HUMANITARIAN REACTIONS TO CONFLICT AND THE RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES

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Abstract: Refugee movements are, indeed, the embodiment of "glocalization", or the increasing interconnectedness of global and local phenomena, with local entities being affected by globalization as well as by their own contexts. Host countries are generally unprepared for the local impact of refugee resettlement, and because there are significant differences between (and within) refugee groups, even for experienced service providers, the process is challenging. Escaping refugees, powered by the urgency of conflicts with, and/or within, their homelands, are faced by a myriad of additional tests to their fortitude and flexibility. Nation states are not insular, regardless of distance from the country in conflict, and they either directly or indirectly experience the consequences of these conflicts. As host nations prepare to receive and integrate refugees, the global or international issue becomes a local one, and the local community moves to develop opportunities for these newly arriving populations. This paper presents an overview of the refugee experience, proposing that refugee resettlement is only a beginning, and acceptance and integration in the host country is a lifelong process. It provides a model to speak to this ongoing process of adjustment and adaptation and suggests puppetry as a tool for the education of host country residents, service providers, and also for refugees.

Keywords: refugees, resettlement, conflict, intervention, puppetry.

INTRODUCTION

The unexpected, seemingly unprovoked, and devastating attack on the Ukraine by Russia at the beginning of 2022 has shocked the world, and while the horrors of the atrocities perpetrated on the

Ukrainian peoples may not be unique at the time of war and conflict, the power of current technology and the fearless reporting by the media are bringing current, real-time images of this violence and carnage into the homes of people across the globe. Countries surrounding the Ukraine are experiencing the inflow of thousands, especially women, children, and elderly Ukrainians seeking to refuge as most men, and many women, are taking up arms to defend their nation. Even as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UN-HCR) works to establish refugee status, surrounding nations and those farther away are preparing for the entry of these refugees.

Refugee movements are, indeed, the embodiment of "glocalization", or the increasing interconnectedness of global and local phenomena, with local entities being affected by globalization as well as by their own contexts (Blatter 2022). Host countries are generally unprepared for the local impact of refugee resettlement, and because there are significant differences between (and within) refugee groups, even for the experienced local service providers, the process is challenging. Escaping refugees, powered by the urgency of the situation, are themselves generally unprepared for the myriad of additional tests they will face to their fortitude and flexibility. Nation states are not insular, regardless of distance from the source country of conflict, and the consequences of these conflicts are felt to greater or lesser degree, either directly or indirectly, by most other nations. As host nations prepare to receive and integrate refugees, the global or international issue becomes a local one, and the local community moves to develop opportunities for these new populations. This paper presents an overview of the refugee experience, proposing that refugee resettlement is only a beginning, and acceptance and integration in the host country is a lifelong process. It provides a model to speak to this ongoing process and suggests a tool for the education of host country residents and service providers as well as for refugees themselves.

REFUGEES AND REACTIONS TO THEM

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol (UNHCR 1967) provided the parameters of refugee definitions and humanitarian assistance for those who were fleeing persecution. It has its foundations in the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights that recognized people's right to seek asylum in other countries when they experienced persecution in their own (UNHCR 1967). Since the last few decades of the 20th Century, as the numbers of people seeking refuge have risen, many nations have moved from their willingness to help refugees, to increasingly expressing "compassion fatigue" or "refugee fatigue" (Hayes-Raitt 2016; Nguyen, Phu, Troeung 2018), and even developing a generalized suspicion of this population (Boccagni, Guidici 2021; Engler 2016; Haid 2017). Therefore, in the third decade of the 21st Century, the empathy and welcome accorded to refugees fleeing the atrocities of war and discrimination have visibly declined. The Ukrainian situation, and the real-time reporting and images of atrocities occurring in that country, seem to have reawakened the developed world's collective compassion (McGrath 2022), yet awareness of discrimination in compassion for refugees of different origin countries is not lost to many (Buruma 2022).

