



Refugee Programs Administration



Cuban, Haitian, and Bosnian Refugees in Florida: Problems and Obstacles in Resettlement

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CUBAN, HAITIAN, AND BOSNIAN REFUGEES IN FLORIDA: PROBLEMS AND OBSTACLES IN RESETTLEMENT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the last 15 years, Florida has consistently had one of the highest refugee populations in the country. Many refugees currently entering the state are from Cuba, Haiti, and Bosnia. This report is an initial literature review for a comprehensive study of Cuban, Haitian, and Bosnian refugees in Florida.

Background

The Cuban refugee crisis of 1959–60 forced the United States to begin to articulate a formal refugee policy. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, thousands of people from all over the world sought refuge in the United States. In 1980, Congress passed the Refugee Act, which formalized refugee admittance procedures and authorized funding and administrative oversight for refugee resettlement services. This act put into law procedures that were already becoming common practice in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. Although the Mariel boatlift of 1980 and the refugee crises of the 1990s brought into question many of the assumptions of the Refugee Act, it still remains the foundation for national and state refugee resettlement efforts.

Factors in Resettlement

Research on refugee resettlement has focused primarily on economic adaptation, English language proficiency, and ethnic community development. Refugees who are working tend to hold low-wage, low-status positions, regardless of their former occupational status (a phenomenon known as “downward occupational mobility”). Age, gender, country of origin, and household size typically influence economic adaptation. Higher educational levels, knowledge of English, and increased levels of time spent in the United States tend to increase the chances of employment. Being functionally proficient in English appears to increase the chances of successful resettlement, although

a greater knowledge of English may not. Refugees who live and work in “ethnic enclaves,”¹ however, tend to have more promising employment prospects and consequently less of a need to rapidly acquire English proficiency. Ethnic enclaves and ethnic communities also offer substantial social and cultural support. The change to more restrictive welfare policies instituted at the national level may have mixed effects. On one hand they may place hardships on refugees who are unable to work, elderly, or disabled. On the other hand, they may help to discourage welfare dependency. Concern over welfare usage and dependency among refugees has also sparked a debate over privatizing the refugee resettlement system. The “Wilson-Fish” program, a federally funded alternative to public-sector refugee resettlement, has generally shown evidence of increasing the employment levels and self-sufficiency of refugees.

Refugees in Florida

Florida has been an international and multiethnic region since the colonial period. Cuban refugees have continuously come to Florida since the great influx resulting from political upheaval in Cuba in 1959. Cubans also came in great numbers during the Mariel boatlift in 1980 and during the early 1990s. However, recent agreements between the United States and Cuba have normalized the flow. Research on Cuban refugees has shown them to be generally successful in adapting to life in Florida. For example, although many Mariel Cubans were socioeconomically disadvantaged at the time of their arrival in 1980, Portes and Clark (1987) found that within six years most had found jobs

¹Ethnic enclaves are ethnic communities that have a high level of entrepreneurial and economic development (Portes & Bach, 1985).

and had increased their earnings. (Most were living and working in Cuban ethnic enclaves.) Moreover, Potocky (1996) found that Cubans who had arrived in Florida as refugee children had equal or higher economic status compared to total adult Cuban refugees and their native-born counterparts. Such success is due in part to factors that include a history of favorable admissions and resettlement policies, highly developed Cuban ethnic enclaves in South Florida, and the powerful political influence of Cuban lobbying and advocacy groups. These factors, however, may contribute to lower rates of English proficiency and overall assimilation among Cubans.

The history of Haitian refugees in America has been one of success mixed with failure. While mostly upper- and middle-class Haitian refugees fleeing the repressive Haitian government of the 1960s were able to resettle rapidly throughout the United States, the more disadvantaged “boat people” of the 1970s and 1980s fleeing similar repressive regimes met with discrimination and prejudice. Political and economic conditions in Haiti have been more promising since the intervention of the United States in 1994 and subsequent efforts to establish a more democratic system. Stepick and Portes (1986) surveyed Haitians who entered Florida during the 1980 Mariel period and found low levels of education, English, employment, and income. For example, more than 33 percent of Haitian males and over 80 percent of females were jobless. Since the 1980s, however, there are indications that many Haitians in America have prospered. Potocky (1996) found that between 60 and 72 percent of Haitians were employed in 1990. Stepick (1998) described the emergence of “second generation” Haitians, many of whom are college educated and are becoming established in professional and managerial careers.

As a result of the war in Bosnia in the early 1990s, thousands of Bosnians have applied to the United States for resettlement. Bosnian refugees have experienced many atrocities resulting from “ethnic cleansing,” including the breakup of ethnically mixed communities and families and the loss of family members and friends. Such experiences have led to a high rate of physical and mental health problems among Bosnians. For example, Weine, Becker, McGlashan, Laub, Lazrove, Vojvoda, and Hyman (1995) found that among a sample of 20 Bosnian refugees, almost two-thirds had post-traumatic stress disorder and more than one-third had depressive disorders. In addition to these difficulties, Bosnians encounter problems in resettlement such as low-paying jobs, downward occupational mobility, and difficulty with English. However, most Bosnian refugees surveyed by the Center for Applied Linguistics in 1995 and 1996 had at least a secondary education and were working.

Implications

Employment, the implications of welfare reform, the status of refugee women, and cultural-related issues are of particular importance to the future of refugee resettlement efforts in Florida. Two major factors that contribute to successful employment for refugees are English proficiency and education. Ethnic community support is also significant particularly in the absence of adequate English proficiency or educational levels. Specialized services will be essential for refugees who remain dependent upon welfare, such as those who are older or disabled. Refugee women are also in need of employment services to help meet domestic needs or to overcome obstacles such as lack of workforce experience. Bosnian women may need health

services to help them cope with war atrocities and associated trauma. Lastly, refugees continue to need assistance with learning about life in America through services such as cultural orientation.

INTRODUCTION

For more than 40 years, Florida has been a major point of entry into the United States for refugees worldwide who are seeking asylum from persecution or adverse conditions in their home countries. From 1985 to 1994, Florida received 92,700 refugees; that number was surpassed only by California and New York (Abdulla, Palin, Doak, & Laird, 1997). Unlike other states, however, Florida is not only the first United States location of asylum but is often the favored destination for many refugees, notably Cubans and Haitians. The fact that most of these refugees will remain in Florida constitutes an additional burden on the state.

The Refugee Programs Administration (RPA) of the Florida Department of Children and Families is the primary governmental agency responsible for refugee resettlement in Florida. Since its creation in the early 1980s, the RPA has had a history of successfully resettling refugees in Florida, especially Cubans and Haitians. From 1992–1994 Florida received over 16,000 Cuban entrants and over 10,000 Haitian entrants (Abdulla, Palin, Doak, & Laird, 1997). Historically, about 85 percent of all Cuban refugees and entrants have resettled in Florida.

After a decline in the flow of Cuban and Haitian refugees to Florida in the mid-1990s, their numbers appear to be on the rise again. Coast guard and border patrol data show that Cuban and Haitian arrivals to Florida increased from 650 in fiscal year 1997 to 1,830 in 1998 (Florida Department of Children and Families, 1998). Yet since the 1980s, there have only been a few comprehensive studies on Cuban and Haitian refugees in Florida.

Bosnians are the third refugee group arriving most often in Florida. Bosnians are fleeing conditions in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina and over 63,000 have resettled in the

United States since 1992 (Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Labor Migration, 1998). While only 334 came to Florida in 1994, in 1997 Florida received 1,323 Bosnian refugees and 2,040 in 1998 (Abdulla, Palin, Doak, & Laird, 1997; Abdulla, Palin, Doak, Ritter, & Laird, 1997; Abdulla, Doak, Bellamy, & Miller, 1998). As such a new refugee population, little research has been done on Bosnian refugees nationally, and our search could find no existing studies on Bosnian refugees in Florida. Such diverse groups of incoming refugees have a variety of needs. As the state agency primarily responsible for administering federally funded refugee resettlement programs in Florida, the RPA depends upon up-to-date information on the conditions of refugees in order to best assist refugees to acculturate and gain economic self-sufficiency.

Purpose

In October 1998 the RPA contracted with the Educational Services Program (ESP), Florida State University, to conduct a comprehensive study of Cuban, Haitian, and Bosnian refugees in Florida. The stated objectives of the study are to determine:

- problems and obstacles these refugees encounter during resettlement and to suggest ways to solve or cope with these difficulties;
- employment-related effects of training provided to refugees (by service providers);
- refugees' level of satisfaction with training; and
- employers' level of satisfaction with refugees' job performance.

The study consists of three phases: a review of existing studies and relevant literature; a survey of refugees, service providers, and employers; and a follow-up survey of refugees. This report is the initial review of existing studies and literature relevant to Cuban,

Haitian, and Bosnian refugees in Florida. As specified in the contract between RPA and ESP, the objectives of this literature review are to determine the problems and obstacles these refugees encounter during resettlement and to suggest ways to solve or cope with these difficulties.

The report is organized as follows: *Background* gives a brief history of the delivery of services to refugees in Florida. *Factors in Resettlement* provides an overview of the predictors and determinants of successful resettlement. *Refugees in Florida* describes the characteristics unique to Cubans, Haitians, and Bosnians, and discusses issues each refugee group faces during resettlement. Lastly, *Implications* looks at the findings of the literature review and discusses suggestions for refugee resettlement in Florida.

