INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

by

KARI BURNETT

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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By KARI BURNETT

Dissertation Director:

Dr. Joanna Regulska

With the number of refugees increasing worldwide, states not historically refugee destinations and refugees are placed in new roles. Questions arise about how refugees integrate into a new host society, how do identity markers and past experiences affect the integration process, and how do state's policy choices affect integration processes? I will examine these questions, among others, through an analysis of refugee integration in the Czech Republic (a new destination country for refugees). I derived my data from twenty semi-structured interviews with refugees, institutional interviews and analysis of diverse documents. Findings show that refugees consider obtaining Czech language skills and citizenship as essential for successful integration to take place. In addition, my data shows that policy-makers are often disconnected from the policy implementation process hampering the governments' integration efforts.

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Chapter 1:
Introduction

Forced migrants are found throughout the world; they are people who are persecuted

and/or mistreated and feel they cannot be protected by their own state government. In

many cases, it is in fact the state that is the perpetrator of the maltreatment and as a result,

forced migrants believe their only option is to move from their home country or region.

Once leaving their home country, forced migrants must find a place to resettle. In my

research, I focus on this resettlement process. Specifically, I examine the process of

integrating into a new host society, which involves not only a refugee him/herself, but the

host society and state as well.

As environmental disasters and local, regional and global conflicts increase

around the world, people are compelled to leave their home countries and seek refuge

elsewhere. As a result, the number of forced migrants has subsequently increased,

leading to questions and concerns in the host countries about how to respond to and

accommodate the influx of migrants while continuing to serve the interests of its people.

Due to mobility constraints, these issues do not uniformly affect all countries.

Forced migrants differ from regular or voluntary international migrants who

choose to migrate for various reasons (e.g. employment, family reunification) and have

permission to enter another state prior to migrating. Different classifications of forced

migrants exist: asylum seekers, refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless

persons. Asylum seekers leave their country of origin and apply in-person for protection

from another country. If this application is accepted, asylum seekers are reclassified as

refugees and are allowed to remain legally and resettle in the application country. In

some cases, resettlement programs exist where a person can apply for refugee status in another country while they are still in their home country. The term refugee also includes forced migrants who live in temporary camps or settlements designed to shelter groups of people for a short period of time. Internally displaced persons are those who are forced to leave their home regions but for a variety of reasons, stay within their home country and do not cross international borders. Finally, stateless persons are not recognized as citizens of any state. For the purpose of this research, I will be using the terms "forced migrants" and "forced migration" to discuss refugees and asylum seekers only.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in 2009 there were almost 36.5 million forced migrants worldwide and of these, approximately ten million were refugees. Approximately two-thirds of refugees are found in conflict areas and in lesser developed countries (i.e. Afghani refugees in Pakistan and Iran, Iraqi refugees in Syria) whereas the remaining one-third are found in more developed countries (UNHCR 2010). Many refugees in more developed countries receive their refugee status after going through the asylum application process.

For the past few decades, Europe (mainly countries in Western Europe[1]) has received the highest number of asylum applications worldwide with France, Germany and the United Kingdom receiving the majority of asylum applications in Europe (UNHCR 2001, 2003-2010). From the advent of the legal definition of a refugee in 1951 until the 1980s, asylum seekers in Western Europe were mainly fleeing communist Eastern European countries (see Chapter 4). This trend shifted in the late 1980s as asylum seekers began flowing in from countries such as Turkey, Iran, and Sri Lanka (UNHCR

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[1] I will use the two terms Eastern and Western Europe throughout the dissertation. Eastern Europe includes countries formerly part of the Soviet Union or former communist states and all others are considered Western Europe.

2001). The 1990s witnessed the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and the independence of the Baltic States from the Soviet Union. These changes led to two consequences for Europe: fewer people left Eastern European and Baltic States in search of asylum and those same countries were now open to receiving asylum seekers from other countries (although the number of applications submitted there was relatively low compared to Western Europe) (UNHCR 2001). As the geopolitical landscape continued to change throughout the 1990s, asylum seekers migrated to Europe from a wider range of sending countries with a significant number of asylum seekers from Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Iran, Somalia, Bulgaria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (UNHCR 2001).

While the same countries in Europe tended to receive high numbers of asylum applications in the most recent decade, the origin of asylum applicants changed to include more diverse countries both culturally and geographically. This includes an increase of asylum applicants from Africa; indeed some sending country's applications doubled in the first six months of 2009 compared to the entire year of 2007 (Somalia, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Mauritania, Ghana, Mali, Gambia and Senegal (UNHCR 2009b)). The most recent decade also saw a wider range of European countries (i.e. those in Eastern Europe who had previously been sending countries) become receiving countries for a larger number of asylum seekers and refugees.

A major concern for the state and host society is how to manage the resettlement process and whether to focus on integrating its refugees or to repatriating them. If the state chooses integration, it must decide how to develop policies that effectively promote

integration. The host society is also involved in refugee integration and their role in this process needs to be adequately defined in order to facilitate the integration process.

Forced migrants face numerous constraints and must content with a variety of obstacles as they arrive and settle in a strange new land. Refugees have to decide on how to navigate their new social, cultural, physical, political and economic spaces. Part of this is deciding if they want to redefine their identity to some extent and integrate into their new host society; if so, they have to learn, often through trial and error, how to become successfully integrated. Likewise, the host society must be willing to tolerate this period of acclimation without resorting to reactionary attitudes. This decision and this mutual adjustment process are among the most challenging contemporary dilemmas faced by individuals, communities, states and institutions around the world concerning forced migration.

Research questions

With the increasing number of resettled refugees, researchers and policy-makers struggle to understand what forces shape and govern the integration process. I began my project with one main research question: How do refugees navigate the resettlement process and become integrated in their new host society? By using the integration process as the framework for my research design, I sought to answer specific questions regarding integration practices (i.e. refugee identity and the state's involvement in refugee integration).

My aim was to explore the experience of becoming a refugee – legally, emotionally and socially – and to understand how this could potentially affect the

integration process. More specifically, I wanted to determine how/if the new legal status of refugee impacted a person's identity by exploring how the label of "refugee" affects a person who was once identified as a citizen of another country. I also wanted to learn if and how refugees experienced experience discrimination because they are labeled as such. Does such labeling impact their identity and how does it impact the integration process.

As my initial task was to examine integration processes, I needed to formulate questions that would illuminate how individual refugees shape such processes through their everyday practices and what role state policies and institutions (both governmental and nongovernmental) play in this process. To that end, my research questions examined how refugees defined integration and if they actively seek integration into their host society. When do refugees consider themselves integrated into their host societies and how do different identity markers (such as age, gender, education, past employment, race, ethnicity, country of origin or immigration status) affect a refugee's integration into the host country society?

As the state and its institutions decide who can become a refugee, the state is deeply involved in the resettlement process (regardless of whether it decides to enact integration policies or not). I was concerned with states that have refugee integration policy and the impact such policy has on the integration process. My other goal was to evaluate the effectiveness of integration policies. To do this, I asked refugees how integration policies help/hinder the integration process. I also examined how integration policies are created. By doing so I was exploring refugee integration policy from the perspective of the individual refugee and the state. The examination of my case study of

the Czech Republic demonstrates the relevance and connection between these research questions.

Case study

The aforementioned issues of migration – identity, integration and policy – operating at different scales – individual, societal and state – are apparent in the context of today's Czech Republic. The changing context of European immigration (i.e. immigrants arriving from more diverse countries and cultures in the past decades) and the recent enlargements of the European Union (EU) (i.e. in 2004 and 2007) make the Czech Republic an interesting place for a case study. New flows of asylum seekers are applying for protection in former communist Eastern European countries, including the Czech Republic. Historically, these countries had not been destinations for asylum seekers, but in many cases were in fact the origin countries of asylum seekers.

This new influx of refugees presents a new and unexpected challenge in Eastern Europe as countries are relatively ill-prepared to respond to the resettlement and integration process of refugees in this region. The Czech Republic, along with other Eastern European countries, is a recent member of an expanded European supranational space (joining the EU in 2004) and one of the countries that witnessed an increase in the number of asylum applicants and subsequent refugees in the past decade; it is also located on the frontier of the post-communist space in Europe. While preparing to enter the EU, the Czech Republic was considered a front-runner on the list of Eastern European EU candidate countries because its economic and political situations were more in line with those of the existing EU member states (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004, Yilmaz

2003). The Czech Republic also showed a willingness to amend and/or create social policies in accordance with EU standards in order to comply with the rules for EU ascension (Vermeersch 2003).

With regard to its refugee population, the origin countries of refugees in the Czech Republic are much different that those found in Western Europe. A review of the main sending countries of refugees in France, Germany and the United Kingdom shows great diversity in the top three origin countries of resettled refugees: France – Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Democratic Republic of the Congo; Germany – Serbia, Iraq, Turkey; and the United Kingdom – Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq (UNHCR 2011). In contrast, the major sending countries to the Czech Republic (i.e. Belarus, Russia) are former communist spaces that are linguistically, culturally and geopolitically similar to the Czech Republic. Of the eight Eastern European states that joined the EU in 2004, only the Czech Republic and Poland have witnessed this regional trend.

My dissertation fieldwork (performed during the 2008-2009 academic year) consisted of interviewing refugees in the Czech Republic about their resettlement experiences. I interviewed twenty refugees with a focus on obtaining data about their integration process. Besides determining what aspects they considered essential to successful integration (and comparing those to previous studies), I explored whether or not the experience of becoming a refugee had any impact in how they identify themselves after receiving refugee status and how they felt about their new label. I discussed refugee integration policy with them to determine how they perceived the effectiveness of such policy and to find out what recommendations they would suggest for bettering the policy's effectiveness (if needed). I interviewed a representative from the Ministry of the

Interior of the Czech Republic to find out about the policy-making process. My research design and findings are presented in the following format.

Dissertation format

My dissertation consists of six chapters, Introduction and Conclusion. Chapter 2 presents a review of the relevant literature on forced migration. This includes a review of forced migration theory, refugee identity, refugee integration and legislative strategy and governance concerning forced migration policies. Chapter 3 details the methodology used in my dissertation research, including my reasons for choosing the Czech Republic, how I obtained my sample and how I analyzed my data (which consists of interview transcriptions and policy documents). Chapter 4 situates my research. I start with the evolution of the term "refugee" in the European context; I include a brief history of the Czech Republic to provide a background of the country and discuss the historical and contemporary situation of forced migration in the country. This chapter also introduces my research participants.

Chapters 5 through 7 present the analysis of the data collected during my fieldwork: Chapter 5 answers my research questions concerning refugee identity and the effect that legally becoming a refugee has on a person who was once a citizen of a different country; Chapter 6 dissects the integration process, including an examination of the definition of integration, a comparison of my data to existing conceptual frameworks of integration, and what aspects are considered essential for successful integration from the viewpoints of refugees and also scholars. Chapter 7 looks at the state's role in the integration process by analyzing integration policy, its implementation and refugee

experiences with aspects of integration policy to determine if what is found on paper translates into what happens in reality for refugees.

Finally, Chapter 8 concludes my dissertation. In this chapter, I discuss how my research contributes to the scholarly literature on refugee integration, introduce future research questions that emerged after analyzing my data and offer my recommendations for facilitating refugee integration.

Chapter 2:
Explaining forced migration and examining its specific aspects of
identity, integration and legislation

Introduction

Geographers have made many contributions to the field of internal and international

migration studies; however, the study of forced migration has been a recent development

in geography appearing as a significant topic for research only within the past decade

(Hardwick and Meacham 2005). Regarding studies of forced migration in geography,

Wood (1994) recognized that the increasing number of forced migrants worldwide would

provide geographers with critical topics to research. I endeavor to add to the growing

contributions of geographers to the field of forced migration studies.

Forced migration is a complex phenomenon that engages a variety of forced

migrants: asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, refugees and stateless persons.

Each designation has its own specific economic, political and social issues that are

different from the others. I have chosen to focus my research on refugees since I am

particularly interested in examining the resettlement process of people who were forced

to leave their country of origin due to some type of persecution. I am interested not only

in how the individuals navigate their new situation, but also how the state and host

society are involved in this resettlement process. Thus, refugees (who have been

recognized as such and allowed to stay legally in the host country) are the population that

best reflects my research focus.

My research draws on four bodies of literature concerning asylum seekers and

refugees: forced migration theory, identity, integration and legislative strategy and

governance. The rationale behind choosing these theoretical frameworks lies in their

importance to the field of forced migration studies and their relevance to my research

project. Forced migration theory discusses the development of forced migration studies,

which is a relatively new sub-discipline in the interdisciplinary field of population

studies, and examines different ways in which social scientists have attempted to theorize

forced migration. Forced migrants add the new layer of "refugee" to their identity, which

in turn can affect not only their identity reformulation but the integration process as well.

My research focus is on the integration of refugees and how they navigate their new

economic, social, cultural and political spaces making a review of existing integration

literature necessary. Finally, legislation and governance examines the ways in which the

EU and individual member states have created a governance environment for asylum

seekers and refugees through policy means, including the decision-making process of

who can legally be granted asylum and the resettlement and/or integration policies that

are imposed after a person receives refugee status.

Prior to reviewing these four bodies of literature, I will situate my research in the

field of forced migration studies. After the literature has been reviewed, I will discuss the

significance of my particular case study.

Situating my research

Compared to regular migration, the field of refugee or forced migration studies is a

relatively new and, until recently, comparatively unstudied sub-discipline in the social

sciences. Indeed scholars claim that forced migration studies have been sorely neglected

by the social sciences (O'Neill and Spybey 2003).

Geographers have an important role to play in the development of forced migration studies as much of the experiences of forced migrants, their countries of origin and destination countries as well as aspects of policy-making are specific to a particular place. Geographers' "passion for place, as well as space" can illuminate refugee-related studies (Robinson 1993: 213). In addition to place, geography is important to the study of forced migration as it can explain the causal conditions that induce migration (e.g. ethnic/religious/political conflict, environmental degradation, economics); the interdisciplinary nature of geography affords a space to address policy-making as well (Brun 2001). Furthermore, geographers can be instrumental in contributing to the field of forced migration studies because of their interest in globalization and its affect on the state and society (Brun 2001). My research on refugee integration in the Czech Republic will not only add to the aforementioned bodies of literature on forced migration theory, legislation and governance, integration and identity but also to the growing body of literature about forced migration offered by geographers as it specifically addresses some of the areas broached by Brun (2001) (e.g. by looking at policy-making in regards to refugee integration and how globalization (i.e. its influence on migration) has affected the Czech state and Czech society) and Robinson (1993) (e.g. by giving a place-specific account of refugee integration).

One of the conspicuous shortcomings of the forced migration literature is a lack of attention being given to migrants' themselves. The privileging of agencies, institutions and mechanisms that manage forced migrants and the resettlement process means that migrants are rarely at the center of the analysis. Exceptions here are several studies in the United Kingdom (UK) that specifically target the opinions of refugees about their

resettlement experiences (Fillamore and Goodson 2006, Griffiths et. al. 2006, Sim and Bowes 2007). My research will focus on individual refugees and their resettlement experiences in the Czech Republic, including an examination of their daily life experiences and practices. I am especially interested in determining what (if any) economic, political and/or social aspects of the resettlement process help or hinder refugees' integration the most. I am concerned with the role that prior knowledge about the destination country had in their decision-making process, and if/how they used that knowledge once receiving refugee status. As a majority of the studies determining the influence of refugee's prior knowledge on destination choice was completed in Western European countries (e.g. Gilbert and Koser 2004, Havinga and Bocker 1999, Healey 2006, Morrison 1998, Robinson and Segrott 2002), the case of a post-communist country makes a particularly important site for inquiry and holds potential for contributing to forced migration scholarship.

Research discussing different aspects of refugee integration (including policy aspects) in Europe is limited in its geographic scope with the UK featured as a dominant site of investigation (Ager and Strang 2008, Bloch 2007, Griffiths et. al. 2006, Healey 2006, Phillimore and Goodson 2006 and 2008, Sim and Bowes 2007, Valentine et. al. 2009, as well as various UK Home Office reports). Few studies incorporate other countries (Eide, 2007 (Norway), Franz 2003 (Austria), Hagelund 2005 (Norway), Korac 2003a (Italy, Netherlands), Pero 2005 (Italy), Valtonen 1999 (Finland), Wauters and Lambrecht 2008 (Belgium)), but the range of countries included is rather small. My research departs significantly from the past geographical focus by examining the case of

one of the newer, Eastern European members of the EU that has traditionally been ignored as a destination country.

All things considered, my research examines the resettlement process of refugees in an oft-ignored region in Europe (Eastern Europe) that has newly been experiencing the population affects of globalization (i.e. an increase in the number of refugees as well as an increase in the diversity of sending countries). My research takes a close look at the individual refugee's resettlement process, including the process of integrating (or not) into their new host society and the affect that becoming a refugee has on their identities. I examine the integration process from the state's viewpoint as well by analyzing the policies enacted to promote refugee integration, including their amendments and implementation throughout the past decade.

Explaining forced migration: search for theories

Asylum seekers and refugees are considered involuntary or forced migrants. An asylum seeker becomes a refugee once they have been granted asylum. The United Nations (UN) established the official definition of a refugee during the 1951 Geneva Convention (see Chapter 4) (Castles and Miller 2003, Iversen and Morken 2004, Loescher 1989, Mann and Fazil 2006, Paludan 1981). One of the earlier social scientists to attempt a theoretical explanation of forced migration, Kunz (1973: 129) contended that the complexity of theorizing involuntary migration lies in the "sheer difficulty of reconciling and explaining the seeming contradictions and aberrant patterns and to fit them into one conceptual framework." As a result, his models based on the dynamic movement of refugees categorized forced migration into a collection of movements consisting of specific push

factors. In later work, Kunz (1981) further categorized refugees based on social situations, including their identity or marginality and attitudes toward their flight and homeland.

Zolberg (1989) gave consideration to forced migration when he ascertained that earlier migration theory needed to be modified as a result of contemporary global inequality, and that attention should be paid to temporal and spatial considerations (including those for home and destination countries) in any new approach to migration theory. Scholars also theorized that the historical process of state formation and social conflict as well as geopolitical transformations and varying socioeconomic conditions were responsible for the global increase of forced migrants (Portes and Borocz 1989, Wood 1994, Zolberg 1989, Zolberg et. al. 1986). However, echoing Kunz (1973), Wood (1994) admitted that creating an all-inclusive refugee theory is virtually impossible since the decision to migrate is influenced by a complex combination of decision-making and causal factors, which include not only the more evident social and political issues of discrimination or civil war and unrest, but also environmental and ecological factors, such as natural disasters and famine.

That universal migration theory is almost unattainable remains a current theme in the literature (Akcapar 2006, Healey 2006). Accepting that, social scientists have used different theories to examine forced migration, including social network theory (Collyer 2005, Morrison 1998), post-colonialism (Havinga and Bocker 1999), analyses of gender differences that result in different migratory experiences (Franz 2003, Indra 1999) and transnationalism (Al-Ali et. al. 2001, Eastmond 2006, Shami 1996), among many diverse factors. Collyer (2005) and Morrison (1998) confirm the positive linkage between social

networks and migration, while Havinga and Bocker (1999) find a positive correlation in

migration from former colonies to colonizers. Forced migration theory using a

transnational perspective recognizes that, despite the move, refugees oftentimes continue

to have various connections (e.g. familial, economic, political and cultural) with their

home country.

Several studies have attempted to add to a comprehensive theory of forced

migration by focusing on the decision-making processes of asylum seekers to determine

how they choose their destination country. Most of these studies concluded that not all

asylum seekers have much choice in their destination country and do not determine the

destination before emigrating, although a recurrent theme shows that some admitted to

influencing factors, such as being in a European country and/or the presence of friends or

family (Barsky 2000, Day and White 2002, Doornheim and Dijkhoff 1995 in Robinson

and Segrott 2002, Gilbert and Koser 2006, Morrison 1998, Neumayer 2005, Riddle and

Buckley 1998). Robinson and Segrott (2002), for a British Home Office research project,

developed a model of an asylum seeker's decision-making process. This model includes

four stages: 1) the decision to leave; 2) figuring out how one will leave (use or not of an

agent); 3) weighing the options of where to go and 4) making the final destination choice.

A scientific model of decision-making may be helpful in the abstract; however, it must be

recognized that forced migrants are individuals with unique factors influencing their

decision to move and do not always conform to the paths delineated in scientific models.

Crisp (2003: 87) questions the practicality of attempting to model the movements of

forced migrants; he states and asks: "Refugee movements are inherently chaotic and

unpredictable, involving individuals and groups of people with strong emotions,

intentions and aspirations. In seeking to regulate their movement, are states and international organizations trying to manage what is essentially unmanageable?"

Along this same vein few researchers have examined the amount of knowledge an asylum seeker has about his/her destination country itself and the asylum policies in that country to determine if this knowledge affects their choice of destination country. These studies have shown that asylum seekers generally do not know about the policies concerning asylum (Gilbert and Koser 2006, Robinson and Segrott 2002). Nor did they have much specific knowledge about the host country, only a broad notion of it (Gilbert and Koser 2006).

My research will add to forced migration theory as I examine some of the aforementioned themes in the context of refugees in the Czech Republic, including transnationalism, the decision-making process of migrants and migrant's prior knowledge of the host country and/or its asylum policies. As much of the forced migration research ignores the conditions of the host country and focuses on either constructing general theories based on secondary data or specific theories based on interview data on a particular topic (e.g. social network theory, transnationalism), my research will add to that body of knowledge as I analyze the decision-making process of migrants, including the influence the host country had on their decision to migrate there and how that affects the resettlement process. I do this because I believe that place is an important aspect of migration, which is ignored in much of the forced migration literature. One could argue that place does not matter in a globalizing world; however, I agree with Buchanan (2001: 284) who discusses the "reemergence of the significance of place in a world of diminishing spatial barriers to exchange, movement, and communication." Place is a

complex issue that is important when researching forced migration, including not only the host country but also the locale where the refugee lives or calls home (Kabachnik et. al. 2010). Each place has its own specific social and cultural attributes, which can profoundly affect a refugee and his/her resettlement process. Place is also important as it needs to be considered whether examining an asylum seeker's choice of destination, asylum policy or demographic composition, among the almost endless list of factors that can affect the resettlement process.

Identity

Identity is an ever-changing aspect of a person's life. It is individual and collective and based on numerous variables, including environment, location, age, nationality, gender, ethnicity, religion, among others (an almost infinite list). Kuus (2007: 91) defines identity "not as a single, monolithic thing, but as an amalgam of contested elements…[and] a moving and contested target…" Since identities are dynamic and flexible, researchers study the experiences of identity formation within different populations and circumstances.

As with integration (discussed below), social scientists and other scholars have offered several definitions of identity. Holt (2007) provides a synopsis of identity definitions, including that identity is the creation of an individual and his/her personal histories but is also affected by place (e.g. an individual's relationship with specific features of a place). Social, cultural and political aspects as well as contextual situations, according to these definitions, play an important role in identity formation, and refugees are active in the reshaping of their identity (Ager 1999).

Identity formation and maintenance is a continuous process, and individuals play an active role in mediating this process as well. Identity politics deals with both the collective and personal facets of one's identity – the plurality of these facets creating a "hierarchy of identities" that an individual must choose how to organize (Pani 2011: 46). Identity reformulation is based on factors that unify or differentiate an individual from others with the individual actively choosing the ways to identify themselves (Mutanen 2010); however, in some cases the choice is not made by the individual but by the society or state in which they live (Penn 2008). As identity is constructed of a plurality of elements, individuals have to choose which aspect of their identity to emphasize in different situations (Sen 2006).

In my research, I focus on the process of my respondents' identity reformulation by analyzing how/if the change from citizen to refugee was noticeable to them; how they are/not choosing to respond to their new role as a refugee in Czech society; and how/if the label of "refugee" as part of their identity has changed with time. I also examine the identity politics of my respondents by determining the importance they have chosen to put on specific aspects of their identity. In the study of asylum seeker and refugee identity reformulation, the combined elements of identity are extremely varied and place specific due to the diverse natures of the sending and receiving countries.

According to scholars, one of the main influences of a refugee's evolving identity is place (Brun 2001, Griffiths 2001, Hein 1993, Holt 2007, Parker and Brassett 2005, White 2002). This influence is partially due to the existing legal infrastructure in the destination country; different places respond to resettling refugees in different ways leading to a range of consequences at the individual level. Oftentimes the admittance of

refugees is tied to a state's foreign policy situation (Hein 1993). Additionally, forced migrants often cross internationally recognized borders through varying legal systems. Because each country involved has a different political structure, history, culture and demographic composition, among other traits, "place shape[s] law and legal relations…[and] law and legal relations shape places" (White 2002: 1071). Given these circumstances, when no global binding legislature concerning forced migrants exists, the destination country can decide to admit whomever (and however many) they choose. The overall effect of this transpolitical journey is that refugees are often seen as people who have lost their identity because they no longer have legal connection anywhere (Papastergiadis 2006, Parker and Bassett 2005, White 2002). White (2002) finds this problematic as it emphasizes legal citizenship as the most significant aspect of identity.

Population classifications or definitions (e.g. age, gender, race) are other identity markers that can change based on the specific location (Haines 2007, Hein 1993, Keel and Drew 2004). Refugees may ethnically describe themselves differently than the host country, and "concepts generally thought of as relatively fixed, like ethnic identity, have a capacity for fluidity…" (Summerfield 1999: 122). Adding confusion to the issue is that legal bodies sometimes frame identifiers differently as Haines (2007) found in his study of refugees in the United States (US). He noted that ethnic, racial, national and class distinctions can vary from sending to receiving country, which became confusing for refugees who had to classify themselves based on categories used in the United States. This brings the notion of governance into identity reformulation as the receiving country imposes its conceptions of identity on refugees (Haines 2007); making a forced migrant choose an ethnic identification based on indigenous categories, definitions and

significations illustrates how even ethnic identity can be politically impressed upon refugees. Another inconsistency can appear when refugees identify themselves as specific nationalities that no longer exist, as in the case of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union (Keel and Drew 2004). I encountered issues of inconsistency while compiling descriptive data about my respondents, which made me question the value of measuring these characteristics in the first place.

Scholars studying refugee identity often mention the "us" and "them" aspect, being the "other" or feeling as outsiders in both their country of origin and destination country as impacting identity (Eide 2007, O'Neill and Spybey 2003, Papastergiadis 2006, Parker and Brassett 2005, Robinson and Rubio 2007, Zetter 2007). Refugees are a part of and also excluded from both their country of origin and host country (Zetter 2007). Again this connects to the legal aspect of refugee studies as policy is often blamed for creating an "other" by putting people in a refugee category and labeling them as such (O'Neill and Spybey 2003, Zetter 2007). Zetter (2007) asserts that the refugee label underscores a sense of isolation for refugees.

Besides the legal distinction, the sense of "otherness" is often apparent between refugees and the host society (Eide 2007, Grove and Zwi 2006, Papastergiadis 2006, Robinson and Rubio 2007). "Othering" is a process of creating an identity based upon a perception, often of difference, that has affected identity both internally and externally (Capo Zmegac 2007). It is described as something that "defines and secures one's own identity by distancing and stigmatizing an(other)" (Grove and Zwi 2006: 1933). The feeling of being the "other" is often intensified when refugees come from countries that are ethnically/racially dissimilar from the host country since their "otherness" is more

noticeable (Parker and Brassett 2005). Connected to this is the feeling of fear that some refugees feel in their destination country based on their refugee status (Griffiths 2001); although it is possible that refugees experienced a sense of fear in their home countries, this is a new type of fear that accompanies their refugee label upon resettlement.

Through this research, I aim to analyze the ways refugees self-identify; this leads to discussing transculturalism. This again examines the connection between integration and identity as refugees begin to identify more with their host country as they progress through the process of transculturalization. I also examine the influence of religion on refugees who consider themselves religious in a mainly secular society. In fact, this dimension of analysis, the intersection of religion and secularism, seems to be omitted from scholarly literature. Secondly, I analyze what impact, if any, the "refugee" label has had on my respondents. This aspect of analysis adds to the literature on labeling and the negative impact that it tends to have on refugees.

Integration

Refugees can take several avenues once resettled (assimilation, acculturation, etc.), but integration is thought to be the best result (O'Neill and Spybey 2003). According to Favell (2001: 378): "Integration, not immigration control or naturalization, may indeed be the most important immigration issue, particularly in view of problematic research in this area". Attempting to establish a comprehensive theory of integration has proven complicated, if not impossible (Ager and Strang 2004, Korac 2003a, Mestheneos and Ioannide 2002, Robinson 1998, Sigona 2005, Vaiou and Stratigaki 2008). The term "integration" is said to be "chaotic and vague" and "a word used by many but understood

differently by most" (Robinson 1998: 118). Sigona (2005: 119) calls integration an "elusive concept". The complex process of integration occurs on various levels: political, social, cultural and economic. This complexity is reflected in how the term integration is defined and in the numerous definitions used by researchers.

In an attempt to remedy the ambiguity of the definition, several scholars have endeavored to create general integration models (Ager and Strang 2008, Healey 2006, Valtonen 2004) and models concerned with specific aspects of integration (e.g. quality of life in Ager and Strang 2008). However, the individual nature of refugees makes it difficult to apply integration models as universal frameworks. Further attempts to clarify the meaning of integration have been devised in the form of guidelines for integration research by independent scholars, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and governmental institutions that offer their opinions on what elements are essential for successful integration (Castles et. al. 2002, ECRE 2002, ECRE 2005, Meyer 2008).

Because a concrete definition of integration has been unattainable, much of the recent research has concentrated on exploring different aspects of forced migrants' integration process and factors that result in successful integration. These include a social network that reaches beyond others from the same country of origin (Colic-Peisker 2009, Mansouri et. al. 2006, Mitchneck et. al. 2009) and employment (Ager and Strang 2008, Colic-Peisker 2009, Fillamore and Goodson 2008, Korac 2003a and 2003b, Valtonen 2004). According to Colic-Peisker (2009), employment is considered by the state, NGOs and scholars to be the most significant facet of integration. Recognition, interpreted as being accepted members of a multicultural society, has been shown as an aspect of successful integration (Ager and Strang 2004, Eide 2007, Korac 2003b, Valtonen 2004).

Cultural compatibility (meaning a similarity in native language, religion, cultural beliefs,

values and traditions) between host country and country of origin is also considered of

critical importance for integration (Kunz 1981). Similarly, education, which includes

learning the host country language, is often mentioned as an aspect of successful

integration (Ager and Strang 2008, Fillamore and Goodson 2008, Healey 2006).

Geographers have begun to use different concepts and theories to discuss

integration. Secor (2004), in her research about Kurdish women in Turkey (not forced

migrants, but definitely a marginalized group), considers urbanization as a process that

fosters integration of migrants. Andersson and Solid (2003) infer, however, that smaller

regions are more conducive to integration as community members have more

opportunities to interact. Another line of inquiry is represented by Healey (2006) who

employs structuration theory, which combines structural and agentic[2] experiences of

forced migrants, to determine the impact of structural forces (e.g. immigration status,

language fluency, cultural differences) on refugee integration, concluding that language is

a key factor in successful integration. Healey (2006) and Hagelund (2005) conclude that

religion either promotes or hinders integration, respectively. If religion represents one of

the critical factors that determine the integration process, what effect would a secular

society have on religious refugees? How would such beliefs affect the integration

process? Can it lead to the emergence of new forms of segregation and isolationism?

Ager and Strang (2008: 185) note, concerning their model of refugee integration,

that: "Its wider utility and explanatory value now needs to be tested in diverse contexts to

gauge whether the proposed structure captures key elements of stakeholder perceptions of

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[2] With agency being defined as the self-determined capability and empowerment of humans to act (Healey 2006, Robinson 2005).

what constitutes integration in an appropriately broad range of settings and timeframes".

Due to the ambiguous nature of integration (discussed earlier in this section), it is

imperative that integration is studied in different places (e.g. cities, rural areas, states

with/out integration policies, culturally homogeneous areas, multicultural areas) and

longitudinally in order to fully understand the integration process. My research answers

Ager and Strang's (2008) call to test their integration model (as well as Valtonen's

(2004)) by questioning refugees in the Czech Republic about specific aspects found in

these models that are considered essential to successful integration (e.g. language skills,

housing, employment, social networks, among others). My research moves the argument

of what constitutes successful integration forward as my findings do not always

correspond with results providing the framework for Ager and Strang's (2008) and

Valtonen's (2004) integration models; this shows that more research is indeed needed to

perfect an integration model.

Furthermore, scholars have concentrated their efforts on studying integration as a

process of "othering", which creates the dichotomy of "us" and "them". Grove and Zwi

(2006) use this theory to examine how "othering" of refugees affects public health.

Stewart (2005) incorporates "othering" theory in the examination of asylum seeker

vulnerability. In her research, she concludes that asylum seekers often create new

identities or hide their asylum status for fear of being known as the "other". "Othering"

theory can be used to investigate how refugees are perceived in the destination country

and the implications that this reception has on refugees' integration process.

Conducting research in a post-communist country brings an additional critical

element to this analysis. As Kuus (2004: 473) pointed out Eastern European countries

experience "othering" as they are considered "not-yet-fully European", an idea that Kuus (2004) says has persisted since the 18th century. Instead of accepting a unified Europe, assessments are often made between East and West, with the West generally being the model for comparison (Horschelmann 2001). My research breaks new ground as it will study the "othering" of refugees in a society that is itself considered the "other" within the European setting (Kuus 2004, Neumann 1999, Strath 2000). Does living in an Eastern European country mean that refugees' integration experiences are different than those in Western Europe? To answer this question, I compare my data with studies performed in Western Europe.

To further address the concept of "othering", I address the issue of becoming an "other" on an individual level. In this context I ask: How does being labeled an "asylum seeker" or "refugee" affect individual migrants and their integration process? The social and political implications of their new label can certainly affect the integration process. How does a former citizen recognize (or not) his/her new distinction as "refugee" and navigate their new lives with this label? This introduces the interconnectedness between identity and the integration process (Eide 2007). Whether a refugee accepts or rejects their new label and whether they consider themselves integrated (or not) in their new host society can help understand the impact the label has on the integration process. Besides the social outcomes, this can be important to the political element of forced migration.

Legislative strategy and governance

An abundance of literature exists on policies related to refugees because of the intimacy between forced migration studies and the policy developments that affect forced

migration (Black 2001). In fact, a review of articles published in the *Journal of Refugee Studies*[3] shows that a majority of the published pieces (where the discipline was specified) were from policy organizations and political scientists (Black 2001). In this review, I am concerned with aspects of forced migration policies in Europe, which are the refugee-related integration polices and the attempt made by policy-makers to control the movement of forced migrants.

The Dublin Convention of 1990 included an attempt by the EU to clarify the method of ascertaining which country is responsible for determining asylum. Provisions of the Dublin Convention aimed at simplifying the application process (i.e. First Country of Asylum, Safe Third Country, and Safe Country of Origin) were established in order to reduce the occurrences of "asylum shopping" and "asylum seeker in orbit". The notion of "asylum shopping" refers to conditions in which asylum seekers submit applications for asylum in several countries in order to increase their chances of acceptance, while "asylum seeker in orbit" signifies the process where asylum seekers are transferred between countries without any one country agreeing to examine their applications (Abell 1997, Boswell 2000, Rudolph 2003, Russell et. al. 2000). Literature concerning the Dublin Convention concludes that these provisions are means of deflecting asylum seekers from Western European countries (Byrne et. al. 2002, Costello 2005). Much of the literature on asylum seeker and refugee acceptance in the EU also focuses on how policy regarding this population is often construed as a means of "spreading the burden" away from the Western EU countries (Costello 2005, Lavenex 1998, Peshkopia 2005, Robinson 2003a). Oftentimes this is accomplished by enacting increasingly restrictive

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[3] The Journal of Refugee Studies, established in 1988, was the first major interdisciplinary refugee studies journal.

asylum policies that practically guarantee that an asylum seeker will not meet the requirements to gain refugee status (Castles, Crawley and Loughna 2003, Joly 1999, Schonwalder 1999, Schuster and Solomos 1999, Thielemann 2004, Wood 1994). These provisions also underline the power of the EU not only within its supranational borders, but beyond its physical borders as asylum seekers denied entry are often returned to countries outside the boundaries of the EU, which are not necessarily the asylum seekers' home countries.

The EU member states abide by the requirements covered in the Dublin Convention; however, each country is allowed to construct their own specific policies and procedures concerning asylum seekers and refugees (Byrne et. al. 2002, Noll 2000). As a result, individual migrant experiences vary depending on the policies of their destination country; again emphasizing the importance of place in refugee resettlement. The newly joined Eastern European countries are experiencing the reception of asylum seekers and refugees as a recent phenomenon; therefore, their reactions are often a response to unilateral or bilateral agreements with neighboring Western European countries (e.g. the Czech Republic and Poland with Germany; also see discussion in Chapter 4) that do not necessarily ensure that both countries involved are on equal footing (Byrne et. al. 2002, Lavenex 1999, Vermeersch 2005). Oftentimes the signing of agreements was coupled with financial aid given by the Western state. In effect these agreements underscore the power that Western European countries have over Eastern European states. These bilateral agreements are also seen as controversial because the policies are often transferred between countries with varying levels of political and social issues and are not adjusted to the local context (Lavenex 2002).