Despite decline and/or variability in the welcome of refugees, conflicts at nation state borders persist, and natural disasters and other calamities caused by human actions force people out of their homes. Despite the formal definition adopted by the UNHCR of who is a refugee[1], Frelick (2022) suggests what many may have thought, that it is time we moved beyond these limitations to adopt those that include a wider range of circumstances that cause people to cross borders unwillingly. Nevertheless, the continuing constraints placed by the 1967 Protocol to the Refugee Convention may be practical as UNHCR and host country resources are already severely strained by refugee numbers. However, humanitarianism and consistency with human rights expectations point to enlarging considerations about who can apply for refugee status.

The State of Global Peace
Countries and territories by peace level in 2022

Least Peaceful ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ Most Peaceful ■ No data available

Most improved

Jordan		+15
Greece		+14
Angola		+14
Bolivia		+14
Sri Lanka		+13

Most deteriorated

Eswatini		-31
Kazakhstan		-29
Guinea		-26
Kyrgyzstan		-21
Ukraine		-17

Improvement/deterioration in ranks
Source: Global Peace Index/Institute for Economics and Peace
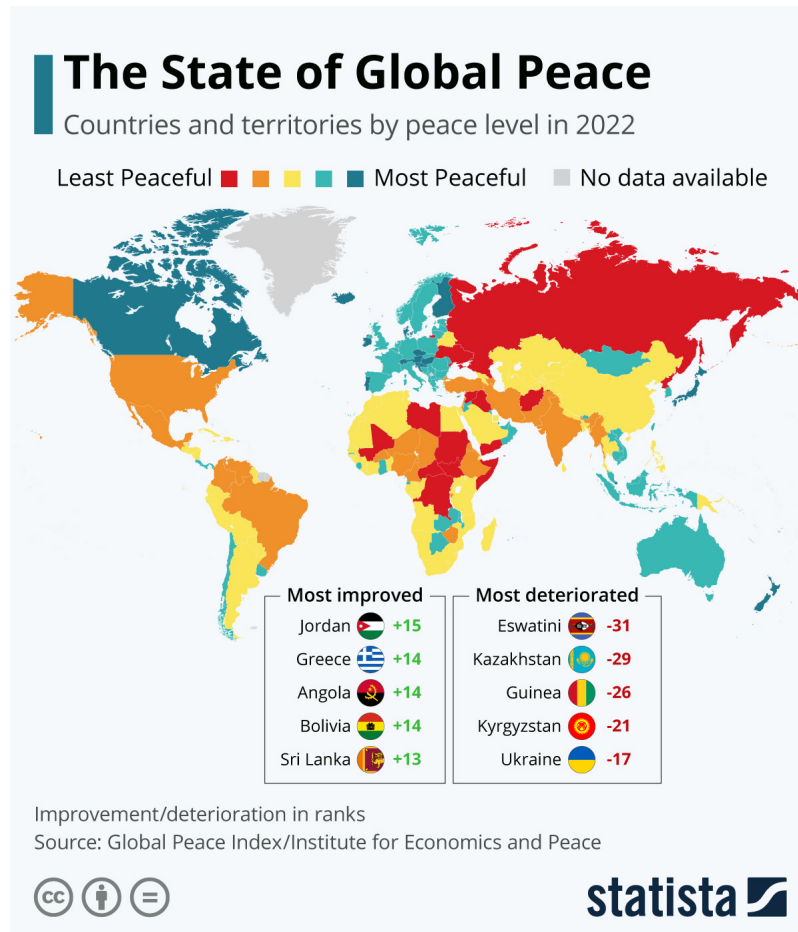
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Fig. 1. *Conflict-Ridden Areas*.

