AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

A ROCKY START FOR IRAQI REFUGEES:
AN ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT IN TAMPA BAY,
FLORIDA

by
JAMILA ELIZABETH TANNOUS CHEDID

A project
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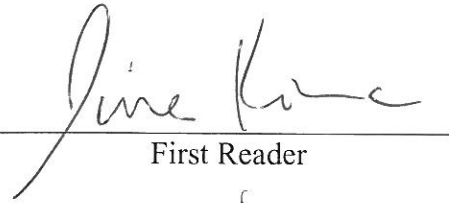

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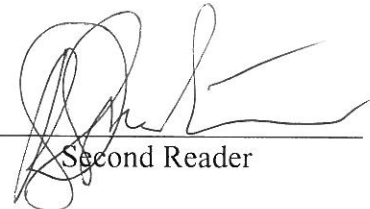FLORIDA

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE PROJECT OF

Jamila Elizabeth Tannous Chedid   for: Master of Arts
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Title: A Rocky Start for Iraqi Refugees: An Action Research Project in Tampa Bay, Florida

This project concerns itself with the acculturation and resulting acculturative stress of Iraqi refugees being resettled by a particular refugee resettlement agency in Tampa Bay, Florida. While volunteering with the resettlement agency from 2010 until 2012, I noticed a distinct void in the acculturation process; ease of access to information on resources available to increase acculturation.

By employing action research methods, I sought to develop a contribution toward resolving that problem for the benefit of the refugees and the employees of the resettlement agency. The project I have created is aimed particularly at Iraqi refugees in Tampa Bay, due to their increasing presence in the area and the unique struggles they face.

I compared my own opinions with the data obtained from academic literature and similar existing resource guides for immigrants and refugees in order to determine the types of local resources and institutions that I should include in the guidebook.

The final product is a guidebook containing relevant local information in an easy to use format that is designed to provide some assistance to Iraqi refugees in Tampa Bay as they go through the process of acculturation.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Migration across borders is not a new phenomenon. At times, the movement is calculated and voluntary, perhaps motivated by the continued search for food and resources, and yet other times, migration is forced, due to danger and fears of persecution. Dating as far back as 3,500 years ago, indications of granting sanctuary to those escaping maltreatment can be found in texts left behind by ancient civilizations of the Middle East (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2013). Currently, there are approximately 10.4 million refugees worldwide, excluding 4.8 million registered Palestinian refugees, who are of concern to the organization.

The United States as a safe haven for the oppressed has long been part of the American historical narrative, beginning with the Pilgrims seeking religious freedom in the 17th century (Haines, 2010). Throughout the world, the United States has been known for generations as a land of opportunity for those seeking a fresh start and a better life; purveyor of the "American Dream" (Haines & Rosenblum, 2010). In part due to its position as a global superpower, and the effects thereof, the United States has often welcomed people from areas in which it has had significant political influence, such as Vietnam, the former Soviet Union and the Middle East (Berman, 2011; Connor, 2010).

Since the country's inception, immigration has been an essential element of American life and national identity (Foner, 2013). The economy of the United States remains dependent on immigration, both legal and illegal, in important sectors such as technology and agriculture (Reyna, Dobria, & Wetherell, 2013). Immigration comes in various forms and while most immigrants are eager to relocate to the United States and

have voluntarily decided to do so, others, including refugees and asylum-seekers, have abandoned their homes and fled to the United States strictly out of necessity (Williams & Berry, 1991). Refugees hold a unique and important place in the national lore, although they make up less than 10 percent of annual immigration (Haines, 2010). Accepting and providing for refugees allows Americans to continue to believe in the American Dream themselves and reinforces the conviction that their country is fair, open-minded and a strong supporter of human rights (Beiser, 2006; Haines, 2010).

Despite romanticized views of the outlook on immigration in the United States, government policies and national attitudes toward all types of immigrants vary significantly and are often self-contradictory (Haines, 2010; Reyna *et al*., 2013). Attitudes tend to become increasingly negative at times when the country undergoes a crisis (Akram & Johnson, 2004). The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and subsequent economic downturn have served as catalysts for this most recent shift (Betts, 2009; Reyna *et al*., 2013). In this context, immigrants represent a symbolic threat; that is, the host communities view immigrants as a danger to their cultural foundations and fear that expanding foreign populations will irrevocably alter the existing culture in negative ways (Hitlan, Carrillo, Zarate, & Aikman, 2007).

Since 1975, when the United States suddenly needed to resettle hundreds of thousands of Indochinese after the collapse of Vietnam, over three million refugees have been resettled nationwide (Office of Refugee Resettlement [ORR], 2014). More than three-quarters of those individuals have been either Indochinese or originally from the former Soviet Union. In the years leading up to September 11, Iraqis consistently represented approximately three percent of the annual refugee allotment. Between 2002 and 2006, in the midst of Operation Iraqi Freedom, that number dropped to less than

one percent. 2008 saw a sharp rise in the flow of Iraqi refugees, making up approximately 23 percent of the allotment that year. The number has consistently stayed above 16 percent since then.

Arabs and Muslims in particular have suffered because of growing hostility toward immigrants, commonly portrayed in public discourses, including the media and government rhetoric, as violent, anti-Western extremists (Akram & Johnson, 2004; Hakim-Larson, Kamoo, Nassar-McMillan, & Porcerelli, 2007). The volume of reports evaluating the treatment of Arabs and Muslims before and after September 11 suggests that those attacks did impact Americans' feelings toward the two communities (Bayoumi, 2008; Hitlan *et al.*, 2007). Since that time, "stereotyped perceptions of Arab Americans have become the primary means by which most of the United States understands Americans of Arab origin" (Ajrouch, 2007, p. 168). Between the time of the attacks in September 2001 and March 2002, hate crimes against Arabs and Muslims, and those perceived to be Arab or Muslim, increased by 1,700 percent and still have not reverted back to pre-September 11 levels (Bayoumi, 2008). In early 2003, a member of President George W. Bush's Commission on Civil Rights openly testified that if Arabs were to orchestrate another terrorist attack on American soil, the suggestion of internment camps, similar to where Japanese Americans were held during World War II, would be difficult to ignore (Orfalea, 2005). At least one other member of the Commission publicly agreed.

A. Project Context

Much has been written about the shortcomings of the United States' program for the resettlement of Iraqis, both before and after their arrival in the country (Sanders &

Smith, 2007; Sassoon, 2010). Based on feedback from resettlement agencies and refugees, many of the calls for reform focus on the acculturation process (Hanna, 2011; Yako & Biswas, 2013).

I have elected to use action research to study Iraqi refugees being resettled in the Tampa Bay, Florida area. The study focuses on a specific refugee resettlement agency, where I volunteered from 2010 until 2012, how the agency presents acculturation resources to recently arrived Iraqi refugees and how that process can be improved. My work, which centers on acculturation and acculturative stress, explores various challenges of refugee resettlement in the United States and discusses resources available to help improve the acculturation process. The refugee experience varies significantly but is always made up of multiple stages, including flight from the home country, waiting in a transit country and, possibly, either resettlement in a host country or repatriation (Haines, 2010). Although permanent resettlement in a host country, such as the United States, is the least likely option, available only to a minimum number of refugees each year, my work focuses exclusively on this group.

Throughout the time I volunteered with the resettlement agency, from 2010 until 2012, a deficiency I noticed in the acculturation process was that refugees are seldom made aware of the full scope of available services and options, much less how to access them. During their brief tenure with the organization, refugees are presented with a wealth of instructions, data and resources but are rarely given a hardcopy of that information to take home, review and refer to at a later date. Instead, available resources are primarily presented, entirely in English, through a single five-hour long Power Point presentation.

That the acculturation session is in English is the first hindrance to its usefulness. Many of the refugees are still learning the fundamentals of the language and miss the value of the presentation simply because they do not sufficiently understand it. Furthermore, although the content may be worthwhile, it may not be relevant to the refugees' situations at that particular stage of the acculturation process so it is disregarded. Without a way to easily, reliably access the information in the future, refugees may unnecessarily spend valuable time researching topics already presented to them – with no guarantee they would be able to do so successfully – when they could instead be using that time searching for work or studying English.

I quickly learned firsthand the impacts shortages of time and money can have on non-profit organizations. Two years after I began volunteering, the organization lost a significant source of funding. That budget reduction forced the Volunteer Coordinator position to be eliminated and all volunteer activity was indefinitely suspended. Volunteers were a critical asset and the loss meant the organization's employees were required to take on more responsibilities. Ultimately, the result was that the refugees received even less time, personal attention and access to resources that could help them along the path to successful acculturation.

B. Purpose of the Project

The purpose of my work is to contribute toward efforts to improve the acculturation process and mitigate acculturative stress for Iraqi refugees coming to the immediate Tampa Bay, Florida area. "Indeed, where is the justification or purpose in pursuing academic work in refugee studies if the end result is not to offer something, sooner or later, for the benefit of those people we are studying?" (Haddad, 2008, p. 6).

In this case, I seek to remedy a particular void I noticed while volunteering with the resettlement agency; ease of access to information regarding resources that are available to increase acculturation.

To help improve this situation I have created a bilingual paperback booklet containing a description of services and contact information for dozens of institutions in the Tampa Bay region that would be useful to recently arrived Iraqi refugees. It is in no way a complete listing of all resources or contacts that could be needed but it is a comprehensive index covering far more than just the basics. Some of the details included in the guide are available food and clothing assistance, public transportation, English language education, Arabic-speaking healthcare providers, churches, mosques and Middle Eastern supermarkets.

The guidebook is not intended to be an absolute solution to any problem but it is a useful, practical tool to save time and reduce stress for refugees by allowing them to easily, efficiently discover available resources aimed at improving their acculturation. Improving resettlement procedures is not only in the best interest of the refugees; it is also beneficial for the cities and towns accepting refugee populations and the country overall (Beiser, 2006). Increased commitment to bettering their chances of successful resettlement early on in the process will help insure refugees will go on to become contributing members of their newfound communities and help perpetuate the cycle of refugee resettlement that has grown to be an important part of American heritage and identity (Beiser, 2006; Haines & Rosenblum, 2010).

C. Significance of the Project

In 1943, anthropologists Linton and Hallowell advocated the importance of studying acculturation because, as they saw it, the world continued to shrink as cross-cultural interaction grew. The phenomenon of globalization, and thus the relevance of acculturation, has increased dramatically since that time (Betts, 2009; Mirza & Heinemann, 2012). First and second generation immigrants now make up close to 20 percent of the U.S. population and the immigrants coming to this country are from increasingly varied regions (Mirza & Heinemann, 2012). This makes acculturation a subject relevant not only in academia, but in everyday life as well, as the relevance of better understanding the possible results and consequences of cross-cultural interaction is further enhanced (Betts, 2009).

Some authors have suggested that Arabs have gone unnoticed by researchers studying minority populations in the United States, in part due to difficulties clearly defining and identifying Arabs as a specific ethnic group (Samhan, 1999; Wrobel, Farrag, & Hymes, 2009). In spite of the focus placed on Arab-Americans post-September 11, it is challenging to identify them as a subgroup for the purpose of research since Arabs are officially classified as non-Hispanic whites (Ajrouch, 2007). Confusion around the appropriate use of identifying categories including Arab, Muslim and Middle Eastern has complicated research efforts (Wrobel *et al*., 2009). Despite the availability of information on the subject, and the growing numbers of immigrants coming from the Middle East, little work has been done involving Arabs or Iraqis, refugees or otherwise (Ajrouch, 2007; Takeda, 2000).

A wealth of problems exists in the United States' current framework for refugee resettlement and the situation appears to be getting progressively worse (Hanna, 2011).

According to a report from the International Rescue Committee, one of the numerous nonprofit groups working to resettle Iraqis in the United States, the current resettlement program has many shortcomings that actually commit the refugees to a life of "poverty rather than helping rebuild their lives in the country that offered them sanctuary" (International Rescue Committee [IRC], 2009). The ineptitude of the resettlement program, in addition to the frail state of the U.S. economy, has left some refugees wondering if they would be better off in Iraq, in spite of the constant violence and turmoil (Gupta, 2013). Ahmad Talib, an Iraqi social worker in El Cajon, California, where the main street is now nicknamed "Little Baghdad," knows of at least five recently arrived families who chose to return home, despite the risks.

The plight of refugees from Iraq is particularly significant to Americans because of the war the United States waged in that country throughout the last decade (Sanders & Smith, 2007). Since Operation Iraqi Freedom began in 2003, over four million Iraqis, or approximately 15 percent of the country, have been forced to escape their homes (Berman, 2011; Bettis, 2010). Of those, an estimated two million remain displaced within Iraq while two million more have sought refuge in nearby countries and around the world.

Since 2007, approximately 85,000 Iraqis have entered the United States as refugees and tens of thousands more are expected to follow (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services [USCIS], 2013). The resettlement program in Florida is the country's largest, resettling nearly 30,000 refugees in 2013 from as close as Haiti and as far away as Burma (Department of Children and Families [DCF], 2013). Statewide, the only region that resettles more refugees than Tampa Bay is Miami. In the Tampa Bay area, refugees from Iraq are outnumbered only by those from nearby Cuba. With no

cause to believe the growth trend will slow in the near future, improved processes and accommodations are needed.