BACKGROUND

Refugee Policy and Service Delivery in the United States

Although the United States has a long tradition of open admittance of immigrants and refugees, it was not until the middle of the twentieth century that the United States began to formulate a refugee policy. Traditionally, any individual who wanted to come to America had simply entered the country as an immigrant, although not all were welcomed (the notorious Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 is a case in point). The first federal laws placing restrictions on immigration were passed in the late 1800s, and later the Immigration Act of 1924 set quotas for countries based upon their representation in the United States population, except for countries in the Western Hemisphere that were allowed unlimited immigration (Holman, 1996).

The first federal legislation to make a distinction between immigrants and refugees, however, was the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 and its amendments that, based on the quota system established in the Immigration Act of 1924, allowed for the admittance of persons displaced during World War II. The subsequent Refugee Relief Act of 1953 similarly allowed for admittance of refugees (escapees) from communist countries, except that it authorized additional visas for refugees from those countries in excess of the amounts the country quotas had previously specified.

The post World War II period also marked an increase in the numbers of voluntary resettlement agencies (volags). Until the late 1950s, there had been virtually no federal assistance appropriated for refugee resettlement.² Moreover, federal legislation dictated that refugees could only be admitted into the United States if it was

²Legislation in the 1950s had appropriated funds to voluntary agencies for entry, processing, and transportation costs incurred during the resettlement process (Holman, 1996; Abdulla, Palin, Doak, & Laird, 1997).

guaranteed that they would not become public charges. Voluntary agencies acted as sponsors and coordinated with the federal government, the private sector, and resettlement communities so that each refugee would be guaranteed a place of residence and a job upon arrival.

In 1959, the Cuban revolution forced a change in the process of refugee resettlement in the United States, creating the first emergency refugee situation in Florida. During 1959 and 1960, thousands of Cubans who opposed Fidel Castro's new government or who feared persecution sought refuge in the United States at the nearest point of entry—Florida. Holman (1996) stated that “by the end of 1960, more than 100,000 Cuban refugees had reached the United States, mostly in the Miami area” (p. 7). These refugees were admitted into the United States under the attorney general’s parole authority in immigration law. President Eisenhower and then President Kennedy allocated funding for programs to deal with the refugees and Cubans who were continuing to arrive. Authorization for an array of services for Cuban refugees including financial assistance, health, education, English language training, vocational training, and job placement came from the Cuban Refugee Assistance Program of 1961, the first such federally funded program, and later from the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1962. Later legislation, such as a “Memorandum of Understanding” jointly signed by the United States and Cuba and the Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966, enabled Cuban refugees to arrive in Florida and resettle in a more orderly fashion.

For the next two decades, refugee issues continued to be addressed through ad hoc legislation that developed in response to crisis situations. For example, in 1975 during the aftermath of the Vietnam conflict, nearly 130,000 Indochinese refugees entered the

United States, causing the creation of the Indochinese Refugee Assistance Program (IRAP), which was developed along the lines of the Cuban refugee program. By 1979 several federally supported programs for refugees were in existence, including the Cuban Refugee Assistance Program, IRAP, and the Voluntary Agency Matching Grant Program (Holman, 1996). The United States now more than ever needed to develop a formal refugee policy.

In 1980, Congress passed the Refugee Act, the first comprehensive refugee policy for the United States. This legislation sought to define procedures for the admission of refugees and for the “effective resettlement” of those who are admitted. It also set parameters for resettlement funding and administration, and brought together the different resettlement programs, in effect putting what was already common practice into law. The provisions of the act amended existing legislation in three main areas: refugee admissions, authorization and funding for refugee resettlement services, and organizational responsibilities and oversight.

The Refugee Act uses the definition of refugee adopted by the United Nations High Commission on Refugees: a person who seeks protection or who is unable to return to his or her home country due to “persecution or well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion” (Public Law 96–212). This definition opened up refugee admissions to include refugees from all parts of the world, not only from communist or Middle Eastern countries. The act also set procedures for regular and emergency refugee admissions and based the yearly number of refugees to be admitted to the United States on an annual consultation procedure between the president, the cabinet, and the Congress. The

attorney general's parole authority was limited and to be used only if there were "compelling public interest reasons" to do so (PL 96–212).

Under the Refugee Act, refugees are entitled to a number of benefits. The act authorized federal support for resettlement and made a variety of services available to eligible refugees, including cash and medical assistance,³ English language training, vocational training, employment services, elementary and secondary schooling for refugee children, and child welfare services. The responsibility for funding and administering these programs was given to the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) of the Department of Health and Human Services.⁴ The role of states includes planning, administering, and coordinating these resettlement activities. In order to receive funds, states are required to submit plans to the ORR that explain how refugee resettlement programs will be implemented in the state (in accordance with the provisions of the Refugee Act) and designate a state-level coordinator. States must also submit annual plans that detail how federal funds have been used. Currently in Florida, the RPA of the Department of Children and Families handles refugee resettlement.

The Refugee Act places responsibility with federal and state governments for resettlement policy, funding, and administration. Much of the actual resettlement effort is carried out by voluntary resettlement agencies. States are to be reimbursed for 100 percent of the costs of providing cash and medical assistance during the first 3 years (36

³Depending on the eligibility of each refugee, this includes Social Security programs, Medicaid, and welfare, or alternatively refugee cash assistance (RCA) and refugee medical assistance (RMA).

⁴Initial resettlement (reception and placement of refugees with volags) is managed through the Department of State (Holman, 1996).

months) that a refugee is in the United States, but the act allows states to contract with public or private nonprofit agencies that provide resettlement services as specified above. Although states may use funds in order to provide services directly, Florida and most other states contract out with independent service providers.

Ironically, only weeks after the Refugee Act of 1980 became law, the United States encountered perhaps its worst refugee crisis ever, the Mariel boatlift. From April to the end of May in that year, a series of events in Cuba led to the mass exodus of nearly 100,000 Cubans to Florida. By that fall, an additional 25,000 Cubans and 40,000 Haitians had arrived in Florida. Unfortunately, the Refugee Act was mainly directed toward the admittance and resettlement of refugees from abroad, not for individuals arriving directly in the United States and seeking asylum. The Cubans and Haitians who came during the 1980 Mariel period fit somewhere between the categories of refugees fleeing persecution and of immigrants seeking better lives—the United States was faced with simply the “phenomenon of mass escape” (Zucker & Zucker, 1996, p. 66). Moreover, since they did not qualify as refugees under the Refugee Act, resettlement responsibilities and expenses became the burden of state and local governments. In June 1980, the federal government used the attorney general’s parole authority to create a new category of “Cuban/Haitian entrant (status pending)”—Mariel Cubans and Haitians. The category allowed them to be eligible for a limited amount of services. Finally, in October 1980, legislation was passed that enabled refugees who had applied for asylum and all Cuban and Haitian entrants to be eligible for refugee benefits; it also allowed states and local communities to be reimbursed for expenses. During the 1980s and early 1990s, most Cubans seeking asylum were considered refugees who were fleeing communism;

however, few Haitians were admitted into the United States and were instead repatriated to Haiti or, under a policy of interdiction, intercepted at sea.

Throughout the 1980s, after an initial decline following the Mariel boatlift, the number of refugees entering the United States remained relatively constant. In the early 1990s, however, following deteriorating political and economic conditions in both Haiti and Cuba, thousands of Cubans and Haitians began once again to travel by boat to Florida. From 1991 to 1992 more than 38,000 Haitians were intercepted by the United States Coast Guard and in 1994 over 5,000 Cubans arrived in Florida. By August, the coast guard had begun to intercept over 500 a day (Holman, 1996; Stepick, 1998). Once again, as with the Mariel crisis, all of the Cubans and Haitians had strong reasons to risk their lives in order to reach Florida, but it was not clear which ones could meet the Refugee Act's criteria of "a well-founded fear or persecution." In response to the crises, the United States sent all Haitian and Cuban refugees to the Guantanamo Naval Base in Cuba for processing. In late 1994, the United States restored power to Jean-Paul Aristide, Haiti's democratically elected president, and most Haitian refugees at Guantanamo were sent back to Haiti. Simultaneously, the United States and Cuba settled on an annual admission level of 20,000 Cubans through immigration procedures. In 1995, the Clinton administration, in a reversal of a 35-year-old policy, declared that while all Cubans at Guantanamo would be admitted into the United States, in the future all other Cubans intercepted at sea would be repatriated back to Cuba unless they were found to have a need for protection (Holman, 1996; Stepick, 1998; Zucker & Zucker, 1996).

Apart from changes in refugee admissions policy, the major trend in refugee resettlement since the Refugee Act has been increased refugee dependence on federal aid

(via sheer numbers of refugees admitted) with decreasing federal funding for cash and medical assistance. For example, the 36-month limit was reduced to 8 months after controversy over the use of assistance among refugees to seek education and training rather than immediate employment (Holman, 1996). However, other resettlement funding was established during the 1980s, such as a continuation of the matching grant program, targeted assistance grants, and alternative resettlement projects. The effects of current initiatives such as welfare reform and potential privatization of the refugee resettlement system are discussed in the next section.