Figure 1 provides an overview of conflict-ridden areas of the world in 2020 (Buchholz 2022), revealing that many regions of the world are experiencing political and social conflict. This is also evident through the Council on Foreign Relations' "Global Conflict

Tracker"[2], while the International Crisis Group (2021) presents 10 conflicts to watch in 2022. Interestingly, although it mentions President Vladimir Putin's menacing overtures toward Ukraine, the International Crisis Group, in 2021, suggested that such conflict was unlikely. This perspective was disturbingly inaccurate, and Russia's current and ongoing attacks on Ukraine, has resulted in over 12 million fleeing their homes by early May 2022, with 5.7 entering neighboring countries and another 6.5 million being internally displaced (Reuters 2022).

Perusal of the news indicates that although refugees hope to cross national borders to escape unsafe conditions at home, even at the borders of nations where they are awaiting asylum, they experience further indignities, abuses, and conflicts, some which appear to be clearly discriminatory. For example, Middle Easterners at the Belarus – Poland border receive a different welcome than do Ukrainians at Poland-Ukrainian border (United Nations 2021); in Australia, those from Papua New Guinea are detained in inhospitable conditions (Roth 2021a); and in the United States, Title 42 expels migrants who are disproportionately people of color and who experience rape, kidnapping, extortion and other forms of abuse when they are returned to the Mexico border (Roth 2021b).

While there is a general belief that the developed world is doing much to help refugees, most refugees and displaced persons, especially from the Global South, tend to enter bordering countries, with lower- and middle-income countries hosting more than twice the number of refugees received by high income nations (Amnesty International 2021). Thus, while the presence of refugees in the Global North can strain the resources of this region, several nations of the Global South which are already struggling with limited resources, bear the burden of providing sanctuary to those in more dire straits in neighboring nations that share their borders.

CONFLICT, MIGRATION, AND RESETTLEMENT

As the world looks to Russia and the Ukraine, conflicts still continue in other parts of the world. In addition to the reports by the Statistica, the Council on Foreign Relations, and the International Crisis Group, the PSC Report (2021) identifies ongoing wars and political strife in many of Africa's nations, and the Wilson Center (2021) specifies conflicts, issues, and concerns likely to evidence themselves in all regions of the world as does figure 1. Migration can result from several forms of conflict in the homeland as evidenced in figure 2, and while some escaping these conflicts have the resources to plan their exits and leave their homelands with all the requisite documents, a large majority is forcibly pushed out, having to move to survive with little, if any, support in either the journey or in resettlement. Several experience, at the very least, hunger and deprivation (UNWFP 2022), and once "safety" from the homeland is achieved, even if they are not subjected to the atrocities many encounter at the transit or host country border, they must cope with less concrete social and cultural conflicts in the receiving nation.

In the host country, then, the effects of refugee trauma must be mitigated at the local level. Immigration and refugee policies prescribe who may be admitted into a nation, but immigrant policies describe who has access to the country's resources and under what circumstances (Segal 2019). The global becomes the local, and local actors and their norms, values, and behaviors intersect with their understanding of global phenomena, the refugee experience, and the impact of a refugee presence in their communities. Refugee resettlement is complex and difficult; frequently neither refugee nor host truly understands its immediate and long-term personal and community impact. The local community must be prepared to help the refugee not only cope with trauma, but also with the very fundamentals of survival and subsistence in an alien environment. Refugees, themselves, are unprepared for their reception, the opportunities and challenges they will encounter (Kosny et al. 2019),

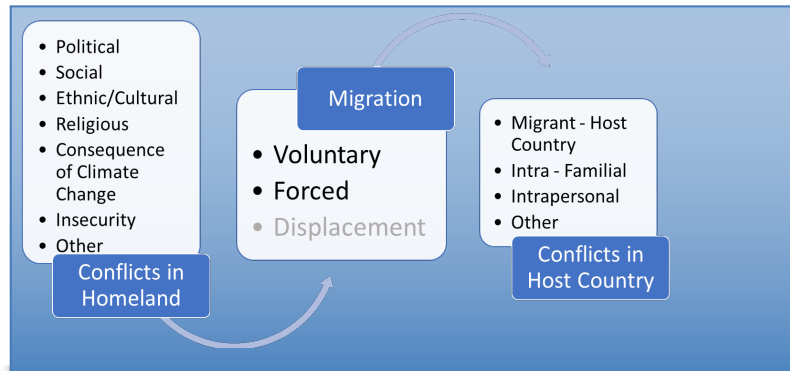Fig. 2. *The Conflict-Migration Nexus.*

- Political
- Social
- Ethnic/Cultural
- Religious
- Consequence of Climate Change
- Insecurity
- Other

