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# Somali Immigrant and Refugee Women In Boston: Settlement and Adjustment Problems

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SOMALI IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE WOMEN IN BOSTON:  
SETTLEMENT AND ADJUSTMENT PROBLEMS

A Project Paper Presented

By

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## SECTION 1

### INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of the study. It describes the statement of the problem and purpose of the study. The definition of key terms, significance, and delimitation of the study are also discussed.

#### Statement of the Problem

The United States and Canada have been multicultural nations since their beginnings, given the diversity amongst their native peoples. The first European settlers came to North America for different reasons. Some were fleeing religious and political persecutions, others were seeking a better life, and still others were brought against their will as slaves. The first European settlers, who were mainly from Britain and France, became the dominant ethno-cultural groups in North America.

In Canada, after the confederation, immigration policies, which favored European immigrants and refugees, were regulated. From the 1900s to 1967 most of the immigrants and refugees coming to Canada were from Western Europe. This was due to Canada's policies of racial discrimination regarding those admitted as immigrants until 1967(The Social Planning Council of Ottawa - Carleton, 1986). The United States had similar immigration restrictions.

Since the United States and Canada are both largely nations of immigrants, the majority of the population embrace new ethnic groups even as they worry about the perceived economic, social, cultural, and educational challenges recent arrivals may pose.

Heartfelt humanitarian values encouraged both the United States and Canada to revisit their immigration laws and revoke the discriminatory aspects of the system. They substituted them with neutral factors, such as: education, arranged employment, occupational demand, having family members in the country, occupational skills, knowledge of English in the case of the United States, and English and French languages in Canada, and humanitarian reasons. Only then, immigrants from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and South America found it possible to immigrate to North America without racial restrictions. For the last two decades, the number of immigrants and refugees entering the United States and Canada increased. In the same period of time, emigration from Europe slowly declined.

In addition to the increase in numbers, there has been a shift in the culture as people brought in values from their countries of origin. This shift was mainly from the traditional western European culture to cultures from other parts of the world, particularly Africa, Asia, and South America. Among the recent and non-traditional refugees who arrived in the United States and Canada are the Somalis.

Most Somalis came to Canada to seek refugee status from within Canada, while those coming to the United States were more lucky in the sense that most of them were brought by the US government. According to a study conducted by the Center for Refugee studies, York University, refugee claims by Somalis rose from 31 in 1985 to 3505 within the first six month of 1991 (Opuko-Dapaah, E, 1995). Also, the number of Somali refugees in Ottawa-Carleton rose from several hundred in 1986 to approximately twelve thousand (12,000) in 1993. Most Somali immigrants and refugees in the United States came later than those who went to Canada did. Comparatively they are recent immigrants.



They are the focus of both the heartfelt welcome and the conflicting discussions about immigrants and refugees in general. While settlement agencies have been successful in helping a significant number of these immigrant and refugee population, evidence shows that many Somali immigrant and refugee women are disconnected from most of these services. For example, significant numbers of Somali immigrant and refugee women can not take advantage of the existing programs due to many barriers such as: lack of English language skills, lack of day care to take their children to, in order to attend language and skill related training programs (SDC, 1997).

One way of helping Somali immigrant and refugee women to settle, adjust and start a successful life in the United States, is to provide adequate and meaningful support when they arrive and help them achieve the necessary skills they need to establish a new life. Thus, an important and maybe most crucial step towards providing such services is to involve ethnic community leaders and educators in the process of assisting newcomers. The main purpose of this study, therefore, is to explore what Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston consider the major settlement and adjustment problems that they experience, and what they think should be done by service providing agencies to address these problems.

### Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine directions for improving settlement and adjustment conditions for Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston, Massachusetts. First, the study will identify the factors that hinder the settlement and adjustment conditions for Somali immigrant and refugee women. Second, various ways in which the State, the Federal government, and Non-governmental refugee and immigrant settlement agencies and the Somali community organizations can work

together to help immigrant refugee women to settle and easily adjust to their new homeland will be discussed. Third, the Somali immigrant and refugee women's perceptions of the main problems that they encounter in their settlement are explored.

Further, the recommendations of Somali immigrant and refugee women regarding suggestions for improving the settlement and adjustment conditions for all immigrants and refugees in general and women in particular are presented. Specifically, the study was guided by the following four research questions.

1. What do Somali immigrant and refugee women consider to be the factors that help the Somali immigrant and refugee women who are succeeding in settling and adjusting to country?
2. What do Somali immigrant and refugee women consider to be the factors that hinder their settlement and adjustment to this country?
3. How important do Somali immigrant and refugee women consider collaboration among service agencies for helping immigrants and refugees succeed in their settlement and adjustment to the new country ways of living?
4. What recommendations do Somali immigrant and refugee women make that may help them and other immigrant and refugee women to succeed in settling and adjusting to this country?

#### Definition of Terms

The definitions below explain specific terms central to this study.

Immigrant: A person who immigrates to a new country or region.

Refugee: A person who flees his or her home or country to seek refuge elsewhere, as in a time of war or because of political or religious persecution.

Parent: A parent refers to a biological or adoptive parent, step-parent, or legal guardian of a child. In the case of Somali community, all members of the extended family are considered to be parents.

Perception: In this study, perceptions are the set of ideas that adults accept as true. These perceptions could be objective or subjective viewpoints on reality.

Single mother: refers to a mother who is raising her children alone without the support of the father for various reasons.

Settlement: become established in a lifestyle. In this case, it means adjustment to a new life.

Adjustment: settle, or begin a way of dealing with the challenges of settlement comfortably.

### Significance of the Study

This study has both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, this study advances our knowledge about the factors that affect the settlement and adjustment of Somali immigrant and refugee women by examining their experiences since they arrived in Boston.

This study is important for four practical reasons. First, by reviewing the results of this study, the Somali Development Center, and other Somali organizations, in collaboration with governmental and non-governmental organizations that work with immigrants and refugees could determine constructive ways of creating partnerships that help immigrants and refugees in general and immigrant and refugee women in particular to succeed in their settlement and adjustment to the new life in Boston, and

may be in the United States. Second, understanding the factors that hinder the successful settlement and adjustment of Somali immigrant and refugee women, may help all organizations working with immigrants and refugees to determine ways of collaborating and involving immigrant and refugee educators in the process of improving settlement and adjustment conditions for all newcomers, particularly women.

Third, this study may be helpful to Somali scholars and US institutions who studying the Somali immigrants and refugees who has been among the largest groups who were coming to North America for the last seven years. Simply stated, organizations that provide services to immigrants and refugees need to develop sensitivity to immigrant and refugee women's viewpoints about the factors that foster or inhibit their settlement and adjustment. The findings of this study may also encourage service providers such as: the International Refugee Council (IRC) and the Massachusetts Office of Refugees and Immigrants (MORI), to establish constructive communication and cooperation with Somali Development Center, and other Somali community organizations, so that approaches to helping Somali immigrants and refugees settle and adjust better could be explored.