FACTORS IN RESETTLEMENT

The process of resettlement constitutes a difficult period for every refugee, since it entails not only adapting to a new home and community but most likely to an entirely foreign culture. Most refugees arrive with little possessions except for what they have carried with them and are thus entirely dependent upon any assistance or employment they can find. They must meet basic needs such as finding a job, affordable housing, and reliable transportation, and they must begin the task of learning new languages, cultures, customs, and laws. The simple acts of counting change or going shopping may become difficult or frustrating when done in a foreign environment, and laws such as those governing traffic or child abuse may be entirely different than in one's home country. Moreover, refugees may be taken advantage of or may face discrimination in their new communities. While adapting to a new life and trying to care for themselves and their families, they also must cope with the memories of traumatic events they may have experienced, of their home country, and of whom and what they have left behind. Many Haitians, for example, in addition to trying to make ends meet in the United States, also send money and food to relatives at home who depend upon them (Chierici, 1991; Stepick, 1998).

During the last three and a half decades, a great deal of research has been conducted on refugees in the United States, much of it focusing on Southeast Asians and Cubans (see Haines, 1996). Several studies have been conducted on refugee groups in Florida during the last decade as well (see, for example, Armer, Serow, Katsillis, & Louk, 1992; Burns, 1993; Portes & Clark, 1987; Portes & Stepick, 1985; Potocky, 1996, 1997; Schilit, 1991; Stepick, 1998; Stepick & Portes, 1986; Stepick & Stepick, 1990). This body of research has primarily attempted to determine what factors contribute to making

the process of adaptation and resettlement successful for refugees. Forbes (1985) categorized factors in resettlement into three main categories: economic adaptation, English language proficiency, and ethnic community development.

Economic Adaptation

Economic adaptation is perhaps the most visible or most often discussed factor in resettlement, due in part to a policy focus on effective resettlement through economic self-sufficiency. Economic adaptation is usually measured in terms of employment levels, labor force participation, and income levels or earnings. Forbes (1985) noted that refugees had slightly lower rates of employment and labor force participation and higher unemployment rates than the overall United States population. In addition, refugees who were working tended to hold mostly low-skilled, low-status, or nonprofessional positions, irrespective of their former occupations (although refugees from professional or high socioeconomic status backgrounds tended to eventually meet or exceed their past status).

A variety of factors influence refugees' employment, labor force participation, and income. Among these factors are demographic and background characteristics and economic, social, or political conditions in the resettlement community. Male refugees, refugees of working ages, those with higher educational levels, and those with smaller households or fewer children tend to have better employment prospects. Other indicators for better employment include longer length of time in the United States, a good knowledge of English, good job skills, high income aspirations at the time of arrival, high assimilative capabilities, and help from volags (Armer et al., 1992; Forbes, 1985). Upon their arrival, however, many refugees face a phenomenon of underemployment or "downward occupational mobility" (Haines, 1996, p. 43). Refugees may be forced, out of economic necessity, to accept employment that is not commensurate with their skill

level, education, or experience. Economic conditions and job availability, social or political conditions, and public assistance policies and practices may also influence refugees' economic adaptation (Armer et al., 1992; Forbes, 1985). Finally, Haines (1996) points out that life experiences, values, and expectations may also influence the employability of some refugees. For example, although older refugees from pre-Castro Cuba may be familiar with the American job market and capitalist economy, more recent Cuban arrivals may have trouble assimilating because they have been accustomed to a socialist system that meets many of their basic needs. Moreover, refugees' experiences during their flight from persecution or during their journey from their home country may have lasting health effects.

Many of the same factors influence economic adaptation among refugees in Florida. In a recent study, Armer, Serow, Katsillis, and Louk (1992) surveyed refugees in Florida and found the following factors to be significant determinants in getting and/or keeping a job: having knowledge (adequate or functional) of English, being from certain countries or of a certain ethnicity, and receiving housing assistance from a service provider. Moreover, refugees who send money to people in their country are more successful in finding and keeping employment than those who do not. Although both males and females are just as likely to be continually employed (having a job now), males are more successful in initially finding a job. It also was found that service providers who help refugees to learn English, fill out job applications, write resumes, and find housing appear to be more effective than those who do not. Finally, the researchers found that the length of time a refugee is employed at any given job depends upon the quality of their job or the wages that they receive. Overall, the authors explained refugee

unemployment as being primarily due to a lack of English proficiency and a lack of formal education.

More recently, Potocky (1997) analyzed 1990 Census data on Cuban, Haitian, Nicaraguan, and Soviet/East European refugees in Dade County, Florida, to determine predictors of refugee economic status. She found the most important predictors to be disability status, having a household headed by a married couple, and education. The following predictors were found to have had “enhancing effects” on economic integration (i.e., increased odds of employment, decreased odds of using public assistance, and increased household income) among Cubans:

- having more education,
- having a greater length of residence (in the United States),
- holding United States citizenship,
- being in a household headed by a married couple, and
- having nonrelatives or subfamilies in the household.

Predictors that had impeding effects included

- being older,
- having made a secondary migration (having moved to Florida from elsewhere),
- having a disability, and
- having children or persons 65 and over in the household.

Among Haitians, predictors that enhanced economic integration included

- having a household headed by a married couple, and
- having nonrelatives in the household.

Predictors that impeded economic integration included

- being female,
- having made a secondary migration,
- having a disability, and
- having children, persons 65 and older, or subfamilies in the household.

English Language Proficiency

As alluded to above, refugees' English language proficiency has important influences on their employment and economic adaptation. Several studies have found it to be a significant factor in resettlement and adjustment, although its effects are not entirely clear. For instance, many studies show that English proficiency is, if not a necessity, at least a great advantage for economic adaptation, as well as for social, cultural, and political adjustment and assimilation. Armer et al. (1992) found that a functional or adequate level of English proficiency was a determinant in getting and/or keeping employment. Among the Florida refugees that they surveyed, more than half reported having either no English proficiency or poor knowledge of English, while only 16 percent felt that their English was good or excellent. Most of their sample, however, felt that a knowledge of English was an important, if not *the* most important, factor in getting a job. A greater knowledge of English, however, may not further adaptation or resettlement. Armer et al. found that the probability of getting a job was not much higher for a respondent with excellent English proficiency than for one with good proficiency. However, the probabilities were higher for the respondents who had poor English skills than for those with no English skills. Those with fair English skills also showed a higher employment probability than those with poor skills. This suggests that a functional

knowledge of English is important for employment, but greater English proficiency may not significantly affect employment. Moreover, in communities in which many refugees or immigrants of the same ethnic group live and work, individuals may have less need to learn English, but this in itself may stand as an obstacle to learning English. Indeed, among Cuban refugees from Miami communities, Armer et al. found many who had lived there for more than five years were still not yet proficient in English.

The Refugee Act itself specifically stresses the importance of English language programs in requiring that the director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement “give consideration to . . . English-language training” (Public Law 96–212). Forbes (1985) suggested that the main factors influencing gains in English proficiency are background characteristics and training. She noted that many refugees have low levels of English proficiency upon arrival. Background characteristics include previous educational levels (higher education and literacy in one’s own language positively affect English proficiency), occupation (professionals and others often have higher levels of English proficiency), gender (men usually have higher levels of English proficiency), and age (older refugees often have less English proficiency). English language training and its availability also significantly affect gains in English proficiency. Refugees who have received English training in orientation programs and those who take English training usually have higher levels of English proficiency than those who have not (Forbes, 1985). Armer et al. (1992) found that refugees who received English training from service providers had better employment success, and also that general English language training had less effect on current job status than English language training provided or facilitated by service providers. The researchers surmise that service providers may emphasize

employment-related English and thus contribute more toward functional English proficiency than general English language training.

Ethnic Community Development

A third category of factors involves the presence of ethnic community support structures, which play a large role in helping refugees adjust to their new lives. Often members of the same ethnic group settle in the same areas and over time develop immigrant communities, sharing common social and cultural activities. Portes and Bach (1985), however, described the phenomenon of “ethnic enclaves”—ethnic communities that are distinct from immigrant communities by virtue of their entrepreneurial and economic development. Ethnic enclaves develop out of the entrepreneurial activities of members of a certain ethnic community and the reinvesting of profits into those activities and the community. They offer resettlement opportunities to refugees and immigrants that are often more promising than other alternatives. For example, new arrivals may, without having to learn English, be quickly able to find a place to live and a job, albeit low paying, among members of their ethnic group. Moreover, their longer term employment prospects may also be more promising than outside ones since ethnic enclave employment often offers mobility and promotion not available in the wider society.⁵ Refugees in ethnic communities may also be insulated from other problems they might face otherwise. In situations of ethnic enclaves, for example, working refugees most likely will face less discrimination than they would if working outside of the enclave. However, just as English language acquisition may be hindered, assimilation to American society and culture for such refugees may be impeded as well.

⁵See Portes & Bach, 1985 and Portes & Stepick, 1993 for a discussion of the Cuban enclave in Miami.

