in numerous American cities. They provide services to the homeless, the hungry, to refugees, to immigrants and others in need of assistance. CCS is a refugee resettlement agency providing core services designed to help families adapt to life in America and become self-sufficient.

Department of Workforce Services (DWS)

Several U.S. states provide their residents with employment support, matching potential employees to employers and providing employment training through a Department of Workforce Services. In addition, they provide benefits to the unemployed or underemployed such as food stamps and daycare.

International Office for Migration (IOM)

The International Office for Migration is a leading inter-governmental organization in the field of migration. IOM has offices in more than 100 countries and helps to ensure the humane treatment of migrants including refugees and internally displaced people. http://www.iom.int

International Rescue Committee (IRC)

Mission statement on website:

> Founded in 1933, the IRC is a global leader in emergency relief, rehabilitation, protection of human rights, post-conflict development, resettlement services and advocacy for those uprooted or affected by violent conflict and oppression...The IRC is on the ground in 42 countries, providing emergency relief, relocating refugees, and rebuilding lives in the wake of disaster. Through 24 regional offices in cities across the United States, we help refugees resettle in the U.S. and become self-sufficient. (International Rescue Committee, n.d.)

"Refugee"

The term refugee, as defined by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and Article 1 of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees is used to describe a person 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 or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to

> avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.. (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, n.d.)

When those who arrive in the U.S. with federal refugee status step off the plane, they are legal permanent residents. They must wait 5 years to apply for U.S. citizenship but they are entitled to most of the rights and privileges of U.S. citizens. They are no longer "refugees" by UN standards. For many, the term "refugee" implies statelessness, an absence of belonging to a country that has a government in place that protects them. Many who I have met and spoken with, who have come to the U.S. with refugee status, resent the persistence of the refugee label and would prefer to be viewed as Americans. Some, however, are comfortable with the refugee label as it fits with their self-identity and signifies the experiences they gone through. Throughout this text, I have attempted to remain sensitive to this issue of labeling and will at times use phrases such as, "those who arrived with refugee status" or "who have had a refugee experience" to avoid the labeling that is offensive to some who have taken up residence in the U.S. Most often the word "refugee" will be used as it is the convention with refugee resettlement services and is a difficult term to avoid when describing programs that are offered by these agencies.

The term "refugee" is used as a convenient label for a person who has achieved asylum and the State rights associated with this classification. It is, however, a problematic term as it does not allow for representation of the vast diversity within and among groups. Refugees come from a wide range of backgrounds with an equally wide range of human capital resources available to them. It cannot be assumed that refugees from the same country arrive with identical histories or come from similar positions of

power within their native societies. In the case of those arriving from Somalia, the story of the Monkeys and the Turtles in Chapter 1 makes this clear.

"Resettlement" vs. "Settlement"

Resettlement is a term used to describe the transition from life in a refugee camp, or other locations of asylum, to life in a third country that has offered to take in refugees and give them permanent legal residence. The agencies that do this work call themselves "resettlement" agencies. Some scholars prefer the word "settlement" and resent the implication that refugees, forced to leave their homeland and living without state government protection, were ever "settled" in the first place. At times I will use the word "settle" to acknowledge the logic of this argument but will often use the word "resettlement" as this is the term agencies, that provide services to those who arrived with refugee status, use to label the work they do. Although some in academia object to the phrase "resettlement" in this context, no one I interviewed or have worked with who came to the U.S. after a refugee experience has expressed any discontent with the term.

United Nations (UN)

The United Nations was founded in 1945, after the Second World War. Fifty one countries joined together to make a commitment to maintaining international peace and to promote human rights, social progress and better living standards around the world. It is now comprised of 192 Member States. The organization is best known for promotion of peace among nations and humanitarian assistance but also works on other issues as well including sustainable development, refugee protection, disaster relief, landmine clearing and international health. http://www.un.org

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Mission statement on website:

> UNHCR is mandated by the United Nations to lead and coordinate international action for the worldwide protection of refugees and the resolution of refugee problems. UNHCR's primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. In its efforts to achieve this objective, UNHCR strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another State, and to return home voluntarily. By assisting refugees to return to their own country or to settle permanently in another country, UNHCR also seeks lasting solutions to their plight. (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, n.d.)

World Food Program (WFP)

The World Food Program is a United Nations agency that fights hunger throughout the world by responding to disasters and emergencies as well as managing programs designed to prevent hunger in the future. They are experts in the logistics of large scale food distribution, food security analysis and nutrition. In 2008 they provided services in 78 countries reaching 102 million people. http://www.wfp.org

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the members of the Somali Bantu community who were so helpful, offering their time, and sharing their past experiences, thoughts and feelings with me. They opened their homes and their hearts during this process and I will be forever grateful for the opportunity to meet and work with so many fine individuals.

I could not have asked for a more supportive and wise group of committee members who, throughout the process, provided suggestions and insights that helped me to develop and grow both as a researcher and writer. They devoted a great deal of time and attention that added tremendous depth and clarity to the work that I was doing which would not have been possible without their guidance. I would especially like to thank Frank Margonis, the chair of my committee, for his encouragement and for his advice and extreme patience during the development of the dissertation proposal. It was the final proposal that led to a project that was manageable and, at the same time, encompassed the diversity of topics I was interested in.

In addition, Ed Buendia, Doris Warriner, Sarah Munro and Veronica Valdez all provided assistance in critical ways, in their own areas of expertise. Thanks to their thoughtful critiques of my work and extensive recommendations, the final product is one that goes well beyond my hopes and expectations.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank my husband, Thom Gourley, for many years of support, encouragement and faith in me. He has been by my side through

challenging times as well as good times, and lifted my spirits when I thought I would not make it through to the end. I could not have done this without him.

CHAPTER 1

THE MONKEYS AND THE TURTLES

There are four of us sitting in the back yard of Abdi's home: Abdi, two other Somali Bantu men, and me, a White woman with a tape recorder. At that moment, my privileged position stood in stark contrast to the socioeconomic positioning of those in my presence. I felt privileged to have a college education, a full-time job teaching at a university and to have the opportunity to participate in this research project. I could not help but think how fortunate I was to be sitting outside on a pleasant, sunny day in the company of these men. I was surprised and delighted that the trajectory of my life had led me to this place and this moment, sitting at a weather-worn picnic table in the backyard of Abdi's rented home and listening to the stories, opinions, and perceptions of three Somali Bantu men who were so kind in their offer to share their world with me. I asked questions about what life was like when they lived in Somalia. In response, Abdi told this story while he was drawing a picture of a tree:

> This is a tree. It is a big tree. We are down here [on the ground] and the Somali people are up here [in the tree]. Somali people, if you know the monkey, they jump from the tree to another tree, the Somali people are like the monkey. And the Somali Bantu are like the turtles. So whenever you beat the turtle it only hide his head and the rest of the body but even if you kill him they don't bite, they don't do *nothing*. Whatever they are done, whatever you do to them they used to say, "God is great. Whatever you do, we don't mind. Kill us, do whatever you doing but there is one day God will punish you for what you are doing to us today."
>
> Today we kind the same and people don't understand that today you have money but tomorrow you may be running out of money. Today we and the

Somali people we sharing the same life and the guys who that did that for us we could not be the same unless the American see us and say everybody has equal opportunity. The Somali guy today, his kid is going to school. My kid is going to school. If he can drive a taxi, I can also drive a taxi. But in Somalia there was a law that said Somali Bantu can't do this but today there is nothing like that. And today we appreciate to the American people and our God.

So before the war broke out we had like a little bit discrimination but we still had connection, like whenever we see each other we would greet each other but after the war broke out they change their faces. Like even somebody I used to know they say, "I don't know you." Abdi returns to his drawing.

And you need to understand what I am going to tell you right now. This history is between the Somali Bantu but I am going to tell it in a history of monkeys and turtles. Because I am a turtles, and the Somali people used to be monkeys. So the monkey people had wedding one of the days in Somalia. And the turtles were invited to the wedding. And when the turtles go to the wedding the monkeys say, "We don't celebrate down there. You need to come up to the tree", and the turtles cannot go up there. (We all laugh.) So the turtles they travel *allllll* the way down to the wedding and when they go there they were told "Not down there, you need to come up here." So what they say only is, "Thank you for inviting us and we will be going back without eating." (laughter)

And the turtles had wedding one of the days and this time turtles is having the wedding. And they were just getting married themselves, the turtles and turtles getting married. The monkeys were invited to the wedding. They came to the ceremony and the turtles say, "Today is our wedding. Whatever we doing today we going to eat here on the ground not up there in the tree. And we have one thing to tell you monkeys." There was a very big can of water so the monkeys were told to wash their hands down to the can and then come and eat here. So the monkey, whenever he goes there he can't come to the place standing, he has to walk with hands too. So the problem is, whenever he comes to the food he has dirty hands, that was their revenge, that they couldn't eat. (everyone laughs)

…[T]oday in the world we were the people that were cheated so right now the Somali people are trying to be clean to be saying, "Hey, we are brothers." The Somali Somali they are like the monkeys, they already make their hands to be dirty and they trying to wash their hands and they keep forgetting. And the Somali Bantu people still cannot go up the tree right now. They still trying to go to the tree so they can climb the tree but the Somali people, they also trying to wash their hands so they can come to the Bantu people and the Bantu people are still trying to go up to the tree. And the Somali people today are like the monkeys, they try to walk in the legs, they keep forgetting, I mean about their hands. If they walk down here to this place a very small distance they forget, just make their hands dirty again. They say, "Oh I have to be clean" and then they try to wash and after a very few minutes and then they say, "Oh I forget." They kind of are like that right now. They trying to do that all over the world and these people and once again their hands are dirty.

But today we are in the middle of the trees. We are trying to be on the tree today, we accept people to push us to the tree but the Somali people don't accept

somebody to wash their hands. They say, "I know how to wash my hands. Don't tell me." But the Bantu people they only need somebody to say to them, "Hey climb the tree of the monkey", so the American people did that for us. And we appreciate that, we are right now on the tree.

CHAPTER 2

THE SOMALI BANTU COME TO AMERICA: FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Since the summer of 2003, Somali Bantu families and individuals have been relocating with legal refugee status in the United States. They are either from the Mai Mai or Mushunguli ethnic groups and speak different tribal languages, although many of them speak Somali as well. A total of around 12,000 Somali Bantu have been settled in the U.S. with approximately 150 families, or around 700 individuals (personal communication with Somali Bantu leader, January 24, 2010), relocated to the site of this study. These families and individuals lived in refugee camps in Kenya for 10 to 12 years after fleeing their native lands to escape a violent and protracted civil war and severe persecution at the hands of the Somali majority, those who are known to the Somali Bantu as "Somali Somali." Many of the Bantu children were born and raised in the camps. Bantu lifestyles and daily rhythms, in both Somalia and Kenya, were far different from what they encountered when they arrived in America.

Most of the Somali Bantu, when they first arrived, were unfamiliar with telling time with a clock or tracking time with a calendar; they had never used electricity or indoor plumbing. With limited access to formal education in Somalia, most were illiterate in their own language and did not speak English. The majority of Somali Bantu are Muslim and have traditionally practiced polygamy with one male marrying as many

as four wives (Lehman & Eno, 2003). In order to seek refugee status in the United States, Somali Bantu men have been forced to retain only one legal wife, technically divorcing the others. Resettlement organizations did their best, however, to place extended families in the same city. From my personal experience, I can safely say that many, but not all, of the "divorced" couples have maintained relations and many "single" mothers continue to bear children. The Bantu have a tendency toward large families and this has not changed with their move to the United States.

On September 17, 2003, as a volunteer family mentor for a local refugee resettlement organization, the International Rescue Committee, I had the pleasure of meeting a Somali Bantu family of seven as they arrived at the local airport. I spent time interacting with the refugee resettlement agency staff on their behalf, looking for employment for the parents, enrolling one of the children in school, making calls in an attempt to avoid utility shut offs in the middle of a very cold winter, negotiating with their landlord to avoid eviction after an employer (who had signed a contract with a state employment agency to provide employment and training) stopped providing employment, and buying diapers and other necessities food stamps will not pay for. As I helped out this family, it became clear to me that their traditional social structure was different from what I was familiar with. There was a tremendous sense of community among the Bantu I interacted with, a desire to help each other out by watching each other's children or giving someone a ride to the store, and children would share material goods including toys and shoes in a way that I was not accustomed to. On one occasion, I purchased a pair of shoes for one child and on a different day, with several kids in my

car, I noticed he was not wearing them. I asked where they were and he pointed toward the back seat and said, "My cousin is wearing them. He needs them today."

As I spent time with the Bantu community, it became painfully clear that the resettlement services in place for refugees in the United States are far from adequate, that state services meant to assist the poor find employment are ineffective, that minimum wage jobs and food stamps do not begin to cover basic expenses, that public schools do not have the resources to adequately meet the needs of refugee children, and that the community they are living in is not entirely happy to have them here.

The following sections describe situations that occurred during the initial period of settlement of the Somali Bantu in the location of this study. Without sufficient background knowledge, the behavior of the Bantu in these situations is hard for Westerners to understand. This lack of understanding resulted, in many cases, in strained relations between the Somali Bantu and resettlement workers and other Westerners they interacted with. These strained relationships only added to the problems the Bantu faced in an environment where resettlement services were not typically meeting the needs of newly arriving refugees.

The initial motivation to complete this study was based on the observation that the local resettlement system was not equipped to respond to the arrival of the Somali Bantu. In order to investigate the intersection where refugee resettlement services and those who arrive with refugee status meet, in-depth research into institutional structures and into the personal, historical and social lives of the Somali Bantu was required. In Chapter 5, I address issues related to the institutional structure of both international and local resettlement systems. In Chapters 6 and 7, Bantu social structures and their history of

relations with others in Somalia and Kenya are investigated in depth, after which I return to these same examples of Somali Bantu behavior that can then be viewed in a different light.

Disruption to Business-as-Usual

Seeking Help From Multiple Sources

"No Medicaid,[1] no Medicaid, no Food Stamps,[2] no Daycare!" This statement was made repeatedly by the Somali Bantu women I worked with during the spring and summer of 2005. I was running a group for Somali Bantu women who met weekly in a community center located in the apartment complex where they lived. My plan was to provide life skills training for these newcomers to America who had no prior experience living in a Western society. They spoke very little English and could not read or write in English or any other language. We worked on reading utility bills and learning the English words common to other functional daily tasks. But time and time again, the women would complain about losing their benefits. Some would hit the top of the table with their hands and let me know, loudly and clearly, that they were without these essential funds and would ask me if I could help them.

The community center where this class was held offered a wide range of services including assistance with access to welfare benefits. Every time a woman in the group would complain about her loss of benefits, I would check with the staff of the center and

---

[1] Medicaid is a healthcare program for eligible low-income residents of the United States. It is jointly funded by federal and state governments but is managed by individual states.

[2] The term "food stamps" refers to a United States federally funded program for eligible low-income residents. Those who qualify are given a monthly allotment of money to pay for food. The program, officially called the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, is administered by the U.S. government but benefits are managed and distributed by state governments.

would find out that they had already been approached by this same woman, were already working on her problem, and that she was well aware of this. I would return to the classroom and let the women know that the problem was already being addressed but this never seemed to satisfy whoever was complaining at the time. They seemed to want me to work on the problem as well.

This behavior of seeking help from multiple sources was commonplace and resulted in redundancies in efforts that required the time of volunteers and resettlement workers to sort out who was helping who with what. This was irritating to those who were trying to assist the Bantu as this behavior was viewed as disruptive, as a waste of precious time, and perhaps even as deceitful.

The "Ungrateful Refugee"

As has been noted above, the Somali Bantu became well known, among local refugee resettlement workers, for being demanding and for seeking assistance for the same issues from multiple agencies or people at the same time. Many expressed dissatisfaction with services without hesitation, giving some of the people who worked with them a sense that the Bantu were "ungrateful"[3] for the help that was being provided. The Bantu had high expectations of resettlement agencies and wanted more from them than the agencies were prepared to provide. Additional education sessions were offered by service agencies to explain their roles in the resettlement process and the limitations of their services due to budget constraints. This did not sit well with many of the Bantu.

[3] In *Managing displacement: Refugees and the politics of humanitarianism*, Hyndman (2000) describes how Somali residents of refugee camps were viewed as difficult to work with and as ungrateful for the services they were receiving. They developed a reputation for talking back to relief workers and refusing to comply with the charity script that expects those who are needy to also be grateful. "The actions of Somalian refugees toward humanitarian staff unsettle the charitable, hierarchical relationship of power between Western donors and Somali refugees" (p. 156). I return to this topic in Chapter 6 in more detail.

They wanted more and expressed that they felt they were not getting what they were entitled to. At one point, they even threatened to form a human chain around the building in order to get the media to make public their complaints (personal communication with resettlement agency employee, January 4, 2010).

At times, nothing less than chaos and turmoil ensued at the primary local resettlement agencies when the Somali Bantu were receiving initial services. At one agency in particular, leaders of the Bantu community made frequent visits demanding more services and more material goods for members of their community. One of the leaders, "would come in and make demands and tell us we were not doing anything to help the community and leave very angry" (personal communication, January 4, 2010). Funding that would extend services for 1 year was located for this group, due to their extensive needs. No other group had received an extension of this kind. The Bantu were told that there would be a deadline in terms of how long they would receive cash assistance for rent but when the deadline passed, they showed up at the agency expecting rental assistance to continue. Specific examples were provided by one employee of individuals who repeatedly used their rental assistance to purchase household goods such as furniture and DVD players and returned to the agency for more money to pay their rent. One agency employee stated that this behavior seemed to continue until they were satisfied with the initial set up of material goods in their apartments.

In June of 2005, I was present for a meeting with two leaders of the Somali Bantu community and two representatives of one of the resettlement agencies. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the possible formation of a Somali Bantu community association. On many occasions, in past years, this resettlement agency assisted

particular refugee groups with the formation of nonprofit organizations designed to meet that community's self-determined needs. Help with the creation of these associations generally took place at least 2 years after the group started arriving in the United States in order to allow members of the group to get adjusted to life in America and become proficient in English. The Bantu were demanding the same assistance but at a point much earlier in their resettlement process and at a time when few Bantu in the area had a command of the English language. Even this meeting required a Somali translator in order for communications to be clear. I was struck by the level of tension in the meeting that began the moment the Somali Bantu leaders arrived. The agency staff seemed sincere in their efforts to be helpful but the Bantu leaders appeared suspicious and challenged suggestions that were made. They were anything but courteous and I was appalled at how they treated one of the agency employees. When the meeting ended, I asked her how she could tolerate being treated in this manner. She did not seem to be upset by their behavior and responded by saying, "I'm used to it."

Some of the Bantu know me as a volunteer, as someone who helps out, as someone unaffiliated with any particular organization. Others know me in a more professional context, as someone associated with the refugee resettlement system. For the most part, my interactions with members of the Somali Bantu community have been delightful. I have become especially close to one particular family and cherish the time I am able to spend tutoring some of the children at their home, shopping for school clothes and taking them to movies and dance classes. The Somali Bantu I know well have remarkable strengths and an ability to react with resiliency to the challenges they face. I admire them as individuals and I have great admiration for how they work together as a

community. But for Westerners, like myself, many members of the Somali Bantu community were not easy to work with. They often seemed demanding and ungrateful or were distant, trusting and opening up only to members of their own community.

Children Misbehaving: Stealing and Lying

In March of 2006, I attended a district meeting of elementary school teachers who were concerned about the behaviors of Somali Bantu children in their classrooms. The recent influx of Bantu children into the school system was a tremendous challenge for everyone involved stressing the educational system in multiple ways. The schools were unprepared for such a large number of children in need of English-as-a-Second Language services and teachers did not know how best to manage behaviors they were observing. The Bantu children were depicted as "running wild" and specific stories that involved "stealing" and "lying" were described. One child was accused of theft when he took something out of another child's locker that was not his. Another child was accused of lying when the teacher saw him get a second helping of cookies in the cafeteria. When confronted, he denied having received cookies earlier. As these occasions were described in the meeting, several teachers nodded and provided their own examples of similar events. Teachers also complained about a lack of Somali Bantu parental involvement in their children's education.

Limitations in Cultural Orientation Training

Before the Somali Bantu started arriving in the United States, cultural orientation information about the group was provided to resettlement workers. Most of this information was accessed on-line. The national offices for the two local resettlement

agencies attempted to prepare their staff with information about the Somali Bantu's history of slavery in Somalia and the reasons for their flight from Somalia to Kenyan refugee camps. They were aware of their lack of formal education and had some general knowledge of their religious beliefs but, according to the director of one of the local agencies, "A lot of practical information was missing." In his opinion, local resettlement staff did not have enough information about potential health issues, child-rearing practices, or food preferences. They did not realize how little the Bantu knew about the basic life skills needed to function in an American society, such as how to use a telephone, tell time with a clock, or use diapers.

Resettlement employees became aware of the Somali Bantus' lack of knowledge regarding practical, everyday issues. It was easy to observe their lack of familiarity with the basic skills needed to negotiate life in a Western city. What resettlement workers did not recognize was their lack of critical background knowledge at much deeper levels. They knew very little about the Somali Bantu history of oppression and how this continues to disrupt their relationships with non-Bantu Somalis, or "Somali Somali." They were unaware of the Bantu's long history of social support systems that have been an effective mechanism for community survival and were not taking into consideration the lack of trust many Bantu have developed for people outside their ethnic group. This dissertation addresses these issues and helps to explain some of the behaviors and characteristics of the Somali Bantu that have seemed so foreign, and at times disturbing, to Westerners working in refugee resettlement.

CHAPTER 3

THE INTERSECTION OF INSTITUTIONAL POLICY AND REFUGEE EXPERIENCE: A NEED FOR FURTHER STUDY

> "I am *sad* because of the way I am being treated as a refugee.... We are not an American. That is why they can treat us this way."
>
> "We do not feel good coming to America....You are the ones who brought us. Help us..."
>
> "I had hoped to be an independent person, not a dependent person."
>
> After being told by a case worker at the [state]Department of Workforce Services that he had to give up school and go to work, a Sudanese man said, "If I do this, I will never become self-sufficient."
>
> Describing the "impossible situation" of trying to survive under current assistance programs, a Sudanese male said, "This is the same as when we were in the camp."

These statements were made in the spring of 2006 at town hall style meetings in a city located in the Intermountain region of the Western United States. The Department of Workforce Services, a state administered employment and welfare office with a division responsible for support of all newly arriving refugees, sponsored the meetings, which were designed to identify issues and generate solutions in order to improve the local refugee resettlement system. The statements above were all made by African men but, based on my own interactions with refugees in the community, represent the sentiments of a large number of male and female refugees from numerous countries.

Each year, approximately 1,200 refugees arrive in the metropolitan area where this study was conducted (personal communications with resettlement employees, January 3 & 8, 2010). When refugees first arrive, they are supported by one of two local refugee resettlement organizations: The International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Catholic Community Services (CCS). As soon as they step off the plane, they are not yet citizens of the United States but are officially permanent legal residents. During their first few months in America, IRC and CCS provide assistance including "core services" which include locating and furnishing an apartment, setting up health screenings, enrolling children in school, looking for employment for the adults, and connecting these new Americans with the state's Department of Workforce Services, which administers benefits such as food stamps and healthcare for low-income residents. After several months, IRC and CCS transfer their cases to a third agency. Those who arrived as refugees, in the metropolitan area where this study was conducted, are able to access free services from this third agency during their first 5 years of residency in the United States.

Numerous services are available through the organizations mentioned above, as well as other smaller nonprofit and volunteer groups, to assist refugees with their adjustment to life in this American city but it has long been known by refugees and resettlement service providers that there are serious gaps in services that result in great hardship for many families and individuals. In 2006, the state's governor's office requested recommendations to mend an apparently broken system which led to the development of a "Working Group" that organized numerous community meetings held over several months during 2006 and 2007. These well-attended meetings were designed to elicit the opinions and feelings of those who arrived in the U.S. as refugees, as well as

the opinions of service providers and volunteers, as to not only what was wrong with the system but to generate ideas as to how best to fix it.

> Two Town Meetings were conducted the evenings of May 6 and 7, 2006 at [a county building]. Both of these public meetings were characterized by intense discussion among the hundreds of refugees present, individual and group conflicts and general discord about the quality of resettlement services available to refugees in [the state] was apparent. Emotions ran high at these events at which the number of negative remarks toward resettlement organizations and government agencies far outweighed positive perceptions. (Cobb, 2006)

Using the information gathered at these meetings, the Working Group created a document of recommendations and priorities that was presented to the governor, which led to the restructuring of the state's administrative services in this area.

The changes that occurred, which took place during the formation of this dissertation, have been substantial in terms of raising awareness of gaps in services, raising the visibility of the resettlement system within the state's political arena, increasing funds for resettlement agencies, and increasing funds and support for refugee self-support groups. Nevertheless, gaps in services persist and many of those who arrived in the area with refugee status continue to suffer great hardships and are excluded from full participation in local society and the local economy.

The purpose of this dissertation was to delve deeper into the complexities of the resettlement process, reflecting on both international and local issues, with the hope that in-depth interview data collected from resettlement workers as well as from newly arrived refugees themselves would provide the insight needed to make recommendations as to how the system could be improved. I chose to focus on one particular group of refugees, the Somali Bantu, who are viewed by many resettlement workers as the most challenging group to work with in recent history. The arrival of the Bantu in America

stressed resettlement systems in ways that exposed significant gaps in services and intensified the need for change. As one resettlement agency director stated, "[The Somali Bantu] highlighted the gaps in our system. We have been plugging the gaps since then." In approaching this research project, I wondered if it is possible that an examination of the local Bantu community could help us to imagine more flexible and culturally specific ways in which to provide effective resettlement services.

Why Study Somali Bantu Experience?

Gaps in services exist for all refugees but in particular for groups that come from non-Westernized countries with little to no formal education. The Somali Bantu, most of whom are illiterate on arrival, struggle to survive in a society where even warehouse jobs require computer literacy. The Somali Bantu started arriving in the U.S. in 2003. Even after living in the U.S. for 6 years, most find it extremely difficult to survive economically and many of the women are unemployed and still do not speak English. One Somali Bantu leader I interviewed said:

> Well, most of them they do work but what they do is like dishwashing, working at [a church run second hand store], warehouses, production jobs that's all they do. The only people that does that are the men. The woman it's really hard to find jobs for them to fit their needs, because they don't have any experience…

He went on to explain that in addition to barriers to employment created by language and lack of experience, the women are also determined to continue to wear their traditional clothing, in compliance with their religious beliefs. This means they will not accept a job that requires them to wear pants, instead of a skirt, or one that will not allow them to wear a head scarf.

The Somali Bantu are not the last group of refugees that will be brought to the U.S. from non-Westernized environments. More recently, a large number of Burmese Karen and Karenni have been arriving from refugee camps in Thailand. They come from an agrarian culture and they too arrive without the formal education or cultural capital to become self-sufficient in American society. The decision to do research with the Somali Bantu, a group with such challenging barriers to successful integration into American society, was deliberate as I felt that a group with such extreme needs would highlight contemporary, local resettlement issues and that recommendations based on the results of this study would be relevant to the resettlement of many other ethnic groups as well.

Intersection of Institutional Structure and Personal Refugee Experience

A fairly substantial body of work is available on an extensive range of topics related to refugee experience by scholars from a wide variety of disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, geography, psychology, social work, and occupational therapy. Most studies related to the personal experiences of refugees who have been relocated to Western countries use surveys, ethnographies, or narratives to describe cultural and daily life concerns from the perspectives of refugees as they transition from life in refugee camps to life in a Western country (Fangen, 2006; Gifford, Bakopanos, Kaplan, & Ignacio, 2007; Holtzman, 2000; Hopkins, 2006; Knudsen, 1995; Lamba, 2003; Majka & Mullan, 1992; Mesthenos & Ioannidi, 2002; Stoll, 2007). Studies focused on refugee experience can alert us to the typical problems refugees face after being relocated to cities in a Western country, such as the one used as a site for this dissertation. For example, Lamba (2003) investigated the quality of employment of 525 Canadian adult refugees.

Using interviews of refugees from a variety of countries, he identified resources for seeking employment, which included family and ethnic group ties. He found that even when these personal connections were available, they could not overcome structural barriers and the downward mobility many of them faced. Refugee human capital was found to be of little or no value in the labor market. This study includes a recognition of structural barriers but it does not investigate the mechanisms that perpetuate structural barriers or explain how it is that refugee resettlement systems do not overcome them.

Another example is provided by Majka and Mullan (1992), who looked at employment retention of refugees in the Chicago area using data from a statewide refugee data base. The information was collected by 70 interviewers who asked questions regarding area of origin, age, length of residence, education in country of origin, number of dependents, gender, household head status, type of support, marital status, and current level of English proficiency. The results indicate that area of origin, chronological age, number of dependents, ability to read and write in English, and the type of support structures available had the greatest effects on employment patterns and retention. Single women with dependents had the most difficult time accessing and maintaining employment. This study may provide valuable data on barriers to employment and retention but there is no attempt to understand how these are related to institutional policies and practices.