Fourth, this study advances the educational research about the settlement and adjustment problems that Somali immigrants and refugees; specially women experience in the United States. Specifically, this study offers a direction for understanding and improving the environment and the conditions in which Somali immigrant and refugee women settle and adjust to their new home country. This study will add to educational research relating to the problems in which new immigrant and refugees coming from countries of cultures other than Europe experience in their settlement and adjustment to the United States.

### Delimitation of the Study

This study will be limited to the settlement and adjustment factors that impact positively or negatively the Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston. Specifically, the study will look at the perceptions of the immigrant and refugee women of such factors that affect their settlement and adjustment to their new home country. Inferences from the results of the study may be used to conduct further research. However, no generalizations will be made from this study to the perceptions of all Somali immigrant and refugee women or to the rest of the United States of America outside the sampling area.

Nevertheless, information from this study may provide valuable insight into the factors that may help or hinder the successful settlement and adjustment of Somali immigrant and refugee women.

### Overview of the Study

Section one, then, is the introduction of the study. It discusses the research problem, the purpose of the study, its significance, and limitations. Section two presents the literature related to the historical and cultural background of the Somali people, the historical role of Somali women in the Somali society, The problems that made them refugees, and their settlement and adjustment experiences in their new home country.

Section three explains the design of the study and procedures used to select the sample from Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston and the collection of data for each research question. Section four discusses the analysis of the data and presents the findings for each of the research questions. Section five summarizes the

study. Implications drawn from the findings are stated and recommendations for further research are presented in this final section.

## SECTION 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this section was to establish a conceptual and empirical base for the study. In this section the literature on the historical and cultural background of the Somalis in general and Somali women in particular, the experiences of Somali immigrants and refugees, the role of the Somali women in their community, and the settlement and adjustment problems the Somali immigrants and refugees in Boston encountered. The literature review gave direction to the research process that was used to explore the settlement and adjustment problems those Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston experience. The literature review is presented in four parts.

First, the historical and cultural background of the Somali community and the crucial issues regarding their immigration to North America is presented. Second, the historical role of Somali women society is discussed. Third, the settlement and adjustment problems experienced by the Somali immigrants and refugees in Boston, particularly women are examined. Fourth, the role of the Somali Development Center in assisting Somali newcomers deal with the anxiety, and challenges of settling in a culturally different country and adjusting to new ways of living are reviewed.

#### Historical and Cultural Background of the Somalis

This part of the literature review presents the historical and cultural background of the Somali community and the crucial issues regarding their immigration to Canada. An overview of the historical and social setting of the Somalis, their immigration

history and the unusual conditions under which they arrived in North America are discussed. The forced and unfortunate refugee experience and the social context of their difficult journey may have an impact on both the settlement and adjustment problems they experience.

### Historical and Social Setting

The Somali people and their land have a long history that has its beginnings in antiquity. As early as the fifteenth century BC, the Egyptians traded with the Somalis to get Myrrh and frankincense for pharaonic temples. They knew the area as the “Land of Punt”. In the seventh century A.D, Islam reached Somalia through the trade between the Somalis and Arabs in the Red Sea coastal towns. The most famous coastal towns of that time were Mogadishu, Zeila, Merca, Bulahar, and Brava.

The Somali people are culturally, linguistically, and religiously one of the most homogenous populations in the African continent. Their traditional culture is characterized by democracy and egalitarianism (Lewis, 1961). The egalitarian aspect of the Somali culture attracted the interest of many European anthropologists such as I.M. Lewis (1961) who described it as “Pastoral Democracy”. Other European writers (Laitin, 1977; Touval, 1963) have also addressed the egalitarian aspect of the Somali culture. In this culture, the clan chiefs are nominal. The community policies and decisions are debated in councils where every adult male has the right to speak at any time (Laitin, 1977). Richard Burton, who led a British expedition into northern Somalia in 1854, noted the culture of the Somalis and their pride.

While democracy, egalitarianism, nobility, pride, and love of freedom are drawn from their traditional culture, Somalis also display a strong attachment to Islam. Somalis are almost exclusively Sunni Muslims who adhere to koranic laws. Religious



principles and traditional practices do sometimes conflict, and even though traditional practices may prevail, this does not diminish their strong attachment to Islam. In fact, history has shown that Islam strengthens and reinforces the Somali cultural heritage and nationalism (Andrzejewski, 1964; Lewis, 1961).

### The Role of Women in the Somali Society

Traditionally Somali women had distinct roles in running family affairs. They have always been the backbone of the social and economic development of the Somali nation. During the struggle for independence, women fought and many of them died in the battle fields such as Hawa Tako whose monument stands in front of the Ex-parliament building in Mogadisho. Others participated in the form of literature, reciting poems of encouragement, singing national songs, mobilizing the community, and educating their children about the impact of colonialism and the meaning of independence. Still others helped the wounded, provided food and the responsibility for the needs of their families, while their husbands, brothers and sons were either killed, jailed, or fighting against the colonial armies.

The hard fought independence finally achieved on June 1960 by the British Somaliland and July 1, 1960 by the Italian Somalia, the day the two parts united to form Somali Republic. Unfortunately, the first independent Somali government ignored the crucial role of women in independent Somalia. As a result, there was no single Somali women in the newly elected parliament of 123 members. In addition, the Somali government did not address the needs of women such as their education, employment, and involvement in the government and the political process. Women did not experience any meaningful change in their position of being the least educated group of the Somali population. In 1969, the civilian president was assassinated, and

while the parliament were in session discussing an interim president, the military engaged in a coup and took over the power.

In the first five years of the military rule significant changes did happen. First, the Somali script was written for the first time. Expansion of schools including the Somali National University and urban and rural literacy campaigns were undertaken. A major resettlement program for the drought stricken population of the middle and northeastern regions of the country were successfully carried.

Since women were the least schooled, many became literate through these programs. In 1977, war started between Somalia and Ethiopia. The focus of the Somali government investment turned to military build up on the expense of social and economic development. A group of military officers initiated a coup against Siad Barre and his government. The coup failed and Siad Barre and his government started killings, imprisonment, and the torture of any one suspected of being a member, or supporter of an opposition group. The fear, crisis, and indiscriminate punishment and clan rivalry reached unreversible levels. Somali women once again became the saviors of families and victims of the civil war.

The civil war in their country changed the roles of family members. It caused families to separate and immigrate not only to different countries but different continents. Women suffered most. Many lost their husbands in the civil and escaped with their children to other countries. As a result, most of the Somali families in North America, Europe and Australia are, headed by women. These women perform both the mother and father roles for their children.