The potential EU Common Asylum System with its universal asylum policies would effectually end this practice; however, the process of enacting a collective asylum system has been in the making since 1999 and does not look to be coming into fruition in the near future. This is partially because of resistance by some the EU member states who do not want to enact less restrictive asylum policies (Meyerstein 2005). The ramifications of the EU Common Asylum System have been debated in the literature (Lindstrom 2005). A Common European Asylum System would reduce the individual state's role in the application process and increase the power of supranational institutions (Gill 2010). Some researchers have found via quantitative analyses that a universal asylum system may not have the positive outcome that it is expected to have as the number of asylum applicants in each country would still vary throughout the EU (Facchini et. al. 2006, Thielemann 2004). Furthermore a common system may even violate the terms of the Geneva Convention (Levy 1999) or impose policies that are even more restrictive than the current ones (Leitner 1997, O'Neill et. al. 2005).

States also enact policies that apply to forced migrants after they receive refugee status. Many, but not all, of the EU countries have integration policies that attempt to ensure successful integration into the new host society. According to Mansouri et. al. (2006), integration policies can play a very important role in facilitating the integration process. While the bulk of the literature discussing integration policies in the EU member states focuses on the outcomes of individual policies, for example housing (Robinson et. al. 2003, Edin et. al. 2004) and employment (Bloch 2008), some studies do focus on integration policies in their entirety (Hagelund 2005). Hagelund (2005) finds that in Norway previous integration policies offering too much assistance were

counterproductive and were amended to help refugees become more self-sufficient.

Robinson et. al. (2003) and Edin et. al. (2004) both examined housing dispersal policies

in Western European countries and found them to hinder integration because of their

tendency to isolate refugees in less-populated areas. I address the housing issue of

refugees in the Czech Republic in my case study. The Czech Republic does not have a

specific dispersal policy; however, due to the location of available housing, dispersal is

taking place *de facto* and refugees often refuse the proffered housing. How does this

reflect on the effectiveness (and existence) of integration policy if a main aspect

promotes isolation rather than integration?

      Resettlement and/or integration policies in the EU member states are often put

into practice by NGOs. This is another example of the state's diminishing role in regards

to refugee resettlement and is seen to be "an 'outward' shift in responsibility away from

states towards social actors" (Gill 2010: 10). Furthermore international agencies (e.g.

International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNHCR) have become more involved

in influencing policies concerning forced migration, adding another level to the already

multi-leveled governance configuration that has an impact on asylum seekers and

refugees (Betts 2009).

      Legislative channels that determine where asylum seekers can apply for asylum

(supranational EU policy) and the resettlement process (state governmental policy, often

implemented by NGOs) illustrate the multi-level governance environment that is imposed

upon forced migrants in each stage of their journey to resettlement in (or often removal

from) their eventual destination country. Through my research I will address these

different levels of governance and the impact that they had (or did not) on the application

and/or resettlement process. I have yet to find a study performed that addresses the affect

of the EU deflection policies on individual migrants so my research will be the first on

that aspect. My research will also continue the evaluation of state integration policy based

on refugees' experiences. I will examine the effectiveness of policy implementation,

which includes an analysis of the responsible state institutions' and NGOs'

implementation methods.

Significance of research

My study of refugees is, to my knowledge, a first of its kind carried out within a post-

communist context in a country undergoing economic, political and social

transformation. From a theoretical perspective, my research attempts to account for a

variety of factors (e.g. migrant knowledge of host country and its impact on destination

choice, integration policy and its implementation, influence of population characteristics

– both migrant and host country, identity formation, among others) that operate at various

levels: individual, community, local, national and supranational and affects the

resettlement and integration process of refugees. By learning from forced migrants about

their resettlement experiences (narrative approach) and about strategies and policies

adopted by institutions regarding forced migrants (institutional approach), my research

reveals aspects that promote or inhibit the integration process. My research focuses on the

concept of integration in order to draw theoretical and practical attention to the ways

through which individuals and institutions negotiate the process of resettlement. It is my

belief that these findings will provide a framework for further forced migration studies in

other transformation countries and add to the existing frameworks on successful refugee integration.

The issue of refugee integration is among the most challenging contemporary dilemmas faced by governmental institutions and NGOs around the world. With the increasing number of forced migrants, researchers and policy-makers struggle to understand what forces shape and govern the integration process. Therefore, determining, from the perspective of individual refugees, how this process works on the ground is of critical importance. The extent of a forced migrant's prior knowledge of their destination country is significant as the findings could potentially predict migration flows to destination countries. If it can be shown that asylum seekers do in fact determine their destination country beforehand, and that such knowledge has an impact on the integration process, countries might be able to develop new approaches, policies and strategies on forced migration. My data on the effectiveness of integration policies will be of service when developing new or amending existing policies on service provisions relating to the resettlement of refugees. My findings that add to the existing models of successful refugee integration will be beneficial to a wide range of international organizations (e.g. IOM, UNHCR) as well as different national governmental units and NGOs in a variety of countries throughout the EU and potentially elsewhere.

The next chapter details my research design. This includes the rationale behind choosing the Czech Republic as my research site and the methodologies used to perform my research.

Chapter 3:
Research design and methods used

Introduction

I lived in Prague, Czech Republic and performed the fieldwork for my dissertation during the 2008-2009 academic year funded by Fulbright IIE. Prior to this, I spent one month in Prague doing pre-dissertation fieldwork with funding provided by the Association of American Geographers and Rutgers University.

The general purpose of my research is to explore the integration process of recognized refugees in the Czech Republic. I aim to discover how refugees are handling their resettlement process; what, if any, strategies they use in order to facilitate their integration process; how they define integration and whether or not they consider themselves integrated into Czech society; and what, if anything, helps or hinders the integration process. The general research questions led to the examination of Czech integration policy to determine whether or not policy and/or policy-makers had any affect on a refugee's integration process. Answering these questions required an analysis of Czech integration policy; the policy-making process; whether or not refugees were aware of the policy and if the policy affected them in any way (either positively or negatively). Another aspect of the integration process dealt with refugee identity and the change(s) and reshaping that occurred in their identity once they were resettled in the Czech Republic and acquired the label of "refugee" as an identity marker.

A qualitative approach was most appropriate for my study as I was attempting to place an "emphasis on discovery and description…[by] extracting and interpreting the meaning of experience" (Bloomberg and Volpe 2008: 80) rather than seeking to address

specific hypotheses. A qualitative approach was used as opposed to a quantitative approach as I was interested in the narrations of my respondents and inducing theoretical and thematic conclusions rather than comparing, measuring and analyzing the relationships between variables (Creswell 2009). Qualitative research in refugee studies is quite valuable; indeed Harrell-Bond and Voutira (2007) argue that it is critical to gather information on individual refugee experiences. In addition, my research is a case study that included interviewing refugees in the Czech Republic. I chose a case study approach as I wanted to gain a thorough understanding of the integration process of a specific population.

This chapter will concern itself with the methods and methodologies I chose to conduct my research. It includes the reasons behind choosing the Czech Republic as my research site; the method of collecting my research sample; how I determined the information needed to answer my research questions; methods used for data collection and analysis; ethical considerations and the limitations of my study.

Research site

I chose the Czech Republic as a research site for several reasons. Firstly, the country witnessed fairly recent massive political and economic transformations and social upheavals, including the fall of the communist government in 1989 and the revolution that resulted in the dissolution of Czechoslovakia and creation of the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993 (Bryson and Cornia 2000, Dangerfield 1997, Hampl et. al. 2007, Holy 1996, Myant 2007). The Czech Republic witnessed further transformation upon joining the expanded EU in 2004. Its location at the eastern frontier of the EU and bordering

Germany is significant as it impacted forced migration and corresponding policies in the Czech Republic (see discussion of readmission agreements and restrictive policies in Chapters 2 and 4 and of the Dublin Convention in Chapter 2).

Secondly, the country has witnessed a change in its forced migration patterns – replacing its history as a sending country of forced migrants to that of a receiving country in recent years. The country saw a relatively large increase in the number of asylum applicants during the recent decades, from 841 in 1992 to its peak of 18,094 in 2001 (Ministry of the Interior 2007). From 2002 to 2006, the Czech Republic received one percent of all asylum applications submitted and was ranked 16th in the number of applications received in Europe (UNHCR 2007b). Because the country has only recently experienced an increase in the number of asylum seekers and consequent refugees, the Czech government has enacted policies as conditions arise. Finally, research on integration of refugees in Europe is limited in its geographic scope with a dominant focus on Western Europe (discussed further in Chapter 2), and I wanted to add an Eastern European perspective to the literature and also discover whether or not refugee experiences differ between these places.

I specifically selected Prague, Czech Republic as my research site for several reasons. Prague, as the capital and largest city of the Czech Republic, is where the majority (16% in 2006) of refugees have resettled (Government of the Czech Republic 2007). Other cities (such as Brno) have significant refugee populations; however, I wanted the site to remain constant so that all respondents had access to the same services (governmental and nongovernmental) in the same places. Since place is extremely significant in forced migration studies, I required an invariable research site for this

study. A comparison of the two cities would be valuable and this is a potential topic for future research.

These factors combined make the Czech Republic a compelling site for refugee integration research. The Czech Republic is in an exceptional situation as it represents a duality of positions – a marginalized position within the EU, but on the frontier of the EU expansion. Entering into a relatively homogenous, post-communist host country, such as the Czech Republic whose foreign-born population is currently about four percent (Czech Statistical Office 2009b), could exacerbate the integration challenge. This could be further intensified as the ethnic composition and origin of refugees is undergoing a shift from mainly post-communist countries (e.g. Ukraine, Russia, Belarus) to more geographically and culturally distant countries, such as China, Egypt, India, Kazakhstan, and Nigeria (UNHCR 2007a). For example, in 2005 asylum applications from Indians and Chinese represented the third and fourth most received, respectively, while in 2006 the second and third highest number of asylum applicants came from Egypt and Kazakhstan, respectively (UNHCR 2007a).

While the composition of origin countries of asylum applicants in the Czech Republic has become more diverse, applicants who receive asylum are typically from former communist countries (i.e. Belarus, Russia) (discussed in detail in Chapter 4). As mentioned in Chapter 1, this regional similarity is not found throughout Europe; in fact, the majority of refugees in Western Europe are from Africa and Asia. This regional similarity is also found in the composition of regular migrants in the Czech Republic. Out of the top five countries of origin of regular migrants in the Czech Republic, only one (i.e. Vietnam) is not in Eastern Europe, although it is a former communist country; the

remaining top five countries of origin with the most regular migrants, in descending

order, are: Ukraine, Slovakia, Russia and Poland (Czech Statistical Office 2011). This

makes the Czech Republic a unique site for integration research since its native

population and the majority of its foreign population (regular and forced migrants) is

from the same geographic and cultural region. It can be assumed that this would provide

an advantage for integration of refugees from this region, but that refugees from more

culturally and geographically diverse regions may have more difficulty in integrating into

Czech society.

Research sample

Numerous sampling methods exist; each falling under the category of probability or

nonprobability sampling. Probability sampling usually involves a type of mechanized

random-selection, whereas nonprobability does not. As the data required for probability

sampling was unavailable due to reasons of confidentiality, I used a combination of

nonprobability sampling methods. Initially a purposive sampling[4] method involved

contacting NGOs and international agencies whose responsibility is to assist in the

resettlement of refugees and provide services (legal, social, etc.) to refugees. I contacted

numerous organizations as they are places that interact with refugees on a daily basis and

would know which refugees would be willing to participate in my project. Out of those

contacted, the following found refugees that were willing to be interviewed for my

research:

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[4] Purposive sampling is also called judgment sampling; this method of sampling has the sample population selected based on their usefulness and/or representativeness (Babbie 2007). In my case study, I contacted NGOs about a study population, and they decided who to contact based on their judgment of who would agree to participate in my research.

Table 1: Information on NGOs in Prague

Organization	Year Established in the Czech Republic	# of interviews arranged
CIC (Centrum por integraci cizincu/Center for Integration of Foreigners)	2003	6
EKS (Evropska kontaktni skupina/European Contact Group)	2004	1
OPU (Organizace Pro Pomoc Uprchlíkům/Organization for Aid to Refugees)	1991	2
PPU (Poradna pro uprchlíky/Counseling Center for Refugees)	2002	1
SOZE (Sdružení občanů zabývající se emigranty/Society of Citizens Assisting Emigrants	1990	1
UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)	1992	5

The remaining respondents were located through snowball sampling[5]. Snowball sampling

is often used in research concerning refugees as there is a lack of formalized data

available to obtain a sample from (Bloch 2007, Timotijevic and Breakwell 2000). One

participant was the sister of a participant that I interviewed with information provided by

CIC; another participant was found based on information from a refugee that I

interviewed via EKS. The remaining two participants were located through my social

network in Prague (via friends of friends who had previously worked at NGOs that

assisted refugees and asylum seekers).

Research methods used

In order to answer my research questions, I used a variety of research methods. These

methods are detailed below.

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[5] Snowball sampling involves obtaining members of the study population by asking members to recommend others who would also be willing to participate (Babbie 2007).

Survey research

 I obtained my research data on integration and identity via participant interviews. The interview consisted of open- and closed-ended questions (see Appendix A) that were administered by myself or by a translator for non-English speaking participants. I personally conducted eleven interviews with participants who spoke English. I recorded the first two interviews and transcribed them afterward. Being recorded seemed to make my respondents feel uncomfortable so I decided to stop recording and transcribe the interview as it was taking place. A translator conducted the remaining nine interviews. I attended these interviews; the translator asked the questions in Czech and translated the answers into English while I transcribed. This made it possible for me to ask follow-up and/or clarifying questions if needed. I worked with two translators who were both graduate students in the Department of Social Geography and Regional Development at Charles University in Prague. The interviews typically lasted an hour and took place in locations chosen by the respondents: seven were carried out in the respondent's home, seven in a restaurant or café, two in a public park, two at the respondent's workplace, one in an NGO office and one online as, after several attempts, we were unable to coordinate a meeting in person. This participant's answers were very elaborate (more so than some conducted in person) so I do not believe the online format adversely affected this interview.

        I used a combination of open- and closed-ended questions during the interview process. The interview questions were separated into four sections: 1) general questions (i.e. age, country of origin, education level); 2) questions about the asylum/refuge experience; 3) questions about their knowledge of the Czech Republic and 4) questions

about their integration experience, including inquiries about how their identity has (or has not) been affected by the refugee experience, the extent of their knowledge of Czech integration polices and whether or not they took advantage of the assistance provided by state and nonprofit agencies. Closed-ended questions were used to give uniformity for questions whose answers included a range of activity. The majority of the questions were open-ended, which allowed the respondent to answer them without any preconceived answers or guidance. I felt that making the interview feel more like a conversation was the best way to get respondents to talk about their experiences and to feel more comfortable with the interview process. The answers to the open-ended questions were subsequently open coded using descriptive wording derived from my interview questions and the responses given. Codes were induced from the data rather than predetermined based on references to policy, including employment and housing assistance and language training; integration and identity, including indications of discrimination and transculturalism.

I also interviewed a representative from the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, which is responsible for the housing assistance portion of refugee integration policy. The representative was the head of the Unit for Integration of Refugees and Foreigners. The interview incorporated a series of open-ended questions about housing assistance provided to refugees, including the location of available housing, the selection process for receiving housing assistance, the monetary arrangement between refugees and owners and the rights and responsibilities of refugees in government housing, among others. I contacted representatives from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (responsible for Czech language training) and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs

(responsible for employment assistance) via telephone and email, but, despite many attempts, I never received any responses. I found documentation online that detailed the policy and implementation procedures in their respective ministries. This allowed me to learn about services provided and to perform the policy analysis required in my research.

Document analysis

A portion of my research dealt with integration policy analysis as a goal of my research is to bridge the gap between policy-makers and the refugees affected by related polices (see Chapter 7). I reviewed and analyzed integration policies (current and historical) in order to familiarize myself with their evolution in the Czech Republic. The Czech government introduced the State Integration Program in the Asylum Act of 1999 (Chapter IX, Articles 68, 69 and 70). I used this piece of legislation as my starting point since this is the main document from which all current asylum policies are derived. I then located the Czech Government Resolutions that amended the State Integration Program (Czech Republic Government Report 2008, Government of the Czech Republic 2005, 2006 and 2007). I compared each resolution with the preceding resolution to determine what changes had been made to the existing policy regarding funding allocated to each Ministry connected to housing assistance, Czech language training and employment assistance. I also examined the particulars of each aspect of the State Integration Program to ascertain whether any adjustments had been made in each succeeding resolution. Per the Head of the Unit for Integration of Refugees and Foreigners, the 2008 resolution has been extended to the present since no changes were recommended. I received some of the policy documents from the Ministry of the Interior, including the latest government

resolutions concerning housing for refugees. I retrieved others from online sources; these included the original Asylum Act of 1999 and subsequent amendments as well as specific policies and implementation procedures concerning Czech language training and employment assistance offered to refugees.

In addition to analyzing policy documents, I examined media documents in order to determine if similar language was used in the Czech Republic versus Western European countries when reporting about refugee and asylum seekers (see Chapter 5). The examples from Western Europe were included in various journal articles cited in Chapter 5. I used these as references of language used to describe forced migrants and wanted to find out if similar language was used in the Czech Republic. To do this, I initially searched headlines found in the *Prague Post* (Prague's English-language newspaper). The newspaper was established in October 1991 and all but the first year's articles can be found online. I searched the *Prague Post* website for headlines containing the words asylum, asylum seeker and/or refugee to determine if the negative language used in Western European countries was used in the Czech Republic. Upon locating a headline with comparable language, I read the article to determine if the negative stance was continued throughout. I also did a general Google search combining Czech Republic and asylum, asylum seeker and/or refugee to find any other publications that had reported on this topic as well.

Ethical considerations

Before performing my dissertation fieldwork, I submitted my research design to the Internal Review Board (IRB) at Rutgers University. The methods of collecting my data

and the interview questions that I would be using were approved by the IRB in May of 2008.

Prior to each interview with a refugee, either the translator or I explained my research goals to them and had them sign a written consent form (see Appendix B). The consent form gave a brief summary of my research design; a review of the questions that I would ask stating that they could opt out of answering any question that made them uncomfortable; described the confidentiality of the study and provided contact information for me and for Rutgers University. A copy of the signed consent form was given to the participants. The consent form was translated into Czech, and the Czech version was used for the participants who were interviewed in Czech by the translators.

I expressed to my respondents that their confidentiality was ensured. As I was working with a vulnerable population (discussed below), confidentiality was a major concern for them. As mentioned, recording the interview became a sensitive situation so I discontinued that practice. To guarantee confidentiality in writing my research findings, none of the respondents' identifying information has been used. When disseminating my research findings in publications, I will continue to omit any characteristics that could identify the respondents. During the interview process, I did not discuss any information that I received from prior interviews nor did I mention anything about any of the respondents that were already interviewed with other respondents and/or organizations that I was in contact with.

Limitations of the study

One of the limitations of this study is the sample size. I had proposed to do a study with many more participants and had planned to perform statistical analyses with the data as well. Case studies of refugees tend to be relatively small due to the "invisible" and "hidden" nature of refugees and because they are a "hard to reach" population (Bloch 2004, Harrell-Bond and Voutira 2007, Voutira and Dona 2007, Wahoush 2009).

It is not unusual to find case studies of forced migrants with sample sizes less than 30: n = 29 (Ager and Strang 2008), n = 27 (Robinson and Segrott 2002), n = 26 (MacFarlane et. al. 2009), n = 24 (Timotijevic and Breakwell 2000), n = 20 (Koser Akcapar 2006), n = 18 (Havinga and Bocker 1999; Healey 2006, n = 12 (Keel and Drew 2004) and n = 8 (Szczepanikova 2005), among others. Studies with larger sample sizes tend to be performed with refugees confined in camp situations where access is not a concern.

The small sample sizes are partly due to the fact that refugees do not always remain in the country where they obtained refugee status; that "people are constantly moving both geographically across multiple borders, and administratively across formal and informal 'bureaucratic' regimes" (Voutira and Dona 2007: 168). Refugees in the Czech Republic are able to apply for citizenship once they have been in the country for five years, which means they lose their refugee status and are free to move anywhere within the EU. This population is also reluctant to submit to interviews as they can be wary of discussing their experiences (past and present) and prefer being inconspicuous.

Another barrier to obtaining more respondents is that governmental agencies and NGOs will not provide contact information to researchers because of confidentiality

and/or because they do not have residential records since refugees are not required to inform anyone of their whereabouts. For these reasons, I had to rely on NGO and international agency representatives to contact potential participants, explain my research and either provide me with contact information for them (if they agreed to that) or coordinate a time and place for the interview. I tried to use the snowball sampling method with my participants to find further interviewees; however, except in two cases, the respondents said that they did not know other refugees. Several said that they met other asylum seekers in the centers while awaiting their application decisions, but they did not maintain contact with them once granted refugee status since they all received their refugee status at different times and/or some of them received negative decisions and had to leave the Czech Republic. Others said they did not associate with others in the centers because they did not speak the same language and could not communicate with them. Therefore, the social network that I thought would form between asylum seekers and subsequent refugees did not exist.

Dealing mainly with NGOs became a further barrier since many NGOs in the Czech Republic are understaffed and under funded, which I heard from several of my respondents as well as from the NGO representatives themselves. Once I was able to get in contact with someone who spoke English, they often complained of their workloads and lack of funding. Since most NGOs rely on outside funding from governmental or international sources, they spend a great deal of time applying for grants. I offered any service I could to NGOs that assisted me, and several of them asked if I knew of any funding sources. Respondents also mentioned that they did not receive help allegedly proffered by NGOs because they were too busy doing paperwork to find funding. Due to

the shortage of staff members, my request for help was (as I was told) not at the top of their priorities, which could explain why I was never able to get in touch with anyone from several NGOs that I contacted (in English and/or Czech).

The combination of lack of access to contact information and the inability or unwillingness to help in contacting refugees were the reasons I had to decrease the proposed sample size. During my pre-dissertation fieldwork, I met with several NGOs in order to inform them of my project and discover their opinions about the feasibility of my research. A representative from the Organization for Aid to Refugees (OPU) said she thought it was feasible (this was based on the larger sample size) and that her organization would be willing to help me achieve my research goals. This representative even wrote a letter to the Fulbright Commission stating the same. Prior to arriving in the Czech Republic in September 2008, I contacted this representative to discuss my research proceedings. She said she was looking forward to helping me with my work; however, when I met with her in Prague, she said that she was too busy because her NGO was short-staffed and that there was no possible way that I could get my proposed sample size. This was after I responded in the negative when she asked if I knew of any EU grants because her organization was losing funding at the end of the calendar year. During our pre-dissertation meeting, I was told this organization would help me find 100 participants; in the end, they helped me find two. I met with a representative from another NGO during my pre-dissertation fieldwork who said she would be willing to help me find study participants. Upon returning to the Czech Republic in 2008, I found that this NGO no longer existed. Several attempts were made to contact the representative on her personal cell phone; however, my calls were never returned.

Language presented another barrier to my research. As previously stated, I had to rely on translators to perform the interviews with Czech-speaking participants, while I conducted the interviews with participants who spoke English. The fact that these were the only two languages spoken fluently by the interviewers became a slight barrier. One participant said that he knew another refugee who would participate, but she only spoke Burmese. An NGO representative said she could possibly persuade a Somali-born refugee to participate. However, the refugee only spoke Somali and very rudimentary Czech (enough for the NGO representative to get a small amount of information from her). The aforementioned Organization for Aid to Refugees representative said I would not be able to find enough refugees to interview using only English and Czech, and I would need translators that spoke French and/or Russian as well.

Finally, my role as the researcher could be construed as a barrier in this topic of study. In general, issues of power can arise between interviewer and interviewee; interviewing vulnerable populations can exacerbate this dichotomy (Bloch 2007; Jacobsen and Landau 2003). Much as I tried to avoid this issue, as Bloch (2007: 231) states: "Issues of power, domination, politics, values, knowledge and social relations (outsider/insider) cannot be divorced from any stage of the research process". My role as a researcher from an academic institution may have conveyed that I had a certain amount of power. Two of my participants thought that I could help them with social services and give them advice about dealing with Czech bureaucracy, but I could not. As stated previously, the OPU representative thought I would be knowledgeable about grants and funding available through the EU and other international organizations, which I also did not. I had to convince each of these individuals that my role in the Czech Republic was

strictly as a graduate student performing dissertation fieldwork. Being an American also complicated my role as a researcher. "American" can imply certain power and political nuances that automatically come with the term. In my case, I believe this led participants and NGO representatives to suppose that I had some sort of power over their situations that I did not possess.

Conclusion

My research objective is to explore the process of refugee integration via qualitative analysis. This includes, in the context of the Czech Republic, examining the process through a refugee's perspective as well as analyzing legislation that could influence this process and how this process affects a person's identity. The Czech Republic was chosen for this case study as it is a country in economic, political and social transformation; and it does not have an extensive history of refugee immigration. I chose to focus my search for research participants in the capital city, Prague, in order to control for some aspects that could affect the integration process.

My research sample was obtained through a combination of non-probability sampling methods (purposive and snowball). My sample population consisted of 20 refugees from diverse countries that lived in or near Prague all of whom gained refugee status via the asylum application process. My data was retrieved and analyzed using a mixture of methods.

Previous studies with forced migrants discussed the limitations of research of this type. I encountered similar obstacles in my research. While I did meet with impediments during my fieldwork, I was able to obtain sufficient data to perform my research goals.

Chapter 4:
Situating the case study

Introduction

The historical state of forced migration in Europe during the late eighteenth and early

nineteenth centuries was the basis of the international need to legally define the

conditions one must meet in order to receive refugee status. The definition of a refugee

conceived in 1951 as a response to the European situation continues to be used globally

even though conditions that spurred the definition have changed drastically.

The current forced migrant situation in Europe is quite different than that of the

mid-twentieth century as refugees are coming from a multitude of countries rather than a

few. In addition, countries not previously seen as immigration countries (and in fact were

partly the reason for legally defining the refugee) have found themselves hosts to

refugees from an array of origins. The Czech Republic is one of these countries that has

seen itself transform into a host country to refugees.

The purpose of this chapter is to look at the historical definition of a refugee and

trace the changes this definition has seen in the past few decades. I will give a brief

history of the Czech Republic and examine refugee migration in the Czech Republic in

more detail. Finally, I will introduce the refugees that participated in my case study.

Who can be a refugee?

 Conflicts resulting in displacement of people in Europe, in the late nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries, were the catalyst for the official refugee definition. Late nineteenth

century pogroms in Russia targeted the Jewish population and forced them to migrate

throughout Europe; the Balkan Wars in the early twentieth century (in 1912 and 1913)

caused further displacement of millions of people. Similarly the reconfiguration of European borders and dissolution of empires (e.g. Austro-Hungarian) after World War I resulted in the massive relocation of millions (Haddad 2008).

The Russian Civil War (1917-1923), the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922) and the Russo-Polish War (1919-1921) were responsible for creating refugee flows during the period between World Wars I and II (Haddad 2008). In the 1930s, many of the forced migrants in Europe were Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria due to the rise of Nazism, which led to World War II (Marfleet 2006). During the inter-war period it was acknowledged that the refugee situation required international cooperation since forced migrants were not only of national concern but impacted international politics as well; forced migration also affected relationships between countries as immigration laws were becoming more restrictive (Marfleet 2006). This began the tendency in Europe of deflecting refugees and asylum seekers elsewhere and emphasizing the sovereignty of the state, territorial boundaries and national identity (Haddad 2008).

By the end of World War II, the number of forced migrants in Europe was roughly 30 million mainly due to German military advancement eastward (Haddad 2008). At the end of the war, it was thought that refugees would disappear as those displaced by the war could be repatriated. However, repatriation was impossible in many cases because either border changes and/or denationalization, which occurred when someone became a refugee, meant returning home was not an option. The terms of settlement led to the disparity between "refugees" and "displaced people"; the latter were expected to return to their country of origin whereas a refugee could resettle in another country. These definitions mainly affected Europe's Jewish population. As a majority of the

Jewish population originated in Eastern Europe, the displaced were expected to return to their respective Eastern European homelands or were resettled in what was at the time known as Palestine (Haddad 2008).

The first internationally recognized definition of a refugee was found in the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (also known as the Geneva Convention or simply the Convention) (Badar 2004). The need for a legal definition of a refugee emanated from the international dependence on borders and territories and the required attachment of all people to a sovereign state. The Convention was built upon the foundations of the Charter of the UN and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that were approved in 1948. Although the notion of the refugee had been used in prior acts of legislation (i.e. the League of Nations' 1922, 1926 and 1928 Arrangements concerning Russian and/or Armenian refugees, the 1933 Convention Relating to the International Status of Refugees, 1938 Convention Concerning the Status of Refugees coming from Germany and consequent 1939 Protocol), Article 1 of the 1951 Convention provided the first legal definition of a refugee as:

> A person who…owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it… (United Nations General Assembly 1951: 16).

The Convention contained a Eurocentric perspective as part of the condition for being a refugee was to have been affected by "events occurring in Europe before 1 January 1951" (United Nations General Assembly 1951: 17). This is significant as it coincides with the start of the Cold War and the creation of the legal refugee was seen

strategically as Western countries' encouragement of migrants fleeing the Soviet Union and communist Eastern European countries. Notable also is the fact that of the twenty-seven countries[6] participating in the Convention, only ten of those were outside Europe (although two of these – Australia and Canada – were members of the British Commonwealth), and only one of the European countries was communist (Yugoslavia). Welcoming refugees from communist countries was used as a means of weakening the Soviet Union and its satellite states both politically and ideologically, and at this time the refugee was depicted globally as a person fleeing communism (Haddad 2008). Ironically it was easier during this time for a person to enter a Western state than leave a communist state, as it was illegal to emigrate or even to leave to travel abroad.

In the following years, it was recognized that due to global events (mainly the diffusion of independence in Africa where the subjective borders drawn during decolonization by European powers resulted in mass forced movements of people), the temporal and geographical constraints of the Convention required amending (Zetter 1999). Therefore, in 1967 the UN drafted a Protocol to remove the language necessitating that a refugee meet specified conditions prior to January 1, 1951. Language stipulating that the events producing the refugee situation had to occur in Europe was also removed. Most Western states signed the 1967 Protocol agreeing to the removal of geographic limitations because they assumed that the circumstances in Africa were too far away to affect Western politics, stability and/or identity (Haddad 2008). However, since granting refugee status makes a statement about the sending country, some European countries

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[6] These countries were: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Egypt, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Holy See, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Liechtenstein (represented by the Swiss), Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, Venezuela, and Yugoslavia (United Nations General Assembly 1951).

were wary of signing the Protocol because their involvement in dividing Africa into sovereign nations was the often the cause of forced migration, and this negatively portrayed the former colonizers (Zetter 1999). As of October 2008, 141 states were signatory to both the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol[7].

The change in the geographic limitations did not seem to produce migration flows from countries outside of Europe until the mid-1970s. The late 1960s and early 1970s saw asylum seekers (and subsequent refugees) continue to flee communist Eastern European countries because of political and/or religious oppression and migrate to nearby European countries: Czechoslovakians, Yugoslavs and Hungarians to Germany; Hungarians, Romanians and Czechoslovakians to Austria; Poles and Czechoslovakians to Denmark; Hungarians, Yugoslavs and Czechoslovakians to Switzerland; and Hungarians, Yugoslavs and Poles to Italy (UNHCR 2001).

The introduction of refugees from countries further afield than Eastern Europe occurred in the late 1970s. These refugees mainly received their refugee status through the increasingly restrictive asylum application process. In the late 1970s, Vietnamese asylum seekers constituted the highest number of applicants in Belgium, Denmark and Switzerland (this was a result of the Vietnam War, and they still fit the "fleeing from communism" designation). Large numbers of Chileans were applying for asylum during the late 1970s as well (corresponding with the military takeover of the government by General Pinochet). Germany also witnessed a vast change in applicant origin; the top five countries of origin for asylum seekers in Germany were Turkey, Pakistan, India, Lebanon and Ghana (UNHCR 2001). However, the number of asylum applicants in Europe

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[7] Madagascar, Monaco and Saint Kitts and Nevis are only party to the Convention; Cape Verde, the United States and Venezuela are party to the Protocol only (UNHCR 2008a). Countries that are not party to either are mainly found in South and Southeast Asia and the Middle East.

remained fairly low in the 1970s (roughly around 300,000 in Western European countries for the entire decade, according to UNHCR data).

Each European country has its own policies and procedures regarding the asylum application process. Over the years these policies have become more restrictive and have been used as a way of keeping asylum seekers out rather than letting them in, which was the goal of earlier policies created after World War II (Westin 1999). Then it was relatively easy to gain entrance into a Western country as a refugee fleeing communism whereas now the goal of Western countries is to significantly decrease the number of asylum seekers that reach their borders in search of refuge (Haddad 2008).

"Non-arrival" and "protection elsewhere" are the policy trends currently found in the EU member states; these make it easier for a state to transfer responsibility for an asylum seeker elsewhere (Byrne et. al. 2002). A popular way for the EU member states to restrict asylum seeking prior to 2004 was through readmission agreements between the EU member and the EU candidate states. This allowed for the legal transfer of asylum seekers to non-EU countries. These agreements allegedly benefited both parties as they reduced the number of asylum seekers in the EU states and, in turn, the EU states relaxed visa restrictions for citizens of candidate states; the cooperation of candidate states would positively affect their chance of being accepted into the EU (Byrne et. al. 2002). Bilateral agreements were often formed between the EU border states and their eastern neighbors (e.g. Germany with the Czech Republic and Poland; Austria with the Czech Republic and Slovakia) purposefully for border control; these included agreements between police on each side of the border and financial help from Germany to fortify the eastern borders of

neighboring states ensuring a more difficult border crossing for asylum seekers (Byrne et. al. 2002).

Inevitably once a European country enacts a restrictive asylum policy, neighboring countries enact equally (or more) restrictive policies. The Common European Asylum System, which would establish common standards and procedures for all of the EU member states (discussed in Chapter 2), is an attempt to combat the race for the most restrictive policy and the perception that one European country is more or less attractive than another. When the "refugee" was defined in 1951 it was a basis for welcoming people into European countries. The current climate of forced migration in Europe (and the EU especially) is an attempt to keep migrants from crossing its borders – a complete reversal from the reason refugees were recognized in the first place.

The Czech Republic

The Czech Republic, a former communist country that has not historically been a destination country for asylum seekers witnessed an increase in the number of asylum applicants and consequent refugees in the past two decades. At the same time, the Czech Republic witnessed political and economic transformation as a member of the recent EU expansion.

Brief history of the Czech Republic

During most of the twentieth century, the current Czech Republic was encompassed in Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovakia was created in 1918 upon the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the end of World War I. In the interwar period Czechoslovakia was

"the most prosperous and most democratic country in Eastern Europe" (Starr 1988: 60).

Just prior to the start of World War II, Czechoslovakia came under Nazi control and

remained as such almost until the end of the war when the Red Army crossed the borders

of Czechoslovakia in 1944 and "indigenous communists began to move into key position

from which to assume control over the country"; Czechoslovakia fell under communist

rule in 1948 (Starr 1988: 60). In 1955 Czechoslovakia signed the Warsaw Pact, which

was a mutual defense treaty between the Soviet Union and its satellite states as a

counterbalance to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; the Warsaw Pact was used in

"Eastern Europe…as an instrument of integration in both the military and political sense"

(Brown 1988: 39).

Because Czechoslovakia had been the most economically advanced in Eastern

Europe, it underwent a serious financial decline due to the communist restructuring of the

economy (Mason 1996). This economic deterioration and the demand for political and

financial reform led to an important event in the modern history of Czechoslovakia: the

1968 Prague Spring. This began with political changes in the country that proposed

"freedom of press, assembly, and travel…[and] censorship of the media was abolished"

(Mason 1996: 24). It was under the auspices of the Warsaw Pact that the Soviet Union,

Poland, Eastern Germany, Bulgaria and Hungary attacked Czechoslovakia in 1968 to

stem the tide of change and reform. The successful invasion of Czechoslovakia resulted

in the reinstatement of censorship, communist economic policies and all other conditions

present before the Prague Spring, which was called the process of "normalization" that

lasted until the collapse of communism in 1989 (Ulc 1984).

As in other communist European countries, the Czechoslovakian government started to weaken in the late 1980s. Following the flood of anti-communist protests and peaceful demonstrations in East Germany, Czechoslovaks protested as well in Prague in late 1989 (the largest protest attracted 350,000 people) and demanded the resignation of the president (Mason 1996). These protests along with a general strike in the country "forced the government to agree to the formation of a coalition government, to free elections, and to freer travel to the West. The communists had bowed out without a fight…" (Mason 1996: 61). The end of communism in Czechoslovakia was called the Velvet Revolution since the regime collapsed without contestation.