Studies that focus exclusively on refugee experience may identify gaps in services but they do not help us to understand why resettlement systems are unable to adequately address these identified problems that have persisted over time. Castles (2003) calls for more work to be done linking social policy and bureaucracy to human agency and the

study of refugee experience. Warriner (2007) is one scholar who has helped to fulfill this call by analyzing how a broad range of social, political, and historical factors influence educational and employment opportunities and outcomes for refugees in an urban American environment. Her analysis of the experiences of three Sudanese women enrolled in English language classes, in relation to ideologies about language learning and discourses of immigration, makes it clear that many refugees in America face tremendous obstacles in their attempts to be fully accepted and included in American society. Warriner's study links systemic social and political factors to refugee experience but it is focused on educational institutions and systems, while this dissertation is focused more on resettlement agencies. Gaps in local resettlement services impact refugees in very personal ways. For services to improve significantly, it is critical that we examine the experiences of refugees receiving these services as viewed from their perspectives but at the same time, link these experiences to the nature of resettlement systems examining how their policies directly impact refugee lived experience.

One study that examined the intersection of refugee resettlement institutional policy with individual refugee experience was completed as a dissertation by Hyndman (1996) in the Dadaab camps in Kenya through participant observation and analysis of the narratives of Somali women. Hyndman (2000) states that both anthropologists and geographers have called for a greater emphasis on the study and analysis of "institutions, organizations, and bodies that govern human relations rather than to study the governed themselves" (p. xvii). In her own work, Hyndman draws attention to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), analyzing the political forces that dictate UNHCR policy and the ways in which power relations affect refugee management

systems. In addition to addressing structural issues, she provides us with the interviews of several Somali women living in the refugee camps. She then critiques the ways in which UNHCR policies play out in the lives of the women linking practices that benefit UNHCR administrators and staff with hardships imposed upon these refugee women. Hyndman's work links the study of refugee management policy with lived experience and highlights the resulting gaps in services but this work was done in the Kenyan refugee camps, not in a resettlement environment, and was focused on one institution. To my knowledge, there are no in-depth studies that analyze American refugee-management institutional policies at the local level with a comparison of the lived experiences of the refugees directly affected by these policies. This dissertation looks at the intersection of refugee management policy and the lives of one particular group of refugees, the Somali Bantu, who have recently been resettled in cities all across America.

Selection and Representation of Theoretical Perspectives

In order to examine the impact of local refugee resettlement systems on the lives of the Somali Bantu moving into the area and to help explain the gaps in services that were particularly evident when the Bantu were receiving resettlement services, it was necessary to use more than one theoretical lens. An investigation of the intersection of resettlement structure and refugee experience required a theoretical lens that would help explain resettlement agency modes of operation while different theories were needed that could provide a greater understanding of Somali Bantu expectations and behavior. The three theoretical perspectives employed in this study include: economic globalization, social capital, and history-in-person. Below, I provide a brief explanation of the utility of

each of the three theoretical perspectives, which will then be addressed extensively in Chapters 5, 6, and 7.

Economic globalization was selected as a theory with which to view the policies and behaviors of agencies and institutions involved in refugee resettlement as I believe this is the Western neo-liberal paradigm within which these organizations function. Keles (2008) has supported this concept stating, "The neoliberal utility maximizing, rational decision-making model of personhood adopted by the resettlement regime remains largely inattentive to the experiences, cultures and capacities of incoming refugee cohorts" (p. 6). The use of economic globalization theory highlights the nature of the framework within which refugee service institutions, at both international and local levels, function. An examination of this bureaucratic structure is crucial to our understanding of policy at the local level. Phrases such as "helping refugees to become self-sufficient in the least amount of time" are commonly included in mission statements and in verbal explanations of services provided locally and reveal a business, rather than humanitarian, emphasis in practice. The focus of services is not on spending quality time to create positive outcomes for refugees but to move them in and out of services quickly and efficiently. Warriner (2007), whose study took place in the same location as this dissertation, has also criticized the educational practices of English language programs designed for refugees, "that aim to assimilate recently arrived refugees 'in as short a time as possible' [as this] often provide[s] very few of the skills, resources, and connections that refugees and immigrants need to become active, contributing members of local communities" (p. 356). The structure of services of all kinds, including employment training and adult education, appear to be limited by a top-down Westernized approach to

policy making and service delivery. Interviews for this study were designed to explore the nature of local resettlement practice in relation to current trends in business practice at the international level.

Due to the reported strengths of their social relationships in Somalia (Besteman, 1999; Lehman & Eno, 2003; Stewart et al., 2008), a theoretical perspective based on social networks, social capital theory, was selected to examine the lives of the Somali Bantu as they migrated from Somalia, to Kenyan refugee camps, and to the United States. The paradigm within which resettlement agencies operate is focused primarily on deficits refugees acquire by being relocated to a foreign social context and does not adequately consider the unique nature of communities, such as the Somali Bantu, with regard to their history of communal support based on family, clan, and village networks. In examining the strategic use of social networks of a Somali Bantu community, it is critical to view these strategies from a historical perspective that includes internal relationships within the group as well as the nature of relationships with external entities that have had control over the resources the Somali Bantu have needed access to in order to survive. We have some understanding of how the Somali Bantu utilized social capital in Somalia (Besteman, 1999; Lehman & Eno, 2003). Very little information is available as to how the benefits of social networking translated into refugee camp experience (Hyndman, 2000). In addition, there is no information available on how social capital is being utilized or developed in the local American context. This dissertation was designed to elicit this information as an understanding of the strengths of a particular group could be utilized to minimize the negative effects of the settlement experience.

In addition to the theoretical perspectives of economic globalization and social capital, the concept of *history in person* (Holland & Lave, 2001; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998) was included. The manner in which a particular group interacts with the resettlement process and those outside their ethnic group will be influenced by experiences they have encountered in the past. The Somali Bantu have a long history of challenging relationships with people outside of their ethnic group. As a people, they have endured slavery, human rights abuses, and years of confinement in refugee camps where they were forced to rely on others for basic necessities that were in short supply. The memories of these experiences have become an integral part of who they are as individuals and how they interact with social service agencies as a group. For this reason, it seemed critical to utilize the concept of history in person to better understand the issues that have arisen with Bantu resettlement at the site of this study. At the start of this project, history in person, as a theoretical lens, was treated as an adjunct to the economic globalization and social capital perspectives but as the interviews with Somali Bantu progressed, it became readily apparent that present day relations between the Bantu and others, and their response to resettlement practices, are deeply grounded in the past experiences of the Bantu people in Somalia and Kenya and that the history in person perspective would need more attention than originally anticipated.

Refugee resettlement involves a complex web of interactions between institutional practice, differing world views of various ethnic and cultural groups, and a wide range of personal reactions to the resettlement process based on past experiences. Using these three perspectives was useful in the analysis of the experience of the Somali

Bantu to help explain the gaps in resettlement services that were highlighted by the arrival of the Bantu in an urban American environment.

With these perspectives used as tools to frame an investigation of the intersection of institutional policies and refugee experience, it became apparent that the changes made to the local resettlement system in recent years have not addressed several critical issues. They have not addressed the barriers to relevant and effective services caused by the top-down, business oriented (rather than humanitarian oriented), management style prevalent among resettlement agency systems. Nor have they adequately addressed the need for an increased awareness of the strengths and assets that are inherent within particular refugee communities and the need to facilitate utilization of these strengths. In addition, they have not addressed the need to fully understand and respond to the impact of historically entrenched attitudes refugees bring with them that influence relationships between ethnic groups as well as between refugees and those who are employed to serve them. This dissertation addresses these issues.

Representation of Complex Systems

As interviews and analysis of data progressed, it became clear that all three theoretical perspectives are equally critical to an understanding of the Bantu resettlement experience and that each perspective raises issues that are influenced by and linked to factors revealed by the other two theoretical vantage points. A linear approach to representation to this project cannot take into full account the complexity of the relationships between perspectives. For this reason, an approach to the theoretical conceptualization and writing of this paper has been employed that is somewhat similar in structure to the cinematic representation of the 2006 film, *Babel*.

Babel, directed by Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu and written by Guillermo Arriaga, presents a complex story comprised of nonlinear relations and networks of nonlinear loops (Soelistyo & Setiawan, 2008). Portions of the story take place simultaneously in Morocco, the United States, Mexico, and Japan, resulting in several subplots. Events in one subplot affect events in the others and each subplot must be put in relation to the others for it to become meaningful. The film's representational style is characteristic of complexity theory where,

> components are mutually entangled, so that a change in one component will propagate through a tissue of interactions to other components that in turn will affect even further components, including the one that initially starts the process. This makes the dynamics of the system very hard to track in terms of its elements. (Soelistyo & Setiawan, 2008, p. 177)

This research project is not bounded by one theoretical perspective. Instead, three are at play simultaneously and each impacts our understanding of the other. Rather than presenting a literature review for each theoretical perspective in an arbitrary linear order, and then reporting on the data collected during the research process, literature relevant to the study, data from the study, including quotes from those interviewed, and analysis will be presented in a manner that weaves these components together and highlights the relations between the three theoretical perspectives: economic globalization, social capital, and history in person. In addition, data and discussions will take a somewhat circular route in time with resettlement workers first impressions of the Somali Bantu toward the front, in Chapter 2, and toward the end, within Chapter 8, a return to this same point in time with a reflection on these first impressions from a position of greater understanding. In the movie, *Babel*, a particular point in time is depicted at the beginning and end of the movie (a portrayal of two sides of a long-distance phone call). The

significance of the phone call makes sense to the viewer only after its context has been fully revealed by the events that took place leading up to this moment. The story of the Somali Bantu resettlement can be addressed effectively using this same representational style as our view of the Bantu, when they first arrived, was largely uninformed with regard to their history and cultural background. In the end, I will discuss the results of the study in terms of its implications and will make recommendations as to how institutions involved in refugee resettlement, including resettlement agencies and public schools, could enhance their services to more effectively assist newcomers to America with their adjustment process.

Conclusion

Local institutions providing services to refugees are well aware of problems within the refugee resettlement process. Efforts are being made by each resettlement organization to improve services but no cross-institutional effort is being made to address the issues. The purpose of this study was to investigate the efficacy of the refugee resettlement process for the Somali Bantu at the local level in one American city with an examination of the intersection of personal refugee lived experience and refugee resettlement institutional practice. The theoretical perspectives of economic globalization, social capital, and history in person have been employed to frame this investigation. Can these theoretical perspectives help to explain why the resettlement of the Bantu was such a disruptive and challenging process and why the Bantu continue to struggle to adapt to life in America today? There may be aspects of their experiences that cannot be explained through these lenses and a better understanding of Somali Bantu experience may not generalize to all refugee groups but it is my hope that the results of

this study will lead to suggestions for institutional policy change that will improve the lives of refugees adapting to life in America.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

My involvement with the Somali Bantu began in 2003 as a volunteer family "mentor" for the first Somali Bantu head of household to arrive in the city where I reside. She was single with three young siblings to care for as well as two toddlers of her own. She did not speak a word of English, had no prior experiences using electricity, indoor plumbing, a telephone, or public transportation. She did not know how to tell time with a clock and was illiterate in her native language. She had never held a pen in her hand and was learning how to write her own name. As a volunteer for a local refugee resettlement agency, I met several Bantu families and learned that the scenario described above was a common one.

I became particularly involved with one family of seven after helping to pick them up at the airport when they first arrived. I continue to see this family often. After 6 years of regular interactions with the father, for the purpose of describing myself for this dissertation, I asked him how he would describe me to others. I was wondering if he would use the term "White" or describe me in a different way. Although I was having a conversation in English with him at the time, he called his teenage son over to translate. Through his son he said, "Yda is the first person who welcomed me to America. She was at the airport when we arrived. She is helping us still. I think of her as my American mother." Not getting quite the response I was looking for, I asked how he would describe

the way I look. The answer was, "White". For this reason, I use the term 'White' when describing myself to the reader.

The time I have spent with members of the Somali Bantu community has been an eye-opening experience and has taught me much about not only refugee resettlement processes but about the struggles many newcomers to America face. Because of my long-standing involvement with the family of seven (now a family of 11), I have had the opportunity to spend a great deal of time at their home and meet many of their friends and extended family members. In the process of assisting this family, I have interacted with many agencies on their behalf including the Department of Work Force Services, two local resettlement agencies, and various employers and potential employers. This has helped me to gain a broad understanding of the issues refugees face when relocating to an American city.

My initial interactions with these families led me to a desire to conduct research examining the local refugee resettlement process and the impact this process has on the adaptation experience refugees face when moving to this particular Western urban environment. Through these initial interactions, participant observation began. Time spent with members of the Bantu community helped me to become aware of social support networks that local Bantu were establishing with members of their own community and the emergence of community leaders among their group. I was also keenly aware of the inadequacy of services to support new Americans arriving with refugee status and of their struggles to meet very basic needs. The design of this study and questions that would be asked were shaped by these early observations.

Research Design

The Somali Bantu come from a cultural group that is vastly different from my own. In addition, they have endured experiences I can only begin to imagine. As an outsider to the local Somali Bantu community, I felt it was important to use an interpretive approach, avoiding an a priori design, such as a positivist or postpositivist one, that could limit the discovery of unexpected understandings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Using an interpretive approach allowed for flexibility throughout the data gathering and analysis processes that ultimately led to far more nuanced and complex findings. These findings would not have emerged had I approached the study with a fixed agenda.

I wanted to provide an opportunity for those I interviewed to tell their side of the story while recognizing that data collected during interviews would represent a joint construction between myself and those I interviewed. I chose to use a theoretical approach that is based on the assumption that there is no one reality, no one truth, but that perception of truth is relative and is based on personal experience. This seemed particularly important in the study of a community of people who, as an ethnic minority, have suffered immense hardships due to protracted conflictual relations with a dominant ethnic majority population. Using this approach provided the Somali Bantu with an opportunity to tell their stories with limited prior assumptions on my part that could occur due to interactions with members of the Somali majority and members of the local resettlement community. Grounded theory, and in particular constructivist grounded theory, provided a suitable framework. A grounded theory method is appealing to me, in

part, due to the fact that it "offers a set of flexible strategies, not rigid prescriptions" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 513).

Constructivist Grounded Theory

Grounded theory involves the development of a substantive theory that is derived from, and therefore grounded in, the data. Grounded theory can also be used to examine the adequacy of an existing theory within a particular context (Schram, 2003). No assumptions or hypotheses are made in advance. Instead, broad questions are asked in an investigation of participant actions and interactions in a particular field of study. The "theory may be elaborated and modified as the researcher plays additional and ongoing instances of data against it" (Schram, 2003, p. 73). Using a grounded theory approach allows for flexibility in the process of doing research but it does not explicitly provide a framework that takes into consideration the fact that the researcher is an outsider to the experiences under investigation. As an outsider, the researcher can easily make assumptions, based on the data collected, that do not ring true to those being studied. For the purposes of this project, a more collaborative model was needed.

Grounded theory, as described by Glaser and Strauss (1967), Glaser (1978) and Strauss and Corbin (1998) has been criticized by Charmez (2000) for taking an objectivist and positivist stance, operating under the assumption that there is one truth that can be discovered by the researcher. Charmaz describes a constructivist version of grounded theory that fits well with my personal views as to how research should be conducted.

> [A] constructivist grounded theory fosters the development of qualitative traditions through the study of experience from the standpoint of those who live it.…A constructivist grounded theory recognizes that the viewer creates the data and ensuing analysis through interaction with the viewed. (Charmaz, 2000, p. 522-523)

I recognize that my own experiences, in particular those working with this group as a volunteer and as a professional, have influenced the development of questions for this study as well as the analysis of the data and interpretation of results. By using a constructivist grounded theory approach, which included opportunities for new ideas to emerge throughout the process, my evolving questions and the opinions of those I interviewed have merged resulting in an analysis that expresses an integration of perspectives.

Original Questions

This dissertation examines the experiences of 11 Somali Bantu adults during forced migration, and places their experiences accessing services from refugee resettlement organizations within the context of resettlement policies, practices, and resettlement employee perspectives. Social capital theory was used to generate questions for the Somali Bantu while an economic globalization perspective was used to generate questions for resettlement and state agency staff. These theoretical perspectives will be discussed in detail in Chapters 5 and 6.

The following questions were used as an initial framework for an investigation into the resettlement experience of the Somali Bantu in one metropolitan city in the United States:

- How do Somali Bantu adults perceive their experiences accessing services from organizations directly involved in the refugee resettlement process and how do

these historically and culturally based perceptions compare to the descriptions of services provided by the staff of these organizations?

- Can concepts of economic globalization and an investigation of economic networks within the refugee resettlement system help explain particular policies and practices of the organizations involved in the refugee resettlement process?
- How does the manner in which organizations and institutions work with people who come here as refugees make use of, support, or disrupt the social networks they have brought with them or have used in the past?
- Does an increased understanding of Somali Bantu use of social networks, past and present, help us conceptualize ways in which refugee resettlement organizations could modify their practices to better meet the needs of this particular group?

Methods

In order to answer the questions above, methods were required that would help me, as an outsider, understand the resettlement environment the Somali Bantu live within. In addition, methods were required that would allow for new questions to emerge based on the responses of those I interviewed to my original inquiries. Both extensive participant observation (Foster, 1996; Spradley, 1980) and semistructured interviews (Flick, 2002) were necessary to meet these requirements. This combination of methods provided insight into the complex nature of the refugee resettlement process with participant observation creating a guide to ask questions that have not been asked before.

On many occasions, the Bantu I interviewed were aware of my long-standing relationship with members of their community and had already heard of me before I arrived for an interview. Their reception was warm and they answered my questions

without hesitation, often offering far more information than I had asked for. I felt that at least some level of trust had been developed over time which decreased reactivity (effect of the researcher's presence on the behavior and verbal remarks of the informants) and increased the integrity and trustworthiness of my findings. Trustworthiness refers to evidence of competent practice in the research process along with ethical conduct. Unlike the term 'validity' used in quantitative research, it is not related to the uncovering of a single truth. Trustworthiness refers to an honest attempt to represent the views of the participants, at the time the study was conducted, accurately and to respect the participant's interests in all phases of the research process (Schram, 2003).

Participant Observation in a Professional Context

My involvement with Somali Bantu families led to significant changes in my professional life. As a faculty member at the local state university, involvement with the Bantu community generated an opportunity to participate in a university and community-based partnership project at a large apartment complex where a significant number of Somali Bantu refugees were living when this dissertation was initiated. I developed an occupational therapy life skills program for residents of the apartment complex by creating a fieldwork program for university students. Many Somali Bantu women participated in this program. For 2 years, I was cochair of the partnership steering committee and for 3 years, Faculty Director, which included the responsibility to facilitate an interdisciplinary seminar of university students who are involved with refugee service programming. In this environment, I have had the opportunity to interact with Somali Bantu families and hear the perspectives of faculty, students and staff of community organizations involved in the daily lives of the Somali Bantu living at this

apartment complex and in other locations in the same city.

In addition to the exposure to refugee resettlement issues mentioned above, I frequently attended monthly meetings for those who provide services for refugees run by the Department of Work Force Services (DWS). Representatives from DWS, the resettlement agencies, English-as-a-Second-Language providers, and other groups providing services to refugees attend. Reports from various agencies are given and issues that affect multiple organizations are discussed. In this meeting, I have had the opportunity to hear issues raised by staff of organizations that provide services to refugees. When I cannot attend, I receive an electronic copy of the minutes.

Participant observation has provided me with insights into the interaction between refugee resettlement systems and Somali Bantu experience that has profoundly, and positively, affected the outcomes of this study. Extensive time spent, over a period of seven years, in the refugee resettlement community and with Somali Bantu families has allowed me to interpret the prevailing discourses among resettlement workers and educators and deconstruct disruptive interactions between the Somali Bantu and employees from local institutions such as those described in Chapter 2. Without this level of participation, I am confident the interviews and subsequent analysis of data would not have been nearly as rich and informative.

Interviews

In my requests for interviews with Somali Bantu, I presented the project as an opportunity for them to tell their story. The purpose of the research was described so as to avoid any misperception of the intent of my work. I let them know that it was for my education, to complete a university degree, and that I would do my best to give them

access to it prior to any publication in order to give them the opportunity to check my interpretation of the issues raised.

In the interviews conducted with refugees, open-ended questions were asked that were structured to include issues related to interactions with institutions involved in their resettlement. The interviews were also structured to investigate past and present social capital available and utilized by the Somali Bantu to gain a better understanding of the strengths of this community and to determine if there was any attempt on the part of the refugee resettlement organizations to capitalize on these strengths during the resettlement process.

After reading Hyndman's 1996 dissertation, describing life in the Kenyan refugee camps, I was concerned that the idea of being 'interviewed' would be of some concern to the Somali Bantu. According to Hyndman, refugees were frequently subjected to interviews for the purpose of surveillance in order to track misuse of ration cards. Hyndman did not collect complete demographic data on her interviewees as one measure to create an atmosphere of trust between her and the participants. For this reason, I did not ask for demographics but simply asked the person I was interviewing about life in Somalia and their personal story of migration. Specific demographics, such as the number of children in the family, were not relevant to this study anyway. The focus of this investigation was on broad relational issues between members of the Somali Bantu community and the structure of the local refugee resettlement community.

Initially, 11 interviews of adult Somali Bantu were conducted, usually at their homes. Six were with women, and 5 with men. The length of interviews varied from 30 minutes to over 3 hours. One male Somali Bantu was interviewed twice and another was

interviewed three times in order to get through all of the questions I wanted to ask and to allow time for all that they wanted to share with me. All but one participant gave me permission to audio-record the interview, which was then transcribed verbatim. One participant requested that I take notes instead. After initial analysis of the data, four follow-up interviews were conducted to explore additional questions generated by the analysis process and to get feedback regarding my interpretations of the data.

Eleven interviews were conducted with employees of refugee resettlement organizations, including the national agencies that are primarily responsible for the first 6 months of the resettlement process, the state organization that is responsible for many of the benefits (i.e., food stamps, day care subsidies, etc.) refugees receive when they first arrive, and a local agency that is available to assist refugees during their first 5 years in the United States. Interviews were conducted with the leaders of these organizations as well as with case workers who interact with refugees on a daily basis. These interviews were not audio-taped as I was concerned that having a tape recorder running might inhibit honest responses when the person being interviewed might otherwise be willing to provide information critical of the services currently available. Notes were taken during the interviews which were then typed a short time later. When interviewing resettlement staff employees, no translator was needed as they all spoke English.

Issues of Translation

My previous experience with the Bantu community taught me that a Somali Bantu translator would be required for this project, not just someone able to speak both Somali and English. I was already aware of tensions between members of the Somali Bantu community and the Somali community and I did not want to take the risk that some

information would be withheld due to the presence of a non-Bantu translator. I had no idea just how important this would actually be. As I will describe in detail in later chapters, a frequent topic raised by those interviewed was of their difficulties dealing with native Somali people in the past and the present. I am confident that much of the information I learned during this project would not have been available to me, had I used a native Somali, or as the Bantu call them, a "Somali Somali" translator. Two men and 2 women I interviewed were able to speak English fluently so no translator was needed. In all other cases, translators were necessary.

From my interactions and observations with Somali Bantu in the past, I felt that it would be best to use a female translator during interviews with women as the women might not feel comfortable discussing certain issues with a male member of their community present. In retrospect, I am not sure that matching the sex of the translator to the person being interviewed made any difference. The topics that came up were not likely affected by this.[4]

Working with Somali Bantu translators brought about one concern in relation to the trustworthiness of the information received during the interview. Both translators

---

[4] Male and female roles are generally well defined in Somali Bantu culture. (Lehman & Eno, 2003) On many occasions, while I worked at the university-community partnership center located in an apartment complex, as I walked from the community center to the parking lot, I would see women sitting on the lawn chatting, watching their children while the men were hanging out in the parking lot together. Men were taking on Bantu community leadership positions while women were responsible for home maintenance, cooking, and childcare. Somali Bantu women often had parties to celebrate new babies or other occasions. When I attended these parties, there were no men present. On another occasion I was invited to a meeting of the Somali Bantu when they were initiating a formal organization of their own. I was the only woman attending the meeting, other than the woman who lived in the home where the meeting was held. Approximately 20 men attended the meeting and made decisions as to how they would formally organize their community. These observations led me to believe that it would be best to match the gender of the translator with the person being interviewed but during the first few interviews I found no evidence that this was warranted. The Somali Bantu female interpreter accepted the position and was paid an hourly rate comparable to what is offered to medical translators locally. The Somali Bantu male I worked with refused the money saying that, since I was a "helper of Bantu people" he did not want to be paid.

lived through the same experiences as those I interviewed and at times spoke for themselves rather than just translating. They often made it clear when they were speaking for themselves versus speaking for the person being interviewed but it was not clear to me how much of an effect this had on the content of the interviews. To assure that the translator was not influencing the data I was receiving, I interviewed 1 female and 1 male Somali Bantu who were fluent in English with no translator present. The information I received matched or fit well with the information I had received earlier. There were no contradictions, just more detail on particular topics. I do not believe that having the translator participate in the interview conversation significantly influenced the results. In fact, I believe it only added to the depth and richness of the information I was receiving.

Issues of Representation

I have avoided using names or have used pseudonyms for the people I interviewed. Several of the Somali Bantu told me they did not mind having their names revealed but as most are unable to read English at this time, I decided that their willingness to reveal their real names was not based on a complete understanding of how their names were being used. The resettlement worker community is a small one with, for the most part, everyone knowing everyone else who works is this area. For this reason, in order to maintain confidentiality, I have not revealed the names of those I spoke with and have avoided linking anything said by them to any particular organization. When quotations include my own questions or comments, a "Y" precedes my words. The words of the person I was interviewing are preceded by the first letter of the pseudonym I assigned them.

As I interviewed members of the Somali Bantu community and transcribed their words, I was struck by how rich and informative their statements were. I chose to, on many occasions, include lengthy excerpts from their interviews as I felt that they could tell their stories and express their concerns effectively with minimal interpretation on my part. This research project has generated a rare opportunity for members of the Somali Bantu community to be heard and it seems appropriate to let them speak for themselves whenever possible. There is little in the way of quotations from resettlement worker interviews as these were not tape recorded. Their responses are often paraphrased based on notes taken during the interview.

Data Analysis

Analysis of the data took place in multiple locations and includes a(n):

- Comparison of internationalized global business trends in refugee management to daily practices in refugee resettlement at the local level in one metropolitan area of the United States.
- Analysis of Somali Bantu internal community social support systems across settings (Somalia, Kenyan refugee camps, United States).
- Examination of the influence of historically-based relationships between the Somali Bantu, native Somalis, the Somali government, and Kenyan refugee camp staff on the attitudes of the Somali Bantu in the United States today.
- Evaluation of the intersection between the Somali Bantu and institutional norms and policies of the organizations that provide these services locally with attention to how historically constituted attitudes foster specific kinds of responses by the Bantu to the resettlement process.

A grounded theory approach was used with initial line-by-line open coding of interviews, axial coding designed to make connections between emerging categories, and selective coding to develop conceptual and theoretical frameworks (Charmaz, 2000; Glaser, 1978; Glaser, 1998). Below, I will discuss how the original questions shaped the codes that emerged and how coding led to the categories that formed the results of this study. Because interviews were conducted with members of the Somali Bantu community and with employees of resettlement agencies, two data sets were completed based on each of these specific contexts. The two sets of data were analyzed separately and were then compared to each other in order to examine the intersection of personal and institutional perspectives on the resettlement process.

In order to answer the original research questions, the Somali Bantu who were interviewed were asked about daily life and specifically about their social networks in Somalia, the Kenyan refugee camps and in the United States. They were also asked specific questions regarding their opinions of the resettlement process at the local level. Resettlement employees were asked questions about the mission of their organization and the services they provide. They were asked if any institutional rules, regulations, or issues with funding influenced their provision of services. Questions were asked regarding their opinions on the efficacy of current services and whether these services were adequate for a group like the Somali Bantu. In addition, inquiries were made about their perceptions of the Bantu and their reaction to the resettlement process.

Open coding of the interviews was influenced by the original overarching research questions but when participants offered information that diverged from the specific question asked, coding was still completed to identify topics that were of

importance to those being interviewed. During interviews with the Somali Bantu, a great deal of information was offered regarding social support systems and networks within the Bantu community. Examples were provided of Bantu helping each other during hard times in Somalia, Kenya, and in the United States. Problems with services provided by resettlement agencies were mentioned frequently with lack of access to education being a common complaint. Less information was offered when questions were asked about leadership within the community but this seemed to be a significant aspect to their story as it was directly linked to their internal social support networks. What was most interesting was that time and time again, without any prompting on my part, issues of discrimination by the native Somalis were mentioned and were often described in great detail. Interviews included complaints of persecution and discrimination by the dominant Somali population in all contexts: in Somalia, the refugee camps, and in their current American home city. Due to the prevalence of codes that emerged on this topic, the use of *History in Person* (Holland & Lave, 2001) as a theoretical lens was expanded and became a perspective of critical importance in the understanding of Somali Bantu experience in the past and present.