Conflicts in Homeland

Migration

- Voluntary
- Forced
- Displacement

- Migrant - Host Country
- Intra - Familial
- Intrapersonal
- Other

Conflicts in Host Country

Source: Segal 2021.

the limited and limitations in the resources accessible to them, the expectations placed on them by the host environment, and their lack of general knowledge about the host country. For refugees, as for most migrants, adaptation and adjustment are lifelong endeavors. Service providers indicate that they do not receive sufficient training or support to work with refugees (Kavukcu, Altıntaş 2019), frequently struggling to be effective.

RESETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION

Resettlement is not synonymous with integration, and "self-sufficiency in the shortest time possible", the guideline for refugee resettlement in the United States (Department of Human Services 2021: 18), focuses on promoting financial independence with time restrictions and limited economic support. Other nations provide more humanitarian approaches to integration, including longer governmental assistance and formalized mentorship programs

(Segal, in press), but integration is a complex and continuing process and requires the cooperation, acceptance, and engagement of both refugee and the host nation toward the other. Furthermore, integration involves a holistic comprehension of the implications of moving from one society and culture for better and safer opportunities in an alien environment, but also requires leaving behind all that is familiar. This understanding is required of both the refugee and the host community, including an understanding of their respective roles and perceptions and necessitates two-way adaptation and acceptance (IOM 2017).

On its website, the Migration Policy Institute (MPI 2022) defines integration as

the process of economic mobility and social inclusion for newcomers and their children. As such, integration touches upon the institutions and mechanisms that promote development and growth within society, including early childhood care; elementary, postsecondary, and adult education systems; workforce development; health care; provision of government services to communities with linguistic diversity; and more. Successful integration builds communities that are stronger economically and more inclusive socially and culturally.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) lists a number of indicators of integration[3], and the International Organization for Migration (IOM 2020) states that integration is complex and is essential for social cohesion (IOM 2017):

[It] cuts across different policies and various aspects of migrants' lives […] including whether migrants are integrating into the economic, social, cultural, and political spheres of society, the discrimination they face, how policies affect migrants' inclusion, and how the public perceives migrants and immigration.

Because much research is based in grounded theory and data collection, it is often difficult to measure the less evident and less

tangible psychosocial, emotional, and mental health factors surrounding integration. As refugees become "integrated" into the society, or find themselves marginalized, or fall somewhere in between these two possibilities and begin settling into those niches, the refugees and communities in which they live settle into a status quo, assuming integration. This paper proposes that not only must both the host and the refugee recognize that many factors are involved in the integration process, but these factors evolve and change through the individual's life trajectory, and the refugee as well as service providers, administrators, policy makers, and researchers must be cognizant of changing needs and their implications on the continued well-being of the refugee and the stability of the local and larger communities.