Following the Velvet Revolution, national tensions became apparent in Czechoslovakia. The country was divided politically, socially and economically and the two main regions began to act as separate republics. In 1990 Slovaks were granted greater autonomy, but they ultimately wanted independence (Mason 1996). One of the main frictions concerned economics as the country endured a recession while it transitioned into a capitalist economy; political factions in each region attempted to deal with this differently: the Czech finance minister advocated for "rapid privatization of state-owned enterprises and a quick transition toward the market" while the Slovak prime minister "urged a more evolutionary transition" (Mason 1996: 96). Eventually these issues resulted in the dissolution of Czechoslovakia (known as the Velvet Divorce) and the creation of two independent states in 1993: the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Forced migration in the Czech Republic

The Czech Republic was a major sending country of asylum seekers to Western Europe in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s; it received its first asylum applicant in 1990 while still part of Czechoslovakia (UNHCR 2001). Once becoming a migrant receiving country, the number of annual applications for asylum increased or decreased commensurate with European trends. According to the UNHCR (2001), the Czech Republic received a total of 20,415 asylum applications from 1993[8] to 1999, with the highest number received in 1999 (7,285) (see Appendix C). The numbers pale in comparison to many Western European countries whose annul number of asylum applications were in the hundreds of thousands (France, Netherlands, Sweden, United Kingdom) or almost two million as in the case of Germany.

The nationalities most commonly represented among asylum applicants in the Czech Republic during the 1990s were Romanians and Bulgarians until 1997 when the countries of origin became more diverse; in 1998 and 1999 most applicants came from Afghanistan (see Appendix D) (Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic 2007). The large number of Romanian asylum seekers in the early 1990s was due to "a faltering economy, continued political unrest, human rights abuses against Roma (Gypsies), and laws discriminating against homosexuals in Romania" (USCRI 1998: 1). Similar conditions forced the migration of Bulgarians during this time period as well (Mason 1996). The political ascendance of the Taliban in the mid-1990s and subsequent civil war in Afghanistan resulted in the proliferation of asylum seekers from there (UNHCR 1997).

Recognition rates in the Czech Republic were high in the early 1990s since number of applications received was fairly low (see Appendix E). The countries of origin

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[8] I am using 1993 as a benchmark since that is when the Czech Republic became an independent country.

for recognized refugees varied throughout the decade (see Appendix F). An examination of the number of applications, rate of asylum granted and the number of persons granted asylum shows that the numbers do not always compute as expected (e.g. in 1995 Romanians and Bulgarians submitted the most applications, but do not appear as one of the top five nationalities granted asylum (Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic 2007; also see Appendices B and D)). A consideration is that not all submissions go through the entire application process because some asylum seekers withdraw their applications, some leave the country and some are initially denied and in the appeal process. In some cases asylum is granted and the data will appear in a later year.

The number of asylum applications received in the Czech Republic from 2000 to 2009 again emulated the European trends in yearly increases and decreases totaling 64,228 for that time period (see Appendix G) (UNHCR 2005a, 2009a). There was a distinct downward trend in the number of asylum applications throughout Europe and the EU in the 2000s due to the restrictive asylum policies and readmission agreements discussed earlier in this chapter. In fact, the biggest decrease from the previous year in the Czech Republic was in 2004 when it joined the EU.

In the 2000s, asylum applicants in the Czech Republic were mainly from countries of the former Soviet Union with Ukraine submitting the most applications (see Appendix H). Ukrainians represent the largest percentage of the foreign-born population in the Czech Republic, which is a pull-factor for Ukrainians forced to migrate (OECD 2010). Recognition rates were low in the early part of the decade, but increased in 2005 (see Appendix I). People granted asylum in the Czech Republic in the 2000s were mainly from former Soviet countries with Belarussians and Russians receiving the most positive

decisions (see Appendix J). Similarities in culture and geopolitical histories between the Czech Republic and former Soviet countries attract forced migrants from those countries.

With the introduction of asylum seekers in the country, the Czech government realized it needed to create policy detailing the steps that asylum seekers and those deciding their claims had to follow. Because refugee resettlement is a relatively new phenomenon in the country and no universal EU asylum policy exists, much of the corresponding policy is drafted as new conditions arise, often without much experience with or knowledge of refugee populations and the dynamics that govern their behavior.

Forced Migration Legislation in the Czech Republic

When forced migrants started to arrive the government created an office in 1990 (while still part of Czechoslovakia) under the Ministry of the Interior that dealt with issues concerning asylum seekers and refugees. The current Department of Asylum and Migration Policy (still under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior) was, however, not created until after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia on January 1, 1993. The Department for Asylum and Migration Policy encompasses a number of units that handle all procedures relating to asylum seekers and refugees. This includes everything from the asylum application process to resettlement after being granted refugee status.

In 1990, Czechoslovakia enacted its first law on refugees. The Czech Republic's main act of legislation regarding asylum seeking, which greatly expanded the 1990 policy, is the Asylum Act of 1999. This Act was subsequently amended from 2002 to 2007. This Act details the process of asylum from the initial request to the application process and finally to the decision-making procedures used to either grant or deny an

applicant's request for asylum. The Act specifies what services are to be provided to asylum seekers during their application process, such as housing and healthcare. The document also details an asylum seeker's responsibilities once they are granted asylum. Other legislation concerning forced migrants includes the Residence of Aliens in the Territory of the Czech Republic (created in 1999, amended in 2006) and the 2003 Act on Temporary Protection of Aliens. These latter Acts however, are concerned with conditions pertaining not only to forced migrants but regular immigrants as well.

Case study participants

My sample population consists of twenty recognized refugees who originated from a diverse set of countries (fourteen different countries in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa) and currently reside in or very near Prague, Czech Republic. The majority of my sample population is married. Their ages range from 24 to 62. A slight majority of the participants are women (11). All of them received an education in their country of origin: 35 percent had a high school diploma (or its equivalent), 25 percent had some college education, 35 percent had an undergraduate degree and five percent had a graduate degree. Due to confidentiality reasons and my small sample size, in order to protect the identity of my participants I cannot provide a more detailed breakdown of their personal information.

My sample population included respondents from diverse cultural, political (and geopolitical), social and/or historical backgrounds. This diversity of experiences (but some similarities) enriched my case study and allowed me to learn how such different walks of life shaped my respondents' integration processes. This made their

commonalities regarding integration even more significant since contributing to a universal framework for refugee integration is one of my research goals.

All of my participants are in the Czech Republic as a result of applying for asylum and being granted refugee status (none arrived with a group of refugees as part of a governmental resettlement program). The reasons for seeking asylum in that particular country varied. Nevertheless, political persecution in the home country was indicated as the primary reason by a majority of respondents (65 percent); the asylum seekers were mainly members of political opposition parties or political activism and/or resistance movements. Also grounds for receiving refuge in the Czech Republic were religious persecution for practicing a minority religion (25 percent) and humanitarian reasons (ten percent).

A majority (65 percent) specifically chose the Czech Republic as their destination country. All but one of the remaining participants chose a Western European country (France, Germany, Ireland, Italy or Sweden) as their destination; the other participant was attempting to get to the US. Of those who wanted to apply in Western Europe, 57 percent of them were sent to the Czech Republic to apply for asylum based on the rules of the Dublin Convention (discussed in Chapter 2).

The reason(s) for choosing the Czech Republic as a destination also vary. Some participants from Eastern Europe said they chose the Czech Republic because it was culturally and linguistically similar to their country of origin. Others said they already knew people from their country of origin who were granted asylum in the Czech Republic, and that is why they chose it as a destination. Some respondents from Eastern

Europe chose the Czech Republic because they saw it as having more political freedom

than their country of origin:

> [The reason for choosing the Czech Republic was…] *mainly the impression that it is a democratic country. Much more democratic than* [country of origin]. *More freedoms…*
> Respondent 15
>
> *We were thinking seriously about the new place. We wanted a place with the freedom of faith and liberty. We were reading and asking the others a lot. It's also a Slavic country and the closest. We were considering also France, Italy and Germany but here we know how to do the things to let them work. The others recommended that we go to Germany because it's easier. You have more possibilities there; you immediately get a flat. But this was not so important for us.*
> Respondent 19

The Czech Republic was also chosen due to its geographic location:

> [The Czech Republic was my first place of request because] *it is a strategically important location in the middle of Europe.*
> Respondent 1
>
> *It's closer in Europe to go back to* [country of origin] *rather than the US or Canada. The Czech language is also closer to* [native language].
> Respondent 7

Respondent 1 said that being in a country in the EU was not part of his decision-making

process, but that being in the Schengen Area (the region of the EU member states without

internal border controls) was more important (although, as he acknowledged, the Czech

Republic was not a part of the Schengen group when he applied for asylum).

The Czech Republic is often seen as a transit state for migrants seeking to go

further west in Europe (Byrne et. al. 2002). However, my study contradicts this as a

majority of my respondents plan to resettle permanently in the Czech Republic. The

majority of my respondents (68 percent[9]) specifically chose the Czech Republic and said

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[9] This was not on my original questionnaire; therefore, only 19 participants were asked the question: If the situation that forced you to migrate changed, would you want to return to your country of origin?

they were planning to stay there rather than move to a third country or back to their country of origin. The remaining group of respondents would move back to their country of origin if the conditions that forced them to move were remedied (21 percent) or were undecided about returning or staying in the Czech Republic (11 percent). As previously stated, many of my respondents chose the Czech Republic specifically because of its similarities to their home countries. This was a strategic move on their part as it meant they would be more culturally similar to the host country population and experience fewer new and/or unfamiliar situations.

Conclusion

The "refugee" has changed extensively since the creation of the official UN definition in 1951. Refugees in the early days of the definition were mainly people fleeing to Western Europe from communist Eastern European countries, while contemporary refugees are fleeing a wider range of persecutions to/from a wider range of countries.

The Czech Republic is one of the countries that now find itself as a destination country for forced migrants; indeed, the number of migrants seeking asylum increased drastically in the late 1990s and early 2000s. As the Czech Republic emerged as a destination country, the Czech government created asylum policies. Subsequently, these policies were amended during much of the 2000s.

The twenty participants in my case study were granted positive decisions on their applications for asylum. My respondents originated in a variety of countries with diverse backgrounds. Contrary to other studies, many of my respondents specifically chose the

Czech Republic as their destination country and plan to stay there permanently rather than use it as a transit state.

In the next chapter I will explore the question of identity and how leaving one's country of origin and becoming a refugee elsewhere affects a person's identity. This includes an examination of the impact the "refugee" label has on a person and whether they have experienced any discrimination based on the label. I will also discuss how the media plays a role in the perception of refugees. When applicable, my data will be compared to previous research on refugee identity.

Chapter 5:
Refugee identity; how becoming a refugee impacts the ways in which refugees
perceive themselves and are perceived by others

Introduction

Refugee identities are complex and formed not only by internal feelings, beliefs, ethnic

and cultural traditions, but also by external factors, such as resettlement practices, forced

migrant policies, cultural traditions and the economic, political and social conditions of

his/her new host country (Hein 1993; Capo Zmegac 2007; Holt 2007). Over time,

refugees undergo a complicated process of identity reformulation as a result of

displacement (Griffiths 2001).

Forced migrants' identity transformation can generally be examined in three

stages: on their journey to seek asylum, during their time spent awaiting a decision on

their asylum application and after receiving refugee status. Initially the journey of exile

would be a component of identity reformulation. As scholars have connected part of the

construction of identity to place, oftentimes, during their journeys, asylum seekers are

seen as a people without a place (Brun 2001, Eide 2007, Papastergiadis 2006, Robinson

and Rubio 2007).

Upon arrival in their destination country, asylum seekers are frequently housed in

camps during the application process. These camps are also deemed placeless and are

oftentimes located in remote areas of a country and/or not legally part of the country to

which they physically belong enhancing the impression of placelessness. Georgio

Agamben describes refugee camps as "non-sites of detention" underlining their placeless

status (in Papastergiadis 2006). Because identity has been associated with place, what

happens when asylum seekers with no legal identity live in a place with no legal

foundation? Do they continue to base their identity on their country of origin, do they form an identity connected to a non-place or do they no longer have a part of their identity based on place?

Once given the status of refugee and resettled into their new host country, refugees begin another phase of identity reformulation. The resettlement of refugees into new environments, whether social, cultural, economic and/or political can be disruptive to their identity and their sense of belonging in their host country (Koser Akcapar 2006).

From a political standpoint, refugees do not have legal identity as they are not citizens of the destination country, and they often lose their legal identity as citizens of their home country once they flee (Papastergiadis 2006). In Griffiths (2001: 303) study of refugees in Greece and the UK, one of her participants felt the importance of legal attachment: "When you don't have a homeland, you have no place in the world, no homeland, so no identity, no passport". Parker and Brasset (2005) equate legal attachment or citizenship to agency, and a lack of citizenship to a loss of agency.

Another potential legal effect on refugee identity is a country's political standpoint and policies toward immigrants (voluntary and forced; positive or negative), which can determine their reception in the destination country (Brun 2001). One could assume that all immigrants have to contend with new living conditions that would affect their identities; however, it can be argued that a forced migrant has a far more difficult resettlement experience since their new living conditions may not necessarily have been a matter of choice for them.

Refugees also have to confront the new label of "refugee" that can affect the process of identity formation; a component that they previously did not have to consider

while living in their country of origin. Such a label reflects the "need to manage globalize processes and patterns of migration and forced migration in particular" (Zetter 2007: 174). People that were formerly citizens of one country are now refugees in another, which can (and often does) have a profound effect on a person's identity. The label of refugee is influential not only for defining and categorizing people but also in the way the label impacts an individual who must carry it (O'Neill and Spybey 2003).

Zetter (2007) argues that the word "label" is more influential as an identity marker than classifications such as "category", "designation" or "case"; this is certainly the case of the "refugee" label. Refugees do not have a choice in having or not having the label imposed upon them, but they can decide how they want to perceive, accept and/or use the label and can be agentic in all three. The label of "refugee" has a concrete political definition that has transformed throughout recent history. It also has a figurative meaning that changes based upon the individual, society and place: ranging from those in camp situations to someone awaiting an asylum decision to refugees successfully integrated into their new host society (Hein 1993; Ager 1999; Kibreab 1999; Capo Zmegac 2007).

In refugee studies, labeling can have the effect of creating an "us" and "them" and designating an identifying mark that can essentially create and/or compound the feeling of being an "other". In this case study, it is essential to define the "us" in order to contrast with "them". "Us" is the majority Czech society, which consists of people with Slavic heritage and culture that are tied to the Czech lands. According to Vlachová and Řeháková (2009: 256), a person cannot be considered "Czech" if they do not live in the Czech Republic and speak Czech and "full participation…in the cultural and political life

of the community known as the Czech nation is what makes a person Czech". Holý (1996) asserts that Czech identity is naturally, not culturally, derived and that people speaking of being Czech refer to Czech identity as being born on Czech territory, speaking Czech as their native language and having Czech parents. A 2003 ISSP survey on national identity defined being Czech as someone who speaks Czech, feels Czech, had lived in the Czech Republic for most of their lives and has Czech citizenship; interestingly, this survey showed an increase from the previous survey (based on information gathered in 1995) in the importance of being Christian to being Czech, which some have attributed to the resettlement of non-Christian immigrants in the Czech Republic (in Vlachová and Řeháková 2009). This definition of being Czech makes "them" (i.e. refugees) clearly discernible.

Contributing to a refugee's identity formation are the opinions and perspectives forced or imposed upon them by society due to their refugee status. The "refugee" label can carry contextual stigma with it (O'Neill and Spybey 2003). Oftentimes the stigmas are based on negative and/or misinformed viewpoints (frequently perpetuated by politicians, the media and the general public) that portray refugees as economic migrants who take jobs from native citizens, as uneducated migrants who are in the country to receive state aid and/or with xenophobic characterizations (Bowes et. al. 2009, Moore and Clifford 2007, Zetter 2007). A Congolese refugee living in the United Kingdom agreed with the notion that "refugee" as a label carries negative social connotations: "If you say it, they won't consider what you do – it's nothing, because of that word: 'refugee'" (Moore and Clifford 2007: 455). In addition, refugees have further labels

attached to them, such as "outsider" and "other", which can work as a force of ostracism and exclusion from society.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the identity of my respondents first as perceived by refugees themselves and second to see if and how the "refugee" label has affected their identity formation and claiming process. This chapter also aims to discover whether or not the designation of "refugee" has made individuals feel as outsiders and/or "others" in Czech society and whether they have noticed any change in how they perceive themselves based upon how Czech society sees and treats them. Throughout the chapter, when applicable, my data will be discussed in the context of findings presented by previous studies of refugee identity. Finally, the media plays a critical role in how different groups of people perceive themselves and are perceived by others. I will examine different media outlets to understand how the media perceives refugees and how the media contributes to the process of refugees' identity formation.

Self-identification

I asked my respondents a series of identifying questions; in particular, how they identified themselves racially and/or ethnically. This became a more complicated issue than expected as racial/ethnic classifications are not standardized throughout the world and their meanings are flexible. For example, in the Czech Republic Roma ("gypsies") are often called "black", whereas in the United States, an ethnic Roma would not fit the standard impression of a "black" person. Gemie (2010) gives the example of an Iranian woman in the US who had always considered herself "white", but was not classified as such (to her surprise) in the US.

As an American, I was expecting racial/ethnic self-identifiers to correspond with those that I was familiar with; those typically employed by the US Census Bureau[10]. I did not give my respondents options to choose from and it was soon apparent that my perceptions of the ways in which my respondents would self-identify did not necessarily coincide with theirs. Most respondents (56 percent[11]) identified themselves based on their country or region of origin, while only one respondent racially self-identified ("black").

Four respondents specifically mentioned their former nationality as an identifier, while one said that he would identify himself based on his country of origin if he still lived there. This contradicts Malkki's (1992) assertion that national identity is inherently connected with territory; since deterritorialization is one of the first experiences in a refugee's journey, it is assumed that the national identity would disappear. My data shows that leaving a country does not automatically result in a person denying their home country as a part of their identity.

Respondent 13 who identified himself based on his country of origin is a distinct case. The country is known by two names, and when asked to self-identify, he used the former name that is no longer nationally recognized. A similar issue arose in Keel and Drew's (2004) study of refugees from the former Yugoslavia in Australia. Most of the refugees in the study identified themselves as Yugoslav. The authors found it fascinating that the participants continued to identify based on a country that no longer existed as they knew it (Keel and Drew 2004). None of my respondents were from the former

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[10] The 2010 Census form included the following racial categories: White; Black, African American or Negro; American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian Indian; Chinese; Filipino; Japanese; Korean; Vietnamese; Other Asian; Native Hawaiian; Guamanian or Chamorro; Samoan; Other Pacific Islander (United States Census Bureau 2010).

[11] This percentage is out of 18 replies. Two respondents did not answer the question because they said they did not know how to answer.

Yugoslavia so I do not have any comparative data; however, two of my respondents said they were from the Soviet Union when asked their country of origin (both had been in the Czech Republic prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union). Although they did not identify themselves based on this or any national or ethnic categorization, it gives an example of claiming affiliation with a country that no longer exists, which can indicate how they relate to or have a connection with the nation-state.

Rather than alter my question to provide racial/ethnic choices that conformed to American notions, I left the question open-ended in order to discover respondents' own interpretations. This is in accordance with Haines' (2007: 305) conception that predetermined categories of identification could inhibit my participants from revealing their view of self-identification; she says that Americans are often "ensnared" by identification categories. I was certainly "ensnared" by the Americanized racial/ethnic categories that were familiar to me; my naiveté with this terminology showed since I was surprised to hear my respondents self-identify in ways that did not correspond to my preconceptions. I asked about racial/ethnic categorization in order to obtain simple population characteristics of my respondents (other questions concerned age, gender, education level, etc.). I did not realize the racial/ethnic question would be so perplexing.

Maybe these types of classifications are so subjective they should not be used at all, especially as they can differ based on national contexts and places, which underscores the different understandings of the concepts of race and ethnicity. This is evident in the answers given by 28 percent of my respondents: "cosmopolitan" and "human" as racial/ethnic identifiers. No generalizations can be made of those respondents (i.e. all female, all from the same country of origin, etc.). Compounding the rationalization that

these types of identifiers are almost futile, two respondents said that they did not know

how to answer the question. In fact, during one of the interviews, my Czech interpreter

said that people who are not American do not think about racial and ethnic

classifications. She said it was a hard question for them to answer because they did not

think like that. The history and contemporary state of immigration and race relations in

the US leads Americans to continue basing importance on these classifications that are

not addressed as often (or as publicly) elsewhere.

My reasoning for asking my respondents how they self-identified was to see how

many of them would identify themselves based on their country of origin. I was

interested in whether my respondents are experiencing transculturalism, are open to

adopting Czech customs and traditions or maintaining a strong connection with their

country of origin.

Transculturalism[12]

The reason for examining the transcultural nature of my respondents was to gain an

understanding of the importance that their country of origin has on their identity and to

determine whether they are open to accepting the culture of the Czech Republic. It can be

presumed that a refugee who is not closed off from Czech society and does not only

identify with his/her country of origin and strictly adhere to its customs would be more

successful in the integration process (underscoring the relationship between identity and

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[12] In this context, I will use the term "transcultural" (and it's variations) in the original form as defined by Ortiz (1970: 102-103): "I am of the opinion that the word transculturation better expresses the different phases of the process of transition from one culture to another because this does not consist merely in acquiring another culture…it carries the idea of the consequent creation of new cultural phenomena…the result of every union of cultures is similar to that of the reproductive process between individuals: the offspring always has something of both parents but is always different from each of them".

integration). It would be reasonable to assume that a refugee from a culturally similar country of origin would find it easier to adopt aspects of the Czech culture (ex. language) into his/her life since many of the cultural traditions may be the same.

Only 30 percent of my respondents felt their country of origin was similar to the Czech Republic culturally, politically and/or socially; therefore, the majority indicated that it was not. As culture[13] can influence one's identity, what effect, if any, does resettling in a culturally dissimilar country have on a refugee's identity? Does a refugee retain their traditional culture or accept a new culture and attempt to identify with it? Do they even want to retain their accustomed cultures and traditions? Koser Akcapar (2006: 843) contends that "Following migration, whether it is forced or not, new communities or migrant networks need to be formed if the migrant is to regain her sense of identity and continuity with her previous self". This claim assumes that all migrants want to have a continued connection with their country of origin, but what of the migrants who were forced to emigrate and have created successful lives for themselves in a new place without maintaining a tie with their country of origin?

While some refugees claim to have severed all ties to their country of origin, it is almost certain that they retain some aspects of their former culture, whether consciously or unconsciously. An example of this occurred when I interviewed Respondent 14 at a café in Prague. During the interview he said he has never maintained any cultural aspects of his country of origin. Though when we arrived at the café, he was adamant about paying for my order (even after I protested). He said in his country of origin the man always pays no matter how much money he made, and he wanted to continue that

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[13] I am using the word "culture" as defined by Domosh et. al. (2010: 427): "A total way of life held in common by a group of people, including such learned features as speech, ideology, behavior, livelihood, technology, and government; or the local, customary way of doing things…"

tradition in the Czech Republic. So, while he said he did not practice any cultural

traditions, in reality (though seemingly unconscious of it), he did.

In order to determine the transcultural sentiments of my participants and whether

or not they still feel connected to their home country, I asked a series of questions about

this topic. Firstly I wanted to know if they would return to their country of origin if the

situation that forced them to leave had changed. A majority of my respondents (68

percent) said they would not; others said they would like to visit but not move back.

Some expounded on their reasoning:

> *The situation has changed, but we don't want to go back. It is a totally different
> country now. And now we are more similar to the French* [i.e. Western
> Europeans] *than the 'new* [nationality of country of origin[14]]*'. The people have
> changed very much. There is much more nationalism due to the dissolution of the
> Soviet Union; the mentality has changed. We are only able to 'understand' the*
> [nationality] *who left* [country of origin] *fifteen years ago as we did.*
> Respondent 3

> *I have a son in Czech school. The school is good; there is a different style of
> teaching than in* [country of origin]. *In the Czech Republic the teaching is better.
> The pupil is taken as an individual. I would not move because of the children. The
> future for my kids is here in Prague.*
> Respondent 8

Other rationales for not wanting to return to their country of origin were having a job and

liking the public services available in the Czech Republic and also feeling that the Czech

Republic was now their home.

As a follow-up question, respondents were asked how strongly they felt they

belonged to their country of origin versus the Czech Republic. This was an attempt to

gauge whether their perceived identities had changed since being in the Czech Republic.

Although most of my respondents did not want to return to their country of origin, half of

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[14] To protect the privacy of my respondents I have removed any references to their country of origin when
quoting them.

the respondents[15] still felt they were very much a part of it. Less than a quarter (22 percent) did not feel connected. Since several refugees responded that they did not feel at all or very much part of their home countries, the statement made by Koser Akcapar (2006) claiming that all migrants want to maintain a connection with their country of origin seems to be negated by this case study. My study also contradicts Robinson and Rubio's (2007) claim that refugees have repatriation as their goal, which in turn preserves identification with their country of origin and inhibits integrating into their new host society. While many of my participants ethnically identified themselves based on their country of origin, most of the respondents distinctly state that they would not want to return there even if the situation that led them to migrate were remedied. This means that voluntary repatriation is not on their minds. Each of these participants also said they felt integrated into Czech society, which shows they are not averse to or inhibited from becoming a part of their new host society.

Respondents' feelings about being a part of the Czech Republic show greater variation, but 33 percent said they did not at all feel a part of the Czech Republic. This was mainly due to their legal status as non-citizens and perceptions of being foreign:

> *I don't feel like a whole Czech because I don't have citizenship. But I will apply this year.*
> Respondent 11

> *I never feel like this. I am a foreigner, but I feel that I belong here very strongly.*
> Respondent 19

> *I cannot feel Czech because I always feel like an immigrant.*
> Respondent 20

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[15] Questions concerning how much the refugee felt part of his/her country of origin and part of the Czech Republic were not on the original questionnaire. Therefore, there are only eighteen responses to these questions rather than twenty.

While I will discuss the question of citizenship and legal status as a factor in integration and belonging to Czech society in the next chapter, here I point out that some of my respondents deeply felt that changing their identity-marker from refugee to citizen would benefit their integration process.

Nearly the same number of participants responded that they felt both a part of their country of origin and the Czech Republic:

> *We fall somewhere in between – like a tree who has* [country of origin] *roots but is nourished by Czech culture. I feel like a mutant. We are Czech artists of* [nationality] *origin.*
> Respondent 3

This quote illustrates the epitome of transculturalism where the respondents have successfully combined aspects of both cultures. Respondent 3 replied that he and his wife felt equally a part of the Czech Republic and their country of origin (although they would not want to return); they have been in the Czech Republic for almost 20 years and have raised a family there. They attend Czech and ethnic-related events equally and have many friends who are Czech and others who are from their country of origin.

To continue examining the notion of transculturalism and to gauge what was important for refugees to retain, I asked my respondents about the aspects of their culture they adhere to in their new lives in the Czech Republic. The majority (90 percent) holds on to some aspects of their native culture, such as celebrating national holidays and cooking traditional foods.

Several respondents said that they have integrated part of the Czech culture into their home life because of their children:

I cook [ethnic] *food because I'm used to it. I celebrate* [country of origin] *and Czech Easter and Christmas mainly because the children are in Czech schools. There are not so many differences between Czech and* [country of origin] *cultures.*
Respondent 11

Easter, Christmas…but we also have Czech traditions, mainly because the children know them from school.
Respondent 17

We celebrate Czech and [country of origin] *Christmas. Czech Christmas more for the children, for us (parents) the New Year is most important…I cook borscht in the winter.*
Respondent 19

Only two respondents (13 percent[16]) said that it was very important to them to adhere to customs and traditions from their country of origin, while the majority (80 percent) was ambiguous. Again, respondents mentioned their children as a reason for adapting the Czech culture:

I would say that we keep half Czech and half [country of origin] *traditions. The kids are for the Czech traditions. My husband is* [nationality] *so we have* [nationality] *traditions.*
Respondent 17

Such responses show a deliberate effort on the part of respondents to integrate their children into Czech society. It also may indicate that refugees do plan to stay in the Czech Republic and want their children to feel a sense of belonging to the new host country. These responses contradict Byrne et. al.'s (2002) argument that the Czech Republic is mainly seen as a transit state for migrants.

My data also seems to negate Koser Akcapar's (2006) statement that migrants strive to maintain a connection with the country of origin since a majority of my respondents did not feel strongly about retaining some aspects of culture of their country

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[16] This question was not on the original questionnaire; therefore, only 18 respondents were asked. Three respondents (out of the 18) chose not to answer the question so percentages are taken out of a total of 15 respondents.

of origin. While such practices as cooking traditional dishes and celebrating national holidays are only a few ways to express connections with the former home, eliminating them from everyday life reflects a desire for integration in their new country of residence. This, however, could also be a reflection of forced migration, and the fact that my respondents left their home countries due to some type of persecution. It may be easier for them to cut ties to their culture because they do not want to be reminded of their former experiences and are embracing the chance to resettle and start a new life in the Czech Republic. That some of the respondents are making a conscious effort to include aspects of the Czech culture into their homes because of their children also shows their willingness to accept Czech traditions and their process of transculturation. Although my respondents did not strongly identify with the Czech Republic or Czech society, this could change over time. It would be an interesting future research project to interview the children of the respondents to see if their parent's endeavor to include aspects of Czech culture in their homes made the children feel a stronger sense of belonging to Czech society than their parents.

Religion

Religion is frequently used as an identity marker; oftentimes it takes precedence over other aspects of self-identification (Amini 2009). Koser Ackcapar (2006) discusses religious conversion as a strategy for Iranian migrants in Turkey who convert from Islam to Christianity in order to be accepted. I wanted to determine the level of religiosity of my participants and whether or not religion, and identifying as religious, had any affect on their experiences in the Czech Republic. Since the population of the Czech Republic is

mainly secular (59 percent) (Czech Statistical Office n.d.), it seems important to understand what happens if a religious person continues to identify him/herself based on religion. There is also the question of which religion a refugee practices. The Czechs who do practice religion are mainly Roman Catholic (26.8 percent) leading to the question of whether refugees who practice another religion maintain and identify with their traditional religion or convert to the mainstream religion (Czech Statistical Office n.d.).

I asked my participants if they considered themselves religious, and if so, what religion they practiced. The majority (70 percent) said they were religious; Christian (50 percent; none specifically mentioned Catholicism) and Muslim (29 percent) being the two most frequently mentioned religions. Over one-fifth (21 percent) of the respondents did not specify their religion. Because of the secularity of the Czech population, religious differences did not seem to matter much to my respondents. In fact the secular nature of the Czech Republic was seen as liberating for some. One respondent noted:

> *In the refugee camps they asked about religion, and I told them I was born a Muslim but that I don't practice. My parents don't practice either, but in* [country of origin] *they would say they are Muslim. I was never allowed to say in public in* [country of origin] *that I'm not religious. I always had to fake it, and it was a relief in the Czech Republic to say that I don't have a religion.*
> Respondent 9

Three of my respondents were forced to migrate from their country of origin due to their religious beliefs. They practiced a minority religion in their country of origin and were persecuted because of it. However, none of these respondents chose the Czech Republic because of its religious freedom. And none of them mentioned their religion as having an affect on their own identity or how they were treated and/or perceived in the Czech Republic.

To find out whether my respondents' religion had any effect on how they were treated by Czech society, I asked if they had experienced any discrimination or felt segregated or isolated because of their religious beliefs. All of them responded in the negative. Respondent 14 gave her perception of the attitude toward religion in the Czech Republic:

Since most people are atheists, religion doesn't matter.
Respondent 14

However, two respondents who are practicing Christians said they did not face prejudice or intolerance, but that being Muslim may result in discrimination:

The Orthodox Church is similar to Catholic; there is a similarity in culture and so on. I think if I were a Muslim it would be more difficult.
Respondent 8

When I was seeking the apartment for rent, they asked me if I am a Christian or Muslim. The Christianity helped in seeking the new apartment – it was about the time of the 9/11 attacks.
Respondent 17

None of the Muslims interviewed said they experienced hostility or discrimination because of their religion so it is interesting that these respondents would expect discrimination if they were Muslim. This could be a reflection of their own personal feelings and reactions toward Muslims. Or it could be the negative stereotyping that occurs through the media, which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Based on these responses it does not appear that religion is a critical factor in my participants' daily lives. Therefore, it would not seem that religion plays a major role in their self-identification. Furthermore, none of the respondents mentioned converting to Catholicism in order to be accepted by Czech society. The fact that the Czech population is mostly secular probably makes religion a less sensitive topic as it is elsewhere.

From citizen to refugee

Immigrants are likely to experience an impact on their identities if they move to a country whose social and cultural background is extremely different from their country of origin (Timotijevic and Breakwell 2000). Forced migrants are especially vulnerable to identity reformulation as they now have the label "refugee" to contend with; a label that automatically bestows a bureaucratic identity-marker. This moniker typically has a negative stigma attached, which is often a product of place as the social and political connotations that come with the label are often place-based. Moving to a country that holds negative views on immigration (forced and voluntary) could pose a more potent threat to identity (Timotijevic and Breakwell 2000).

All of my respondents were citizens of a country (none were considered "stateless") prior to their arrival in the Czech Republic. Upon receiving refugee status, they surrendered their citizenship. In order to apply for Czech citizenship refugees have to live in the Czech Republic for five years. During the five-year interim they have a Czech passport that says "refugee" on the inside. This change in legal status can have a profound effect on a person's identity. As indicated by participant's responses, oftentimes nationality and citizenship are prominent characteristics of a person's identity.

Refugee identity can also be affected by the ways in which their destination country views immigration. Timotijevic and Breakwell (2000: 358) find that identity can be impacted whether the host society is either "aggressively or passively opposed to the immigrant". Regarding forced migration, a country with strict asylum policies and outwardly (and/or inwardly) negative attitudes (e.g. restrictive asylum policies, xenophobia) toward asylum seekers and refugees would most likely create a more hostile

environment for refugees; likewise a country with more lax asylum policies and positive orientations toward forced migrants would result in a more congenial environment. Compounding the political aspects, a "refugee" and who is or is not a refugee and who can and cannot be a refugee is socially constructed as well (Hein 1993). This emphasizes the importance of place in the reformulation of a refugee's identity as identity can be affected by outside influences.

The Czech Republic, as a relatively new destination country, does not have an extended experience with resettling refugees. In addition, the number of resettled refugees is comparatively low to those in other Western European countries meaning that the Czech population has not has much history interacting with refugees or holding refugees responsible for societal problems (which is found in countries with larger refugee populations). Therefore, the political (and social) history related to refugees is unlike that found in European countries that have been refugee destinations for much longer (i.e. France, Germany, United Kingdom) and have been active in creating asylum policies that have become stricter throughout the past few decades.

The "refugee" label

As shown throughout the literature on refugee identity, the label of "refugee" tends to have a negative impact on one's identity (Harrell-Bond 1999, Timotijevic and Breakwell 2000, Colic-Peisker and Walker 2003). Harrell-Bond (1999) quoted a Sudanese refugee in Ireland who formerly managed a refugee camp in Sudan; he felt that his social and economic status was lowered as a result of becoming a refugee and that also lowered his self-esteem. In Timotijevic and Blackwell's (2000: 366) study of Bosnian refugees in

Britain, respondents experienced some of the same feelings about their refugee label: "I am a refugee, and that sounds terrible, really bad…When you say to the people here that you are a refugee, everyone turns their head away from you."; "…when I go to the Home Office…I feel 'oh, look at yourself how low you are now, you used to be a normal person…'". Highly skilled professionals in Colic-Peisker and Walker's (2003) study of Bosnian refugees in Australia felt uneasy about their refugee classification since it left them socially disadvantaged.

Several of my respondents mirrored these negative attitudes about their new label and refugee status. Two specifically echoed the sentiment in Timotijevic and Blackwell's (2000) study that they were made to feel "lower" since becoming refugees:

> *Yes, there is a feeling. I am considered the lowest. It would be different if I were here as a student or businessman.*
> Respondent 13

> *Maybe it makes me feel lower than others. Before I had a passport; now I am just adapting.*
> Respondent 14

This change from citizen to refugee affected these respondents negatively, which in turn made them identify as feeling lower as a result of becoming a refugee. Contrary to the findings that the "refugee" label carried a negative connotation, one of my respondents specifically felt that obtaining refugee status and the accompanying label was positive:

> *Before we received asylum, it was a hard time for us. At the beginning, it's like being in a prison. You have to go to Mladá Boleslav* [a city about 35 miles northeast of Prague] *for a stamp. It's a little bit messy, and you're still waiting to see how it will end. And you know that you can't go back home. After we received asylum, we were all crying, and we felt liberated and life became something totally different, and we were feeling that now we can do everything.*
> Respondent 19

This response was unexpected since all of the literature I have read deals with the negative aspects attached to becoming a refugee, including a feeling of inferiority and actual or perceived discrimination. The positive aspects and feelings toward becoming a refugee are overlooked. In this case, Respondent 19 felt that becoming a refugee was a release from her past and the persecution she experienced. She felt liberated; obtaining refugee status and its identifier meant that she could start over and build a new life in the Czech Republic.

My respondents also felt negatively toward their label because of how others perceived them and what others thought about being a refugee:

> *At first I did not feel anything. I did not know the Czech language. I received asylum in two months. Now I know something about it because I know the language. I know how people react when they hear 'refugee'. Also I myself know something about refugees.*
> Respondent 8

> *I feel that the asylum seeker has a very bad reputation. I feel like an asylum seeker and receiver is not taken as a person or a human.*
> Respondent 17

Respondent 8's comment that the refugee label affected her negatively partly because she now "knows something about refugees" is perplexing. She does not like how she is now perceived as a refugee (though she said she never experienced any specific mistreatment or discrimination because of it). She also implies that she can understand the negative perceptions since she knows about refugees. From her responses, it did not appear that this respondent experienced negative treatment personally; however, it is possible that she has seen others being treated in a discriminatory way. A possible explanation is that she sees how refugees are depicted in the media, which tends to portray refugees in a negative light (discussed in detail later in this chapter). This shows that the identity-

making process not only involves a refugee's personal experiences but also the surrounding practices that can have an influence on him/her as well.