### Somali Immigration to North America

The Somali political crisis started with the war with Ethiopia in 1977 and following attempted coup in the beginning of 1978. The execution of the military officers who attempted to overthrow Siad Barre ignited an armed opposition. A second armed opposition began in the northern part of the country (Keefer, 1999). These hostilities continued till 1990, when Siad Barre was finally forced to flee the country. Unfortunately, the clan hostilities escalated. By 1992, an estimated one third of the Somali population was facing starvation caused by draught and civil war.

Over one million Somali fled to Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Yemen at that time. By 1993, 20% of the Somali population was displaced or had sought refugee in other countries (UNHCR, 1995). Over 350,000 Somali refugees fled to Kenya alone over the course of the fighting (US Department of State, 1994). As a result, most of the Somalis in North America came as refugees and not as immigrants. . Their refugee experiences were different than the experiences of many traditional refugees and immigrants. It is the first time in the history of the Somalis that such a significant number of the Somali population left their country seeking asylum (Ali, 1995). Since the early 1990s, the civil war that put Somalia on the international map as the first failed state in modern history has driven hundreds of thousands of Somalis, mainly children, women, and elderly to refugee and resettlement camps (Bay State Banner, 2000).

Unlike other refugees from countries where there are governments, the Somali State collapsed, and therefore, crisis, lawlessness, and chaos accompanied their departure of Somalia. By 1993, 20% of the Somali population was displaced or had sought refugee in other countries (UNHCR, 1995). Over 350,000 refugees who left Somalia fled to Kenya over the course of the fighting ( US Department of States,

1994). Parents and their children were separated during their escape, many were killed, others died on the way, and many family members ended up in different countries. Lack of a government to issue documents made their travel a nightmare. As a result, many of the refugees spent years in refugee camps in Kenya, Ethiopia or Djibouti before they received an acceptance for resettlement in another country. Many of those forced refugees began to seek a safe haven in Europe and North America. They applied for resettlement in the United States through UNHCR and was granted approval by the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) and, once approved, the logistics of the resettlement process were handled by the International Organization on Migration (IMO). This led thousands of Somalis to settle in the United States. About 5,000 of these refugees have settled in Boston. Others passed through four or five different countries before they reached North America. Most of the Somali immigrants and refugees in North America lost everything they had in Somalia. The lucky ones are those who arrived in Canada or the United States with their children.

#### Settlement Experience

The Somali refugees who came to the United States and those who settled in Canada have both similar and different experiences. Those who settled in Canada came by themselves and claimed refugee status at the border. As a result, one of the most immediate issues they face was a long immigration process. Unlike those who settled in Canada, most of the Somali refugees in the United States were brought here did not have to go through hearings to prove that they are legitimate refugees.

However, both communities are considered to be among the most disadvantaged and most ambitious among the visible and minority groups in North America. Most of the Somali families fled Somalia, and brought with them only some of their children.

Contrary to the traditional Somali families where mothers and fathers have distinct roles, most of the Somali refugee families are headed by mothers.

A main characteristic of the Somali family pattern is an extended family system (Lewis, 1961). Lewis noted the central role the family plays in the social and cultural environment. A survey done by Dr. M. Nuh (1995) found that the majority of the Somali households in Canada are single parents, whose spouses were killed, separated in transit, or trapped in Somalia not being able to escape. Studies conducted by the Somali Development in Boston indicate the same pattern. Since Somalis are a communal society, it is a new and difficult experience for single parents to settle, and raise children in a new country with different cultural values and without the social and emotional support of family or extended family members (Nuh, 1995).

Sociologists have realized that the family is an important agent that provides the refugees with the psychological and emotional support they need to successfully settle, adopt, and integrate into the new society.

#### Somali Community in Boston.

As stated previously in this paper, the Somalis are one of the most recent immigrants to North America. Boston is among the cities in which many Somalis settled recently. The Somali community in Boston is estimated to be about 5,000 in number. The majority came recently to Boston, coming from refugee camps in Kenya and other countries they ran to after the clapse of the military government of Siad Barre and beginning of the civil in Somalia. Most of the heads of households are single mothers. The new family role for women, the trauma they experienced in the refugee camps, and the level of their education are among the presenting problem issues that women face. In addition, there has been no established Somali community before them to assist them to easily deal with issues of settlement, adaptation.

### The Somali Development Center

The Somali Development Center was established in 1995 with the initiatives of Somali group who themselves have been immigrants. To help the newcomers and move the community forward in their new country, the SDC began assessing and prioritizing the needs of the community. Lack of English proficiency, unemployment, lack of adequate housing, and lack of daycare were among the issues identified by the SDC. Since, most Somali households are headed by women, it is impossible for the community to advance socially and economically unless the crucial roles women play in the community are recognized and their needs are made a priority.

## SECTION 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

#### Introduction

The purpose of this section is to explain the specific procedures and methodologies utilized in this study. It details the description of the population, the processes involved in the sample selection from the population of Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston, and the background and development of the research instrument. Finally, The distribution of the survey, methods of data collection, and the procedures used to organize, analyze, and report the data are explained.

This study is exploratory and descriptive in nature. A descriptive research effort involves collecting data in order to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of study or to test a hypothesis. Since this study seeks to answer questions concerning the settlement and adjustment problems in which Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston experience, which is a particular population, it is consistent with Gay's (1976) definition of descriptive research.

Again, the major purpose of this study is to collect data about the settlement and adjustment problems that Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston experience.

Specifically, the study was guided by the following four research questions.

1. What do Somali immigrant and refugee women consider to be the factors that help the Somali immigrant and refugee women who are succeeding in settling and adjusting to country?
2. What do Somali immigrant and refugee women consider to be the factors that hinder their settlement and adjustment to this country?
3. How important do Somali immigrant and refugee women consider collaboration among service agencies for helping immigrants and refugees succeed in their settlement and adjustment to the new country ways of living?
4. What recommendations do Somali immigrant and refugee women make that may help them and other immigrant and refugee women to succeed in settling and adjusting to this country?

The four research questions served as the basis for the construction of the questionnaire and the follow-up interviews. Every item of the questionnaire is related to one of the four research questions. The questionnaire and follow-up interviews are the instrumentation utilized for data collection in this study.

Qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to investigate the settlement and adjustment problems facing the Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston. By definition, validity is the degree to which a survey measures what it is intended to measure. Both content and translation validity was important in this study since the questionnaire was written in both English and Somali languages. The validity of the questionnaires and interview questions, were reviewed and checked by a panel of Somali educators in Boston.



### Selection of Population

The major population of this exploratory study is the Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston. The Somali immigrant and refugee women have common characteristics such as: language spoken, cultural values, religion, and ethnicity.

However, their diversity in terms of their level of education, socio-economic status, number of years in the United States, marital status, and immigration status, may impact their responses. Therefore, a representative random sample was selected to participate in this study and to produce the data about the settlement and adjustment problems they experience. This way, the results of the study could be generalized to the population of the study. Any differences in responses are examined on the basis of the above mentioned aspects of diversity.