Receiving countries, by necessity, focus especially on the early stages of refugee arrival, namely entry and adaptation. As refugees begin adjusting, gaining employment, finding housing, and establishing their families, they are believed to be "self-sufficient". Less attention is placed on their social and emotional integration, with services for emotional trauma generally being delayed, with negative outcomes (Magwood et al. 2022). Neither the host nor the refugee can be faulted for this reality as the ramifications of refugee trauma are more likely to become evident some time after resettlement (Carlsson, Sonne 2018) and after subsistence needs are met. Figures 3 and 4 present an inclusive perspective that should provide suggestion for the successful and long-term integration of newcomers, and particularly refugees, to a host country. The refugee journey from entry into a receiving nation, through adaptation and on to the end of life, must be balanced by all levels of service provision at every stage of refugees' integration journeys and through their lifetimes, using change agents cognizant about potential and developing challenges. This must include the concurrent building of data driven evidence-based knowledge to guide understanding of current and ongoing needs as well as the efficacy of service modalities. Hence, at the entry point, as medical practitioners, case managers, language instructors and other front-line staff provide
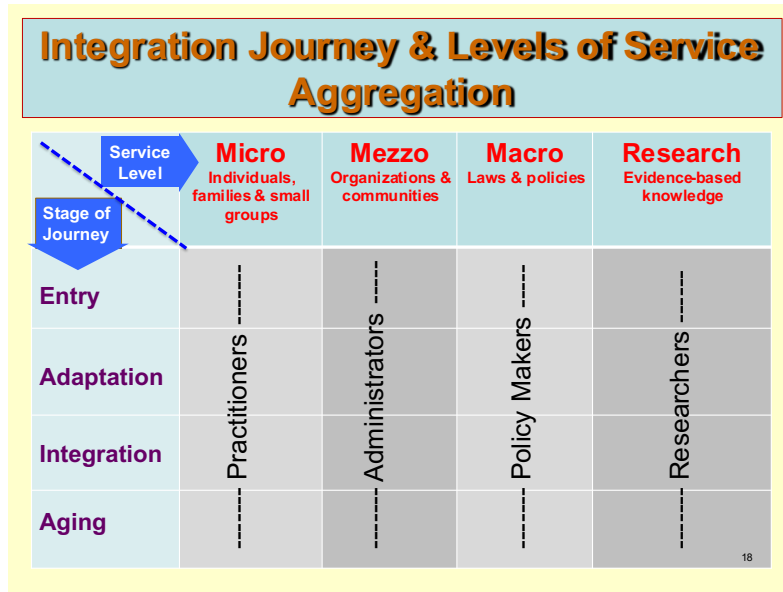
Fig. 3. *Integration and Levels of Service.*

services to ensure smooth transition at the micro level, administrators in service organizations and community leaders and practicioners must ensure the context, or environment, is receptive to the new arrivals and resources are sufficient and acceptable. At the same time, those at the micro and mezzo levels of practice who are bound by laws and the policies defined by the nation state may need to call on advocates for refugee resettlement to play an active part in educating and supporting policy makers at the macro level. At each stage of the refugee passage to integration, micro, mezzo, and macro services should aim to be alert, mindful, and prepared to help address potential challenges facing this population. As suggested by the MPI's (2022) statement on integration, lack of adaptation or marginalization at any stage can potentially be detrimental not only to the refugee and the refugee community but also to the host environment and
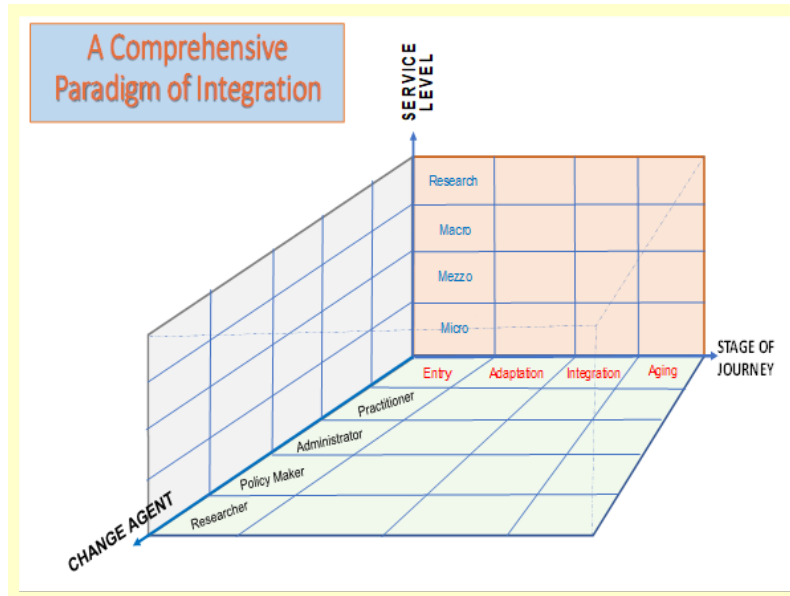
Fig. 4. *Comprehensive Paradigm of Integration*.