Immigrant communities and ethnic enclaves often give rise to mutual assistance associations (MAAs). MAAs are formal organizations established by refugee communities to serve the community. They may provide a range of supportive activities and assistance to refugees and often function similarly to volags. Such supports include business and economic development and self-help activities, as well as legal assistance and advocacy. For example, in Miami the Haitian Rights Coalition was instrumental in guaranteeing the rights of Haitian refugees during the Mariel crisis. Increasingly, MAAs are being supported by governmental funds as well as local communities.

Welfare Reform

As the first section of this report indicated, successful or effective resettlement of refugees is not only dependent upon internal factors or “human capital” such as English language proficiency and employability skills, but it is also highly influenced by changes in the world of national and state policy. During the last decade, many states began to develop or implement welfare reform plans, and in 1996 the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation (PRWOR) Act changed welfare policy nationwide. The PRWOR Act furthered the efforts of states by establishing a decentralized public assistance system. It eliminated federal programs such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and replaced them with the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), a block grant system that allocates funds to states that develop their own welfare policies. The main provisions of the PRWOR Act that affect program participants are (1) time limits on eligibility for benefits and (2) work requirements in order to receive benefits. In 1996, shortly before the passing of the PRWOR Act, Florida established its own welfare reform policy, known as the Work and Gain Economic Self-Sufficiency (WAGES) program. WAGES is implemented through local coalitions

directed by a state board of directors. Under WAGES, participation is limited to two or three years, and most participants are required to work or enroll in job assistance programs to receive benefits (benefits can be cut for noncompliance). WAGES is also responsible for helping to reduce teen pregnancy and out-of-wedlock births. The state helps participants with job skills training or education and aid or assistance such as work-related expenses, transportation, and child care (WAGES, 1998; "Welfare reform," 1997).

The effects of welfare reform on refugee resettlement are somewhat unclear at this point, but some generalizations can be made. There has been some debate as to whether or not refugee welfare dependency has even presented a problem (Kerpen, 1985). Researchers have pointed out that many refugees use proportionately less public assistance than American citizens (Stepick, 1998), while "aliens" and refugees with undocumented immigrant status are ineligible for any public assistance at all. Moreover, public assistance usage rates vary greatly across refugee groups. However, while most refugees are not dependent upon welfare in the long term, typically about 50 percent of refugees who have been in the United States for less than 5 years do receive public assistance. More than half, however, become economically self-sufficient after a transition period of a few years. Under the Refugee Act, refugees may receive assistance from existing federal programs such as Social Security or Medicaid if they are eligible. Those not eligible may receive Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) and/or Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA) for up to 8 months following their arrival in the United States. As a result of welfare reform initiatives, however, unless they become citizens, most refugees become ineligible for federal public assistance once they have been in the United States

for more than 5 or 7 years, depending upon whether they arrived before or after August 22, 1996 (Allen, 1997).

The changes instituted by the PRWOR Act and other welfare reform initiatives are being felt by refugees (Allen, 1997; NCD, 1997). Many refugees are trying for citizenship to maintain their eligibility for benefits after the 5- or 7- year residency period. Some may not be able to pass naturalization requirements, and even those who do may face extended waiting periods without assistance before becoming citizens. Moreover, older and disabled refugees who may be unable to work and who rely on public assistance may be particularly affected, especially in terms of cash assistance and medical or disability insurance. Those lacking work permits may also be caught in a double bind in which they are unable or ineligible to work on the one hand, yet not eligible to receive public assistance on the other. Finally, Allen (1997) points out that volags, service providers, and local government will most likely have to assume responsibility for those refugees who “fall through the cracks” as a result of less state and federal assistance. There are some indications, however, that the effects of welfare reform on refugee resettlement can be positive in the long run. For example, among Southeast Asian refugees in Wisconsin the welfare dependency rate dropped from 73 percent to 4 percent over an 11-year period after the implementation of Wisconsin’s state welfare reform plan in 1987 (“Welfare dependence,” 1998).

Concern over the welfare usage among refugees has also sparked a movement to privatize the refugee resettlement system. Refugee resettlement in the United States is currently administered mainly by public and nonprofit sectors, i.e., state refugee coordinators and volags, with oversight from the national Office of Refugee

Resettlement. Although the exact details of a privatized system are not yet worked out, generally privatization would move refugee resettlement administration to the volags, with the goal of increasing efficiency and cost-effectiveness through emphasizing self-sufficiency and “early employment,” i.e., placement of refugees into jobs as soon as possible. Efforts to privatize refugee resettlement began in the 1980s when Congress passed legislation authorizing the development of “Wilson-Fish” alternative resettlement projects. In 1992 further attempts were made to move all refugee cash and medical assistance delivery to voluntary agencies, but this effort was blocked by a federal court. However, the subject continues to remain open to discussion (*Possible shifting of refugee resettlement*, 1996). Currently, the handful of Wilson-Fish projects nationwide (administered by public or non-profit agencies) operate as an alternative to state refugee resettlement systems by receiving funding directly from ORR.

Wilson-Fish projects have been fairly successful in increasing employment levels and self-sufficiency of refugees. For example, during the initial year of the first Wilson-Fish project, almost three-fourths of the participating refugees became self-sufficient within 12 months. In the Kentucky Wilson-Fish project, which was developed after the state discontinued its refugee resettlement program, most refugees are placed in above minimum wage jobs and with health care benefits within 70 days (*Possible shifting of refugee resettlement*, 1996, p. 5). In the past, Wilson-Fish projects were “budget-neutral,” i.e., there were no additional appropriations from Congress and they were funded using only existing ORR resources. The ORR now has the authority, however, to provide assistance using TANF funds as well as traditional RCA and RMA funds.

Determinants or predictors of successful resettlement appear to be specific to each refugee group. For example, factors seemingly related to successful adjustment in one study may have different effects or no significant effects in another study. In many cases this may be attributed to ethnicity and background of a specific refugee group (Armer et al., 1992). The next section examines in greater detail the adaptation and experiences of Cuban, Haitian, and Bosnian refugees in Florida.

REFUGEES IN FLORIDA

Florida has been an international and multiethnic region since colonial times. After being populated by Native Americans for thousands of years, Florida was explored by the Spanish, French, and English and was finally colonized by the Spanish in the mid-1500s. Over the next two centuries, the Spanish controlled Florida except for a brief period of British control in the late 1700s before Spain regained control at the end of the American Revolution. By the time of the American conquest of Florida in the early 1800s, Florida was a land of diverse influences, among them European (mainly Spanish and English), Native American, and African cultures. These ethnic influences are nowhere more apparent than in the cultural make-up of Florida's major inhabitants at that time, including *seminoles* (Native Americans from different tribes), African Americans, and former Spanish colonists. Florida continued to be a land of diverse cultures through the early 1900s with the arrival of a small but steady number of immigrants from the Caribbean, such as the Bahamians in the Florida Keys or the Cubans who settled in the Tampa Bay region (Florida Division of Historical Resources, 1996).

Cubans

Cubans began to settle in Florida in the early twentieth century to work in the developing cigar industry of Tampa. However, it was not until the 1960s that Florida began to be heavily involved in Cuban refugee resettlement due in large part to the influx of refugees after the 1959 revolution in Cuba. Cuban refugees have continued to come to Florida since the revolution, but arrivals peaked at two distinct points since then: the Mariel boatlift of 1980 and the refugee crisis of 1991–94. With the admissions agreement between Cuba and the United States in the fall of 1994, much of the potential for future refugee crises seems to be curtailed.

Since the 1959 revolution the phenomenon of Cuban migration to Florida has been primarily a result of the political battle between Cuba and the United States. Cuban refugees are to some degree “pawns” in this battle, since they have alternatively been used by both sides as part of political agendas. In the end, however, Cuban refugees have mostly benefited from the situation as they have received preferential treatment compared to other refugee groups, especially Haitians. While the migration agreements of 1994 and the Cuban interdiction policy of 1995 show that both countries are willing to be flexible, upcoming events in the policy world may require a close watch.

Under the United States–Cuban Migration Agreement of 1994, 20,000 Cubans per year may apply in-country for admission to the United States as either immigrants, parolees, or refugees. Those eligible to apply include individuals fearing political and religious persecution, such as political prisoners, human rights activists, and displaced professionals (Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Labor Migration, 1998). Although the accord specified that all other arrivals would be interdicted at sea and repatriated back to Cuba, other attempts at immigration continue. In December 1998, a boat carrying Cubans capsized off the Florida coast with few survivors (“4 Cubans,” 1998), and later the same month, three Cuban men who had hijacked a plane to the United States were freed from custody after two members of Congress interceded with the Immigration and Naturalization Service on their behalf (“Cuban refugees,” 1998).

Clark (1997) graphically discussed some of the conditions that force Cubans to risk their lives to come to the United States. He viewed Cuba’s government as a totalitarian system that demands complete loyalty to the regime while controlling every aspect of Cuban life, including education, employment, and health care. For example,

students from an early age must show evidence of “ideological and political integration,” while labor unions are under governmental control and workers are forbidden to strike. As a result of such a system, Clark maintains that Cuba has the highest numbers of political prisoners and the highest rate of suicide in the Western Hemisphere. Torture and executions (firing squads) are some of the tactics commonly used on political prisoners. Moreover, although the constitution guarantees freedom of association, most formal means of opposition such as human rights groups, civic associations, and independent journalism, operate under the risk of their members being incarcerated. Cubans also must endure religious persecution and increasingly worsening economic conditions.