Codes that emerged most frequently from interviews with resettlement employees were related to issues of gaps in services, competition between agencies, issues of efficiency, accountability, and constraints imposed by federal regulations. When asked about their experiences with the Somali Bantu, responses were focused primarily on their inability to read or fill out required paperwork.

Constant comparison (Flick, 2002) was used as the interviews progressed exploring themes that other interviewees had brought to light. Data reduction began with

thematic organization of codes and development of major themes using an inductive approach (Adler & Clark, 1999). As organization of codes from Somali Bantu interviews progressed, in vivo codes for a total of six themes emerged in the two primary topic areas of social capital and history in person. In the area of social capital the themes were organized based on the location of events:

Social Support in Somalia: "It would be everybody's problem."

Social Support in Kenya: "Everyone has the same problem."

Social Support in the U.S.: "We try…"

In the area of history in person, themes were also organized in a historical sequence of location:

In Somalia: Civil War Breaks Out: "Do it or die."

Life in the Camps: "And they still had their guns."

Relationships in America: "Here it is the same thing."

An additional theme that encompasses both the benefits of relocation to the United States and the hardships that the Somali Bantu face daily is titled, "And Here There Is Not a lot of Things to Worry About and There Is a lot of Things to Worry About."

Follow up interviews were requested, when appropriate, to discuss issues that were raised during interviews with other participants or to discuss potential conclusions. Triangulation (Maxwell, 1998) was achieved through comparison of interviews and several member checks for content validity and discussion of interpretations.

Closing Remarks

I am a White female employed as a university professor and am certainly an outsider of the Somali Bantu community. I recognize that the research I am conducting is

beneficial for my own career advancement but I do hope that the results of this study, disseminated through presentations and journal publications, will benefit refugee communities in their "third country" placements through the development of improved refugee resettlement policies.

During my interviews with the Bantu, in particular with the men, I was impressed by their apparent desire to tell their stories. I felt as though they viewed this as a rare opportunity to let people outside of their community hear about their struggles, both past and present, and in particular to hear about issues of discrimination by the "Somali Somali." My hope has been to provide an opportunity for the Somali Bantu to share their stories and to construct an interpretation of what their journey from Somalia to the United States has been like for them, especially with regard to historically, culturally, and socially rooted adaptive responses to structural conditions imposed on them by the institutions and organizations providing them with social services.

During a follow up interview, I asked one of the participants why he was willing to spend so much time talking with me. He told me that it was important to tell the story of the Somali Bantu. When I asked him who should hear this story he replied, "Everyone." His main concern was that his children have written documentation of the history of the Bantu, both in Somalia and in the Kenyan camps.

CHAPTER 5

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN AN ERA OF ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION

This chapter addresses the topic of economic globalization within the context of refugee experiences in Africa and refugee resettlement management both internationally and within the United States. The effect of economic globalization on the human capital of the Somali Bantu, forced to migrate from their homes in Africa, will be introduced (and then covered in more detail in Chapters 6 and 7) in terms of the skill sets they bring with them and the nature of the receiving environment in which they are expected to begin a new life. Data from interviews with local refugee resettlement workers are utilized to investigate the assertions made in refugee resettlement literature regarding the tendency for resettlement systems to prioritize Western "expert" knowledge, relying on a top-down management approach. Available literature critiquing international and national resettlement systems also claim that services are managed within an atmosphere of competition rather than cooperation and that the same set of services are provided to all refugees regardless of their backgrounds, to the detriment of the refugees they are employed to serve. Issues of funding and support for refugee self-help organizations will also be discussed as research into this topic revealed conflicting opinions as to the benefits inherent in these organizations versus their potential to split refugee

communities, creating tensions rather than fostering an atmosphere of mutual support and cooperation.

There are two aspects of economic globalization that are relevant to the resettlement of the Somali Bantu in America. The first aspect to be considered is the impact of economic and technological globalization on the people living in Africa, in this particular case the Somali Bantu, and how this affects their adaptation to life in a Westernized urban environment. The second aspect to consider is how globalized trends in institutional practice have affected the manner in which refugee resettlement systems conduct business. The intersection of these two realms is the location where refugees from developing countries, including the Somali Bantu, get caught in the middle without the human capital required for a relatively smooth transition to life in a Western country.

Globalized Neoliberal Economics: Some Countries Prosper While Others Are Left Behind

Globalization, broadly defined, refers to the continual process of increasing connections, communications, trade, and interdependence among countries and economies throughout the world. Globalization can be viewed as having two intertwined dynamics, the first being globalization propelled by a neoliberal economic development model and the second being technological advances that have dramatically increased the speed of international communications and rates of production (Stromquist, 2002). Both dynamics have had an impact on the experiences of the Somali Bantu resettling in the United States and help to explain why their resettlement process has been, and continues to be, such a challenge.

Globalization of neoliberal economic policies has resulted in an exacerbation of an already uneven distribution of wealth and knowledge throughout the world. Neoliberalism as defined by Stomquist (2002), is "an economic doctrine that sees the market as the most effective way of determining production and satisfying people's needs" (p. 25). Three economic policies are emphasized in this model: deregulation, privatization, and liberalization, which led to a reduction of state power in marketplace production and economics. Privatization and deregulation result in competition for market shares and drive the need for efficiency in all aspects of business. "Technological capacity, technological infrastructure, access to knowledge, and highly skilled human resources become critical sources of competitiveness in the new international division of labor" (Castells, 2000, p. 108). An international trade imbalance between developed and developing countries is perpetuated due to the inherent value of high-technology goods and high-knowledge services that are available to those in the more developed parts of the world. Those in developing countries, with limited access to technological advances and the knowledge required to utilize these advances, lose in the zero-sum game of international competition. Underdeveloped economies, such as those in Africa, remain impoverished due to this process of unequal exchange (Castells, 2000). The vast majority of those living in Africa are being denied the potential benefits inherent in neoliberal economic structures.

Educational systems in developing countries, which lack access to high levels of technology, are unable to prepare their students for profitable participation in a global economy. Africans, such as the Somali Bantu, who have had little to no access to formal education and who have been living off the land, tending to their gardens and farm

animals, are completely left out of the loop. The Somali Bantu come to America with social and human capital representing a wide range of skills and assets but the production skills they have relied on to be successful in rural Somalia are of little value in the United States as these skills do not transfer to a Western job market. The vast majority of Somali Bantu worked their own land as farmers in Somalia. Some worked as manual laborers in the Kenyan refugee camps. In America, they have no choice but to work as dishwashers, maids, and in other low-skill, low paying positions. The Somali Bantu provide a case of extremes as they have been uprooted and dropped into a society at the opposite end of the globalization spectrum. Although they have been living in the United States for several years, they continue to struggle with unemployment due to lack of English proficiency, education, and experience with technology. Upon arrival in the U.S., the Somali Bantu are forced to cope in an environment where it is far more difficult, as a newcomer to America, to become economically self-sufficient today than it was 50 years ago when entry-level positions in manufacturing were abundant (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

Decline of Manufacturing in the United States

In 1950, half of the American workforce was employed in manufacturing but by 1990, manufacturing accounted for only 20% of American jobs (Bamberger & Davidsen, 1998). Technological advances and international competition changed the structure of the labor market in the 1960s when low-cost imported goods began to pour into the United States. In response, in an effort to keep costs down, many U.S. companies moved their manufacturing facilities abroad while others reduced wages, cut benefits, or closed their factories due to an inability to generate adequate profits for stockholders. "New

technologies rendered the skills of countless American workers obsolete while manufacturing jobs went offshore" (Bamberger & Davidsen, 1998, p. 168). Boeing, for example, the American aircraft manufacturer, made a radical shift toward outsourcing. Twenty years ago, the majority of aircraft parts were made in the U.S. as compared to 2005 when as much as 70% of parts were produced overseas (Morley, 2006).

The White Furniture Company of Mebane, North Carolina provides a typical example of a factory closure caused by industrial globalization and deregulation during the 1980s. White Furniture Company, a family owned business employing over 200 men and women, was known for the manufacturing of high quality fine furniture reproductions. For many decades, it was the primary employer in the small town of Mebane but after 112 years of operation, the doors closed for good in 1993. The White Furniture Company, an operation relying on skilled manual labor rather than high-tech equipment, could not compete in a market place that was shifting more and more toward high-tech manufacturing operations and overseas outsourcing (Bamberger & Davidsen, 1998). What happened to the White Furniture Company and its employees is typical of manufacturing operations all across America.

The large-scale movement of low-skilled and semiskilled jobs overseas has had a dramatic impact on U.S. labor markets. In the United States "[i]ndustrial restructuring and corporate downsizing brought about the gradual disappearance of the jobs that had provided the basis for the economic ascent of the European second generation" (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, p. 57). The impact of globalized technology advances on the market place has resulted in a shift toward increased information context demands in the work place, a greater split between unskilled and skilled labor, a decrease in farm work, and a

shift from manufacturing of goods to service jobs (Castells, 2000). Unfortunately, the vast majority of service sector jobs in the U.S. are low-wage, menial positions with little to no opportunity for advancement. College degrees and proficiency with technology have become prerequisites for most any job above minimum wage - a wage that does not provide the necessary income to support one individual, let alone support a family. This was not the case when United States resettlement policies were first established. United States policies and federal assistance standards were developed during the Cold War when Eastern European refugees entered the U.S., fleeing communist governments, with a large percentage of refugees arriving with professional backgrounds and college degrees (McBrien, 2005). If they were not well educated, they were at least likely to be literate and accustomed to living in a modern society and to have some familiarity with Western-style political and bureaucratic systems. This is not necessarily the case with today's refugees, many of whom come from Burma, Iraq, Afghanistan, Haiti, and villages in sub-Saharan Africa (McBrien, 2005)

The forces of economic globalization play out in Africa and the United States in ways that put the Somali Bantu at a severe disadvantage. They have been forced to migrate from a location that globalization left behind. Their lives in Africa did not prepare them with the education or training needed to succeed in an American context where neoliberal economic policies have resulted in a shortage of low-tech manufacturing jobs that provide sufficient earnings to support a family.

Economic Globalization Forces in Relation to Refugee Resettlement Practice

The nature of the refugee populations migrating to the United States has changed over time, as well as the nature of the receiving environment, but the institutions responsible for assisting them with this process have not kept up with the changing needs of the people they serve (Castells, 2000; McBrien, 2005). All refugees are dependent on agencies and institutions in the refugee camps and in the countries where they are resettled. These institutions include international organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), national and state refugee resettlement agencies, and state institutions such as the Department of Work Force Services (DWS). This dissertation is designed to address resettlement issues in one city in the U.S. but an investigation of the policies and practices of local organizations involved in refugee resettlement, and the ways in which Somali Bantu interact with these policies and practices, is superficial and incomplete without an examination of the global and national contexts within which these organizations function.

Mato (1997) argues that the local cannot be studied effectively without studying the effects of the global on the local and that "local" and "global" are not entirely separate "domains of experience" (p. 46). Issues that take place in local contexts are invariably influenced by broader globalization forces. For example, non-Western forms of knowledge, devalued at the global level, are typically devalued at local levels as well.

Bias Toward Western Knowledge Systems

The assumption that the knowledge of Western educated professionals is superior to other forms of knowledge has been a persistent feature of globalization from colonial times until the present. In *Encountering Development*, Escobar (1995) writes about Westernized knowledge systems that are the driving force in Third World development projects. In development discourse, the Third World has been described as a "child in need of adult guidance" (p. 30). A system of relations established on these terms sets,

> the rules of the game: who can speak, from what points of view, with what authority, and according to what criteria of expertise; it sets the rules that must be followed for this or that problem, theory, or object to emerge and be named, analyzed, and eventually transformed into a policy or a plan. (Escobar, 1995, p. 41)

In an attempt to "improve" conditions in the Third World, Western professionals have devised procedures designed to make societies fit into pre-existing models based on Western values and assumptions (Escobar, 1995; Hyndman, 2000). The marginalization of non-Westernized ways of thinking present in development policy is prevalent in refugee management policy as well.

Similarly, Aleinikoff (1995) has described the legal discourse surrounding refugee and refugee camp management policies as state-centered with little concern for "the actual experiences and desires of refugees themselves" (p. 258). The skills and capacities refugees bring with them, potential resources to tap into during times of crisis management, have been ignored and instead refugees have been viewed as "helpless objects of pity" in need of "top-down" interventions (Aleinikoff, 1995; Marfleet, 2006). Aleinkoff suggests that a "bottom-up" approach be considered to address refugee issues "with participation by refugees in the definition of both 'the problem' and acceptable

'solutions'" (p. 267). Numerous authors, including Voutira and Harrell-Bond (1995), Hyndman (2000), Kibreab (2004), and Marfleet (2006) have discussed the tendency of UNHCR and other nongovernmental organizations to take a top-down approach to the management of refugee camps, marginalizing the knowledge and opinions of the refugees who live there, treating them as people who are in need of administrative structures designed to keep them under control.

In America, non-Westernized knowledge systems appear to be marginalized and devalued when decisions are being made regarding management of refugee resettlement services at both federal and state levels. Refugees themselves are not placed in decision-making positions with regard to policy development and implementation. The opinions of college educated professionals are favored over the opinions of the refugees themselves, giving the professionals full control over the distribution and management of resettlement funds. Knowledge acquired through lived experience, such as that acquired through life in the camps or through community leadership experiences, is not valued in any tangible way in this context. Several examples of this came up during the course of my interviews. One refugee resettlement employee I interviewed talked about a need to develop programs that respond to needs as expressed by refugee communities, rather than implementing programs that follow opportunities for funding that are based on pre-determined program concepts established by the professionals charged with the distribution of refugee resettlement funds.

It is clear from interactions with numerous refugee resettlement professionals that the majority of them are compassionate about their jobs and have a sincere desire to provide the best possible services for these new Americans. One employee, however,

described state office employees as people more interested in promotions than in their clients. They were described as, "more business oriented than people oriented" and as being concerned about their own power within the organization. This statement supports the idea that a business oriented construct creates a tendency to attract staff that are more focused on their own careers than on providing quality services.

Persistence of Institutionalized Marginalization

During the data collection phase of this study, two examples of institutionalized marginalization became apparent that demonstrate how systems historically based on top-down management resist change. One situation involves the DWS Office of Refugee Services administrative decision to hold meetings that are open to the public on a weekday morning, the other situation involves management of funds meant to help refugee groups support themselves.

In an attempt to provide a mechanism for communication between refugee service providers, the Department of Workforce Services holds meetings once a month on a weekday morning. Employees of various resettlement agencies attend regularly but recent-arrival refugee voices are not present. Representatives of refugee groups are encouraged to attend but are noticeably absent. One of the organizers of the meetings stated, "We don't have a good relationship with [refugee community] associations. They don't communicate with us." It is not clear why those most affected by resettlement system management are not attending these meetings but it is quite possible that they are unable to attend due to work schedules. Is this meeting really designed to address the needs of the refugee community or is it organized in a way that only serves the resettlement agencies and others earning a living providing services?

In contrast, the Working Group community meetings organized by the Department of Workforce Services task force, designed to identify problems within the local resettlement system (described in Chapter 3,) were held in the evenings to facilitate attendance and attract as many people from the refugee community as possible. The meetings were very well attended by refugee service providers as well as members of the refugee community. The DWS monthly provider meetings, however, remain on a weekday morning as this is most convenient for employed service providers. While there is an acknowledgement that the voices of local refugees are generally not heard at these meetings little, if any, effort is being made to facilitate their attendance. Those who arrived in the area as refugees are, therefore, unable to participate in the conversations about policy and appropriation of funds that take place among administrators and agency staff.

Another area of concern involves the management of money designated for refugee self-help organizations. At the DWS Working Group community meetings, refugees stood at the microphone to request policy changes such as increasing the focus of expenditures on community centers for refugee groups to come together. Many at the meetings were concerned about a lack of structured activities for their youth and an increase in gang activity. Long time residents of the local community, who had arrived decades before as refugees, complained stating that their requests for access to funding through the state for support of their own community self-help organizations (often referred to Mutual Assistance Associations or MAAs) were repeatedly denied. An increase in funds for community capacity building, including appropriation of funds for MAAs, was identified as the number one priority by the refugees in attendance.

The Working Group community meetings, spread out over several months, resulted in an extensive list of recommendations for the governor and other law makers to consider when working toward improvements in the system. At the time of the governor's request for recommendations, only two people within DWS were responsible for the management and support of refugee services, clearly an impossible task. The first three recommendations included establishing a new department within DWS to provide statewide refugee service coordination, establishment of a system to address the accountability of refugee service provider organizations, and the initiation of a task force to work on an increase in funding for refugee related services. The top three recommendations all focused on administrative and economic issues. The fourth recommendation included support for the creation of MAAs for the purpose of refugee community capacity building. In response to the recommendations, several significant changes were implemented, including the creation of a new office of refugee services positioned at a higher level in the bureaucratic chain of command within state workforce services. In addition, funding was provided to support a director and six supporting staff members.

With the support of a new Director of Refugee Services, an increase in funding for refugee groups to create organizations that support their own communities occurred during the first year of the new state office for refugee services. During the state's 2008 Legislative Session, $200,000 was appropriated for refugee capacity building. The same amount of money was available for this purpose in 2009. With this money, the state's refugee services office has provided grants to at least 16 different refugee groups from nearly as many countries. This direct response to the requests of refugees in the

community seems like a step in the right direction and fits with the concept of moving away from top-down management, respecting the wishes of members of the refugee community, and giving them some level of control over refugee service resources. However, during a follow-up interview with a leader of the local Somali Bantu community, a disturbing issue was raised when I asked about the recent increase in funds for refugee community associations.

> A: [T]he main problem is that if the money goes to an agency like IRC or CCS then CCS to be on top of these people start telling people what to do instead of just as ourselves solving the problems between us and maybe getting experience in how to use the money and where to spend it other than some other people that already know what they're doing to tell us what to do...[the DWS money] has nothing to do with IRC but IRC will say, hey, I'm helping these refugees, I'll open an account for them, I'll do this for them and they will get at least three, four leaders from the Somali Bantu, tell 'em this is what I'm gonna do, you be with me, this is what I'm going to do, I'll take care of you, then the money goes to IRC.
> Y: And that's what's happening?
> A: Yeah, that's what's happening.

With the creation of a new office of refugee services and an increase in funds for Mutual Assistance Associations, there appeared to be a move toward shifting the locus of control from refugee resettlement agencies to refugee communities but a closer look reveals that the same pattern of top-down management remains in place. Local resettlement agencies have found a way to funnel at least some of the monies, meant for refugee groups to manage themselves, through their agency systems, controlling how the money is spent.

Funding MAAs has also resulted in problems that reflect the need to approach the development of MAAs with sensitivity to tensions that may occur within groups that have a long-history of strained relations within their home country. During Working Group community meetings, leaders of various ethnic groups expressed their desire to create associations for their own communities but funding for specific refugee

communities has created a sense of competition and, at least in some cases, has been divisive, rather than bringing communities together. This same dynamic has been documented in London and Toronto in a study of Somali organizations by Hopkins (2006). Hopkins found that exclusionary dynamics between different Somali clan groups (Somali Bantu are not included in her study) hindered efforts to establish effective community-based self-help organizations.

During one follow-up interview with a Somali Bantu community leader, I was told that funding separate groups that have a history of adversarial relations, such as the Somali and the Somali Bantu, was problematic as it could easily result in a perpetuation of prior tensions (relations between native Somalis and the Somali Bantu will be discussed in great detail in Chapter 7). The gentleman I was interviewing would have preferred to see funding be made available for broader refugee communities, to encourage different communities of refugees to work together. This young man's opinion points to the complex nature of refugee resettlement and how challenging it can be to design effective systems that meet everyone's needs.

The director of the state refugee services office was asked what he had heard about possible tensions created, or recreated, by this funding. He replied that funding has brought out an "underlying tension and distrust" in the Bantu and Burmese communities and that although work was being done to resolve problems, some tensions still existed (personal communication, December 28, 2009). Mutual Assistance Associations are a valuable tool for providing refugee groups with the opportunity to identify and address the needs of their own communities. With more knowledge up front as to the tensions between groups that are in place prior to entrance to the United States, development of

MAAs could take place in a more productive manner. Expecting groups to work together effectively, simply because they come from the same country, may not be realistic. Often members of refugee groups from the same country were on opposite sides of a war in their homeland and tensions between the groups may persist. At the same time, the Somali Bantu leader I spoke with has a good point. Supporting separation of ethnic groups can perpetuate divisions and diminish the potential for those who came to the U.S. as refugees to work together in support of common interests. Either approach can be problematic but in-depth background knowledge of home country ethnic group relations is critical for effective support of Mutual Assistance Associations or other self-help organizations.

Homogenization of Services

An additional impact of Westernized perspectives on refugee management at state, national and international levels, has been the homogenization of services without regard to cultural differences and variations in refugee experience. Literature available on the topic of international services reveals that refugees do not represent homogeneous populations although there is a tendency for states and refugee agencies to treat them as such (Matsuoda, & Sorenson, 2001; Voutira & Harrell-Bond, 2000). Refugee experiences differ with regard to the circumstances which lead to forced displacement and exile. They also come to these experiences with differing religious beliefs, ethnic backgrounds, class status, and political allegiance. A sense of political solidarity is rare even amongst those who have arrived from the same country. Refugees often retain differing views as to how the conflicts at home should be resolved (Voutira & Harrell-Bond, 1995). "Humanitarian organizations tend also to treat their beneficiaries as an

undifferentiated mass. Assistance is often 'packaged' and delivered without due consideration of the distinctive values, norms and social organization of the afflicted population" (Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 1992, p. 8). Refugees are essentially treated as economic units that require funding in order to be supplied with housing, nutrition and other basic services and supplies.

There was unanimous agreement among all I interviewed that the systems in place to work with newly arriving refugees were not effective with a group like the Somali Bantu due to their lack of experience in Westernized cultural systems, lack of formal education, and level of illiteracy. One DWS employee stated that the state system was not ready for resettlement work with Africans with no formal education. As has been described earlier in this chapter, with this population, services that were designed for refugees from Eastern Europe have not been adequate. Gaps in services exist for all groups of refugees coming to the United States but transitioning is extremely difficult for most refugees who are coming from Africa, primarily due to lack of experience with the English language and skills that transfer to employability. One director of a resettlement agency stated, "DWS is designed for White people with at least a grade school education. [It is designed for people who] can figure out how to navigate the system." The Department of Workforce Services manages the federal funds refugees receive during their first few months in America. This federal resettlement system is designed with the expectation that refugees will be employed and will be economically self-sufficient, on average, within 6 months of arrival. As one resettlement worker stated, with the Somali Bantu, "After 6 months we are happy if they have learned how to sign their names." This is an exaggeration for some but literally the case with other members of this community.

One resettlement employee explained that refugees from non-Westernized environments need to be followed closely by case managers longer than they have been. The 5- month mark was described as especially important as DWS sends out paperwork that is needed to renew welfare benefits 6 months after arrival. With what has been called, "a preliterate" group of refugees, the paperwork goes unattended to, since they cannot read it and do not realize its significance. When the paperwork does not get resubmitted, benefits they should qualify for stop. This worker jokingly said, "So what do you do? Do more bureaucracy. Send them more papers they can't read!"

All providers of services for refugees that were interviewed stated that the local resettlement system was not designed to meet the needs of these newly arriving refugees, even though refugees from Africa, and other non-European parts of the world, had been arriving for decades. State employees, recognizing this deficit in the system, felt constrained by inflexible federal regulations that dictate how refugees must spend their time in order to receive refugee resettlement benefits.

Outdated modes of operation and lack of flexibility caused tremendous disruptions to not only the Somali Bantu, but to DWS employees as well. As one staff member stated, "When the Somali Bantu started to arrive, timeliness of applications crashed; denials [of benefits] skyrocketed." Caseworkers were often forced to "close" cases only to have to go through laborious procedures to re-open them after proper paperwork was submitted. Meanwhile, Somali Bantu families had to survive without benefits, including day care, food stamps and state-funded health care, for the periods of time when their cases were closed. The arrival of the Somali Bantu resulted in a tremendous upset to business-as-usual for the resettlement agencies. As one employee

stated,"[They] highlighted our gaps in our system. We have been plugging the gaps since then." One employee described a need for "a well-oiled machine" but the system in place appeared to be at the opposite end of the spectrum in terms of efficacy and support for refugees such as the Somali Bantu.

When the Bantu began to arrive, the primary resettlement agencies realized immediately that 6 months of service would be drastically inadequate. They were able to extend services to some degree by securing grants but even this extra effort was not nearly enough to meet the needs of the Somali Bantu community. Several resettlement workers stated that the Somali Bantu would need case management for a minimum of 2 years. During that 2-year time frame, many important milestones occur including the need to process applications for permanent U.S. resident status through the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, renewal of apartment leases, and renewal of application forms for healthcare and other state benefits for low-income residents. While my interviews were taking place, one resettlement organization developed and initiated a program that would extend benefits for a 2-year period. The primary person responsible for the new program described what he perceived to be a lack of support by other organizations for his plans, a "push back" from the refugee resettlement community. When I asked if this could be due to a sense of competition between agencies he responded that this was likely the case. As much as those working for resettlement agencies would like to think that their primary focus is on those they serve, economic circumstances create a climate of competition, hindering coordination among agencies and the development of higher quality services. In the next section, I will address how this climate of competition has been fostered by globalized capitalistic forces.

Interagency Competition

Much has been written about the impact of democratic principles and capitalistic market forces on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) responsible for assisting with refugee settlement (Barnett, 2003; Loescher, 2001; Raper, 2003; Partners in Education, 2003). Barnett (2003) describes how capitalistic globalization forces have pressured non-governmental refugee assistance organizations to protect their own interests in order to survive. Loescher (2001) and Raper (2003) contribute to our understanding of how these forces affect UNHCR policies.

Due to the complexity of refugee needs and the large number of organizations working toward improvements in the lives of refugees, it would be logical to assume that inter-agency coordination would best serve this population. Despite improved communication capacity in today's globalized world, specifically with the advent of email, interagency coordination remains a problem. Unfortunately, competition for funds has become a disincentive to coordinated efforts. The UNHCR, like other organizations, receives funding based on the image it projects and high profile projects that get media attention. Collaboration with other agencies results in a blurring of individual agency identity, which then results in reduced external funds. This leads to a perceived need to prioritize agency self-preservation and compromise humanitarian efforts in order to survive in the humanitarian market place (Loescher, 2001). Due to funding cuts, UNHCR has begun to ask nongovernmental organizations to remain in refugee camps but is asking them to locate their own funding (Raper, 2003). This has caused competition between groups for a right to stay in the camps, further decreasing collaborative efforts.

Competition between service agencies, encouraged by neoliberal economic policies, is evident in the local refugee resettlement community as well. For example, one resettlement employee I interviewed described the various organizations as territorial with more emphasis being placed on the needs of the organizations rather than "centering their thoughts on the refugees." Competition arises between the nonprofit groups who are competing for the same grants to sustain their services. One employee stated, "[It has] never been more political than now," complaining that funding systems were resulting in less communication and cooperation between groups.

Both refugees and resettlement workers made it clear that communication between agencies is a serious problem and interferes with the efficacy of services. Duplication of services was brought up several times. Employment programs are provided by four primary agencies. In addition, numerous small nonprofit groups provide services to refugees, including employment readiness training and job searches. And then there are the countless volunteers who are trying to help individuals and their families deal with the obstacles faced during the resettlement process. This results in a confusing mess of people helping out without communication between them. As one worker said, "Everything is so disconnected." Cross-training is needed between agencies as no one seems to be sure who is doing what. This situation only confuses the refugees and results in wasted time on the part of those trying to help them. During the period of time when interviews were conducted for this dissertation, the state office initiated a volunteer service education program available on-line and made a concerted effort to connect trained volunteers to refugee resettlement agencies but the issue of lack of

communication between volunteers and agencies persists, as well as a lack of coordination between refugee resettlement organizations.