The protracted situations in both Egypt and Syria may mean future surges of Arabic-speaking refugees who could similarly benefit from the guidebook I have developed. Egyptian refugees have already begun to relocate to Tampa Bay during the last year (DCF, 2013). The number of refugees from Syria has far exceeded two million and continues to increase daily (UNHCR, 2014). Although the United States has been willing to accept few Syrian refugees thus far, there are indications that may change. During a recent government hearing on the Syrian crisis, a representative of the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration assured the audience the department is working to respond to refugee referrals from the UNHCR more swiftly and efficiently (Sprusansky, 2014). Several thousand refugee referrals, according to the representative, are projected to be accepted in the coming year.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL REVIEW

This section of the literature review will present a brief summary of theoretical and empirical works relevant to the project. It will start by defining the terms refugee, acculturation and acculturative stress, followed by a review of theories and applicable research conducted on Iraqi and Arab populations in the United States. I have elected to focus on the element of acculturative stress because it is an experience that affects all refugees to varying degrees, regardless of country of origin, age, gender, education level or economic status, meaning the guidebook, with some adaptations, should be of practical use for other groups in the future (Nwadiora & McAdoo, 1996; Rudmin & Ahmadzadeh, 2001).

A. Who is a Refugee?

Refugees are a very specific class of immigrant granted certain protections and rights under the law (Betts, 2009). Since their legal status directly affects the services they are entitled to, the content of the guidebook I developed was therefore impacted. Unlike other immigrant groups, refugees are pushed toward migration because they face victimization and discrimination in their home countries and have genuine concerns for their safety and wellbeing (Haines, 2010; Martin, 2005). The international community's policies regarding refugees can truly mean the difference between life and death for these individuals (Haddad, 2008).

The term *refugee,* as it is used today, developed in the aftermath of the Second World War (Zieck, 2010). The inherent implication is that severe changes to circumstances in the refugee's home country have made it unsafe to remain there

(Haddad, 2008). As World War II came to a close, the tremendous process of moving hundreds of thousands of displaced Europeans back to their native countries began (Zieck, 2010). Citing concern for their safety, many resisted the prospect of returning home, which led the United Nations to declare that repatriation must be entirely voluntary. The notion of *non-refoulement,* a ban on forcibly returning refugees to a state where they have a reasonable fear of maltreatment, was consequently introduced (Betts, 2009).

The 1951 Refugee Convention created the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as a subsidiary of the General Assembly (Zieck, 2010). The primary responsibility of the UNHCR is to protect refugees but the organization is also responsible for determining refugee status and supplying humanitarian aid (Nawyn, 2013; Zieck, 2010). The Refugee Convention sets forth the definition of refugee I will adhere to throughout this work: Someone who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country" (UNHCR, 2013).

To be considered a refugee and obtain the rights and protections associated with that status, individuals must register with the UNHCR, or on rare occasions, with the American embassy or an authorized non-governmental organization (NGO) once outside of their home country (Forrest & Brown, 2014). Employees of these institutions review each case and decide if applicants meet the requirements for refugee status. Although their needs may mirror those of recognized refugees, individuals who leave

their homelands due to natural disaster or famine are ineligible to be considered refugees (Kane & Peterson, 1995).

Many think of refugees as being forced from their homes and while that is to some degree true, refugees are not entirely powerless in the situation (Haines, 2010; Martin, 2005). Those individuals who are able to flee are "often precisely those who could act" (Haines, 2010, p. 34). Circumstances in the home state often deteriorate over time so while refugees may need to leave quickly and with few possessions, there is generally a modicum of forethought involved (Martin, 2005). Despite exercising choice, refugees are still considered forced migrants and their decision to escape is likely not entirely voluntary (Haines, 2010).

Refugees and other immigrant groups share numerous similarities but there are also distinct, significant differences between them (Haines, 2010; Malkki, 1995). Although refugees make up a minimal amount of annual immigration to the United States, they are often resigned to be the most noticeable and challenging immigrants (Beiser, 2006; Haines & Rosenblum, 2010). Exposure to peril, violence and loss are hallmarks of even the most basic examples of the refugee experience (Haines, 2010). Many refugees have survived situations "literally beyond the imagination of most people" (Malkki, 1995, p. 510).

As in the countries where refugees await resettlement, once in the United States, those individuals with refugee status are treated differently (Forrest & Brown, 2014; Nawyn, 2011). Unlike most other immigrants, who are at least in part judged by their economic prospects, refugees are granted entrance to the United States without any consideration of their skills or means (Nawyn, 2011). Refugees are also provided with financial assistance, albeit a limited amount, for a fixed period after arrival (Masterson,

2010). Additionally, only refugees are immediately given permanent residency and entitled to receive the same services and benefits as American citizens (Mirza & Heinemann, 2012; Sinha, Andrews, Lawrence, & Ghannam, 2012).

For all immigrants, the acculturation process is affected by the customs and beliefs of the society from which they came (Haines, 2010). For example, Arab culture is viewed as being centered around the family and as having a notoriously expansive "cousin network," which plays an important role whether or not members of the nuclear family are absent (Chun & Akutsu, 2003; Orfalea, 2005). Such strong kinship and social ties can be particularly helpful and supportive during acculturation and, equally, those without a sufficient support system are burdened with additional acculturative stress (Haines, 2010).

That refugees have often been viewed as a separate, homogenous entity, much like an ethnic group, is an academic and practical challenge (Malkki, 1995; 2002). Some researchers have ascribed characteristics and traits to refugees simply based on their legal status. Governments and humanitarian groups have often provided uniform responses to refugee situations, not taking into account the specifics of the socio-political environment or the refugees' needs as individual human beings.

B. Defining Acculturation and Acculturative Stress

Allusions to acculturation can be found going back to 1880 but the most commonly referred to definitions developed in the 20th century (Rudmin & Ahmadzadeh, 2001). Study of the subject initially began with cultural anthropologists examining the impact of Western society on third world countries (Malkki, 1995; 2002).

It has since also become a significant topic of research in the fields of cross-cultural psychology, psychiatry and sociology (Berry, 2003; Malkki, 1995).

According to anthropologists Redfield, Linton and Herskovits (1936), "acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups" (p. 149). The authors go on to emphasize the distinctions between acculturation and other related terms, namely culture-change, which acculturation is an element of, and assimilation and diffusion, which are both regarded as stages of the acculturation process.

A second definition states that acculturation is "culture change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems" (Social Science Research Council [SSRC], 1954, p. 974). This definition is consistent with Redfield *et al.* but expands on it by asserting that changes due to acculturation may not exclusively be results of "direct cultural transmission" (SSRC, 1954, p. 974). Changes may also be consequences of ecological or demographic shifts introduced by the dominant culture. Additionally, changes may be reactionary in nature and, since acculturation is a process that occurs over time, changes may not be immediately apparent.

Berry originally presented the term "acculturative stress" as a replacement for "culture shock," which was once regarded as a disorder closely related to psychosis (Berry, 2006; Tartakovsky, 2007). Whereas "shock" implies something inherently negative, "stress" can have both negative and positive elements, as does acculturation itself (Berry, 2006). Thus, acculturative stress is a stress reaction to problems individuals encounter during the acculturation process, specifically, problems that arise

from the immigrants' increased exposures to the dominant culture "that challenge their cultural understandings about how to live" (Berry, 2006, p. 294).

Facing a host of sudden changes, including different social customs, a new language and new rules of law can all cause acculturative stress (Organista, Organista, & Kurasaki, 2003). Higher levels of acculturative stress are associated with poor language proficiency, low income and separation from family (Dillon, La Rosa, & Ibanez, 2013). Physical adjustments, such as food consumption and type of housing, can also produce physical and psychological effects that are considered acculturative stressors (Nwadiora & McAdoo, 1996). While some challenges faced by immigrants are shared by all Americans, such as obtaining affordable housing and quality education, there are other difficulties encountered exclusively by immigrant groups, including learning English and adapting to American customs (Haines, 2010; Wrobel *et al.,* 2009).

Refugees tend to experience greater acculturative stress than other types of immigrants, at least in part because their migration may not have been completely voluntary and they likely had less time to prepare for it (Nwadiora & McAdoo, 1996; Tartakovsky, 2007). Furthermore, refugees also bear the burden of being "expected to conform to the values of their sponsors" (Harrell-Bond, 1999, p. 145). This demand is far more exacting for refugees than for other immigrant groups because, by definition, forces beyond their control have required refugees to flee their homes, often leaving them with a stronger need to preserve their native culture and less inclined to successfully acculturate (Haddad, 2008).

There are a wide range of symptoms associated with acculturative stress, including but not limited to, fear, anxiety, depression, homesickness, lonesomeness, low

self-esteem and identity confusion (Tartakovsky, 2007; Williams & Berry, 1991)

Psychological disorders are possible in severe situations (Tartakovsky, 2007).

C. Theories and Models

In refugee research, acculturation is often interpreted through a psychological perspective, not only by psychologists but also by other social scientists (Malkki, 1995). While the migration and acculturation processes certainly cause anguish and impact refugees psychologically and spiritually, it is important not to assume that refugee populations will inevitably suffer from psychological disorders.

With that in mind, I chose to review academic literature primarily written from a psychological perspective, despite the availability of literature in the fields of anthropology and sociology. I pursued this option because of my interest in acculturative stress, which impacts the psychology of the individual, not the group. According to Berry (2006), examining acculturation at the group level "requires extensive ethnographic, community-level work," whereas examining acculturation at the individual level requires studying a sample of individuals who are part of a group undergoing acculturation (p. 289). My experience volunteering at the resettlement agency afforded me the opportunity to meet and converse with refugees on a one-on-one basis, where a psychological perspective was most appropriate.

Although the definitions of acculturation discussed above indicate the process can affect both the dominant and non-dominant groups, many researching acculturation in the United States have conducted their studies with the assumption that members of the non-dominant group will undergo greater changes as they are expected to acclimatize to the dominant Anglo-American culture (Chun & Akutsu, 2003).

Many authors from numerous fields (Berry 1992; 2003; 2006; Padilla, 1980) have outlined distinct options for addressing acculturation, often bearing many similarities to the results of acculturation proposed by Redfield *et al.* (1936). The strategies focus on the primary issues immigrants undergoing the acculturation process must face, namely, how much of their native culture they want to maintain versus how much they desire to participate in their adopted society (Berry, 2006).

The possible strategies, according to Berry (1992; 2003; 2006), are as follows: Assimilation, Integration, Separation and Marginalization. Assimilation occurs when immigrants abandon their own culture in favor of the dominant culture. Integration occurs when immigrants seek to engage with the dominant culture but still maintain elements of their original culture. Separation occurs when immigrants aim to preserve their culture at the expense of participating in the majority culture. Marginalization occurs when immigrants exclude themselves from both cultures. Some individuals may apply the marginalization strategy by choice but for others it is a consequence of discrimination and previously unsuccessful attempts at acculturation (Berry, 2003).

Berry (1992; 2003; 2006) advocates the importance of examining acculturation at the group and individual levels, or a multilinear approach. Study of the group focuses on the sociocultural environment, while study of the individual focuses on the psychological element. Not all individuals, even those exposed to the same acculturative changes, will exhibit the effects of acculturation similarly. Impacts on the individual can range from fairly mild behavioral changes, such as the way one speaks, eats, or dresses, to more significant cultural changes related to language, religion, etc. The cultural changes result in acculturative stress, which is characterized by feelings of depression and anxiety.

Berry (1992; 2003; 2006) also argues that the least stressful acculturation strategy is Integration, while Marginalization is the most stressful. Assimilation and Separation are both in between Integration and Marginalization, but an immigrant's specific circumstances determine which of the two strategies is least stressful. Further, Berry asserts that Integration is typically most favorable because it allows immigrants to take advantage of resources available in the host society while still retaining support and solidarity from the ethnic community. Other researchers (Ajrouch, 2007; Lamba & Krahn, 2003) also support the notion of bicultural acculturation because of the positive benefits extolled on refugees.

Padilla's (1980) proposed model of acculturation centers primarily around two features, cultural awareness and ethnic loyalty. He defines cultural awareness as an individual's familiarity with the cultural elements, such as language, history and cuisine, of the dominant and non-dominant groups. Ethnic loyalty reflects the individual's predilection for one culture over the other. Ethnic loyalty is dependent on cultural awareness, ethnic identification and level of acculturation, as it is believed that less acculturated individuals are more likely to maintain closer relationships with the members, institutions and activities of the ethnic community. Padilla, like Berry, criticizes previous acculturation models for their unidirectional premise. Additionally, he criticizes others for stressing the importance of generational level to the exclusion of other crucial factors, including language, heritage, pride and identity. Padilla also highlights the potential of actual or supposed prejudice to minimize interaction between dominant and non-dominant group members, thereby slowing the process of acculturation.

D. Studying Acculturation and Acculturative Stress

Immigrant populations in the United States must deal with significant social, economic and political demands to acculturate to "traditional" Anglo-Saxon American culture (Zane & Mak, 2003). Acculturation is particularly daunting for refugees because their migration is by definition to a greater or lesser extent forced (Nwadiora & McAdoo, 1996; Tartakovsky, 2007). Because of the widespread impact of acculturation on members of both the dominant and non-dominant cultures, efforts to research and quantify its effects have been extensive (Zane & Mak, 2003).