There is evidence of increased government persecution of dissidents in Cuba even while the United States is beginning to increase contact between Americans and Cubans. In February 1999 the Cuban government approved prison terms for individuals convicted of promoting United States policy aimed at changing Castro’s government, a measure that seemed to be directed particularly towards independent journalists (“Cuban journalists,” 1999; Snow, 1999). The official position of the United States is that “change in Cuba is going to be inevitable” and that it is the “beginning of the end” of the Castro regime. United States policy remains focused on facilitating the development of a civil society in Cuba in the hopes of supporting peaceful, democratic, and “non-chaotic” change.⁶ The level of chaos in this inevitable change could strongly influence future Cuban refugee admissions.

⁶Hamilton, 1999.

To date the most comprehensive survey research conducted on Cuban refugees in Florida has been the longitudinal studies conducted in the 1980s by a team of researchers from Johns Hopkins University, Florida International University, and Miami Dade Community College. These studies examined the economic, social, and cultural adaptation of 1980 (Mariel) Cubans and Haitian refugees (see, for example, Portes and Clark, 1987; Portes & Stepick, 1985; Stepick & Portes, 1986; Stepick & Stepick, 1990). In general, Mariel Cubans have been characterized as being at a socioeconomic disadvantage compared to Cubans who came to the United States during earlier periods. Indeed, the Cuban government denounced the “Marielitos” as the dregs of Cuban society consisting of criminals, mentally ill individuals, homosexuals, and other “undesirables”⁷ (Aguirre, Saenz, & James, 1997). The existence of such a group within the Marielito population drew media attention to the supposed higher levels of homicide attributed to recent Mariel arrivals, although Martinez (1997) argued that Marielitos did not make up a disproportionate percentage of homicide offenders, rather, they were in fact at a greater risk than pre-1980 Cubans and native-born Cubans.

Portes and Stepick (1985) looked at the labor market experiences of Mariel Cubans and Haitian refugees in South Florida. They noted that Mariel Cubans on the average had lower levels of education, less knowledge of English, a higher percentage of unemployment and lower incomes, and were more often black or mulatto than Cubans already residing in the United States and Florida. In their survey, Portes and Stepick found 39 percent of the Cuban respondents to be without work and about one-third

⁷Aguirre, Saenz, & James (1997) point out that only a small portion of the Marielitos were prisoners and ex-convicts, mentally ill, homosexuals, religious refugees, and political prisoners. Many other Marielitos were forced to declare themselves as criminals and deviants in order to emigrate. Yet 84 percent of all Marielitos did not have prison records in Cuba (p. 495–96).

underemployed. However, among those who were employed, many had started their own businesses, were employed professionally, or were skilled workers or craftsmen. Another important finding was that Mariel Cubans who were employed in the ethnic enclave had economic situations comparable to those employed in the “primary” labor market (public-sector and private-sector companies with more than 100 employees).

Portes and Clark (1987) looked at the situations of the same sample of Mariel Cubans six years after their arrival. They found that unemployment among respondents had decreased by half and that earnings had increased. Almost half of their sample (or more than half of those employed) were either self-employed (often as street vendors) or working for Cuban-owned companies; indeed, they conclude that the Marielitos’ incorporation into the South Florida society took place “almost completely...through their absorption into the pre-existing Cuban community” (p. 18).⁸

Portes and Clark (1987) found, however, a limited knowledge of English among their sample, with only 15 percent reporting a “passable understanding” of English (p. 16). In their analysis of 1990 census data, Aguirre et al. (1997) found similar figures pertaining to the adaptation of Marielitos, with only 28 percent reporting that they spoke English “very well,” with median personal earnings of \$12,000 annually, and with almost 90 percent of households having a member or members who were employed. While Marielitos may not have yet reached the economic success status of earlier Cubans, Portes and Clark found most to be satisfied with their lives in the United States, although many felt that discrimination exists (especially from older Cubans) and many said they would return to Cuba if the Castro regime fell.

⁸Although the influx of over 100,000 Marielitos increased Miami’s labor force by 7 percent, Card (1990) found almost no effect on the wages or unemployment rates of less-skilled workers (both Cuban and non-Cuban) in Miami’s labor market.

Potocky (1996) looked at 1990 census data to determine the economic status of Southeast Asian, Cuban, Haitian, Soviet/East European, and Nicaraguan adult refugees in California and Florida who had arrived as children. Potocky used employment status, earnings, public assistance use, employment history (proportion of people who have never worked), poverty, education, and school enrollment as indicators of economic status. She found that Cuban childhood arrivals in Florida had equal or higher economic status on all indicators than total adult Cuban refugees and native-born Cubans. For example, 80 percent of Cuban childhood arrivals were employed, compared to 73 percent and 76 percent of adult Cuban refugees and native-born Cubans, respectively (p. 368). Potocky attributes the success of Cubans to the long lengths of time many Cubans have been in the United States, the cultural and racial advantages of Cubans, and preferential treatment during the admissions and resettlement process.

Portes, Kyle, and Eaton (1992) looked at the usage of mental health services among Haitians and Mariel Cubans in South Florida. Among Mariel Cubans they found a high prevalence of mental illness and psychological disorders such as depression. They attributed these problems to the age and mental illness backgrounds of some refugees. They also found a great deal of help-seeking behavior among their sample (about twice as many Mariel Cubans used services compared to native-born Cubans). The authors attribute the high rate of mental health service use to Cubans' familiarity with psychological and social services in the Cuban health care system and through their connection with favorable social networks.

There has not yet been much research conducted on more recent Cuban arrivals, such as those who were at Guantanamo in the early 1990s. However, there are some

indications regarding the backgrounds of many Guantanamo Cuban refugees and how they are faring in the United States. The Guantanamo Refugee Education and Training program (GREAT) at Miami-Dade Community College has been assisting Guantanamo refugees in English, vocational training, and employment since 1995. Among the student body in the GREAT program, consisting of recent Cuban and Haitian refugees, there are some indications that many Guantanamo Cubans are similar in socioeconomic status to Cubans who came in the 1960s. For example, about half of the original student body had at least a college degree, and many had had former professional careers in Cuba in areas such as medicine (Lozada, 1998). Due to language difficulties, certification requirements, and other obstacles, many of these individuals have experienced downward occupational mobility upon their resettlement in Florida.

In 1997 the Institute for Health and Human Services Research (IHHSR) of Florida State University conducted an evaluation of selected refugee service providers. At the same time they surveyed refugees in Miami-Dade County who had received services from state-funded providers and asked their opinions of services and about their recent employment experiences. Individuals in the GREAT program had higher average educational levels, higher percentages of employment (both before and after training), a lower average age, and a lower percentage of females than people from other programs evaluated in the study. A statistical analysis showed that GREAT program participants also had a higher likelihood of being employed after completing the program.⁹

Overall, Cuban refugees in the United States seem to have good chances in resettlement and economic adaptation due to three main factors: (1) a history of favorable

⁹IHHSR also found that the factors in employment status after services related to gender, ethnicity, earlier employment status, and the type of program the client was in.

refugee admissions and immigration policies, (2) quick incorporation into the South Florida Cuban ethnic enclave and into other ethnic structures that offer economic opportunities and less need for proficiency in English, and (3) a large amount of political power relative to other refugee and immigrant groups. For example, the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF) has had a decisive influence on United States policy towards Cuba since its formation in the 1980s. Furthermore, at both national and state levels, there are significant numbers of Cuban-American legislators, especially from South Florida.¹⁰

Cuban refugees, however, may be at a disadvantage during resettlement in the following ways: (1) precisely because of the high concentration of Cubans in Florida and the security that it provides, Cuban refugees may have less of an incentive to learn English and to assimilate to American culture, (2) based on preconceived perceptions of life in the United States, many Cubans may have high expectations that may not always equate with available opportunities, and (3) the Cuban socialist background differs from the market-driven culture of the United States; Cuban refugees may need education informing them about what is and what is not provided by the United States government (i.e., employment opportunities, education, health care, etc.). Also, acculturation may be difficult because of the large differences between Cuba's authoritarian government and America's emphasis on free speech and freedom (Robson, 1996).