Efficiency and Accountability Trends Dominate Systems

Competiveness as a principle, with efficiency and accountability as key valued features, had been brought about through the influence of globalized business strategies and has impacted a variety of institutions, including those involved in schooling and refugee resettlement (Stomquist, 2002). Stomquist and Monkman, in *Globalization and Education* (2000), state that the global market has had detrimental effects on formal schooling including a push for efficiency and productivity that is not necessarily appropriate for quality education. I contend that this is also the case in refugee resettlement institutions where an emphasis is placed on getting as many refugees through the resettlement process as quickly as possible. Donors and others financing these systems demand accountability in the form of numbers being collected on how many people are being served and at what percentage they are finding employment. In both education and refugee resettlement arenas, quantitative measurement results have become the norm for determining effectiveness and efficiency of services (Carnoy, 2000). Information collected on management of resettlement organizations is not likely to include qualitative data as to how refugees feel about the process or whether they are finding satisfaction in life after moving to America. But the question is, are speed and efficiency, as a driving force behind resettlement systems, improving those systems through accountability and reduced cost per refugee or would outcomes improve, in terms of long-term satisfaction and economic integration, if we took more time? Based on the interviews I conducted, I argue that the current business model is not in the best

interests of the refugee population and that more time spent during the resettlement process on education and life skills training would allow for a smoother transition and better long-term outcomes. In addition, more time should be spent investigating the skills and interests refugees bring with them.

During my experience with the local refugee community over the past several years, I have seen occasional attempts by employment case workers to match newly-arrived refugees from developing countries with jobs that fit with their interests and the skills they have acquired prior to coming to the United States. This is not the typical scenario, however. For the most part, case workers do not take the time needed to identify strengths and assets and match these to employment options. There are countless newly-arrived refugees who are placed in the first job that becomes available. A common placement is in meat packing plants were the wages are well above the federal minimum but the work is hard, the environment is cold, and many I have talked with are miserable. One Somali Bantu male I have worked with extensively was placed in a meat packing plant shortly after arriving in the United States. He was unaccustomed to the cold temperatures he was expected to work in and was unhappy with this placement. On his third day of work, unable to understand English, he misunderstood his supervisor and thought he was told to take the next day off. This was not an unusual request as it was common for the management to decrease their workforce whenever business slowed down. When this gentleman returned to work after one day's absence, he was fired for missing work without calling in. After several weeks of unemployment, I asked him if his caseworker was helping him find another job. No one was helping him; his caseworker felt she had already found him one job and she needed to move on to helping

others on her case load. I decided it was up to me to help him and started by asking him what his work experiences were in the past. He had been a mechanic in Somalia and also worked for nongovernmental organizations in the Kenyan refugee camps repairing their vehicles. Without the ability to read or write in English, it was not possible to place him in a position at an auto repair shop as mechanics are now generally required to pass written certification tests. Awareness of his employment background did, however, help me to locate an entry level position for him working for an automobile service company that specializes in oil changes. His skill level in auto mechanics was far above the level of skill required for the position but he was now in a setting he was familiar with and working at a job that gave him some satisfaction. Six years later, he is still working there.

The case I describe above was relatively easy to resolve as this gentleman had prior employment in a skilled trade. Many refugees lack work experience, in the typical sense of the word, but have acquired skills in home building, child care, gardening and so forth. It takes time to make employment matches that are based on an in-depth review of life experiences but long-term outcomes and life satisfaction would likely improve if case workers were given the time, resources, training, and were expected to work in this manner.

Providing refugees with time to learn basic life skills before expecting them to work full-time would be helpful as well. One resettlement case worker felt that refugees need time to feel safe in their new surroundings. They need to know how to shop, ride the bus, and so forth before they will be successful in school and able to look for employment. "They can't get anything out of school if they are worried about these

things. They need the basics first." Another stated that time is needed to build trust between the case worker and the refugee. She provided an example: when a refugee is having difficulty with work, he or she may not feel comfortable going to the case worker for assistance. The refugee may instead just stay home. Without the problem being resolved openly, the result is an unemployed refugee and an employer who may not hire those who came to this country as refugees in the future due to the appearance of unreliability. This case worker felt that dedicating more case management time to each refugee would decrease the occurrence of these types of events.

Those I interviewed who were employed by DWS consistently described their program as being geared toward, "self-sufficiency as quickly as possible." This was viewed as a federal mandate and as a concept they had no choice but to comply with. Federal resettlement funds are distributed through a complex system of programs with extensive strings attached in terms of demonstration of expected numbers of hours spent by refugees in particular activities related to time in school and time at work. The programs are performance driven based on employment outcomes. Expectations of employability and number of children determine assignment to particular federal programs by the resettlement agencies. These programs vary greatly in terms of the benefits they provide and for how long benefits, such as rent assistance, are available. The Match Grant Program, designed for a family that is expected to have an employed head of household quickly, provides significant support initially but with the assumption that the family will be economically self-sufficient in 90 days (Administration for Children and Families, n.d.a).

Those who are placed in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program are required to participate in work activities for 35 hours per week with at least 30 of these hours involving regular employment, job searching, on-the-job training, and job skills training (Administration for Children and Families, n.d.b). This program might work well for those who already speak English but for those who do not, and in particular those who are illiterate in any language, the program is deeply flawed. Federal guidelines require that refugees spend most of their day looking for work, volunteering, or actually working while only a few hours a week of English classes count toward eligibility guidelines. One rationale for expecting refugees to begin work immediately is that they will learn English by being immersed in an English-speaking environment.

Locating employment for non-English speakers is difficult to accomplish. To cope with a lack of employment options, case workers in the location of this study commonly place newly arrived refugees with a chain of church-based stores that sell second-hand donated clothing and household supplies. Refugees without English language skills are most often spending forty hours a week in the back room sorting clothing or other donated items. Work skills transferable to other workplace settings are sorely lacking. When a large number of refugees are being relocated to the area from the same ethnic group, many of the newer employees in these stores speak the same language. It is then easy for an employee, such as someone who speaks Somali, to spend the entire day conversing in her or his native language rather than learning how to speak English. Federal guidelines are being met with regard to number of hours spent employed but the refugees working there are only earning minimum wage and are learning little in the way of job skills that will serve them well in other employment

settings. After 1 year, administrators of this church-based "employment training" setting expect those they have employed to move on to a job outside of their system. Current federal policies, played out in this way, do not provide the supports needed for non-English speaking refugees with little to no formal education to become fully engaged in the American workforce in ways that can lead to middle-class lifestyles.

The expectation of these federal programs is that the refugee will become economically self-sufficient within anywhere from 90 days to 8 months, depending on which program they were enrolled in, is a concept that is clearly absurd, especially with a group like the Somali Bantu. One administrator stated that only 5 hours of English-as-a-Second-Language counts toward the hours needed to access benefits which, "puts them in a no-win situation."

In order for resettlement agencies to continue to qualify for federal funds, extensive tracking is required to demonstrate accountability. Progress reports demonstrating high rates of employment are critical to survival of the program. One administrator described reports generated at 1 week, 2 weeks, 1 month, 90 days, 120 days and 180 days. If employment numbers do not meet the criterion level established by the federal government, agency funding is reduced drastically. Resettlement agencies are audited by the state to look at program participation levels and compliance with regulations, which results in time spent by staff generating reports, thereby reducing the time available for direct services. This intensive focus on employment reduces the ability of resettlement staff to address other areas of concern.

One person interviewed, with the experience and integrity to back up the story, described corruption in one particular system. In the opinion of this worker, false data

was being generated to make it appear that more refugees were being served than was actually the case. Interest in self-preservation was creating a push toward exaggeration of successes and toward falsification of records.

Discussion

Refugee resettlement systems are fully entrenched in a globalized paradigm that prioritizes the needs of state and national organizations over those of the refugees they serve. This top-down, business oriented approach is focused on outcome measures based on numbers generated to demonstrate employment rates, rather than focusing on education and support that would create opportunities for individual and refugee community capacity building. The efficacy of services is further diminished by continued reliance on systems that are based on programs created during the Cold War era that have not been adequately updated to meet the contemporary needs of refugees who now typically come from Africa and Southeast Asia and who are unprepared for life in a highly technological society. Current federally mandated systems limit access to education and overemphasize early employment, which then holds people down in minimum or near-minimum wage jobs, with little hope for advancement.

Globalization, with its procapitalist, neoliberal market driven tendencies, has had a profoundly negative impact on the institutions and agencies involved in refugee resettlement. It is clear from the information provided in interviews for this study that the well documented negative impact of globalization on international refugee resettlement practice, occurs at the local level as well. Business oriented practices are in direct conflict with humanitarian agendas. This has resulted in a decrease in the overall efficacy of refugee services due to increased competition between agencies, a lack of

communication and collaboration, as well as the marginalization of refugees themselves in decision-making about how best to manage and support refugee resettlement. Institutions responsible for assisting with refugee resettlement have moved their focus away from the humanitarian needs of their clients to the financial needs of their own organizations with "efficiency" and "accountability" being of primary concern, rather than quality of life and long-term outcomes for those forced to migrate from their home countries.

CHAPTER 6

WE ALL BANTU – WE HAVE EACH OTHER

Social Capital: Continuity and Change with Forced Migration

The Somali Bantu arrived as refugees in the United States after living in refugee camps in Kenya for 10 to 12 years. They moved into a foreign culture without prior familial connections to the community. Once here, however, they are often living with or near extended family. The Somali Bantu arrived without financial resources and without the human capital skills needed to succeed educationally and financially in American society. The one form of capital they may possess (or may have lost, at least to some degree, in the process of migration) is social capital. Knowing that the Somali Bantu lack economic and cultural capital in American society, the use of a perspective based on social capital theory, with an examination of kinship and clan networks, helps to identify why the Somali Bantu are succeeding or struggling in their current context and why they are so often not accessing or benefiting from the many services and educational opportunities that are available in their new community.

How the Somali Bantu came to live along the banks of Somalia's Jubba River will be discussed in detail in Chapter 7. For the purposes of this study, Somali Bantu social capital networks are examined starting with the mid- to late-1800s, after the initial establishment of Somali Bantu villages in the area. In their settlements along the Jubba River, the Bantu acquired land through inheritance, or were able to access farm land

through a community lending and borrowing process that was based on reciprocal obligations. This process was managed by community leaders and was designed to sustain entire communities. It provided flexibility during periods of fluctuating weather conditions and fluctuating needs of community members (Besteman, 1999). This is one example of the Somali Bantus' long history of supporting each other through reciprocal social relationships.

The ability to maintain a communally advantageous system of this kind is clearly a strength of the Bantu people but has this been transported to refugee camps or to urban environments in the United States? This sounds especially challenging when members of village communities and families have been dispersed throughout the United States while some have remained behind in Somalia or Kenya (Matsuoka & Sorenson, 2001). This study revealed that social support systems have been transported and adapted to new environments in some cases but not others. One young Bantu male I interviewed said, "We all Bantu. We have each other." During my interviews, examples of Bantu people supporting each other came up often, such as getting help from other Bantu to read mail and fill out welfare paperwork. But as much as the Somali Bantu would like to support each other as they did in the past, physical distance from family members and others in their community along with a lack of useful resources in Western society have made it difficult, if not impossible, for them to maintain many of their former social relationships. Mothers, now living far apart from each other, are not able to share parenting responsibilities. Those in need of food or other basic necessities cannot turn to a member of their own community for help because everyone in their community is suffering from similar economic hardships.

What follows is a discussion of social capital from various authors' perspectives linked to my interpretation of how these fit with the written history of the Bantu and the current circumstances of those I interviewed. I argue that no single social capital theoretical perspective fully embraces the issues present in their lives. A combination of perspectives is needed to address the contemporary issues of marginalization and poverty that plague this community today. In addition, social capital theories based on those who are marginalized by a dominant White culture need to be reconsidered or broadened to include the experiences of those who have been marginalized by non-Whites and have been forced to migrate, along with their oppressors, to the United States.

Social Capital Theory in Relation to Bantu Experience

Somali Bantu have relied on members of their community for sustenance and protection for generations in Somalia and, at least to some degree, in the refugee camps (Lehman & Eno, 2003). Besteman (1999), in *Unraveling Somalia: Race, Violence, and the Legacy of Slavery*, provides an extensive history of the Somali Bantu, also known as the people of the Gosha, from their forced entry into Somalia as slaves, through the period of migration and settlement in Somalia's Jubba River valley as ex-slaves during the colonial era, to the period of property loss, violence and destruction brought on by the Somali government and native Somalis that ultimately led to their flight from the country. She describes the extensive family and clan affiliations and social networks that defined Gosha society and the necessity of these networks for survival. Families in the Jubba Valley worked together, sharing labor in the cultivation of their fields; they formed work groups to aid sick or injured neighbors; they lent plots of land to assure that their fellow clansmen would have enough food to eat; they contributed funds for weddings and

funerals and participated in collective *diya*-payments or blood compensation when wrongs were committed by a member of their group against a member of a different *diya*-payment group or lineage.

In many ways, the social life of the Somali Bantu, when they were in Somalia, presents as an example of Bourdieu's concept of social capital. Bourdieu described and analyzed four types of capital: economic, cultural, social, and symbolic. For the purposes of this dissertation, I have focused primarily on social capital and, to a small degree, economic and cultural capital. Symbolic capital, a more abstract concept compared to the others, relates to an individual's honor and prestige in relation to the other forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1987; Ritzer & Goodman, 2004) and will not be addressed directly here.

Pierre Bourdieu described capital as "any resource effective in a structured arena of social action (or field) that allows one to obtain the specific profits that arise out of activity and contest within that arena" (as cited in Wacquant, 1998, p. 26). Of the four types of capital described and analyzed by Bourdieu, economic capital is the easiest concept to understand as it includes access to financial resources that then provide access to food, housing, education, health care, and other material possessions. The Somali Bantu have lacked economic capital throughout their history in Somalia (Besteman, 1999). They lived off the land in Somalia, were entirely without financial resources in Kenya, and continue to struggle today in the United States living in poverty.

Cultural capital involves the acquisition of knowledge that is legitimized and useful in a particular society (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). Somali Bantu could effectively use their cultural capital in their villages in Somalia but the knowledge they acquired and

that was passed down for generations is of limited use in a Western context. The government in Somalia limited the Bantu's access to formal education resulting in lack of access to schooling for many while others were only able to attend for a few years. Educational discrimination against the Bantu in Somalia has resulted in an illiterate adult population unaware of how to help their children succeed in American schools. Prior to their forced migration from Somalia, education was generally not a useful resource in everyday life and is, therefore, not always recognized as a useful resource in the United States. In Somalia, Bantu communities were supported through farming and livestock. Little money was exchanged as most could live off of what they produced on their own land. The knowledge needed to continue this lifestyle was passed down from parents to their children without the need for formal education. In the U.S. today, Somali Bantu children fall behind their classmates because their parents are not familiar with the educational system; they do not always understand the importance of staying in touch with their children's teachers; and they are unable to help their children with their homework. Even when they want to help their children to succeed in school, for the most part they do not know how to go about it.

First to develop a systematic analysis of social capital, Bourdieu described this as consisting of "valued social relations between people" (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004, p. 523). "His treatment of the concept is instrumental, focusing on the benefits accruing to individuals by virtue of participation in groups and on the deliberate construction of sociability for the purpose of creating this resource" (Portes, 1999, p. 3). The relationships the Bantu maintained in Somalia within their own ethnic groups were highly effective in providing supportive resources and can be considered as an example of

Bourdieu's concept of formalized sociability; but in looking at how Bantu were positioned in Somali society, and how they were excluded from full participation in that society, a more in-depth analysis of social capital is needed to help explain how they were continually marginalized and why their exclusion from mainstream America continues today.

In Somalia, a hierarchical society is in place with the Bantu positioned at the bottom. Here again, Bourdieu's work can be used to examine how this hierarchy persists from one generation to the next as his analysis of social relations was further developed to include a theoretical framework designed to explain how a hierarchical society reproduces itself, a phenomenon he called social reproduction. He argued that knowledge held by the upper and middle class is valuable capital that must be acquired for full participation in society. This knowledge is either acquired by being born into a family already possessing the knowledge or through attendance in formal schooling. Those born outside this system must adapt to the system and find ways to acquire the knowledge valued by those in power (Yosso, 2005). The Bantu provide an example that fits with Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction. The Somali Bantu, in Somalia, were farmers or manual laborers. As mentioned previously, for the most part they did not, or were unable to, attend school, which resulted in high rates of illiteracy. One generation's lack of familiarity and experience with formal education and lack of access to financial security has led to a need for the next generation to cope without these assets. Lack of access to education has severely limited the Bantu's ability to move out of farming and manual labor into more profitable and less physically demanding jobs. This was the case in Somalia and is the case today in the United States. Somali Bantu parents are not able

to pass along the knowledge needed to succeed educationally and financially in the United States as they do not possess this knowledge themselves.

Bourdieu's work is widely recognized as helpful in explaining a societal mechanism that provides opportunities for some and not others (Morrice, 2007) but in the process of developing his social reproduction theory, he positioned upper and middle class values and social systems as standards required for academic and economic success (Yosso, 2005). From this perspective, Western middle class social relationships and economic standards are presumed to represent a norm to which members of any society should aspire with formal academic knowledge viewed as the vehicle to "rise" to this norm. This positioning has resulted in an assumption that those of low socioeconomic status suffer from cultural deficiencies that need to be changed. The strengths inherent within cultural groups are not examined, mentioned, or valued.

Due to the Somali Bantu's lack of experience with Western ways and (in most cases) their lack of command of the English language, many who interact with the Bantu in the U.S. view them through a deficit lens. Their skills and strengths, which must be abundant for them to have lived for generations off the land, and to have survived persecution, war, and refugee camp warehousing, are not the focus of conversation among resettlement workers and school teachers. These skills, forms of cultural capital, are hidden as most outside the Bantu community are unaware of the details of their history and what goes on within the Bantu community. Many Bantu still know how to garden, build traditional Bantu homes and, since they never wrote anything down, have remarkable auditory memory skills. Women have participated in child rearing, cooking, and have worked as midwives. As a community, they have experience negotiating to

make group decisions and have worked out culturally based systems to provide legal protection and economic support to individuals and families in crisis. The Bantu have numerous skills but these skills do not transfer into U.S. educational and economic structures well. Advancements in education and technology have created a social context that devalues the skills the Bantus bring with them. They are generally viewed through a deficit model lens as people with cultural deficiencies in their new surroundings. No where, during my interviews with resettlement staff, did anyone mention strengths inherent in the Bantu community except for their ability to manipulate and take advantage of the refugee resettlement system. Looking into their history, especially into refugee camp conditions in the Dadaab camps, reveals that "manipulating" a system is a learned strategy for survival (Hyndman, 2000) (This issue will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7). Viewing the Somali Bantu's behavior from a deficit perspective blocks our ability to recognize the assets they possess. A more informative view is needed in order to appreciate and tap into the strengths of this community.

Yosso's (2005) work in the area of social capital focuses on the unrecognized and undervalued cultural knowledge and skills of socially marginalized groups. She argues against the assumption that cultural deficiencies are the cause of low socioeconomic status. In *Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth* (2005), she introduces a concept she calls "community cultural wealth" with six forms of capital that are typically unrecognized, unacknowledged and underutilized in formal education and, I will add, underutilized in the social service systems of refugee resettlement agencies. Using a critical race theory lens, Yosso outlines six forms of capital that are aspects of community cultural wealth: aspirational,

navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant. These are described as dynamic processes that overlap and build upon each other. Viewing communities as having these cultural assets moves the analysis of capital beyond the narrow scope of traditional perspectives rooted in the works of Bourdieu. Of the six forms of capital included in the article mentioned above, the additions of familial and resistant capital are the most relevant in the analysis of data collected for this study. Navigational and linguistic capital play a role in the contemporary circumstances of the Somali Bantu as well. Yosso describes familial capital as, "those cultural knowledges nurtured among *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition" (2005, p. 79). There is a commitment to community well-being and a broad sense of family and kinship relations that extends beyond blood relatives to include friends and bonds with other families and community members. This sense of extended community responsibility was expressed by several of the Bantu I interviewed. One member of the community stated, "If you have a problem, it wouldn't be your own problem. It would be everybody's problem." Familial capital is a concept that is closely aligned with the work of Stack (1974, 1996) who examined kinship networks in African American families and how these networks and family obligations both help and hinder the economic advancement of individuals and families. I will go into this in more depth later in this chapter but for now acknowledge the value of this aspect of capital as a tool for analysis.

Resistance capital is described by Yosso (2005) as the knowledge and skills acquired through oppositional behavior employed in the challenge of inequality. It "includes cultural knowledge of the structures of racism and motivation to transform such oppressive structures" (p. 81). The examples provided by Yosso (2005) indicate that this

theoretical perspective was based on the study of relationships between communities of color and the dominant White culture within the United States. Resistance includes a refusal to succumb to the influences of societal messages and accept a self-image of inferiority. A similar situation exists for the Somali Bantu in Somalia but the cultural tension is between two communities of color. Throughout the history of the Bantu, in Somalia and Kenya, the Bantu have had to employ various forms of resistance to survive while imbedded in a societal framework that oppresses them. Resistance capital employed by members of the Bantu community has included an awareness of oppression and discrimination based solely on cultural heritage, language and physical features. Although many Bantu interviewed commented on former and current oppression inflicted upon them by native Somalis, at no time during my interviews was there any indication that members of the Bantu community are aware of the institutionalized barriers people of color in the United States face. Yosso's concept of resistance capital is in need of modification within this context. The Somali Bantu are claiming their rights and expressing pride in their cultural heritage, resisting any signs of a continuation of oppression from native Somalis who now reside in America. Many of the Bantu, weary of their history of oppression in Africa, have come to the United States with an awareness that they now have legal rights and that they will not be physically harmed for speaking out against actions they perceive to be unjust. One Somali Bantu male I interviewed said, "And people feel better over here because here there is no discrimination. If there is discrimination it is illegal to do that over here. There is offices that can help people facing discrimination. That is a good thing."

Forms of resistance the Bantu participate in include speaking out against actions by native Somalis who now live in the U.S. when they perceive these actions to be discriminatory. In addition, they may openly refuse to accept a subordinate role in relation to native Somalis as well as refuse the role of the "grateful" refugee when interacting with the staff of agencies that are in control of resources they are trying to access (the topic of resistance and socially situated contentious practice will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7 and 8). This behavior was also evident in the Dadaab camps in Kenya as is evidenced by the following excerpt from Hyndman's *Managing Displacement* (2000). The quote refers to Somali people and does not differentiate between native Somalis and Somali Bantu so I assume it refers to both.

> [E]xpatriate relief workers and administrators generally view work with Somali refugees as difficult. Such jobs are seen as hardship posts that may earn them "credit" toward future opportunities or serve as a punitive posting for past mistakes. Somalis have a reputation for talking back to relief workers, rejecting the charity script of the needy *and* grateful. Trinh Minh-ha contends that "[t]he 'needy' cannot always afford to refuse, so they persist in accepting ungratefully." The actions of Somalian refugees toward humanitarian staff unsettle the charitable, hierarchical relationship of power between the Western donors and Somali refugees. (Hyndman, 2000, p. 156)

In America, the native Somalis have not been viewed as particularly difficult to work with, but the Bantu have been perceived as a challenging group for local resettlement workers, in part, because of their outspoken behavior and demands for services. The combination of their history of oppression, lack of human capital in a Western environment, and skills acquired in refugee camps to secure sufficient food and other supplies has resulted in behaviors of resistance that disrupt standard Western modes of institutional practice.

Navigational capital, as described by Yosso (2005), "refers to skills of maneuvering through social institutions" (p. 80). The Somali Bantu, arriving in a country with educational, health, and state welfare institutions that are far different from anything they have encountered before, are at a disadvantage when it comes to the navigation required to access social resources. On the other hand, they have a great deal of experience accessing resources through navigation of the refugee support and resettlement systems within Kenyan refugee camps. They have used this skill to their advantage in the United States, at times in ways that go against a Western normative framework of "fairness" and civility.

Linguistic capital is another concept described by Yosso (2005) that, in this case, relates primarily to the Somali Bantu children who acquire the ability to speak English much more quickly than their parents. The children of immigrants and refugees are frequently utilized as translators and cultural brokers when their parents are interacting with health care and other social service providers. This can easily disrupt power dynamics within family units causing role reversals and a decline in parental authority (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Although there are issues with family dynamics that can occur under these circumstances, refugee children, with the ability to speak English, as well as their native language (and perhaps even more languages picked up during migration), benefit from this asset both intellectually and socially.

Theories that describe social reproduction, devalue deficit perspectives, and explain resistance behavior help to broaden our understanding of Somali Bantu strengths and barriers in U.S. society but these perspectives do not address a major strength of this group, their historical and continued ability to maintain mechanisms of community

support. Framing the forced migration experience of the Somali Bantu with the work of Putnam (1995) sheds even more light on the complexities inherent in the relocation of this group of Africans to a Western environment.

Community Support: Benefits and Limitations

In addition to the work cited above by Yosso and Stack, the work of Putnam in the area of social capital is useful in the analysis of Somali Bantu experience. Putnam (1995) defines social capital as referring to "features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (p. 67). Trust in one's community and civic engagement are key focal points of Putnam's work. From his perspective, social capital is a collective asset that individuals can access through civic engagement (Warren, Thompson, & Saegert, 2005). The concept of social capital captures "how people use and gain from voluntary associations, interactions with others in their neighborhoods, and the contacts that friends and relations provide" (McMichael & Manderson, 2004, p. 89). This perspective on social capital can be used to highlight Bantu internal community support systems and at the same time can be used to acknowledge that the Bantu have always been, and continue to be, viewed as outsiders in Somali communities. Today, they are also viewed as outsiders in their American neighborhoods. The Somali Bantu were disconnected from the broader Somali community in Somalia and from those with power and resources in the Kenyan camps. They were not able to benefit from contacts made with native Somalis and had only each other to rely on. This social isolation and marginalization continues in America as most do not interact with their non-Bantu neighbors, they do not belong to organizations in the broader community, and their friends and relations are in the same disconnected situation.

Morrice (2007) discusses this issue in reference to refugees resettling in the United Kingdom. She cites Putnam's distinction between 'bonding' and 'bridging' forms of social capital. Bonding social capital is based on ties within homogenous groups and among close relations while bridging social capital links to resources outside of the group. According to Putnam, bridging social capital is essential for 'getting ahead' while bonding social capital can only help individuals and communities 'get by' (Morrice, 2007). In the case of the Somali Bantu, in the American city where this study was conducted, even their bridging is only useful for 'getting by.' They are using their energies to connect outside of their own communities for the most basic needs, such as understanding how to pay bills, register a motor vehicle with the state, and to report income taxes. They are, for the most part, not socially located in positions that provide opportunities to bridge to the communities that hold the knowledge needed to access higher education and skilled trades that offer financial security.

Putnam's concepts of "bridging" and "bonding" social capital (Morrice, 2007) are relevant to Somali Bantu experience but his use of the term "mutual benefit" in his definition of social capital is only relevant to bonding social capital within the Somali Bantu community. There is no evidence that mainstream American communities view relationships with Somali Bantu as providing benefits to their own communities. Rather than operating with a sense of reciprocal benefit by learning from each other, the Bantu are expected to bring their behaviors and social norms in line with those of the American majority. Putnam's work helps to provide language useful for analysis of social relationships but, just as in Bourdieu's work, there appears to be an inherent assumption that Western middle and upper class values are the norm and an inability to bridge to this

norm is viewed as a problem based within the marginalized community. From this perspective, it is the disadvantaged community that needs to take the responsibility to find a way to access the knowledge of the middle class in order to improve their situation. I argue that, the receiving community should work toward understanding and appreciating what may be unfamiliar community modes of operation and should take responsibility to facilitate a "bridge" between communities with the intent to engage in reciprocal learning for mutual benefit. In refugee resettlement, social capital strengths of newly arrived refugees should be identified, acknowledged and incorporated into the refugee resettlement system. Specific, historically constituted methods of social support should be facilitated by resettlement agencies so that those with a refugee background can work together in their own communities to address communal issues and develop ways to successfully adjust to their new surroundings.

Using the words of the Somali Bantu I interviewed, the following sections describe social support systems the Bantu have employed across contexts including Somalia, the Kenyan refugee camps, and urban America. Quotations from interviews help to clarify how social support among the Bantu has remained the same or has been modified depending on the circumstances they encounter in the environments in which they reside.

Social Support in Somalia: "It Would Be Everybody's Problem"

All of my interviews with the Somali Bantu included questions about social support systems within their communities in Somalia, Kenyan refugee camps, and in the United States. I was told that in Somalia family and friends were relied on heavily for support with activities such as harvesting, building and rebuilding homes, protecting farm

land from animals, and sharing of food when someone's crops failed. Nearly everyone I interviewed relied on farming for subsistence in Somalia. Harvesting time was described in different ways by different people but social support from the community was always available. One older Somali Bantu male from Jamama described a system his community used to bring in the harvest from several farms:

> They help with harvesting, they help with transportation, because since we don't have cars, for ten days every family sends a child to help the other guy to get out all those things from the farm. . . . We have like 10 families and we come together and we say 'hey' tomorrow let's help Abdi and the other day let's help this guy so 10 people help each day until it is done. If we help each family three times it done (he gestures in a circular pattern with his arm). We used to farm two hectares a day with 10 people. It was 12 hours of working.