While for some, the refugee label had no effect on their identity, it did elicit a response from others:

> *We were running away from something since my childhood. When I was a little kid, we were fleeing from… bombs that were falling on our villages in the northern part of our country. We ran away like refugees to* [neighboring country]. *Two years later we went back home and across southern* [country of origin]. *It took two years until we got back to* [region in country of origin]. *And when I was ten, we started to run from bombs from the…War. It was until 1988, after a short break time and another escape. This time in the face of American bombs in the First Gulf War. So I am still running. That's why the label of refugee is not strange to me. The funny thing was, when I received asylum, one of my colleagues from* [foreign country] *read the paper from the police. There was some data about me. After the first name and surname there is a cell for sex and there was written: man and underneath it was status: refugee, and it amused this* [foreign nationality] *guy so much.*
> Respondent 12

This response shows that even if the label does not impact the person with the label, it still may influence the way a person is perceived by others, underlining a process of subjective identity-making that such a label creates. In Respondent 12's case his colleague's perception of him was not negative, but as demonstrated earlier in the chapter, often it can be. Such attitudes toward refugees can make a refugee question whether to mention the refugee status since he/she cannot always be sure of other's reactions.

Much of the negative identification with their status pertains to the way refugees' feel they are perceived by the host society; however, it can also be based on the opinions about them in their country of origin. Timotijevic and Blackwell (2000: 366) found that "being an immigrant requires dealing with the two imposing, but equally derogating representation – that of an intruder (in relation to the host country) and of a traitor (in

relation to the home-culture)". One of the respondents echoed the fear of what being considered a "traitor" could mean:

> *In* [country of origin] *when someone becomes a refugee, they become a traitor and unfaithful to the country. I didn't want to face activists in* [country of origin] *after becoming a refugee. Since I didn't make the decision myself (I was somewhat forced into it because of my job), I had a hard time digesting the issue. After six months I finally started living a normal life again.*
> Respondent 9

Respondent 9 did not fit into the typical archetype of political refugee like a majority of my other respondents. She mentioned in her interview that she was not planning to apply for asylum when she left her country of origin to work at an internship in a Western European country; she did not leave her home country with the prospect of resettling elsewhere. She got a job in the Czech Republic and was "somewhat forced" to apply for asylum by her employer. Due to her profession she could not go back to her home country without the threat of being unable to ever leave again. Because of this, she strongly felt the effects of being seen as a "traitor" to her home country. Her ultimate goal is to be able to live in her country of origin again; ironically, when asked how strongly she feels to be a part of her home country, she replied that it was more so after she left:

> *Very strongly. Even more than when I lived there. Not because I am homesick, but once you're out and in contact with foreigners, you realize how much people don't know and you try to inform them.*
> Respondent 9

There are numerous ways in which asylum seekers begin the legal process of claiming asylum. While the majority flees their country of origin based on some type of persecution, some are employed internationally and start the asylum process when they realize that, because of their occupation, they will undoubtedly face persecution if they

return home. Because they have already established themselves in the new host country with housing and employment, this can affect the asylum application process.

Several of my respondents either worked at an internationally known corporation or had family that did, which factored into their asylum application process. They did not have to go through the procedure typical to most asylum seekers (applying once crossing the border into the Czech Republic). Representatives from the company managed the application process for them. They also did not have to wait for their asylum decisions in a refugee camp or center, and they (or their family members) already had employment when the asylum process started so they did not have to search for employment once granted refugee status. The company paid for expenses incurred during the application process and helped find housing for them as well. Because of the company's role, these participants had a very different experience of the asylum process than others:

> *No, the label does not have any affect on my identity. But because of the status, we could not leave the country. We had to get fingerprinted at a refugee camp. The process took one day and* [company name] *took care of everything else. In the camp I said to my mother 'Look at the refugees'. She said 'So are we'.*
> Respondent 2
>
> *I didn't have to stay in the camps like other asylum seekers, but I had to do the interviews in the camps.* [Company name] *set it up so I didn't have to stay in the camps.*
> Respondent 9

This detachment from the asylum application process clearly affects the way those accommodated by their employers feel about their "refugee" label and status and the way in which those aspects are considered part of their identity. The fact that they did not have negative experiences like my other participants during the application process and afterward while seeking employment and housing means they may not have connected being a refugee with negativity as others did. In fact the lack of a typical application

process and that receiving asylum was practically guaranteed led Respondent 2 to view

herself differently and identify others in the camps as refugees, but not her. This example

provides a basis for potential future research asking how the differences in application

processes (including the benefit of having an institution advocate for a positive decision)

affect a refugees identity and how/if the different processes impact the feelings about

being a refugee (both positively and negatively).

Discrimination based on the "refugee" label

Even if having the refugee label did not affect the refugee's identity, oftentimes the label

led to respondents feeling as outsiders or as being discriminated against based on Czechs'

reaction to it. Thirty percent of my respondents said they did not feel like outsiders.

Others said that Czechs were often accepting of them until they became aware of their

refugee status:

> *People don't know that I'm a refugee until I tell them. Then they start looking at me differently.*
> Respondent 9

> *It's okay until people find out I am a refugee in Prague.*
> Respondent 13

Timotijevic and Blackwell (2000) found a similar situation in their research on refugees

from the former Yugoslavia. One Bosnian refugee contemplates whether to tell people

she is a refugee or not because of what their ensuing reaction could be:

> When I meet the English people and when they ask me where I am from, I think –
> OK, what that guy will think of me when they hear that I am a refugee, from
> Bosnia and all these things, that I am a refugee…I never had any kind of
> complexes in my life, but this has become a social complex, and you can't go
> straight to these people and ask – oh, can I sit here, etc., as you would do in your
> country. They would probably not like me because I am from Bosnia (Timotijevic
> and Blackwell 2000: 367).

The part of the above quote about disliking her because she is Bosnian connects with statements made by my respondents. When asked about feeling as an outsider or being discriminated against because of their refugee status, other than the above statements, most felt that they were treated as such not because of their refugee status but because they look like foreigners (again, recall that the Czech population is quite homogeneous). Remembering what made them feel like outsiders, three responded:

> *People are not so open even if you are Czech-speaking. No, I don't think it's a problem now. In the beginning I thought it was because I am black, but then I realize that between Czechs it still is not harmonized. I work with children who don't care. Some people block out foreigners; there's an epidemic reaction, but I see it as having a problem with themselves.*
> Respondent 1
>
> *Society pushes you to feel like an outsider, but I don't care. I am very self-confident and do not feel like an outsider.*
> Respondent 15
>
> *Once when I was buying a newspaper on one Sunday; the woman told me that I've got a strange accent. This I considered ridiculous; the woman was mostly upset about being at work on a Sunday.*
> Respondent 19

In these instances, respondents decided the discrimination was not actually about them, but more about the person/people who were being discriminatory; they were able to recognize that reactions to them were of intolerance by individuals and therefore attempted to not take them personally. Such strategies of coping with prejudice show refugees' ability to address the perceived difference in a constructive way rather than letting negative attitudes distress and marginalize them further.

At the same time, several respondents said they felt like an outsider due their being perceived as foreign rather than being a refugee. This was mainly owing to their physical appearance. Because of this, the "us" versus "them" aspect of identity (discussed

in Chapter 2) is conspicuous. Hobsbawn (1992: 6) underscores this when discussing nationalism in Europe: "Who 'they' are is…not difficult. 'They' are recognizable as 'not we', most usually by color or other physical stigmata, or by language". Regarding xenophobia in the Czech Republic, Burjanek (2001) says that Czechs tend to think negatively about foreigners. Burjanek (2001: 57) further (quoting) Gabal (1999) lists three categories of foreigners and their perceived acceptability by the Czech population: "'capital' foreigners who are seen as acceptable in cultural terms (e.g. Americans, French, Germans)… 'relations' (Slovaks, Czech émigrés, Jews) towards whom the attitude is somewhat mixed but who are still seen as acceptable…[and] Arabs, Vietnamese, Chinese, people from the former Yugoslavia, Russians, Ukrainians, Blacks…are seen…as the most foreign 'foreigners'".

A survey on the attitudes of Europeans toward minorities shows that 39.3 percent of Czechs questioned are resistant to a multicultural society and 61.8 showed a resistance to diversity; 49.8 percent of Czechs surveyed have resistance toward immigrants, and when asked specifically about asylum seekers, almost 30 percent of Czechs surveyed felt negatively toward them (EUMC 2005). In themes entitled "favoring ethnic distance"[17] (31 percent) and "perceived collective ethnic threat"[18] (75.1 percent), the Czech Republic ranked second (after Greece) out of all 19 European countries surveyed (EUMC 2005). Unfortunately I could not locate a more recent survey of this type in order to ascertain whether attitudes toward foreigners in the Czech Republic have become more or less

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[17] "Favoring ethnic distance" was figured by asking if a person minded if his/her boss was of a different ethnicity and/or if his/her close relative married someone of a different ethnicity.

[18] "Perceived collective ethnic threat" was determined by asking if/how immigrants affected the country socially and economically.

favorable. I can surmise that attitudes have not changed significantly since several of my

respondents experienced hostility or discrimination based on looking foreign:

> *Socially yes I feel like an outsider, but not because of being a refugee, but because of being a foreigner. I felt it in bureaucratic ways because traveling outside the Czech Republic was a terrible process. In customs there were two groups – Czech and Russians in a non-EU line. The way customs looked at my passport and at me made me feel it.*
> Respondent 2

> *We wanted to get ownership of our apartment, but they wouldn't let us because we were* [nationality]…*we were searching for an architect for our summer house, and he told us first that he will not make a house for* [nationality] *because they are murderers and thieves.*
> Respondent 3

> *I recognize the difference because the country has a homogeneous population. Some people speak slowly to me or shout because they think I can't speak Czech because I look different. I'm open and friendly so I think that helps.*
> Respondent 7

> *In smaller villages we are considered 'others'. We are called names, such as 'yellow' but not as much in Prague.*
> Respondent 13

> *You always feel like an outsider here. You are new and since this was a communist country, if the old don't like you then the young won't either. I feel discrimination and prejudice. Eastern European refugees get integration apartments but Africans don't.*
> Respondent 14

These statements reflect discussions in the literature on "otherness" and the

tensions created between refugees and the host society (Eide 2007, Grove and Zwi 2006,

Papastergiadis 2006, Robinson and Rubio 2007). Most of these respondents were all

ethnically/racially included in Gabal's third category of foreigners listed above ("the

most foreign 'foreigners'" – quoted in Burjanek (2001:57)). Because the Czech Republic

has a mostly homogeneous population (only four percent foreign-born), these

respondents' "otherness" is conspicuous in Czech society due to their physical

appearance. Thus, some, in addition to being recognized as refugees, also have the new identity marking of "foreigner" imposed upon them; previously, in their home countries, neither of the two identities was present.

The anti-foreigner sentiment in the Czech Republic does not make the situation any easier for those migrants. Wallace (2002) attributes this sentiment found in the Czech Republic and other Eastern European countries to the isolation of those countries during the time of communism. Moreover, during that time, the Soviet satellite states were mostly experiencing emigration. Wallace bases her conclusions about xenophobia in the Czech Republic on 1980, 1990 and 1995 World Values Survey and 1998 New Democracies Barometer data. While the percentage of Czechs who would not like to live next to foreigners decreased over time based on data from the World Values Survey, the latest survey results showed that almost 50 percent of Czechs would not want to have a Muslim as a neighbor (only a one percent decrease from the preceding survey), which shows that anti-Muslim sentiments are widespread in Czech society (Wallace 2002). The New Democracies Barometer also alludes to Czech intolerance toward foreigners; 44 percent of Czechs surveyed agreed with the statement that the migrant numbers should be reduced, 82 percent agreed that migrants increase crime rates and 53 percent agreed that migrants take away jobs (Wallace 2002).

Complicating matters for some is the history of social and political intolerance in the Czech Republic toward the Roma ("gypsy") population that has been present for centuries (Burjanek 2001). Respondent 4 (who is not Roma) said he often gets mistaken for a Roma because of the way he looks:

Yes, we feel like outsiders. Czechs are not nice people and are not good to people with brown skin.
Respondent 4

He said he has experienced job discrimination because employers think he is Roma. In addition to his appearance, he does not speak Czech; he said this also makes potential employers think he is Roma since many Roma speak the Romany language and not Czech. In a European Values Study, when asked who they would not want to have as a neighbor, 39.8 percent of Czech participants answered "Roma" (Burjanek 2001). Since Respondent 4 "looks" like a Roma, the feelings of intolerance are erroneously assigned to him, and he is treated with the same intolerance. Burjanek (2001: 57-58) maintains that the reason for Czech xenophobia exists "primarily in the ideal of cultural, ethnic and national homogeneity, from a degree of self-centeredness and from a repressive approach to immigration and the settlement of foreigners".

Besides feeling as outsiders, some respondents also witnessed hostility and/or discrimination based on their perceived "foreignness" since they physically did not resemble the typical Eastern European:

Sometimes I do [experience discrimination] *by a small percentage. I had problems with some Nazis, and I think Czechs are racist but not more or less than other countries…*
Respondent 2

We don't have any specific experiences. It is just a general feeling that we always have.
Respondents 4 and 5

Maybe every day in shops, hospitals – especially hospitals, trams. When people get drunk they express how they feel. It is still an obstacle; they need a lot of time.
Respondent 14

It was mostly that time we were living in Kralupy nad Vltavou [a small town north twenty miles north of Prague]. *The locals had the feeling that foreigners came to steal their jobs. They also did not want to rent an apartment to us.*
Respondent 17

I remember once on a tram in Olomouc [a city 175 miles southeast of Prague]. *I was accosted by drunks and asked 'Why are you here? You are foreign'. I spoke with them and explained my situation. They understood me and became friendly and apologized.*
Respondent 18

If Burjanek (2001) is correct in declaring that Czechs desire a homogeneous population, people who look different would be more conspicuous especially when the population is already quite homogenous. Therefore, it can be presumed that a person in the ethnic/racial minority would probably feel their "difference" as well. It is important to point out that two of the above-quoted respondents mentioned that this discrimination happened outside of Prague. Typically more xenophobia is witnessed in smaller towns and rural areas (Wallace 2002). While Olomouc is a relatively large town in the Czech Republic, in its population of roughly 100,000, less than 4,000 are foreign-born and the majority of those are from Slovakia (Czech Statistical Office 2010). Also worth noting is that two respondents experienced this discrimination from people who had been drinking, which "permitted" their behavior and comments.

Several of my respondents who are visibly different in physical appearance than the majority of the Czech population did feel that they were discriminated against because of this difference. According to the Czech Statistical Office (2009b), out of the 437,565 foreigners in the Czech Republic in 2008, 9,402 were from Central Asia and the Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan); of those more than a third were from Kazakhstan. This percentage is high due to the number of Kazaks with Czech heritage who migrated to that

region during the late 19th and early 20th centuries and are relocating to the Czech

Republic via a government sponsored resettlement program (P. Novak, personal

communication, December 2008). Comparatively, Ukrainians, Slovakians and

Vietnamese comprise more than half of the total foreign-born population in the Czech

Republic meaning that a bulk of the foreign-born population (except Vietnamese)

physically looks similar (i.e. Eastern European) to the majority of Czech society (Czech

Statistical Office 2009b).

Interestingly two respondents from countries outside Europe said they did not

experience discrimination or hostility from Czechs because they actively decided not to

go to places where they would likely experience this type of treatment. This tells us that

they assumed they would encounter racism or harassment based on their ethnicity and/or

skin color if they went to certain places either due to past experiences, stories they heard

and/or perceptions of such treatment. When asked if they had encountered discrimination

or hostility because they are perceived as foreign, they answered:

> *No, not really. I keep to myself and don't go to bars. In 1987 there was an incident with Sudanese, but I didn't go to places where I would get into any trouble.*
> Respondent 6
>
> *No, not really. I was trying not to go to the places where I could expect that. It means like going to restaurants or bars where I expected people with not so high IQs or people who do not know something different than the borders of the Czech Republic. So I was trying to avoid that.*
> Respondent 12

Scholars have pointed out that refugees often use a "strategy of invisibility" (Kibreab

1999). Respondents 6 and 12 give evidence of using this tactic in their daily life. Kibreab

(1999) discusses Liisa Malkki's research of refugees in Tanzania, and the tactic of

assuming a new identity (that of the majority ethnicity) that refugees used in order to

avoid trouble based on their refugee status. My respondents were not in a camp situation or a designated site for refugees as in the aforementioned study, but in the case of Respondents 6 and 12, they did avoid certain areas in order to assume a sense of invisibility. Malkki (1995: 193) asserts that the strategy of invisibility by her participants "entailed a denial of identities…" I do not surmise that my respondents were denying their identities as refugees or foreigners, but rather attempting invisibility by keeping away from areas perceived as potential problem spaces in order to avoid experiencing hostility in an already discordant environment, thus limiting the spaces they can occupy.

The change in legal status from citizen to refugee can impact a person's identity as they decide how to live with their new status and label. Oftentimes this new label produces not only individual tension, but societal tension as well. Refugees from further afield than Eastern Europe have shown to experience more difficulties due to the refugee label and their conspicuous difference to the majority of Czech society. Compounding the xenophobic attitudes that are thought to be inherent in the former communist states of Europe used to isolationism and cultural homogeneity are media outlets that fuel these attitudes. The following section examines the media's role in perpetuating stereotypic and xenophobic sentiments toward asylum seekers and refugees.

Media coverage

Media coverage throughout Europe often engenders a negative sentiment concerning refugees, and this could be deemed responsible for fueling fires of anti-refugee sentiment. Several studies in the UK, for example, illustrate the extent to which the media is responsible for stimulating and encouraging negative attitudes toward asylum seekers and

refugees in particular; the media in the UK regularly portrays them in a negative light and depicts them as being responsible for an assortment of societal problems from the increase in crime rates to the lack of affordable housing to the quality and accessibility of healthcare, among others (Greenslade 2005, Lewis 2005, Moore and Clifford 2007, White 2002).

Greenslade (2005) performed an analysis on a sample of British daily newspaper headlines from 2002 to 2004 that referenced asylum seekers and/or refugees. These titles have repeatedly portrayed asylum seekers and refugees negatively; examples of these titles are: "Surrender to Asylum: Outrage as Blair gives up our veto on Brussels bureaucrats", "Asylum war criminals on our streets", "Asylum: Tidal wave of crime" and "Plot to Kill Blair: Asylum seekers with hi-tech equipment and maps caught half a mile from PM's home" from the *Daily Express*; "Brutal crimes of the asylum seekers'" and "Asylum gangs are to blame for new era of crime" from the *Daily Mail*; "Handout UK: how many refugees are living in your town?" and "Britain's 1bn [pound] asylum bill" from the *News of the World*; "Swan Bake: Asylum seekers steal the Queen's bird for barbeques" from *The Sun*; and "Asylum seekers ate our donkeys" from the *Daily Star*. In addition, Lewis (2005) references other negative headlines: "Fury at asylum seekers' free golf lessons" and "Asylum seeker? Doctor will see you first" from the *Daily Express*.

What is quite disturbing about these newspaper headlines and the stories that followed (besides their content and the variety of newspapers included) is that some of them came to light as untrue ("Plot to Kill Blair", "Swan Bake" and "Asylum seekers ate our donkeys"); they were proven to be falsified stories or based on unsubstantiated events**.** The newspapers did not always acknowledge the inaccuracy and report it to their

readers, and if the stories were retracted, it was usually done weeks later, typically by printing a small article in the latter pages of the newspaper.

Media coverage in Europe frequently consists of wording that leads to a negative impression of asylum seekers and refugees. Newspapers and other media outlets in the UK have used terms such as "crime, dirty, thieves, fraud, deception, bogus, false, failed, rejected, cheat, illegal, burden, drugs, wave, flood, influx, scrounger, sponger, fraudster, tide, swap, flood mob, horde, riot, rampage, disorder, race war, fight, brawl, battle, fighting machine, deadly, orgy of violence, fury, ruthless, monsters, destruction, ruin" (Tyler 2006: 191). And this is how "the figure of the asylum-seeker has become sticky with grotesque qualities; qualities that invoke fear, anger and disgust amongst 'native' communities…[and] it is the repetition of these imagined qualities that shapes public perceptions of asylum-seekers" (Tyler 2006: 191).

In addition to headlines screaming negative statements about asylum seekers and refugees, British newspaper columnists publish disparaging and racist comments about them as well. According to Greenslade (2005: 24), Richard Littlejohn, a columnist for *The Sun*, has regularly used reproachful comments when writing about asylum seekers, including a frequent claim that asylum seekers are criminals and referencing "Albanian mobsters, Kosovan knife gangs, Romanian shoplifters, and assorted riff-raff". Both Greenslade (2005) and Lewis (2005) found that racist comments are considered socially acceptable when discussing asylum seekers and refugees, although social restrictions exist against making racially and ethnically prejudiced comments about regular immigrants and British citizens. A representative from Refugee Action, an NGO in the UK, blames the news media for perpetuating negative images of asylums seekers and

says that "Newspapers have latched on to asylum seeker issues as a useful way of getting more readers. They scapegoat them, and use asylum as a coded way to talk about race" (Valios 2003: 32).

This negative press would undoubtedly affect the identity imposed on refugees. Millions of people read these newspaper articles; many others notice the headlines only, on a daily basis. Newspapers are expected to publish reliable, factual information, which leads people to believe all of the claims made against asylum seekers and refugees. In their defense, editors of some of the aforementioned newspapers said they reflect the viewpoints of their audience, deflecting the blame that could be placed on them for reproducing negative attitudes about forced migrants. Having an allegedly reliable source publish negative (and often false) statements ultimately enforces identities of refugees that may not necessarily be otherwise expressed. This can affect the way the general public views refugees and may discourage them from interacting with refugees in order to form their own opinions. Even if the media coverage is not explicitly negative, the connotations derived from the coverage can give a sense of being antipathetic. One of Timotijevic and Blackwell's (2000: 366) respondents from a study of refugees from the former Yugoslavia living in the UK said that he does not want to be thought of in the way refugees are portrayed on television.

In addition to the media, political factions in Western Europe often propagate negative viewpoints regarding asylum seekers and refugees. Firstly this is seen in the increasingly restrictive asylum policies throughout the region (Guild 1999, Joly 1999, Vedsted-Hansen 2002). Statham (2003) finds that policies in Western European countries tend to be resolutely anti-asylum using national and societal interests as a defense for the

restrictive policies. Secondly, many Western European countries (e.g. Austria, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Switzerland, UK) have politicians that have based their campaign platforms on anti-asylum and anti-immigrant components, and some of them have been quite successful (Duval Smith 2003, Immigration Control Platform 2004, Institute of Race Relations 2004, Statham 2003, Valios 2003). Statham (2003) concludes after his quantitative analysis that the state plays a major role in shaping the way migrants are perceived in Britain. The deputy director for the Institute of Race Relations, a London-based think tank, says that anti-asylum sentiments increased after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 in the United States, and that refugees are often portrayed as terrorists (Valios 2003). Papastergiadis (2006) seconds this appearance of the refugee as terrorist in political spheres.

Media coverage in the Czech Republic

A search of headlines on the *Prague Post*'s (the Czech Republic's English-language newspaper) website about asylum seekers and refugees results in a numerous headlines using the aforementioned terms: "Slovak crime boss asks for asylum" (April 2003); "Some towns just say no to refugees…Fears of infectious diseases, crime and loss of tourist trade…" (May 1999); "Czech police strengthen borders against refugees…in fear of a massive influx of illegal refugees…" (March 1999); "Sun Article Stigmatizes Refugees" (August 1995, a Letter to the Editor about an article reprinted in the *Prague Post* from the *Budapest Sun* that the rise of AIDS in the region was due to refugees from the former Yugoslavia); "Czechs Prepare for New Wave of Displaced Balkan Refugees" (August 1995); "Hungary Prepares for Refugee Influx" (August 1995) and "Border Town

Braces for Refugee Influx" (June 1993). Another example comes from the *Christian Science Monitor*: "Prague Wearies as Host to Exiles from East; A proposed law would slow the flood of refugees, whose numbers are expected to triple this year" (November 2001).

Several of these articles use the terms that Tyler (2006) found in his analysis of articles about forced migrants in the UK: crime, illegal, influx – with influx being a commonly used word. Recall that 82 percent of Czechs surveyed for the New Democracies Barometer in 1998 agreed with the statement that migrants increase crime rates. The usage of the word "crime" in these newspaper articles promotes the idea that migrants (including forced migrants) are involved in illegal activities, which puts them under unjust suspicion. Grove and Zwi (2006: 1934) discuss the language of threat that is often used when describing asylum seekers and refugees; these include threats "of natural disaster, of invasion, of war, and of contagion…" Examples of natural disasters (flood, wave) and contagion (infectious disease) are seen in the aforementioned article titles.

I did not specifically ask my respondents their opinion about the media's impact on refugee perception in the Czech Republic, but two respondents raised this issue themselves. Although, this seems to be more of a reflection on their perceived foreignness rather than their refugee status:

> *I don't feel that Czechs care that much about religion, but I don't like to see radical Muslims on the news because I don't want to be lumped in a group with them. Czechs seem to be ignorant of other religions. The news gives bad news about foreigners in general. I feel more discriminated against by being from the Soviet Union than because I'm a Muslim.*
> Respondent 2

People are not trying hard enough to find out why refugees are here. Some people do bad things and when they see one black guy doing something bad on the news, and then they assume that they are all bad. In my country that doesn't happen, people are judged as one, not as all are the same.
Respondent 14

Respondents 2 and 14 were both from places that fit into Gabal's (1999 – quoted in Burjanek (2001:57)) third category of foreigners in the Czech Republic: "the most foreign 'foreigners'". Their reflections on the media and its role in disseminating negative information about foreigners simulate the viewpoints of refugees in the UK who do not want to be likened to refugees they see portrayed in the media. The respondents' problem with the media portrayal was their fear of being considered the same as someone who was involved in the reported incident. This invokes an identity marker ("radical Muslim", "black guy doing something bad") inflicted on them without their choice.

Anti-asylum and anti-immigrant political parties in the Czech Republic are not as prevalent as in Western Europe. Wallace (2002) attributes this to the perceived homogeneity and relatively low numbers of immigrants in Eastern European countries. That does not mean these types of political parties do not exist. The now defunct Workers' Party in the Czech Republic was a far-right party that campaigned with anti-foreign rhetoric. The Workers' Party held a few local seats but no national ones. This party was banned by the Czech courts from running in governmental elections in 2010 due to its "racist, xenophobic, homophobic and anti-Semitic" sentiments (BBC News 2010); however the fact that it held three local seats means that they were able to find enough Czechs to support their anti-foreigner agenda.

The instances where disparaging terms are used to describe asylum seekers and refugees (and migrants in general) can certainly tarnish their image in the minds of Czech

society. As shown earlier, Czech society is far from fully accepting a multicultural society, and this negativity propagated by the media does not help the situation

Conclusion

Identity is dynamic and people consistently go through a process of identity reformulation based upon their situational circumstances that vary according to physical, social and political environments, among others. Self-identification was not as clear-cut as I had expected since respondents did not always identify themselves as I had envisioned.

The label of "refugee" did not necessarily have the negative impact on my respondents that is found in previous studies; what did emerge from my research is the negative experiences my respondents had were usually based on their perceived foreignness. In fact, 70 percent of them experienced some type of discrimination and/or felt like outsiders in Czech society (often perpetuated by Czech media) because of this. Conduct toward them ranged from minor incidents with Czechs to name-calling and blatant racism and/or discrimination. Some used a strategy of avoidance and stayed away from places where they foresaw experiencing this type of treatment.

Research findings also shed light on the impact that the asylum application process can have on a refugee's identity. Three of my respondents worked for an international company that handled all aspects of their asylum procedure, and they did not have to reside in camps and/or centers like other asylum seekers. Furthermore, their refugee status was basically guaranteed so they did not have to anxiously await their application decision. Because of this, there was a disconnect with the asylum seeking

process; the degree to which such a disconnect existed was reflected in the fact that one of the refugees did not even see herself as such. This leads to a future research topic that questions the impact of the asylum seeking process on one's identity: does the lack of apprehension about the decision and the absence of a stay in a refugee camp/center affect the way in which the label and status of "refugee" impacts identity formation?

Becoming a refugee not only has an impact on a person's individual identity, but their societal one as well. A refugee has to decide whether and how to become a part of their new host society. In this context, I examined the transcultural nature of my respondents to determine if they were open to accepting aspects of Czech culture or determined to maintain their cultural traditions. Most of my respondents preserved some of the home country's traditions, which were mainly celebrating national holidays and consuming traditional foods; most also felt that they already were or were becoming a part of Czech society.

These findings lead to the need for an understanding of the process of integration and how refugees engage with it. In the next chapter, I will discuss what integration means to both scholars and refugees. I will then examine two conceptual integration frameworks and evaluate them based on my research.

Chapter 6:
Refugee integration; how scholars and refugees define and envision successful integration

Introduction

Migrants can take different routes in the resettlement process: assimilation, acculturation and integration are the most commonly chosen paths. Assimilation is blending completely with the new host society and losing all distinctive cultural traits; acculturation is learning enough about the host society and culture to be able to function both economically and socially (Domosh et. al. 2010), and integration is a hybrid of both. Favell (2001: 378) states "Integration, not immigration control or naturalization, may indeed be the most important immigration issue, particularly in view of problematic research in this area". Part of the problem with integration research is that a precise, concrete definition of integration is nonexistent.

Initially, I believed that the most relevant definition of integration, for the purpose of my work, was the one offered by Castles et. al.[19] (2002) and echoed by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE). In their view, integration is a two-way, dynamic, continuous and long term, multidimensional process. Yet, after performing my research, I found that only some aspects of that definition fully apply to my case; it was the multidimensionality of the integration process that emerged most strongly from my interviews. In fact, I would argue that refugee integration is actually a three-way process involving: 1) the individual, 2) a host society and 3) the state. All three groups of actors interact in order to secure equality (i.e. in access to services, in treatment by

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[19] Integration is the "process through which…refugees become part of the receiving society…A two-way process of adaptation, involving change in values, norms and behavior for both newcomers and members of the existing society" Castles et. al. (2002: 117).

governmental institutions, etc.) and the sense of belonging in all aspects of a refugee's life (i.e. legal, social, economic).

To analyze how the process of integration functions in practice, in this chapter I explore the definition of integration offered by others and my respondents. I am interested in determining if various aspects of the integration process proposed by scholars correspond with my respondents' perceptions of how integration works in reality. Thus this chapter will examine different conceptual frameworks of integration, and it will compare the aspects of successful integration put forward in those frameworks with factors that my respondents indicated are needed for successful integration to take place. I will also compare the aspects of successful integration mentioned by my respondents to those found in previous studies on refugee integration in Western European countries in order to ascertain whether any differences between new and old European destinations for refugees exist. Finally, I will examine the story of one respondent to determine the usefulness of the proffered conceptual frameworks for integration and evaluate the definitional aspects of integration based upon my research.

Defining integration

As stated, researchers agree that integration is a long-term, two-way multidimensional process. In addition to these features of integration, I wanted to know what specific aspects my respondents believe are necessary for successful integration to take place. With this in mind, I asked my respondents whether they considered themselves integrated and how this was noticeable to them. While I argue for changes to the established

definition of integration, I initially used that definition when analyzing my response data and saw evidence of the established definition in some of my participant's responses.

Integration as a long-term process

Refugee integration is a process that takes time in order to be successful. According to the ECRE (2005: 14) the process of integration "starts at the time of arrival in the country of final destination and continues even when a refugee becomes an active member of that society from a legal, social, economic, educational and cultural perspective". Therefore, it is expected that refugees who had been in their destination country for a longer time period would be more integrated into that society than new arrivals. One aspect remaining unexplored in the ECRE's definition is the meaning of the notion "long-term". Since integration is an individual process, long-term will mean a different amount of time to different people, which makes it difficult to suggest a comprehensive time frame for achieving successful integration. The implication of defining "long-term" and basing integration research and/or policies on that time frame can be detrimental to refugees. Based on the time frame, a refugee who takes longer to integrate may find him/herself omitted from integration studies and/or deprived of services that are only provided during that time frame.

In my case study of the Czech Republic, I asked my respondents how long they had lived in the Czech Republic. Time spans ranged from 1.5 to 22 years. I also asked respondents if they considered themselves integrated into Czech society or not. Seventy-five percent of the respondents said they did feel integrated into Czech society. The remaining respondents said they were not integrated.

Keeping in mind that "long-term" cannot be generalized, a striking attribute of the respondents' who felt integrated is the length of time spent in the Czech Republic. Sixty-five percent of those who felt integrated had been in the Czech Republic for longer than five years, whereas those who did not feel integrated had all been in the Czech Republic four years or less. The fact that the majority of respondents who had been in the Czech Republic the longest underscores ECRE's (2005) view of integration as being a long-term process. In this case, understanding that long-term is at least a five-year period.

Two cases did not fit into the above yearly breakdowns. One respondent who had been in the Czech Republic for three years said he felt integrated, and another who had been in the Czech Republic for only 1.5 years said she felt integrated. Is 1.5 years "long-term"? If so, what is it that makes the respondent who has been in the Czech Republic for four years feel as if they are not integrated into Czech society? And conversely, if 1.5 years is not "long-term", what makes the respondent feel integrated after that amount of time in the Czech Republic? This introduces the individualized nature of the integration process, which includes many different elements. I will revisit this point again.

Integration as a two-way process

It is sometimes assumed that successful integration involves only the individual who is responsible for his/her own integration (Castles et. al. 2002); however, integration is a three-way process including both the refugee and the host government and society who are all active in this process. Refugees must be open to accepting the conditions of the host country, but simultaneously, governmental cooperation as well asut active participation by the host society to foster a welcoming atmosphere as well.

Reflecting the two-way process of integration, one of my respondents commented that:

No democratic government or society can make you integrate. It is only up to the person, whether he wants to be integrated. Even the most expensive governmental or nongovernmental project cannot help if the person does not want. If I would insist on practicing my culture, religion and so on, I would never have been integrated into this society...Until the time I started to accept Czech society and Czech habits seriously. It won't work in a different way. It would be like two trains going on the same track, but unfortunately in the opposite directions. Sooner or later there must be a crash.
Respondent 12

This respondent acknowledges that successful integration relies on different actors, and that both governmental bodies and individual refugees must be active agents in the integration process. It cannot simply be a governmental body imposing policies that will force people to integrate, refugees have a role to play as well; it must be a combination of the two actors working together. Although it may seem as if the respondent is talking more about assimilating rather than integrating into Czech society, answers given to other questions indicate he has not renounced all aspects of his traditional culture: he continues to practice some aspects of his culture at home and reads online news and watches some television in his native language. In his situation, he has blended his traditional culture with the Czech culture and feels integrated into Czech society.

I asked respondents if they developed any strategies to facilitate their integration process. Several respondents recognized that they were agents of change, and they took it upon themselves to actively integrate into Czech society:

I make an effort as to what I say, and I listen to people, and I adapt cultural preferences. You should learn to integrate yourself.
Respondent 1

I prepared ahead of coming to the Czech Republic [her husband received asylum, and she joined him later via family reunification]. *I knew that I must learn the 'Czech life', but I still want to keep my '*[country of origin] *life'. I think I was ready to get to know Czech society; I was open. I knew what I could expect.*
Respondent 8

I have the philosophy that if you're learning to swim, you jump right in, and I applied the same to integration. You can't wait for someone to make something for you; you have to make the effort yourself, and as you're doing more for yourself, you will be successful.
Respondent 11

Accept local culture and do not compare it to your habits. Do not say this is better and that is worse. Meet more Czech people and make Czech friends, to be among them. Learn the language – this is very important. And drink Czech beer – it cannot work without it - because you can learn things there that you cannot learn at any university.
Respondent 12

I was personally very active. I showed a lot of effort. I kept seeking information for myself, and I liked to integrate with people.
Respondent 15

Learning about Czech culture and adapting aspects of it into their own lives, being open to and accepting of Czech society, gaining Czech language skills and initiating contact with Czechs were strategies these respondents used to facilitate their integration into Czech society. These strategies also illustrate that the respondents knew they were partially responsible for their own integration. The specific and implied usage of the word "effort" in the responses demonstrates this. They also realized that they had to involve Czech society and did this by meeting Czechs, making Czech friends and going to places specifically to interact with Czechs. Oftentimes the prejudiced and xenophobic attitudes toward refugees (discussed in Chapter 5) are alleviated when interaction between the two groups takes place; this attempt by my respondents to involve the Czech community in their own lives shows that they are aware of this and are personally making an effort to ameliorate the situation.