Haitians

Like Cubans, Haitians have steadily sought asylum in the United States since the late 1950s. During the 1960s, thousands of mostly middle- and upper-class Haitians

¹⁰In the 1998 Florida Legislature, Cuban-Americans accounted for 2 seats in the Senate and 6 in the House, out of a total of 39 Senate and 120 House seats. Currently there are two Cuban-Americans representing Florida in Congress, Representatives Lincoln Diaz-Balart and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen.

emigrated to the United States, fleeing from the repressive regime of Francois “Papa Doc” Duvalier, and later from his son, “Baby Doc” Duvalier. Later, the mid-1970s and the 1980 Mariel crisis marked the appearance of “boat people,” poorer Haitians who rafted across the Caribbean to Florida, fleeing both persecution and poor economic conditions. During the 1980s, a policy of interdiction at sea discouraged Haitians from coming to Florida. In 1991, after the first democratically elected leader of Haiti, Jean-Paul Aristide, was ousted in a coup, over 10,000 Haitian refugees fled to Florida. Since the restoration of the Aristide presidency in late 1994, the flow of Haitian refugees to Florida has decreased to almost a “trickle,” but the last two years have seen a rise again in the numbers of Haitians seeking asylum in the United States. For example, on March 7, 1999, 40 Haitians lost their lives when the two boats carrying them sank off the coast of West Palm Beach in South Florida. Of an estimated 43 individuals aboard, only 3 survived (La Corte, 1999). Events such as these suggest a less than satisfactory political and economical situation in Haiti. Haiti remains the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and among the least developed countries in the world (United Nations Development Program, 1998). Despite the initial promise of democratic rule under Aristide and his successor, Rene Preval, the Haitian government has not yet established a stable democratic governing process and has been caught in an increasingly worsening political stalemate. Moreover, human rights abuses by the newly formed Haitian National Police continue to be reported, possibly due in part to a faulty justice system and the need for judicial reform. Haitian advocates maintain that the only effective means of resolving these crises are to organize new elections and to support human rights, social service, and self-help organizations in the Haitian nongovernmental sector in the hopes of

developing a civil society (National Coalition for Haitian Human Rights, 1999a, 1999b; Human Rights Watch/Americas, National Coalition for Haitian Human Rights, & Washington Office on Latin America, 1997).

Haiti appears to have a difficult relationship with the United States as can be seen in much of the history surrounding the two countries. In colonial times Haiti had the dubious distinction of being the first and only “slave republic” in the Western Hemisphere. Later, the United States occupied Haiti for a period in the early twentieth century. Haitian advocates have seen the United States concern for Haiti as generally more political than humanitarian. While the United States was fighting the influence of Castro’s communist Cuba in the 1960s, the Duvalier regime supported the United States by casting votes against Cuba in the Organization of American States (OAS) and allowed the United States to set up military bases in Haiti. The United States in turn tended to overlook the human rights abuses reported to the international community under the Duvalier and later regimes. Thus, while Cubans have been for the most part readily admitted and accepted for resettlement, Haitians have frequently been denied asylum even under apparently severe circumstances. Many Haitian refugees have feared persecution from the Haitian government if returned but have often been repatriated anyway. Maglio (1999) cited the experience of “R.A.” an Aristide supporter seeking asylum in the United States, as a case in point:

. . . After the coup against Aristide the military began targeting neighborhood committees and especially the leaders of the committees. Consequently, my wife and I were forced to go into a continual partial state of hiding . . . We departed Haiti on the evening of November 30, 1991 and sailed all night. The

next morning, December 1, 1991, we were stopped and taken aboard the United States Coast Guard cutter the Hamilton. In the haste of being transferred to the Hamilton, we were forced to leave the suitcase with our clothes aboard the boat. Also in the suitcase was my manda [formal Aristide campaign document] and other important papers. We arrived at Guantanamo on December 5th. In May, 1992, I was allowed into the United States. In June, my wife was denied admission and sent back to Haiti. Approximately a month after she was sent back I received word that my wife had been killed by soldiers. The details, the few to which I could bear to listen, came later in an audio cassette tape from my wife's mother. Apparently, she had been surprised by soldiers hunting for her, tried to escape, and was shot (Maglio, 1999).

Once in the United States, Haitians have suffered discrimination. For example, in the early 1980s, the United States Centers for Disease Control classified Haitians as a high-risk group for AIDS based on studies that wrongly asserted that the disease had originated in Haiti (Civian, 1994). Stepick (1998) described the experiences of a Haitian agricultural worker and his family in Florida who received only \$540 dollars for a five-week period of full-time work when employment records showed that they should have earned \$2,500. These types of difficulties stem in part from Haitians being at a disadvantage in terms of economic adaptation, English language proficiency, and ethnic community development. Existing research indicates that Haitian refugees in the United States have tended to have high poverty levels and low literacy levels in their own

language¹¹ and have lacked ethnic enclaves or community structures in the United States and Florida.

Due to these conditions, researchers have faced significant difficulties in studying Haitian refugees. In conjunction with the studies on Mariel Cubans mentioned above, researchers from Johns Hopkins University and Florida International University conducted longitudinal survey research on Haitian refugees who arrived in South Florida during or after 1980. Stepick and Stepick (1990) described the techniques used in these studies. Problems included identifying the population and ensuring random sampling, developing survey instruments that were sensitive to cultural differences, and establishing trust and rapport with respondents. For example, the authors found that in response to the question, “Are you working?”, many Haitians considered themselves as “working” only if they worked at least 40 hours a week—individuals working part-time or temporary, or who were self-employed would respond with “no” (p. 69).

Stepick and Portes (1986) surveyed Haitians who entered Florida during the 1980 Mariel period and found low levels of English, education, employment, and income, with females having especially lower levels. Only 5 percent of Haitians who came during the Mariel period had graduated from high school, compared to 27 percent of all Haitians in Florida and 55 percent of Haitians in the United States. No respondents had completed college, compared to 4 percent of Haitians in Florida and 10 percent in the United States. The average education of Haitians in their sample was only 4.6 years (pp. 336–337). They also found that 44 percent of their respondents had no knowledge of English, while more than 50 percent had little knowledge of American society. Rates of employment

¹¹Haitian-Creole has been primarily a spoken language until recently, and it is still being standardized in its written form.

were not much better—more than 60 percent of Haitians were jobless (more than one-third of males and over 80 percent of the females), yet less than 2 percent of males and about 6 percent of females described themselves as unemployed and not looking for work. Haitians in the sample who were working had experienced significant downward occupational mobility—almost 50 percent of their sample had worked in skilled blue collar or white collar professional or managerial occupations in Haiti, but only 6 percent were working in such positions in the United States. There was also little evidence of any ethnic enclave type activity. Overall, most Haitians who were working in South Florida tended to work for non-Haitian employers in low-wage, menial positions (p. 338).

Stepick and Portes (1986) also looked at predictors of employment for Haitians. They found that older refugees as well as those with greater education, a knowledge of English, and a knowledge of United States society had better chances at employment. They also asked Haitians about their beliefs relating to discrimination. Fifty percent agreed that there is racial discrimination in economic opportunities in the United States; 65 percent felt that Anglos (white Americans) consider themselves superior to Haitians; 53 percent felt that black Americans discriminate against Haitians; yet 80 percent reported that they had never experienced discrimination by black Americans (p. 346).

Another study from the early 1980s, conducted by Stepick, Brott, Clapp, Cook, & Megi (1982), surveyed 129 adult Haitian ESOL students and gathered information on their socioeconomic and employment status, education, literacy, level of English proficiency, and outlook on life in the United States. Most Haitians in the sample traveled from Haiti to the United States as “boat people.” Although almost 60 percent did not have a “job,” most were working, albeit mostly part-time and temporary work in

the “informal sector,” such as street vending, tailoring, or mechanical work (pp. 19–21). Most had had some amount of formal schooling in Haiti, with an average of almost 8 years; about 40 percent had had secondary schooling, and about 23 percent had had vocational training (pp. 16–17). Of those who were formally employed, about three-fourths were receiving minimum wage or near minimum wage (less than \$4.00 per hour). Despite these somewhat difficult conditions, most (87%) Haitians responded that they were satisfied with life in the United States. Moreover, most respondents (93%) were “completely satisfied” with their ESOL classes, and although the majority of them felt only “a little bit” proficient in English, most respondents performed well on a English test given to them by the researchers (pp. 40–45). Another important finding of the researchers was related to the difficulties that respondents faced in attending classes. The biggest problem mentioned was transportation—students did not usually have access to cars. Students also missed classes due to work or other time conflicts.

Among Haitians who entered as refugee children in Miami-Dade County, Florida, Potocky (1996) found a lower rate of yearly earnings, a lower employment rate, a higher poverty rate, and a higher percentage who have never worked, compared to total adult Haitian refugees and United States born Haitians. For example, while 9 percent of total adult Haitian refugees and 7 percent of United States born Haitians had never worked, almost 22 percent of Haitian childhood arrivals had never worked (p. 370). Additionally, Haitians in 1990 averaged a lower socioeconomic status than Cubans, although on some indicators they compared favorably. For example, while Haitians averaged yearly earnings of \$10,000 to \$16,000 among all three groups, Cubans averaged from \$20,000 to \$24,000.

However, Potocky (1996) also found indications of improvement in socioeconomic status among Haitians since the 1980s. Haitian levels of education tended to be similar to Cuban levels (11–13 years) and to have an even greater percentage of school enrollment (67 percent of Haitian childhood arrivals compared to 21 percent of Cuban childhood arrivals) (pp. 368–370). Overall, between 60–72 percent of Haitians were employed in 1990, a much higher rate of employment than that found previously by researchers during the 1980s. Potocky also found no use of public assistance among Haitians who had entered the United States as refugee children. Indeed, despite such discouraging employment prospects, Stepick (1998) noted that most Haitian refugees did not use welfare. Stepick and Portes (1986) found that among Haitians who had arrived in the 1980s, over one-half had never received food stamps and almost two-thirds had never received free medical assistance, although they were eligible. In an anthropological study of Haitian migrant workers, Chierici (1991) attributed this reluctance to accept welfare to the Haitian concept of *demele*. *Demele* is a Haitian-Creole word that refers to “making it” on one’s own, in spite of difficulties (p. 43). It also carries the meaning of constant improvement: to “look for a higher goal and a different center” (p. 182). Most Haitians she studied viewed their current employment as simply a means of supporting themselves or their families until they could find a better situation.