A young Somali Bantu male talked about family, friends, and neighbors helping with harvesting. "You have to tell them. All you have to do is cook a big meal for them." Those who helped out were also given some food to take home. He described how some of the harvest, such as sesame seeds, may be sold in order to get enough money to rent a truck for transporting the produce. He also talked about the Somali Bantu tradition of storing food by burying it in the home. "After you get everything at your house, they will help you dig inside your house to bury everything."

Those I interviewed responded in different ways when asked how people get help when times are hard, such as when crops fail. In some cases, people would ask to work on another person's farm and would get paid in produce for their efforts. In other cases, people would borrow food and would pay back the food at the next harvest. One person said her family would help, "and then later, you're gonna have it." And in still another case, the person in need of food would find work with other families cleaning their

homes, "so they give us a little bit to eat for the day, so that is how we live for our living. It is not for clothing, just food."

The following excerpt provides an example of how the community would come to the aid of one of its members rather than operate within an individualistic social model that promotes the accumulation of economic and material wealth for an individual nuclear family.

> Y: So, let's say you're in Somalia and somebody's crops don't do well.
> A: They will help that person.
> Y: They will help that person?
> A: Cause they know and they tell each other, "Hey my farm is not good, I need help". So the community will do something for that person to survive. You have to look the same as the rest of the people, that's what they did.

Help was also available for building and rebuilding homes. The homes were described by one person in this way: "The houses used to be like two bedroom and the roof was grass and we used to build them with sticks and mud and they usually look like huts." I asked those I interviewed how the homes were constructed and if they were made by individuals, with family members or with people from the community.

> Even cutting trees we used neighbors. Neighbors come and help for transporting the trees from the forest to the villages (he gestures holding a tree trunk above his head to indicate that several people carried the trees together to get them from the forest). Use head. (Abdi)

Others I interviewed said:

> When you want to build a house, the first thing you have to do in Somalia, the first thing you have to do it go to the bush or forest or jungle, where ever you will be and cut trees down. Just cut trees and make them ready and leave them there. And the other day you will come home, you know everybody has a bull, you know, like a donkey cart, like the bull has cart and ask two neighbors, three neighbors to help you get their bulls and get your own bull and go to the bush and get all you got out there, get 'em home, and the next day you will invite some other people to start building the house. It will just be a one day thing. (Ali)

> We used to help the neighbors, the neighbors come around, my families, we all come together and help each other. (Salati)

In cases where there was no family available to help, which occurred during the war when people were fleeing from their villages to safer locations, community leaders could be approached to access help from the broader community. One person interviewed stated that the person in need of help, such as with harvesting or home repairs, could ask for assistance at the local mosque.

> We used to do it in different ways but where I used to live, but if somebody is a friend of mine and don't have any family, he can tell me his problem and then I can tell other friends and say, 'This guy need help'. If that does not work out, people always meet at a mosque so after we pray the person can raise his hand and say to the public that he has this problem and that he need help. (Nasib)

Support was also available when problems occurred, such as a death in the family:

> S: We had a lot of different villages. And the close brothers that live in different villages, they used to go visit their brothers when there is a problem, when there is a kid died, a deceased kid in the family we used to go and visit the dad and the mother and stay with them at least one week and then come back to my home. Those who have transportation they have bicycle or have donkey carts and those who do not have them they used to just walk.
> Y: So people would move to different villages and still get to see and visit each other?
> S: Yes, that is right.
> Y: How would you know that a baby dies when you live in different villages?
> S: In the village there is some guys who know how to cycle the bicycle and when somebody is dead or really seriously sick to death they usually send these guys. Or if someone in the family has a bicycle, with the bicycle they have to go the closest village and tell them there is somebody dead in the village and those guys from there they send someone to another village. We usually work like that. (Salati)

An emphasis on communal support was consistent throughout all of the interviews with members of the Bantu community, when asked about social networks in their home villages in Somalia. Along with this came expectations of reciprocity.

As one person interviewed said, "If we don't have anything for the season, we just take, borrow from our neighbors and what I borrow from them I have to pay back another year". But this system of support and reciprocity did not bridge beyond the Bantu ethnic group into the broader Somali community. Only the Bantu watched out for each other. "Just our Bantu people [helped]. Even if somebody is not related to me he's helping, not the Somali Somali. Somali Somali didn't help me with anything." This sense of communal support in isolation to the broader social environment carries over into present support systems in America, as described later in this chapter.

Social Support in Kenya: "Everyone Has the Same Problem"

Clan affiliations that were developed in Somalia were maintained, at least to some degree, in the Kenyan camps, as evidenced by Besteman's (1999) accounts of the Mushanguli, one clan whose ties to each other have remained strong to this day. When they could, the Bantu I interviewed maintained their support systems but this was most often not possible due to limited resources and food rations. "Everyone has the same problem" was a common phrase heard during interviews on this topic. The following quotes demonstrate how systems of support and reciprocity were disrupted by an inability for any Somali Bantu family to accumulate enough rations or other resources to be supportive of others.

> In Dadaab. . .they give food for 15 days, so when I go to my neighbor, she might not contribute her food because we might be in the same situation in a few days, if she try to give me her portion of food, she might run out of food so we might not be able to help each other the same as we did in Somalia. (Abdi)

> Kakuma hard. There was some Somali Bantus that were there in Kakuma before us so we used to go and borrow something from them and when the distribution day from the UNHCR comes we go and pay back them. But it was too hard to do

> that because if I take the three kilos from the UNHCR I have to go and give back that and so I am still having the problem. (Salati)

Social Support in the U.S.: "We Try"

In the United States, food and other resources continue to be in short supply. Few Bantu are able to read the utility bills that come in the mail or the paperwork from the Department of Workforce Services, which is their source for welfare, health insurance, and employment services when they first arrive. The knowledge of how to access the resources necessary in their new surroundings is held by people outside their own community. Using Putnam's terminology, social bridging is employed to learn how to address specific basic needs. Social bonding is then employed to share this knowledge within their community. The few Bantu who can help with reading documents are called upon to help members of the community so often, it drains their energy and ability to spend the time needed to go to school or participate in other activities that would help them to get ahead personally.

> It is really hard here in America because we are like two or three people helping people around but in Dadaab, like everybody, we used to go always in the morning to work, during the night everybody is at home so we go together to work and come back all of us to the village again so right now is kind of different. There is some people going to work at night and people going in the morning. Example, like him and me, we go at work only at the evening, I go to the airport at the evening and he goes to his work in the evening. We help people in the morning so it is like *hard* for two people to help all these people. Before we could all help each other. (Nasib)

A very small number of people within the local Somali Bantu community have the skills and knowledge to navigate the American economic and social system they now find themselves within. These few people are called upon regularly by members of their community to provide assistance with issues such as housing and employment even

though state and refugee resettlement funded employment and housing services are set up to deal with these issues. Members of the Bantu community turn to the leaders of their own community to seek help rather than bridging outside the limits of their own group.

In addition to lack of literacy, members of the community are separated by time and space living in different parts of town and with differing work schedules. Most of the women are not driving and are forced to stay home with small children. Hajia is one woman in this situation. During her interview the translator said she, "Doesn't know what's going on."

Social capital theory has been linked to the experiences of refugee women in an article by McMichael and Manderson (2004). Their examination of the resettlement process of Somali refugees in Australia looked at how social networks were impacted by war, displacement, and resettlement. They found the construct of social capital helpful in understanding how immigrants adapt successfully to a new environment but they also discovered that social capital networks are disrupted by displacement, family separation, and mistrust. Somali women they interviewed expressed disappointment when reflecting on the lack of reciprocity and sharing among Somali refugees. These norms were disrupted by the migration process. Two contributing factors were described by the women in this study. One issue was the physical distance between the homes of Somali refugees. Rather than being neighbors, they were placed in homes far from other Somali families who could provide reciprocal support, such as watching each other's children. This situation occurs in the location of this study as well. One Bantu woman, who lived far from other Bantu families, said, "Nobody help here. It is easy over there (referring to an apartment complex where many Bantu families lived at the time). Pick kids up over

there." Throughout my interviews with members of the local Bantu community, examples of communal financial support systems were provided but those interviewed, in particular the women, reported social isolation and issues with childcare that are caused by housing that is scattered throughout the city.

Lack of Western social capital has had a negative impact on all Somali Bantu who have moved to the United States but women have been affected in more drastic ways than men. Their traditional roles of child rearing and home maintenance have left them isolated from each other resulting in gender-based barriers to English classes and other forms of education. They are far less likely to obtain a driver's license or employment and are more likely to remain illiterate. From my observations in their homes, they spend a great deal of time on the telephone talking with their Somali Bantu female friends and seem sad and lonely. They appear to be stuck. The telephone is a means to continue social and kinship networks but they are fully excluded from the possibility of participation in bridging social networks.

Another issue raised by McMichael and Manderson (2004) was in relation to welfare dependency and the poverty refugees in Australia typically faced. In Somalia, if one family was struggling, another family, with greater resources at the time, would help them out. In Australia, everyone in their Somali community was dependent on welfare checks. No one had more than anyone else and the "ethic of exchange and redistribution [had] been lost" (p. 94). This research with Somali refugees in Australia suggests that "social capital is neither necessarily portable nor easily established on migration" (p. 96). I also found this to be the case with the Somali Bantu I interviewed.

Members of the community with the ability to help others do so when they can but helping with money for bills and food is not an option, as evidenced by the following statements:

> We try to help each other. If somebody need to get to work and he don't have a ride if I'm available they call and I help them. If I have emergency problem I call the person who speaks English and available at home I say I need this help. And also we help with transportation and emergency and the [local resettlement agency] and [another local resettlement agency] they don't help with my reading papers I take to one of the Bantu people around here and they read for me and they fill out the papers. That's how we help each other here. With helping with bills, like electricity, things like that we cannot help each other because everybody here is still working how to raise his family and he need to pay a bill too because there is nobody we can say that he has a little bit of money to help others with bills. (Salati)

> Here it is not easy to help your family....Because I have to pay rent. I have to pay everything. How am I going to pay my family?...They have the same problem. (Hajia)

> Here is totally different because people used to help with everything in Dadaab, if I don't have some food I can just go to a neighbor to help me with a little thing and here I don't have anything at home, it's hard to go to the neighbor to get it and also here we still helping with funeral, if somebody die, if my son get in trouble, and if I by myself here the community come and just to make me happy and to say don't worry about it, if there is like a wedding so we go to each other and have fun but if it is like a family problem like food or anything like that we do not help other because everyone is having the same problem. (Abdi)

The above quotes demonstrate the disruption to prior systems of reciprocal and communal support that has occurred with migration to the United States. As much as the Bantu I interviewed would like to continue their traditions of communal support, external pressures have forced them to abandon or modify many of their familiar practices. They have done their best to help each other in America but a lack of social connections to the broader community and a lack of access to educational and financial resources has resulted in great hardships and suffering with all members of the community struggling to meet their most basic needs.

Internal Supports and Resource Sharing: Advantageous or Limiting?

In the case of the Somali Bantu in America, a lack of outside connections, "bridging" connections, has a profound negative impact on their ability to access adequate employment and fully utilize social services. The strength of Bantu social capital lies in their connections among members of their own community. With these connections, they can share information about where to purchase low-cost food, how to get a driver's license, and where unskilled labor jobs might be available. Their social network does not, however, extend outside their community in ways that would lead to higher levels of education and training and higher wages. The vast majority of the people they interact with regularly are people from their own community or people in work environments who are equally disconnected from the opportunities that lead to the resources available to the middle class.

Along this same line, both Newman (1999) and Stack (1974,1996) expand upon social capital theory by examining personal social and kinship networks of people living in poverty. Their work makes it clear that the situation the Bantu are in is not entirely due to having been transplanted from rural villages in Africa. They are not an exotic "other" suffering from unusual circumstances. They have been placed in a society that has a long history of institutionalized discrimination against people of color and against people living in poverty. Well established institutionalized structures hold low-income families in their place, denying most the opportunities to significantly improve their educational and economic status.

In *No Shame in My Game*, Newman (1999) focuses on how social networks, particularly of family and friends, influence employment opportunities in impoverished

inner cities. Marginalized, low-income families in U.S. urban environments also must rely on each other for connections to employment opportunities making it nearly impossible to 'get ahead.' Stack, in *All our Kin* (1974) and *Call to Home* (1996), provides us with an understanding of kinship networks utilized in African American families as a response to poverty. In order to survive, scarce resources are shared among family and others considered as kin. Patterns of cooperation and mutual aid occur with the trading and exchange of goods, resources, and shared care of children. There is a positive aspect to this sharing of resources but as Stack (1996) says, "spreading scarce resources even thinner throughout a large, poor family is no solution to the problem of poverty; it may help people get through tough times, but it does not lift them into economic security" (p. 101). Similarly, the Somali Bantu have modified a traditional communal support system for use during hard times. In Somalia, it was food that could be stored for later use.

> Like at the end of the month, I would say, everybody would bring two pounds of maize that they would store in a place they will have their own place where they will just store food. If there is a funeral happen, is someone is killed by a guy, if someone is killed by an animal, anything happens, you know, for that family to give them back or to forget what happened this is what they will take. . . .If someone's house was on fire and everything got blown away, they pay 'em with that. That's what they do. (Ali)

In the U.S., it is money that is collected to support members of the community in need of emergency assistance. The following quote refers to this communal support system but it also speaks directly to the issue of knowing the cultural 'rules' in America. The Bantu become aware of American societal rules, such as paying rent on time and avoiding debt that cannot be repaid, but many learn these rules after they have already gotten themselves into financial trouble and many lack the resources needed to comply

with this new set of rules. Resettlement workers are charged with the responsibility to provide basic services, such as locating an apartment and getting the kids enrolled in school but little is done to educate new arrivals on how to do these tasks for themselves or how to access community resources after refugee resettlement services are terminated.

> The idea of contributing money came from everybody's mind because we were not wanting to have homeless people here but there was one guy from Atlanta Georgia, he did not know about the situation and the laws of this country, he owed 3500 dollars. He was living outside for like a month, he has small kids. We don't like to help people pay the bills if they know the rules if you know the rules and you don't pay, that is not our concern, that is because you didn't like to do that and we cannot help with that issue but we were fighting for the small kids and his wife. And when we check with him, the refugee resettlement organization in Atlanta we ask how did this happen you owe this money he say I was thinking the resettlement organization would pay so that is when we came to the community and collect community collections and go to everybody to get this money so he can pay this debt and we were sorry because he was sleeping in the snow for a couple days, it was like a month, so if we could have this money ready we couldn't have him wait so long. That's why we say instead of waiting this, we need to do this right now before it happen. (Nasib)

Several people I interviewed described the community fund organized for members of the Somali Bantu community. Each member or family participating in the funds puts in a certain amount of money per month. Only those who contribute to the fund are in a position to benefit from it. Different amounts per month were reported but there was consistency in the basic outline of how it works. Interestingly, the Bantu report their own set of rules for participation in this fund. The system they have devised is highly structured and well organized with a great deal of participation and support from the Bantu community. This fund, operating outside of the view of non-Bantu, reveals that the Bantu, assumed by many to be dysfunctional, chaotic, unorganized, and haphazardly grasping for free services from the broader community, are effectively organizing themselves is a systematic way for the benefit of their own people.

> The idea came by Nov. 2006. . . .I have seen since 2004 a lot of problem at [two apartment complexes with many Somali Bantu residents]. That people running out of gas and used to have power shut off and things like that and it takes long to go to workforce services fill paperwork and that takes a little bit longer and these people cannot live in a house that does not have power so I said this might be good idea if we just come together and collect money before the problem happen and if the problem happen we can pay you and you need to pay back to the community because this money is not coming from [the government], it's coming from everybody and anybody that need help can come. If we pay like 500 and say we helped for good and don't have to pay back we will run out of this. If we have emergency situation for another family its going to be again the same problem so you have to pay back. And we have to reach like how many days its going to take for you, you have to agree, like you will take one month to pay this back and we check with you to make sure it is ok and you sign a paper. (Nasib)

This fund is also available to finance funerals. Although I never once mentioned funerals during interviews with members of the Bantu community, the topic came up frequently within the context of community support. The importance of funerals was made abundantly clear. In the United States, funerals are costly, resulting in a perceived need to help families arrange for them when a death occurs in the family.

> A: In Somalia we did not have to buy the grave for the body. You can buy for free, it is my land. But here we have to pay that, if we don't pay I don't know what would happen. They could abandon the body and our religion doesn't allow somebody to get abandoned.
> Q: So in your religion people are buried? They are not cremated?
> A: No, they are buried. That is why the money is for burial only. Even if it is 5000 dollars we give the money and they don't have to pay back.
> Q; So you would like the community money to be only for funerals? That would be the best?
> A: Yes, that would be the best, for housing issues and for emergency issues we only help one time for each person. If you do again we consider that you don't try. . . .But if it is another problem we can help. . . .
> Q: Do you think that other cities like Atlanta, Houston or Seattle, do they do the same thing?
> A: Yeah, the Bantus [here] are the people behind the other cities. Other cities are helping each other more than [here]. (Nasib)

> When someone dies, someone will bring maize. Someone will bring beans. Someone will bring oil. Someone will bring salt for you. So you can help yourself and feed the people and a lot of people will come to that funeral and say, "Hey, sorry for what happened." Sorry for this, so they will give you that. So, do

> here too, they do that as well here, they bring you some food, money, everything. Now they don't have to cultivate it, will just go to the store. You know, 22 dollars they can get a whole sack of wheat flour or maize or beans or whatever you can get the person. You know, that's what they do. And that's something that came from Somalia too. (Ali)

Providing support to a newly married couple continues to be of great importance within the Bantu community as well. "And that is something they started since, centuries and centuries. It came from Somalia. In the refugee camp they used to give each other mats" (Ali). The specific gifts offered have changed based on the setting but provision of food and supplies has been consistent across contexts. In Somalia, people brought food to the wedding. In the refugee camps, they gave floor mats, a cup of oil, or wheat flour. In America they give food, furniture, decorations, pillows, even shoes.

> "It's *really* important. And like if someone didn't' show up, like I invite you to my wedding and you didn't show up. I will have to call at least three people and explain why you didn't come to my wedding." (Ali)

> It is really hard to get married because there is a lot of things to do. We go and help the guy who is getting married and we go and help the lady who is getting married. Financial, everybody contribute 20 dollars, 100 dollars, whatever they can do for help. And they also have the clothing, like prize to get them new very nice clothing and say this is my assistance today for you. And we do that because we understand that the happy day is the day a person is getting married and the worst day is the day the person is dying and the other best day is the day a person is born so that is why we do this. And also when somebody is born we go to the family and give the prize to the family that has the new baby and after that we also go if somebody died we go there and stay at least seven days to make the family better, they feel like they lose somebody in the family. But here in America it is a little bit different because we can't stay with the family seven days and everybody need to go to work so after work we need to come over and we can even sleep with them and go from the funeral there. (Abdi)

These interview excerpts make it clear that the local Somali Bantu community is well organized and has maintained a system of communal resource sharing but as Stack's (1996) work reveals, communal support has the potential to hold individuals down, limiting their ability to accumulate the resources needed for higher education and home

ownership. During follow-up interviews, I asked if this particular down-side of communal sharing was ever considered. I was told that it would not hold a family back, that some could save money but that no one was talking about buying a home. Supporting members of the community during hard times or significant life events is seen as a priority above the protection of personal and family resources. The Bantu may not, as yet, realize the significance of college funds and home ownership and how securing these resources can dramatically change financial stability. The downside of a shift toward protection of family financial assets is a decline in the ability to support others in their community.

Community Leadership and Conflict Resolution

Another topic related to social supports that came out of interviews with members of the Somali Bantu community was that of community leadership in relation to conflict resolution. During my interviews, I asked about leadership within the Somali Bantu communities in Somalia, Kenyan camps, and in the United States. Responses to my questions are described and discussed in the following three sections. Leadership in all three locations has been outside of formal government and institutional systems. The Bantu have consistently lacked representation in formal circles and have had to meet the needs of their community members through unofficial means. They have been forced to organize outside of broader communities in all three locations (this issue will be explained in more detail in Chapter 7). They have become masters at internal social networking but have little to no experience bridging outside of their own insular communities. The questions I brought with me were meant to focus on leadership in a broad sense but examples provided by those I interviewed consistently brought up the

role of community leaders in conflict resolution within Bantu communities and Bantu families.

Leadership and Conflict Resolution in Somalia

In Somalia, when problems occurred between members of the Bantu community, resolution was generally first addressed within family units. If the problem could not be resolved within the family, it would be taken to the Bantu leadership within the local community. In extreme cases, the issue was brought to Somali government officials but this was avoided whenever possible as it was well known that there would be brutal consequences for any Somali Bantu accused of a crime.

The men I interviewed had much more to say about leadership than the women did. Many times, when I asked one of the women about community leadership systems, they did not even respond to the question. This may be due to cultural role delineations within the community. As Ali said, "Most likely we don't have female leaders. Culturally, we don't, you know, females are not supposed to be ahead of men. That's why we don't have female leaders."

> Y: Before the war in Jamame, did you have a Somali Bantu leadership group?
> A: Yes, we did. But they were not recognized by the government as leaders. But they were just like solving problems in the communities. If I have a fight with my wife they come and solve that problem. That is the only kind of leadership.
> Y: But the Somali Bantu leadership, if someone had a problem they could go to those Bantu leaders and get help with their problem?
> A: Also we used to do this, before matters go to the Somali Bantu leader, me and my wife, my wife goes to her Dad and I go to my Dad and we tell the problem. If it is a big problem that we need to take to the community leader or it is a very small problem that can be solved by both our parents. If they say this is bad but doesn't need to go to the community leader we just solve our problem by ourselves in the family. And if it is domestic violence, we used to go to the leader and the leader is the one who sentenced the husband saying you need to pay this to your wife so she can go to the pharmacy, to the hospital to fix everything you give to her. And they negotiate us, they make sure that everybody's ok and we

> shake hands and they make sure that I shake hands with my wife and my wife shakes hands with me so then they say right now you need to pay this money to the wife go to the hospital and go to the doctor. And also they sentence the husband to give a goat to the wife so she can finish that goat by herself, also oil, that food is for herself even if it takes month. If it is like the husband does not obey the community leader, the community leader takes the matter to the Somali Somali people. The Somali Somali people, they beat the husband and they take out the wife from the husband. And they really beat the husband very seriously until the husband vomits up blood, they don't leave. And we didn't have representatives in the government so that's why we didn't have somebody to say that's bad to beat somebody like this and we didn't have senators, we didn't have like ministries, we didn't have representatives of the Somali Bantu community so that's why whenever they get a Somali Bantu case they treat like a dog like an animal. (Abdi)

> We had organized community leaders that had connection with police so like if two people misunderstood each other so they usually come and try to negotiate between the two parties and after they negotiate with them they go to the police and say we are done with the case, we help them, they came together and they are good right now but in case they fight again we will not deal with this, we have to bring them to you. We deal with the first matter and then next time you do it again they take to the police. That's how we used to help each other whenever somebody's fighting but if it is emergency, somebody killing another we have to do it with the police. (Salati)

> [S]o if there is something wrong they won't go to the government, they won't do anything, they will just discuss between themselves and solve the problem low key. Because if they raise it up to the government it's gonna be a politic thing and you're gonna need a lot of money. Which this people don't have, Bantu, like that. They can't afford it. (Ali)

The following quote continues the theme of conflict resolution being managed within families but it also highlights the disconnect between conflict resolution systems familiar to the Bantu and those within the United States, namely the U.S. legal system.

> Y: But in Somalia was it pretty much always family that you go to?
> H: Yeah, because when my brother hit me I have to call the other brother and coming say ok everything's good. That's it. We don't know how to call police, how we go to court, and you know, we don't know that.
> Q: So it stays in the family.
> H: Ahhh. (as an affirmative). . . .No like uh in Somalia we don't have police, we don't have nothing. But here somebody fights you, you have to call police, you have to call the court.

> Y: You have to call the court? So which is better? Do you think the way you do in Somalia is better or the way you do it here?
> H: (She laughs.) But here it's different like over there. But its better what we doing there because only it was family. But here (she laughs) he gonna go jail, he gonna go, you know, that's not good for us (Habiba)

According to Habiba, managing issues within family units, as it was done in Somalia, was a more effective method of conflict resolution. Problems could be addressed without the disruption and hardship associated with state legal systems and jail time.

Leadership Within the Camps

Within the Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya, the Bantu were again excluded from formal leadership positions. This was often due to their inability to communicate directly with UNHCR staff and staff of the Western NGOs providing services as the vast majority of Bantu did not speak English or any other Western language. This made it easy for Somali natives in leadership positions to take advantage of them. This same situation occurred with Ugandan refugees in Southern Sudan where being able to speak the same language as the Western helpers put some in positions of authority over the less well educated and resulted in a lack of solidarity and feelings of mistrust among camp residents (Voutira and Harrell-Bond, 1995).

At every interview, when I asked about life in the camps, I brought out Hyndman's book, *Managing Displacement: Refugees and the Politics of Humanitarianism* (2000). In her book, Hyndman describes UNHCR camp structure and includes line drawings of each of the three Dadaab camps. The drawings show how the camps were divided up into sections labeled by letters and numbers. Those I interviewed were able to show me which section they lived in and some described how official

leadership positions within the camp were based on camp structure. As one young Somali Bantu male explained:

> In the refugee camps we had section leaders. We had like 10 blocks in a row and the other is ten blocks in a row and ten blocks in a row and like A is up to ten and those have section leaders. 1A,2A, 3A. . . .B. The section leader is the one who is having the meeting with the UN worker. (Nasib)

With the Bantu being formally out of touch with camp staff, it was easy for the section leaders to withhold services and rations from them. This was particularly problematic when the sections leader was native Somali. Several I interviewed reported that bribery among camp residents, and even among camp staff, was a common practice. Those with the resources to offer bribes to officials higher up in rank could assure greater rations and services for their own families. The Bantu I interviewed were not in a position to offer bribes and were, therefore, often denied services and rations that were rightfully theirs.

Once again the Bantu, in order to protect themselves, created community leadership positions and managed many of their own problems internally. In addition, they were able to negotiate with the native Somali community on some issues by working with leaders of both groups.

> We had like a chief who was in charge of every Somali Bantu in Deghaly [one of the three Dadaab camps] and there was a chief who was responsible for every problem caused by the Somali, so when anything happen in the two communities if a Somali guy fight with a Somali Bantu. The people didn't used to go there, only the chief they come together to discuss the problem and after they discuss the problem they decide who was behaving badly. If I am the one who was behaving badly the Somali chief sentences me to a fine to pay compensation to the one I hurt. If I fail to pay that they take the matter to the police. (Salati)

Leadership in an American City

There are two main tribes of Bantu, the Mai Mai and the Mushunguli. In Somalia, they spoke their own tribal languages and generally lived in different

communities. Over time, the two groups have become linked through intermarriage and many Bantu are able to speak both languages, as well as Somali. In the city where this study took place, they have identified leaders for each group and sometimes organize separately but most often they work together.

> Yeah, so there's this tribes, you know but the Mushanguli and Mai Mai thing, it's not a big problem from them. Because they get into marriage. They can marry each other. They can do things together, and they *always* do things together. Like my dad is Mai Mai and my mom's mom is Mushanguli. You know, so I can speak both language. And her dad's mom is Mushanguli and her dad's dad is Mai Mai so things are like that. So if there is a problem between the Mai Mai community and the Mushanguli community, we work with that community just having problem like that. They will go there, die together and live together. (Ali)

Shortly after the Bantu started arriving in the city where this study was conducted, the Bantu men held meetings to elect leaders and began organizing themselves. One young Bantu male in particular became a central figure in the Bantu community due to his leadership skills and his command of the English language. He has spent countless hours helping members of his community access health care, deal with workforce services appointments and paperwork, locate housing, and so forth. At this point, leaders in the community are expected to not only manage broad community issues, but are called on to help individuals with everyday problems. Community organizations are in place to assist refugees with these everyday problems but it is clear that the resettlement system is not viewed as helpful by many Bantu. During my interviews, I often asked for an opinion on services provided by these agencies. At times I was given specific reasons as to why services were considered inadequate but for the most part, answers were vague. I was usually provided with a general statement such as, "They are not so good." It could be a matter of distrust or a recent history of dissatisfaction with services but for whatever reason, the Bantu I have interacted with shy away from fully accessing the state agencies

and formal support systems made available to them. Instead, they turn to members of their own community for help, even though these people are clearly exhausted by the combination of full-time work, child rearing, and community service. Many in need of assistance continue with their former lifestyle of problem solving through social bonding networks rather than bridging outside and taking advantage of the social services offered by the broader community. Below is an excerpt from an interview with a Somali Bantu married woman:

> Y: When you had to find this house, did you get help finding the house?
> H: Yeah. Yahya.
> Y: Yahya helped?
> H: Yahya helped.
> Y: So if you need help with something like that, you go to Yahya? Like you had Yahya help you with your paper.
> H: Yeah.
> Y: Are there other people who help or just Yahya?
> H: No, just Yahya.