### Selection of Participants

The sample was selected from the Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston. This is a homogeneous population in terms of language, religion, cultural values and ethnicity. A representative sample of 15 women was selected for this study so that the results could be generalizable to the larger population of Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston.

The researcher prepared a letter(see appendix B) which was sent to each participant chosen for the study. The letter explained the study, its purpose and significance, and asked each participant if she was willing to participate. In addition, the letter explained that it is voluntary to participate, and discussed clearly the confidentiality issues.

### Development of Research Instruments

The type of educational research used for this study was descriptive in nature, with an emphasis on survey research. Both questionnaires and follow up interviews were conducted to determine the major factors that may help or hinder the settlement and adjustment of Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston. The questionnaire was employed to collect descriptive information from a specific sample of Somali immigrant and refugee women and a telephone interview was used to follow up the survey respondents and non-respondents.

For the design of this study, the survey instruments used to collect data are questionnaires and follow-up interviews. The use of questionnaires has some definite advantages over other methods of collecting data. For example, a questionnaire is much more efficient in that it requires less time, is less expensive, and permits the collection of data from a larger sample of a population. The four research questions that guide the study were the basis for the development of the research instruments used to obtain the data.

A focus group of five Somali Development Center personnel and five Somali immigrant and refugee women who attended a 1999 summer training in which the writer served as a bilingual teacher were selected and given the research questions. Each of the two focus groups was asked, to list the major settlement and adjustment problems that Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston experience. The factors listed by the two focus groups which are displayed in (Appendix H) were consistent with the findings of previous studies (Abel, 1993; Ali, 1994).

These factors and literature review related to immigrant and refugee settlement and adjustment issues were used as the basis for the construction of questions 1 and 2 of the survey. Question 3 is based on the literature review on home-school

collaboration in improving learning conditions for all children, while the purpose of question 4, which is open-ended, is to find out what Somali parents recommend to be done so that public schools could serve all children on equal terms.

Most questionnaires are either descriptive or predictive (Labaw, 1980).

Descriptive questionnaires are concerned with fact finding, while on the other hand, predictive questionnaires predict behavior and establish hypothesis about future events and ask participants to respond to invented scenarios. This descriptive study relies on the use of a questionnaire to collect data.

A focus group of Somali immigrant refugee women who participated in the computer skills and office skills were selected and given the four research questions. The focus group was similar to the sample of the study, but was not part of the sample. The group listed the settlement and adjustment problems they experienced after they arrived in Boston. The findings of the literature review and the responses of the focus group served as the basis for the development of the survey questionnaire.

The complete questionnaire, a consent form, and a cover letter were written in English and Somali. The English version of the questionnaire, the consent form, and the cover letter were given to two Somali educators to translate into Somali. Likewise, the Somali version of the materials were given to two other Somali educators to translate into English. The new English and Somali versions of the materials were reviewed by the four Somali educators and the researcher to determine accuracy. They were then compared to the original versions to find out if there were differences that may have been caused by the translation and may impact the responses of the participants.

Any resulting differences were then corrected and final forms of the questionnaire and other materials were pre-tested with a small sample of the population of this

study. This small sample was not included in the sample selected for this study. An evaluation was made from the results of the pre-test and revisions were considered for the final forms of the questionnaires, the consent form, and cover letter written in both English and Somali. The revised and finalized materials were prepared for distribution so that data collection could be utilized.

### Distribution of the Survey and Collection of Data

This study used a mail survey questionnaire (Appendix ) as the method of data collection to answer the research questions. Some of the benefits of this method as related to this specific study over other methods are that it takes less time, it can be done at one's own convenience, and it can enable the researcher to collect data from a large sample in less time than an interview.

Mailed survey questionnaires, however, have some limitations. Among these limitations are obtaining responses from a representative sample that could be generalizable to the population of the study and low response rates. These factors were taken into consideration in developing the research instruments and choosing the method of its distribution, as well as procedures for collecting data, organizing, and analyzing the results.

The methodology is presented according to the four research questions that guided the study. The process began with personal telephone calls to the randomly selected participants from the Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston. The purpose of the phone calls was to introduce the study to them, to determine their willingness to participate in the study, and to confirm their current mailing addresses.

Using their current mailing addresses, a copy of the questionnaire, a consent form, and a cover letter introducing the study, its significance, and the importance of

parents participation and cooperation were mailed to each willing participant. A stamped addressed return envelope was provided to participants in order to facilitate the return of the questionnaire and consent form within a reasonable period of time. A period of three week was suggested.

#### Data Analysis Procedures

The data collected from the parent responses to each Item of each of questions 1, 2, and 3 were first recorded in a computer using Microsoft Excel. The data was then transferred to a Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to be analyzed. The results of the analysis are presented in tabular form. The collected parent responses to question four were 255 in number and were grouped into main categories for analysis. The results of the analysis are reported in section four.

#### Summary

This section explained the major components of the design. A description of the population of the study was presented along with the description of the selection process used to determine the sample of the Somali immigrant and refugee women who participated in this study. Details of the research methods that were used to answer the four research questions, which guided this study, were explained. In addition, the development of the research instruments and procedures for collecting, organizing, and analyzing survey and descriptive data were elaborated. The collected data was transferred to Microsoft Excel, and the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was used for the data analysis. The results of the study are reported in the next Section.

## SECTION 4

### DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to present, analyze and interpret the data obtained from the survey responses of 15 Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston, Massachusetts. The data were collected from June of 1999 to March of 2000. This study describes the settlement and adjustment problems experienced by the Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston.

The data analysis in this section is presented in four sections based on the four research questions that guided this study. The first section answers the question: What do Somali immigrant and refugee women consider to be the factors that help the Somali immigrant and refugee women who are succeeding in settling and adjusting to their new home country? The second section answers the question: What do Somali immigrant and refugee women consider to be the factors that hinder their settlement and adjustment to this country? The third section answers the question: How important do Somali immigrant and refugee women consider collaboration among service agencies for helping immigrants and refugees succeed in their settlement and adjustment to the new country ways of living? Finally, section four answers the question: What recommendations do Somali immigrant and refugee women make, that may help them and other immigrant and refugee women to succeed in settling and adjusting to this country?

The data collected from the survey was coded and transferred to Microsoft Excel. The data was analyzed with SPSS statistics package and displayed in tabular and graphic forms. The data from responses to question 4, regarding recommendations, were analyzed for themes and organized by categories such as student needs, parent involvement, staff development, curriculum reform and safe environment. The descriptive results of the data were analyzed using percentages. In presenting the results of the questionnaire, the data gathered were analyzed using percentages.

### Research Question 1

What do Somali immigrant and refugee women consider to be the factors that help the Somali immigrant and refugee women who are succeeding in settling and adjusting to their new home country?