Data addressing acculturation and acculturative stress has predominantly been collected through use of self-reporting methods, including surveys, questionnaires and interviews (Berry, 2003; Zane & Mak, 2003). The legitimacy of qualitative results, however, often remains somewhat ambiguous because of the difficulty of determining the degree to which attitudes and behaviors are direct results of acculturative stress and because the attitudes and behaviors of individuals experiencing acculturation can vary significantly. The inadequate standards of measurement are an indication that the fields of acculturation and acculturative stress have yet to reach an accepted consensus on theories and models (Chun & Akutsu, 2003). Confusion about distinctions between the definitions of acculturation and related terms, including assimilation, integration and adaptation, has also made obtaining conclusive results challenging (Takeda, 2000).

Predominantly, studies have concluded that acculturative stress does affect an individual's mental health and can manifest itself in symptoms such as anxiety, depression, substance abuse and suicidal tendencies (Berry, Kim, Power, Young, & Bujaki, 1989; Hovey & King, 1996; Organista *et al.,* 2003). Research has further shown that raised levels of acculturative stress, particularly during the initial stages of

acculturation, increase the odds individuals will develop mental health problems (Hovey & King, 1996; Organista *et al.,* 2003).

Language is the most commonly measured indicator of acculturation (Padilla, 1980; Zane & Mak, 2003). Even within this topic there is significant variation with regard to the questions posed. For example, some researchers have chosen to examine just English fluency, or lack thereof (Ajrouch, 2007; Nwadiora & McAdoo, 1996), while others look at language use within specific contexts, such as in the home versus in the workplace (Dillon *et al.,* 2013; Padilla, 1980). Generally, researchers have concluded that there is a positive correlation between competency in the dominant language and acculturation (Ajrouch, 2007; Dillon *et al.,* 2013; Nwadiora & McAdoo, 1996; Padilla, 1980).

The link between employment and refugees' self-esteem and mental health has consistently been affirmed by researchers (Fernbrant, Essen, Ostergren, & Cantor-Graae, 2013; Perera *et al.,* 2013). Nwadiora and McAdoo (1996) argue that their findings prove a "direct correlation between acculturative stress and unemployment" (p. 483). Further, the adverse effects on mental health are even more pronounced for refugees faced with discrimination by the majority culture (Nwadiora & McAdoo, 1996; Tartakovsky, 2007).

Many studies use participants of the same ethnicity in an attempt to draw conclusions about a particular group's acculturation processes (Fernbrant *et al.,* 2013; Tartakovsky, 2007). Studies have most frequently used participants of Southeast Asian, African or Hispanic origins (Dillon *et al.,* 2013; Hovey & King, 1996; Perera *et al.,* 2013). Berry cautions researchers against oversimplifying the results of studies with broad classifications, such as "African" or "Hispanic" (Berry, 2003). Appropriate

attention should also be given to the unique features and circumstances of sub-groups and individuals so as to avoid stereotyping. As previously discussed, research on Arabs and Iraqis is generally lacking (Ajrouch, 2007; Samhan, 1999).

Below are more comprehensive reviews of studies of acculturation conducted on Arabs and, in particular, on Iraqis. When reviewing literature on Iraqi refugees resettled in the United States, including the sampling below, it is important to be aware that studies on the most recent wave of refugee, those who have arrived after 2003, are still lacking. Much of the literature therefore refers to refugees who were resettled in the 1990s, after the first Gulf War. The literature addressing Iraqi refugees, and my experience with the most recent wave of refugees, indicates that the groups are relatively homogenous. There are few differences in socio-economic status, region of origin, or religion.

Takeda (2000) examined the psychological and economic adaptation of male Iraqi refugees who came to the United States during the 1990s. Although the term "acculturative stress," is not explicitly used, the author repeatedly notes the high levels of stress inherent in the harsh circumstances perpetuating refugee migration, the migration itself and exposure to a new, vastly different culture. Takeda goes on to add that refugees from Iraq are in the unique position of dealing with additional stress attributable to the prevalence of prejudice and negative stereotyping against Iraqis and Arabs in the United States.

Based on the refugees' responses to the Center for Epidemic Studies Depression (CES-D) scale, the study concluded that the refugees from Iraq have greater hardships than other types of immigrants. The hardships of Iraqi refugees are at least as severe, if not more so, than other refugee populations. 20 percent of respondents, all of whom

were of working age, were unemployed. Because of communication barriers and problems certifying degrees or validating past employment experience, Takeda found that more highly educated refugees faced greater difficulty finding work and often had lower incomes than less educated refugees. More educated refugees reported reluctance to work as unskilled laborers for extended periods due to frustration and embarrassment, leading them to be more likely to depend on government assistance. Interestingly, English language competency did not prove to be a significant predictor of either economic or psychological adaptation.

Social support, however, was found to be crucial for successful acculturation. Takeda asserted that for refugees lacking the necessary social support from family members, support from the Iraqi community was a viable substitute. Members of the ethnic community may give one another information regarding job opportunities and may be able to help facilitate transportation to and from work. For refugees with young children, the community might also be able to provide additional childcare options, often based on cultural or religious principles, which would give parents greater flexibility when evaluating potential employment options.

In studying a group of elderly Arab immigrants residing in Michigan, Wrobel *et al.* (2009) utilized the Multi-dimensional Acculturative Stress Inventory (MASI) and Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS). The participants were of particular interest because of their age. In terms of research, elderly Arab-Americans have been all but ignored (Ajrouch, 2007; Wrobel *et al.,* 2009).

Results of the study found that refugees of this particular background and age experienced higher levels of acculturative stress than most other immigrant groups. Stress levels relating to lack of English proficiency were also significantly higher

among refugees than other immigrants. Higher levels of stress regarding lacking English proficiency were found among Iraqis versus those Arabs of other nationalities. Iraqis also indicated greater pressure to acculturate than the others. Overall, the refugee participants and Iraqi participants both revealed significantly higher rates of depression that either non-refugees or non-Iraqis. Given the socio-political climate at the time, these results did not surprise the researchers. Many of the Iraqis, who comprised the majority of the refugee respondents, dealt with feelings of isolation and hostility in the United States, after already undergoing considerable upset in their home country, so the importance of acculturating more quickly may have been greater.

According to authors Yako and Biswas (2013), their study addressing the effects of acculturative stress on Iraqi refugees is the only such study conducted in the United States. They applied Berry's four strategies directly to the acculturation of Iraqi refugees in the United States. Assimilation: abandonment of Iraqi culture in favor of American culture; Integration: the blending of Iraqi and American cultures; Separation: total rejection of American culture; Marginalization: disconnection from both Iraqi and American cultures.

The research found that the chance to participate in religious activities was connected to lower acculturative stress and Muslim respondents were more likely to have increased acculturative stress than Christians. There was no significant correlation, however, between acculturative stress levels and employment but those who reported being content with their social lives in Iraq also indicated greater acculturative stress in the United States.

E. Recommendations for Reform and Reduction of Acculturative Stress

In an op-ed piece published by Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, a leader in coordinating resettlement reform efforts with the Obama administration, Daniel Masterson, founding director of a food-aid group working with Iraqi refugees and formerly of the UNHCR, submitted his own recommendations, including greater educational and orientation sessions both before and after resettlement, the goal of which would be to increase the likelihood that Iraqi refugees integrate and succeed in the United States (Masterson, 2010).

The International Rescue Committee produced a report in 2011 listing many proposals for the resettlement program, which support the assertions of Masterson and others. More comprehensive orientation processes and improved distribution of information regarding available benefits, resources and acculturation will leave refugees better equipped to deal with the challenges of acculturation and, ultimately, help them become well adjusted, contributing members of their new communities (IRC, 2011).

In studies and interviews, refugees have echoed these calls for change, expressing the desire to spend more time in acculturation programs in order to increase their understanding of societal customs and norms, job hunting and available refugee services and benefits (Gupta, 2013; Kornfeld, 2012). Demands for more English instruction are also abundant (Kornfeld, 2012).

Employees of resettlement agencies who interact with refugees on a daily basis also emphasize the need for more education, "dismissing as laughable the four hours of cultural orientation some receive as their entire introduction to American society" (Gupta, 2013, p. 24). Olga, who works for a resettlement agency in Chicago and came to the United States as a refugee herself, discusses the challenges associated with

acculturation (Nawyn, 2011). She acknowledges the importance of obtaining fluency in English in finding jobs but also stresses the ability to communicate as a crucial factor in becoming acclimatized to and a part of the new communities in which refugees find themselves. Olga goes on to add that acculturation sessions should not overlook the value of explaining cultural nuances, such as body language.

Immigrants' lack of familiarity with social service systems and procedures in the United States is a known issue (Gold, 1992; Mirza & Heinemann, 2012). Considerable time has been invested in exploring the differences between native-born Americans and foreign-born immigrants and refugees with regard to availability and consumption of social services (Mirza & Heinemann, 2012). Gold (1992) found that between 50 and 70 percent of refugees at the time did not even know how to reach important services offered to them, such as English classes and food banks.

Although resettlement agencies and other organizations working with refugees should work to meet the demands of more education and training, employees of these organizations must also be cognizant of the manner in which they provide services (Jamil, H., Farrag, M., Hakim-Larson, J., Kafaji, T., Abdulkhaleq, H., & Hammad, A., 2007; Nawyn, 2011). Resettlement agencies should pay particular attention since they represent the refugees' initial introduction to the country (Yako & Biswas, 2013). Iraqi refugees have expressed frustration at ignorance of their culture and perceived prejudice.

CHAPTER III

CONTEXTUAL REVIEW

It is important to have a cursory understanding of some terminology and recent history that have predicated the development of current resettlement processes in the United States. This section will discuss the process of refugee resettlement in the United States, the ongoing Iraqi refugee crisis, as well as my review of existing guidebooks.

A. Permanent Resettlement in the United States

Options available to the UNHCR for protecting refugees include voluntary repatriation, remaining in the transit country or permanent resettlement in a third country (Martin, 2005; Masterson, 2010). Resettlement is the least used and least desirable of the three. Refugees given this opportunity are considered especially vulnerable and likely unable to either safely return home or safely remain in the transit country (Fisher, 2013). The United States sets an annual quota for each country (Berman, 2011). Iraqi priority cases include single mothers, unaccompanied minors, individuals with serious health conditions, victims of torture and those with connections to the U.S. military, United Nations or related organizations working in Iraq (Sanders & Smith, 2007). Employees of the UNHCR, American embassy or NGO who determine refugee status are also responsible for determining whether or not individuals should be referred to the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) for resettlement (Forrest & Brown, 2014). Once referred to USRAP, refugees prepare for interviews with U.S. immigration officers (Fisher, 2013). They must also submit to various medical and security screenings before officially being accepted for resettlement.

The services offered to and attitudes toward refugees vary significantly from one country to another (Nawyn, 2013). Many nations are apprehensive about accepting large numbers of refugees because of the anticipated economic strains and possible risks to security and national identity (Haddad, 2008). With such concerns in mind, resettlement processes are typically intended to integrate refugees into the existing population as smoothly as possible so as to limit the impact on that existing population (Nawyn, 2013). Inherent in refugee resettlement efforts in the United States are the concepts of permanence, opportunity and a focus on refugees becoming financially independent, meaning they do not accept any form of cash assistance, as quickly as possible (Haines, 2010). Along with those notions come great demands on the part of refugees to "prove" they are deserving of the chance at a new life and will not squander it.

The stated goal of The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), a division of the Health and Human Services Department, is to give refugees the chance to make the most of the opportunity they have been afforded by "linking people in need to critical resources to assist them in becoming integrated members of American society" (ORR, 2014). The federal agency is the main financer of resettlement efforts but volunteer agencies (VOLAGs) actually provide the vast majority of services (Forrest & Brown, 2014; Nawyn, 2011).

Before arrival in the United States, refugees approved for resettlement are referred to a VOLAG representing the ORR (Forrest & Brown, 2014). The specific location where refugees are resettled is contingent upon the VOLAG obtaining financial support, cooperation from the local community, sponsors and agencies. VOLAGs attempt to place refugees in areas with culturally appropriate services and resources. The local resettlement agency then secures furnished housing and provides basic food

and household items for the refugee family upon arrival (Nawyn, 2011). The agency also assists with finding employment, enrolling children in schools and adults in English classes, as well as helping to manage the government provided financial assistance all refugees receive.

Resettlement agencies are supposed to provide refugees with helpful, personalized advice, assistance and services but due to the "inherently awkward nature of resettlement," those goals are rarely achieved to the satisfaction of the agencies or the refugees themselves (Gold, 1992, p. 143). It is extremely difficult for an organization to provide "elusive elements of social membership on demand," regardless of funding or training. The primary goals of resettlement agencies, economic independence and acculturation, are complicated, difficult tasks (Gold, 1992). When resettlement benefits expire, refugees may or may not stay in contact with the agency (Nawyn, 2011).

Successful resettlement depends on a wide range of factors, some of which refugees have no control over (Gold, 1992). The vastness of the United States and the lack of centralized control over the administration of resettlement benefits have resulted in drastically different experiences from one refugee to another (Nawyn, 2011). A given region of the country may have job opportunities better suited for a refugee's particular skill set but may not have adequate access to language training or an established ethnic community to provide support and resources throughout the acculturation process (Haines, 2010).