The following is an excerpt from a later interview with a Somali Bantu male:

> Y: I know Yahya does a lot, has for a long time, helping people. So mostly you think Somali Bantu would go to another Somali Bantu?
> A: Yeah, they need to go to [a refugee resettlement agency], like somewhere big, like an office thing. But the problem is, if they go there, they don't get things done the right way. "Ok, come in tomorrow, do this tomorrow, we'll do this tomorrow, we'll do this the day after" and these Somali Bantu don't like that. You need the Somali Bantu to trust you, do something that goes in their mind. . . That's how they are. "Hey I need an apartment. Ok. Drive me to this place, let's go there right now."
> Y: So it has to be today?
> A: No, you don't have to get it right away but at least show yourself you did *something* for them.
> Y: Instead of, "Come back tomorrow."
> A: Oh, yeah, instead of, "Come back tomorrow." Then whenever they come back tomorrow, you're full, you don't have time. "Oh, I got busy. This is what happened." They don't need that. They don't really like that. And that's one of the problems. They don't trust the [the resettlement agency]. (Ali)

In Somalia, the Bantu were excluded from formal government representation and lived their lives, for the most part, as outsiders of their own government's systems. Within their own villages and social networks, the Bantu worked together to support individuals and families in their communities. When forced to move to Kenyan camps, they were still excluded from representation and were denied official leadership positions. Although they were marginalized within camp structure, they maintained their own community support systems when they could. In the United States, they have organized themselves again, in order to help their own community members. Decades of hardship, abuse, and discrimination have led to a general mistrust of community agencies and the people who work for them resulting in a preference for seeking help from within, whenever possible, rather than accessing public assistance programs.

CHAPTER 7

THE PAST LIVES IN THE PRESENT: THEY BRING THEIR MEMORIES WITH THEM

In this chapter, I begin with the history of the Somali Bantu in order to provide the historical context needed to frame an analysis of contemporary refugee resettlement experience for this group. I then introduce the theoretical framework of *History in Person* (Holland & Lave, 2001) and explain how this theoretical perspective is useful in helping us to understand current attitudes and behaviors of the Bantu toward the native Somali population now living in the United States and the resettlement workers and institutions they interact with during the resettlement process, a process which has been challenging for all involved.

History of Bantu Forced Migration and Relocation

In this section, I present a brief report on the history of the Somali Bantu starting with their first experience with forced migration during the 1800s and follow their story through migration to Kenyan refugee camps and then to America. I have drawn this information from published literature but include quotations from my own interviews to demonstrate that those living locally and in the present are the embodiment of the events described by historians, geographers, journalists, and anthropologists (Abdullahi, 2001; Barnett, 2003; Besteman, 1999; Chanoff, 2002; Hyndman, 2000; Jaynes, 2004; Lehman

& Eno, 2003; Lewis, 2002; Voutira & Harrell-Bond, 1995). The Bantu I interviewed shared their lived experiences of recent events as well as their knowledge of events that took place before they were born. Considering the low level of written literacy typical of the Bantu population, their knowledge of the history of their people is notable. This information has been passed down verbally through many generations and according to one young Somali Bantu male I interviewed, the history of the Bantu was taught by Somali Bantu elders in the refugee camps. Those who shared stories of Bantu history with me seemed to take pride in their ancestry. It was also made abundantly clear that current relationships between the Somali Bantu and the 'Somali Somali,' as the Bantu call them, are based on a 200 year history of persecution and discrimination which began with the African slave trade.

Era of Slavery and Colonization

During the 1800s, somewhere between 25,000 and 50,000 Bantu slaves were captured, primarily in Tanzania and Mozambique, and were brought into Somalia to work in agricultural production (Lehman & Eno, 2003). The influx of laborers allowed for the expansion of agricultural production in the Shabelle River Valley but the more remote Jubba River Valley to the south remained largely uninhabited. Many Bantu people were not willing to remain as slaves of the Somali people for long. Some escaped from bondage while others managed to gain their freedom through legal means. In the 1840s, thousands of Bantu slaves, both fugitive and liberated, made their way south to the Jubba River Valley where they settled and began farming, creating communities that were often based on their East African tribal origins. By the early 1900s, approximately 35,000 former slaves had set up residence along the Jubba River (Besteman, 1999).

During one of my interviews it became clear that there are Somali Bantu, even those who are illiterate in their own language, who are aware of the history of their people, not just what they have witnessed in their own lifetimes.

> We originated from Tanzania and Mozambique....[I]n Africa there was no border before colonization. So people could go everywhere to search for food. There was a very bad famine, starvation, our grandgrand dad didn't have anything to eat...In West Africa this happened, there was a drought, the Bantu were farmers...and one time the rain was not there and there was a flood of water and there was nowhere to go so they came from Nigeria, so some came to East Africa. They were in Mozambique...the Arabic people came trading, they add the people into the business, 'Give me money and I will bring you somebody to work for you. I will give you food if you follow me wherever I take you.' They did not know about slavery, they were not wise people, so they do this, they were always positive so... the Somali people needed the Bantu for farming. The Italian people came to Somalia for colonization. The Somali people and the Italian people became friends. When the Italian people came the Somali people had a little education and they were herders so they had like a little bit trading and they could share trading with the Italians while the Bantu didn't know anything about education. What they knew only was farming. The colonization was only happening to the Somali Bantu people, not the Somali people. And the Italian people they were like judges between us and the Somali people. They made us like second class citizens. At first they were like judges and said if we do this to the Somali Bantu we will also do to the Somali people but later they only do colonization to the Somali Bantu people. (Nasib)

The content of this quote reflects an awareness of historical events but also suggests an understanding of the impact of education and other forms of capital that shape relationships and create hierarchies of social power. These issues were addressed in Chapter 6 and will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

During the late 1880s the United Kingdom and Italy took control of land on the horn of Africa, known today as Somalia, with the British in control of the northern region (British Somaliland) and the Italians occupying the south (Italian Somaliland) (Abdullahi, 2001). British and Italian governments colonized the region until 1960 when the north and south were unified into one independent state (Lewis, 2002). A system of slavery

was in place prior to colonial rule but the Italian colonial government did nothing to limit slavery in the region until they were pressured by the British to officially ban the practice (Lehman & Eno, 2003). Although slavery was officially abolished the Italian government, needing laborers to work on government owned plantations, forced the Bantu to work for daily wages, rather than on land of their own. Labor laws were enacted that resulted in the development of government controlled villages of Bantu who provided the labor needed to farm over 100 plantations. Italian officials were involved in this blatantly repressive practice but: "The Italian agricultural schemes would not have succeeded without the collaboration of individuals from non-Bantu ethnic groups who themselves were former slave owners" (Lehman & Eno, 2003, p. 9). The Bantu that worked on these plantations were forced to remain as laborers through brutal measures. There was essentially no difference between the new labor policy and the former practice of slavery. While thousands of Bantu were forced to work as laborers for plantation owners, others remained in villages in the Jubba Valley but the 1970s and 1980s brought dramatic changes to these Bantu as well.

State Appropriation of Bantu Land

Until the 1970s non-Bantu viewed the lower half of the Jubba River Valley as unhealthy and dangerous, infected by both tsetse flies and malaria. It was considered uninhabitable but the Bantu were successful in their cultivation of this land. Over time, the native Somali realized there were profits to be made by taking possession of it (Besteman, 1999). During the 1970s and 1980s, the Jubba Valley was legally redefined by the Somali government as a state resource and was viewed as an economic opportunity for Somali elite. Laws were put into place in 1975 that gave the government

total control over land ownership, removing it from clan-based systems. Individuals were now required to obtain land titles from the government which involved a very complex process of filing applications along with the payment of a large fee. Applications had to be turned into officials in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, which meant that those occupying land along the river had to travel there at their own expense. The process was lengthy, expensive, and required literacy and familiarity with state bureaucratic systems (Besteman, 1999). For the Somali Bantu, this amounted to the equivalent of an outright land grab as most were illiterate and were without needed funds.

Farm land, at one time considered undesirable by the Somali, was appropriated by Somali businessmen, most of whom had no experience with farming. The Somali Bantu had been farming this land for over a hundred years but the state political system made it possible for urban Somalis to dispossess the Somali Bantu of their land, depriving them of a means of independent subsistence. Many were forced to work as farm laborers for wealthy landowners in large-scale production (Besteman, 1999).

As the Somali increased their wealth and power in the region, the Bantu became further marginalized and even more removed from national politics. They occupied a "lower-status occupational class within the context of the Somali nation-state" (Besteman, 1999, p. 198). They were denied access to national and international commercial opportunities and when the country began falling into economic collapse, had difficulty accessing the international aid that was coming into the region. The Bantu were, once again, suffering from discrimination and persecution at the hands of the 'Somali Somali' (Lehman & Eno, 2003).

> The thousands of Gosha villagers who lost some or all of their land to the state farms (without compensation) became landless laborers working for pitiful wages

> (or unripe bananas), sharecroppers, illegal squatters on land they had previously owned, or poverty-stricken immigrants to Mogadishu. (Besteman, p. 205)
>
> The amount of money siphoned into private hands from the lower Jubba state farms amounted to tens of millions of dollars, although the Gosha villagers who lost their lands to the state farms received not a shilling. (Besteman, p. 205)

Civil War Breaks Out: "Do it or Die"

After decades of political unrest throughout the country and devastating vicious attacks by one Somali group against another, the people of Mogadishu overthrew the current president, Siad Barre who fled to the south, on January 27, 1991. With the presidential position vacant, two men quickly rose to power, both competing for rule over Somalia: Ali Mahdi and General Aidid. These two men and their supporters, "crossed swords in 1991 in a bloody urban war that would destroy the remaining infrastructure of Mogadishu" (Abdullahi, 2001, pp. 39-40). Meanwhile, Barre had set himself up in Baidoa with his remaining supporters, and began to attack the people living between the Shebelle and Jubba Rivers, an area largely settled by Bantu. An ethnic cleansing campaign began with what remained of his army. They tore across the region, massacring and raping, "with the wrath of a defeated army and the rapacity of unpaid soldiers" (Abdullahi, 2001, p. 40). General Aidid's army arrived to take up battle with Barre's troops in the fear that Barre would move north and, once again, take over the capital. As each side waged war against the other, the Bantu were caught in the middle and became the invaders' only source of food (Lehman & Eno, 2003). The armies had no rations and looted Bantu villages "without restraint" (Abdullahi, p.40).

During my interviews with members of the local Somali Bantu community, several provided examples of their experiences in Somalia during this time. One Somali

Bantu 22 year-old male I spoke with talked about what he remembered seeing as a child in Somalia. He described attacks on Somali Bantu homes for food and demands made by the Somali such as forcing Somali Bantu males to load trucks for them:

> The Somali Bantu they have a cultural thing that when they cultivate their maize and everything they get from their farms they bury it downstairs, you know, they just dig a big hole....They put them in barrels and put them down. So [the Somali] will know there is something there..."Ok, pull everything out or you will die. Do it or die". And these Somali Bantus they will just pull everything out and give it to them. Now it's all theirs, they can do anything. You know...a lot of people lost their lives of saying, "I gave you this and I'm not going to do anything else"...You know, so after they pull them out they will still ask these Somali Bantu to load their trucks or to load whatever they get from these Somali Bantus. (Ali)

Another young Somali Bantu male talked about his childhood memories of his village. He remembers running into the forest to escape Somali people coming with guns. They were often forced to stay in the forest until the Somali left their village and it was safe to return. I asked if this happened often and he replied, "Yeah, often, every day." He described a pattern of Somali attackers coming to his village and after killing two or three people they would leave, only to return again another day.

During the fighting, which took place over 2 years, four seasons of planting were missed as the Bantu and others in the area fled for their lives. Toward the latter part of 1992 the situation for the Bantu and was only getting worse. Life for those remaining became more and more unbearable (Abdullahi, 2001). The Bantu began to flee their villages and head south to refugee camps just over the Kenyan border. "By January of 1994, an estimated 10,000 Bantu were living in Dagahaley, Ifo, Liboi, and Hagadera Refugee Camps..." (Lehman & Eno, 2003, p. 10). These camps are known collectively as the Dadaab camp due to the close proximity to a town by that name.

An older Somali Bantu couple shared with me the events that caused them to leave their home and walk for 7 days to get closer to the Kenyan border. Their oldest son had climbed a mango tree to get something to eat on a very windy day. He fell from the tree and was injured but there was no hospital to take him to. Somali men came to the house and demanded food, tying the father's hands behind his back while his wife told them they could go in the house and get whatever they wanted; but this was not enough to avoid physical harm. They cut her arm which bled profusely. She showed me a large scar on her upper arm and demonstrated how she wrapped it and held her arm in the air while she walked for days. Their son died while they were fleeing. Another son had been killed by a stray bullet that hit him while he was looking for leftovers from a restaurant. The bullet hit him in the abdomen and "the intestines was out". I asked them at what point they decided it was time to leave their village. The translator said,

> What made us leave for the village to Kismayo was the son, the one that fell from the tree and dead, he died like somebody who is like even a dog, with them running they didn't even have a chance to bury him, so that is what feeled them very bad because they can't stay and watch their sick boy over the house so they decided to leave the village and the famine and the killing of the people in the village so when they were on the way from their village to Kismayo they have seen a lot of people dead on the street because of famine, some of them killed by bullet, so they decided to leave [for] the refugee camp.

Life in the Camps: "And They Still Had Their Guns"

It is no secret that the World Food Program has been unable to supply the residents of the Dadaab camps with an adequate daily diet. The caloric content of rations was such that there has been great concern about starvation, in particular of the women and children there. Refugees in Dadaab camps have had to deal with not only a shortage

of food, but also a lack of culturally appropriate food and a shortage of nutritional variety (Abdi, 2004).

> [I]n Dadaab in summer 2001, [Doctors Without Borders] reported a dramatic increase in the malnutrition rate of Somali refugee children – 172 percent within a period of six months – due to a 35 percent decrease in the general food distribution in the camps. Only those few who receive remittances from the diaspora and those involved in petty trade/business are able to supplement the meager rations. (Abdi, 2004, p. 22)

Refugees living in these camps, concerned for the well being of their families, would do what they felt they needed to do in order to obtain adequate rations for survival. Standing in line for rations more than once, if they could get away with it, was a common strategy. If a member of the family died, the death might not be reported so food ration cards, which listed family members, would not be adjusted. "As one refugee summed it up, 'To be a refugee means to learn to lie.'"(Voutira & Harrell-Bond, 1995, p. 216). Hyndman (2000) describes UNHCR practices for headcounts within the Kenyan camps which sound dreadfully similar to techniques used to round up cattle. Due to an assumption that those residing in the camps would subvert attempts to determine the actual number of camp residents, numbers needed to allocate food rations and raise money, refugees were awakened in the middle of the night and were forced to walk into fenced enclosures where they could be watched and counted. Camp residents have complained bitterly about this treatment as it is seen by them as inhumane and demoralizing.

Persecution against and violence inflicted on the Bantu did not cease after they crossed the border into Kenya. It continued in the camps in the form of raids on their food, the raping of their women, and marginalization of their ethnic group within political structures (Chanoff, 2002; Lehman & Eno, 2003). Little is available in the literature

regarding persecution of the Bantu in the camps but interviews revealed a great deal of support for this claim.

The Bantu were settled on the periphery of the camps where they were more vulnerable to attacks by bandits. Security within the camps was far from adequate resulting in the need for the Bantu to devise means of their own to protect themselves from nighttime raids. A Somali male described the situation in the camps:

> In Dadaab was the same. The same people we left in Somalia, they also came walking and they still had their guns and they come at night and every night people killing and the small food that we get from the [World Food Program] they also take at night. If you don't give the food, you dead. (Salati)

Somali violence against the Somali Bantu continued in the Kenyan refugee camps. "You know, so they would come to the houses during night time and they won't do anything, they will just hit you bad and take whatever you have in your house." (Ali) The same Somali Bantu male commented on what happened when word got out that the Somali Bantu were being invited to move to the United States. "But what happened is when the Somali Bantu started taking pictures [for identification purposes to go] to the United States, it was really a big mess…they started shooting people."

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Office for Migration responded to attacks against the Somali Bantu by native Somalis by relocating those who would be traveling to the United States to Kakuma, a camp further from the Somali Border. A Somali Bantu male described what happened when the 'Somali Somali' learned that the Bantu were being relocated to the United States:

> I came to understand, and when we were on the trip from Dadaab to Kakuma the Somali people, they burned a lot of tires on the road so we can have like confusion and not see where we going so that makes me sad when we came to Kakuma and some people was saying that was bad and what I have seen on the way coming from Dadaab to Kakuma the tires burning out there the Somali

> people doing demonstration against our process in Kakuma that makes me like feel people were really not liking us to come to America...And this all happened, the burning of the tires happened when the Somali people heard about our process to America on the radio. They heard on the broadcast radio, the BBC saying that the Somali Bantu will be transported from Dadaab to Kakuma and then from Kakuma to America. When they heard that is when they came to believe this was really true. They were not believing that we were coming here so when they believe is when they start burning tires. (Nasib)

Several I interviewed talked about what they perceived as discrimination within the camps when it came to providing services for the Bantu or providing camp residents with employment opportunities. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) employees were viewed as corrupt and willing to take bribes from those who could afford them. The Somali were much more likely to speak English than the Somali Bantu and were placed in leadership positions over particular sections of the camp. The Somali leaders were then in a position to block the Somali Bantu from camp resources including food and social support services such as a program designed to assist women who had been raped. The stories I heard on this topic are similar to those reported by Ugandan refugees in Southern Sudan where the UNHCR practice of placing better educated refugees in positions of power as middle men has led to structural inequalities within camp communities (Voutira & Harrell-Bond, 1995). This practice has, unintentionally, inhibited the development or maintenance of solidarity among camp residents, instead generating an atmosphere of mistrust and a system that does nothing to discourage corruption. In some of my interviews bribery of the police was reported as commonplace, allowing Somali to get away with violence against the Bantu, even in cases of murder. Two of those interviewed described how secret meetings were held with the Somali in order to keep the Bantu out of the loop and to devise ways to steal camp resources from them. They described how Somali leaders would recruit people from

their own families, telling them to dress poorly and look needy. When officials of the camp would visit to check on how camp residents were feeling about services, these dressed-down refugees would tell them that everything was going well. In this way, the Bantu were blocked access to administrators and were, therefore, unable to complain about the Somali who were limiting their access to food and other resources.

The story of persecution against the Bantu in the camps has gone unreported in refugee literature; it is a story that has been largely hidden from view. For example, Hyndman (2000) interviewed numerous women from Somalia living in the camps. The focus of her study was on how the structure of institutions and their management of refugee camps impacts the daily lives of those forced to live there. Discrimination against the Bantu is not included in her research. I suspect that the reason she did not hear about this issue was that she, as a former UN employee, was an outsider being escorted by UNHCR employees during her interviews with camp residents. She had little contact with the Somali Bantu and her research questions were not designed to elicit this type of information.

During my interviews I asked about leadership within the camps and was provided with yet another story of discrimination and lack of justice:

> At the refugee camp we used to have leadership. And when I take my problem to my community leader they say ok and we will solve this and the community leaders take the matter to the UN workers and the UN workers say ok we will solve this and then it take 30 days because they keep my file as the last file (he gestures that his file is at the bottom of a pile of other files) from the other people and when the community leader goes there he usually tell him that his is behind, that we have other people ahead of this guy so we will help them first. And also they sometimes bribe the community leaders too, they give some money to be quiet. They say, "Be quiet about this case."

The Somali Bantu, after suffering a long history of discrimination against them in Somalia, were now being cheated out of rations and services within the camps which could only add to an attitude of distrust of Somali people, government officials and representatives of institutions.

Relationships in America: "Here It Is the Same Thing"

It appears that little, if any, literature is available, outside of newspaper reports (such as the one written by Erickson in 2007 entitled *Learning to Leave Bad Blood Behind*) to document contemporary relationships between the Somali Bantu and native Somalis in America but several of those I interviewed described a continuation of discrimination within the context of their new lives in the United States. During my interviews of the Somali Bantu, Somali employees of more than one resettlement organization were accused of discriminatory actions against Somali Bantu trying to access services. In one case a Somali Bantu male described how he was scheduled to meet with an employee of the organization that was assisting with applications for permanent U.S. residence. A Somali employee was working at the front desk and told him the person he was to meet with was not in. The Bantu male returned another day for a second scheduled meeting and was once again told the person he was to meet was not in. When this happened a third time, the man I interviewed said he refused to believe it and walked back to the office of the person he had an appointment with who was, in fact, in the office.

Another Bantu male described a similar situation at a different refugee resettlement agency where a Somali employee of the agency told the person at the front desk to tell this Bantu male that he was not in the office, when he actually was. The man

I interviewed waited around the office and watched another refugee arrive to meet with the same employee. He asked this man, as he left the facility, if he was able to meet with the employee and was told that the employee was actually there and had met with him. It is this Somali Bantu's perception that the Bantu are deliberately being denied services at this agency. On another occasion the man I interviewed encountered this same employee outside the office. He asked the employee why he was treating the Bantu this way.

> He told me in Somalia you guys used to be like our servant, we used to tell you what to do. For right now in America we have to order you to do something so what I told him is you will wait us to a servant to you forever in America, it is not going to happen. So he promise me it will happen, that Somali Bantu will be [his] servant.... He say you guys used to be a servant for Somali and here it is the same thing. (Salati)

Regarding services at a local refugee resettlement office, one Somali Bantu woman I interviewed said, "Somali people go there, they help them but the Bantu people, they don't help." In many cases, acts of discrimination by Somali people are real occurrences. In some cases they may be just misperceptions based on experiences with discriminatory practices of the past, but perceptions are what count when it comes to developing attitudes of distrust. In the following section members of the Somali Bantu community describe how past experiences of discrimination, particularly in the area of formal education, have led to continued hardships for the Bantu in America.

"And Here There Is Not a lot of Things to Worry About and There Is a lot of Things to Worry About"

> Somali people don't like us do something that will help in the future. That is why I am missing a lot of things. If you have education, everything is good. If not, farming, cooking, cleaning, wash clothes, that is what you do. (Jamila)

Access to formal education in Somalia was limited by state sanctioned discriminatory practices, including the absence of native Bantu languages in the classroom (Abdullahi, 2001). When formal schooling was available, some Bantu chose not to attend due to a sense that formal education was not relevant to their daily lifestyles. Many of the men I interviewed attended school for at least a few years in Somalia but the women stayed home to care for their siblings and help their mothers with daily chores.

In the Kenyan camps formal education was available but many Bantu families found it too difficult to survive on the rations they received and found opportunities to work for native Somalis who were receiving money from families who had already migrated to Western countries. Many Somali Bantu, in particular women, felt forced to continue their subordinate position in relation to native Somalis which resulted in a perpetuation of their illiteracy. During my interviews the topic of discrimination in education frequently came up even though I did not ask questions directly related to this. The following is an excerpt from a conversation with a young Bantu male:

> Y: Do you think life was good before the war in the village?
> S: Yes, it was really nice to live in the village before the war broke out. And also we had problem before the war broke out. We had discrimination in education. We did not have equal educational opportunities like other people did.
> Y: Like in other villages?
> S: No like other people in town. Other villages were the same as us. We start with class one to class eight and after class eight they had to transfer us to secondary school…and after [that] they stop us and they used to tell us if you need more education you need to pay for it. People who had money they have more educational opportunity but if people do not have money…is the last time the government can help. . . .

Another Somali Bantu male, whose native language is Mushanguli, said, "To go to high school…the problem is that everything is in Somali, the history is in Somali, the math is

in Somali, the biology is in Somali. If you need to stay for more educational you have to pay to go to English class."

When I asked questions about life in the refugee camps, the topic of working for native Somali people came up often. The following exchange took place during a conversation with a Somali Bantu woman and a female Bantu translator:

> Y: Did anyone at Hagadera [one of the Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya] have a job or have a way to make money?
> H: Yeah, her uncle had a job. Sometime when she don't have nothing, he was help.
> Y: What kind of job did he have?
> H: He was helping the Somali people. We are Somali Bantu. We was working there, the people, something to carry, like the UN when she pay the food, the people something carry. That was how he was work.
> Y: Did you go to school?
> (They laugh)
> H: No. No school because she was living with her grandma. She was very old and she was working for the Somali people. She go to the tap, the water, and then take the water to the Somali people…
> Y: So you were working too?
> H: That's why she say she I never go to school. (They laugh)
> Y: I see.
> H: That's why she never speak English.
> In a different interview with a young Bantu male the following was said:
> N: We used to help my mother in the morning before we go to school. And she was working for Somali people taking water for the Somali people. We used to take all that water. . . .
> Y: So she would go stand in line?
> N: Yeah, stand in line. And she used to get the water at night while nobody's there so and then she make the jugs, the cans for the water ready for us in the morning so I used to wake up at 6:00 in the morning and then take that water 6:00 to everybody that she was supposed to do, to take, and then after that we come back at home and go to school at 7:30 in the morning. So that's how we do it.

Another Somali Bantu male described the situation in the camps like this:

> S: We used to do digging toilets for Somali people so we get paid for that for the daily life so that's what we used to do and for work. And if I have like a daughter, my daughter was going there to work for them, she cleans for them and do like household things for them and she get food for that. And because of this they had some of their family members in America already, the Somali people, they had their family members in America, they get some money, their children

were going to school, that's the reason today you can see a lot of Somali Bantu, small kids, teenagers not speaking English while Somali people, teenagers are speaking English. Our children we were sending them to work for them. They didn't have clothes for school, they didn't have food to eat so instead Bantu go to school they used to work for Somali people.
Y: So these are Somali people that are refugees?
S: Yeah, they were refugees.
Y: Did school cost money?
N: No, but they didn't have food or clothes. And this is myself (the translator now speaks for himself), they need books to buy, sometimes the UN had some books for contributions but they were going to the people with money, but you have to buy them, they go to the refugees but you have to buy them because the guy who is working there is taking them.
S: And also my wife used to go to transport water for the Somali people from the tub to the house do all this kind of this and get 2 shilling in Kenya. Two coins for each 25 liters of water. She use to take 8 jugs. . . .(gestures caring them strapped to her head/back). The rice we used to eat only one time a year because it was expensive. The only people that has money buy rice and pasta. And my wife used to eat the rice, when the Somali people eat so they used to give her some that remain on there, after they eat they give to my wife and the rest of the [leftovers] she took to her kids. Today that is why a lot of Bantu do not speak English, they don't have educational histories, they used to keep us behind and let themselves in front of other people.

History in Person

The Somali Bantu, the people of the Gosha, on arrival in America are not without their memories of their past. They have a long history of relationships, both good and bad, with others in Somalia. They come with knowledge of their lineage and with enduring clan-based relationships that are historically grounded in their forced migration to Somalia as slaves during the 1800's. They suffered tremendous hardships as native Somalis claimed their land, stole their food, and murdered their relatives (Besteman, 1999; Jaynes, 2004; Lehman & Eno, 2003). They do not lose their relationships or their memories as they resettle in an American city. In addition, they arrive in America after spending a decade or more in refugee camps where they lived alongside Somali people who had persecuted and attacked the Somali Bantu. They were dependent on

institutionalized agencies that provided basic necessities and have had countless interactions with agency staff whose job it was to distribute aid and to determine who would be allowed to resettle in a Westernized country and who would remain behind (Barnett, 2003; Hyndman, 2000). They learned how best to interact with agency staff to maximize the benefits that might be gained from the interaction and developed a lack of trust for those who are employed to help them (Voutira & Harrell-Bond, 1995). The Somali Bantu are survivors; they have learned many lessons along their arduous path. For these reasons, *history in person* (Holland & Lave, 2001), as a theoretical perspective, is appropriate to help frame an investigation of Somali Bantu experiences and social relationships.

Holland and Lave (2001) have extended social practice theory by defining subjects as not only social and cultural beings, but also as historical beings. The concept of history in person includes the idea that persons are historically fashioned and carry the struggles of their past, including the struggles of their ancestors, into the present. Local practice is produced by a combination of present circumstances and reactions to enduring struggles. Long-term specific conflicts shape and sustain identities influencing how subjects interpret contemporary relationships and fashion local practice.

The theoretical perspective developed by Holland and Lave (2001) expands upon the work of Bakhtin and others (Holland, et al., 2003: Holquist, 2002) who have investigated the complexities of human perception. Dialogism, a term used to describe Bakhtin's work in this area, is at the heart of this concept. "Dialogism argues that all meaning is relative in the sense that it comes about only as a result of the relation between two bodies occupying *simultaneous but different* space, where bodies may be

thought of as ranging from the immediacy of our physical bodies, to political bodies and to bodies of ideas in general (ideologies)…Conceiving being dialogically means that reality is always experienced, not just perceived, and further that it is experienced from a particular position" (Holquist, 2002, p.21). A sense of reality is generated by how one perceives oneself in relation to others.