This section analyzes and presents findings related to research question 1 by looking survey results. It consists of three parts. First, the survey statements related to the factors that help the Somali immigrant and refugee women who are succeeding in settling and adjusting to their new home country are presented. The survey statements are based on the factors identified by the two focus groups of Somali Development Center personnel and the women who participated in the summer computer training and office skills training in Boston.

Second, the analysis of survey responses of 15 Somali immigrant and refugee women relating to the factors that help the Somali immigrant and refugee women who are succeeding in settling and adjusting to this new country are discussed. Third, the findings gleaned from the participants' responses to each of the statements related to question 1 of the survey are presented.

#### Survey Statements Relating To Question 1

The survey contained 8 statements which could give possible answers to question 1. These survey statements are based on factors identified by a focus groups of Somali development Center personnel and Somali immigrant and refugee women who attended the summer program in Boston.

The survey statements are:

1. Receiving immediate daycare assistance
2. English language proficiency
3. Previous work experiences



4. Getting housing assistance
5. Receiving support from SDC
6. Having clear future goals
7. Employment
8. Receiving support from family members already in USA

The participants were asked to read these statements and indicate if they strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, or strongly disagree with each of the statements by circling 1,2,3,4,5 depending on the one that corresponds with their position. The responses of the 15 participants in the survey to each of the above 8 statements under question 1 of the study is shown in tabular form.

In the discussion of the data from each item under question 1 of the survey, strongly agree and agree are viewed as positive responses and are combined to give a total positive response. Likewise, strongly disagree and disagree are combined to give total negative response. Items that show more than 51% of agreement or disagreement responses are selected for the discussion of question 1 under major findings. In this case, all responses were positive as shown by tables 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, and 1.8.

Table 1.1 shows that 11 participants (73.3%) of the respondents agree that they will be able to attend training programs if they have assistance with culturally sensitive daycare. 2 participants (13.4%) of the respondents were undecided while the other 2 participants (13.4%) of the respondents disagree. The data clearly shows that Somali immigrant and refugee women who participated in this study, strongly believe

that receiving immediate daycare assistance would help them to succeed in settling and adjusting to the new country.

Table 1.2 indicates that 12 participants (80%) of the respondents agree with the statement that English language proficiency would help them to succeed in settling and adjusting to the new country. The other 3 participants (20%) were not sure and neither agreed nor disagreed. The analysis of the responses show that English language proficiency would help them to succeed in settling and adjusting to the new country there is a general feeling among participants that communication in English is to their success in this country.

Table 1.3 indicates that all 15 participants (100%) agree that previous work experience would help them to succeed in settling and adjusting to the new country. This indicates that Somali immigrant and refugee women who have related work experience are succeeding in this country.

Table 1.4 shows that 11 participants (73.3) of the total respondents agreed that getting assistance with housing issues would help them to succeed in settling and adjusting to the new country. Two of them (13.3%) were not sure and remained undecided, and the remaining two (13.3%) respondents disagreed.

Table 1.5 shows that 11 participants (73.3) of the total respondents stated that support from SDC would help them to succeed in settling and adjusting to the new country. Two of them (13.3%) were not sure and remained undecided, and the remaining two (13.3%) respondents disagreed. The results show that Somali

immigrant and refugee women believe that the support from Somali Development Center is crucial in their settlement.

Table 1.6 shows that 6 participants (40%) of the total respondents agreed with the statement that having clear future goals would help them to succeed in settling and adjusting to the new country. Another 6 participants (40.0%) of the respondents were undecided. The remaining 3 participants (20.0%) disagreed.

Table 1.7 shows that 14 participants (93.3%) of the 15 respondents stated that with the statement that employment would help them to succeed in settling and adjusting to the new country. The remaining respondent stated that she is sure.

Table 1.8 shows that 11 participants (73.3%) of the 15 respondents agreed with the statement that support from family members already in the United States would help them to succeed in settling and adjusting to the new country. The remaining 4 respondents were not sure and remained undecided.

Table 1.1

## Participant Responses to Survey Statement 1.1

Participants indicated to what degree they agree or disagree that receiving immediate daycare assistance would help them to succeed in settling and adjusting to the new country.

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	05	33.3	33.3	33.3
Agree	06	40.0	40.0	73.3
Undecided	02	13.3	13.3	86.6
Disagree	01	06.7	06.7	93.3
Strongly disagree	01	06.7	06.7	100.0
Total	15	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.2  
Participant Responses to Survey Statement 1.2

Participants indicated to what degree they agree or disagree that English language proficiency would help them to succeed in settling and adjusting to the new country.

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	06	40.0	40.0	40.0
Agree	06	40.0	40.0	80.0
Undecided	03	20.0	20.0	100.0
Disagree	00	00.0	00.0	100.0
Strongly disagree	00	00.0	00.0	100.0
Total	15	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.3  
Participant Responses to Survey Statement 1.3

Participants indicated to what degree they agree or disagree that previous work experience would help them to succeed in settling and adjusting to the new country.

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	10	66.7	66.7	66.7
Agree	05	33.3	33.3	100.0
Undecided	00	00.0	00.0	100.0
Disagree	00	00.0	00.0	100.0
Strongly disagree	00	00.0	00.0	100.0
Total	15	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.4  
Participant Responses to Survey Statement 1.4

Participants indicated to what degree they agree or disagree that getting assistance with housing issues would help them to succeed in settling and adjusting to the new country.

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	05	2.4	2.4	2.4
Agree	06	37.6	37.6	40.0
Undecided	02	29.4	29.4	69.4
Disagree	01	27.1	27.1	96.5
Strongly disagree	01	3.5	3.5	100.0
Total	15	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.5  
Participant Responses to Survey Statement 1.5

Participants indicated to what degree they agree or disagree that support from SDC would help them to succeed in settling and adjusting to the new country.

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	05	2.4	2.4	2.4
Agree	06	37.6	37.6	40.0
Undecided	02	29.4	29.4	69.4
Disagree	01	27.1	27.1	96.5
Strongly disagree	01	3.5	3.5	100.0
Total	15	100.0	100.0	



Table 1.6

## Participant Responses to Statement 1.6

Participants indicated to what degree they agree or disagree with the statement that having clear future goals would help them to succeed in settling and adjusting to the new country.

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	3	20.0	20.0	20.0
Agree	3	20.0	20.0	40.0
Undecided	6	40.0	40.0	80.0
Disagree	2	13.3	13.3	93.3
Strongly disagree	1	6.7	6.7	100.0
Total	15	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.7

## Participant Responses to Survey Statement 1.7

Participant stated to what degree they agree or disagree with the statement that employment would help them to succeed in settling and adjusting to the new country.

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	02	13.3	13.3	13.3
Agree	12	80.0	80.0	93.3
Undecided	01	6.7	6.7	100.0
Disagree	00	00.0	00.0	100.0
Strongly disagree	00	00.0	00.0	100.0
Total	15	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.8

## Participant Responses to Survey Statement 1.8

Participant indicated to what degree they agree or disagree with the statement that support from family members already in the United States would help them to succeed in settling and adjusting to the new country.