B. Crisis in Iraq

The Iraqi situation is unique compared to other refugee crises of recent memory, notably Rwanda and Darfur (Sinha *et al., 2012)*. Many Iraqis do not fit the standard

image of refugees shown in the media. They are not underfed, illiterate and accustomed to living in rural, poverty-stricken hinterlands. Conversely, the group is predominately composed of urbanites from the educated middle and upper classes. The needs of this category of refugee are inherently different and far exceed the very basic demands of traditional refugee populations (Yun, K., Hebrank, K., Graber, L., Sullivan, M., Chen, I. & Gupta, J., 2012).

Those coming from Iraq to the United States as refugees are in the unique position of obtaining sanctuary in the nation "that most would argue caused their displacement" (Hanna, 2011, p. 193). World leaders have been reluctant to pledge their countries' assets and resources to support Iraqi refugees since they see it as a situation the United States cultivated by virtue of its decision to invade Iraq in 2003 without approval from the United Nations Security Council (Bettis, 2010; Hanna 2011). Though costs of the war exceed $8 billion each month, in 2006 the United States allocated only $20 million toward the refugee crisis (Sassoon, 2010).

Not until 2006, after significant pressure from human rights organizations, did the American government acknowledge the existence of a problem (Bettis, 2010; Chatelard, 2010). The situation has since been described as "an unprecedented refugee crisis of huge proportions" (Chatelard, 2010, p. 18).

During the occupation, many Iraqi nationals proved to be invaluable to American and allied military interests by providing translation and interpretation services at checkpoints, in administrative centers, and even on the front lines (Twu, 2010). The threat to translators, others who cooperated with military in any capacity and their families, all of whom were perceived as traitors, remained constant, even after the relationship with the military was terminated. In 2005, the U.S. Department of Labor

received reports from private contractors in Iraq indicating that over one-third of deaths in the country that year were locals working as translators. One Iraqi cook who supplied food to American and British troops reported that he applied for resettlement in the United States after his nine-year-old child was shot and killed in his car (Yako & Biswas, 2013).

The United States government created a distinct category, known as the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV), specifically for this group of Iraqis, supposedly with expedited processing times (Twu, 2010). Instead, those who had risked their lives by helping the American operation encountered waiting periods as long as six months just for the initial appointment to register as refugees (Sanders & Smith, 2007). One interpreter noted that her application for resettlement took four years to be processed and still others were placed on a six-year wait list (Hamblin & Al-Sarraf, 2010). When the SIV was first proposed in 2006, the annual limit was set at 50 but that number has since increased and now over 11,000 SIVs have been awarded to Iraqi citizens who worked in some capacity with the United States government or its affiliates during American operations their country (Twu, 2010).

In addition to being a humanitarian concern, the Iraqi refugee situation is also a practical matter for the United States (Bettis, 2010). The United States may not be able to recruit locals to work as translators alongside U.S. interests in the future if Iraqis who have cooperated are not given the opportunity to be resettled in this country (Sanders & Smith, 2007).

C. Existing Resource Guides

Community resource guides comparable to the one I prepared are available for refugees, immigrants and asylum-seekers in many U.S. states, Canada, Europe and Australia. The domestic guides I chose to focus on were from Colorado and California, while the international guides I focused on were from Canada and Sweden. I selected these guides in particular because all either included a useful category of resources often overlooked in other guides or had unique design features that enhanced their usefulness. The features of these guides helped me to develop my own guidebook and provided me with inspiration for future revisions.

Of the five guides I focused on, only one, from the Oakland Unified School District in California (2009), was made expressly for refugees. The remaining four guides contained resources for refugees but were intended for use by all types of immigrants. Three of the guides were available in print and online, while two could be accessed online only. All of these guides contained categories of language acquisition, education, employment, health care, and social services. Employment was often the largest section.

The online guide for immigrants and refugees in Denver, Colorado, created by the city's Office of Community Support (2014), provided search capabilities that would be useful for those with computer proficiency. Instead of scrolling through pages or using a table of contents to locate information, users must search by entering a keyword or phrase, or by selecting specific categories from a list provided. Users customize the search by choosing the neighborhood or city suburb they want information for. The website also seeks input from immigrants by asking users to call or e-mail with

suggestions of resources to be included or if changes should be made to existing information.

In 2007, the Environmental Youth Alliance published a resource guide for immigrant and refugee youth coming to Vancouver, Canada that was tailored to its audience in terms of content and appearance. Creators of the guidebook chose the design and content after conducting surveys, focus groups and discussions with local refugee and immigrant youth. The result was a concise guide with color photographs, maps and graphics containing information on schools, public transportations, part-time jobs, social activities and Canadian slang words. Most notably, it also contains written instructions and photographs showing how to purchase train tickets from a machine at the train station, rather than simply listing station locations.

The other Canadian guide was created as a website by the organization North Shore Neighborhood House (2014) for immigrants and refugees arriving in Vancouver. This is the only guide I encountered that included local ethnic media outlets, restaurants and supermarkets, in addition to religious and cultural centers.

The Swedish Integration Board (2001) created a guide that was unique because in addition to community resources and ethnic institutions, it also included valuable details about Sweden and its inhabitants. In the guide, immigrants could find a brief country history and information on Sweden's climate, geography and national traditions. Basic Swedish vocabulary was also introduced. Of the guides I reviewed, this one included information that, in my opinion, best encouraged the integration approach to acculturation.

Since the American and Canadian guides were designed for individual cities they were more concise and included more specific, local resources and institutions than

country guides, such as the Swedish example discussed above. The Swedish guide, though informative, was 260 pages in length. For a refugee still learning the basics of the host country's language, a document of that length is likely daunting.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

In social science research, action research is a collection of approaches and practices used to encourage new ways of thinking and development of practical solutions to identified societal problems (Bradbury & Reason, 2003). Action research stems from the researcher's own concern for the progress and success of their communities. A key feature of this methodology is that the researcher is involved and participates in the community he seeks to help, as opposed to merely studying it. Action research was therefore an appropriate methodology for this project because the idea to create a guidebook was derived from my personal experience volunteering with, and desire to help, Iraqi refugees being resettled in the Tampa Bay area.

It is important to collect data from multiple, independent sources in order to improve reliability and validity of findings in action research (Sagor, 2000). Analyzing information obtained from various sources allows the action researcher to consider the scope of situation from different perspectives before recommending a solution. For this project, I collected data from Iraqi refugees and resettlement agency employees in Tampa Bay, Florida, from academic literature and from existing guidebooks similar to the one I developed. The opportunity to obtain feedback from refugees and resettlement agency employees—those who will directly benefit from use of the guidebook—was most valuable in my work and gives credence to the value of the guidebook.

One strategy I found particularly helpful in sorting and analyzing data obtained from the literature and from my own observations was the use of thematic networks. Thematic networks are web-like diagrams (the networks) that organize the content of a given text in order to identify themes, rationale and significance (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

Thematic networks are divided into three categories: Basic Themes, Organizing Themes and Global Themes. Development of a thematic network begins with Basic Themes, which are the simplest of themes taken from the text and, individually, have little meaning. Each Organizing Theme represents a summary of a collection of Basic Themes and serves to introduce broader themes connecting multiple Organizing Themes. A Global Theme is the center of a thematic network. Global Themes are made up of Organizing Themes which, collectively, reveal a claim or an argument about a particular matter.

Some recurring Basic Themes I found include categories such as mental health treatment, language acquisition and employment. Those Basic Themes directed the specific content of the guidebook, as reflected in the Table of Contents in the next chapter. The Global Theme addressed by the guidebook is improving the acculturation process for Iraqi refugees in Tampa Bay, Florida. Some of the Organizing Themes I found include pre-migration education and accessing local resources. I chose to focus on information on local resources.

I have discovered a number of recurring themes as a result of my volunteer experience, study of texts related to acculturation and review of existing guidebooks in the United States and abroad. Some of the most prevalent Organizing Themes I encountered in the literature were the importance of developing specialized and culturally appropriate programs (Dillon *et al*., 2013; Hanna, 2011; Nassar-McMillan and Hakim-Larson, 2013; Jamil *et al*., 2007) and the importance of social support and the ethnic community (Foner, 2013; Gold, 1992; Tartakovsky, 2007).

The guidebook was not commissioned and to date has not been implemented. I developed the content based on observation of the resources currently presented during

the resettlement agency's acculturation session, observation of academic sources and with feedback from the manager of the agency's program for students. The agency is working to customize the document to meet their specific requirements, such as including their mission statement, and it was recently approved for use by the board of directors. Before being printed, the guidebook will be professionally translated from English to Arabic.

CHAPTER V

ADDRESSING REFUGEE NEEDS IN THE GUIDEBOOK

I determined the inclusion, as well as exclusion, of local resources in the guidebook based on needs of the general refugee population, in addition to needs specific to the influx of refugees from Iraq. Initially, I observed the needs of a particular group of Iraqi refugees while volunteering with a resettlement agency between 2010 and 2012. I also sought input from employees of the resettlement agency. Then, I compared my own findings with the existing literature and with similar guides for new immigrants to various U.S. states, Canada and Sweden.

Using thematic networks allowed me to better organize and analyze data I obtained from these various sources so that I could decide which resources should be included in the guide. Below are the major categories covered in the guidebook:

- Refugee Resettlement Agencies

- Adult Education and Literacy

- Employment

- Medical, Dental and Mental Health Care

- Schools and Child Care

- Housing and Utilities

- Food, Nutrition and Clothing

- Transportation

- Legal

- Driver's License, Driving Test and ID Cards

- Financial and Tax Services

- Other Resources

A. Employment

In the United States, the need to find employment often takes precedence over everything else because of the limited duration of economic aid and the stigma attached to accepting government assistance (Connor, 2010; Nawyn, 2011). Refugees, particularly those from non-western nations, encounter far more difficulties obtaining legitimate employment compared to the general population (Jacobsen, 2005).

The high quality, free education previously available in their country means Iraqi refugees frequently hold postgraduate degrees and have specialized job training (Jones, 2009). This sets them apart from other groups of refugees where skilled professionals are considered an anomaly (Gupta, 2013). The cost of coming to United States can be quite high—one refugee reported that he spent upwards of $40,000—so it is unsurprising to learn most those coming to this country tend to be educated and well-off. The murder of hundreds of intellectuals, educators, physicians and judicial personnel that took place after the fall of Saddam Hussein further encouraged thousands employed in similar fields to flee Iraq (Jones, 2009).

Initially, refugees expect their education and experience will translate into job opportunities comparable to the positions they held in Iraq, but only too quickly do they realize how unlikely that is (Kornfeld, 2012). Despite their skills, the unemployment rate of Iraqi refugees was reportedly three times the national average in 2011 (Hanna, 2011). Statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicate that 67 percent of Iraqi adult refugees who came to the United States after 2009 are unemployed (cited in Gupta, 2013). Khattab Aljubori, an IT specialist with a $4,000

monthly salary back in Iraq, now, in California, struggles to support his family with Welfare and computer work, when he can find it (Gupta, 2013).

Iraqi professionals struggle to find basic, entry-level positions in their fields of expertise because their certifications are not valid in the United States (Kornfeld, 2012; Sinha *et al.,* 2012). Additionally, they are often unable to provide potential employers with references from past employers or coworkers (Kornfeld, 2012). The need to find work quickly, coupled with their heavy financial burdens and language barriers, means many Iraqi refugees are unable to even consider enrolling in the courses required to recertify their degrees in the United States (Hanna, 2011).

For refugees, a decline in job status is likely unavoidable and quite possibly irrevocable (Haines, 2010). The focus on economic self-sufficiency in the United States leaves many refugees with no other choice but to accept unskilled labor positions. There are numerous stories of Iraqi physicians working as grocery store clerks, university professors working as janitors and engineers driving taxis (Yako & Biswas, 2013). This is disadvantageous for refugees and their new communities. The refugees are kept from advancing and achieving self-sufficiency, while the existing population loses a significant "brain gain" (Hanna, 2011).

Most refugees I met while volunteering were willing to accept any employment opportunity they were offered. In the Tampa Bay area, these jobs were often found in the kitchens of local restaurants and on factory assembly lines. Lack of English proficiency was repeatedly noted as their most significant challenge to advancing in the workplace. In order to improve job prospects for the refugees, the resettlement agency highly encouraged them to spend as much time as possible studying English and to initiate the process of recertifying their degrees in the United States.

Employment is strongly connected to successful acculturation and to both somatic and mental health, particularly for professional refugees who hold degrees from their native countries (Jamil, H., Aldhalimi, A., & Arnetz, B. B., 2012). Educated refugees forced to take menial jobs in order to survive are especially prone to depression and other mental illnesses connected to low self-esteem (Nassar-McMillan & Hakim-Larson, 2003). Alternatively, mental illness, which is not uncommon among refugee populations, can reduce an individual's employability and earnings (Connor, 2010). Holding a job results in higher self-esteem and gives refugees the chance to meet new people and improve chances of successful acculturation (Phillimore, 2011).

Other challenges related to finding work include the prospect of ethnic or religious discrimination (Jacobsen, 2005). Particularly in the years since September 11, 2001, Islamic attire is seen as being linked to terrorism, so refugees choosing to continue wearing traditional dress can face additional harassment and discrimination (Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007; Phillimore, 2011). Potential employers fearing trouble with the authorities may also hesitate to hire refugees if they do not have complete understanding of refugee entitlements with regard to employment (Jacobsen, 2005). Unlike some other immigrant groups in the United States, refugees do always have the right to work since they enter the country as permanent residents (Gold, 1992; Sinha *et al.,* 2012).