its social and economic well-being. Furthermore, it appears that most countries may be less likely to pay heed to the unique psychosocial and mental health needs of the aging refugee population and this gap in services can have implications for the refugee community's perceptions of its vulnerability and position in the host nation.

Figure 3 speaks to the different stages of integration of the refugee and the service levels and practitioners involved at each level. Figure 4, in addition, proposes that, regardless of the service level at which they work, all change agents are responsible for informing and advocating for refugees across service levels and life stages. It is those on the ground, and the front-line workers that are the most knowledgeable about the refugee population, hence it behooves

administrators, policy makers, and researchers to utilize them in developing programs, formulating policies, and conducting research.

INNOVATION IN EDUCATION

Those who meticulously plan their migration moves, those who are fluent in the language of the host country, those who have travelled to the country to which they are migrating, and those who believe they are familiar with the land to which they are moving find that once they actually make the move, they are met with much that is bewildering (Segal 2016). In situations in which people are forced to move against their volition and have little choice of resettlement country, or location within that country, preparedness is negligible. Most refugees, fleeing conflict and violence have had their opportunities stripped and their rights violated and, often, they fear and mistrust those in power (Segal 2012). Nevertheless, they are dependent on "authorities" to educate them about their new homes, resettle them, and meet their needs. On the other hand, those charged with resettling refugees may be unfamiliar with the particular refugee group, the traumas it has experienced, and its social and cultural norms and traditions. In essence, both groups are frequently unprepared for the monumental task of reestablishing gravely disrupted refugee lives (Kavukcu, Altıntaş 2019; Kosny et al. 2019). Depending on their human capital, refugees may be unable to grapple with the enormity of the change and expectations placed on them by the host country (Segal 2012), and practitioners may be so pressured to address human rights violations and integration efforts that they may become distanced from a more holistic perspective in guiding resettlement (Segal 2014).

Any exploration of the news will reveal several current stories about immigrants in general and refugees in particular (Llewellyn, Kowalik, Basma 2021). Refugee stories range from the dramatic and heart-rending to the xenophobic, and even to the comedic,

often reflecting the host community's perceptions of these individuals. Such reactions are evident whether refugees are new arrivals, if they have been in the nation for several years, or even if they have been naturalized, becoming citizens of the country. The Syrian refugee crisis of the last few years had a major impact in Europe (Kaya, Nagel 2021); it heighted worldwide fears of loss of native jobs, cultural and religious contamination, and terrorism, and these have been fanned by political and prejudicial rhetoric across Europe and in the U.S. (Haas, Shuman 2019). Nativist, xenophobic fears are usually based in poor knowledge, and many denizens are unconvinced of the reality that refugees, especially those who are resettled through the UNHCR, are well vetted before they are permitted entry into a third country, one outside the nation to which they had fled and that had provided them sanctuary.