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	06	40.0	40.0	40.0
Agree	05	33.3	33.3	73.3
Undecided	04	26.7	26.7	100.0
Disagree	00	00.0	00.0	100.0
Strongly disagree	00	00.0	00.0	100.0
Total	15	100.0	100.0	

### Findings for Research Question #1

The results of the data analysis show that responses to all the 8 items are positive. The participants believe that all the factors identified by the two focus groups help the Somali immigrant and refugee women who succeeding in their settlement, adjustment and adaptation to this country. During the follow up interview, most of the participant stated that Somali immigrant women who have family members already in the United States easily found available services. Also, they stated that those who were proficient in English were among the first to secure employment and job training. The only exception among this group were those who have young children and did not get daycare. Another important factor that contributed to their success according to the research participants, was previous work experience.

### Research Question 2

What do Somali immigrant and refugee women consider to be the factors that hinder their settlement and adjustment to this country?

This section analyzes and presents the findings related to research question 2 by looking at the survey results. The section consists of three parts. First, the survey statements related to the factors that hinder settlement and adjustment of Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston which were identified by the two focus groups of Somali Development Center personnel and Somali immigrant and refugee women who attended the Summer 1999 job training are presented. Second, the data from the responses of the Somali immigrant and refugee women to each of the survey statements under question 2 are analyzed. Third, findings from participant responses to the statements are presented.

#### Survey Statements Relating To Question 2

The survey contained 8 statements that could give answers to research question 2. These statements are based on factors identified by two focus groups: a focus group of Somali Development Center personnel and Somali immigrant and refugee women who attended the summer program of 1999. The statements are:

1. Lack of permanent housing
2. Lack of culturally sensitive daycare for single mothers
3. Dealing with many agencies that have different goals
4. High illiteracy rate among Somali women
5. Cultural shock
6. Communication problems due to lack of English proficiency
7. Lack of extended families' social and emotional support
8. Lack of financial support from husbands

The data analysis of the participant responses to the survey statements of question 2 is explained in tabular form. The percentage of respondents who strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, disagree or undecided to each item of the survey is explained and shown in the following tables. Strongly agree and agree responses are combined. Likewise, strongly disagree and disagree responses are also combined.

Table 2.1 shows that 11 participants (73.3%) of the responders stated that they agree with the statement that lack of permanent housing is a problem to their success in settling and adjusting to their new country. 4 participants (26.7%) of the respondents stated that they are not sure and do not have enough information to make a decision.

Table 2.2 shows that all the 15 participants (100%) of the total respondents believe that lack of a culturally sensitive daycare is a problem to their success in settling and adjusting to their new country.

Table 2.3 shows that 7 participants (46.6%) of the respondents agreed with the statement that dealing with many agencies that have different goals is a problem to their success in settling and adjusting to this new country. The remaining 8 participants (53.4%) of the total respondents are not sure whether it is a factor.

Table 2.4 shows that 9 participants (60%) of the respondents agree with the statement that high illiteracy rate among Somali immigrant and refugee women is a problem to their success in settling and adjusting to this country. 6 participants (40%) of the respondents were not sure and remained undecided.

Table 2.5 shows that 12 participants (80%) of the respondents agree with the statement that cultural shock is a problem to their success in settling and adjusting to

their new country. The remaining 3 participants were undecided. None of the participants disagree.

Table 2.6 shows that all 15 participants (100%) of respondents agreed with the statement that poor communication due to lack of English proficiency is a problem to their success in settling and adjusting to their new country. None of the participants disagreed.

Table 2.7 shows that all 15 participants (100%) of the study participants agreed with the statement that lack of extended families' social and emotional support is a problem to their success in settling and adjusting to their new country.

Table 2.8 shows that all the 15 participants (100%) of this study agreed with the statement that lack of financial, social, and emotional support from husbands is a problem to their success in settling and adjusting to their new country.

Table 2.1

Participant Responses to Survey Statement 2.1

Participants stated to what degree they agree or disagree that lack of a permanent housing is a problem to their success in settling and adjusting to their new country.

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	05	33.3	33.3	33.3
Agree	06	40.0	40.0	73.3
Undecided	04	26.7	26.7	100.0
Disagree	00	00.0	00.0	100.0
Strongly disagree	00	00.0	00.0	100.0
Total	15	100.0	100.0	



Table 2.2

## Participant Responses to Survey Statement 2.2

Participants stated to what degree they agree or disagree with the statement that lack of culturally sensitive daycare is a problem to their success in settling and adjusting to their new country.

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	10	66.7	66.7	66.7
Agree	05	33.3	33.3	100.0
Undecided	00	00.0	00.0	100.0
Disagree	00	00.0	00.0	100.0
Strongly disagree	00	00.0	00.0	100.0
Total	15	100.0	100.0	

Table 2.3

## Participant Responses to Survey Statement 2.3

Participant stated to what degree they agree or disagree with the statement that, dealing with many agencies that have different goals is a problem to their success in settling and adjusting to their new country.

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	05	33.3	33.3	33.3
Agree	02	13.3	13.3	46.6
Undecided	08	53.4	53.4	100.0
Disagree	00	00.0	00.0	100.0
Strongly disagree	00	00.0	00.0	100.0
Total	15	100.00	100.0	

Table 2.4

## Participant Responses to Survey Statement 2.4

Participants stated to what degree they agree or disagree with the statement that high illiteracy rate among Somali women is a problem to their success in settling and adjusting to their new country.

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	03	20.0	20.0	20.0
Agree	06	40.0	40.0	60.0
Undecided	06	40.0	40.0	100.0
Disagree	00	00.0	00.0	100.0
Strongly disagree	00	00.0	00.0	100.0
Total	15	100.0	100.0	

Table 2.6

## Participant Responses to Survey Statement 2.6

Participants stated to what degree they agree or disagree with the statement that poor communication due to lack of English proficiency is a problem to their success in settling and adjusting to their new country.

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	05	33.3	33.7	33.3
Agree	10	66.7	66.7	100.0
Undecided	00	00.0	00.0	100.0
Disagree	00	00.0	00.0	100.0
Strongly disagree	00	00.0	00.0	100.0
Total	15	100.0	100.0	

Table 2.7

## Participant Responses to Survey Statement 2.7

Participants stated to what degree they agree or disagree with the statement that lack of extended families' social and emotional support is a problem to their success in settling and adjusting to their new country.

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	12	80.0	80.0	80.0
Agree	03	20.0	20.0	100.0
Undecided	00	00.0	00.0	100.0
Disagree	00	00.0	00.0	100.0
Strongly disagree	00	00.0	00.0	100.0
Total	15	100.0	100.0	

Table 2.8

Participant Responses to Survey Statement 2.8

Participants stated to what degree they agree or disagree with the statement that lack of financial, social, and emotional support from husbands is a problem to their success in settling and adjusting to their new country.