B. Language Acquisition

Although job hunting usually takes precedence, the area I believe refugees should initially be able to dedicate their time and attention to is language acquisition. Knowledge of English is perhaps the most vital piece of the ongoing process of adjusting to life in the United States (Hanna, 2011; Nawyn, 2011). The ability to

effectively communicate in English is not only essential for improving employment prospects but also severely impacts a wide range of other day-to-day activities (Nawyn, 2013; Takeda, 2000).

Limited language proficiency increases the likelihood that refugees will accept jobs without being fully aware of the responsibilities, risks, rewards and their rights (Yako & Biswas, 2013). Numerous refugees have recounted stories of being overlooked for a position, despite having the proper work qualifications, because of their poor English or of being hired, and then subsequently let go, because they could not understand directions (Kornfeld, 2012). To be faced with the prospect of finding another job in the current economic environment would serve to further increase acculturative stress (Jamil *et al*., 2012).

According to one Iraqi refugee, "'English language is the key to happiness in the United States'" (Yako & Biswas, 2013, p. 7). Other refugees note that the ability to converse in English allows them to interact with neighbors and coworkers of other backgrounds and facilitates becoming integrated, participating members of their adoptive communities (Nawyn, 2011). Those who are unable to speak the language often limit contact with others, typically leaving them to grapple with strong feelings of isolation (Phillimore, 2011). Those feelings are further enhanced for refugees residing in areas short on interpretation services (Nawyn, 2013). Although acquisition of the local language is imperative for all immigrants it is perhaps uniquely so for Arabs, a group accustomed to hostile attitudes in the United States (Ajrouch, 2007; Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007).

Refugees have expressed frustration at the lack of assistance in navigating the social service sector and being "expected to find their own way" to access some benefits

(Phillimore, 2011, p. 583). One Iraqi refugee emphasized the importance of providing more English language education so individuals can understand '"the programs that are available to them and where to turn if they need help'" (Yako & Biswas, 2013, p. 7). That written English and Arabic bear no resemblance to one another makes the transition that much more challenging for native Arabic speakers (Ajrouch, 2007).

Conflicts may arise within families when the children rapidly become fluent in the new language while their parents still struggle with the basics (Baxter & Krulfeld, 1997; Nassar-McMillan & Hakim-Larson, 2003). The discrepant learning curves can result in a role reversal where suddenly "English-speaking children hold the power over oftentimes depressed, traumatized" adults (Codrington, Iqbal, & Segal, 2011, p. 130). Unexpectedly, parents become dependent on their children to help accomplish the most basic tasks, from scheduling dental appointments to reading a bus schedule. Some bilingual children have been known to take advantage of such situations by editing the content of conversations between their parents and local authorities to suit their needs and avoid getting into trouble (Nassar-McMillan & Hakim-Larson, 2003). Stress on the parent-child relationship may further increase when parents are forced to depend on their children not only for assistance with English but also for "translation" of American social customs (Baxter & Krulfeld, 1997).

C. Medical and Mental Health Care

Most refugee families have little time to prepare for their migration journey so they may not have sufficient amounts of prescription medications or other health care (Chynoweth, 2008). Medical services available during the waiting period in temporary host countries may be appropriate for the basic demands of traditional refugee groups

but not for Iraqi refugees, a population whose needs more closely mirror those in developed nations (Sinha *et al.,* 2012; Willard, Rabin, & Lawless, 2013). Typical living conditions in these countries are substandard and can lead to additional health problems that are often left unattended while families deal with more pressing issues (Chynoweth, 2008).

After expiration of the federally subsidized medical care refugees are initially entitled to, many, particularly adults without dependent children who typically do not qualify for state insurance, have a significant chance of becoming uninsured (Mirza & Heinemann, 2012; Yun *et al.,* 2012). Many refugees become uninsured within one year of arrival in the United States (Willard *et al.,* 2013). Being without medical insurance can lead to worse overall health because the uninsured are often more likely to forego treatment if they cannot afford it (Yun *et al.,* 2012). Navigating the country's complicated health care system is especially difficult for refugees who do seek treatment.

Given the experiences many refugees have endured it is unsurprising that refugees show higher rates of mental disorders compared to the general population (Jamil *et al.,* 2007; Williams & Berry, 1991). Challenges with acculturation can have further negative results on refugees, ranging from seclusion to health concerns, especially in the realm of mental health (Fernbrant *et al.,* 2013; Jamil *et al.,* 2007). The prevalence of mental health issues suggests definite problems exist in acculturation processes and that, despite its importance, the subject is not given ample attention (Jamil, H., Hakim-Larson, J., Farrag, M., Kafaji, T., Duqum, I., & Jamil, L. H*.,* 2002).

Studies and conversations with aid workers have revealed that Iraqis are one of the most traumatized refugee populations seen in recent decades (Harding & Libal,

2012; Yun *et al.,* 2012). One counselor described the suffering of Iraqi refugees from the first Persian Gulf War as "'beyond PTSD'" (Nassar-McMillan & Hakim-Larson 2003, 156). These issues, which have often gone untreated for long periods, are generally considered to be caused by the refugees' migration experiences (Nawyn, 2013). However, research has shown that the immense difficulties refugees deal with after resettlement are also factors.

Counseling is a new concept for many Arab immigrants whose mental health concerns have traditionally been treated by doctors, religious leaders, fortune tellers, magicians and mystics, if at all (Nassar-McMillan & Hakim-Larson 2003; 2013). Social stigma toward this unfamiliar practice is a significant barrier to refugees accessing mental health services (Weine *et al.,* 2008; Yun *et al.,* 2012). Arab culture not only stigmatizes mental illness but also strongly discourages any actions that could bring shame or dishonor to the family; which is how the notion of discussing personal, domestic problems with an unknown third party is often perceived (Hakim-Larson *et al.,* 2007). Other barriers include language, being unable to locate adequate facilities or providers, scarcity of information on mental illness and care, as well as lack of contact with individuals who have the information and experience (Weine *et al.,* 2008; Yun *et al.,* 2012).

Continuing to leave mental health issues unaddressed can foster various health and socio-economic issues that can go on to affect future generations (Nawyn, 2013). The trauma these families have endured often alters the traditional patriarchal structure, as fathers may have been killed, may be missing or may be present but disengaged, which is common among Iraqi refugees (Nassar-McMillan & Hakim-Larson, 2003). Though there are many benefits for women leaving behind patriarchal Iraq for a

significantly more equalized society, as is found in the United States, the drastic change

can create spousal conflict and even culminate in incidents of domestic violence (Black,

B. M., Chiodo, L. M., Weisz, A. N., Elias-Lambert, N., Kernsmith, P. D., Yoon, J. S., &

Lewandowski, L. A., 2013; Fernbrant *et al.,* 2013). Intimate partner violence can affect

a woman's reproductive system and cause mental health disorders such as PTSD,

anxiety and depression (Chynoweth, 2008; Fernbrant *et al.,* 2013). Observing such

violence as a child makes psychiatric problems more likely and increases the probability

of the child becoming either a victim or perpetrator of domestic violence later in life

(Black *et al.,* 2013; Fernbrant *et al.,* 2013).

Rates of substance abuse, which are generally low among Arab Americans,

became significantly higher among Iraqi refugees who migrated to the United States in

the 1990s, after the first Gulf War (Jamil *et al.,* 2002; Nassar-McMillan & Hakim-

Larson, 2003). Gambling addictions also became increasingly prevalent (Nassar-

McMillan & Hakim-Larson, 2003).

In the guidebook, I chose to include contact information for numerous bilingual

health care providers. Many of these physicians, dentists and mental health

professionals expressly note fluency in Arabic on their websites, in local advertising and

in the records of insurance providers. Some are also my own personal acquaintances.

Medical and psychological services have greater effectiveness when patients are able to

discuss their needs and concerns in their primary language (Griner & Smith, 2006;

Nassar-McMillan & Hakim-Larson, 2003).

Especially for stigmatized, marginalized or traumatized groups, mistrust of

individuals from outside the ethnic community is not unusual (Nagata, Kohn-Wood, &

Suzuki, 2012; Nassar-McMillan & Hakim-Larson, 2003; 2013). Therefore,

professionals who are also part of the ethnic community can be particularly important because of their unique opportunity to gain an individual's trust (Nagata *et al.*, 2012). Conversely, mental health professionals of Arab backgrounds also report encountering mistrust from patients when the clinician and patient may have common social acquaintances and the patients fear their personal information may not remain privileged (Nassar-McMillan & Hakim-Larson, 2003; 2013).

D. Finances

Although refugees are entitled to government cash assistance, it is a minimal amount, placing refugees below the U.S. poverty line and is provided only for a limited time after initial arrival in the country (Masterson, 2010). The inefficiency of processing Iraqi refugees means many have spent years in a transit country awaiting approval to come to the United States (Masterson, 2010; Yako & Biswas, 2013). The savings many families left Iraq with were used for living expenses during that time so refugees often arrive in the United States with little or no money.

Families may arrive already in debt since airfare to the United States is paid for by the government in the form of an interest free loan (Gupta, 2013; Masterson, 2010). Repayments are to begin after only three months, when most refugees remain wholly dependent on government assistance for survival (Hanna, 2011). Those who default on payments are reported to collection agencies and negative impacts to their credit score can prove to be yet another challenge to finding a job.

Many migrants feel compelled to provide money to family members still residing in their native countries but refugees resettled in affluent states often possess a greater sense of responsibility because they have been given the opportunity to start

anew, while their relatives may not only be living in poverty but are liable to be displaced and unsafe (Jacobsen, 2005; Nassar-McMillan & Hakim-Larson, 2003). Although the money helps the recipient, the sender's economic self-sufficiency can be hindered (Jacobsen, 2005). Resettled refugees are one of the most impoverished immigrant groups and sending remittances can keep them from paying off their travel loan, covering the cost of recertifying their credentials or saving for unanticipated needs, such as medical care or auto repairs.

According to the literature, and in my own observations, Iraqi refugees resettling in the United States are typically from the educated middle and upper classes. Although they are likely familiar with banking services and personal finance, there are specifics in the United States that must be explained, including income tax policies and credit reporting bureaus. It would be prudent for eligible refugees to take advantage of free income tax return preparation provided by various Tampa Bay organizations in order to ensure they meet both federal and state tax obligations. Many refugees are also surprised to learn that negative information collected by the three primary credit bureaus can be a significant problem. Taking into account refugees' financial hardships, many resources providing free and discounted services were also included in the guidebook.

E. The Ethnic Community

Despite efforts by the federal government to discourage the growth of ethnic enclaves, NGOs, recognizing the importance of ethnic solidarity in the lives of refugees, have been known to champion the development of the ethnic community and its institutions (Nawyn, 2011). For those not joining relatives already in the United States, resettlement agencies typically do not have a specific formula for placement but instead

attempt to place refugees in areas where other coethnics already reside (Beaman, 2012;

Forrest & Brown, 2014).

Refugee social networks and ethnic group camaraderie have been shown to be

important elements in the process of resettlement and acculturation (Ajrouch, 2007;

Foner, 2013; Gold, 1992). Ethnic group networks benefit refugees by granting them

access to information and resources for jobs and housing, as well as social perks, such

as introductions to friends or potential mates (Lamba & Krahn, 2003). According to

Gold (1992) and Nawyn (2011), a refugee's personal connections provide greater access

to resources than the resettlement agency. Refugees also rely on their group of

ethnically similar family and friends to help develop ties within their new communities.

Employment is one of the areas in which refugees rely most heavily on the

ethnic community for assistance (Foner, 2013). Recently arrived refugees lack sufficient

information on the wider job market and tend to follow in the footsteps of coethnics,

often creating ethnic job concentrations, exemplified by the prevalence of Mexicans in

the construction field or Chinese working in garment factories. Members of the ethnic

community may also provide each other with information about other employment

opportunities and may be able to help coordinate transportation to and from work (Gold,

1992; Takeda, 2000).

Despite the social stigma surrounding mental health issues mentioned

previously, Arab immigrants willing to seek counsel may be most likely to confer with a

religious figure from their local church or mosque (Nassar-McMillan & Hakim-Larson,

2003; 2013). Cooperating with the religious leadership to promote mental health

awareness could help to reach individuals who might otherwise be unwilling to address

issues. Iraqi culture, like the broader Arab culture, is notably collectivist in nature so to

have endorsement from the ethnic community, and perhaps religious authorities in particular, would give credence to mental health treatment.

In addition to fellowship, many of the Arabic-speaking places of worship included in the guidebook also provide useful services, including document translation and child care. Both mosques and churches in Tampa Bay offer free Arabic and religion classes for children during weekends. The resettlement agency does not include such information in its acculturation session because the same presentation is shown to refugees of various linguistic, ethnic and religious backgrounds. In my experience, Iraqi refugees quickly became aware of the range of services available from religious institutions on their own. It was often refugees who approached me, asking where they could find a mosque, church, or more frequently, an Arabic supermarket or restaurant.