Indeed, many Haitians in the United States are “making it.” Contrary to the prevailing poor and/or illiterate stereotype of Haitians, Stepick (1998) notes that 40 percent of Haitians in the United States have at least some college education, and more than 22,000 Haitians in the United States hold either professional or managerial positions (p. 53). Most individuals in these groups come from either the earliest refugee groups

(upper- and middle-class refugees from the Duvalier regimes), or they are members of the “second generation” of Haitians. Second-generation Haitians are not immune to discrimination and other problems; many young Haitians often try to obscure their ancestry by going “undercover” and presenting themselves as African Americans. Stepick described one young Haitian who committed suicide once his Haitian identity was made known to other Americans. On the other hand, other young Haitian-Americans have managed to integrate both of their identities, “being” not only African American, but also affirming their Haitian cultural heritage through speaking Haitian-Creole at school, wearing traditional Haitian clothes, or organizing activities related to Haitian culture. Stepick noted that these Haitian “strivers” are typically more successful in school and sports, while those who do not earn respect on American and African American terms seem more likely to remain “undercover” and become academically and socially distant (pp. 59–74).

Bosnians

While Haitian and Cuban refugees have both faced political persecution and economic hardships serious enough to compel them to undertake the perilous journey across the Caribbean to Florida, Bosnians did not consciously make the choice to leave their countries. Rather, they were forced out through internecine fighting and later through the infamous tactic of “ethnic cleansing,” in which entire communities were destroyed. In Bosnia, Muslims were especially targeted by both Serbians and Croatians; however, all groups of the former Yugoslavia, including Croatians and Serbians, were subject to these conditions. For example, in late 1995 Croatian soldiers forced over 250,000 Serbians out of the Krajina region of Croatia (Mertus, Tesanovic, Metikos, & Boric, 1997).

The initial break-up of Yugoslavia occurred in the early 1990s, as Slovenia and Croatia struggled to secede from the former Yugoslavia, now controlled by Serbia. In early 1992 Bosnia formally declared independence, although Bosnian Serbs vehemently opposed the move. By April, 50 years of relatively peaceful co-existence among the three groups had come to an end. After the war formally ended three years later in December 1995, millions of Bosnian refugees were left throughout the former Yugoslavia, most of whom feared to return home. In 1998 the United Nations estimated that there were still over 600,000 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina in Western Europe and in the former Yugoslavia “who remain without durable solutions” (Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, 1998).

One of the most devastating results of the war has been the division of traditionally intermixed Bosnian communities along new ethnic lines. As part of the former Yugoslavia, Bosnia was for the most part made up of Croats, Muslims, and Serbs who shared a common language, Serbo-Croatian, and who were of the same Slavic ethnicity.¹² Mixed marriages and mixed families were common, such that different ancestries or traditions might be included in a single family. Bosnians prided themselves on this unity in diversity, typically identifying themselves as “Yugoslav” rather than “Serb,” “Croat,” or “Muslim.” During the war, however, as a result of “ethnic cleansing” and the nationalistic policies of the Milosevich regime, a process of factionalization similar to what had occurred during World War II in the pre-Communist period caused communities to be divided up again along these very lines. Mertus et al. (1997) provided

¹² Bosnian Muslims are not of Turkish or Middle Eastern descent but are descendants of European Slavs (Croatians and Serbians) who converted to Islam during Turkish Ottoman rule (Maners, 1995).

this quote from one older Bosnian Muslim woman who lost her home to invading Serbian forces:

Our life in Bosnia had become impossible . . . We had to leave because we decided not to fight on any side. What for? Whom for? . . . We left our house to a man, a refugee, a wonderful man, a Serb who will take care of it. When we left, a Serbian woman came to see us off. She was my best friend and we had lived thirty-seven years together . . . / (p. 41)

Such intercommunal warfare often resulted in the separation of families, and tragically turned neighbor against neighbor:

My cousin was killed in his home, that is why we left. A neighbor killed him in the middle of the night, because his brother was killed on the front line. Even though my cousin was a Muslim volunteering in the Serbian army [Yugoslavia National Army], wounded when fighting for his village. The neighbor just fired bullets into him, without a word . . . The police came and took the murderer to prison in Banja Luka, but what is the use of it? . . . Before the war we didn't know who was what, we all had our houses next to each other: in my village Serbs and Muslims lived together. My best friend was a Serbian woman . . . / (p. 29)

Women have especially suffered. While men from all sides were guilty of committing rape during the war, evidence indicates that Bosnian Serbs used rape as part of a systematic “ethnic cleansing” strategy aimed at terrorizing and coercing Muslims and Croatians to leave areas that the Serbs wished to control. The numbers of women raped by Bosnian Serbs has been estimated to be in the tens of thousands. Moreover, non-Serb

males have also been targeted and often killed. Many Bosnians have experienced other atrocities such as forced confinement in concentration camps, torture, the loss of family members or friends, and discrimination against partners in mixed marriages (Mertus et al., 1997; Gutman, 1993; Riedlmayer, 1993).

Since Bosnians are primarily refugees fleeing war conditions as well as political and economic conditions, they qualify under the Refugee Act for admission into the United States and for resettlement services. About 63,000 Bosnians have entered the United States as refugees since 1992 through a referral process with the United Nations; over 3,000 have arrived in Florida during the last two years. Because they are a fairly new refugee population, there is little research relating to the resettlement status of Bosnians in the United States and Florida. Most of the existing research details the health and psychological problems of Bosnian refugees caused by the trauma they have experienced. Other literature examines the status and needs of Bosnian refugees during resettlement.

A team of mental health professionals (Weine et al., 1995) interviewed and clinically assessed 20 Bosnian refugees who had experienced ethnic cleansing (all but one of the refugees in their sample were Muslim). They found 65 percent with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and 35 percent with depressive disorders. Almost all of the refugees that they interviewed had experienced:

. . . the destruction of their homes and belongings, forced evacuation from their towns, serious lack of food and water, disappearance of family members without explanation, exposure to acts of violence or death, loss of loved ones or family

members, prolonged separation from family members, detainment in a refugee camp, and forced emigration . . . (pp. 537–38)

Older Bosnians tended to have a greater exposure to such traumatic events, while adolescents did not usually have formal adult PTSD symptoms (although they might show signs of it by engaging in “traumatic” play and reenactments of traumatic events they had experienced).

In a follow-up study, Weine, Vojvoda, Becker, McGlashan, Hodzic, Laub, Hyman, Sawyer, and Lazrove (1998) examined 34 Bosnian Muslim refugees upon arrival in the United States and again one year after resettlement. At the initial assessment, 25 refugees were diagnosed with PTSD, while at the one-year follow-up only 15 had PTSD. PTSD severity score levels for refugees measured at the follow-up were also somewhat lower than at the initial assessment. However, older refugees appeared more likely to have PTSD and more severe symptoms than younger refugees. The authors concluded that PTSD levels and symptoms among Bosnian refugees had decreased by one year after their resettlement, although they were still substantial. Goldstein, Wampler, and Wise (1997) looked at war experiences and distress symptoms as reported by children and their parents of 364 children in Bosnia. The majority of children had been exposed to extreme war experiences. Children from the Sarajevo region had the highest prevalence and severity of experiences. Almost 94 percent of the children had PTSD, and similar percentages had other depressive disorders such as sadness and anxiety problems. Greater symptoms were found among older children from large cities who had seen family members injured, tortured, or killed.

After their arrival in the United States, Bosnian refugees not only must learn to cope with their past, but they also must learn to deal with difficulties they encounter while they adapt to their new lives. At a conference for Bosnian refugee resettlement agencies in Chicago (Somach, 1995), service providers discussed a host of problems facing Bosnian refugees. For example, Bosnians, like Cubans, were used to a socialist system that provided a wide array of social services. The United States system, conversely, places an emphasis on individual responsibility and operates in a notoriously slow bureaucratic manner. Furthermore, many Bosnians may not realize that not all jobs provide benefits, and often they are not familiar with issues such as income tax and sales tax. Similarly, many Bosnians come to the United States with high expectations of employment or living standards and are not prepared to accept low-wage or entry-level positions (especially those who have had professional employment in the past), slow upward mobility, living in poverty and low-income neighborhoods, or the need to use public assistance. Finally, like many other refugee groups, the majority of Bosnian refugees do not speak English.

In 1995 and 1996, the Center for Applied Linguistics surveyed Bosnian refugees and service providers in the United States to explore refugees experiences in resettlement. They found that services for Bosnian refugees varied widely from state to state, city to city, agency to agency, and even refugee to refugee. Most service providers were mainly resettling Bosnian Muslims, and mainly resettling families rather than single refugees. Service providers indicated that most Bosnian refugees live together in the same neighborhoods, usually in lower income areas. Bosnians are also encountering downward occupational mobility. Most are placed in employment by their service

providers fairly quickly, but mainly in low-paying and entry-level jobs. Professional placements are rare, mostly because of obstacles such as lack of English language proficiency and certification requirements. However, for the most part, free ESL classes are readily available, although many Bosnians who work have stopped attending or are unable to attend ESL classes. Among the greatest difficulties in adjustment listed by service providers were transportation, language, high expectations, war stress, and adapting to differences in work, culture, and life in the United States.