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	12	80.0	80.0	80.0
Agree	03	20.0	20.0	100.0
Undecided	00	00.0	00.0	67.1
Disagree	00	00.0	00.0	100.0
Total	15	100.0	100.0	

### Findings for Research Question # 2

The findings for research question 2 are gleaned from the data analysis of 8 survey statements. The Participant respondents were given the survey statements and asked to indicate whether they agree, disagree, or are undecided with each of the statements. After the data analysis, the survey items in which more than 50% of the respondents either agreed or disagreed are selected for the discussion of the findings of question two. These items are (1) Lack of permanent housing. (2) Lack of culturally sensitive daycare for single mothers. (3) Dealing with many agencies that have different goals. (4) Prior educational experiences. (5) cultural shock. (6) poor communication due to lack of English proficiency. (7) Lack of extended families' social and emotional support. (8) Lack of financial, social, and emotional support from husbands. The results of the data analysis show that the participants are in agreement with all the statements related to research question2.

### Research Question 3

How important do Somali immigrant and refugee women consider collaboration among service agencies for helping immigrants and refugees succeed in their settlement and adjustment to the new country's ways of living?

This section analyzes and presents the findings related to question 3 by looking survey results. It is divided into two parts. First, the data from the responses of Somali immigrant and refugee women to five statements that are related to the importance of collaboration among service agencies who support immigrants and refugee to settle and adjust to the ways of living of this country, are analyzed. Second, Findings from participant responses to the five statements are presented.

#### Survey Statements Relating to Question 3 of the Survey

1. Collaboration among agencies helps the provision of appropriate programs.
2. Collaboration among agencies helps community involvement
3. Collaboration among ethnic and other agencies creates trust, and improvement of services.
4. Collaboration among ethnic and other agencies helps to find the community needs.
5. Collaboration among ethnic and other agencies helps to prioritize programs in terms of need.



Participant responses to these statements are shown in tables 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5. The responses to the five items are all positive. Table 3.1 shows that 66.7% agree that collaboration among agencies helps the provision of appropriate programs. The remaining 33.3% is undecided and none of the respondents disagrees with the statement. Table 3.2 shows that 86.7% agree with the statement that collaboration among agencies helps the immigrant community involvement, and the remaining 13.3% is undecided. Table 3.3 shows that 53.3% of the respondents believe that collaboration among ethnic and other immigrant serving agencies creates trust and cooperation in providing services. Table 3.4 shows that 80.0% of the responses agree that collaboration among ethnic organizations and other agencies helps to find the presenting community needs. The remaining 20.0% is undecided. Table 3.5 shows that 80.0% agree that collaboration among ethnic and other agencies helps to prioritize programs on the basis of community needs, and the remaining 20.0% is undecided.

Table 3.1

Participant Responses to Survey Statement 3.1

Participants indicated to what degree they agree or disagree that Collaboration among agencies helps the provision of appropriate programs.

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	04	26.7	26.7	26.7
Agree	06	40.0	40.0	66.7
Undecided	05	33.3	33.3	100.0

Table 3.2

Participant Responses to Survey Statement 3.2

Participants indicated to what degree they agree, or disagree Collaboration among agencies helps community involvement.

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	01	6.7	6.7	6.7
Agree	12	80.0	80.0	86.7
Undecided	2	13.3	13.3	100.0
Total	15	100.0	100.0	

Table 3.3

Participant Responses to Survey Statement 3.3

Participants indicated to what degree they agree or disagree that Collaboration among ethnic and other agencies creates trust, and improvement of services.

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	03	20.0	20.0	20.0
Agree	05	33.3	33.3	53.3
Undecided	07	46.7	46.7	100.0
Total	85	100.0	100.0	

Table 3.4

Participant Responses to Survey Statement 3.4

Participants indicated to what degree they agree or disagree with the statement that Collaboration among ethnic and other agencies helps to find the community needs.

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	06	40.0	40.0	40.0
Agree	06	40.0	40.0	80.0
Undecided	03	20.0	20.0	100.0
Total	15	100.0	100.0	

Table 3.5

Participant Responses to Survey Statement 3.5

Participants indicated to what degree they agree or disagree that Collaboration among ethnic and other agencies helps to prioritize programs in terms of community needs.

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	03	20.0	20.0	20.0
Agree	09	60.0	60.0	80.0
Undecided	03	20.0	20.0	100.0
Total	15	100.0	100.0	

### Findings for Research Question # 3

Participant responses to research question 3 point to strong support for inter agency collaboration in assisting immigrants and refugees. The responses to all the five statements were positive. The survey results of item 1 of question 3 show as stated in table 3.1 that Somali immigrant and refugee women believe that collaboration among agencies would help the provision of appropriate programs. In addition, the participants stated that collaboration among agencies, specially among ethnic organizations and immigrant and refugee serving agencies could help improvement of services, creation of trust, community involvement, assessment of community needs, and prioritization of programs.

This can be achieved according to the participants, only through trust among agencies and commitment to improvement of services provided to newcomers. The results indicate that Somali immigrant and refugee women are willing to work with all organizations to help them identify presenting issues that need to be addressed.

#### Research Question #4

What recommendations do Somali immigrant and refugee women make that may help them and other immigrant and refugee women to succeed in settling and adjusting to this country?

This questions designed to provide Somali immigrant and refugee women who participated in this study, the opportunity to recommend what they think should be done to help them succeed in settling, and adjusting to this country. All 15 participants responded. Each participant was asked to write recommendation. Forty-five (45) recommendations were collected.

Participants based their recommendations on two things: First, their personal experiences with the both the Somali community organizations and other settlement organizations; and second, information they received from other Somali immigrant and refugee women.

The findings gleaned from the responses of the participant recommendations regarding what may help immigrant and refugee in to succeed in settling and adjusting to this country can be categorized into four main groups for analysis. The categories address such areas as: 1) collective action by Somali ethnic organizations and other immigrant and refugee serving organizations to look the specific needs of community, find out the presenting issues, and develop appropriate programs to address. 2) The community leaders, specially women leaders should be involved in the whole process from needs assessment to the final evaluation of every program. The other things that came of these recommendations include the following:

- a) Affordable daycare for mothers
- b) Childcare and nutrition training for women
- b) Pre-arranged housing at least for the first six month.
- d) Transportation support



e) Interpretation assistance by bilingual staff at health providers, schools, state and settlement agencies, f) Increase of welfare eligibility time for refugees, and finally g) job and skills training done by bilingual staff.