Ethnic shops and restaurants begin to appear as an immigrant group's presence grows in any given region (Foner, 2013). The businesses develop and thrive because they cater to the unique needs of the ethnic group. Many business owners in ethnic enclaves, particularly of restaurants and supermarkets, often depend heavily on, and even take advantage of, other coethnics (Gold, 1992). In-group conflict and the development of exploitive relationships in ethnic enclaves is not uncommon (Lamba & Krahn, 2003). Other ethnic business owners, however, have worked successfully to appeal to wealthier Americans outside of the enclaves (Gold, 1992).

F. Guidebook Design and Distribution

There are some distinct disadvantages to producing a paper guide instead of an online resource. Updates and corrections are more difficult to make to a paper version compared to a web-only version, so handheld booklets become out of date more

quickly. To identify the most current version, the year of publishing could be printed on the front. The cost of reprinting updated versions of the guide would certainly be a source of expenditure and dependent on the number of pages per guidebook and the number of guidebooks printed.

Logistically, the distribution of new guidebooks is limited to either handouts at specific locations or mailings by request, but a possible way to ease distribution would be to have a PDF version available on the resettlement agency's website for anyone to download and reprint as needed. Since a PDF would work offline, such a version would also be of benefit to those who have computer access, but perhaps not always access to the internet. In addition, an easily accessible digital copy would reduce the need for printing large quantities of guidebooks unless demand calls for such action.

The benefits of a paper guidebook are its portability and the ability to be modified by the end user who might write notes in the margins or highlight details important to them. A physical copy is also more easily given to a friend or relative.

Educational and orientation programs for refugees are "encouraged to be offered in a manner that is culturally and linguistically compatible" with the refugee's background (Hanna, 2011, p. 208). Research has shown that programs geared toward ethnically similar groups are four times more effective than those aimed at ethnically diverse groups (Griner & Smith, 2006). Furthermore, programs and materials presented in an individual's native language are twice as effective as those that are not.

In addition to language, another useful feature added to the guidebook was color coding based on the category of each resource. For example, all entries in the Transportation category are blue and all entries in the Food and Clothing category are pink. All related lines in the Table of Contents are color coded accordingly, as are the

headers of each page. Color coding makes the guidebook user-friendly and easy to navigate.

The resettlement agency will distribute one copy of the guidebook to each refugee family from Iraq or other Arabic-speaking countries. Given the recurring theme of the importance of social support and the ethnic community in successful resettlement, I also suggest making copies available in local mosques, churches and Middle Eastern stores. This would expand the opportunity of the guidebook to reach its intended audience, including refugees being resettled by other local organizations. Similarly, recent non-refugee immigrants who frequent the same establishments could also benefit from some of the resources included in the booklet.

CHAPTER VI

LIMITATIONS, PROSPECTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Acculturation is an unavoidable experience for all immigrants, and notably challenging for refugees, all of whom have undergone tremendous strain and loss throughout the process of migration. Acculturative stress also impacts all immigrants and refugees to varying degrees but the effects can be mitigated by providing newcomers with access to appropriate resources. As discussed in this work, a deficiency exists in how such information is presented to newly arrived refugees resettled by a particular agency in the Tampa Bay, Florida area and the guidebook I have prepared is a contribution toward rectifying that situation.

The guidebook has not yet been implemented, although the resettlement agency recently approved it for use. It is in the process of being professionally translated from English to Arabic so refugees will be able to view the same information in both languages. The agency will provide one copy of the guidebook to each family upon arrival in the United States. A copy will also be made available on the agency's website.

While many of the items found in the guidebook are available on the Internet, they are not always easy to locate or simple enough to understand, regardless of language skills or computer literacy. With more pressing issues, such as finding a job and learning English on their minds, recently arrived refugees have limited free time and spending it navigating search engines and websites for basic information seems unnecessary. To have pertinent information collected, organized and presented in a user-friendly format may be particularly beneficial to those with limited Internet access, computer skills or English fluency.

I believe specificity and customization makes the guidebook more valuable to its intended audience. Although Iraqi refugees are different when compared to refugees from other nations, I did not anticipate how challenging it would be to reflect that uniqueness in the content of the guidebook. Most of the resources are applicable to all immigrants. In the future, I would like to obtain more feedback, both from refugees and resettlement agency employees, regarding content of the guide. Their thoughts and experiences were instrumental in developing this project and would be most helpful when working on future revisions, hopefully leading to a more personalized, and thus useful, guidebook. I would especially welcome the opportunity to follow up with refugees after they have been in the United States for a longer period of time to find out how useful the guidebook is beyond initial arrival in the country.

The guidebook has been designed for Iraqi refugees but could also be used for refugees from other Arabic-speaking states, particularly Egypt and Syria. In the future, I hope a similar guidebook would be created specifically for other groups of refugees. The resettlement agency could easily use the basic format I have developed and then customize the content to conform to the needs and requirements of any given group. I believe a website and mobile application would prove to be increasingly practical as refugees become accustomed to the use of technology in the United States.

Until a future revision is developed, I hope Iraqi refugees resettling in Tampa Bay and resettlement agency employees will find my efforts to be worthwhile and useful. Again, the guidebook is not an absolute solution but it should be a beneficial tool to help refugees locate the resources and assistance needed for a better start in their new homes and to lessen some of the stress they experience during acculturation.

APPENDIX I

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDEBOOK

Quick Reference Guidebook

A useful tool to help you and your family
find the resources and the assistance
you need for a better start in your new home

2014

Table of Contents

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT AGENCIES

Catholic Charities

1213 16th St N
St. Petersburg, FL 33705
(727) 893-1313

Website: www.ccdosp.org

Hours: Monday – Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Services:

•   Pre-arrival planning and reception
•   Locating and setting up housing
•   Acculturation session
•   Job training and placement
•   Tutoring
•   Assistance with immigration questions and forms
•   Case management
•   Translation and interpretation services

Gulf Coast Jewish Family and Community Services

13630 58th St N
Clearwater, FL 33760
 (727) 450-7290

Website: www.gulfcoastjewishfamilyandcommunityservices.org

Hours: Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Services:

•   Pre-arrival planning and reception
•   Locating and setting up housing
•   Acculturation session
•   School liaison between parents, schools and youth. Interpreters provided.
•   Individual and group tutoring in all school subjects, including English
•   Social and recreational activities
•   Career and education exploration resources
•   Parenting classes, counseling and case management
•   Translation and interpretation services

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7901 4th St N, Suite 308
St. Petersburg, FL 33702
(727) 563-9400

Website: www.lsfnet.org

Hours: Monday – Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Services:

• Job training and placement
• Child care referrals
• Translation and interpretation services
• Assistance with transportation needs
• Case management and follow-up services

2312 Gulf to Bay Blvd
Clearwater, FL 33765
(727) 785-3551
(727) 791-5822

Website: www.copticcharities.org

Hours: Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Services:

• Pre-arrival planning and reception
• Locating and setting up housing
• Acculturation session
• Job training and placement
• Assistance with immigration and benefits paperwork
• Translation and interpretation services
• Referrals to community resources
• Provides education and advocacy on diversity and human rights with emphasis
  on Middle Eastern cultural awareness

4255 56th Ave N
St. Petersburg, FL 33714
(727) 520-9820

Website: lanfc.homestead.com

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Hours: Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Services:

- After school tutoring
- Adult English and computer classes
- Income tax return completion
- Job referrals
- Education and vocational training
- Financial literacy classes
- Family activities and support groups
- Affordable housing
- Immigration and naturalization services
- Translation and interpretation services
- Insurance and medical referrals

Intercultural Advocacy Institute   *Resettlement Agencies*

612 Franklin St
Clearwater, FL 33756
(727) 445-9734

Website: http://www.hispanicoutreachcenter.org/

Hours: Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Services:

- Mental health counseling
- Acculturation and citizenship classes
- English classes
- Translation and interpretation services
- Parenting and healthy relationship classes
- Legal and immigration law workshops
- Victim and family advocacy
- Youth services

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ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY

Pinellas Refugee Education Program
Adult Education and Literacy

901 34th St S
St. Petersburg, FL 33711
(727) 217-7635

Website: www.pinellas.k12.fl.us

Hours: Monday, Friday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
                Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, 5 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Services:

- Free training, classes and tutoring for refugees in the U.S. less than 5 years
- Case management and follow-up
- Career assessment and exploration
- Job referrals
- Assistance with educational costs
- Financial literacy classes
- Transportation and child care assistance
- Translation and interpretation services

Caribe Refugee Program
Adult Education and Literacy

5410 N 20th St
Tampa, FL 33610
(813) 231-1972 ext. 228

Website: http://ace.mysdhc.org/caribe/home

Hours: Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Services:

- Adult Basic and Secondary Education
- Vocational Education
- Computer Classes
- English Language Program
- GED Preparation
- Literacy Program

Public Libraries
Adult Education and Literacy

- 138 E. Lemon St, Tarpon Springs, FL 34689, (727) 943-4922
- 2330 Nebraska Ave., Palm Harbor, FL 34683, (727) 784-3332
- 425 E. Lake Rd. Palm Harbor, FL 34685, (727) 773-2665

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- 4125 East Lake Rd., Palm Harbor FL 34685, (727) 773-2665
- 223 Douglas Ave., Dunedin, FL 34698, (727) 298-3080
- 101 Second St. N, Safety Harbor, FL 34695, (727) 724-1525
- 101 State St. W, Oldsmar, FL 34677, (813) 749-1178
- 100 N. Osceola Ave. Clearwater, FL 33755, (727) 562-4970
- 2251 Drew St. Clearwater, FL 33765, (727) 562-4970
- 905 N. MLK Jr. Ave. Clearwater, FL (727) 562-4970
- 9200 113th St. N, Seminole, FL 33772, (727) 394-6922
- 7770 52nd St., Pinellas Park, FL 33781, (727) 541-0718
- 280 5th St. N, St. Petersburg, FL 33701, (727) 892-5003
- 6700 8th Ave. N. St. Petersburg, FL 33710, (727) 341-7199
- 3745 9th Ave. N. St. Petersburg, FL 33713, (727) 893-7724
- 861 70th Ave. N. St. Petersburg, FL 33702, (727) 893-7214
- 2300 Roy Hanna Dr. S., St. Petersburg, FL 33712, (727) 893-7244
- 1059 18th Ave. S. St. Petersburg, FL 33705, (727) 893-7113
- 691 43rd St. S. St. Petersburg, FL 33711, (727) 893-7714
- 5501 28th Ave. S, Gulfport, FL 33707, (727) 893-1073

Website: www.pplc.us/

Hours: Vary by Location

Services:

- Free Membership
- Books, Magazines and Electronic Materials for all ages, to be read in the library or rented
- Use of Computers and Internet
- Literacy Workshops
- English Tutoring and Conversation Clubs
- GED, TOEFL and Citizenship Test Tutoring Available
- Subscriptions to Job Search Databases Provided

Pinellas Technical Education Centers   *Adult Education and Literacy*

901 34th St S
St. Petersburg, FL 33771
(727) 893-2500

6100 154th Ave N
Clearwater, FL 33760
(727) 538-7167

Website: www.myptec.org

Hours: Monday – Thursday, 6:30 a.m. – 9:30 p.m.
            Friday, 6:30 a.m. – 9:30 p.m.

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Services:

- Adult basic and secondary education
- Vocational education
- Career consultation and testing
- Job referrals
- GED preparation
- Computer classes
- Tuition Waivers and scholarships may be available

Tomlinson Adult Learning Center   *Adult Education and Literacy*

296 Mirror Lake Dr N
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
(727) 893-2723

Website: www.tomlinson.pinellas.k12.fl.us/

Hours: Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 9 p.m.

Services:

- Adult basic education
- English language program
- GED preparation and testing Site
- Vocational education
- Computer classes
- Citizenship classes

Dixie Hollins Adult Learning Center   *Adult Education and Literacy*

4940 62nd St N
St. Petersburg, FL 33709
(727) 547-7872

Website: www.dhaec.pinellas.k12.fl.us

- Adult basic education
- Adults with disabilities program
- English language program
- GED preparation and testing Site
- Vocational education
- Citizenship classes

Clearwater Adult Learning Center   *Adult Education and Literacy*

540 S Hercules Ave
Clearwater, FL 33764

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(727) 469-4190

Website: http://www.caec.pinellas.k12.fl.us/

Hours: Monday – Thursday, 2 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
                Friday, 9 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

- Adult Basic Education
- English language program
- GED preparation and testing site
- Vocational education
- Citizenship classes

Gaither Adult and Community Education Center	*Adult Education and Literacy*

16200 N Dale Mabry Hwy
Tampa, FL 33618
(813) 632-6823

Website: ace.mysdhc.org/school_sites/gaither/gaither

Hours: Monday - Thursday 1 p.m. - 9:45 p.m.
                Friday 8 a.m. - 4:45 p.m.