Holland and Lave (2001) describe their social practice analysis as emphasizing an inquiry into historical structures of privilege based on class and race that are brought into the present, enacted in local practice. "[P]ersons and, to a lesser extent, groups are caught in the tensions between past histories that have settled within them and the present discourses and images that attract them or somehow impinge upon them" (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 2003, p.4). The Somali Bantu migration and resettlement experience provides a perfect example of this concept due to their long, and remembered, history of conflict and struggle as a marginalized and persecuted group in Somalia and Kenya and due to their experiences coping with UNHCR and other resettlement organizations when they were confined to refugee camps. These experiences and memories are carried forward and affect their perceptions of those they encounter in the United States. All those they interact with in the U.S. occupy the same physical space but view reality from their own perspective which is based on their own experiences and perceived relation to the Bantu. Two conversations I listened to, during meetings at a community center involved in refugee resettlement, provide clear examples of this concept. In one case, a middle-aged Somali woman was speaking. In the second case, at a different meeting, a young Somali male was speaking. Both stated that there should be no hard feelings between the Somali Bantu and the majority Somali. Any issues between

them were in the past. These representatives from the American Somali community appear to view the Somali Bantu as social equals and believe that all people from Somalia should consider themselves to be part of the same community. Clearly there are Somali Bantu who do not agree with this sentiment. What must be noted here is that variations in perspectives are based on relative positions of privilege. Many Somali Bantu are acutely aware that their subordinate positions in Somalia and Kenya have negatively impacted their adaptation to life in America. Jamila's statement, a few pages back in this chapter, demonstrates her understanding of the relationship between formal education opportunities and access to employment.

Those who interact with the Bantu in the United States may feel that what took place in the past should remain in the past and may feel that entrance to the U.S. should be seen as an opportunity for a fresh start, free of negative baggage from previous experiences, but some members of the Bantu and Somali Somali communities may not be inclined to take on this attitude. "[E]vents initiated in the most distant past, as measured by the clock, may still be fresh and unfinished in cognitive time/space" (Holquist, 2002, p. 24). Interviews with the Bantu, in at least two cases, provided what appear to be distinct examples of discrimination by American Somali Somali against Somali Bantu. The context within which the Somali Somali and the Bantu live has changed but both groups are influenced by historical events and relationships of the past. At this point we can return to the story of the Monkeys and the Turtles in Chapter 1. The narrator of the story, a Somali Bantu male, uses this story to represent current relationships between the Somali Somali and the Bantu. He describes members of the Somali majority community as people who will tell you that all Somali should be "brothers" and should be viewed as

equals but in reality the Somali Somali act under the influence of historical relations and, at least on some occasions, practice discriminatory behaviors in their American environment (getting their hands dirty once again).

History in person, as a theoretical construct, includes the idea that people both participate in and, through their actions and attitudes toward others, generate cultural forms of behavior. Contemporary situated social practices are a creative response to historical influences within local contexts. The Bantu personify this concept as they live out contentious social practices based on unequal relations that were developed over generations. Prior social practices of others in relation to the Bantu have created a tendency for Bantu to opportunistically attempt to access assistance from multiple sources, to make demands for services beyond what resettlement agencies are prepared to provide, and to hold back socially, trusting only members of their own group. Contemporary social practices of the Bantu reflect long-term struggles for autonomy and respect from Somali natives as well as representatives of governments and refugee resettlement institutions.

Mistrust

Issues relating to trust in refugee experience are well documented (Kibreab, 2004; Marfleet, 2006; Voutira & Harrell-Bond, 1995). One text in particular, *Mistrusting Refugees* edited by Daniel and Knudsen (1995) provides extensive evidence of how mistrust between refugees and camp staff is fostered by the refugee resettlement system. Refugee camp organization is usually structured in a way that promotes an attitude of "us", referring to the employees of aid organizations, versus "them" which refers to the refugees, the "needy" recipients of services (Voutira & Harrell-Bond, 1995). Power

relationships are realized through the distribution of food, supplies and services with refugees positioned in a way that forces them to submit to this unbalanced relationship in order to gain access to the materials needed for survival. Refugees are typically perceived by camp workers as untrustworthy, as people taking advantage of the system whenever possible to get as much as they can for themselves. The humanitarian aid regime, paternalistic and authoritarian by nature, is based on an inherent lack of trust of those it serves.

> Refugees are allocated a subordinate role in which it is anticipated that they will accept the authority of external forces and the 'charity script' in which they have been given non-speaking parts. In fact they may be disinclined to play such roles. They may already have experienced repression and ill-treatment and may be unwilling to subordinate themselves to the authorities in camps and relief centres. (Marfleet, 2006, p. 207)

Kibreab (2004) in *Pulling the Wool over the Eyes of Strangers: Refugee Deceit and Trickery in Institutional Settings* analyzes the behavior of refugees in refugee camps where theft of food and lying in order to increase rations are commonplace. He discusses this behavior in terms of its moral implications noting that actions that would create a sense of guilt or wrong doing when performed against an individual, would be considered justified when acted out in an institutional context. "It is only when the refugees interact with faceless organizations or governments which they consider rich, powerful, corrupt and unaccountable (to them) that they resort to whatever means available to maximize material benefits without any consideration of the interests of such organizations. In doing this, they feel no sense of guilt and that is why the pursuit of their own interest is not subject to moral constraints" (Kibreab, 2004, p. 13). This behavior may be typical of refugees in general but in the case of the Somali Bantu living at the location of this study, as compared to other groups of refugees, an attitude of distrust and guilt-free attempts to

over-utilize services seems to be a commonplace occurrence. This may be due to their long history of subjugation, not only in the camps, but in Somalia as well. Besteman (1999) points out that the Bantu, while living in Somalia, maintained a sense of skepticism toward a government that was both their "protector and predator" (p. 150). On the one hand they needed to rely on government assistance, if they could get it, during times of flood or drought, while at the same time they were well aware that their rights were continually violated by government regulations. "For the most part, Gosha villagers avoided interaction with the state, viewing most state intervention in their daily lives as detrimental" (p. 150) but at times they played along and were opportunistic when they could get away with it.

In Somalia, Somali Bantu had no representation in, and no protection from, the Somali government. They have been consistently mistreated by native Somalis in multiple settings and were unable to access adequate protection and resources from UNHCR and other NGOs in the camps. Lack of trust of native Somalis is based on an extensive history of adversarial relationships between the two groups. This lack of trust was then compounded by a decade or more of confinement within refugee camps in Kenya that fostered the continuation of mistrust of those in positions of power. Is it any wonder that on arrival in the U.S. many Somali Bantu developed relationships with local resettlement agencies that were less than amicable and were loaded with mistrust from the onset? With both the Somali Bantu and native Somalis being influenced by historically-based contentious relations with each other, is it at all surprising that members of the Somali Bantu community describe incidents of mistreatment by Somali case workers and Somali employees of resettlement agencies? The Somali majority have

a long history they carry with them of practices intended to marginalize the Bantu while the Bantu have a long history of solidarity amongst themselves and distrust of outsiders. Why would this suddenly change with their migration to the U.S.? What we see today, in America, represents local actors engaging in practices that are both influenced by historical events and are modified by present day social and political opportunities and constraints.

Shifting Identities

Contentious relationships continue to exist but identities of many Bantu are shifting as they realize they have a right to talk back and a right to demand equal distribution of government supports and benefits. This state of transformation is another aspect of the Bantu's migration experience that exemplifies a history in person perspective. Holland and Lave (2001) argue that relationships that are based on identities that have been constructed by prior circumstances are in a constant state of transformation as they are influenced by contemporary circumstances and forces. In the case of the Bantu migrating to America, they realize that the discrimination they suffered in the past is not a permanent condition, that outside of Somalia the circumstances change and in the United States there are laws and institutionalized systems in place designed to provide an assurance of equity and opportunity for all. Here again, a history of relationships with others, in this case with white Americans, has influenced perceptions in contemporary circumstances. During one interview a Somali Bantu leader described how helpful Americans were when the Bantu were in refugee camps and how the Americans helped them migrate to the United States.

> American people they really help the Bantu people for real…They came *all* the way over here and came for us down here (pointing to a drawing that depicted the Somali Bantu in Africa). We were in Africa, in Africa there's not only Somali people, there's *a lot* of people. Why our African people didn't help us? Why American came all the way down and pass all the way this continents, all these, and came over to Africa while we are in our country? (Nasib)

In Somalia, and in Kenyan camps, White people were helping the Somali Bantu survive. White people were helping the Bantu escape from their misery in the camps and were transporting them to America. White people were offering them safety and a better future. In America, it is primarily White people who are offering to help the Bantu learn English, find housing, jobs, and learn how to live in a Western urban environment. American humanitarian organizations and their staff have been providing support to the Bantu throughout all aspects of their journey of migration. As a result, institutionalized discrimination against people of color, and people in poverty, that is pervasive in America is not yet visible to the Bantu. They recognize that their options are limited due to a lack of proficiency in English. They do not realize they are constrained by mythical notions of meritocracy and that hard work alone will not provide them with the comfortable future they long for. They cannot see the institutionalized barriers that will hold them back even when proficiency in English is no longer an obstacle. Perhaps this issue will become clearer to them as they watch their children grow up and attempt to access and navigate educational systems that lead to middle-class incomes. For the time being, they recognize that their opportunities are greater now than they were in Somalia, as well as in Kenya, and that those who held them back in the past are not *legally* in a position to continue this practice. The marginalization of the Bantu was overt in Somalia. This may not be the case today in America but the Bantu remain positioned as a

marginalized group with limited access to education and other resources and without political representation.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Using economic globalization, social capital (and other forms of capital including familial, resistance, and navigational), and history in person theoretical perspectives has provided a lens through which to view the complex nature of refugee resettlement and has offered insight into how contemporary refugee resettlement practices can negatively impact the adaptation process for those who have been forced to migrate to the United States. This combination of perspectives helps to explain why the resettlement of the Bantu was such a disruptive and challenging process and why the Bantu continue to struggle to adapt to live in America today. An investigation of the intersection between institutional policies and procedures and refugee experience reveals that refugee resettlement organizations, both globally and locally, are dispensing their services in a standardized manner that limits the ability of the system to effectively address the unique needs of a particular group or take advantage of their strengths and assets to enhance the resettlement process.

Refugees, with a desire to maintain their former social networks and support systems, and a longing to successfully forge a new life in America, come up against a system that rather than fostering self-sufficiency (which is the stated goal of resettlement organizations) actually discourages it. Professionals in the resettlement business run their organizations with a top-down approach that leaves little room for refugees to participate

in the management of their own affairs. These newly-arriving Americans are without the needed educational programs and language classes to truly become self sufficient "in the least amount of time". It seems to be clear to everyone involved that this is not the most effective system but state and local employees operate under the assumption that there is nothing they can do about the federal regulations that structure their programs.

The professionalization of refugee services, with management of funds controlled by those holding Western education credentials, has resulted in a top-down management style that denies refugees significant control over their own affairs. Management of refugee services, including the distribution of the limited funds available for refugee resettlement will likely always occur in a conflictual context with professionals and refugees both operating under the belief that these funds should be under their control. Professionals with Western education that supports their positioning within systems administering resettlement programs see themselves as the experts and as the people who are most qualified to make decisions as to how the funds should be spent. This is not an entirely unwarranted perspective, as newly-arrived refugees from non-Western countries do not have the background to readily understand how to manage organizations within an American context where, for example, federal tax laws need to be followed. At the same time, it must be recognized that professionals who are lobbying for control over these funds are assuring that their own interests are being served and that their paid positions as experts are maintained.

A top-down approach is not the answer, as this eliminates the possibility of benefitting from the knowledge and experience of members of the refugee community and denies refugees the opportunity to identify and respond to their own issues. Refugee

community leaders should be consulted regarding resettlement policies and Mutual Assistance Associations should be supported as they provide refugee groups with the ability to address issues specific to their communities. This support should include training in how to manage nonprofit organizations but decisions as to how funds will be spent should be made by leaders of the refugee community.

While it is important to recognize that no two refugee groups will have the same opinions as to the most effective ways to help their communities, there is also a need for sensitivity to the potential negative outcomes of funding numerous groups at the same time. Competition for funds can result in conflict and splintering of already marginalized populations. In the case of the Somali Bantu, funding one Somali organization that is meant to serve all people from Somalia would likely lead to a replication of power struggles that occurred in Somalia and in the Kenyan camps. On the other hand, funding the Somali groups separately has perpetuated divisions between communities.

Knox, Agnew, and McCarthy (2002) provide distinctions between five major modes of economic production that societies tend to move through over time: subsistence, slavery, feudalism, capitalism and socialism. There are variations as to what forms occur and in what order but the process of change does not happen overnight. In the case of the Somali Bantu, their relationship to these modes of production did, in literal terms, change overnight. Prior to life in Kenyan refugee camps, a subsistence mode of production was the only form of economic organization most of them had ever been exposed to. In the refugee camps survival was based on handouts and, for some, manual labor such as unloading supply trucks for non-governmental organizations or collecting firewood to sell to other residents of the camp. Abruptly, one day they step off

the plane in the U.S. and are living in a capitalistic and highly informational economy that requires a level of education never made available to them in their native country or in the refugee camps. Viewing their transition to America from this perspective helps to explain why it has been, and continues to be, such a challenging adjustment. Limited to low-skill, low-wage, dead-end manufacturing and service jobs in America, the Bantu, particularly those with children, find it difficult, if not impossible, to earn enough money to meet their basic needs.

Social capital theory is a valuable tool for examining both the strengths of refugee communities and the barriers they face due to lack of social connections outside of their own communities. Examination of the work done by those who have developed theories on the topic of social capital reveals that no one theoretical perspective is adequate for a full understanding of the Somali Bantu experience. Bourdieu's foundational introduction of social capital concepts and social reproduction helps us to understand how a lack of particular kinds of knowledge limits access to higher education and other opportunities available in Western countries such as the United States. Bourdieu's work, however, falls far short of telling the whole story as his bias toward middle class and upper class Western values blocks us from seeing the strengths and positive qualities of Bantu social networks, further marginalizing and isolating the Bantu community from the dominant society within which they reside. Yosso's counter to this deficit-based perspective and focus on the potential value of familial networks helps us to appreciate the complex support system employed by the Bantu in American society that is designed to help members of the group navigate unfamiliar social and institutional terrains. Her concept of resistance capital, however, requires modification within the Somali Bantu context.

The Bantu, having been transported, with their memories of Somalia and refugee camp life intact, have been dropped into a society dominated by whites. They represent a group of people whose forms of resistance are perhaps unique and certainly not identical to forms of resistance characteristic of African American or Latino/a families in the United States. Forms of resistance expressed by members of the Somali Bantu community, continually affected by time and context, are specific to their interactions with Somali natives and refugee resettlement system power structures. Often they do not conform to the behaviors typical of Westerners in social service interactions and, whenever possible, they seek social support from members of their own community. Their resistance to their former oppressors, the native Somali, is overt now that they perceive themselves to be in a location that denies native Somalis the right to discriminate against them. They do not, however, appear to view the dominant white society as oppressive and do not seem to recognize the obstacles they are likely to face due to institutionalized discrimination in the United States against people of color and those of low socioeconomic status.

The work of Newman (1999) and Stack (1974,1996), which both focus on the lives of people living in poverty in the United States, help us to recognize that the hardships faced by the Bantu in American society are not entirely due to their refugee experience and low socioeconomic status when they first arrive. The United States, throughout its history, through the acts of individuals and institutions, has discriminated against people of color and those in low income brackets.

Stack's work presents examples of the utilization of kinship networks to support a community of family and analyzes the complex nature of this support that both holds

communities up and, potentially, brings individuals down. At this point, the Bantu in America appear to be more concerned with maintaining support systems for members of their communities than they are with holding onto their resources for the support and advancement of a nuclear family. Historical patterns of social behavior persist across contexts. They may not be aware of the long-term impact this can have on financial security or they may, when considering this, choose to rely on a system of communal sharing and reciprocity.

Putman's (1995) theoretical perspectives on the value of voluntary organizations along with the concepts of bonding and bridging capital helps to illustrate how the Bantu use bonding within their own community to their advantage but are denied full participation in bridging to resources in American society that lead to financial security. Through the application of a combination of social theory perspectives, it is clear that the forms of capital needed to succeed in American society are not easily accessible to the Bantu and that the social network strengths already inherent in Bantu culture are not being tapped into by those who participate in the business of refugee resettlement.

In 2003 Barnett, referring to the resettlement of the Somali Bantu in America, wrote: The, "challenge will be managing the dissolution in a modern western society of a traditional culture with its traditional ways of handling conflict and providing comfort and support" (p. 6). Many outside of resettlement institutions were aware of traditional Bantu culture but knowledge of Bantu social support systems was not integrated into resettlement policy. Through an understanding of the particular social support systems a refugee community is able to employ, more effective resettlement programs could be

designed that include taking advantage of traditional community leadership systems for communal support and conflict resolution.

An investment into in-depth cultural understanding is needed prior to the arrival of a new and unfamiliar group of refugees as misunderstandings between the receiving culture and the culture of new arrivals are likely to occur without such an investment. Arrangements should be made so that traditional and familiar community systems can be put in place quickly after a particular group begins arriving in the United States. Recognition of the capacity of the Bantu community to help itself could have been incorporated into a resettlement plan tailored to match the strengths and needs of this community. In addition, it should be recognized that social connections outside of the refugee community are needed to help members of the community advance their skills through higher education and employment training. In the current system new arrivals are typically set up with low-paying entry-level employment positions, if they are set up with a job at all. A few months later, in most cases, no one in the resettlement system is following them to see if they are ready to move on to better opportunities. From this point on, those who arrived in the U.S. as refugees, are on their own, with no choice but to rely on the connections they have available to them which are, for the most part, connections within their own communities. Long-term effective case management and follow-up services should be available to these individuals, helping them to bridge to the broader community, so they may advance beyond employment opportunities that hold them down in a life of poverty.

When the Somali Bantu first arrived in America, many of those providing social support to incoming refugee communities viewed the Bantu as disruptive to the system,

as hard to get along with and impossible to understand. They seemed to come from a different world that operates on some plane outside of our comprehension. Had more been known about the history and culture of the Somali Bantu, fewer instances of misunderstanding would have occurred. If we look again at the stories told in Chapter 2, viewed with a greater knowledge of the social history and their relationships with others in Somalia and Kenya, the situations that occurred are easier to appreciate and understand. The third story in Chapter 2 describes the behaviors of Bantu children in local elementary schools as perceived by their teachers. The children were described as "running wild" and some were accused of "stealing" and "lying". Elementary school teachers in the area were largely uninformed about the history of the Somali Bantu. Their impressions of the behavior of the children in their schools and classrooms was not favorable in many ways. Some of the children were viewed as liars and as apt to take things from other kids that did not belong to them but these behaviors can be understood in a different light when there is an awareness of community social practice and a history of opportunistic behavior used as a survival strategy. Were Bantu children who took something from another child, such as a backpack or bicycle, stealing or were they borrowing the item under an assumption that material goods can be shared among members of the community rather than belonging to just one person? Were children who made false statements about having received food or other items at school acting as liars or were they being resourceful? Children learn by observing their parents and other adults in their community and may have picked up the navigational skills (Yosso, 2005) they were observing to acquire food and material goods. Perhaps these kids were unaware that what they were doing is viewed as misbehavior in American society. Teachers have

a responsibility to act when they observe behaviors that are outside of those socially accepted by the broader community but knowledge of cultural norms and the history of a particular group can change what teachers see and how they respond. Without an awareness of the root cause of particular behaviors, teachers may be inclined to punish the child, rather than providing education as to what types of behaviors are considered unacceptable in an American school environment.

Children "running wild" and a lack of Somali Bantu parental involvement in their children's education were other areas of concern among school teachers. An awareness of village and camp life, where children did not, for the most part, have access to school and where their time was most often unstructured helps us to understand why Somali Bantu children were not behaving according to American social standards. They did not know that running in school hallways was viewed as an inappropriate behavior and they had not been socialized to line up in the cafeteria. In addition, lack of access to education, along with an agrarian lifestyle, has resulted in illiteracy among the majority of Bantu adults and an inability for parents to communicate with teachers in English. They lack an understanding of the expectations American schools have of parents and the navigational capital to participate effectively in the education of their children.

In Chapter 7 discrimination against the Bantu in Somalia and in the Kenyan refugee camps was discussed in some detail. Living through these experiences along with more than a decade of harsh refugee camp conditions fraught with conflict between the Bantu, native Somalis and camp staff has culminated in a group of people with little tolerance for less than stellar resettlement services and a general distrust of those outside their community. Upon arrival in the U.S., many behaved in ways that seemed

unreasonable and deceitful to those who worked with them in resettlement systems but viewing this behavior through a history in person lens (Holland & Lave, 2001) and as a form of resistance capital (Yosso, 2005) gives us the opportunity to link past experiences to present responses and to view these responses as creative maneuvers to maintain control of their own affairs, resist continued discrimination by native Somalis, and secure the material goods they view as necessary for survival.

Returning to the stories in Chapter 2 that described the Somali Bantu pattern of seeking help from multiple sources, making demands of resettlement workers and acting ungrateful for the help they received, we can see, once again, that these situations look different when viewed from a more informed position. There are legitimate reasons as to why the Bantu would be prone to seek help from multiple sources for the same issue and opportunistically behave in ways that could be interpreted as deceitful and selfish to employees of resettlement systems. For decades they had to negotiate the difficult position of not being able to trust the Somali government while, at the same time, needing to turn to government officials for humanitarian relief during times when their crops did not do well (Besteman, 1999). They lived for many years in Kenyan refugee camps, where they were underfed and poorly supported by camp services (Abdi, 2004; Horst, 2006). Out of necessity, the Bantu have learned to make the most of what is being offered to them. They brought this skill with them to America. Seeking material goods from multiple sources and withholding this information from everyone involved has been unsettling for local resettlement and charity workers. Within U.S. systems, open communication and collaboration are seen as the most effective method for problem resolution. The Bantu who seek help from multiple sources often cause confusion among

resettlement workers and others trying to help them, ultimately bogging down the helping process but in light of their history, their approach to service providers can be viewed as a survival strategy, as a form of navigational capital (Yosso, 2005), and as an asset. Knowledge of the relationship between past experiences and present behaviors would improve resettlement worker interactions with members of the Bantu community, providing an opportunity for tolerance and more open discussion about the most effective ways for them to secure support from the broader community.

Demands for material goods made on local resettlement agencies and a refusal to accept the help that was being offered graciously and without complaint was characteristic of many Bantu when they first arrived in the United States at the site of this study. Here Holland and Lave's (2001) analysis of contemporary practice examined through the lens of *history in person* is helpful as Bantu behavior can be viewed as an example of socially situated contentious practice and as a manifestation of historically constituted enduring struggles. The Bantu have maintained a sense of pride and solidarity in their community in spite of, and as a response to, a long history of persecution and oppression. They have been waiting a long time for legal rights of citizenship and the opportunity to assert themselves without fear of punishment or retribution. The Somali Bantu are not only grateful for the opportunities that life in America can offer them, but they are also well aware of what they have lost in terms of human capital due to their lack of access to education in Africa. Viewing their behavior as a creative response to historical influences within a local context and as a form of resistance to being positioned in a subordinate sector of society can provide those outside

their community with an opportunity to appreciate, and even admire their responses to the external forces they are now subject to.

Western refugee resettlement services and other support systems such as state departments of workforce services and public school systems are accustomed to a top-down management approach. Those at the top with the education and credentials to acquire their positions in the chain of command are assumed to be the ones with the knowledge to determine what is best for those they serve. Refugees seeking services are expected to follow their directions, to maintain open communication with those helping them and to express gratitude for what is being offered to them. They are not supposed to take matters into their own hands. When the Bantu seek help from multiple service providers simultaneously, work outside the system to find ways to address their needs and withhold information, they are viewed by members outside their community with suspicion and distain. Two culturally and historically prescribed modes of operation, one being a Westernized business oriented approach to management of services and the other being the manner in which the Somali Bantu have, as individuals and as a community, learned to organize their lives, clash with each other resulting in a disruption in service provision that is disturbing to service providers and leaves the Bantu with a sense that the systems they now deal with are not helpful.

Longing for a Better Life in America

Life in the Kenyan camps was hard. The weather was harsh, food rations were sparse, security did not adequately protect the Somali Bantu from physical assaults and theft by bandits, and opportunities for education and employment were severely limited. There was little to no hope of political stabilization in Somalia while Kenya was not

inviting the refugees living in the Dadaab camps to become Kenyan citizens. Longing and desire to be resettled in a different country became commonplace. The emotions around resettlement were so strong, a term for this condition was created, that being *buufis*. (Horst, 2006). "In Dadaab, *buufis* is mostly used to refer to someone's hope, longing, desire or dream to go for resettlement" (Horst, 2006, p. 143). Transnational flows of information and remittances result in residents of the Dadaab camps learning about the lives of friends and relatives in America. They compare the poor quality of their own lives to these stories and imagine how much better life would be if they were to relocate to the United States. Realistic or not, they imagine a life that is full of promise for themselves and their children. "In this process, the lines between the realistic and the fictional are blurred, especially for those far from the reality described" (Horst, 2006, p. 151). *Buufis* leads to a powerful realization of global inequality, a realization that, for example, Americans have access to a wide range of privileges beyond the majority of the residents of Africa. For the Bantu, it was also a realization that anti-discriminatory laws exist in America that would give them legal rights that were unheard of in Somalia. As one young Bantu male I interviewed said,

> [W]hen I was in Somalia before the war broke out I didn't know that there was a law in the world but when I came to Kenya I came to understand that there are laws…[In Somalia] if you have the big nose or this kind of hair and you don't have representation in the government, you can't have a daughter, any relationship with anybody who is Somali. That is what they say, you get in trouble. Today that is why I say, there is laws in this country. I talk to white ladies, they talk to me, we work together, there is no discrimination…When the war broke out is then we find out the laws and we find out that there is America where people have opportunity to go to school. We use to heard about America saying people, "I'm going to America, my brother is in America." So we used to heard about that from other people but today I'm in America. And it was like our paradise, heaven, we used to say, "Where is this America? When can we go there?" We used to hear about America with rich people but today I am talking in American.

In many ways life in America, for the Somali Bantu, is a vast improvement over the life they lead in Africa. During the time I was running a Somali Bantu women's group, I asked the women what was "good" about living in America. The answer was, "Sleep at night." They spoke in broken English and demonstrated how they used to hide behind "bushes" to protect themselves from attacks. After many years of terror living in Somalia, running from their homes in the middle of the night and after many more years of fear and stress living in the camps, they finally feel safe. The Somali Bantu are also, as has been discussed earlier, grateful to live in a country that has laws designed to protect them. The reality of living in America, however, is far different than imagined expectations. Hopes and dreams have only been partially realized.

The data gathered for this study, generated through history in person, social capital, and neo-liberal economic frameworks, helps to clarify why this is the case and why the Somali Bantu respond to contemporary circumstances in the way they do. This study has revealed numerous advantages and resources gained with migration to the United States but the full potential of such benefits cannot be realized due to structural barriers present in the receiving community. Educational opportunities do exist for incoming adult refugees but access is limited and literacy for many is denied. Employment is encouraged but without sufficient education, employment opportunities are hard to locate, offer little in the way of income and benefits, and generally offer little opportunity for advancement. Caseworkers and others are available to assist refugees with all aspects of the adaptation process but help is inadequate due to high case loads that make it impossible for caseworkers to meet the wide range of needs of those they serve. New Americans with a refugee background have some knowledge of the laws that

exist that are designed to protect residents of the United States but they have limited ability to access support from the legal system and lack political representation at federal and local levels. Support is available for the formation of community self-help groups but funds that make this possible remain in the control of administrative staff outside of the community group. Refugee children are provided with public school education but school districts lack resources and provide limited, if any, cultural awareness training for teachers and staff. Education for refugee children remains inadequate and most perform well below grade level.

Limited Access to Education in the U.S.

Throughout my interviews with Somali Bantu, the need for more formal education and the disappointment they felt in not being able to attend school in America was repeated again and again. Two of those I interviewed stated that it was a good idea to gain employment shortly after arrival as this helped them to learn more about how to live in America and helped them improve their English. The majority of those I interviewed, however, were upset about lack of access to education upon arrival in the United States. Difficulty dealing with state welfare paperwork and the inability to read bills received in the mail were the issues most often described. The state welfare department requires paperwork to be filled out on a regular basis in order for refugees to maintain access to benefits such as food stamps, Medicaid, and daycare services. These forms arrive in the mail at the refugee's home. The vast majority of Somali Bantu, on arriving in the U.S., are unable to read these forms which are lengthy and request a great deal of specific information regarding social security numbers, birthdates, income levels, expenses and so forth. Resettlement agency caseworkers were criticized for not helping with this

paperwork. At times it was acknowledged that their caseworkers were too busy with other cases to help them. One woman stated that she got the paperwork done and still there was no Medicaid for her baby.