Even two respondents who said they did not feel integrated into Czech society were conscious of the two-way process as they explained their sense of belonging to Czech society:

> *I think it is because of Czech society. They have to think positively about foreigners. Foreigners try to involve Czechs.*
> Respondent 13
>
> *I feel ex-grated, not integrated. I feel like a foreigner, but I am trying. Maybe it is me or maybe Czechs. Maybe I should talk more to Czechs. I don't have any Czech friends. Barriers can come from both, but maybe if I talked to more Czechs, they would realize that we think the same way.*
> Respondent 14

While the above quotes show integration as a mutually constituted process, each of the respondents emphasizes a different aspect of it. Respondent 13 feels Czech society and refugees should interact insinuating that migrants try but that Czechs are less willing to initiate relationships with foreigners. In the case of the second respondent, it seems that he believes integration is a mutually constitutive process where both Czech society and refugees are responsible for the integration process. During the interview, Respondent 14 thought a great deal about this question. He started answering defensively and blaming Czechs for his lack of integration. But as he took time to think about it, he began to reflect that he had not been as active in his integration process as he could be. In answering this question, Respondent 14 recognized that integration is a two-way process requiring effort from both involved parties (i.e. refugee and host society).

Integration is multidimensional

The multidimensionality of integration concerns the access refugees have to all aspects of the host society. This includes "participation in…the economic, social, cultural, civil and

political life of the country…as well as to refugees' own perceptions of acceptance by

and membership in that society" (ECRE 2005: 14).

Some of my respondents said they felt integrated into Czech society because they

had Czech friends, Czech citizenship and/or learned the Czech language fluently.

According to one respondent:

> *I feel integrated because of language, work, friends, social contacts and*
> *involvement in politics. Also I asked for and got citizenship.*
> Respondent 7

All of these characteristics indicate the multidimensional nature of successful integration

defined by ECRE. Respondent 7 mentions the economic ("work"), social ("friends",

"social contacts"), cultural ("language") and political ("involvement in politics") aspects

that show integration's multidimensionality. Each aspect working together enhances the

integration process. Most of the facets listed in the above quote are included in

conceptual integration frameworks offered by Ager and Strang (2008) and/or Valtonen

(2004). These two frameworks are based on studies of refugee integration in Finland and

the UK. I discuss these frameworks in detail in the next section and later compare my

research findings with those used to create the frameworks.

Conceptual frameworks of integration

Given the lack of a precise definition of integration, scholars have constructed several

conceptual frameworks of integration based on their specific research of refugee

resettlement. These conceptual frameworks illustrate the different facets thought to be

essential for successful integration of refugees. I have chosen two of these conceptual

frameworks to discuss, as they are the most comprehensive and detailed frameworks. I will then compare my data to these models of integration.

Valtonen's model

Valtonen's (2004) conceptual framework for refugee integration is based on her research of refugees in Finland. She proposes that successful integration is "an ongoing quest for emancipation, parity, interdependence and cultural integrity" (Valtonen 2004: 87). Emancipation is considered the "freedom from systemic and structural oppression, and the openness or access of societal spheres…" (87); parity refers to the "condition in which the personal and social resources, and characteristics of settling persons are valorized fairly in the society…the realization among the citizens of the society's procedural commitment to deal fairly and equally with each other" (89); interdependence (also called the social bonds of reciprocity) connects to "a high level of participatory activity in the informal social arena…[and] a tie of reciprocity at the institutional level" (90); finally, cultural integrity is "defined as the settling person's ability to shape the terms and pace of cultural achievement" (91). According to Valtonen, the combination of these four characteristics will result in successful integration.

Elements of "emancipation" are the social rights of language training and access to the labor market, which facilitate the ability for participation in the new host society. Oftentimes this access is provided by language courses and training programs offered by the host government. Valtonen focuses much of her exploration of emancipation on access to the labor market. Part of this discussion considers the notion of power (or rather the lack of) affecting the integration process as refugees are often found on the periphery

of the host population and are subject to the state and its policies that may or may not be effective in providing the access to institutions and services they set out to provide. Refugee status often suggests a deficiency of power, and Valtonen (2004: 89) says it is this "lack of power, not cultural difference, which obstructs the quest for integration". She further links the lack of power to discrimination and racism toward refugees as a person lacking power has less of a chance of preventing these behaviors.

Access to healthcare providers, social services and education are also included in "emancipation". A notion of social service in this context is not fully explored and remains vague and not clarified (e.g. does it mean access to legal services, NGO services, housing; it is not clear). This lack of specificity makes it difficult to use as a marker of successful integration. Valtonen's section on emancipation concludes that refugees must be active in facilitating integration. This suggests that refugees are agents of their own integration process.

The remaining factors resulting in a successful integration are not detailed as much as "emancipation". Valtonen's "parity" concerns a refugee's access to equal rights and fair treatment in the host country. She focuses mainly on the labor market and equal access to employment, and recognition of education and professional experience gained in the home country. "Interdependence" concerns the relationship between refugees and the host society. Stronger personal relationships between the two would ideally lead to successful integration. Finally, "cultural integrity" pertains to a refugee's method of adapting to the host culture. Valtonen defines cultural integrity as a means of acculturation in which cultures of the host country and country of origin are combined.

Ager and Strang's model

Ager and Strang (2008) combined their research on refugee integration in the UK with literature reviews and document analyses to construct a conceptual framework for integration based on four main themes (See Figure 1). These themes work together to result in successful integration by ensuring equal rights and access across all sectors of society and removing barriers that could inhibit integration. As shown in Figure 1, the four themes create an inverted triangle with each aspect contributing to a refugee's integration process as they move toward the ultimate foundation of "Rights and Citizenship". Ideally, a combination of all domains will result in successful integration.

Figure 1: A conceptual framework defining core domains of integration
(Ager and Strang 2008: 170)

Markers and Means	Employment	Housing	Education	Health
Social Connection		Social Bridges	Social Bonds	Social Links
Facilitators		Language and Cultural Knowledge	Safety and Stability	
Foundation		Rights and Citizenship		
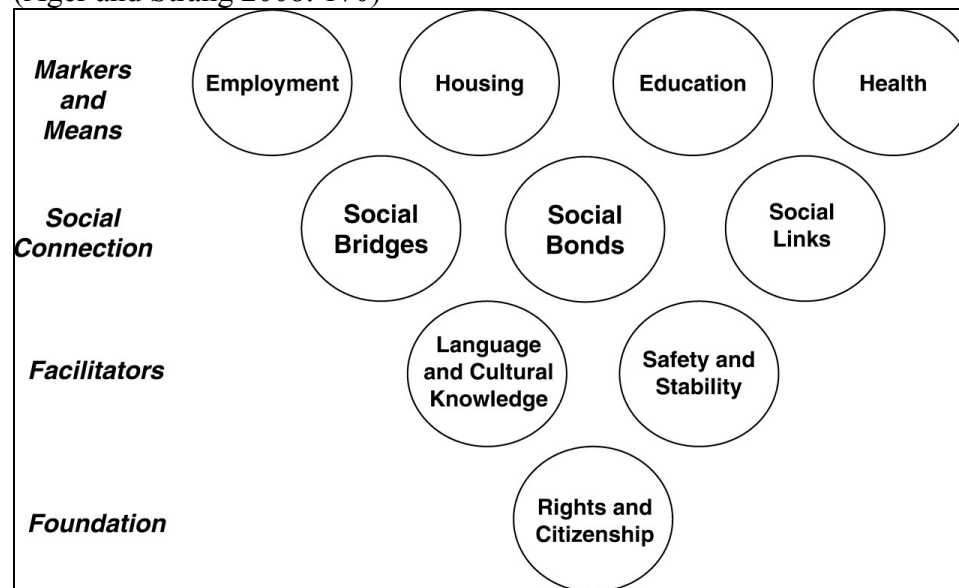
"Markers and Means" concerns the indicators of refugee integration found in the public sphere. Ager and Strang (2008) chose employment, housing, education and health as the most prominent public features of integration. "Social Connection" consists of social bridges (linkages between groups), bonds (connections with members of a group) and links (individual associations with state and/or institutional structures) that are found

between refugees and the host society at the local and community level. These recognize that integration is a two-way process that involves the host society and resettled population, not just one or the other. "Facilitators" are features that eliminate obstacles to integration (Ager and Strang 2008). In this conceptual framework, these are considered to be knowledge of the host country's language and culture and a feeling of safety, stability and/or security. The ability to speak the language of the host country is integral to the integration process; cultural knowledge is regarded as refugees' comprehension of the host country's culture, customs and services (Ager and Strang 2008).

Two models of integration: comparison and critique

Although categorized differently both models ultimately include similar aspects of successful integration. These include: language training and knowledge; access to employment, education, healthcare and social services; the establishment of social bonds and networks; equal rights and the ability to live without societal or institutional discrimination. The differences in these two models are only slight. Both address cultural adaptation; however, Valtonen discusses it more in terms of acculturation while Ager and Strang use knowledge of the host culture as a facilitator of integration. Furthermore, Ager and Strang include housing and citizenship as factors in successful integration, while Valtonen makes no specific mention of them.

Valtonen's model puts much emphasis on the importance of employment to refugee integration. My respondents (as will be discussed later in this chapter) did not weigh employment significantly when evaluating aspects of their integration process; therefore, I found Valtonen's model insufficient as a basis for measuring integration.

Valtonen also puts much of the responsibility for integration on refugees themselves by stressing their agency as key to this process rather than promoting integration as a process involving multiple actors. She does mention the host society's acceptance of refugees in the "parity" aspect of her model, but it comes off sounding as a practical arrangement rather than one of the key elements critical for successful integration of refugees into the host society.

Ager and Strang's conceptual framework is more comprehensive than Valtonen's and categorizes the different aspects of integration into a more workable model by balancing the diverse aspects based on the scholars' perceived importance to successful integration. Yet, I have a few concerns with the applicability of Ager and Strang's model. Their research was performed with refugees who were resettled in the UK, which has a dispersal program in effect, unlike the Czech Republic which permits refugees to resettle anywhere in the country. This means that the refugees in their study had no choice in deciding where to live and reside in areas specified for refugee resettlement by the government. As social connections with the host society are seen as essential to successful integration, living amongst foreigners would inhibit the integration process. Also affecting integration is the fact that the government can potentially relocate refugees to other dispersal regions, which would inhibit integration as a refugees' housing situation may always be considered temporary; refugees may be reluctant to become rooted in a community if they have the threat of relocation on their minds.

Finally, there is an open question about the role of the state and how both models account for its actions during a refugee's integration process. In each model the state, its institutions and responsibilities are given little consideration past their role in policy-

making. Both studies discuss the importance of the state's policies on integration and the impact of these policies on the integration process, but neither examines policy-making and/or the decision-making process that influences policy (which in turn influences a refugee's reality). They also do not claim that the state should be more involved in ensuring policies are implemented effectively and that these policies do actually lead to successful integration. I think successful refugee integration should be a priority of the state, and the state should be responsible for making certain that what is written in their policies is what is happening on the ground. If the state makes the effort to create integration policies, they should also make the effort to ensure the goals of those policies are being acheived (discussed in detail in the next chapter).

While I do have criticisms about the two models, for the most part I found them effective guidelines for assessing the integration of my research participants. I used these frameworks when designing my research study and compared my findings to them.

Using conceptual frameworks as a guide

Integration is an extremely important facet of the refugee resettlement process. Recall that Favell (2001) claimed it is the most important of all immigration issues. I focus on refugee integration because of its significance. In my interviews, I specifically addressed the concept of integration in order to determine what factors my respondents considered essential to successful integration. Without offering a definition of integration, I asked my respondents to tell me how integration is noticeable to them and to discuss any personal strategies they used to facilitate the integration process. I asked respondents about features of integration that are included in the aforementioned models (i.e. social

contacts, knowledge of host culture and language, etc.) in order to determine the models'

applicability. This section will review my respondents' comments about successful

integration and will use Valtonen's (2004) and Ager and Strang's (2008) frameworks to

do so. I will discuss specifics included in the models, but not mentioned by my

respondents (i.e. employment, housing) and those not included in the models that I found

important to the integration process (i.e. cultural similarities between country of origin

and host country). I will compare findings of previous research with mine, where

applicable.

Similarities between my research and the conceptual integration frameworks

Language knowledge

Ager and Strang (2008) and Valtonen (2004) argued that learning the language of the

host country is crucial to the integration process. Indeed my respondents echoed that

sentiment. A trend of knowing the Czech language as an indicator of integration was

apparent, and 50 percent of the respondents specifically said learning the Czech language

was a strategic move for them as it facilitated their integration process. Learning the host

country language not only helps to interact and engage with the host society on an

everyday basis (e.g. interacting with shopkeepers, ordering at restaurants, navigating

public transportation, dealing with bureaucratic offices) but also is critical for

establishing social networks and finding employment.

Language is considered one of the most important parts of a culture (Domosh et.

al. 2010); oftentimes language is the most distinctive cultural component. Because of

this, being ignorant of a host country's language (especially when a person plans to permanently resettle) can be seen as an embarrassment:

> *Learning the language* [was a successful integration strategy]. *I have some friends who have been here for twelve years and don't speak Czech.*
> Respondent 2

> *Sometimes I didn't want to do things because I don't speak Czech, but I just overcame the fear and integrated…I am eager to learn Czech because I would be ashamed of myself if I lived here for years and didn't speak Czech.*
> Respondent 9

Several respondents equate not learning the Czech language with a lack of effort to integrate into Czech society. That Respondent 2 found it significant enough to mention having friends who had been in the Czech Republic for numerous years who did not speak Czech illustrates the level of importance local language knowledge has to being integrated into the host society. It is seen as extremely important and without that knowledge it is almost impossible to integrate into the new host society:

> *But how can I integrate if I don't know the language and have no time to learn it?*
> Respondent 14

Respondent 14 said he did not feel integrated into Czech society and recognized that he could not be integrated if he did not learn Czech: he realized the importance of language acquisition for his integration. Lack of time and the necessity to work two jobs just to make ends meet leaves him no time for classes. He was not the only respondent to forego Czech lessons because they had to choose whether to work or attend language classes; in all cases, work took priority.

The mention of host country language knowledge as essential to integration follows the trend found in previous studies of refugee integration. Ager and Strang's (2004) research found several reasons why English language knowledge was seen as

important to integration by refugees and by British society alike. They argues that such knowledge helped in creating relationships with UK citizens; provided access to activities, rights and services that refugees may otherwise never know about; and advanced a feeling of belonging within communities in the UK. In a study performed in Australia comparing African, Middle Eastern and former Yugoslavian refugees, Colic-Peisker (2009) found that English-speaking Africans and Middle Easterners had an easier time adapting to Australian society than ex-Yugoslavs who did not speak English; Africans and Middle Easterners also had better relationships with Australians and this was connected to their English proficiency. Healey (2006) discusses language as a structural force and a means of agency for refugees in the UK finding that, whether refugees view learning the English language for a purpose or not, English language knowledge is an important aspect of integration. In a study of regular migrants in the Czech Republic, Drbohlav and Dzúrová (2007) found Czech language acquistion very important for inclusion in Czech society.

My research reinforced findings of previous studies. Without asking leading questions that would introduce the idea, many of my respondents instantly came up with Czech language knowledge as an indicator of integration. Language knowledge provides many benefits to a refugee with one being the ability to interact and socialize with the host country population. I will now turn to this aspect of the integration process.

Social connections between refugees and the host society

In order to determine if social connections existed, I asked respondents how much personal association they had with Czechs and how many of their close friends were

Czech or were from another country (i.e. their country of origin or different country). The

answers of those with Czech friends ranged from "few" to "many"; two said half of their

friends were Czech. My respondents corroborated the argument that social contacts

within the host country are imperative to successful integration. Having a personal

relationship with Czechs rather than only meeting Czechs in public places or in a work

environment gave refugees a sense of belonging to the Czech Republic:

> *I feel integrated because I know people. I feel at home.*
> Respondent 1
>
> *I feel integrated...I have more Czech friends so I do more Czech activities. When I first went to a Czech cottage house*[20] *it made me feel Czech. These details make me feel at home here, and when they became part of my life, I felt integrated.*
> Respondent 2

Clearly social networks are key to feeling integrated. Respondent 2 has Czech friends

and, because of this, attends more Czech-related events and participates in more Czech-

related activities than she otherwise would. One of these activities is going to a friend's

cottage house; this introduces an aspect of material Czech culture that she experiences

because of her social network. She is becoming embedded in the host country as she

participates in something Czechs do on a regular basis, thus furthering her integration

into Czech society.

Several respondents mentioned the existence of a social network as a marker of

successful integration. In order to determine whether a social network could be linked to

integration, I asked my respondents specific questions about their personal association

with Czechs, compatriots and people from other countries and how many close friends

they had in each category. Out of the 75 percent of my respondents who felt they were

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[20] Many Czechs acquired second homes during communist times and frequently spend their weekends and holidays at these locations.

integrated, 80 percent said they had Czech friends and/or a lot of personal associations with Czechs showing the strong impact social networks have on facilitating the integration process.

Kunz (1981) found that a socially receptive society was beneficial to the integration process - it would be easier to integrate into a society that openly accepts foreigners than one that does not. Societies that are more receptive and open toward others provide greater opportunities for intensified social contacts between the refugees and members of the host country. Similar arguments have been made in other studies (Colic-Peisker 2009, Korac 2003, Mansouri et. al. 2006, Mitchneck et. al. 2009). Mansouri et. al. (2006) researched Iraqi refugees in Australia and concluded that social connections were considered indicators of integration. Korac (2003a) compared the integration process of refugees from the former Yugoslavia in Italy and the Netherlands; refugees in the Netherlands were less integrated than those in Italy, and she concluded that it was partially due to the amount of social contact refugees had with native Dutch and Italians. Colic-Peisker (2009) found in research on refugees from the former Yugoslavia, Africa and Middle East in Australia that all those who had a social network that included Australians found it easier to adapt to the host country. While not a study of refugees but on another forced migrant population, Mitchneck et. al. 2009 discussed the importance of social networks for survival of internally displaced persons in Georgia. Respondents in their study recognized that creating a social network outside the sphere of the family facilitates integration. All discussed above studies agree that a higher intensity of social contacts and relationships between forced migrants and the host society benefits the integration process.

Not all of my respondents had close friends who were Czech. In all but one case, these respondents also said they did not feel integrated into Czech society. The one instance is Respondent 11 who said she had no Czech friends, and that most of her friends were from her country of origin or neighboring country. She indicated that she "feels totally integrated into Czech society", which leads to the question of whether a person can be considered fully integrated into their new host society if they have no social connections with the host society. In this case, Respondent 11 does not have close Czech friends or from any country culturally dissimilar to hers, yet she feels integrated. What then is the meaning and practice of integration? How can one experience integration and yet be isolated from the host society? I will return to this point later in this chapter; here I would argue that while Respondent 11 may feel supported by her immediate community of friends, I do not think this insularity can be integrating into Czech society. What this response also indicates is the fact that integration can mean different things to different people; one can consider him/herself integrated into the host society even if he/she fails to possess friends from the host society, which is considered by scholars to be one of the major indicators of successful integration.

Because of the relatively low number of refugees in the Czech Republic, most of my respondents did not have many friends from their country of origin. The exceptions were refugees from Eastern Europe who had friends from their native country who were already living in the Czech Republic. A reason given for not having friends from their country of origin was because they were in the Czech Republic as refugees. Many opportunities to meet and associate with compatriots are through activities organized by the respective country's embassy. Because of their status, refugees in many cases cannot

affiliate with the embassies as they have renounced legal connections with their country

of origin. Respondents commented:

> *In* [my country of origin] *when someone becomes a refugee, they become a traitor and unfaithful to the country.*
> Respondent 9

> *I can't go to the functions* [at the embassy] *because I am here in the Czech Republic as a refugee.*
> Respondent 20

In the case of Respondent 9, she believes her refugee status also played a role in

the lack of friends not only from her country of origin but in general as well:

> *Once you step out of your country your group gets smaller and smaller. Other* [people from country of origin] *are mostly colleagues… You should find the right way to jump into society. It is impossible to do when you work with foreigners.[21] My friend knew some Czechs and forced me into their society and they accepted me. I dropped out of their society myself because I was depressed about my refugee status. You have to be motivated, but I lost the patience to face people and reduced the number of my friends in general.*
> Respondent 9

A social network outside the compatriot group facilitates integration, and the feelings one

has toward their refugee status can hinder the establishment of these social networks. In

turn, the lack of a social network can create a barrier to the integration process. In

Respondent 9's case, she had network of Czech friends, but despondency toward her

refugee status led her to sever those ties and mainly socialize with other foreigners. She

recognized, however, that integration involves multiple actors. While she indicated that

Czechs were open to accepting her in their social circle, she withdrew from them because

of her refugee status; she was not ready to actively engage in this process. Yet, she was

aware of her responsibility for the integration process.

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[21] This respondent works at an international organization that is based in Prague. It has employees from many different countries.

Despite the fact that not all of my respondents had Czech friends, most of them did have close friends; they were from their country of origin or another country. A regional, cultural and/or geopolitical connection can be seen in some of these relationships: Middle Eastern refugees were more likely to connect and build relationships with other Middle Easterners; Eastern Europeans with other Eastern Europeans. A respondent commented that:

> *Most of my friends are Czech. But I do tend to know a lot of foreigners; even Slovaks because Slovaks feel as foreigners too.*
> Respondent 2

The sense of feeling as a "foreigner" in Czech society was addressed in the previous chapter on identity; many of my respondents felt as if they were treated as outsiders by Czech society because of their perceived foreignness rather than because of their refugee status. Respondent 2 said she did feel integrated into Czech society, and yet her response also indicates that she feels as a foreigner. The feeling of connection and belonging and at the same time being a foreigner in the host society raises a question about the meaning of integration: can someone truly be integrated into their host society if they still consider themselves a foreigner? Feeling as a foreigner emphasizes the "us" and "them" aspect of identity discussed earlier; there is an immediate sense of otherness involved. Because of this inherent otherness, can someone who feels as a foreigner be fully integrated into the host society? I would argue that a refugee can maintain connections with their country of origin and still be fully integrated into their host society (see discussion of transculturalism in previous chapter); but a refugee who personally feels "foreign" in a society is prevented from successfully integrating.

Included in social connections is the relationship refugees have with institutions, both governmental agencies and NGOs. Interestingly, my respondents did not specifically mentions connections with these types of organizations as indicators of successful integration. However, refugees did discuss their interactions with NGOs and state organizations responsible for providing services to them (social services, housing, etc.). I will return to this discussion in Chapter 7 when I will examine the role of the state and NGOs in the refugee integration process. As I will discuss, these relationships with diverse organizations can range from satisfactory when much needed help is provided to refugees to extremely negative when refugees felt that people working at some of those organizations did not actually want to provide help.

Safety and stability as facilitators of integration

In Ager and Strang's (2008) framework, "facilitators" include feelings of safety, security and stability in the host country. Safety and stability can also be seen as the absence of discrimination, violence, xenophobia and/or racism. Mestheneos and Ioannidi (2002) found racism and ignorance to hinder integration of refugees in their study of refugees in the EU member states.

Ager and Strang (2008) also discuss the feeling of "home" as a measure of safety and stability; home is included in other aspects of their model as well (i.e. Markers and Means (housing) and Social Connection (social bridges)). Home can have a range of different meanings (or a combination of meanings) from a physical space to an emotional sentiment (Easthope 2004, Mallett 2004). The meaning of home can also change over time (Black 2002). Particular to studies of forced migration, the construction of home can

be a journey as a person leaves one home and attempts to (re)create another home elsewhere (Kabachnik et. al. 2010, Mallett 2004). As the majority of my respondents do not want to return to their country of origin (and did not mention a desire to migrate elsewhere), they are in the process of making the Czech Republic their home. Home can be an "interaction between place and social relationships" (Mallett 2004: 69). This is highlighted in a response regarding social connections discussed earlier; in fact, the respondent specifically mentions her sense of feeling at home in the Czech Republic:

> *I feel integrated...I have more Czech friends so I do more Czech activities. When I first went to a Czech cottage house it made me feel Czech. These details make me feel at home here, and when they became part of my life, I felt integrated.*
> Respondent 2

Home can offer a feeling of stability and familiarity (Easthope 2004), and Respondent 2 further implies feeling at home in the Czech Republic because of this familiarity:

> *I felt it* [integrated into Czech society] *most when I went to England and then came back. There are little things. I can talk with people in shops; people react differently when I speak Czech. I know how to get around.*
> Respondent 2

Respondent 2 recognized the Czech Republic as her home after she returned from a vacation. She said she felt like a traveler when she went to the UK, but felt more comfortable when she returned to the Czech Republic; consciously, she felt at home in Prague after her trip. The return to the Czech Republic signified a return to security and stability: familiarity with a place that offered her a sense of belonging.

Knowing a place intimately is also a representation of a sense of stability. Being integrated in this instance means feeling comfortable and secure in being completely familiar with your surroundings and capable of engaging in everyday practices without

the fear of the unknown. Several of my respondents pointed to such feelings. One in particular uses knowledge of the city as a representation of integration:

> *Compared to what I see from other foreigners and* [people from country of origin]*, I have integrated. I can navigate the city and know places outside my neighborhood. I know I can find my way out.*
> Respondent 9

Refugees acknowledge then a sense of place that they have created for themselves. As previously discussed, place has an important effect on refugee identity; and identity and integration are often intertwined. As Respondent 9 began to familiarize herself with Prague and navigate the city, she began to feel as if she belonged there. She talked about how Prague has changed for her since she first arrived; since then, she said she has become integrated into Czech society and this intimacy with Prague and making it her space helped facilitate her integration.

Knowing a place; however, also means knowing how to navigate away from potential spaces of conflict. Ager and Strang (2008) cite "avoiding trouble" as a common concern among their respondents and that lacking a sense of physical safety inhibits a refugee's integration process since he/she cannot feel at home in a place where they do not feel safe. I found a parallel in my study that reflected a feeling of insecurity and how the respondent reacted to feeling insecure. Replying to a question about discrimination, one of my respondents said:

> *I kept to myself and didn't go out to bars. In 1987 there was an incident with Sudanese, but I didn't go to places where I would get into any trouble.*
> Respondent 6

What are the strategies that refugees who have gained legal status in the country can use while attempting to integrate when they are still perceived as foreigners in the host society? Ager and Strang found that avoiding places, a commonly used practice, was a

barrier to integration. Respondent 6 said he does feel integrated into Czech society, yet he consciously avoided places and would not visit them. This could be attributed to the length of time he has been in the Czech Republic (over 20 years), which emphasizes the long-term aspect of integration discussed earlier. Respondent 6 also acquired Czech citizenship, which is often seen as an indicator of successful integration.

Citizenship can also be considered a sense of stability (i.e. having legal attachment to a country). Ager and Strang (2008) put citizenship at the tip of their triangle as the foundation of the integration process. Indeed, several of my respondents view obtaining citizenship as an indicator of their integration:

> *The main thing is language and citizenship, and all other things are related to those.*
> Respondent 10

> *I feel integrated because they invite me to programs, and because I have an asylum passport so I am the same as a Czech citizen.*
> Respondent 18

A respondent who had been in the Czech Republic for eleven years said he was only partially integrated because:

> *…citizenship is missing; that is why it is only partial.*
> Respondent 10

Another mentioned citizenship in relation to integration:

> *I think I feel pretty integrated. I know that I am a migrant. I always will be* [part of her country of origin]*, but I will apply for Czech citizenship. I am a foreigner, but I know how to live with Czechs. I like it this way; I respect Czech society.*
> Respondent 8

Different types of citizenship exist (e.g. political, economic, social, cultural) (Isin and Turner 2002); however, I interpreted the above quotes to be citizenship in its legal sense. Although Ager and Strang as well as some of my respondents equate citizenship

with successful integration, I question whether this is true. Per Respondent 8's admission, she will always feel as a foreigner and as belonging to her country of origin. From her perspective, complete integration is impossible. I would argue that legal status is not automatically equivalent to societal integration. All one has to do to obtain legal status is follow the rules for citizenship, which, according to the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, is permanently residing in the country for five years and passing a Czech language test (which can be waived). Perhaps the idea that legal citizenship (in theory) guarantees refugees the same rights and access as native Czechs leads them to believe that citizenship will automatically result in a sense of feeling integrated into Czech society as well since "citizenship is seen as our correct mode of belonging…" (Haddad 2008: 60). Or it is possible that their sense of belonging to the Czech Republic is confirmed when they obtain Czech citizenship as they are no longer in a legal state of limbo and are no longer categorized as a "refugee".

Cultural knowledge and integrity as essential to integration

Ager and Strang (2008) include cultural knowledge as one of the "facilitators" of integration and consider it an intimate knowledge of the host countries traditions, procedures and facilities. Valtonen (2004) uses the phrase "cultural integrity" as a synonym for transculturalism, which includes knowledge of the host country's culture.

I asked my respondents what they knew about the Czech Republic before migrating and whether they considered this prior knowledge beneficial to their integration process. While I will discuss knowledge of Czech integration policies in Chapter 7, in this section I will focus predominately on the refugees' knowledge of Czech

history, culture and traditions, among others. I did not ask my respondents about any knowledge of the Czech Republic they gained after resettlement; my aim was to discover what they knew about the Czech Republic prior to arriving in the Czech Republic.

Sixty-five percent of my respondents said they had some knowledge of the Czech Republic prior to migrating. Thirty-eight percent of those respondents said their knowledge came from their education at school. Mostly this consisted of information (not expounded on) learned in geography and history courses. Twenty-three percent (incorrectly) thought the Czech Republic was part of the former Soviet Union and said their knowledge of the country was based on their knowledge of the Soviet Union.

Of the 65 percent with knowledge of the country, 23 percent said they had a lot of prior knowledge about the Czech Republic. Two of the respondents are involved in the art scene and were familiar with Czech artists (e.g. Karel Gott), Czech authors (e.g. Karel Čapek, Jaroslav Hašek) as well as aspects of Czech history (e.g. Velvet Revolution). Another respondent had previously been to the Czech Republic and had familiarity due to those trips:

> *The impression I had was of democracy. I knew some history and '1968 Prague Spring'. I knew opera, theater and literature since I was a little kid. Also I knew the country from previous visits as a kid in holiday camps and from visits with my husband as a tourist.*
> Respondent 15

Because the majority did not arrive in the Czech Republic with much specific knowledge of its history and/or culture, this was not a viable topic to use for the purposes of determining whether prior knowledge aided integration. However, in two cases respondents said prior knowledge was beneficial to their integration process:

> *It helped to know Czech authors to discuss with other Czechs so that I don't seem as foreign to Czechs.*
> Respondent 1

> *It was some basic help. It helped to understand the country and its history.*
> Respondent 6

Both of these respondents said the knowledge they had came from school. Respondent 6 also said being in the Czech Republic while it was still under communism helped him understand the Czech people. He migrated from a democratic country where freedom of speech was allowed (but frowned upon, which is essentially what forced him to migrate) and saw the limitations put on the public by the communist government. Because this respondent experienced the Czech Republic before and after the fall of communism, he said he was better able to relate to Czech society.

In order to determine if respondents were adapting to their new host country's culture and/or traditions I asked if they adhered to customs and traditions of their country of origin in their homes[22] and whether adhering to their native customs and traditions was important to them[23]. In response to both questions, a majority of the respondents did not feel strongly one way or the other. While I offered an analysis of transculturalism in the previous chapter on identity, here I will further discuss it as it pertains to the integration process as well.

When asked about the importance of adhering to customs and traditions of their home country, 39 percent of my respondents answered: "Somewhat unimportant"; and 28 percent said it was "Somewhat important". Thirty-five percent of the respondents said

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[22] This question provided a range of answers: Yes, very much; Yes, to some extent; Sometimes; Seldom and Never. After choosing an answer, respondents were asked (where applicable) what these customs and traditions were.
[23] This question provided a range of answers: Very important; Somewhat important; Somewhat unimportant; Completely unimportant and No opinion.

they sometimes adhered to the traditional customs and culture of their country or origin, and 30 percent said answered: "Yes, to some extent". Of these, most said they continued to make their traditional foods and celebrate the national holidays of their country of origin. Two respondents said they never adhered to their native traditions. Both respondents were originally from Africa. One who has been in the Czech Republic for over 20 years said he was isolated from all information from his country of origin (from 1986 to 1994) and that made it hard for him to stay connected, and the other, who did not elaborate on the reason(s) he does not adhere to traditional cultural aspects, said he did not want to talk about his country of origin or why he was forced to migrate. It is possible that these antagonistic feelings he has toward his country of origin preclude him from maintaining a sense of connection.

These answers indicate that the respondents are not averse to adapting to the Czech culture or adamant about retaining all aspects of their traditional cultures. This is reflected, in fact, in respondents' answers about maintaining traditional customs:

> *I adapt and integrate new elements…I've adapted to Czech food. Sometimes people traveling will bring traditional food such as okra.*
> Respondent 1

> *I am trying to keep the best of* [country of origin] *traditions and integrate the Czech ones.*
> Respondent 10

> *We celebrate Czech and* [country of origin] *Christmas…We don't make knedliky* [traditional Czech food]*, but sometimes we go to a restaurant for svíčková* [traditional Czech dish]*.*
> Respondent 19

One reason for their willingness to adopt aspects of the Czech culture may be attributed to the fact that they are refugees – people forced to migrate from their home country due to some type of persecution. Because of this forced migration, they may be discouraged

from maintaining a connection to their country of origin, more so than regular migrants who have more choices in their decision to emigrate and therefore tend to maintain closer and more elaborate ties with their home country.

The role of children in facilitating and mediating integration stood out as an important ingredient of this process. Some respondents said they practiced Czech traditions since their children were in Czech schools:

> *I would say that we keep half Czech and half* [country of origin] *traditions. The Czech traditions are for the kids…because the children know them from school.*
> Respondent 17

> *We celebrate* [country of origin] *and Czech Easter and Christmas mainly because the children are in Czech schools.*
> Respondent 11

This suggests that the respondents are actively introducing Czech customs into their daily lives for the benefit of their children who will become as integrated (or more) than their parents. It is well known that second and third generation immigrants become more connected to the society in which they grow up and receive an education than their parents' home country; they also become more integrated into that society than their parents and often become the link between their parents and the host society (Crul and Vermeulen 2003, Drbohlav et. al. 2005, Portes and Rumbaut 2001, van Niekerk 2007). Therefore, this introduction of Czech traditions into the refugee's homes for (and by) my respondents' children is not only beneficial to them, but also advantageous to the parents' integration.

A further attempt at determining whether respondents remained connected to their home countries and/or were willing to adapt to the Czech culture involved asking about their participation in social, community or national activities or festivities that were

Czech-oriented or based on ethnicity or their country of origin[24]. In both instances, the majority of the respondents said they went to Czech-aligned (35 percent) and ethnic-aligned (40 percent) activities somewhat often. All who said they attended Czech-oriented functions somewhat or very often also said they felt integrated into Czech society (those who did not attend Czech-oriented functions said they did not feel integrated into Czech society). And the majority of them did not feel strongly about adhering to their country of origin's culture and traditions.

Regarding ethnic-aligned activities, 40 percent of the respondents said they attended them somewhat often (none replied "very often"). Again, these were respondents who said they felt integrated into Czech society and did not feel strongly about maintaining their traditional customs. Two respondents said they never attend such functions because they cannot associate with their home country embassies (country-specific functions are often sponsored by embassies) due to their refugee status.

Answers to questions about participation in Czech- or ethnic-related functions echoed the responses given to the aforementioned questions about the importance of adhering to their native traditions. This willingness to attend Czech-oriented functions shows that the respondents are open to learning about and adapting to their new host culture. The fact that respondents were not overly involved in activities based on their ethnicity or country of origin also illustrates that they are not absorbed with perpetuating a strict connection with their home country and that they do want to integrate into their new host society.

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[24] These questions provided a range of answers: Very often; Somewhat often; Sometimes; Rarely and Never. After choosing an answer, respondents were asked (where applicable) to give examples of these activities.

What is missing in my responses?

Most of the aspects presented in Valtonen's and Ager and Strang's conceptual frameworks were mirrored in responses given by refugees as markers of successful integration. However, a prominent factor mentioned in both models as essential to successful integration – employment – was not mentioned by any of my respondents.

Several earlier studies, performed in more developed countries, determined that employment was a key aspect of successful integration (Colic-Peisker 2009, Phillimore and Goodson 2008, Valtonen 2004). Colic-Peisker (2009: 176) who researched refugee integration in Australia said "Employment is universally considered – among scholars, settlement providers and policy-makers – to be the single most important aspect of migrant integration"; conspicuously, migrants themselves are absent in this quote of people who consider employment important to integration. Fillamore and Goodson (2008) studied refugees in the UK, and 50 percent of their participants rated employment as the second most important factor impacting their integration process. Valtonen (2004) examined the resettlement processes of Iraqi and Vietnamese refugees in Finland and found employment to be one of the main resettlement goals of her participants.

When asked about integration and how integration is noticeable to them, not one of my respondents mentioned employment as an aspect of integration or helpful in the integration process. As will be discussed in Chapter 7, the Czech government includes employment assistance as one of its integration policies, clearly reaffirming that policy-makers believe employment to be critical to integration. It is compelling that none of my respondents referred to employment as a critical part of the integration process. This cannot be attributed to employment status as some of my respondents were employed and

some were not, some experienced downward mobility while some (albeit fewer) did not. The interview questions concerning integration were asked after the discussion about Czech integration policy. With that in mind, the respondents were already familiar with those aspects of policy that the Czech government considered crucial to successful integration (housing, Czech language knowledge and employment). It was then unexpected that refugees in this study did not acknowledge employment as a factor in their integration process. What accounts for this difference? Is this possibly an example of the different resettlement experiences between refugees in Western and Eastern European countries? The studies in Finland and the UK determined that employment was a main factor in the integration process, while my study of refugees in the Czech Republic did not. Obviously the examples given are too few to deduce a trend necessitating further research to determine if employment has more of an impact on the integration process in Western European countries than it does in Eastern European countries.