- Adult Basic Education
- ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)
- GED Preparation and Testing Site

Hillsborough Adult Education Center	*Adult Education and Literacy*

2222 N Tampa St
Tampa, FL 33602
(813) 276-5654

Website: www.sdhc.k12.fl.us/schools/

Hours: Monday – Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m

- Adult Basic Education
- Adults with Disabilities Program
- English Language Program
- GED Preparation and Testing Site
- Home-Based GED Preparation Program
- Literacy
- Vocational Education
- Computer Classes
- Workplace Literacy

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403 1st Ave SW
Largo, FL 33770
(727) 442-6881

Website: www.umcm.info/

Hours: Monday - Thursday, 9 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Services:

•   English Language Program
•   Computer Classes
•   Financial Literacy Classes
•   Family Literacy Program
•   Homework Help and Tutoring
•   Job Readiness Skills
•   Citizenship and Immigration Classes
•   Parenting and Healthy Relationship Classes

Literacy Council *Adult Education and Literacy*

223 Douglas Ave
Dunedin, FL 34698
(727) 298-3080

Hours: Monday – Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

900 N Ashley Dr
Tampa, FL 33602-3704
(813) 273-3650

Hours: Monday – Friday, 9:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Services:

•   English Classes and Tutoring
•   GED and Citizenship Test Tutoring
•   Minimal Fee for Materials

Online English Classes and Practice *Adult Education and Literacy*

•   All Services Provided Free of Charge
•   Beginner to Advanced Levels
•   Conversation, Grammar, Writing and Reading Comprehension

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Public School System
http://floridaenglish.mrooms2.net/

Cambridge Venture
http://www.cambridge.org/us/cambridgeenglish?site_locale=en_US

English for All
http://myefa.org/login.cfm

English Central
http://www.englishcentral.com/videos#!/index

ESL Gold
http://www.eslgold.com/

Learn American English
http://www.learnamericanenglishonline.com/

Mango Languages
http://www.mangolanguages.com/

Pro Literacy Education Network
http://www.proliteracyednet.org/articles.asp?mcid=1

USA Learns
http://www.usalearns.org

Foreign Diploma Evaluation	*Adult Education and Literacy*

NACES National Association of Credential and Evaluation Services
http://www.naces.org/members.htm

International Education Consultants

7101 SW 102nd Ave
Miami, FL 33173
(305) 273-1616
http://www.jsilny.com

Academic Evaluation Services

7320 E Fletcher Ave
Tampa, FL 33637
(813) 490-6274
http://www.aes-edu.org

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EMPLOYMENT

Career Source
Employment

624 1st Ave S
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
(727) 524-4344

1048 22nd St S
St. Petersburg, FL 33712
(727) 324-2988

2312 Gulf to Bay Blvd
Clearwater, FL 33765
(727) 524-4344

Website: http://www.careersourcepinellas.com/

Hours: Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Services:

*   Career Fairs
*   Career Planning Workshops
*   Basic Computer Literacy Classes
*   Resume Composition and Development Workshops
*   Interview Skills Workshops

Tampa Bay Workforce Alliance
Employment

9215 N Florida Ave, Suite 101
Tampa, FL 33612
(813) 930-7400

9350 Bay Plaza Blvd, Suite 121
Tampa, FL 33619
(813) 930-7832

Hours: Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Website: http://www.workforcetampa.com/

Services:

*   Career Fairs and Recruitment Events
*   Career Planning Workshops
*   Resume Composition and Development Workshops
*   Interview Skills Workshops

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Adult and Career Services Center

Employment

5410 N 20th St
Tampa, FL 33610
(813) 231-1840

Website: http://ace.mysdhc.org/teacher/ACSC/

Hours: Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Services:

* Career Planning Workshops
* Resume Composition Assistance
* Interview skills, networking and job searching workshops

Goodwill Industries Temporary Staffing Agency

Employment

10596 Gandy Blvd
St. Petersburg, FL 33702
(727) 577-6411

Website: www.sbsgoodwill.com

Hours: Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Services:

* Career Exploration and Planning
* Job Referrals

Small Business Centers

Employment

For information on starting a small business contact one of the centers below:

University of South Florida Business Assistance Office
263 13th Ave S, Suite 301
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
(727) 873-4753

Hours: Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, by appointment only

Clearwater Chamber of Commerce
1130 Cleveland St
Clearwater, FL 33755
(727) 461-0011

Hours: Friday, by appointment only

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MEDICAL, DENTAL AND MENTAL HEALTH CARE

Refugee Health Program   *Medical, Dental and Mental Health Care*

- 12420 130th Ave N, Largo, FL 33774, (727) 588-4040, ext. 129
- 310 N Myrtle Ave, Clearwater, FL 33755, (727) 469-5800, ext. 121
- 205 9th St N, St. Petersburg, FL 33701, (727) 824-6975
- 6350 76th Ave N, Pinellas Park, FL 33781, (727) 547-7780, ext. 103

Website: www.pinellashealth.com

Hours: Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Services:

- Medical and dental screenings to identify health problems in new refugees
- Immunizations available for all ages
- Interpreters available

Department of Health and Human Services   *Medical, Dental and Mental Health Care*

2189 Cleveland St
Clearwater, FL 33765
(727) 464-8400

647 1st Ave N
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
(727) 585-7781

8751 Ulmerton Rd
Largo, FL 33771
(727) 524-4410

Website: http://www.pinellascounty.org/humanservices/

Hours: Monday - Friday, 7:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Services:

- Mobile medical care
- Dental services
- Prescription medication assistance
- Referrals to community resources for financial, medical and social service needs

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Johnnie Ruth Clark Health Centers   *Medical, Dental and Mental Health Care*

- 1344 22nd St S, St. Petersburg, FL, 33712
- 701 6th St S, St. Petersburg, FL 33701
- 707 Druid Rd E, Clearwater, FL 33756
- 2960 Roosevelt Blvd, Clearwater, FL 33760
- 7550 43rd St N, Pinellas Park, FL 33781

(727) 824-8181
(727) 824-8177

Website: http://www.chcpinellas.org/

Hours: Monday, Thursday, Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
                Tuesday, Wednesday, 8 a.m. – 8 p.m.
                Saturday, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Services:

- Affordable care for low-income families
- Routine primary and preventative care
- Prenatal and postpartum care
- Women's care
- Behavioral health services
- Classes and support groups
- Appointment required

Free Clinics   *Medical, Dental and Mental Health Care*

Crescent Clinic

5244 Commercial Way
Spring Hill, FL 34606
(352) 610-9916

Website: http://www.crescentclinic.org/index.html

Hours: Monday – Thursday, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Services:

- Medical screening and treatment of chronic conditions for uninsured adults
- Dental services
- Psychotherapy services
- Nutrition and lifestyle classes
- Appointment required

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- Arabic-speaking staff

Red Crescent Clinic

7328 E Sligh Ave
Tampa, FL 33610
(813) 246-5009

Website: http://www.redcrescenttampa.org/index.html

Hours: Tuesday – Friday, 9:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.
                Saturday, 9:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Services:

- Primary, preventative and specialty care for uninsured of all ages
- Treatment of chronic and acute conditions
- Psychiatric services
- Dental services
- Appointment required
- Arabic-speaking staff

St. Petersburg Free Clinic Health Center

863 3rd Ave N
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
(727) 821-1200

Website: http://www.stpetersburgfreeclinic.org/our-services/health-center

Hours: Monday, Wednesday, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
                Tuesday, Thursday, 8:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Services:

- Urgent care clinic for uninsured adults
- Income eligibility requirements must be met
- Treatment of chronic and acute conditions
- Physical therapy
- X-rays
- Classes and support groups
- Qualifying patients receive cash assistance for prescriptions

Clearwater Free Clinic

707 N Fort Harrison Ave

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Clearwater, FL 33755
(727) 447-3041

Website: http://www.clearwaterfreeclinic.org/

Hours: Monday – Thursday, 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Services:

• Primary, preventative and specialty care for uninsured of all ages
• Income eligibility requirements must be met
• Women's care
• Physical therapy
• X-rays
• Diabetic program
• Classes and support groups
• Qualifying patients receive cash assistance for prescriptions

La Clinica Guadalupana

1000 Lakeview Rd
Clearwater, FL 33756
(727) 461-7730

Website: www.laclinicaguadalupana.com

Hours: Monday - Thursday, 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Services:

• Primary and preventative care for uninsured of all ages
• Income eligibility requirements must be met
• Treatment of chronic and acute conditions
• No appointment necessary
• Donations welcome in lieu of payment for service

Bridge Clinic

13330 USF Laurel Dr
Tampa, FL 33612
(813) 526-9684

Website: http://health.usf.edu/bridge/index.htm

Hours: Monday - Thursday, 2 p.m. – 7 p.m.

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Services:

- Routine, non-emergency care for uninsured adults
- Income eligibility requirements must be met
- Treatment of chronic and acute conditions
- Appointment required

Healthy Start *Medical, Dental and Mental Health Care*

205 9th St N
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
(727) 824-6900

2806 N Armenia Ave
Tampa, FL 33607
(813) 233-2800

Website: www.healthystartcoalition.org

Hours: Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
                Phone assistance available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Services:

- Available to pregnant women and children ages 3 and under
- Psychosocial, nutritional and smoking cessation counseling
- Childbirth, breastfeeding, and substance abuse education
- Referrals to community resources

Florida Kid Care *Medical, Dental and Mental Health Care*

(888) 540-5437

Website: www.floridakidcare.org

Hours: Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Services:

- Free or low-cost health insurance for children under age 19
- Must meet income eligibility requirements
- Includes regular physician visits, immunizations and vision and hearing testing
- Interpreters available

Prevent Blindness Florida *Medical, Dental and Mental Health Care*

 (813) 874-2020

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Website: www.preventblindnessflorida.org

Services:

- Free monthly vision testing
- Times and locations vary
- No age or income limits

Crisis Center of Tampa Bay   *Medical, Dental and Mental Health Care*

1 Crisis Center Plaza
Tampa, FL 33613
(813) 964-1964

Hours: Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 9 p.m.
                Telephone Service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Website: http://www.crisiscenter.com/

Services:

- Free crisis counseling 24/7
- Trauma counseling for individuals and families
- Substance abuse counseling
- Suicide prevention
- Case management
- Psychological testing
- Referrals to community resources

Family Emergency Treatment Center   *Medical, Dental and Mental Health Care*

400 15th St N
St. Petersburg, FL 33711
(727) 552-1053

Hours: Monday - Saturday, 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.
                Telephone Service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Services:

- All are eligible, regardless of ability to pay
- Free mental health assistance 24/7
- Evaluation and assessment
- Mental health and substance abuse counseling
- Individual and group therapy
- Medication management
- Follow-up services
- Referrals to community resources

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Bilingual staff available at Crescent and Red Crescent Clinics. See page 14.

Dr. Hazem Al-Andary
1839 Central Ave
St. Petersburg, FL 33713
(727) 322-1054

Dr. Mona Boghdadi
27348 Cashford Cir
Wesley Chapel, FL 33543
(813) 907-7680

Drs. George Dagher and A. Hamid Hakki
1840 Mease Dr
Safety Harbor, FL 34695
(727) 724-8611

Dr. Ashraf Hanna
2250 Drew St
Clearwater, FL 33765
(727) 797-7463

Dr. Nasser Moukaddem
4226 Central Ave
St. Petersburg, FL 33711
(727) 321-3915

Bilingual staff available at Crescent and Red Crescent Clinics. See page 14.

Dr. Ziad Abou Assi
14953 N Florida Ave
Tampa, FL 33613
(813) 269-9360

Drs. Mouhammad Budeir and Mohamed Gamal-Eldin
2525 Pasadena Ave S
S Pasadena, FL 33707

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(727) 360-7063

Dr. Azhar Bustami
10043 E Adamo Dr
Tampa, FL 33619
(813) 865-0658

Dr. Diaa Ghabbour
23036 State Rd 54
Lutz, FL 33549
(813) 909-1317

Dr. Faddy Makaryus
23680 US Highway 19 N
Clearwater, FL 33765
(727) 799-1010

Arabic-Speaking Mental Health Professionals	*Medical, Dental and Mental Health Care*

Bilingual staff available at Crescent and Red Crescent Clinics. See page 14.

Mahmoud Hassan
8910 N Dale Mabry Highway, Suite 12
Tampa, FL 33614
(813) 397-6744

Mona Ido
7600 Bryan Dairy Rd, Suite C
Largo, FL 33777
(727) 478-1742

Shelly Khaldi
1815 Health Care Dr, Suite B
Trinity, FL 34655
(727) 341-5602

Dr. Reham Sadek
11428 N 53rd St
Tampa, FL 33617
(813) 699-4756

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SCHOOLS AND CHILD CARE

Public Schools

Administration Building
301 4th St SW
Largo, FL 33779
(727) 588-6210

Website: www.pcsb.org

Administration Building
901 E Kennedy Blvd
Tampa, FL 33602
(813) 272 – 4000

Website: http://www.sdhc.k12.fl.us/

Hours: Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Services:

•   Assistance choosing a school for the child
•   Parent or legal guardian must register the child in person
•   Must present proof of residency, child's age and immunization records

Homework Help Line

(727) 547-7223

Hours: Monday - Thursday, 5 p.m. - 8 p.m.

Services:

•   Live homework assistance for elementary to high school students
•   No eligibility requirements

Dual Enrollment Program

 (727) 538-7167, ext. 2020
 (727) 893-2500, ext. 2521

Website: www.fldoe.org

Hours: Hours: Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Services:

- Vocational programs for eligible high school students age 16 and up
- Students earn high school diploma and vocational certificates simultaneously
- Tuition, labs and books are free
- Transportation may be available

Florida Virtual School
Schools and Child Care

(407) 513-3587

Website: www.flvs.net

- Free middle and high school classes online
- Over 90 courses available, including most graduation requirements, electives, test preparation, honors and advanced placement

Head Start Program
Schools and Child Care

2210 Tall Pines Dr, Suite 200
Largo, FL 33771
(727) 547-5971

Website: www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ohs

Hours: Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Services:

- Free pre-school for children ages 5 and under
- Must meet income eligibility requirements
- Available at various community centers throughout Tampa Bay. Call for details.