A RESEARCH-BASED EDUCATIONAL TOOL

A recent project sought to educate refugees, practitioners, youth, and the general public about refugee resettlement in the United States, from entry to the first several years following arrival. Literature has suggested that puppetry is used with young children as an educational tool and for therapeutic intervention. Krögera and Nupponen (2019) found that the use of puppets has been effective in generating communication, enhancing creativity, changing attitudes, and fostering cooperation with children, as well as supporting a positive classroom climate. Others have indicated its efficacy with adults in nursing education (Tilbrook et al. 2017), in training therapists (Mortola 2019), and in affecting cognition (Zanzana 2018), and it has been used for centuries in Asia to disseminate information to populations of all ages (Atanu 2014; Cohen 2016; Orr 1974). However, there appears to be little use of this art form when working with refugees, although recently the Walk Productions did create "The Walk", a traveling festival to raise awareness about refugees. This featured a giant (3.5 meter tall) girl-child

puppet that represented displaced children and that moved from Syria to the United Kingdom in "search of her mother"[4].

The project, described below in this paper, developed a tool to enhance both practitioner and refugee awareness about some of the commonly occurring experiences in refugee resettlement in the U.S., regardless of country of origin or precipitating factors. It involved a unique collaboration among social work researchers, the theater arts, academia, service providers, and the larger community, and it had three components: *a*) a qualitative study with refugees, practitioners, employers, and neighbors of refugees; *b*) the creation of a play based on the qualitative study; and *c*) dissemination of the play through puppetry. Beginning with semi-structured interviews of the resettlement experiences of diverse groups of refugees from five origin countries to determine if common threads reinforced extant literature, this interdisciplinary collaboration explored refugees' expectations of resettlement and integration, their preparedness to enter the country, and their perceptions several years after resettlement. Additionally, it interviewed employers and service providers who work with this population as well as native-born people who reside in neighborhoods that house refugees to garner their perceptions regarding refugee integration[5].

Using this information, the project delivered the message of refugee adaptation to the general public through a play dramatized through puppetry, a medium rarely used in the social services (Prior 2020) and using pre- and post- surveys, assessed this puppetry's effectiveness in enhancing viewers' knowledge and interest.

GENERAL PROJECT FINDINGS

Themes that emerged from the interviews were not entirely unexpected for those who are familiar with refugee resettlement, but very remarkable was the similarity across all five refugee groups and the corroboration with findings of extant literature. The most pressing concern for all refugee interviewees was economic, and in

several ways, other concerns were either directly, or indirectly, linked to this. In addition to economic worries, almost all interviewees mentioned language barriers, socio-cultural differences, their own misperceptions about what to expect when they arrived, and changed family dynamics. The most common findings from among the non-refugee interviewees were concerns about refugees' lack of knowledge about social norms in the U.S., language difficulties, and inability to navigate the American infrastructure. Hence, the development of a "master story", a play entitled *We Came as Refugees: An American Story* was based on these findings and was believed to be true to the refugee resettlement experience in the U.S.; the use of puppetry's efficacy was reinforced by findings of the third segment of the study.

Self-reports of knowledge acquisition through the show were particularly interesting. All participants who viewed the recorded show were self-selected, indicating some previous interest or knowledge of the area. However, all the 107 adults who completed both the pre- and post-show surveys indicated having gained increased understanding regarding refugee status, arrival concerns, and struggles with economic security, and a large number stated they learned about adaptation and refugee perceptions about opportunities in the U.S. Some differences were found based on age; more younger participants indicated having learned more from the show than did older ones. Across the board, participants found the medium of puppetry to be relevant, educational, and entertaining, though younger respondents found it much more valuable than did those in the oldest group. Statistical analyses were not conducted as the self-selected group did not constitute a random sample and such analyses would likely have yielded meaningless results. However, the expectation that such a medium can effectively present educational information to adults in an entertaining manner was reinforced.