In surveying Bosnian refugees, the Center for Applied Linguistics (1996) found that almost all had been in the United States for less than two years (more than half were less than one year). Most had at least a secondary education. Most refugees were satisfied with housing. Seventy percent rated their English proficiency upon arrival in the United States as “beginning.” About two-thirds said that they had attended ESL classes, with the majority attending for one to three months. About two-thirds stated that their primary income was from working, with a fourth stating that their primary income was from public assistance (RCA, food stamps, or welfare). About one-half had obtained their first job in their first three months in the United States. About 80 percent were employed in professional positions in Bosnia, while in the United States about 75 percent were in unskilled, entry-level positions. The majority of Bosnian refugees, however, responded that health insurance was available to them through their employer. Finally, the biggest work-related problems facing Bosnian refugees included language difficulties, low pay, transportation/distance to work, health insurance/benefits, lack of time, not working in profession, job insecurity, and child care. More than half rated their

adjustment to life in the United States as “okay,” “easy,” or “very easy,” but almost half thought that life in the United States was worse than they had expected.

IMPLICATIONS

A number of important implications can be gleaned from the preceding examination of literature on refugee resettlement. The following are of particular importance: the status of refugees, their employment needs, the needs of refugee women, and other related issues.

Status of Refugees

Among the three refugee populations in Florida discussed in this report, Cubans seem to have the best prospects for relatively easy resettlement, mainly due to a history of preferential treatment, the existence of economically, culturally, and politically well-developed Cuban communities and ethnic enclaves, and less of a pressing need to learn English or to adapt to American culture. At the same time, however, these factors may lead to difficulties among some Cubans with assimilating or “becoming” American. Moreover, political and economical conditions in Cuba will continue to influence the stability and growth of Cuban communities in Florida.

The socioeconomic status of Haitians in Florida has greatly increased during the past decade. Some signs indicative of their success include increased employment levels and growth in entrepreneurial activity in Haitian communities such as “Little Haiti” in Miami. Educational levels among Haitians are beginning to rival those found among Cubans, and Haitians are beginning to move into professional employment. The Haitian experience in America, however, has been one of success mixed with failure. Haitians moved into local economic “opportunity structures” after overcoming initial prejudice and discrimination and obtaining stable employment and housing (Stepick, 1998). Yet, they have been unable to “move up the ladder” from predominantly low-wage employment; they continue to face discrimination and uncertain immigration policies as

well. The burden of “moving up the ladder” now falls on second generation Haitian-Americans, who are for the most part adapting to American life (and often excelling) but are often at risk of being alienated and falling into “non-assimilative” activities such as dropping out of school or engaging in criminal activities.

In many respects, Bosnians may encounter fewer difficulties in resettlement than Haitian or Cuban refugees. They are for the most part literate and educated in their own language, with most having received a secondary education. Many also have professional or skilled employment backgrounds. Additionally, as Europeans they may experience less discrimination based on race or culture than other refugees and immigrants. However, as a result of their experiences during the war in Bosnia, many Bosnians may have problems in adjusting to life in America (such as mental and physical health problems, lack of motivation to find work, or lack of motivation to attend English and training classes). In addition, Bosnians face resettlement difficulties common to other refugee groups such as needing to learn English and learning to adapt and assimilate into American society.

Employment Needs

All three populations discussed in this report encounter obstacles in resettlement related to economic adaptation, English proficiency, and community development. Perhaps for these populations, unemployment, or more precisely, underemployment, is the most crucial obstacle.

At the individual level, two factors seem to be principally involved in aiding or in limiting employment success for refugees: English proficiency level and educational level. These factors can interact in several ways. If, for example, a refugee has received at least a high school or college education but has poor English skills, he or she may

experience downward occupational mobility. This situation commonly affects refugees with professional employment backgrounds. Conversely, if a refugee has good English skills but a low educational level, they will most likely have limited job opportunities. Employment prospects can be particularly bleak for individuals who have low educational levels combined with low English proficiency. For example, many Haitians during the 1980s, in addition to not being proficient in English, had low educational levels or were not literate in their own language. Thus many could not find full-time work and those who did were often employed only in low-wage positions. Employment-related services and training, which incorporate English language instruction, may be effective in lessening these difficulties and increasing employment chances, especially if they assist refugees in finding above minimum wage employment or jobs with health care and other benefits. English instruction with a focus on literacy training is particularly important for Haitian refugees. Such programs should also aim to increase participants knowledge of American society and culture and of the American job market.

On the other hand, individuals who live and work in an ethnic enclave may not need a high educational level or a high level of proficiency in English. As can be seen among Cubans in South Florida, ethnic enclaves and ethnic communities provide opportunities for early employment and sociocultural support not necessarily available to refugees who are struggling to live and work in mainstream society. They may, however, impede assimilation and the development of English language proficiency. In other cases, such as among Haitians in the “Little Haiti” area of Miami, ethnic communities may not be sufficiently developed to fulfill the economic needs of residents or new arrivals, but they may be able to offer social and cultural support, training, or other

community assistance. Finally, ethnic communities may in some cases be detrimental to resettlement. Among Bosnian refugees, for example, living in a community with a high concentration of Bosniacs might cause increased traumatic stress as a result of rekindling memories of war experiences or even of pre-war life in Bosnia. Mutual assistance associations and other community organizations and resources may help to maintain a balance between the culture and society of the “home country” and American culture and society.

The Needs of Refugee Women

As prior research has indicated (Schilit, 1991), refugee women are an often underserved and neglected population in need of specialized services. Many refugee women from Haiti and Cuba, and to a lesser extent from Bosnia, may never have been in the workforce in their home countries. These women may be in need of intensive or long-term training and cultural orientation before they are able to efficiently adapt to the American workforce. In the short term, however, refugee women without workforce experience may have skills in other areas, such as child care, domestic work, or cooking and food preparation that may enable them to obtain positions in early childhood education, hotel and tourism, or restaurant and food service fields. Service providers should make a particular effort, however, to assist such clients in finding positions that pay above minimum wage and/or offer benefits such as health care or child care.

Refugee women often experience greater difficulties in obtaining employment than men. For example, Stepick and Portes (1986) found that among Haitian refugees who entered Florida during the Mariel period, women had unemployment rates about 20 percent higher than men. Such employment differences may be due in part to family and domestic-related responsibilities placed on women. Special attention, therefore, must be

paid to ensuring that the basic needs of refugee women (such as health care or child care) are met, especially in the case of single-parent families. Alternatively, in the case of larger or extended families, other family members may be enlisted to assist with domestic and childcare responsibilities.

In addition to the above-mentioned needs, Bosnian women need specialized health care programs to help them deal with rape or sexual assault that they may have experienced during the war in Bosnia. There may also be a need for counseling or abortion and adoption services in cases of unwanted pregnancies. Bosnian women may additionally need counseling to deal with the loss of their homeland and their past lifestyles. Most Bosnians, and especially children, have serious physical and mental health needs as a result of their experiences during the war, and in addition to attempting to meet these and other needs, service providers have adopted a strategy of trying to reunite families separated during the war.

Other Issues

In addition to trying to meet basic needs upon arrival in their new country, refugees must cope with a variety of other difficulties. Many refugees often arrive not only without much knowledge of English but also with little knowledge of important laws and customs, which can interfere with their assimilation into the larger society. For example, due to differences between the United States and their own societies, refugees may be uneasy or uncertain in dealing with police or other civil authorities, or they may be victims or perpetrators of sexual harassment, child abuse, or domestic violence. Even

apparently minor differences such as greeting customs¹³ or littering and smoking laws can cause difficulties for refugees. Cultural orientation programs are important means of preventing or minimizing the likelihood of these types of situations.

The impact of welfare reform on refugees is not yet fully known, but the 5- to 7-year time limit on benefits may create hardships for noncitizens who rely on public assistance, such as those who are older, disabled, or unable to work. Medical care and financial well-being provisions are particularly important for these populations. Initiatives such as referral to workforce development and education about citizenship may also be helpful to these individuals. Finally, client follow-up by service providers and outreach to employers incorporating such methods as incentives for hiring refugees can help guard against welfare dependency.

Conclusions

There are numerous factors that influence how successful an individual or a group of individuals will be in adapting to life in America and Florida. However, refugees come to the United States and Florida from a variety of backgrounds. Although different refugee groups may have similar needs such as English proficiency or education, women's needs, or knowledge of American society and culture, each refugee population brings its own culture and develops a unique way of adapting to life in America. These experiences must be taken into account when designing initiatives to assist refugees to successfully resettle. Continued research on Cubans, Haitians, and Bosnians in Florida will help to uncover their experiences, past and present.

¹³For example, Stepick (1990) relates the difficulties in interviewing Haitian refugees at home since in Haiti greeting someone at their house is not done by knocking on their door (except by the police) but by hailing them from the street by voice or by throwing small objects such as pebbles at their door.

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