R'Club Child Care
Schools and Child Care

4140 49th St N
St. Petersburg, FL 33709
(727) 578-5437

 9878 W Linebaugh Ave
Tampa, Florida 33626
(813) 792-7838

Website: www.rclub.net

Hours: Monday – Friday, 6 a.m. – 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. – 6 p.m.

Services:

- Affordable before and after school care

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- Homework assistance
- Recreational activities

- 612 Franklin St, Clearwater, FL 33756, (727) 445-9734
- 100 N Tampa St, Tampa, FL 33602, (813) 222-1334
- 4411 S Himes Ave, Tampa, Florida 33611, (813) 839-0210
- 3200 1st Ave S St. Petersburg, FL 33712, (727) 328-9622
- 2421 4th St S, St. Petersburg, FL 33705, (727) 821-9348
- 8787 Bryan Dairy Rd, Largo, FL 33777, (727) 394-9622

Website: www.ymcaoftampabay.org/

Services:

- Affordable before and after school care
- Summer programs
- Recreational activities
- Transportation provided for eligible children

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Housing Authority *Housing and Utilities*

11479 Ulmerton Rd
Largo, FL 33778
(727) 443-7684

Website: http://www.pin-cha.org/

5301 W Cypress St
Tampa, FL 33607
(813) 253-0551

Website: http://www.thafl.com

Hours: Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Services:

• Rental assistance for low-income individuals
• Foreclosure prevention program
• Homelessness prevention program

Tampa Bay Housing Counseling Services *Housing and Utilities*

2139 NE Coachman Rd
Clearwater, FL 33765
(727) 446-6222

Website: http://www.tampabaycdc.org/housing-counseling-services.html

Hours: Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Services:

• Free homebuyer and home ownership classes
• Credit review, mortgage assistance and down payment assistance program
• Personalized foreclosure prevention

Habitat for Humanity *Housing and Utilities*

13355 49th St N
Clearwater, FL 33762
(727) 536-4755

Website: www.phfh.org

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Hours: Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
                Saturday, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Services:

- Affordable new home ownership options for qualified individuals
- Candidates must complete home ownership course and contribute 250-350 hours toward building the home
- Candidates must be able to pay all home ownership costs, including mortgage, taxes and insurance

Duke Energy   *Housing and Utilities*

5225 Tech Data Dr
Clearwater, FL 33760
(727) 443-2641

299 1st Ave N
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
(727) 820-5151

180 2nd Ave SE
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
(727) 825-3250

Website: https://www.duke-energy.com/

Hours: Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 6 p.m.
                Saturday, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Services:

- Home and commercial electric services provider

Energy Neighbor Fund   *Housing and Utilities*

1400 4th St S
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
(727) 821-9123
(727) 822-4954

700 Druid Rd E
Clearwater, FL 33756
(727) 443-4031

Services:

- Bill payment assistance for individuals with temporary financial hardship

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Energy Efficiency Program *Housing and Utilities*

12520 Ulmerton Rd
Largo, FL 33774
(727) 582-2097

Services:

- Lowering Home Energy Costs workshops
- Attendees receive a free energy-saving kit

Lifeline Assistance *Housing and Utilities*

(800) 540-7039

Website: www.progress-energy.com

Hours: Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 6 p.m.
             Saturday, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Services:

- 50 percent off service connection fee and discounted monthly service
- Recipients of government assistance qualify
- Individuals may also qualify based on income

Water and Solid Waste *Housing and Utilities*

14 S Fort Harrison Ave
Clearwater, FL 33756
(727) 464-4000

Hours: Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

3095 114th Ave N
St. Petersburg, FL 33716
(727) 464-7500

Hours: Monday - Friday, 6 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Services:

- Water (drinking, reclaimed, waste) and solid waste

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Women, Infants and Children Program   *Food, Nutrition and Clothing*

- 12420 130th Ave N, Largo, FL 33644, (727) 588-4716
- 310 N Myrtle Ave, Clearwater, FL 33755, (727) 298-2530
- 205 9th St N, St. Petersburg, FL 33701, (727) 824-6914
- 6350 76th Ave N, Pinellas Park, FL 33781, (727) 547-7780
- 301 S Disston Ave, Tarpon Springs, FL 34689, (727) 942-5457

Website: http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/women-infants-and-children-wic

Hours: Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Services:

- Cash assistance to purchase healthy foods
- Nutrition education and counseling
- Breastfeeding support
- Health care referrals

Food Banks   *Food, Nutrition and Clothing*

A food bank is a non-profit, charitable organization that distributes food to those who have difficulty purchasing enough food to avoid hunger.

St. Petersburg Free Clinic

863 3rd Ave N
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
(727) 823-3471

Website: http://www.stpetersburgfreeclinic.org/our-services/food-bank

Hours: Monday – Friday, 7 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Sylvan Abbey United Methodist Church

2817 Sunset Point Rd
Clearwater, FL 33759
(727) 796-3057

Hours: Monday – Friday, 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

St. Paul's United Methodist Church

1199 Highland Ave NE
Largo, FL 33770

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(727) 584-8165

Hours: Monday – Friday, 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.

Lealman United Methodist Church

4090 58th Ave N
St. Petersburg, FL 33714
(727) 526-6240

Hours: Thursday, 5:30 p.m. - 7 p.m.

Serenity United Methodist Church

2750 5th Ave N
St. Petersburg, FL 33713
(727) 282-2993

Hours: Monday, 5:30 p.m. - 7 p.m.

Wesley United Methodist Church

301 37th Ave N
St. Petersburg, FL 33704
(727) 896-4797

Hours: Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Clearview United Methodist Church

4515 38th Ave N
St. Petersburg, FL 33713
(727) 522-4673

Hours: Monday, Thursday, 9:30 a.m. - 11 a.m.

The Salvation Army	*Food, Nutrition and Clothing*

1625 N Belcher Rd
Clearwater, FL 33765
(727) 725-9777

 1400 4th St S
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
(727) 822-4954

1521 Druid Rd E
Clearwater, FL 33756

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(727) 446-4177

Website: www.salvationarmyusa.org/

Hours: Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Services:

- Assistance with food, clothing, school supplies, rent and utility bills
- Must meet income eligibility requirements

Florida Homeless Education Programs   *Food, Nutrition and Clothing*

(727) 588-6434

Website: http://www.fldoe.org/bsa/title1/titlex.asp

Hours: Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Services:

- Children receive free meals, clothing, school supplies and transportation
- Must meet income eligibility requirements
- Services provided at child's school

Clothes to Kids   *Food, Nutrition and Clothing*

1059 N Hercules Ave
Clearwater, FL 33765
(727) 441-5050

3251 3rd Ave N
St. Petersburg, FL 33713
(727) 327-7100

Website: www.clothestokids.org

Hours: Monday – Thursday, 1 p.m. – 5 p.m.

Services:

- Free, new and gently used clothing for low-income children

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TRANSPORTATION

Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority   *Transportation*

340 2nd Ave N
St. Petersburg, FL 33701

3180 Central Ave
St. Petersburg, FL 33710

(727) 540-1900

Website: www.psta.net

Hours: Monday - Friday, 6 a.m. - 8 p.m.
               Saturday, 7 a.m. - 8 p.m.
               Sunday and Holidays, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Services:

• Bus routes, maps, schedules and other help
• Transit Authority employee will ride with new customers on first trip
• Children ages 5 and under are free when riding with a paying adult
• Seniors, disabled and Medicare cardholders receive 50 percent off fares

Taxis   *Transportation*

• Yellow Cab   (813) 253-0121

• United Cab   (813) 777-7777

• Checker Cab   (813) 229-1888

• BATS Taxi   (727) 565-4699

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LEGAL

Gulf Coast Legal Services   *Legal*

641 1st St S
St. Petersburg, FL 33704
(727) 821-0726

314 S Missouri Ave, Suite 109
Clearwater, FL 33756
(727) 443-0657

Website: http://www.gulfcoastlegal.org/

Hours: Monday - Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Services:

•   Free civil legal services for income eligible individuals in fields of employment
   discrimination, family, housing, medical and immigration issues
•   Free legal workshops to introduce new immigrants to U.S. rule of law

Notary Public   *Legal*

A Notary Public is a state certified professional specializing in signing legal, financial
and other documents.

3665 E Bay Dr, Suite 204
Largo, FL 33771
(727) 535-0620

7780 49th St
Pinellas Park, FL 33781
(727) 209-2459

6822 22nd Ave N
St. Petersburg, FL 33710
(727) 381-2011

Hours: Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 8 p.m.
                  Saturday, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

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DRIVER'S LICENSES AND IDs

Driver's License Offices *Driver's Licenses and IDs*

- 6855 62nd Ave N, Pinellas Park, FL 33781
- 1663 Gulf to Bay Blvd, Clearwater, FL 33755
- 29399 Hwy 19 N, Clearwater, FL 34621
- 13025 Starkey Rd, Largo, FL 33773
- 1067 62nd Ave S, St. Petersburg, FL 33705
- 1800 66th St N, St. Petersburg, FL 33710

(727) 562-3262

Website: www.dmvflorida.org/drivers-license-identification.shtm

Hours: Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

- Immigrants applying for Driver's License or ID card must provide documents from the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration verifying immigration status
- Refugees and asylum seekers require additional documentation
- Appointments can be made online or by phone

Driver's Education for High School Students *Driver's Licenses and IDs*

(727) 588-6543

- Free summer driver's education class for students ages 15 and up
- Times and locations vary. Call for updated schedule.

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FINANCIAL AND TAX SERVICES

Project Prosper *Finances and Taxes*

PO Box 8411
Madeira Beach, FL 33739
(727) 391-8213

Hours: Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Services:

•   Financial literacy classes for adult immigrants and refugees
•   Assistance integrating recent immigrants into the financial and economic
            mainstream

Refugee Savings Program *Finances and Taxes*

1213 16th St N
St. Petersburg, FL 33705
(727) 893-1313

Website: www.ccdosp.org

Hours: Monday – Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

•   Helps refugees reach personal financial goals
•   Refugees develop personal savings plan and attend financial education seminar
•   Refugees who reach their goal receive matching grant of $1 for every $1 saved

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance *Finances and Taxes*

4255 56th Ave N
St. Petersburg, FL 33714
(727) 520-9820

5812 150th Ave N
Clearwater, FL 33760
(727) 533-0730

Services:

•   Free tax return preparation
•   Must meet income eligibility requirements
•   Dates and hours vary

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400 Carillon Pkwy
St. Petersburg, FL 33716
 (866) 595-7678

Website: www.suncoastfcu.org/DEfault.aspx?tabid=416

- Free tax return preparation for anyone over age 50 and for low-income individuals under 50
- Available yearly February 1 - April 15
- Locations and hours vary
- Financial literacy classes and counseling available year-round

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Arabic-Speaking Places of Worship *Other*

Masjid Al Sunnah
2400 6th St S
St. Petersburg, FL 33705
(727) 288-3636
http://www.isspmosque.com/

Masjid Ebad Alrahman
9400 67th St N
Pinellas Park, FL 33782
(727) 546-3162
http://www.ispc-fl.org/

Islamic Society of Tampa Bay
7326 E Sligh Ave
Tampa, FL 33610
(813) 628-0070
http://istaba.org/index.shtml

St. Mary and St. Mina Orthodox Church
2930 County Rd 193
Clearwater, FL 33759
(727) 796-0464
http://stmarystmina.org/

St. Nicholas Orthodox Church
6447 76th Ave N
Pinellas Park, FL 33781
(727) 545-3797
http://www.stnicholasaoc.org/

Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church
6201 Sheldon Rd
Tampa, FL 33615
(813) 886-7413
http://www.peterpaultampa.com/

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Middle Eastern Supermarkets *Other*

Cedar Market
6529 54th Ave N
St. Petersburg, FL 33710
(727) 546-9687

Queen Cleopatra
24111 US Highway 19 N
Clearwater, FL 33763
(727) 726-0101

Al-Aqsa Market
10805 N 56th St
Tampa, FL 33620
(813) 987-2039

Oasis
1450 Skipper Rd
Tampa, FL 33620
(813) 972-7482

Useful Community Phone Numbers *Other*

- Clearwater Police: (727) 562-4420
- Consumer Credit Counseling Service: (813) 289-8923
- Department of Health: (727) 507-4857
- Emergency: 911
- Find Your Evacuation Zone: (727) 453-3150
- Food Stamp Hotline: (813) 276-5900
- Job Helpline: (813) 272-6975
- Job Services of Florida: (813) 930-7400
- Highway Patrol: (727) 469-5959
- Post Office Information: 411
- Power Outage: (800) 228-8485
- Pre/post Disaster Resources: 211
- Red Cross North: (727) 446-2358
- Red Cross South: (727) 898-3111
- Road Conditions: (813) 631-4020
- Senior Services: (727) 576-1533
- St. Petersburg Police: (727) 893-7780
- Travel Information: 511
- Weather Center: (813) 645-2323

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