Also absent from my data is the appearance of housing as an integral part of the integration process, which Ager and Strang (2008) include as part of their conceptual integration framework. They believe that housing affects not only the physical but also the emotional welfare of refugees. Ager and Strang's research was done in the UK, which has a policy of refugee dispersal. In the Czech Republic, refugees are offered housing by the Czech government, but this is often unsatisfactory to them for different reasons (discussed in detail in Chapter 7). The fact that Ager and Strang's (2008) data came from refugees resettled in government housing may be the reason that it is included in their framework. Valtonen's (2004) research was conducted in Finland – similar to the Czech

Republic, a country without a dispersal policy – and housing does not surface as fundamental to integration either. More research is needed to support the theory that housing becomes more important to refugee integration in countries where dispersal policies are in effect.

What is missing in Valtonen's and Ager and Strang's conceptual frameworks?
Many of the characteristics of successful integration perceived by my respondents are included in the conceptual integration frameworks created by Valtonen (2004) and Ager and Strang (2008). On aspect that received less attention in these two conceptual models has been the cultural affinity of refugees' country of origin and destination. Based on the responses of refugees in my study, I believe that a major component of successful integration has to do with emigrating from a country of origin that is culturally similar to the host country. While neither of the discussed conceptual frameworks mentions this dimension of the integration process, other scholars (i.e. Kunz 1981) saw such cultural connectedness as a critical force.

Kunz's (1981) study on refugee integration (a more generalized study that did not specify host or origin country) determined that "cultural compatibility" was an important aspect of this process. He asserted that cultural resemblance has the biggest influence on successful resettlement of refugees. He argued that refugees who were resettled in a country that spoke a language that resembled their native language and had a number of other cultural similarities (e.g. values, traditions, etc.) would find it easier to integrate into the host society. Indeed, others have pointed out that significant cultural differences are

seen as a barrier to integration in the EU-15[25] countries since many resettled refugees rarely had any experience with aspects of Western cultures and/or societies (Mestheneos and Ioannidi 2002).

As part of the interview process, I asked my respondents whether they considered their country of origin to be similar to the Czech Republic, and if this facilitated the integration process. Thirty percent thought their country of origin was similar and that it did help them to integrate. These respondents were all from countries that were formerly part of the Soviet Union. They felt the communist history and similar Slavic cultures and languages were beneficial in their integration process. Some expounded on their thoughts about these commonalities:

> *The language is similar and we have the same mentality because of being in the Soviet Union* (sic - the Czech Republic was not part of the Soviet Union[26]). Respondent 7

> *There is a big difference between the two countries, but maybe it facilitated integration because they are both Slavic.* Respondent 11

At the same time, 45 percent of respondents from the former Soviet Union (none were from communist states that were not part of the Soviet Union) said they did not recognize any similarities between their country of origin and the Czech Republic. This could be attributed to their negative feelings toward their country of origin since they were forced to migrate, and their rather positive feelings about resettling in the Czech Republic, a place where the offending conditions were minimized. For example, one respondent had very disparaging opinions of his home country and said he was happy in

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[25] The EU-15 are countries that were part of the European Union prior to the 2004 expansion: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.
[26] Although the Czech Republic was not officially part of the Soviet Union, it was a former Soviet satellite state with a communist government, which signifies a similar geopolitical history.

the Czech Republic. When asked about adhering to traditions in his country of origin, he said:

> *No good…traditions exist anymore. The ones that exist now are mostly negative; the good…traditions were killed by the Bolsheviks.*
> Respondent 10

He was also bitter because he felt he was taken advantage of in his country of origin and his intellectual property rights were violated – he wrote a book and a television show was created based on his book; he never received any remuneration or royalties from the show. In order to benefit financially, he would have to go to court in his country of origin but cannot afford the court costs (he estimated that the lawsuit would cost 300,000 Euros).

All of the respondents who felt their country of origin was similar to the Czech Republic and that this facilitated their integration process also said they felt integrated into Czech society, while those who did not feel integrated were from countries they said were not at all culturally, historically and/or geopolitically similar to the Czech Republic. These responses indicate that, similarly to Kunz (1981), cultural comparability between the countries of origin and destination does facilitate the integration process.

Related to cultural compatibility is the concept of social receptiveness that Kunz (1981) discussed. Kunz claims that refugees will have differing experiences based on the composition of the host society where "monistic" societies are those that require assimilation of migrants, and "pluralistic" societies are those that favor integration. He argues that "monistic" societies are not as welcoming to people who strictly adhere to their traditional culture as "pluralistic" societies are (Kunz 1981). The Czech Republic can be considered a pluralistic society in name since the Czech government created

integration, rather than assimilation, policy; however, in actuality Czech society may be less socially receptive to newcomers since they are not accustomed to a multiculturalism, which could be a relic of its communist past that mandated a classless society and the uniformity of its citizens (Brown 1988, Brown 2009). The idea that social receptiveness affects the integration process is relevant to my case study since some of my respondents faced discrimination and the inability to find employment based on their foreignness, which in turn can impact the integration process.

The ambiguity of integration

One of my research objectives was to help concretize a definition of integration and to evaluate and add to the existing conceptual integration frameworks. In some instances my findings were consistent with those used to create the frameworks, but in others, my findings only raised more questions about refugee integration and if it is possible to create a comprehensive definition of integration and/or a generalized framework for measuring refugee integration. Many of my respondents do meet the guidelines (mainly having knowledge of host country language, the existence of social networks, a sense of stability and knowledge of the host culture) for successful integration in the models discussed in this chapter. However, some respondents only met few (if any) of the framework guidelines, but still said they were integrated into Czech society. I will focus on Respondent 9's story to demonstrate the case of a refugee who feels integrated but does not meet any of the integration model standards.

Respondent 9 has been in the Czech Republic for less than two years, but she considers herself integrated into Czech society. She says that language is an extremely

important part of being integrated; however, she does not speak Czech. She attempted to learn Czech and started taking Czech lessons twice but said it was too much work and did not continue. She works with people from her country of origin, and most of her friends are from countries other than the Czech Republic or her country of origin (she specifically mentioned having friends from Spain and the US (including Puerto Rico)). She claimed she did not know much about the Czech Republic prior to arrival; only that it was no longer Czechoslovakia and that Franz Kafka and Milan Kundera (authors) were Czech. When taking into account the aspects included in the conceptual integration frameworks, Respondent 9 would not be considered integrated. But she feels that she is integrated into Czech society. With that in mind, how valuable are these conceptual frameworks?

Since many of the respondents do meet the framework's criteria for being successfully integrated, do we consider Respondent 9 an outlier? Or do we need to add other conditions to the existing frameworks? Respondent 9 admits that her integration process is different from others because she did not have to go through the usual channels of applying for asylum; her employer handled all of the necessary paperwork. She had to go to a refugee camp for an interview, but that was the only experience she had with refugee camps. She already had a well-paying job when she applied for asylum so she did not have to go through the financial hardships that some of other respondents mentioned. Her employer also found housing for her. Therefore, something about the refugee's journey to receiving refugee status should be included in an integration framework. Having much of the application and resettlement process managed by someone else

versus undertaking the entire process by oneself could impact a refugee's integration process.

In addition to evaluating the usefulness of Ager and Strang's (2008) and Valtonen's (2004) conceptual integration frameworks, I also wanted to assess the main elements of the existing definitions of integration. My data reinforces the proposition that integration is a multidimensional process. Based on the data analysis, I would argue, however, that this is a three-way rather than a two-way process. I would also argue that integration does not essentially have to be a long-term process.

That integration involves multiple parties is unquestionable. It involves refugees themselves, the host society, and, I would argue, the state with each of these actors exercising an impact on the resettlement process. Moreover, it is important to add that a conscious effort needs to be made by these actors in order to ensure successful integration. Scholars emphasize the agency of refugees in the integration process (Bowes et. al. 2009, Castles et. al. 2002, Valtonen 2004). The responsibility of the host society and the state in this process, while sometimes mentioned, is often overlooked. Refugees are expected to be agents actively engaged in their integration process. Such process is facilitated by the state's policies. The host society is seen as accepting of refugees and/or promoting integration if they accommodate refugees in their neighborhoods and do not act in discriminatory, racist or violent ways toward them. There is a consensus amongst scholars that social networks that include refugees and the host society are essential to successful integration. Yet not enough attention is given to the role of the state and host society in refugee integration; therefore, publicizing the importance of all three actors and

making each party aware that they are equally responsible for successful integration would be beneficial not only the refugees, but also to the state and host society as well.

The multidimensionality aspect of integration is also significant to ensuring successful integration. While social integration is important, complete integration is virtually impossible without access to other facets, services and/or resources offered to the host society, including economic (i.e. access to the labor market, access to education) and political (i.e. a path to citizenship) dimensions, among others. All of these aspects existing concurrently are essential to successful integration.

The facet of prior definitions of integration that I do not necessarily think is essential is that it is a long-term process. As shown through my study, respondents felt integrated into Czech society in a little as 1.5 years. The majority of my respondents who felt integrated had been in the Czech Republic for at least five years. For some, five years may not be considered long-term, while for others five years could be long-term, which emphasizes the subjectivity of the "long-term" notion in the existing definition of integration. If a refugee makes an active, conscious effort to integrate early in the resettlement process and resettles in a welcoming environment, successful integration can be a short-term process.

Considering all of these aspects of integration, again I point to the case of Respondent 9 who says she is integrated into Czech society. Her integration was basically a one-way, one-dimensional process; she does not have much contact with Czech society socially (she has few Czech friends), culturally (she only attends Czech cultural events that are job-related, she usually goes to restaurants that serve ethnic food from her country of origin) or economically (she works at an international company with people

from her country of origin). How then do we define integration if someone who does not meet any of the general aspects considers herself integrated?

I think the conceptual framework proffered by Ager and Strang (2008) is a good model to use and a good place to start as a basis for exploring successful integration. I do not think it is sufficient as it is now (which they also concur), but it can be amended as other studies are performed and new discoveries are made and/or new issues are uncovered concerning successful integration.

Conclusion

It is difficult to measure integration since there is no existing concrete definition. Scholars agree that it is a two-way interaction between refugees and the host society, and that it is a multidimensional and long-term process. In order to help clarify this elusive definition I asked my respondents to give their perspective on integration – what integration meant to them, whether they felt themselves integrated into Czech society and how this integration was noticeable to them. The majority said they considered themselves integrated into Czech society. The time spent in the Czech Republic corresponded to feelings of integration – those who had refugee status for a longer period of time were generally the ones who felt integrated.

Having social connections with Czechs, feeling at home in the Czech Republic, learning the Czech language and culture and obtaining Czech citizenship were examples given of how integration was apparent to my respondents. Establishing social networks is considered an important to integration, and most respondents who felt integrated also had Czech friends and friends from countries other than their native country. Correspondingly

those who said they were not integrated did not have any Czech friends. Creating social networks, learning the Czech language and understanding the culture as well as being open to change and willing to adapt were strategies given on how to facilitate integration. Respondents described their integration strategies in terms of making an effort to become part of Czech society reflecting the realization that the individual is responsible for taking an active role in integrating him/herself with Czech society.

A sense of belonging to Czech society – feeling as if it were home, the ability to navigate the city (Prague), having children born in the Czech Republic – gave respondents the feeling of integration. Learning the Czech culture was also an important part of feeling integrated, and this may be combined with feeling at home in the host country. Ultimately gaining citizenship was the ideal measure of successful integration to several respondents.

A comparison of my data with previous studies offered several important insights. Prior research showed that host language knowledge, cultural similarities, social networks and employment were main factors that exemplified successful integration; however, while my respondents mentioned the first three, not one brought up employment as an indicator of integration. Whether this is a phenomenon specific to the Czech Republic or if this trend can be found in other Central or Eastern European countries is a subject for further investigation. Such findings could be a reflection of my sample population. Most of my respondents did not have trouble finding employment and supporting themselves financially, which may mean that employment was not as important to them as a measure of integration as in other studies.

Further research on the topic of refugee integration is greatly needed; the indistinct definition of integration is insufficient. More studies are required in order to uncover the variables that surface as the most important to successful integration. Additionally, diverse research sites are needed in order to establish how different political cultural and economic contexts impact the integration process and what, if any, are the connections between the sites. To concretize a definition more studies need to be performed with refugees themselves in order to garner a consensus on those aspects that result in successful integration. Gaining information from a refugee's perspective will also help governmental agencies and NGOs whose responsibility it is to provide the best services and support to resettled refugees. How do governmental bodies create policies on integration when the actual meaning of integration is unknown? In my case study, it is evident that refugees and governmental representatives have differing opinions on what facilitates integration; therefore, a consensus on the defining elements of successful integration is required.

Further research is also needed on the relationship between integration and identity formation. I introduced the interconnectivity of the two in Chapter 2; however, my research was not designed to explore this question in depth. Whether a change in identity influences the integration process or vice versa remains unclear and understudied.

By acquiring the ways in which refugees define integration and discovering the measures and strategies that they have undertaken to facilitate their integration process, refugees can be agentic not only in developing a more informed definition of integration, but also in shaping the governance environment that future refugees are subject to in their

new host country. In this case, my respondents' perspectives can be incorporated into existing conceptual integration frameworks and future integration policy-making in the Czech Republic.

I introduced the Czech government's integration policies in this chapter. In the next chapter, I will provide a detailed analysis of these polices, including an examination of the specific aspects of the policies, their implementation and refugees' experiences with those policies, including their effectiveness.

Chapter 7:
Refugee integration policy; policy components, their implementation and
effectiveness

Introduction

Most European countries have policy related to refugee integration; these policies vary

from country to country. The EU has discussed adopting a Common European Asylum

System (called The Hague Program), although this is mainly seen as a means to

standardize asylum application and decision-making procedures throughout the EU. In

2007, the Hague Program spurred the subsequent revision of the European Refugee Fund,

which provides financial assistance to the EU member states for costs related to forced

migrants in their country. Part of this funding is to be used toward integrating refugees;

however, it is not specified as to what integration measures the funds should cover. This

is left to the states' discretion.

Some countries, such as the UK, have a long history of resettling refugees and

have very detailed integration policy; furthermore, the UK Home Office routinely

provides funding to academics and NGOs that research refugee integration in order to

determine the best policies to promote the integration of new refugees. Other countries,

such as the Czech Republic, are new destination countries and create policy as new

situations arise oftentimes without much knowledge of their refugee populations and the

needs they have or the services they require.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the European Refugee Fund and its role

in providing funds for refugee integration in the EU context. It will also examine Czech

refugee integration policies and analyze their effectiveness based upon refugees'

experiences. Additionally, I will offer my respondents' recommendations for improving

refugee integration polices. As implementation of refugee integration policies is often put into practice by NGOs, I will examine my respondents' experiences with NGOs and their thoughts on how NGOs are carrying out their responsibilities.

European Refugee Fund

The European Refugee Fund was created in 2000 by Council Decision 2000/596/EC and initially established for five years; an amendment extended it from 2005 to 2010 (Europa 2005). The EU had been providing funds to the EU member states for programs aimed at refugees and asylum seekers, and the creation of the European Refugee Fund was a move by the EU to coordinate its efforts under one umbrella organization.

From 2000 to 2004 available funds amounted to 216 million euros (approximately 293 million US dollars[27]) of which five percent was to be used for transnational endeavors (Europa 2005). The initiatives supported by the 2000 Council Decision included: "improvement of reception conditions and procedures in terms of infrastructure and services…integration of persons benefitting from a stable form of international protection…voluntary repatriation and reintegration in the country of origin…" (Europa 2005). The amendment extending the Decision until 2010 did not result in a change of content, but the amount of funding was increased to 285 million euros (approximately 387 million US dollars).

A more recent revision of the European Refugee Fund (which extended the program until 2013) was a result of Decision 573/2007/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 May 2007 as part of a program entitled "Solidarity and

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[27] All currency conversions in this chapter were done using www.xe.com based on current conversion rates.

Management of Migration Flows" (European Parliament, Council 2007). This act of legislation "sets out the objectives of the European Refugee Fund and the rules for its management. It also sets out the available financial resources and the criteria for their allocation" (Europa 2010).

Decision 573/2007/EC provides 628 million euros (approximately 853 US dollars) for the six year period. The majority of the funds (566 million euros) are distributed to the EU member states relative to the number of asylum seekers and refugees found in the state (European Commission Home Affairs 2010). These funds can be used in a number of ways: improving reception conditions for asylum seekers; monitoring of asylum policies and collection of data related to asylum seekers and refugees and/or resettlement programs on a national level; and creating networks and cooperation between the EU member states and NGOs that work in multiple EU member states on an international level (European Parliament, Council 2007). Funding can also be used for integration of refugees in the host country, "especially measures relating to education, participation in civil and cultural life, access to the labor market, language training and assistance with housing" (Europa 2010). As previously stated, there is no EU standard for apportioning the funding between or within the member states. The member states use their own discretion when allocating the funds.

The remaining funds (62 million) are used for Community Actions, which are cooperative activities between the EU member states (European Commission Home Affairs 2010). The European Refugee Fund puts forward a call for Community Action proposals annually and distributes grant money to those proposals deemed successful. A large number of the Common Action grants distributed in 2008 and 2009 dealt with

initiatives designed to improve data sharing on asylum seekers between the EU member states and improving conditions for asylum seekers during their application process (European Commission Home Affairs 2010).

Only one accepted proposal in 2008 and 2009 specifically addressed an integration measure: *Integrating Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Children in the Educational Systems of EU Member States: Evaluation and Promotion of Current Best Practices*; this is a project undertaken by organizations in Austria, Italy, Slovenia and Sweden (European Commission Home Affairs 2010). The call for 2010 Community Action proposals sets forth its priorities as "improving the quality of asylum decision-making…Improving the efficiency and fairness of the Dublin system…Enhancing solidarity mechanisms between Member States...Promoting good practices and new developments in the field of resettlement…Promoting common measures to address specific needs of vulnerable groups…" (European Commission Home Affairs 2010). Besides the vague mention of "the field of resettlement", priorities mainly involve circumstances related to the asylum application procedure, which is reflected in the successful grants of 2008 and 2009.

A breakdown of funding allocation in each EU member state is needed to see if this is the national trend; however, it can be surmised that integration of refugees is not of primary importance for the European Commission since only one Community Action proposal focusing on integration was accepted, and that the European Refugee Fund is mainly concerned with allocating funds to organizations dealing with the asylum application process. Many EU states are enacting asylum policies that are becoming more restrictive in order to deflect asylum seekers elsewhere and avoid responsibility for

determining asylum (see Chapter 2). Because of this, the focus on coordinating polices (with or without the conspicuous intent of deflection) is predictable since it discourages countries from enacting even more restrictive policies in order to diminish their attractiveness as a destination country. Also of note is that one of the main uses of funding advanced by the 2000 Decision was for repatriation of refugees and asylum seekers – again, emphasizing the deflective goals of current asylum policy in the EU member states.

While the intent is to limit the numbers who apply for asylum in the EU countries, it is inevitable that some will go through the application process and be granted asylum. Because of this, some EU countries created integration policies that provide assistance for refugees upon resettlement. The Czech Republic is one of these countries.

The Czech Republic's refugee integration policies

The transformation of the Czech Republic from a refugee sending to receiving country necessitated the creation of policy related to forced migration. The first Asylum Act (Act No. 325/1999) was adopted in 1999 with subsequent amendments in 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006 (prior to the Asylum Act of 1999 asylum policy was covered by the Czech Republic Police Act No. 283/1991). These Acts cover all aspects of the asylum process from application to resettlement and integration.

According to Petr Novak (Head of the Unit for Integration of Refugees and Foreigners in the Ministry of the Interior) the Czech government feels it should provide assistance to people seeking refuge in the country because of the assistance and acceptance that Czechs who migrated throughout the world received when fleeing

communism (P. Novak, personal communication, December 2008). While this may not have been his intent, his comment makes it sound as if the Czech government is not necessarily offering assistance to refugees because of their traumatic experiences and need for a safe haven and protection, but because they see it as repaying their debt to other countries that helped Czechs in their time of need.

The Czech government legalized support for resettled refugees by instituting refugee integration policies. Initially the Czech Parliament privileged two aspects of the integration process (housing assistance and Czech language training) and included them in Chapter IX of the 1999 Asylum Act. The wording of Chapter IX was sparse and included no detailed plan(s) of action behind the integration program. Further amendments to this Act elaborated on how the state integration program would be implemented and who would be responsible for implementation.

In 2004, the employment assistance provision was added as part of refugee integration policy. Subsequent amendments named the ministries that are responsible for implementing the integration policies – the Ministry of the Interior (housing assistance); the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (Czech language training) and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (employment assistance) - and their duties were clarified. Refugees are informed of these integration programs and told how to participate in them after they are granted refugee status. In the case of housing, refugees are supposed to tell the Ministry of the Interior that they are interested in receiving this assistance, and the Ministry of the Interior notifies them when/if housing becomes available. As far as Czech language training and employment assistance, refugees are responsible for seeking out these programs on their own.

The Czech government provides funding out of the state budget for the integration

policies, and they revisit funding for integration programs annually to determine which

Ministries should receive funding and in what amount. This is legitimated by an official

Resolution from the Czech government. The latest Resolutions available show that the

Czech government agreed to allocate the following funds for refugee integration

(Government of the Czech Republic 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008):

Table 2: Funding allocated to Ministries involved in refugee integration

Year	Ministry	Amount (CZK/USD)	Usage
2005	Interior	16,000,000Kc/ $799,709	For municipalities that provide refugee housing
2006	Interior	16,000,000Kc/ $799,709	For municipalities that provide refugee housing
2006	Interior	1,000,000Kc/ $49,993	For NGOs that provide services to refugees seeking housing
2007	Interior	17,500,000Kc/ $875,796	For municipalities that provide refugee housing
2007	Interior	500,000Kc/ $25,030	For NGOs that provide services to refugees seeking housing
2007	Education, Youth and Sport	3,800,000Kc/ $190,261	For free Czech language classes
2007	Education, Youth and Sport	800,000Kc/ $40,067	For research on Czech language class design
2008	Interior	17,5000,000Kc/ $875,796	For municipalities that provide refugee housing
2008	Interior	500,000Kc/ $25,030	For NGOs that provide services to refugees seeking housing
2008	Education, Youth and Sport	6,500,000Kc/ $367,221	For free Czech language classes

These governmental Resolutions also set forth expectations for all three Ministries even if

they were not provided with sufficient funding to reach their expected goals. For

example, in 2005 and 2006 the Ministries of Education, Youth and Sport, and Labor and

Social Affairs were not given any governmental funding toward integration programs;

however, the Resolutions required them to draft plans regarding free Czech language

training for refugees and employment assistance for refugees, respectively. In 2007, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs was not given any governmental funding for refugee employment assistance; however, the Ministry was instructed to "analyze the provision of retraining programs to unemployed refugees…and to offer, on an ongoing basis, individual action plans to job seekers – refugees regardless of their age…" (Government of the Czech Republic 2007: 3). Employment assistance offered to refugees is the same offered to anyone in the Czech Republic who meets the particular requirements. Because of this, funding for refugee employment assistance does not come from the money budgeted for refugee integration.

From 2005 to 2008 the amount of funding for refugee integration continued to increase. The accompanying details of funding allocation and use increased as well. This reflects the Czech government's learning process when dealing with refugee integration policy. When the policy was first introduced in 1999, it did not include the amount of funding available, employment assistance or the Ministries responsible for policy implementation. Subsequent amendments showed different components becoming more comprehensive and detailed. They spelled out specific monetary amounts; detailed how the funding was to be used and included procedures allowing for the policy amendments to be revised annually in order to determine if/what changes are needed. As previously stated, the Czech government is newly experiencing the immigration of forced migrants and has to develop policy as conditions arise. This attention to refugee integration policy and its evolution within a relatively short period of time shows that the Czech government is concerned with continuing their integration policies and making them successful and beneficial to refugees. However, the Czech government decided to

approve the 2008 Resolution for 2008 onward and delay the annual reexamination due to financial reasons (P. Novak, personal communication, December 2008).

The Czech government seems to be concerned about successful refugee integration on paper, but the question of whether this concern is witnessed in reality arises. The following sections will examine each aspect of Czech refugee integration policy. I was only able to conduct an institutional interview with a representative from the Ministry of the Interior (see Chapter 3); therefore, my examination of Czech housing assistance is more detailed than those of language training and employment assistance.

Housing assistance

The Czech government realized that newly recognized refugees may need assistance finding a place to live. Therefore housing assistance became part of integration policy, which is overseen by the Ministry of the Interior's Unit for Integration of Refugees and Foreigners. This Unit is responsible for securing housing agreements for refugees depending on whether the housing is municipality- or privately-owned. In each case the government is responsible for paying a specified sum to either owner.

From 1994 to 2008, per the Ministry of Interior (2010b), the Czech government provided 494 integration apartments to refugees:

Table 3: Integration apartments provided by the Ministry of the Interior

Year	Number of Apartments	Amount for Housing (CZK/USD)	Amount for Municipality Development (CZK/USD)	Number of Integrated Persons
1994	22	4,798,000Kc/ $239,523	1,480,000Kc/ $73,884	84
1995	48	8,802,000Kc/ $439,408	3,340,000Kc/ $166,737	120
1996	15	2,700,000Kc/ $134,788	930,000Kc/ $46,427	44
1997	19	4,000,000Kc/ $199,686	1,430,000Kc/ $71,388	56
1998	28	6,050,000Kc/ $302,024	3,070,000Kc/ $153,259	65
1999	44	9,900,000Kc/ $494,222	5,160,000Kc $257,594	110
2000	30	6,600,000Kc/ $329,481	3,090,000Kc/ $154,257	78
2001	23	4,950,000Kc/ $247,111	2,730,000Kc/ $136,285	47
2002	18	3,750,000Kc/ $187,205	2,210,000Kc/ $110,326	41
2003	18	3,750,000Kc/ $187,205	2,910,000Kc/ $145,271	39
2004	38	8,836,750Kc/ $441,143	5,979,500Kc/ $298,505	113
2005	40	7,877,907Kc/ $393,276	5,604,500Kc/ $279,784	102
2006	55	8,832,281Kc/ $440,920	6,867,500Kc/ $342,835	131
2007	49	6,666,744Kc/ $332,813	5,285,500Kc/ $263,859	147
2008	47	1,408,342Kc/ $70,306	7,428,000Kc/ $370,816	119
Total	494	88,922,024Kc/ $4,439,110	57,515,000Kc/ $2,871,228	1,296

According to the Head of the Unit for Integration of Refugees and Foreigners,

municipalities own about fifteen percent of Czech apartments; however, this percentage

decreases every year as apartment ownership is privatized[28] (P. Novak, personal

communication, December 2008). Municipality-owned apartments are offered to refugees

on a yearly basis for a total of five years. The municipality is required to renew the lease

so long as the refugee continues to pay rent and utilities and does not cause any problems.

The government pays a municipality based on the number of refugees they provide

housing for: 1-2 refugees brings 400,000Kc (approximately $21,000) to the municipality,

3-5 brings 600,000Kc (approximately $32,000) and more than 6 brings 700,000Kc

(approximately $37,000). In the case of municipality-owned properties the money is paid

directly to the municipality to be used mainly for infrastructure improvements.

Privately-owned apartments account for 85 percent of Czech apartment

properties. In an agreement with a private owner a refugee is allowed to stay in the

apartment for up to eight years. The government pays a portion of the rent to the owner:

for 1-2 refugees, 5000Kc (approximately $265) is paid by the government; 3-5, 6000Kc

(approximately $315) and more than 6, 7000Kc (approximately $370). The refugee pays

the remainder of the rent to the owner. Financial assistance is only given during the time

when a person has refugee status. If he/she becomes a citizen (which is possible since a

person can apply for citizenship after five years), the government is no longer responsible

for paying a portion of the rent.

Each scenario has its advantages and disadvantages. An advantage of the first

housing option for municipalities is that they can be assured their apartments are rented

for five years and are guaranteed rent payments by the Czech government. However,

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[28] During the period of communism, the state owned most property. After the fall of communism, the
process began to either return the property to the previous owner or sell the property. In the Czech
Republic, municipalities are losing ownership of apartments as ownership is transferred from the public to
private sector.

refugees are disadvantaged in this arrangement because they are given no financial assistance since all money is given directly to the municipality. Conversely, the second housing option provides refugees with some financial assistance in the form of lower rental costs. Refugees can be disadvantaged in this situation though as leases are only signed for one year at a time and a private owner does not have to extend the lease even if the refugee has adhered to all requirements of the agreement. Also because of the disparity in rental costs a 5000Kc offer is not as significant a portion of the rent in Prague as it would be in a smaller city or village leaving the refugee with higher personal rental costs. What is seen as a disadvantage of both housing options according to Petr Novak (and refugees themselves) is that most of the housing available is found outside of large cities in areas where opportunities for higher education and employment are limited.

A third housing option (constructing apartment buildings strictly for refugees) was considered from 2004 to 2007. The Ministry for Regional Development was responsible for this program, which was discontinued in 2008. Petr Novak said this program was canceled because "It is not in the best interest to have integration centers because refugees are not integrating but living a collective life, and the government wants them to have a normal daily life" (P. Novak, personal communication, December 2008). He believes refugee integration should include interaction (personal, community, workplace, etc.) between refugees and Czechs as well as other refugees and immigrants. The proposed tenement housing (as these apartments were called in Government Resolution 543 (Government of the Czech Republic 2008)), would present an impediment to integration. A similar sentiment was echoed in previous studies (ECRE 1999, Mitchneck et. al. 2009). In ECRE's study, a refugee in Austria who lived in

integration housing akin to the discontinued Czech program said: "I think it is some kind
of joke. They call them integration houses and I have never met an Austrian inside the
house except the staff. So what do they mean by integration? Integration between
ourselves?" (ECRE 1999: 28). In Georgia, the government and NGOs are making an
effort to relocate internally displaced persons outside of collective centers because they
believe these centers physically and socially isolate them (Mitchneck et. al. 2009).

When revisiting the annual refugee integration resolutions, the Czech government
decides what percentage of refugees each region in the country will house. These
decisions are based on housing availability. The latest resolutions show that the
percentage of refugee housing in the various regions of the Czech Republic and the
number of refugees housed remained constant in 2005 and 2006; in 2007 the percentages
remained the same, but the number of refugees housed increased (Government of the
Czech Republic 2005, 2006, 2007):

Table 4: Refugee housing available in the Czech Republic by region

Region	Location in the Czech Republic	% of Refugee Housing Available	Number of Refugees Housed 2005/06	2007
Prague (capital city)	Northwest	16%	24	32
Central Bohemia	West Central	10%	15	20
South Bohemia	Southwest	10%	15	20
Plzén	West	10%	15	20
Hradec Králové	Interior	8%	12	16
South Moravia	Southeast	8%	12	16
Moravia-Silesia	Northeast	4%	6	8
Jihlava	Central	6%	9	12
Olomouc	East Central	6%	9	12
Zlín	Southeast	4%	6	8
Ustí nad Labem	Northwest	4%	6	8
Liberec	North Central	4%	6	8
Pardubice	Central	6%	9	12
Karlovy Vary	West	4%	6	8
Total		100%	150	200

The lack of increase in available refugee housing is a frustration for Mr. Novak. It is his responsibility to find housing for refugees. He travels throughout the country to convince municipalities and private owners to provide housing for refugees based on the aforementioned financial agreements. He says:

> *The most effective method of finding apartments is to visit mayors face to face and tell them that the government needs their help, etc. Without the municipality's help, the housing assistance will only be on paper. For a small village, government assistance from refugee housing could be 20% of the budget, which is stressed. It is difficult because visiting 10 mayors usually only equals one apartment.*
> (P. Novak, personal communication, December 2008).

He says it is hard to persuade people to participate in the government's program. In the case of municipality-owned housing, it is difficult because of the lack of property, and:

> *Sometimes it is hard to explain why they should give the apartment to a refugee when they have a long waiting list of people waiting for them.*
> (P. Novak, personal communication, December 2008)

He said the biggest problem is the low number of available apartments. He pointed out the existence of xenophobia but claimed it is not a major concern. Although he did stress:

> *If the experience with refugees is not positive then there is distaste for further cooperation.*
> (P. Novak, personal communication, December 2008)

While Mr. Novak makes an effort to find additional housing for refugees, his effort is not always rewarded. Because of the lack of housing, refugees either remain in government-funded centers until they receive housing assistance or find their housing on their own.

In addition to housing assistance, the Czech government provides other services to refugees. A second aspect of the Czech government's refugee integration policy concerns Czech language training, which will be discussed next.

Czech language training

The Czech government acknowledges that Czech language skills will not only help a refugee integrate into Czech society but also be useful in procuring employment; therefore, the government included free Czech language training as part of its refugee integration policy. Czech language instruction is offered free to refugees on an hourly basis. The original agreement in 2000 offered refugees 100 hours (one hour equals one 45 minute lesson) of individual training or 150 hours of group training over a maximum of ten months. In 2008, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport realized that this was not enough time to sufficiently learn the Czech language, and the policy was amended to include 400 hours of free individual training or 600 hours of free group training.

Unlike the Ministry of the Interior's role in providing housing assistance, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport does not directly oversee the Czech language classes. The management and staffing of the courses as well as the creation of class material is outsourced to an NGO. Since 2002, the selected NGO handling the language courses is the Society of Citizens Assisting Emigrants (SOZE). In addition to language courses, SOZE provides a variety of services (including legal, social and psychological) to refugees. SOZE has offices located in Brno and Olomouc but coordinates Czech language classes throughout the country. SOZE provides refugees the course information – meeting days and times – and it is the refugee's responsibility to choose the classes that are most convenient for them. In 2008, 69 Czech language courses took place in 26 locations throughout the country; of those, 32 were individual courses and 37 were group courses (Government of the Czech Republic 2008).

A further aspect of the Czech government's refugee integration policy involves employment assistance. This includes helping refugees in their search for employment as well as offering job training programs, which will be discussed next.

Employment assistance

Employment assistance as part of the refugee integration policy is offered through the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. Unlike the first two components of refugee integration policy, employment assistance is offered to anyone in the Czech Republic who meets certain conditions; it is not a program specifically designed to help refugees integrate. This is because the Czech government reasons that the "establishment of an independent specific program supporting recognized refugees in the area of employment has been considered as unsuitable and ineffective as far as integration efforts are concerned" (Government of the Czech Republic 2005).

Under the Employment Act of 2004, assistance is offered to "employment seekers under 26 years of age and university graduates during the first two years after their successful graduation from the university (however, not longer than by the age of thirty)…[and those] who (because of their medical condition, age, child care or for other serious reason…) are in need of special attention" (Government of the Czech Republic 2005). Refugees are offered employment assistance as they are considered people who need "special assistance". The Czech government places refugees in this category because of their "lack of language skills, insufficient familiarization with the social and cultural reality of the Czech Republic, problems with recognition of their qualifications gained abroad, lack of orientation on the Czech employment markets, etc…[and because]

they temporarily find themselves in [a] difficult situation" (Government of the Czech Republic 2005).

Employment assistance provided by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs consists of retraining programs and Individual Action Plans (IAPs). Retraining programs focus on computer skills in order to complement a person's existing technical knowledge. IAPs are personalized counseling services that have three objectives: 1) creating an informed job seeker through informational meetings, analysis of employee potential, Employment Center activities and motivational courses; 2) formulating and implanting employment targets via group counseling, job recommendations, and development courses and 3) evaluating activities to find concrete solutions to the unemployment issue by direct intermediation with employers (Government of the Czech Republic 2005).

At the end of June 2008, 44,521 people had participated in the retraining programs; however, only eleven of them were refugees (Government of the Czech Republic 2008). This same report states that the low participation of refugees "reflect[s] that this particular category of job seekers shows lesser interest in undergoing re-training…", and that, out of 93 refugees offered IAPs only ten accepted the offer. The report maintains that a:

> *…language barrier appears to be a difficult problem in offering IAPs…In some cases cooperation with this category of persons is extremely challenging precisely due to their insufficient knowledge of Czech and the lack of any motivation to deal with this problem. However, the knowledge of Czech plays a very important role in finding a job. Acquiring this knowledge depends very much on asylum holders' own motivation and activity and, at the same time, the success of other activities that are offered is dependent on the existence of this knowledge. It was the failure to understand what an IAP has to offer, and one can assume it was due to insufficient knowledge of Czech…*
> (Government of the Czech Republic 2008: 4)

As quoted earlier, the Czech government feels that a separate employment assistance program for refugees is not needed. However, the above quote shows that a specialized program for refugees is in fact needed. If refugees are not availing themselves of the employment assistance as currently offered because of language barriers, specialized help would be valuable to them.