Another Somali Bantu male complained about state welfare paperwork saying he was so busy dealing with it, he had no time to go to school. He had to work all day to support himself and his family. He could not afford a car and had to travel a lengthy distance by bus to and from work every day. When he got home at night he frequently found mail from the state welfare office or other places that needed attention. Unable to read the mail himself, he had to leave home to travel to a friend's home to get help. For this reason, he found it impossible to attend English classes in the evenings after work.

> Education, that is what I was expecting. When I came here the first time I get here my case worker told me to work instead of going to school. And the problem here is I understand that I have to work. I have a family, family doesn't speak English, they know nothing. When I get home you have other things to do at home, to help with my wife, fill paperworks for work force services, run and find somebody to help with the paperwork to fill them out but that has cut up all my expectations to go to school and I was willing to go school at the same time I going to work but when I come from work there is something else to do at home....I try to go to school but they send a lot of papers. I could not fill them and they have stopped giving me assistance. (Abdi)

> [B]efore we even get to Kakuma, we heard in the news that they were talking about the Bantus, that they are illiterate, that they don't know English, they don't know anything about education, when they get to America, they will first learn a little bit about America and get a chance to go to school but that didn't happen when I get here. I ask my case worker and he told me, if you just go to school, nobody is going to pay for your rent, your gas, your phone, so you will be homeless. It was really confusing. If the case worker was right or the newspaper was wrong....the problem I face is, if I go to school, before I go to work, it is really nice for me because there was a day I cried in the office of [the resettlement agency] because I didn't get food stamp for three months. The problem was not me and my case worker at workforce services. Because I don't know how to read and the workforce services sent a letter in the mail for me to fill out and I couldn't fill that letter and I took the letter to the...case worker but since he is working with a lot of clients he could not remember my problem and he just throw the paper away and I was just staying at home depending on my case worker doing

> what he was supposed to do. So I went for three months without food stamps but if I could go to school I would know how to fill it out so it could not happen. I would know how to do it myself. (Salati)

Due to the prevalence of illiteracy among the Bantu, most cannot differentiate bills from junk mail, utility bills don't get paid on time and they end up paying late fees. They also fall prey to credit card and other scams as they are not able to read the "fine print" that comes along with such schemes. This creates additional, unnecessary hardship for families that are already struggling financially due to difficulty accessing employment or employment that pays more than the minimum wage. An investment in opportunities for education, in particular for learning English, prior to full-time employment would have resulted in a far more effective, and less stressful, transition into American life and a significant decrease in the workload for resettlement agencies. Neoliberal principles of efficiency and accountability, with a prioritization of short-term gains in employment data, has resulted in an inefficient system with large numbers of refugees unemployed or underemployed, often relying on state assistance, for extensive periods of time.

Limited access to formal education, both historically and in the present, directly relates to the Somali Bantus' challenges with resettlement and their lack of satisfaction with resettlement services. In some cases, those interviewed were happy with the services they received from their case workers but this seemed to be due to the quality of service provided by particular case workers; overall, opinions of the resettlement process were highly negative.

Current Conditions: "It's the Same Problem. We Almost Where We Going"

> Here is good when you know the laws, you know everything about the health system, you know everything so this is a good place to live but if you really do not know the laws, you do know nothing about here and you trying to live here it

> is better you go back where you came from… It's better than every place but if you do not know the system or how people are work here and if you do not adapt with the culture and the language and the country, so this is the hardest place to live in the world. (Nasib)

One man described his situation as being similar, in many ways, to life in Africa. He complained of not having enough food to feed his family, his wife having to wash all of their clothing by hand and not having a car. The public transportation system was not always available for him to get to and from work and he had more bills to pay than he could afford.

Six years after resettlement of the Bantu began, hardships persist for most of the Bantu living in the city where this study was conducted. During a follow-up interview of one of the Somali Bantu leaders, I asked if life had improved for members of his community. He said that in many ways life is better and that people are adapting to the culture but, "money is still a big problem". Their kids are enrolled in school and are able to speak English, which is a big help to the family. Many of the Bantu have learned lessons the hard way, such as having the heat shut off in their homes during the winter. Housing has been the most challenging issue but at this time a large number of Bantu families are living in federally subsidized housing and are, therefore, paying far less for rent, making it easier to survive on their meager earnings (personal communication with Somali Bantu leader, October 27, 2009).

Unemployment continues to be a major issue, in particular for the women as so many of them are still unable to speak English fluently and most are unable to read and write in English. One employee who works on immigration issues for one of the resettlement agencies discussed her concern for the Bantu women as most are not taking the United States citizenship examination or if they do take it, they are not passing it.

Those who enter the United States as refugees are considered permanent residents the day they arrive but they are not eligible for citizenship for 5 years. At the five year mark, they can take the citizenship test at which time they qualify for the benefits all American citizens have access to including Medicare. Many Somali Bantu men have recently passed the test but it is rare to see one of the women accomplish this. Many Bantu are also too poor to pay the fee required to sit for the examination. This is especially true for the women (personal communication with resettlement employee, December 16, 2009). Federally subsidized housing has been of critical importance, helping the Somali Bantu avoid homelessness. The downside of this housing program is that it has physically separated the community with families now living in homes scattered throughout the city. They are no longer living in apartment complexes with other Bantu families. Many of the women are, therefore, isolated from each other and spend their days as the only adult in the home, caring for young children, unable to access social support from their community except by phone.

The Somali Bantu cultural tradition of polygamy, a practice that is considered to be both immoral and illegal in the United States, continues to cause problems for a large number of Bantu women and children. One resettlement employee I interviewed said, "I don't think that anyone realized the problems that would result from asking a man to divorce his other wives but resettling them all in the same city at the same time". Many divorced wives are angry, considering it unfair that they should have to look for work and deal with life as a single parent. In many cases, sexual relationships continue and these "single" women continue to give birth every year or two. One employee of the

Department of Workforce Services described continued problems with the issue of polygamy and a need for cultural awareness and sensitivity on the part of the caseworker. In order for a single mother to receive state benefits for her children, she must declare the name of the father which then allows the state to go after the father for child support. If the relationship between the two consenting adults is an amicable one, this mother may not feel comfortable sharing the name of the father as they know this type of relationship is frowned upon in American culture. They may feel that this will cause an undue burden on the father, as most Somali Bantu males are struggling to earn enough money to pay their own rent and bills. The name of the father is then withheld which results in a lack of benefits for the single woman and her family. As Muslims, many Somali Bantu believe that Allah, their God, should decide how many children they will have and are not interested in, or are not accustomed to discussing birth control options with their spouse. The Bantu are aware that continuing to have children exacerbates their financial situation but cultural traditions and religious beliefs do not change automatically upon entering a foreign country.

Recommendations and Closing Remarks

The *Somali Bantu: Their History and Culture*, produced by the Center for Applied Linguistics Cultural Orientation Center (Lehman & Eno, 2003), is designed to provide refugee resettlement workers and volunteers with culturally relevant information about the Somali Bantu. In the introduction they describe the Bantu as a persecuted minority group in Somalia, having, "…endured continual marginalization in Somalia since their arrival as slaves in the 19th century" (p.1). The authors then suggest that, due to their history of subjugation, as a refugee group they may present with special needs

and challenges as they resettle in the United States. This, indeed, has been the case with illiteracy being their greatest obstacle. Resettlement workers, volunteers, English language teachers, public school teachers, apartment building managers, city police and others who have interacted with the Bantu have come to this conclusion. Unfortunately, all came to this conclusion late in the game. The challenges that occurred working with the Somali Bantu could have been minimized, and their transition to life in urban America would have been easier for them, had more information about them been available prior to their arrival and had plans been put into place that would customize resettlement services and education for this group.

Resettlement of the Somali Bantu has been a process fraught with challenges, misunderstandings and hardships and has brought to light numerous problems within the American and local refugee resettlement systems. The Somali Bantu are an exceptional group with specific needs and unique responses to the resettlement process but lessons can be learned from their experience that can be generalized to the resettlement of other cultural groups.

The original intent of this study was to generate recommendations that could enhance refugee resettlement services. Recommendations are offered below but the findings of this study point to how difficult it can be to provide straightforward, tidy suggestions that are relatively easy to implement. Some of the recommendations listed are concrete in nature but in other cases, the findings of this study reveal complex, interconnected issues that are more challenging to operationalize. Addressing complex issues can require significant shifts in how bureaucratic structures conduct business but large institutional systems are typically ill-equipped, and lack the flexibility, to respond to

messy and complicated problems. Nevertheless, these issues should be exposed, discussed and examined further with an intent to find solutions that would improve the lives of those coming to America having endured a refugee experience. Significant improvements in refugee resettlement cannot take place without an investment in broad systemic changes that require creative thinking and a willingness to make radical changes to daily practice. Recommendations are listed below and begin with those that are more concrete and specific in nature. I then conclude with a discussion of methodological implications and provide closing remarks.

- Education, and in particular English language literacy, should be prioritized and those lacking literacy should be given extensive educational and vocational training opportunities before they are expected to work full-time. Life skills training on a wide range of topics such as money management, use of public transportation, preparation to obtain a driver's license and issues related to employment such as resume writing and interview expectations should be provided by occupational therapists or other trained professionals and volunteers.
- Personal skills and interests of newly arrived refugees should be investigated in-depth in order to match them with employment opportunities that will provide some level of personal satisfaction. Follow-up services should be available to monitor outcomes of job placement over time and to assist with initial advancement out of entry level positions.
- Social capital strengths refugees bring with them should be incorporated into the refugee resettlement system. Extensive research should be conducted prior to resettlement of a particular ethnic group in order to understand how the group has

traditionally functioned in terms of social supports, conflict resolution and accountability to others in their communities. Mechanisms should be established to help refugee communities continue their traditional practices in these areas.

- When a particular group has been slated for resettlement in the United States, individuals who speak English and have the capacity to work as resettlement caseworkers should be identified and trained for caseworker and other support and leadership positions in the United States. These individuals (and their immediate families) should be the first to arrive in resettlement cities and should be provided with additional training in order to become familiar with the local environment and to prepare for their responsibilities, once others from their ethnic group arrive.
- Caseworkers and others providing services should be provided with extensive training on the background of refugee groups and about the refugee experience in general and should be aware of the history of conflict between groups in former contexts. In particular, workers need to understand how forced migration and the refugee experience can foster an attitude of mistrust and how this can complicate relationships between newly arriving refugees and those who are employed to help them with their adjustment to life in America.
- Events or situations that are viewed as particularly troubling to those being resettled should be identified and methods should be established to minimize stress and worry so refugees can focus on their education and adjustment to a new life in a foreign environment. For example, in the case of the Somali Bantu, many fear that a death in the family will not be handled according to cultural norms if

funds are not available. Establishing a system to fund, or at least partially fund funerals, for the first few years would have alleviated a major source of worry.

- Caseworkers should spend sufficient time with their clients to develop trusting relationships and fully understand their needs during early stages of resettlement. Caseworkers should have the opportunity to address required paperwork with their clients, rather than sending paperwork in the mail that cannot be read or understood by the recipient. They also should be given the opportunity to maintain contact with their clients for several years in order to respond to issues that change over time. This would require an increase in the number of caseworkers employed to assist refugees with resettlement.
- Federal resettlement systems should be modified to allow for greater flexibility in how funds are managed and distributed to more effectively address issues for refugees coming to the United States as their capacities, particularly in the area of education, vary greatly.
- Newly arrived refugee parents should be provided with a thorough orientation to the American school system so they understand what the expectations are of their children and what schools expect of parents. Training is needed in how to enroll children in school. Parents should be provided with sufficient information to fully value and engage in the educational process.
- Support should be provided for the establishment of Mutual Assistance Associations (MAAs) that are managed by the refugee group to address self-identified needs. The organization of MAAs brings about at least two areas of contradiction that can be difficult to balance and navigate. Refugee groups should

be given control over their own organizations but, at the same time, some training and direction may be needed in order to comply with American regulatory policies. Provision of this training, however, can easily lead to a lack of refugee group autonomy. Another potential area of conflict can occur when groups from the same country are either grouped together or separately. A "no-win" situation can result as bringing ethnic groups together may bring out historically-entrenched adversarial relationships, while separating the groups can also perpetuate poor relations. Sensitivity to historical relationships between and among groups is required to try to assure that funding of individual groups does not cause tension and divide communities rather than bring them together.

- Potential employers should be educated regarding cultural and religious traditions that impact employment including issues around clothing in the work environment. Employers should be given suggestions as to how to modify their clothing policies so that women who feel they require skirts and head scarves in public can be included in the workforce.
- Efforts should be made to find a balance between modes of operation based on efficiency and accountability and program designs that enhance quality of life and long-range positive outcomes. Outcome data should be expanded to include qualitative measures that provide information about the resettlement process from the perspectives of those who are receiving services. Research should not only track individuals but also how a community is fairing when working with refugee groups that have a communal, rather than individualistic orientation.
- It should be recognized that what appears to be confusing or disruptive behavior

on the part of newly resettling refugees could be based on historical events and difficult circumstances in the past. Those working in refugee resettlement should be educated about the concept of history in person so they may better equipped to respond to contemporary social practices that are expressions of contentious issues of the past. When assigning refugees to resettlement case workers or translators, the histories of ethnic groups should be taken into account to avoid problems that can arise when people from opposing sides of a conflict in their home countries are expected to interact with each other. When problems do arise due to prior relationships, conflict resolution systems should be employed to assist those involved in adversarial interactions to appreciate alternative perspectives and move forward to more supportive relationships.

- The receiving community should make an effort to reach out to refugees helping them to gain access to education and other forms of human capital. Efforts should be made to educate the receiving community regarding the background of the incoming group, not only to gain a better understanding of their history and culture but in order to appreciate the unique strengths and capacities of the group. This education should be provided to schools, potential employers and social service providers and should highlight the strengths of the incoming group with suggestions as to how the receiving community can participate in a process of reciprocal learning.
- Research should be conducted to examine how Somali Bantu children perform, over time, within public education systems. During the timeframe of the study, the Somali Bantu children attending public school were children born in Somalia

and in Kenyan refugee camps. The responses of teachers and administrators in the schools were based on interactions with newcomers to American society. Meanwhile, adults who arrived in the U.S. after many years in refugee camps viewed the American educational system with no knowledge of long-standing institutionalized discrimination against people of color. Over time, distinctions between Somali Bantu children and African American children will blur and special services for the Bantu children will disappear. It remains to be seen how time will affect Somali Bantu integration into American school systems. Will discriminatory practices against people of color and people of low-socioeconomic status affect them in similar or unique ways? Will patterns of institutionalized discriminatory practice become more apparent to members of the Somali Bantu community and what will their responses be? Will they locate a space within the system where they can succeed in realizing their American dreams or will they give up hope? These are all questions that should be investigated in the future.

Methodological Implications – Closing Remarks

Human beings are affected by multiple forces that take place in personal, social, and institutional spheres. This web of interactional space is further complicated though events and issues of the past, held in memory, that influence attitudes towards events and issues in the present. Simplistic theoretical models and modes of representation do not provide a means to study and portray the intricacies of the human experience, such as that of forced migration. For this reason I chose to utilize aspects of the representational style of the movie Babel, as described in Chapter 3. In particular, this representational style helped to examine refugee resettlement experience from multiple perspectives that

take place simultaneously. The circular nature of the style also provided a means to demonstrate how impressions created by everyday encounters with members of a refugee community can be influenced by knowledge, or a lack of knowledge, regarding the history and culture of a particular group of people. This circular style fits well with qualitative research methodology that includes an iterative approach throughout all phases of interviewing, analysis and writing.

Dealing with three theoretical perspectives that, driven by the data, were intersecting and connecting in complex ways was challenging. As I worked toward sorting out these connections I began to create visual representations, drawing intersecting lines between topics. The temporal and spatial relationships, once visualized outside of the text, reminded me of the three-dimensional chess game in the TV series Star Trek.[5] This image helped me to locate ways to discuss linkages between theoretical perspectives and the data that wove them together.

Although my intent was to avoid feeling forced into a traditional genre of writing for research, I have been limited by traditional expectations of what a dissertation should entail and how interpretation of data should be revealed. The finished document is not as fractured, representationally, in time or space, as I had first imagined it might be. In addition, I have included more interpretation of data, leaving less interpretation to the reader, than originally intended. Nevertheless, I believe that keeping both the images of Babel and the Star Trek chess game in mind during the conceptualization and writing of this dissertation, has led to a document that addresses the complexities at the point at which personal refugee experience and institutional practice intersect.

---

[5] The game of Tri-Dimensional Chess (Tri-D Chess) is seen in many *Star Trek* episodes and films, including the original series which first aired in 1966.

"We Are All Born Without Knowledge." – An Empty Glass and the Desire to Fill It

On the same day Abdi told the story of the Monkeys and the Turtles he also drew a picture of three glasses – two full and one empty. He used the drawing to explain how the Somali Bantu, in Somalia, had no education and no understanding of the world – their glass was empty. He described the Somali Bantu people as invisible to the world but somehow the Americans saw them and, "came all the way to this empty glass where there is nothing for us." He went on to say, "We all born without knowledge. . . .everybody in the world, there is nobody born with knowledge. And doctors and presidents, they all empty when they are born. They know nothing." He explained that through education, and uniting together, the glass becomes full and as the glasses of individuals become full, the glasses that represent the community and their home country become full too.

Throughout my interviews with adult members of the Somali Bantu community, the desire for education was made abundantly clear. Those I interviewed described their frustration with lack of access to educational opportunities and understood that this limited access was making it extremely difficult to navigate American social service systems and find their way to a life beyond poverty. They were acutely aware that discriminatory practices in Somalia have made it much more difficult for the Somali Bantu to access suitable employment, as compared to the "Somali Somali" who arrived in America around the same time. The story of the Monkeys and the Turtles portrays these discriminatory practices of the past and helps us to see that past relations continue into the present, at least to some degree, and in new and emerging forms. The story ends with a sense of optimism, with the statement that the turtles are "right now on the tree", the

tree of knowledge, the tree that leads to a better life. We are told that Americans encouraged the turtles to climb the tree. Americans working for humanitarian organizations have done a great deal for the Somali Bantu but services have fallen short of their potential.

As the findings of this study demonstrate, issues around the resettlement of refugees are deeply complex and loaded with contradictions. It would take time, compassion, flexibility within institutional structures and a commitment to the development of specialized programs to create refugee resettlement services that would truly meet the needs of those forced to migrate from their homelands to the United States. Unfortunately, in a neo-liberal climate where efficiency is prioritized above quality of services and "expert" knowledge is valued more than the knowledge and assets that newcomers to America bring with them, resettlement services will most likely continue to disappoint.

REFERENCES

Abdi, A. M. (2004). In limbo: Dependency, insecurity, and identity amongst Somali refugees in Dadaab camps. *Refuge: Canadian Periodical on Refugee Issues 22*(2), 17-34.

Abdullahi, M. D. (2001). *Culture and customs of Somalia*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.

Adler, E. S., & Clark, R. (1999). *How it's done: An invitation to social research*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Administration for Children & Families, (n.d.a). *Matching grant*. Retrieved November 23, 2009. from www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/programs/match_grant_prg.htm.

Administration for Children & Families, (n.d.b). *Work participation rate*. Retrieved November 23, 2009. from www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/polquest/wkpart.htm.

Aleinikoff, T. A. (1995). State-centered refugee law: From resettlement to containment. In E. V. Daniel & J. C. Knudsen (Eds.), *Mistrusting refugees* (pp. pp. 257 - 278). LA, California: University of California.

Bamberger, B., & Davidson, C. M. (1998). *Closing: The life and death of an American factory*. New York: Double Take.

Barnett, D. (2003). *Out of Africa: Somali Bantu and the paradigm shift in refugee resettlement*. Washington D.C.: Center for Immigration Studies.

Besteman, C. (1999). *Unraveling Somalia: Race, violence and the legacy of slavery*. Philadelphia: Universtiy of Pennsylvannia.

Bourdieu, P. (1987). What makes a social class? On the theoretical and practical existance of groups. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology, 32*, 1-18.

Carnoy, M. (2000). Globalization and Educational Reform. In N. R. Stromquist & K. Monkman (Eds.), *Globalization and education: Integration and contestation across cultures* (pp. 43-61). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Castells, M. (2000). *The rise of the network society* (2nd ed.). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Castles, S. (2003). Towards a sociology of forced migration and social transformation.

Sociology, 37(13), 13-34.

Chanoff, S. (2002). After three years: Somali Bantu prepare to come to America Retrieved April 15, 2005

Charmaz, K. (2000). Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 509-535). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cobb, D. (2006). *Refugee Town Hall Meetings Report: May 6th and 7th*. Retrieved 3/11/10. from http://jobs.utah.gov/refugeeworkinggroup/meetings/0107/townmeet0506.pdf.

Daniel, E. V., & Knudsen, J. C. (1995). *Mistrusting refugees*. LA, California: University of California.

Denzin, N.K. & Linclon, Y.S. (2000). *Handbook of qualitative research*. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Erickson, T. (2007, January 6). Learning to leave bad blood behind. *Deseret Morning News*. Retrieved January 8,2007, from deseretnews.com

Escobar, A. (1995). *Encountering development: The making and unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton: Princeton University.

Fangen, K. (2006). Humiliation experienced by Somali refugees in Norway. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 19*(1), 69-93.

Flick, U. (2002). *An introduction to qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Foster, P. (1996). Observational research. In R. Sapsford & V. Jupp (Eds.), *Data collection and analysis* (pp. 57-93). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Gifford, S. M., Bakopanos, C., Kaplan, I., & Correa-Velez, I. (2007). Meaning or measurement? Researching the social contexts of health and settlement among newly-arrived refugee youth in Melbourne, Australia. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 20*(3), 414-440.

Glaser, B. G. (1978). *Theoretical sensitivity*. San Franscisco: University of California.

Glaser, B. G. (1998). *Doing grounded theory: Issues and discussions*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine.

Harrell-Bond, B. E., & Voutira, E. (1992). Anthropology and the study of refugees. *Anthropology Today, 8*(4), 6-10.

Holland, D., Lachicotte, W., Skinner, D., & Cain, C. (1998). *Identity and agency in cultural worlds*. Cambridge: Harvard University.

Holland, D., & Lave, J. (2001). *History in person: Enduring struggles, contentious practice, intimate identities*. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research.

Holquist, M. (2002). *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his world* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Holtzman, J. D. (2000). *Nuer journeys Nuer lives: Sudanese refugees in Minnesota*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Hopkins, G. (2006). Somali community organizations in London and Toronto: Collaboration and effectiveness. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 19*(3), 361-389.

Horst, C. (2006). Buufis amongst Somalis in Dadaab: The transnational and historical logics behind resettlement dreams. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 19*(2), 143-157.

Hyndman, J. (2000). *Managing displacement: Refugees and the politics of humanitarianism* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota.

Hyndman, J. M. (1996). Geographies of Displacement: Gender, Culture, and Power in UNHCR Camps, Kenya. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of British Columbia.

International Rescue Committee. (n.d). Mission statement. Retrieved September 22, 2009, from http://www.theirc.org

Jaynes, G. (2004). Coming to America. *Smithsonian, 34,* 52-60.

Keles, F. (2008). The structural negilgence of US refugee resettlement policy. *Anthropology News, 49*(5), 6.

Kibreab, G. (2004). Pulling the wool over the eyes of strangers: Refugee deceit and trickery in institutional settings. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 17*(1), 1-26.

Knox, P., Agnew, J., & McCarthy, L. (2003). *The geography of the world economy* (4th ed.). London: Hodder Education.

Knudsen, J. C. (1995). When trust is on trial: Negotiating refugee narratives. In E. V. Daniel & J. C. Knudsen (Eds.), *Mistrusting refugees* (pp. 13 - 35). Los Angeles: University of California.

Lamba, N. K. (2003). The employment experiences of Canadian refugees: Measuring the

impact of human and social capital on quality of employment. *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology, 40*(1), 45-64.

Lehman, D. V., & Eno, O. (2003). *The Somali Bantu: Their history and culture.* Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Lewis, I. M. (2002). *A modern history of Somalia: Nation and state in the Horn of Africa.* Athens, OH: Ohio University.

Loescher, G. (2001). *The UNHCR and world politics*. Oxford: Oxford University.

Majka, L., & Mullan, B. (1992). Employment retention, area of origin and type of social support among refugees in the Chicago area. *International Migration Review, 26*(3), 899-926.

Marfleet, P. (2006). *Refugees in a global era* New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Mato, D. (1997). On global and local agents and the social making of transnational identities and related agendas in 'Latin' America. *Identities, 4*(2), 167-213.

Matsuoka, A., & Sorenson, J. (2001). *Ghosts & shadows: Construction of identity and community in an African diaspora*. Toronto: University of Toronto.

Maxwell, J. A. (1998). Designing a qualitative study. In L. Bickman & D. J. Rog (Eds.), *Handbook of applied social research methods* (pp. 69-100). Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage.

McBrien, J. L. (2005). Educational needs and barriers for refugee students in the United States: A review of literature. *Review of Educational Research, 75*(3), 329-364.

McMichael, C., & Manderson, L. (2004). Somali women and well-being: Social networks and social capital among immigrant women in Australia *Human Organization 63*(1), 88-99.

Mestheneos, E., & Ioannidi, E. (2002). Obstacles to refugee integration in the European Union member states. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 15*(3), 304-320.

Morley, R. (2006). The death of American manufacturing. *theTrumpet.com*. Retrieved from http://www.thetrumpet.com/index.php?page=article&id=1955

Morrice, L. (2007). Lifelong learning and the social integration of refugees in the UK: The significance of social capital. *International Journal of LIfelong Education, 20*(2), 155-172.

Newman, K. S. (1999). *No shame in my game: The working poor in the inner city*. New York: Random House.

Partners in Education: Key findings on the role of NGOs in basic education in Africa (2003). Washington, D.C.: United States Agency for International Development.

Portes, A. (1999). Conclusion: Towards a new world - the origins and effects of transnational activities. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 22*(2), 463-477.

Portes, A., & Rumbaut, R. G. (2001). *Legacies: The story of the immigrant second generation*. Berkeley: University of California.

Putnam, R. D. (1995). Bowling alone: America's declining social capital *Journal of Democracy 6*(1), 65-78.

Raper, M. (2003). Changing roles of NGOs in refugee assistance. In E. Newman & J. v. Selm (Eds.), *Refugees and forced displacement: International security, human vulnerability and the state*. New York: United Nations University.

Ritzer, G., & Goodman, D. J. (2004). *Sociological theory* (6th ed.). New York: McGraw Hill.

Schram, T. H. (2003). *Conceptualizing qualitative inquiry: Mindwork for fieldwork in education and the social sciences*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Soelistyo, L., & Setiawan, D. (2008). The complex system in Babel. *k@ta, 10*(2), 175-184.

Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation*. Stamford, CT: Wadsworth.

Stack, C. B. (1974). *All our kin: Strategies for survival in a black community*. New York: Harper & Row.

Stack, C. B. (1996). *Call to home: African Americans reclaim the rural south*. New York: Basic Books.

Stewart, M., Anderson, J., Beiser, M., Mwakarimba, E., Neufeld, A., Simich, L., et al. (2008). Multicultural meanings of social support among immigrants and refugees. *International Migration, 46*(3), 123-159.

Stoll, K. (2007). Determinants of the psychosocial adjustment of southern Sudanese men. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 20*(4), 621-640.

Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Stromquist, N. P. (2002). *Education in a globalized world: The connectivity of economic power, technology, and knowledge*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

Suarez-Orozco, C. & Suarez-Orozco, M.M. (2001). *Children of immigration*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (n.d). Retrieved March 3, 2010, from http://www.unhcr.org.au/defoblig.shtml

Voutira, E., & Harrell-Bond, B. E. (1995). In search of the locus of trust: The social world of the refugee camp. In E. V. Daniel & J. C. Knudsen (Eds.), *Mistrusting refugees* (pp. 207 - 224). Los Angeles: University of California.

Voutira, W., & Harrell-Bond, B. (2000). "Successful" refugee settlement: Are past experiences relevant? In M. M. Cernea & C. McDowell (Eds.), *Risks and reconstruction: Experiences of resettlers and refugees* (pp. 56 - 76). Washington: The World Bank.

Wacquant, L. J. (1998). Negative social capital: State breakdown and social destitution in America's urban core. *Netherlands Journal of Housing and the Built Environment, 13*(1), 25-40.

Warren, M. R., Thompson, J. P., & Saegert, S. (2005). The role of social capital in combating poverty. In S. Saegert, J. P. Thompson & M. R. Warren (Eds.), *Social Capital and Poor Communities* (pp. 1-28). New York: Russel Sage.

Warriner, D. S. (2007). Language, learning and the politics of belonging: Sudanese women refugees *becoming* and *being* "American". *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 38*(4), 343-359.

Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 8*(1), 69-91.