Refugees are found across nations, and many professionals interact with them in the normal course of the day, even if this group is not their target of services. Even those who work with refugees

have indicated that they know little about either their post- or the pre-migration experiences or even the several differences between voluntary and involuntary migrants. Given the findings of this project and coupling them with service provider reports that they would benefit from training (Kavukcu, Altıntaş 2019), we propose that using a puppet show to disseminate information can be as, if not more, effective as a seminar or a didactic lecture in training practitioners and even educating refugees. Host country expectations have generally put the onus of long-term adjustment on the shoulders of the refugees, providing them only subsistence level support and expecting them to become self-sufficient in the shortest time possible. This is a major barrier for many (Frazier, van Riemsdijk 2021), and poor working conditions, exploitation, and inconsistency, particularly in first jobs, are the initial forays into the workforce for most (Kosny et al. 2020). Awareness among professionals of these realities may enhance their approaches to working with refugees and the medium of puppetry, an engaging and non-threatening medium through which information can be conveyed, may bring to life and sensitize people to the continuing struggles refugees face in resettlement.

Increasing apathy toward the plight of refugees and growing xenophobia in the U.S., and around the world, suggest that renewed efforts must be made to sensitize practitioners to this highly vulnerable, yet human capital rich, population. The medium of puppetry is an engaging and non-threatening tool that can bring to life and sensitize people to the continuing struggles refugees face in resettlement. This project reinforced findings that regardless of their origins, many refugees do express similar issues in resettlement, hence a "master story" delivered through an entertaining medium can be an efficacious and impactful form of information dissemination. Puppetry may well be an alternative to didactic presentations to teach about refugee issues, delivering stories while portraying the difficulties faced by both refugee and host in the adaptation process; it may effectively be used for the education of professionals who work with refugee populations.

DISCUSSION: FROM THE GENERAL TO THE SPECIFIC

Global occurrences have local ramifications, and local actions are tempered by global realities. Ongoing and new conflicts between and within countries, combined with disasters caused by human activities have led to the continuing stream of both voluntary and involuntary migrants. Among these involuntary migrants are refugees who are forced out of their homes and homelands, often with no knowledge about whether, or when, they will return. Countries hosting refugees who cross through their borders are directly affected by international and global phenomena. This paper provides a context for the refugee experience, indicating that despite the heart-wrenching experience of refugees, many host countries are less welcoming than they have been in the past. Entry and the following resettlement process, adaptation, and integration are ongoing and require understanding, empathy, acceptance, and collaboration between the host nation and the refugee. Those who are trained specifically to provide services to refugees, as well as those who find they have refugees in their client populations, will recognize that, over time, the needs and challenges facing refugees are both similar to those facing native born people as well as unique to refugees. Likewise, refugees may learn that, even when they believe they understand the host country culture, there emerge elements that continue to baffle them.

Therefore, this paper suggests that refugees and service providers be cognizant of the refugees' integration journey and prepare for it at all stages. For service providers, whether these be case managers, educators, or health care professionals, or if they are employers and those involved in providing employment services, both micro level direct practitioners and those responsible of developing policy/laws and implementing services, all must make particular adaptations. This is presented in a 3-D pictorial form, touching on the complexity and the need for changing dynamics between the refugee, the service provider, and the host country. Xenophobia and even fear of being culturally inappropriate can cause distance

between refugees and the native-born population; education and intercultural association and collaboration may help ameliorate these phenomena. Required "diversity training" and didactic material may be effective in increasing understanding, however, non-threatening tools that are entertaining, appeal to one's humanity, and less direct may be more efficacious in blurring intergroup fears.

In these times, when the Ukrainian crisis and its media coverage are, once again, alerting the world that conflicts are extremely destructive at many levels, and more fortunate and stable nations must step up to help those forced out of their homes, refugee resettlement programs will be called upon to educate the native population, even as they help provide refuge for those fleeing conflicts. For long-term efficacy, as local actors respond to the global occurrences, nation states accepting refugees will have to take special steps to ensure that refugee fatigue and xenophobia are replaced by welcome and acceptance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NOTES

[1] "Owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, 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, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it" (UNHCR 1967).

[2] https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/?category=usConflictStatus.

[3] https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/indicatorsofimmigrantintegration.htm.

[4] https://www.walkwithamal.org.

[5] The research protocol was approved by the University's Institutional Review Board ensuring protection of the participants' rights.

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