Furthermore, the above report implies that refugees are unmotivated in seeking employment. The Czech government recognized refugees as needing special assistance partially due to their difficult situations as newcomers. Since the Czech government already acknowledges that refugees are in a difficult situation (which could present various barriers to overcome), it would seem that, rather than blame the refugee, the Czech government should change their current (impractical) approach to employment assistance. The Czech government should ask refugees what kind of help they need and/or how they can make the current employment assistance more user-friendly to make the policy successful. Alternately, employment assistance as it currently stands should not be an aspect of refugee integration policy since it is not exclusive to refugees.

The existence of refugee integration policy is a worthwhile endeavor pursued by the Czech government. As refugee integration policy is not required by the EU (or any international organization), the Czech government's inclusion of this policy shows that it is concerned with constructing a governance environment that is conducive to the integration of refugees. The next section analyzes refugees' experiences with the different aspects of integration policy to determine if what is written on paper is actually implemented and made accessible to refugees.

Refugees' experiences with the Czech integration policies

In order to determine the effectiveness of the integration policies, I asked my respondents questions about their experiences with the different aspects of those policies. Firstly, this included finding out how much knowledge they had of the assistance offered by the government. Secondly, where applicable, respondents were asked about their specific experiences with policy implementation and their encounters with persons responsible for putting the policies in effect. An analysis of my respondents' answers is discussed in this section. I also compare my respondents' experiences with those of refugees in previous studies. Although this will be limited as "there is little systematic research being carried out on…settlement policy and on outcomes in various communities and regions" (Castles et. al. 2002: 162). Evaluating policy in practice is a topic deemed essential to future research on refugee integration (Castles et. al. 2002).

Respondents had a range of knowledge about Czech integration policies. Some of them did not know anything about them and/or had never been offered these services:

> *I was not offered housing or employment assistance.*
> Respondent 10

> *I did not get any support whatsoever. Some people get support, but I did not because I was considered capable and could do everything for myself.*
> Respondent 20

This is not uncommon. Ager and Strang's (2004) study on refugee integration in the UK found a similar situation. One respondent said: "I think a lot of people are not actually aware of what they are entitled to…in terms of education, housing needs, social services or that kind of thing…job opportunities, training…things like that" (Ager and Strang 2004: 11). In ECRE's (1999) study, a refugee in Austria mirrored the exact sentiment.

It is hard to know why some of my respondents were unaware of the policies. The specifics of the policies are supposed to be communicated to people while their asylum applications are in review and/or after they receive their asylum decision. Oftentimes the material provided to asylum seekers and refugees is produced by an NGO involved in refugee resettlement; in fact the booklet distributed to new refugees – *Welcome to the Czech Republic* – is published by an NGO called Organization for Aid to Refugees. This booklet includes chapters on the asylum proceedings, transitioning to life in the Czech Republic and education, among others. Refugees receive a lot of information after the asylum decision is made so it is possible that the specifics of the integration policy information are not fully noticed.

In my study, those who were unaware of the services available to them were in the minority. Most of my respondents had some familiarity with the integration policies and had taken advantage of individual policy components - mainly taking the free Czech language courses. This implies that my respondents were actively seeking opportunities to acquire tools to become integrated and thus were involved in their integration process. They not only absorbed the information given to them (that the policies existed), but they also acted upon that information as they had to make the effort to find out class meeting days/times and enroll in/attend the classes.

I asked my respondents if they had any recommendations for changes to the integration policies. In general, my respondents were glad the policies existed; but some suggested that certain changes could be made:

My husband sent me a booklet in Russian made by Poradna por integraci [Counseling Center for Integration, an NGO in Prague]. *It was about integration programs and policies. It was about what kind of benefits and allowances I can get. I used to use it a lot during my first year. I think that this booklet was written in too official and bureaucratic of language, and I would include more information. I think mainly that the real life stories of immigrants and the contacts on each one of them would be helpful.*
Respondent 8

I would recommend that the asylum information be provided online in different languages. Maybe in languages of countries where big economic or war conflicts are because people will probably leave those countries. Or at least have the information in Czech and English.
Respondent 15

Both Respondent 8 and 15 recommend changes in the language of resettlement information. Respondent 8 thinks the information should be written in more accessible language. Respondent 15 thinks information should be provided in more languages and online. Respondent 15 also suggests that online asylum procedures be posted in "Czech and English". This is notable because it broaches the topic of the importance of language and specifically the importance of English language knowledge.

I performed more than half of my interviews in English. Several of my respondents said they were able to find jobs only because they spoke English, and it is not difficult to manage in Prague when only speaking English. This invokes the question of whether it is pertinent that an English-speaking refugee living in Prague learns the Czech language, especially in a world where English is considered the global language. Taking this into consideration, an English-speaking refugee may even have an advantage over a person who only speaks Czech when seeking employment in areas popular with tourists or in international businesses (which is the case with two of my respondents).

Respondent 15 also recommends that asylum information be posted online in languages of countries experiencing conflicts and/or economic problems. As previously

mentioned (see Chapter 2 and earlier in this chapter), countries in the EU are not

necessarily looking for ways to attract more asylum seekers (in fact, deterrence is the

preferred outcome) so this suggestion would probably not be considered. Particularly

since economic issues are not a valid reason for granting asylum per the Geneva

Convention (see Chapter 4).

Two respondents (a married couple) commented negatively about the Czech

integration policies. They were not satisfied with their treatment in the Czech Republic

and felt they deserved more from the Czech government. When asked about

recommendations for the Czech government's integration policies they said:

> *The government should offer more help to refugees. We only have a one-room apartment for our family; our son needs more room. We should not have to pay; the government should give us money. We are asylees. We are at this level* [puts his hand up close to his chin]*, and Czechs are at this level* [puts his other hand about twelve inches lower while his wife shakes her head in agreement]*. There should also be more human rights.*
> Respondent 4 and 5

The reason they gave for not having to pay for anything and that they were at a "higher

level" than Czechs was because they were invited to stay in the Czech Republic. Because

they applied for asylum and were granted refuge by the Czech government, to them it

meant that they were invited guests of the country and should have all of their expenses

covered by the Czech government. They gave no other explanation as to why they felt

this way. To my knowledge, the perspective of refugees being superior to the host society

has not been previously documented. In my research (and others) many asylum seekers

felt they were on a "lower level" than the host society since receiving refugee status (see

Chapter 5). More research is needed specific to refugees and social stratification to

determine if my respondents' are an isolated case or if the feeling of superiority to the host society is pervasive elsewhere.

While not a policy recommendation, one respondent summed up his feelings about the Czech governments refugee integration policies:

> *The housing and integration program is said but not in reality, written with many promises.*
> Respondent 1

Respondent 1 recognized the effort the Czech government made by enacting integration policies, but also recognized that what is pledged on paper does not necessarily translate into what happens in reality. In order to make more effective policies, their shortcomings need to be addressed.

In most cases my respondents were aware of the integration policies enacted by the Czech government. The respondents generally appreciated the fact these services did exist and were grateful that the Czech government was making an effort to help them resettle. However, there were specific issues brought up regarding different aspects of the policies. The following sections provide a detailed analysis of my respondents' experiences with each facet of the refugee integration policy as well as their recommendations for making them more effective.

Housing assistance

While housing assistance is available on paper, in practice it did not materialize for my respondents. Fifty-three[29] percent of my respondents were never offered housing assistance:

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[29] This was out of 17 respondents. Three respondents received refugee status prior to the enactment of refugee integration policies.

> *I was never offered housing after getting asylum. I have been in the Czech Republic for seven years and have never been offered housing. I needed it at the beginning, but I don't need it now.*
> Respondent 11

> *I didn't get offered housing. Others were offered it but not me.*
> Respondent 14

As with knowledge of the integration policies, I cannot determine why Respondents 11 and 14 were not offered housing. I can surmise it was because both respondents wanted to live in Prague and available housing there is limited (see discussion on housing availability earlier in this chapter).

Only 29 percent of my respondents were offered housing through the Ministry of the Interior. However, only one accepted the housing, which was located in a town about one hour from Brno (the second largest city in the Czech Republic). This respondent eventually moved to Prague. The main reason for not accepting the offered housing was due to its unfavorable location (a sentiment mirrored by the Head of the Unit for Integration of Refugees and Foreigners). A majority of available housing is located in smaller villages and rural areas that are perceived as having various limitations. One deficiency of these areas was the lack of available employment:

> *We were not given housing in Prague. We were offered housing in a small village of 100 people where there is no work.*
> Respondents 4

As employment is seen as an indicator of integration according to previous studies (discussed in Chapter 6) and is included in the Czech government's integration policy, resettling refugees in places without access to employment would present a barrier to integration. Respondent 4 emphasized how important it was to live in a city because there are more opportunities for employment.

Another respondent felt he should be offered housing in the city where he already

had employment:

> *If you work in Prague, you should get housing in Prague. The system is hard to*
> *understand. What do they base it on – religion, color, culture, race?*
> Respondent 14

Respondent 14 took it personally that he did not receive housing. He said he knew people

who did get offers of housing in Prague and wondered whether personal characteristics

played a part in deciding who received housing assistance. As stated earlier, the lack of

available housing is the reason that refugees who want to live in Prague do not always get

a housing offer there.

Access to education was another deficiency in the areas where housing was

offered. Again as the majority of available residences are located in rural areas and small

villages attending a university is not viable unless someone is willing to travel:

> *When I got refugee status I wanted to continue with my studies in Prague and*
> *wanted some place for living with that. But finally after a long scramble, I got a*
> *1+1 flat in one town approximately 40 km* [approximately 25 miles] *out of*
> *Prague. They told me to be glad for that. I asked personally every city office in*
> *Prague for the flat, but none of them approved it.*
> Respondent 12

Respondent 12 was able to continue his studies at a university in Prague even though he

never lived in the city. He finished his initial degree (he was studying at a university in

the Czech Republic when he applied for asylum) and went on to receive an advanced

degree as well. In his response, he broached the question of the size of the available

housing.

Respondent 4[30] complained about the size of his apartment as well – his family of three lives in a three-room apartment (including kitchen, bathroom and living room area where the family also sleeps). We conducted our interview in his apartment, and he showed me where the family slept. He said his child was ten and it was only right that he should have a room of his own. The size of available housing for refugees is one area that has been mentioned in previous studies; participants in a UK study had issues with the housing provided being too small for their family (Ager and Strang 2008). Another study in Britain found that overcrowding and the lack of housing available for families was a major issue of concern for refugees also (Fillamore and Goodson 2006).

Another respondent found the location of available housing insufficient because of the lack of diversity in the areas where available housing is found:

I was offered an apartment in the country among foreigners so I didn't take it.
Respondent 13

Respondent 13 considered himself a foreigner but did not want to live in a place that was dominated by people who were not originally from the Czech Republic. Because government housing is often available in smaller villages, these can become highly populated with people originally from countries outside of the Czech Republic. In order to integrate, Respondent 13 felt he needed to live with Czechs instead of a community of foreigners where he said he would feel isolated from Czech sociey.

Chapter 6 discusses social networks as a way of integrating, and refugees who had more connections with members of the host society were more likely to consider

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[30] Respondent 4 did not receive his housing through the Czech government as part of their integration policy. He was offered housing in a small village (see quote on page 20) by the Ministry of the Interior and did not accept it. He found his current housing through an NGO that works with resettling refugees, and he gets financial assistance through the Czech government as part of a social assistance program. The amount he receives is not enough to cover his current rent, and would, therefore, not be enough to pay for a larger apartment. He felt that the Czech government should either provide him with a larger apartment or give him more money so he could afford one.

themselves integrated. In ECRE's (1999) study of refugee integration, living with other foreigners was seen as problematic as well. One of their respondents in Denmark said her neighborhood housed between four and five hundred people who were all foreigners; because of this, her viewpoint is that "the policy of the government is one of segregation" (ECRE 1999: 56). Although the location is different – small village versus urban area – the feeling of the government segregating foreigners is the same. The Czech government considered housing refugees in integration apartments, which was discontinued after a short time because of the realization that segregating refugees was problematic since it impeded integration. While intentionally segregating refugees ceases to happen, unintentional segregation continues since spaces of available housing are limited.

Some of my respondents found the location of available housing insufficient because of their personal inclination to live in a city. They felt that living in Prague was desirable because of their own personality and the social and political opportunities afforded in Prague that would not exist in the locations where housing was available:

> *We left the camp on our own very soon and we immediately decided to live in Prague. I would not live anywhere else. I am a city person and could not live in the country.*
> Respondent 15

Respondent 15 describes herself as an entrepreneur, and she and her husband own their own business in Prague. She is socially involved with a group from her country of origin (planning parties and other social and cultural events). She and her husband were part of political opposition in their country of origin, which is the reason they were forced to migrate, and continue to support the cause while in the Czech Republic. This type of social and political life would not be possible if she did not live in Prague.

The Ministry of the Interior realizes that their current housing policy is not necessarily effective in reality. They are rethinking the policy and may change it in the future to include policy that offers money directly to a refugee who can spend it toward housing anywhere in the country (P. Novak, personal communication, December 2008). Since one of the biggest complaints of the current housing policy was the lack of choice in where to live, this direct monetary offer could be a starting point in creating a housing policy that actually works. Refugees would be able to choose where they want to live rather than have the choice made for them. Monetary assistance would be helpful for refugees who wanted to live in areas where housing assistance is not typically provided (e.g. Prague); this assistance could provide them enough extra money to find a suitable residence. This could support the integration process since refugees may feel more comfortable in a community that they chose to live in.

However, this change to existing policy would mark a shift in responsibility from the state. Under the proposed policy the state would no longer work with municipalities and much of the resettlement burden would be put on refugees. Drbohlav and Dzúrová (2007: 72) say that one of the issues concerning migration policy in the Czech Republic is to decentralize integration efforts – "including involving municipalities"; the proposed change in housing integration policy would do the opposite since it removes the municipality from the integration process. In effect changing the policy displaces the problem from the state to the individual because the state would only have to dispense a stipend for housing; it would not have to ensure that the money was spent on housing nor would it have to find housing for refugees. Since the state would not have any regulation

on how the money was spent, the state has less of a responsibility they to ensure refugees are assisted with housing as specified in refugee integration policy.

This potential act of shifting the responsibility follows the trend concerning the state's diminishing involvement with refugees and asylum seekers on different levels. For example, on the supranational level (discussed in Chapter 2) through the rules of the Dublin Convention the EU has been successful in shifting the responsibility for determining asylum in many cases to the non-EU countries (through the provision permitting an EU member country to return an asylum seeker to a country that he/she passed through prior to claiming asylum if the EU member country deems it a safe country). On a national level, in several of the EU member states, refugees are dispersed throughout the country to various locations in what is referred to as "spreading the burden". In this case, the state provides funding to these locations, but local governments are then responsible for refugees' welfare (including housing). This move by the Czech government to shift responsibility for housing onto the refugee now puts the task on the individual and removes both the national and local government from providing concrete housing assistance to refugees.

While I think providing a stipend for housing is well intentioned, I do not think it fulfills the promise of housing assistance purported by the integration policy. I realize that housing availability is problematic to both refugees in its location and the state in its attempt to find housing, and the change to a strictly monetary policy could be beneficial to both. But since there would be no regulation of where the money goes, I do not think it can be considered housing assistance (even if that is the intended purpose) as far as the policy is concerned. If the proposed changes are approved, I think that housing assistance

would have to be removed from the official refugee integration policy, and an amendment that spells out the specifics of the monetary allotment should be added.

Czech language training

The free Czech language courses are implemented by SOZE who is responsible for all aspects of the free Czech language courses, including scheduling and instruction. Most of my respondents received their Czech language training prior to 2008 when the hours for free group training were increased from 150 to 400 hours (none of my respondents opted for individual training sessions). Sixty percent of my respondents participated in free Czech language courses. None were completely satisfied with their language training, and they talked about several barriers to the proffered training.

The inadequate amount of free class time offered was one of the main criticisms:

I had two months of Czech language school offered by the Ministry, but I stopped because I would have had to pay for more.
Respondent 4

I was given time and a little money to learn the language, but it was not enough.
Respondent 14

Because the amount of free training was limited, respondents stopped their training since continuing meant they would have to pay out of their own pockets. Online sources show that Czech language instruction typically costs around 400Kc ($23) for an individual 45-minute lesson (the price decreases if more people are in the class). Respondent 4 was unemployed and Respondent 14 was working two service jobs and barely able to pay his own bills; therefore, paying to learn Czech was not a high priority for them.

In a previous study in the Czech Republic refugees saw "the most burning problem in the insufficient number of lessons within a course and in the fact that the

language courses focus only on mastering basic Czech" (Krchová and Víznerová 2008: 3). The lack of free training hours is a frequent complaint; an ECRE study found this to be the case in Austria, Denmark and France (ECRE 1999). My respondents also felt that the amount of free language training was not enough to learn the language fluently:

The language classes were not helpful; only a half a year is offered for free.
Respondent 2

Linguists measure fluency in different ways, and it is hard to determine the best way to gauge proficiency (Wood 2009). Immersion programs, where a learner is completely surrounded by the new language at all times, are typically considered the best way to gain language fluency (Freed et. al. 2004). In Freed et. al.'s (2004) study, immersion meant that a student practiced the language for 17.5 hours per week on average; the program lasted for seven weeks (for a total of 122.5 hours). Freed et. al. (2004) compared this type of learning atmosphere to study abroad programs and standard classroom learning and found that students involved in immersion became more proficient in learning the new language. Using these numbers, the amount of free Czech language training offered would not be sufficient to learn the language fluently. The increase in hours of free training is a positive step, which shows that the Czech government is interested in helping refugees learn the language; although whether or not the increase is sufficient to fluently learn Czech remains to be seen. Freed et. al.'s (2004) study shows that the number of hours should be adequate. Unfortunately, this hourly increase was not offered retroactively.

Compounding the lack of free hours is the fact that refugees can only use them during the first ten months after receiving refugee status. If training is not used by then, refugees have to pay for it by their own means. This time constraint hinders a refugee's

opportunity to benefit from free language training because oftentimes they spend their

first months finding housing and employment, and employment tends to take precedence

over language training:

> *I took only one month of language training and found a job legally, but now I don't have enough time to take more classes. I had to choose to work or go to class and I chose work.*
> Respondent 14

> *I started taking Czech lessons, but it was too much with work.*
> Respondent 9

The Czech government responded to the time issue by increasing the number of

available free hours of training. However, a corresponding increase in the monthly time

limit for using the training did not occur. Without extending the time limit, the increase in

hours may be irrelevant since some respondents did not use the free hours in the first

place because they did not have enough time. If the monthly restriction were extended (or

removed altogether), refugees may be able to avail themselves of the service because they

would not feel pressured to use it before they are ready (or not use it at all); they would

have time to find suitable housing and employment before deciding the best time/place to

attend language classes.

In addition to the lack of hourly language training offered, respondents found

troublesome issues within the classes themselves. Respondents said they attended classes

with people having a range of Czech language skills resulting in classes with some

attending their first and last day of training. Several respondents had suggestions on how

to ameliorate this situation:

> *The language classes should be built to the level of the students otherwise it's hard.*
> Respondent 1

> *You learn in a group with people at different levels. I would recommend that the classes find out who can come and when and have smaller groups.*
> Respondent 13

Respondent 13 said people who had already taken several weeks of language training were in his classes, and this made it difficult for both the students and the instructor. He said the instructor usually taught to the more advanced students leaving the less-learned students behind. The recommendation of having classes based on skill levels is an obvious remedy to this situation. Making matters worse is that language instructors change; the same instructor does not always teach the same class at the same time each week. This means the instructor does not always know what the class has already learned.

Difficulties with language course material are documented in previous studies on refugee integration. As stated earlier, Krchová and Víznerová (2008) found one of the problems to be that language courses focus on learning basic Czech[31]. One of their respondents said they did not learn the Czech language in ways that would help them find a job. A refugee in Austria found the same fault with her language courses of learning basic, elementary German that would not be of any use in integrating into Austrian society (ECRE 1999).

The diversity of students (and native tongues spoken) in the language classes became another problem for my respondents. This meant that there was no common language that could be used to teach the students the Czech language:

> *The classes were not helpful because we were put in classes with Arabic and French speakers, and we learned to write in Latin.*
> Respondent 2

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[31] Although my respondents did not mention this, I can relate as I took a short Czech language course in the spring of 2006. We learned simple phrases (e.g. My name is…, I am from…, how are you?) and basic (albeit useless) vocabulary (e.g. desk, window, chair, table).

I learned Czech from a textbook for Vietnamese. Czech and [respondent's native language] *are very similar but it is not the same but you can guess what the word means.*
Respondent 10

The diversity of students meant it was hard to communicate with classmates as well. A study in Denmark also found that refugees had a harder time learning in a diverse atmosphere: "I had had terrible experiences in learning Danish…we were between 15 and 65 years of age, and all of us had different educational backgrounds and interests. And we didn't have any similarities" (ECRE 1999: 29).

One solution to the lack of commonalities in the classroom is to have courses taught by instructors that also speak another language commonly spoken in the Czech Republic: English or Russian. Classes offered in English or Russian would be practical due to the prevalence of English and Russian speakers (both Czechs and immigrants) in the Czech Republic. More advanced Czech classes could be taught and attended by those who already have knowledge of the Czech language.

More individualized instruction is also another way to resolve these issues; though it would probably be a more costly endeavor. Refugees are given the choice of individual versus group training with individual training having fewer free hours. All of my respondents opted for the group training. I did not ask them if they were given a choice; it was assumed that they knew of both options. With individualized training, the student and instructor would always be on the same page. Courses could even be tailored to the specific person and their interests (after learning basic Czech). Specialized instruction is beneficial to refugees when seeking employment or education. This type of instruction is available in the Netherlands. Refugees are taught more than basic Dutch: an Afghan refugee took the basic Dutch course and "also took classes on surveying created

especially for him. 'I needed to learn technical words and specific skills if I was to get a job in my field'" (Daruvalla 2002).

The deficient amount of course hours, refugees' lack of time (when choosing between learning Czech and working) and issues of class composition and skill levels are all barriers to the free Czech language training. These dimensions illustrate the dysfunctional relationship the state has with SOZE. Each of the reasons mentioned by my respondents as a barrier has a simple solution: finding out the amount of time necessary for someone to learn a new language and basing the policy on that amount of time; eliminating the monthly constraint on using the free language training; creating classes that are based on different levels of Czech language knowledge and offering beginner-level classes taught in English or Russian (obviously this would exclude some people, but many would benefit). Again this shows a shift of responsibility and a withdrawal from service-providing from the state as the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport outsources language class management to SOZE. While some problems with the language classes and implementation could be issues of money and/or time, other problems could be discovered and rectified by simply talking to refugees in the classes to find out about any difficulties with the classes and possible suggestions on eliminating the problems.

Employment assistance

Employment assistance for refugees is the same offered to anyone in the Czech Republic who meets the requirements set by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. None of my respondents received employment assistance. This is partly because they were unaware of

the policy and partly because some already had jobs when they applied for asylum. One respondent said he might have used the proffered employment assistance if not for the language barrier:

> *I didn't use it because I don't understand Czech. And I went somewhere to get a job but the jobs were offered to Czechs first.*
> Respondent 18

All of my respondents who were employed found their jobs on their own without any assistance from the Czech government. Therefore, they did not have much to say about the employment assistance aspect of integration policy.

One issue that my respondents did mention regarding employment was their inability to find jobs that were commensurate with their education level and/or professional experience. This phenomenon of downward mobility experienced by my respondents follows the trend of refugee employment found in more developed countries worldwide (Gans 2009, Nawyn 2010). Thirty-five percent of my respondents experienced downward mobility, while only ten percent clearly did not. The remaining participants (30 percent) were school-aged and too young to work or were not employed in their country of origin before migrating. In the other cases (25 percent) it was unclear whether or not downward mobility was experienced.

The respondents who faced downward mobility can be categorized based on employment type (or lack of) in the Czech Republic. They typically fall into categories of retail employee, language instructor or unemployed. Working in retail was the main type of employment for the downwardly mobile. In each case the respondent held a highly skilled job in their country of origin. One respondent blamed her lack of Czech language knowledge for not being able to practice the profession she had before migrating:

> *I used to be an accountant in* [country of origin]*, but because of the language barrier I cannot do it here in the Czech Republic.*
> Respondent 17

A translator interviewed Respondent 17 in Czech. Her Czech language skills were sufficient for this purpose, but she did not have the professional or technical language skills required to work in accounting in the Czech Republic. Respondent 18 (quoted earlier) owned his own metalworking business in his country of origin; he is now a convenience store clerk in Prague.

Another way my respondents entered the Czech job market was by teaching their native language to Czech students. Respondent 1 received a Master's degree in sociology in his country of origin. He taught French literature and philosophy at a university in his there and ran the university's Human Resources department. In Prague he teaches French to school-age children. Respondent 10 received a Bachelor's degree and was a bank manager in his country of origin. In Prague, he works for an institute where he teaches Russian to adults.

Arguably these instances of downward mobility can be ascribed not only to language barriers faced by refugees but also because degrees (high school, university) or professional experience are not always transferable between country of origin and resettlement country (ECRE 1999; Nawyn 2010). Nawyn (2010) found that the lack of recognition of educational credentials from institutions in lesser-developed countries by employers in more developed countries promotes downward mobility. Nawyn (2010: 157) interviewed employees of NGOs and recounted a story of a Bangladeshi man "who is a doctor and also got a masters degree…He worked with the Ministry of Health in Africa, worked with Doctors Without Borders and he came here [the US] and he had to

work in a hotel…nobody is going to hire him as a doctor…we find that many degrees are

not respected here if they are not from Europe or from the United States". Nawyn (2010)

gives other examples of refugees' downward mobility. An Ethiopian refugee who was a

pharmacist in Ethiopia was informed by an NGO about an entry-level position at a

hospital; he asked about more skilled positions and was told he could consider getting

certified for highly-skilled work in the future. Even though he had advanced training in

Ethiopia, he was only offered low-skilled employment in the United States.

Compounding the language barriers and non-recognition of education and/or job

experience in the country of origin is the issue of discrimination. Respondents 4 and 5

both had some college education and were employed in their country of origin before

migrating. Respondent 4 has actively been seeking employment since he received refugee

status, but says he cannot find a job because employers discriminate against him:

> *When I go to find a job they won't give it to me. Because I don't speak Czech, they*
> *see my brown skin and assume that I am Roma.*
> Respondent 4

Respondent 4 attributed his experience of discrimination based on looking like he is a

Roma. Roma (also know as "gypsies") are a marginalized ethnic group in the Czech

Republic (discussed in Chapter 5). Gans (2009) finds that refugees in the United States

who had professional degrees and experience were barred from working in their fields

due to racial and/or ethnic discrimination. My data may corroborate this point – out of the

35 percent who experienced downward mobility, 71 percent were from countries outside

of Europe, which introduces the potential element of discrimination (Respondent 4 was

the only one that verbalized blatant discrimination; I did not delve into this topic with my

respondents so this example could be an isolated case). With the Czech Republic having

a relatively homogenous population (see Chapter 4), someone who is not a native of the Czech Republic or another Eastern European country is fairly conspicuous. Racial discrimination by employers was also reported in ECRE's study: an African refugee in Ireland felt that his education was not recognized because he was black and a Rwandan in Austria experienced discrimination from her boss because she was black; she says that her boss "used to say that I am stupid because I was black…" (ECRE 1999: 39).

Although employment assistance exists in Czech refugee integration policy, none of my respondents used it. As quoted earlier in this chapter, very few refugees in the Czech Republic have used employment assistance so my findings are not surprising. One reason for not using the assistance pertained to a lack of Czech language skills. To alleviate this issue, language training and employment assistance could be combined. It would also benefit refugees if they were given language training that could prepare them for a job rather than focusing on basic Czech.

NGOs often find themselves responsible for implementing aspects of the Czech integration policy. Besides the language courses, they may help refugees find housing and often create the literature describing available services that is distributed to new refugees. The critical role NGOs play in the integration process cannot, therefore, be ignored. The following section will focus on NGOs that work with providing services to refugees and analyze my respondents' experiences with such organizations.

Experiences with NGOs providing integration assistance

NGOs are often responsible for implementing state integration policies even though they may not be involved in the policy-making process. Essentially NGOs are seen as

"subcontractors" of the state as the state tries to distance itself from the task of refugee integration (Lester 2005: 127). In the Czech Republic NGOs play a more informal role than the state in the lives of refugees, which is thought to make NGOs better situated than the state to put integration policies into practice (Szczepanikova 2010).

Because the Czech government often relies on NGOs to implement their integration policies, many of my respondents (80 percent) sought the help of NGOs for various means of assistance in the resettlement process. ECRE (1999: 69) concurs: "For nearly all refugees NGOs have played an important part in their settlement in the new country". Services provided by NGOs include, but are not limited to: help in finding housing and employment; educational and professional services (such as language courses and resume-writing assistance); legal and psychological counseling and help in applying for citizenship.

In addition, NGOs are often involved in organizing cultural events that focus on refugees. At these events (open to the public) refugees will cook traditional foods and make crafts to sell as well as be available to talk to attendees about their country of origin and why they came to the Czech Republic. While the goal of these events is to introduce the general public to refugees and to "reduce distrust, intolerance and xenophobia in…[Czech] society…" (Intercultural Map n.d.), the practice seems to be condescending toward refugees. It is as if the refugees are put on display for members of Czech society to see and that all refugees have to offer are their handicrafts and traditional foods. I was invited to attend one of these events by an NGO representative. As it was described to me, the event would bring refugees from throughout the Czech Republic to a public area in a town outside Prague for the day where the local community could buy arts and crafts

made by refugees and try their traditional foods. Unfortunately I was unable to attend this

event due to a scheduling conflict. However, a refugee that I subsequently interviewed

frequently participated in these NGO-sponsored events where he sold baskets he made

out of pieces of rolled-up newspaper. This was not a tradition from his country of origin;

he learned to make these baskets while living in a center for asylum seekers in the Czech

Republic. People who attend these events to interact with refugees are led to believe that

the goods they buy are aspects of a refugee's traditional culture, which, as in the case of

Respondent 18, is not always true. What this does show, however, is another example of

refugee agency; this respondent took the time and made the effort to learn a new skill that

he could profit from. While this craft was not something from his traditional culture, he

used that identity (an identity of others, in fact) to sell his wares.

My respondents specifically mentioned receiving assistance from eight national

NGOs and two international NGOs (IOM and UNHCR). Typically the NGOs are small

with few employees and/or volunteers; each office I visited had less than ten employees.

Because receiving forced migrants is a relatively new occurrence in the Czech Republic,

many NGOs have been established within recent years only. SOZE (the NGO responsible

for the free Czech language courses) is the oldest NGO assisting refugees in the Czech

Republic (established in 1990) (Interculture Map n.d.). Besides the educational services

provided by the Czech language courses, SOZE also provides legal, social and

psychological support to refugees. Of the ten NGOs used by my respondents, six were

started in the 1990s; the remaining in the 2000s. Only one of my respondents specifically

mentioned using the services of SOZE; however, many participated in the free Czech

language courses offered by SOZE. Because SOZE is responsible for implementing the

Czech language training aspect of integration policy, it was the NGO most used by my respondents.

The two NGOs mentioned by most respondents (five each) were the Center for Integration of Foreigners (CIC) (established in 2003) and the Organization for Aid to Refugees (OPU) (established in 1991). CIC mainly offers help in obtaining citizenship while OPU provides legal, social and psychological assistance to refugees. Since NGOs are typically nonprofit organizations, they receive their funding from private donations and various outside institutions (e.g. the Czech government, the European Commission). NGO representatives who I spoke with said they often have to reapply for funding annually and are constantly looking for different sources of financial support.

My respondents' experiences with NGOs ranged from positive to negative. Some respondents were quite satisfied with the assistance they received from the NGOs:

> *I used their services quite often. Especially with lump sum financial support, support with accommodation seeking, help with applying for citizenship and so on. I am very grateful to them for everything.*
> Respondent 12

> *I think without them* [NGOs] *no foreigner can survive.*
> Respondent 17

> *We used their services 100 percent. They told us where the free Czech courses are, they gave me a* [native language] *translation of asylum law, they came with us to the doctor, and helped us with finding a job. They supported us morally and psychologically. They are doing their best, and they really help the people.*
> Respondent 19

Others had negative experiences. One respondent elaborated:

> *Most…*[NGOs] *kill time so they can write that they worked, but they don't really try. Maybe they do with other people. I know when someone is being helpful and when one doesn't care. One social worker shouted at me. I asked for housing and she said 'no'. I asked why they gave me asylum then. She said she wasn't the one who gave me asylum and she didn't know why they did because she wouldn't have.*
> Respondent 14

Szczepanikova's (2010) study of Armenian, Belarusian and Chechnyan refugees in the Czech Republic also documented a wide range of experiences between refugees and NGOs from expressed gratefulness to disdain. One respondent claims: "Nowhere else have I ever felt treated so much like a second-class citizen as in these NGOs… People at NGOs treat you either like a kid or as a fool who doesn't understand a thing" Szczepanikova (2010: 465). Unfortunately, because of confidentiality, I do not know if Szczepanikova's (2010) respondents experienced this treatment in the same NGOs as my respondents. Being able to compare NGO experiences in Szczepanikova's study with mine would reveal whether the negative experiences were isolated incidents at a particular NGO or across the board from various refugee-assisting NGOs. ECRE's (1999) report also found similar negative feelings of refugees toward NGOs in Denmark. A respondent asserts that NGO employees "…always put us all together in the same sack and on the sack is written 'Less worthy people' and they are always in the position to say 'ours is best, we know things better, we think of the best way, we will teach you how to use the toilet, what a library and a vacuum cleaner are etc. You are refugees…it means you are savages" (ECRE 1999: 33).

This corroboration of refugees' negative experiences with NGOs is unsettling owing to the fact that NGOs exist as a means of help and support for refugees who may not be able to find support elsewhere. I can identify with the treatment received in NGOs

by my own negative experience with OPU. I arrived for a scheduled interview with a refugee at OPU's office. While waiting for the refugee, I said "hello" to one of the NGO representatives I had previously met. She looked at me, made a motion with her hand as if she were waving me away, and said "I don't have time for you". I did not ask her anything or expect her to meet with me or take any time for me, but only saying "hello" made her react in this negative fashion. There are too few negative experiences documented to generalize that pervasive negative attitudes exist at NGOs; however, the few experiences documented are too many.

While it is easy to blame NGOs for not providing the services promised, the state should bear some (if not most) of the blame for outsourcing policy implementation to NGOs without providing them with proper funding to carry out policy implementation and proper training of NGO staff to handle their responsibilities. Most of the NGO representatives I met with said they were understaffed, underfunded and had to rely mainly on volunteer workers. The negative treatment some refugees experienced could be attributed to this. NGO representatives said they had to worry about funding regularly because the funding they receive is per annum, and they have to renew their funding requests (and substantiate their reasons for needing the funding). Hence much of their time and energy is spent on finding funding for their organizations; a common vein found in literature on NGOs in the Czech Republic (Fagan 2005, Szczepanikova 2010).

I witnessed this when I offered to help at OPU while I was living in Prague. I was asked if I knew of any grants available from international organizations and if I would write EU grant proposals because they were getting low on funds and needed to find new sources in order to keep their organization operating. I also witnessed this when I

attempted to contact a representative from an NGO I had met in 2007. I was unable to

contact this person by telephone or email so I went to the office location. I found that

their office no longer existed, and when I asked a representative from a different NGO if

they knew about it, I was told they closed because of funding deficiencies.

In fact, when asked how NGOs could be of better assistance to refugees, some of

my respondents specified the need for more funding:

> *They need more resources but don't have the means…they are doing their best; I recommend that the government do more for NGOs.*
> Respondent 1

> *I think that it is a problem of money. I would like to see more people employed in the NGOs for good salaries so that the work doesn't have to be done by volunteers. Also if the NGOs do not have to ask about grants and do so much paperwork, they can do more work for refugees. The state should support these NGOs at least for fifty percent.*
> Respondent 15

> *I would give them more money from the government. They are real lawyers with university degrees; they are doing their best.*
> Respondent 19

The recommendation for permanent NGO funding is quite valid, although it

brings up the question of who would supply the funding. I think these agencies that offer

services to people often in dire need of help should have permanent funding in order to

provide the best assistance possible to refugees. Whether or not all of the funding is

derived from the Czech government is the question. If that is the case, a conflict of

interest could arise as NGOs should work separately from the government. If NGOs are

completely funded by the Czech government, it could influence the work they perform by

potentially causing NGOs to feel obligated to cater their services to the state's agenda,

which is becoming a trend in NGO/state relationships (Barnett 2005, Chimni 2009).

Although if NGOs are expected to perform the state's work, the state should be

responsible for ensuring that the policies are implemented efficiently and satisfactorily by supporting NGOs financially and administratively.

However, the current method of determining government funding for Czech NGOs is problematic. In order to receive state financial support, NGOs have to provide information that legitimates their need for government funding. This is often done in the form of "bureaucratized accounts" of their interactions with refugees that place a "strong emphasis on quantifiable results", which include reports on the number of refugees who are being assisted by NGOs (Szczepanikova 2010: 468). Stressing quantity over quality at NGOs can put refugees at a disadvantage when trying to obtain NGO assistance.

Respondent 14 spoke of feeling like a number when visiting NGOs. He said he always had to sign-in when visiting an NGO, whether he was eventually helped or not. He said he knew he had to register his presence at the NGO so they could prove how many refugees were using their services. Even when an NGO employee treated him disrespectfully (see above quote), he was still undoubtedly included as a refugee assisted by the NGO when the NGO submitted its funding reports.

Other respondents also mentioned negative experiences with personnel at NGOs. This elicited recommendations for NGOs and their staffing:

> *It is a humiliating situation when you leave your country and try to find help somewhere else and live somewhere where you have no friends or support. In Italy I didn't get support. You need people who are 'human' working at these agencies. Very few refugees would get to where I am without help because it is hard.*
> Respondent 6

> *At my first meeting with the Czech-Helsinki Committee the person I met with said that I can have no help from them, and that I have to leave and never come back. This was ten years ago. Now a new person there helps me a lot. It depends on the people; every organization needs a concrete person. It is always about the people – even when you have a bad organization, it can work well if it has good people.*
> Respondent 10

Respondents 6 and 10 stress the importance of having an NGO staff that is empathetic toward refugees. People are coming to NGOs in need of assistance; they are already in a vulnerable or "humiliating" (per Respondent 6) situation. Being treated with disrespect in a place that should be helpful can discourage a refugee from seeking any assistance from them; this leads to wondering where else would a refugee go for help. My data shows that respondents who were happy with the assistance received from NGOs and those that had negative experiences sought help from the same NGOs. This emphasizes the importance of having a compassionate staff working; one unsympathetic employee and one negative experience can ruin the image of an NGO forever in the mind of a refugee.

A suggestion made by one of my respondents was to have more refugees working at NGOs:

> *I think they should give more life stories by migrants, their personal experiences. I think that it would be good if immigrants ran their own organization because they have the migrant's experiences.*
> Respondent 8

A previous study supported this idea to have more refugees employed at NGOs since they would be more understanding of a refugee's situation (ECRE 1999). This study interviewed refugees who worked at NGOs and found them to be less critical of NGOs because they had gained different perspectives as a result of working at such an organization (ECRE 1999). I also found this to be the case with my research. Respondent 7 worked for an NGO and said she did not want to offer any recommendations for or

criticisms of NGOs since she worked at one. However, she was hesitant to answer the question, and only after thinking for a little while, said she did not want to offer any criticisms or recommendations. I supposed she might have some criticisms because of her reluctance in answering. If she genuinely felt that everything was satisfactory, I do not believe she would have hesitated to say so. Her pause to speak negatively about NGOs reflects a conclusion made by Szczepanikova (2010: 473) that a sociable relationship between refugees and NGO employees works as a "silencing mechanism" because refugees do not want to seem ungrateful to the NGOs, which obstructs refugees' potential to influence the assistance they do (or do not) receive from NGOs.

Conclusion

The EU has no universal policy for refugee integration (although this could potentially change), which leaves the specifics of refugee integration policy, where applicable, to the respective governments. The Czech Republic established refugee integration policies in 1999 and revisits them annually to assess whether changes are required. Aspects of Czech integration policies include housing assistance, Czech language training and employment assistance with a different ministry responsible for each aspect.

Despite the good intentions of the Czech ministries involved in refugee resettlement, oftentimes policy administration does not always have the anticipated outcome. Due to the lack of available housing in the Czech Republic and location of the available housing in smaller towns and villages, providing refugees with suitable housing can be problematic. Issues also arose regarding the free Czech language training. These included not enough free hours to fluently learn the Czech language, extremely diverse

class compositions and a lack of individual training. Employment assistance was either not offered or not sought out by any of my respondents.

Dissatisfaction with the implementation of the Czech refugee integration policies seems to be the case more than not in this particular study. Respondents offered suggestions on ways to improve integration policy implementation (for the state as well as NGOs that are often responsible for putting the policies into practice). The Czech government has typically responded favorably when they realize that their policies are not effective and have amended them as needed. However, more dialogue is needed between refugees and policy-makers. Often there is a disconnect between the people creating the policies and those that are living with the decisions based on the policies. As such, more refugees should be involved in the policy-making process. If policy-makers in the Czech Republic listen to and incorporate refugees' perspectives into future integration policies, refugees can become agents in creating a governance environment they feel is more beneficial to those who have refugee status.

Chapter 8:
Conclusion

As long as events that force people to flee their home countries continue to exist, destination countries must determine the best ways to receive them. Forced migrants must find a way to cope with their new environments and the host society must find the best way to interact with the newcomers. In my research, I wanted to uncover how refugees were coping with their new realities in the context of the Czech Republic. The Czech Republic was chosen as a research site due to its position as a country experiencing recent economic, political and social transformation; including the change from a sending to receiving country of forced migrants in recent decades.

The main goals of my research were to analyze the integration process of refugees who have resettled in the Czech Republic and to uncover aspects that promoted and/or hindered integration into Czech society. My interview questions were designed to illuminate the integration process by focusing on three general topics: refugee identity, refugee integration process and state refugee integration policies.

A main concern regarding refugee identity was examining the role of the "refugee" label in shaping a person's identity. All of my participants were once citizens of their home country so becoming a refugee in the Czech Republic affected them both in how they perceived themselves and how they came to be perceived by the population and institutions in the host country. Scholars have pointed out that the "refugee" label often carries a negative connotation. Indeed some of my respondents acknowledged that their new refugee label made them feel "lower" than other members of Czech society (an emotion mirrored in other studies). The media and politicians are often blamed for

portraying asylum seekers and refugees in an unfavorable light and propagating negative sentiments toward forced migrants. By doing so they cultivate such negative images and hence, shape social opinions and perceptions.

Measuring integration is difficult, as no distinct definition of integration exists. Acknowledging this, scholars have developed different definitions of integration and conceptual frameworks for measuring integration. A majority of my respondents felt integrated into Czech society. Their integration was noticeable to them for a variety of reasons, including: knowing the Czech language and culture, having Czech friends, feeling like the Czech Republic was home and obtaining Czech citizenship. According to my respondents, learning the Czech language was the most apparent aspect of successful integration, and this corresponds with previous studies on integration.

The Czech government recognizes that refugees may need resettlement assistance and created policies privileging aspects that they felt would promote integration into Czech society: housing assistance, Czech language training and employment assistance. Although these policies exist, implementation does not always provide the anticipated results. Available housing tends to be located in areas deemed unfavorable due to their lack of access to employment and/or their high concentration of foreigners. The time limit on and insufficient number of hours for free Czech language training impeded the acquisition of Czech language skills for my respondents. Language class composition was also seen to hinder my respondents' learning of the Czech language. Employment assistance was either not offered or not sought by any of my respondents, while several respondents witnessed downward mobility in their employment status.

Contributions to scholarly literature

Scholars agree on the need for more studies on refugee integration. To that end, I endeavored to contribute to this field of research in the context of the Czech Republic as countries of Eastern Europe have been typically ignored in the scope of refugee integration studies. My case study is unique as the ethnic composition of the majority of refugees in the Czech Republic is similar to the Czech population. Although most studies of refugee integration are in states where refugees are not typically ethnically similar to the host society, my research results and recommendations are still generalizable since they can be applied in any country where the state is involved in refugee integration.

Previous research on refugee identity emphasizes the negative connotation that the label "refugee" has on an individual's identity. My research did not correspond with those results. While I found that some of my respondents felt negatively about their "refugee" label and status, mainly, if a negative impact was felt upon resettlement, it stemmed from being perceived as a foreigner in a relatively homogeneous society. In fact, a majority of my respondents felt like outsiders in Czech society and/or experienced some type of discrimination based on their foreignness not their refugee status. Physical differences are emphasized in a homogenous society, and participants from countries outside Eastern Europe clearly felt conspicuous. Their refugee status became overshadowed by their perceived foreignness. Participants from Eastern European countries who were physically and culturally similar to Czech society did not experience discrimination based on their appearance or their refugee status. This could be because the existence of a refugee population is fairly recent in the Czech Republic and

viewpoints (negative or positive) have not been as firmly established as they have been in Western European countries with long histories of immigration.

Defining integration has proven almost impossible. Each new study introduces or contradicts one or another aspect of the integration process. My case study refutes the notion that integration has to be a long-term process; refugees who had been in the Czech Republic as little as two years considered themselves integrated into Czech society, while those living in the Czech Republic for a longer period of time may not necessarily feel this way. Previous studies have also deemed integration a two-way process; however, I argue, instead, that the integration process is a three-way process. The integration process involves equal effort by the individual (who has to decide to integrate and be active in integrating), the host society (who must provide a welcoming environment for refugees) and the state (who has to ensure that any policies they enact are implemented effectively). Each actor must recognize the roles they have to play in order for successful integration to take place.

Scholars who developed frameworks for measuring refugee integration concluded that more research was needed to support and/or refute their models. My data corresponded with many of the aspects they considered essential for integration (e.g. host language knowledge, social networks, citizenship, stability, among others), but not one of my respondents mentioned a major factor found in these models, and that is employment. My data also shows that cultural similarities between host country and country of origin positively influence the integration process, but cultural similarities are not included in the two conceptual integration frameworks. While the absence of employment as an integration facilitator may be particular to my case study (discussed below as a further

research question), I would argue that cultural similarities between the refugee and host country definitely help in the refugee integration process regardless of location. When cultural similarities exist, refugees have an easier time relating to the host society and/or the state and learning the language of the host country (an aspect that is deemed essential for successful integration to take place). This was certainly the case with several of my participants in the Czech Republic and a major reason for why they planned to permanently resettle there.

On the subject of permanent resettlement in the Czech Republic, my research contradicts the prominent notion held by scholars that the Czech Republic is a transit state for migrants who are aiming to relocate further west in Europe. The majority of my respondents said they are resettling permanently in the Czech Republic rather than returning to their country of origin or migrating further west in Europe. While most of them maintained connections to their country of origin, they were also open to adopting aspects of the Czech culture as well. This underscores the importance for policies that focus on integration of refugees rather than repatriation or an assumption that refugees will eventually migrate elsewhere.

To this end, the Czech Republic does have integration policies in place; however, my research shows that these policies are not always implemented satisfactorily. Research bridging policy and practice is uncommon, and my research contributes to this area of study. I acquired valuable information from my respondents about their interaction with the integration policy specifics. While the Czech government includes housing and employment assistance in its integration policies, my respondents did not avail themselves of either policy provision. Rather than eliminate housing and

employment assistance since it is not being used by refugees, the policy provisions and implementation methods need to be overhauled in ways to ensure that refugees are able to take advantage of the opportunities included in the policies. The aspect of integration policies that my respondents did find useful was the free Czech language training; although, the language training was not without its problems. This was one of the biggest issues that arose out of my study since a majority of my respondents felt that Czech language knowledge was essential for them to successfully integration into Czech society.

The data obtained from my research answered many of my initial research questions about the refugee integration process. However, numerous additional research questions emerged from the analysis of my data. These future research questions about the refugee integration process are discussed next.

Further research questions

While analyzing my data, further questions concerning refugee integration arose. Regarding refugee identity, the media and politicians often negatively portray refugees. This leads to questioning: where did this negative impression of forced migrants originate?; why are refugees continuously portrayed negatively in the media?; and why are politicians increasingly using anti-asylum rhetoric as their campaign platforms? I offer that the first step in changing the negative impression of refugee has to be taken by the state. The state cannot allow or must counteract the continued negative portrayal of refuges by the media. Secondly, the host society must not perpetuate the negative portrayal of refugees and not vote for anti-asylum political parties.

While anti-asylum political parties do not seem to be as popular in the Czech Republic as in Western European countries, Czech media follows the trend found in Western European countries that plays on the fear of a "flood", "influx" and "wave" of asylum seekers arriving in the country and the desire for Europeanness while emphasizing difference and constructing otherness. How can this impression of forced migrants in the Czech Republic be reversed? NGOs attempt this in the Czech Republic by holding events where the general public is able to interact with refugees. However, these events often do a disservice to refugees since it appears as if refugees are on display, offering their traditional foods and handicrafts, as the only thing they have to offer are simple, provincial traditions. To that end, do NGOs have a responsibility to actively promote a positive image of refugees? And, how should NGOs undertake such an endeavor?

In my comparison of conceptual integration frameworks, two aspects considered essential to successful integration by scholars were not mentioned by my respondents. These were employment and housing. In fact, in several previous studies, employment was considered one of the biggest influencers of integration. Why was employment not mentioned by any of my respondents? Is this particular to the Czech Republic? Or is it specific to refugees in Eastern Europe? Housing was not mentioned by any of my respondents either. The model that emphasized housing was based on research in a country with a dispersal policy in effect. The Czech Republic does not have such a policy. Does housing have more of an influence on the integration process for refugees in dispersal areas? Does the lack of choice in type and location of housing in the host country accentuate the importance of it on a refugee's integration process? I would argue

that employment and housing are both impacted by dispersal policies. My respondents chose where they wanted to live (both in terms of the location and physical residence); they were not told where they had to live. In this respect, my respondents chose to live in the capital city, which afforded more opportunities for employment.

The Czech government also includes these two aspects of integration (employment and housing) as features of their refugee integration policy. Since my respondents did not find them beneficial to their integration process, does this mean these elements should be removed from integration policy? If the state bases integration policies on their own perception of integration, can it be effective if its perspective is not in line with refugees' own perspectives? Therefore, should refugees have more of a say in policy-making that concerns them by deciding what aspects should be included in refugee integration policies? I argue that refugees should be active in the policy-making process when it pertains to their integration process. This would ensure that the elements of policy included were relevant to the needs of refugees.

Recommendations

More dialogue is needed between the state, members of the host society and refugees in order to get input from all sides about what is necessary for successful refugee integration. Since I have shown that the Czech Republic is not a transit state (as previously thought) and that refugees do plan to permanently resettle in the Czech Republic, an effort must be made by all parties involved to make sure the integration process is successful. The refugee integration process involves a combination of all three entities - individual, host society and the state. Each plays an active role in the integration

process and each must recognize the role they play. Individual refugees must be open to receiving their new host society since relations between them foster integration. The host society must realize that they are responsible for facilitating the refugee integration process by welcoming them into their society – by treating refugees as equals and not discriminating against them and refusing to perpetuate the "us" versus "them" condition. The state may assume that enacting integration policies is their role in the integration process, but it must recognize this is not enough and their involvement goes much further. The state needs to ensure that their well-intentioned policies are worthwhile, effective and efficiently implemented in order to achieve its goal of successful refugee integration.

The first step to ensure effective implementation is to have one central ministry manage refugee integration and resettlement instead of three different ministries who do not have much contact with each other. Separate ministries may not be fully aware of how one policy aspect affects another. It would be easier for one central ministry to see the connections between the integration policies (e.g. how employment assistance is impacted by Czech language training), evaluate the policies' effectiveness and amend the policies accordingly.

If policy implementation continues to be outsourced to NGOs, the state must build a partnership with NGOs and have more involvement with NGOs to ensure the policies are being implemented effectively; again, one central ministry would be better able to ensure the NGOs are putting the policies into practice accordingly. And if the state chooses to outsource policy implementation to NGOs then the state needs to provide

the resources (e.g. financial, staffing, etc.) to guarantee policy implementation is successful.

The state is also responsible for ensuring that refugees are resettled in safe environments. How refugees are received in society can be influenced by the state's behavior and practice of managing refugee resettlement. If the state sees refugees as a "burden", this negative attitude is passed on to society. In turn, this perception can also be conveyed to refugees affecting the way they interpret their new "refugee" label, which was bestowed upon them by the state. As the media and politicians often spread negative attitudes toward refugees, the state should make certain that any type of discriminatory and/or anti-foreigner rhetoric is not allowed.

Most of my recommendations involve the role of the state in the integration process. The Czech government chose to enact refugee integration policies to facilitate the integration process; however, these policies are not always implemented effectively. The presence of integration policies is a positive step by the Czech government but having written policies is not enough; policies are worthless if not effectively implemented. Since the Czech government decided to enact these policies, it has to be responsible for ensuring the policy facets have positive outcomes.

Appendix A:
Questionnaire used in refugee interviews

INTEGRATION IN CZECH REPUBLIC - REFUGEE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Questions regarding asylum/refuge experience
1. Please tell me the circumstances under which you became an asylum seeker/refugee.

2. How involved were you in the decision-making process regarding migration from your country of origin?

3. Was the Czech Republic your first place of request? If not, what was the first country of choice and why?

4. The Dublin Convention of 1990 (effective in 1997) permitted a member state of the European Union to return an asylum seeker to another country based on several provisions (First Country of Asylum, Safe Third Country, Safe Country of Origin). Was your application in the Czech Republic a result of any provision of the Dublin Convention? If so, were you previously aware of the Dublin Convention?

5. Once you were granted asylum or refuge in the Czech Republic, what effect, if any, has being labeled "asylum seeker" or "refugee" had on your identity?

6. Do you feel that you are considered an outsider by Czech society? If so, please describe these experiences/give examples.

7. Have you experienced any hostility from Czechs or felt mistreated or discriminated against because you are perceived as a 'foreigner'?
      1. Yes, very much   2. Yes, often   3. Sometimes
      4. No, not really   5. No, not at all

      a. If yes, when, where, and by whom did this occur?

Questions regarding the Czech Republic
1. What aspects, if any, of the Czech Republic's history, culture, or any other facets of life in that country were you familiar with before arrival? If you had prior knowledge of the Czech Republic, what was the source of your knowledge?

2. Were you aware of any Czech policies regarding asylum seekers or refugees prior to your arrival in the Czech Republic? If so, what was your source of knowledge?

3. A policy in the Czech Republic offers the dispersal of refugees throughout the country based on housing and employment availability. Were you aware of this policy before arriving in the Czech Republic? If so, what do you think about being offered housing in a place that may not have been your choice? In what ways, if any, has this resettlement limited your life choices?

4. If you specifically chose the Czech Republic as a destination, did any of the aforementioned knowledge affect your decision to apply for asylum/refuge in the Czech Republic?

Questions regarding integration
1. In your home, do you adhere to customs and traditions (eating traditional foods, celebrating national holidays, clothing, music, etc) of your country of origin?
      1. Yes, very much   2. Yes, to some extent   3. Sometimes
      4. Seldom   5. Never
      a. If so, what are they?

      b. Adhering to customs and traditions from your country of origin is:
           1. Very important   2. Somewhat important
           3. Somewhat unimportant 4. Completely unimportant   5. No opinion

2. Regarding Czech language:
      a. How would you assess your ability to speak Czech?
           1. Fluent   2. Very Good   3. Good   4. Sufficient
           5. No ability
      b. How would you assess your ability to read Czech?
           1. Excellent   2. Very Good   3. Good   4. Sufficient
           5. No ability
      c. How would you assess your ability to write Czech?
           1. Excellent   2. Very Good   3. Good   4. Sufficient
           5. No ability
      d. How did you achieve your current Czech language skills?
      e. If applicable, what does it mean for you to interact with others in a language that is not your native tongue?

3. Regarding religion:
      a. Do you consider yourself to be a religious person?
           1. If yes, what religion do you practice?
      b. Has your religion played a role in your integration process?
           1. If so, please explain.

      c. The majority of the Czech population is secular. Therefore, if religious, do you feel at all segregated or isolated because of your religious beliefs?
           1. If yes, please explain.

d. Of the religiously affiliated people in the Czech Republic, the majority is Roman Catholic. If you practice a different religion, does this make you feel at all segregated or isolated?
      1. If yes, please explain.

4. Do you purchase the majority of goods and services from the ethnic or the Czech owned businesses? If ethnic, are these businesses generally owned by persons from your country of origin?

5. Regarding personal associations:
    a. How much personal association do you have with native Czechs?
    b. Where and when does this interaction usually take place? Give examples.
    c. How many close friends do you have that are:
        1. Czech   2. From your country of origin
        3. Other

6. How often do you participate in social, community, or national activities or festivities that are Czech-oriented?
    1. Very often   2. Somewhat often   3. Sometimes
    4. Rarely   5. Never

    a. If applicable, please give examples.

7. How often do you participate in social or community activities or festivities that are aligned based on ethnicity?
    1. Very often   2. Somewhat often   3. Sometimes
    4. Rarely   5. Never

    a. If applicable, please give examples.

8. Regarding media:
    1. Do you watch television?
        a. Do you have a satellite dish that broadcasts programs from your native country?
        b. How often do you watch television programs in Czech?
            1. Very often   2. Quite often   3. Sometimes
            4. Rarely   5. Never
        c. How often do you watch television programs in your native language?
            1. Very often   2. Quite often   3. Sometimes
            4. Rarely   5. Never
    2. Do you read newspapers?
        a. How often do you read newspapers in Czech?
            1. Very often   2. Quite often   3. Sometimes
            4. Rarely   5. Never

      b. How often do you read newspapers in your native language?
           1. Very often   2. Quite often   3. Sometimes
           4. Rarely   5. Never
  3. Do you listen to the radio?
      a. Do you have satellite radio that airs programs/music from your native country?
      b. How often do you listen to radio programs/music in Czech?
           1. Very often   2. Quite often   3. Sometimes
           4. Rarely   5. Never
      c. How often do you listen to radio programs/music in your native language?
           1. Very often   2. Quite often   3. Sometimes
           4. Rarely   5. Never

9. Do you consider your country of origin to be at all similar to the Czech Republic (for example, post-communist)? If so, do you think this was advantageous to you when becoming a refugee in the Czech Republic? Would you say that this facilitated the integration process?

10. Were you aware of the Czech government's integration policies (housing assistance, language classes, employment assistance) prior to arrival in the Czech Republic? Did you find these measures helpful during the integration process? What changes, if any, would you recommend?

11. Have you made use of any services provided to refugees in the Czech Republic by nongovernmental agencies (for example, Organization for Aid to Refugees, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)? If yes, how did you find out about these services? Did you find these services helpful to you?

12. What changes, if any, would you recommend to these agencies to be more of assistance to new refugees?

13. In your new life in the Czech Republic, do you feel integrated with Czech society? How would you describe this feeling? How is such integration noticeable to you?

14. Have you personally developed any strategies to facilitate the integration process?

15. If the Czech Republic was your first choice of destination country, do you think this has helped you in the integration process? If yes, how?

16. If you had any prior knowledge of the Czech Republic, do you think this knowledge was beneficial in the process of integration? If yes, how?

17. If you don't feel integrated, do you see this as a reflection of yourself or Czech government or society?

18. If the situation that forced you to migrate changed, would you want to return to your country of origin?

19. How strongly do you feel Czech?
     1. Very   2. Quite   3. Somewhat
     4. Not very   5. Not at all

20. How strongly do you feel part of your country of origin?
     1. Very   2. Quite   3. Somewhat
     4. Not very   5. Not at all

Personal characteristics

1. Age _____

2. Sex _____

3. What is your marital status?
     a. Single
     b. Married
     c. We live together but are not officially married (cohabitating)
     d. We are separated
     e. Divorced
     f. Widowed

4. How many children (persons under 18 years of age) are in your household? _____

5. How many elderly persons (over the age of 65) are in your household? _____

6. How long have you lived in the Czech Republic? _____

7. What is your country of origin? _____

8. How would you classify yourself racially/ethnically? _____

9. What level of education did you reach in your country of origin?
     a. Some basic schooling
     b. High school graduate (or equivalent)
     c. Some college
     d. College graduate
     e. Post-graduate degree

10. What language(s) do you speak fluently?

11. What language do you most frequently speak:
     a. in your home with children (if applicable)?
     b. in your home with other family members?
     c. at your place of employment (if applicable)?
     d. with your neighbors?

12. Are you employed?
     a. Yes (go to Question 13)
     b. No (skip remaining questions)

13. In what area are you employed?
     a. Energy industry
     b. Industry
     c. Construction
     d. Transportation
     e. Communications
     f. Agriculture
     g. Wholesale
     h. Retail sales
     i. Restaurant and catering business
     j. Education
     k. Health
     l. Culture, arts, sports
     m. Finances, insurance
     n. Military
     o. Other (please specify) _____

14. If your place of employment is owned by someone from your country of origin, is the business patronized mostly by persons from your country of origin?

15. Does your status of employment reflect that which you had in your country of origin?
     a. If no, how does it differ?

Appendix B:
Written Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study that is being conducted by Kari Burnett, a Ph.D. candidate at Rutgers University in New Jersey, USA. I will be talking with about 50 people who have been granted asylum or refugee status in the Czech Republic and would like to talk with you about the experience of emigrating from (your country of origin) to the Czech Republic.

This research will be used to help recent migrants' or immigrants' integration in the Czech Republic. It will also help those who serve asylum seekers or refugees (i.e. policy-makers, social service workers) to find better ways to help in the resettlement process. The research will also help prospective employers and businesses that may employ new immigrants. Finally, the research will add to the body of work on immigration and immigrant communities and adapting to their adopted culture.

While the study does ask questions about your country of origin and likes and dislikes about your current life in the Czech Republic, you are not obligated to talk about anything with which you are not completely comfortable. Your name or address will not be printed in any published materials. The researcher will only note your first name in order to refer to your responses in reviewing the research. If you prefer, a name other than your real name can be noted.

The research is confidential. Confidential means that the research records will include some information about you such as age, sex, country of origin, race/ethnicity, etc. I will keep this information confidential by limiting individual's access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location. The research team and the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated, unless you have agreed otherwise. Research results will be provided to the Refugee Association of the Czech Republic.

You should feel free to refuse to answer any question with which you are not entirely comfortable. You are also free to withdraw at any time.

I may use a voice recorder during this interview so that I may transcribe the interview later. If you are uncomfortable with such a recording, I will limit our interview to handwritten notes.

The entire interview will take less than 60 minutes but I may ask you if I can contact you again with additional questions.

If you have any questions about the study procedures, you may contact Kari Burnett at Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Science, Department of Social Geography and Regional Development, Albertov 6, 128 43 Prague 2; phone: 420 221 951 388, email: kburnett@eden.rutgers.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Sponsored Programs Administrator at Rutgers University at:

Rutgers University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
Tel: 732-932-0150 ext. 2104
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

Sign below if you agree to participate in this research study:

Initials of participant: _____ Date: _____
Consent to audio recording (participant): _____ Date: _____
Principal investigator: _____ Date: _____

Appendix J (cont.):
Written Consent Form in Czech

Byl jste přizván k participaci na výzkumu v rámci studie prováděné Kari Burnettovou, postgraduální studentkou na Universitě Rutgers v New Jersey, USA. Budete dotazování společně s dalšími 50 lidmi, kterým byl přiznán azyl či statut uprchlíka v České Republice, a na Vaše zkušenosti s emigrací z Vaší zdrojové země do České Republiky.

Tento výzkum bude sloužit k vylepšení integrace čerstvých migrantů či imigrantů v České Republice. Pomůže také těm, kteří pracují s azylanty a uprchlíky (sociální pracovníci, plánovači) nalézat lepší cesty jak napomoci plynulému přechodu k životu v této zemi. Tento výzkum bude sloužit také potenciálním zaměstnavatelům a podnikatelům, kteří by mohli zaměstnat nové imigranty. V neposlední řadě tento výzkum přispěje také k široké výzkumné agendě na téma imigrace a imigrantských komunit a jejich adaptace na kulturu v nové vlasti.

Přesto, že se studie koncentruje na otázky o zemi původu a na to, co se Vám líbí nebo nelíbí na Vašem současném životě v České Republice, nemusíte odpovídat na nic, co by Vám nebylo příjemné. Vaše jméno nebo adresa nebude uvedena na žádném materiálu určeném k publikaci. Výzkumník si pouze zaznamená Vaše křestní jméno, aby mohl odkazovat na Vaše odpovědi ve výzkumných zprávách. Pokud si budete přát, můžete udat i jiné jméno.

Celý výzkum je považován za důvěrný. To znamená, že záznamy z výzkumu obsahují informace o Vaší osobě, jako např. pohlaví, věk, zemi původu, rasu/etnikum apod. Tyto důvěrné informace budou chráněny před individuálním přístupem dalších osob na bezpečném místě. K informacím bude mít přístup pouze výzkumný tým a Institucionální Kontrolní Rada Rutgers University, pokud zákon nevyžaduje jinak. Pokud budou výsledky této studie publikovány, popř. prezentovány na odborné konferenci, uváděny budou pouze skupinové výsledky, pokud nebudete souhlasit s jiným návrhem. Výsledky výzkumu budou dány k dispozici Asociaci uprchlíků v České republice.

Máte právo odmítnou odpověď na jakoukoliv otázku, jejíž téma Vám nebude zcela příjemné. Máte také právo kdykoliv od výzkumu odstoupit.

Během rozhovorů bude využito nahrávací zařízení, aby bylo možno později přepsat obsah rozhovorů. Pokud Vám použití nahrávacího zařízení není příjemné, omezí výzkumník záznam rozhovoru pouze na psané poznámky.

Celý rozhovor bude trvat necelých 60 minut, ale můžete být požádání o další kontakt a zodpovězení doplňujících otázek.

Pokud máte jakékoliv dotazy na proceduru výzkumu, můžete kontaktovat Kari Burnettovou na Univerzita Karlova v Praze, Přírodovědecká fakulta, katedra sociální geografie a regionálního rozvoje, Albertov 6, 128 43 Prague 2; tel: 420 221 951 388, email: kburnett@eden.rutgers.edu. Máte-li dotazy na Vaše právo jako účastníka výzkumu, kontaktujte administrátora sponzorovaných programů na Univerzitě Rutgers:

Rutgers University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
Tel: 732-932-0150 ext. 2104
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

K dispozici dostanete kopii tohoto písemného prohlášení o souhlasu.

Pokud souhlasíte s účastí na tomto výzkumu, prosím, podepište se zde:

Iniciály účastníka: _____ Datum: _____
Svolit k vyslovit nahrávka (účastníka): _____ Datum: _____
Hlavní výzkumník: _____ Datum: _____

Appendix C:
Number of asylum applications received in the Czech Republic in the 1990s

Year	No. of applications	Year	No. of applications
1990	1,792	1995	1,413
1991	1,977	1996	2,156
1992	817	1997	2,098
1993	2,193	1998	4,082
1994	1,188	1999	7,285

Source: UNHCR 2001

Appendix D:
Top countries of origin of asylum applicants in the 1990s

1990 (as of July)		1991		1992	
Country of origin	Applications received	Country of origin	Applications received	Country of origin	Applications received
Romania	1,080	Romania	656	Armenia	163
Bulgaria	168	Bulgaria	586	Vietnam	133
Angola	98	USSR (ex-)	287	Bulgaria	82
USSR (ex-)	95	Angola	91	Russia	80
Nigeria	29	Albania	80	Romania	78

1993		1994		1995	
Country of origin	Applications received	Country of origin	Applications received	Country of origin	Applications received
Bulgaria	1,125	Bulgaria	512	Romania	490
Armenia	733	Armenia	160	Bulgaria	330
Romania	60	Afghanistan	78	Afghanistan	107
Afghanistan	32	Yugoslavia (ex-)	62	Iraq	80
Ukraine	30	Romania	58	Armenia	60

1996		1997		1998	
Country of origin	Applications received	Country of origin	Applications received	Country of origin	Applications received
Bulgaria	837	Bulgaria	724	Afghanistan	1,261
Romania	693	Iraq	283	Yugoslavia	710
Afghanistan	133	Afghanistan	268	Sri Lanka	368
Iraq	88	Romania	159	Iraq	315
Armenia	55	Sri Lanka	89	India	297

1999	
Country of origin	Applications received
Afghanistan	2,313
Sri Lanka	900
India	887
Yugoslavia	621
Iraq	346

Source: Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic 2007

Appendix E:
Asylum recognition rates in the Czech Republic in the 1990s

Year	Asylum granted	Year	Asylum granted
1990	100%	1995	75%
1991	100%	1996	88.9%
1992	96.2%	1997	6.5%
1993	96%	1998	12.1%
1994	41.4%	1999	4.1%

Source: UNHCR 2000

Appendix F:
Country of origin for those granted refuge in the Czech Republic in the 1990s

1990 (as of July)		1991		1992	
Country of origin	No. granted asylum	Country of origin	No. granted asylum	Country of origin	No. granted asylum
Romania	23	Romania	325	Vietnam	52
USSR (ex-)	5	USSR (ex-)	150	Romania/ Russia (tie)	26
China/Iraq (tie)	1	Bulgaria	39	Yugoslavia (ex-)	24
		Afghanistan/ Albania (tie)	31	Iraq	18
		Vietnam	30	Afghanistan	16

1993		1994		1995	
Country of origin	No. granted asylum	Country of origin	No. granted asylum	Country of origin	No. granted asylum
Romania	54	Armenia	36	Afghanistan	15
Vietnam	34	Afghanistan	24	Iraq	9
Armenia	32	Romania	11	Armenia	8
Afghanistan	27	Vietnam	7	Zaire (ex-)	6
Bosnia & Herzegovina	14	Iran	6	Somalia/ Sudan (tie)	4

1996		1997		1998	
Country of origin	No. granted asylum	Country of origin	No. granted asylum	Country of origin	No. granted asylum
Romania	28	Bosnia & Herzegovina	16	Afghanistan	15
Afghanistan	23	Afghanistan	14	Dem. Rep. of Congo	9
Armenia	22	Vietnam	13	Azerbaijan/ Belarus (tie)	7
Vietnam	10	Iraq	9	Iraq	6
Iraq/Zaire (ex-) (tie)	9	Nigeria	6	Georgia/ Ghana (tie)	5

1999	
Country of origin	**No. granted asylum**
Afghanistan	20
Belarus	11
Yugoslavia	9
Bulgaria	7
Dem. Rep. of Congo	5

Source: Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic 2007

Appendix G:
Number of asylum applications received in the Czech Republic in the 2000s

Year	No. of applications	Year	No. of applications
2000	8,790	2005	4,160
2001	18,090	2006	3,020
2002	8,480	2007	1,880
2003	11,400	2008	1,690
2004	5,460	2009	1,258

Source: (Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic 2010, UNHCR 2005 and 2009

Appendix H:
Top countries of origin of asylum applicants in the 2000s

2000		2001		2002	
Country of origin	**Applications received**	**Country of origin**	**Applications received**	**Country of origin**	**Applications received**
Ukraine	1,145	Ukraine	4,398	Ukraine	1,658
Afghanistan	1,117	Moldova	2,454	Vietnam	885
Slovakia	721	Romania	1,839	Slovakia	822
India	647	Vietnam	1,521	Moldova	729
Russia	620	India	1,304	Russia	671

2003		2004		2005	
Country of origin	**Applications received**	**Country of origin**	**Applications received**	**Country of origin**	**Applications received**
Russia	4,852	Ukraine	1,599	Ukraine	988
Ukraine	2,043	Russia	1,499	Slovakia	711
Slovakia	1,055	Vietnam	362	India	342
China	853	China	325	China	287
Vietnam	566	Belarus	226	Russia	260

2006		2007		2008	
Country of origin	**Applications received**	**Country of origin**	**Applications received**	**Country of origin**	**Applications received**
Ukraine	571	Ukraine	293	Ukraine	328
Egypt	422	Turkey	213	Turkey	251
Kazakhstan	236	Mongolia	159	Mongolia	192
Belarus	175	Belarus	130	Vietnam	107
Russia	170	Vietnam	100	Belarus	80

2009	
Country of origin	**Applications received**
Ukraine	203
Kazakhstan	186
Mongolia	159
Turkey	66
Vietnam	63

Source: Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic 2010; UNHCR 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2009

Appendix I:
Asylum recognition rates in the Czech Republic in the 2000s

Year	Asylum granted	Year	Asylum granted
2000	4.8%	2005	9%
2001	1.2%	2006	10.9%
2002	1.9%	2007	10%
2003	2.3%	2008	9%
2004	3%	2009	6%

Source: Czech Statistical Office 2010; UNHCR 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2009

Appendix J:
Country of origin for those granted refuge in the Czech Republic in the 2000s

2000		2001		2002	
Country of origin	**No. granted asylum**	**Country of origin**	**No. granted asylum**	**Country of origin**	**No. granted asylum**
Belarus	24	Belarus	25	Russia	28
Afghanistan	22	Iran	10	Belarus	26
Armenia	16	Afghanistan/ Yugoslavia (tie)	9	Afghanistan	17
Yugoslavia	9	Kazakhstan	5	Iraq	8
Russia	8	Iraq	4	Armenia	6

2003		2004		2005	
Country of origin	**No. granted asylum**	**Country of origin**	**No. granted asylum**	**Country of origin**	**No. granted asylum**
Russia	62	Russia	45	Russia	69
Afghanistan	30	Belarus	29	Belarus	47
Armenia	26	Kazakhstan	10	Armenia	19
Belarus	20	Armenia	9	Kazakhstan	18
Kazakhstan	11	Afghanistan	7	Uzbekistan	17

2006		2007		2008	
Country of origin	**No. granted asylum**	**Country of origin**	**No. granted asylum**	**Country of origin**	**No. granted asylum**
Belarus	66	Belarus	32	Myanmar	26
Russia	51	Russia	31	Belarus	19
Kazakhstan/ Ukraine (tie)	31	Ukraine	19	Russia	18
Stateless	23	Iraq	17	Ukraine	17
Armenia/Iraq/ Somalia (tie)	7	Uzbekistan	11	Kazakhstan	14

2009	
Country of origin	**No. granted asylum**
Myanmar	21
Ukraine	9
Vietnam	8
Afghanistan/ Kazakhstan (tie)	7
Uzbekistan	4

Source: Czech Statistical Office 2009a and 2010; Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic 2007 and 2008

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