## SECTION 5

### SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section has three main purposes. First, a summary of this research study is presented. Second, conclusions concerning ways to assist Somali immigrant and refugee women settling in Boston and adjusting to the life in this country are discussed. Third, this section discusses the findings, mainly focusing on the conclusions that are strongly supported by the data. Finally, recommendations for improving the ways in which agencies support the Somali immigrants and refugees in general and in particular are presented. Recommendations for establishing constructive collaboration between Somali Community Organizations and other organizations serving immigrants and refugees are outlined. Recommendations for further research are advanced.

#### Summary of the Study

In the last two decades, new groups of immigration and refugees were coming to North America. There has been a shift in the cultures, values, and countries of origin of the immigrant and refugee population. This shift is from the traditional western European nations to African, Asian, and South American nations. Among the new immigrants and refugees are Somalis.

As a result, of this change, settlement agencies face new challenge and while they have been successful in helping a significant number of these newcomers to succeed in their settlement, adjustment and adaptation, many are disconnected from the services, and are not succeeding. The majority of the unsuccessful group is women.

The difficulties experienced by many immigrant and refugee women, in spite of our increased understanding of their needs, appears linked to be the conditions that newly arrived women experience.

For example, success of immigrant and refugee settlement may depend on many factors such as: housing, availability of affordable daycare, financial situation, employment, level of education, and others

The major purpose of this study was to explore, investigate, and analyze the problems Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston experience.. An additional purpose of the study was to find out what Somali immigrant and refugee women suggest or recommend that would help them and others to succeed in settling and adjusting to the new life in this country. Collaboration of ethnic and other settlement and agencies is necessary for the creation of meaningful services that help all immigrants and refugees to reach their potential.

Four specific research questions guided this study:

1. What do Somali immigrant and refugee women consider to be the factors that help the Somali immigrant and refugee women who are succeeding in settling and adjusting to country?
2. What do Somali immigrant and refugee women consider to be the factors that hinder their settlement and adjustment to this country?
3. How important do Somali immigrant and refugee women consider collaboration among service agencies for helping immigrants and refugees succeed in their settlement and adjustment to the new country ways of living?

4. What recommendations do Somali immigrant and refugee women make that may help them and other immigrant and refugee women to succeed in settling and adjusting to this country?

The study was carried out in the following manner. First, a focus group of Somali Development Center personnel was asked to list the factors that they think are helping the Somali immigrant and refugee women who are succeeding in settling and adjusting to this and the factors that hinder the settlement and adjustment of the struggling ones.

Second, the same question was given to another focus group of the Somali immigrant and refugee women that attended a summer 1999 computer and office skills training. The factors listed by the two groups were used as basis for developing a survey instrument. Four Somali educators reviewed the survey and recommended slight changes. The population of this study was the Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston. A sample of 20 participants (40%) of a list of 50 Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston was selected for this study.

Data was collected by the researcher through a survey questionnaire. The survey was mailed to 20 participants who stated their desire to participate in the study. The participants were asked to complete the survey that consisted of 21 items. In addition, question 4 asked each participant to write three recommendations that may help to improve school and non-school learning conditions for all children. Fifteen (15%) of the fifty (20%) respondent participants completed the survey and sent it back to the researcher. This was a total return of over seventy-five percent (75%).

A reminder letter was mailed to the remaining five participants and after two weeks follow-up phone calls were made. Two of the participants moved to other

states, but the three others did mail the questionnaires later. Since the data analysis began before the researcher received them, they were not added to the data.

Data collected from the responses of the 15 participants who returned the survey within the expected time were coded and transferred to Microsoft Excel. The data was then analyzed with SPSS statistics and displayed in tabular form. Data from the recommendations were analyzed for themes and organized by categories such as.

### Summary of Findings and Implications

In the following section, the major findings and implications of each question are presented. The conclusions of this study are significant for the provision of quality services to Somali and other immigrant and refugee women who are settling in the United States. Major conclusions drawn from the data analysis are described in order of the research questions.

### Findings for Research Question #1

What do Somali immigrant and refugee women consider to be the factors that help the Somali immigrant and refugee women who are succeeding in settling and adjusting to their new home country?

The results of the data analysis show that responses to all the 8 items are positive. The participants believe that all the factors identified by the two focus groups help the Somali immigrant and refugee women who succeeding in their settlement, adjustment and adaptation to this country. During the follow up interview, most of the participant stated that Somali immigrant women who have family members already in the United States easily found available services. Also, they stated that those who were proficient in English were among the first to secure employment and job training. The only exception among this group were those who have young children and did not get daycare. Another important factor that contributed to their success according to the research participants, was previous work experience.

### Findings for Research Question #2

The findings for research question 2 are gleaned from the data analysis of 8 survey statements. The Participant respondents were given the survey statements and asked to indicate whether they agree, disagree, or are undecided with each of the statements. After the data analysis, the survey items in which more than 50% of the respondents either agreed or disagreed are selected for the discussion of the findings of question two. These items are (1) Lack of permanent housing. (2) Lack of culturally sensitive daycare for single mothers. (3) Dealing with many agencies that have different goals. (4) Prior educational experiences.(5) cultural shock.(6) poor communication due to lack of English proficiency. (7) Lack of extended families' social and emotional

support. (8) Lack of financial, social, and emotional support from husbands. The results of the data analysis show that the participants are in agreement with all the statements related to research question2.

#### Findings for Research Question #3

Participant responses to research question 3 point to strong support for inter agency collaboration in assisting immigrants and refugees. The responses to all the five statements were positive. The survey results of item 1 of question show as stated in table 3.1 that Somali immigrant and refugee women believe that collaboration among agencies would help the provision of appropriate programs. In addition, the participants stated that collaboration among agencies, specially among ethnic organizations and immigrant and refugee serving agencies could help improvement of services, creation of trust, community involvement, assessment of community needs, and prioritization of programs.

This can be achieved according to the participants, only through trust among agencies and commitment to improvement of services provided to newcomers. The results indicate that Somali immigrant and refugee women are willing to work with all organizations to help them identify presenting issues that need to be addressed

#### Findings for Research Question #4

Unlike the questions about the factors that help or hinder the settlement and adjustment of Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston, and the importance of collaboration among ethnic and other organizations who provide services to Somali immigrants and refugees; question four was about, what recommendations do Somali

immigrant and refugee women make that may help them and other immigrant and refugee women to succeed in settling and adjusting to this country.

Participant recommendations were based on two things: First, their personal experiences with the both the Somali community organizations and other settlement organizations; and second, information they received from other Somali immigrant and refugee women.

The findings gleaned from the responses of the participant recommendations regarding what may help immigrant and refugee in to succeed in settling and adjusting to this country can be categorized into four main groups for analysis. The categories address such areas as: 1) collective action by Somali ethnic organizations and other immigrant and refugee serving organizations to look the specific needs of community, find out the presenting issues, and develop appropriate programs to address. 2) The community leaders, specially women leaders should be involved in the whole process from needs assessment to the final evaluation of every program. The other things that came of these recommendations include the following:

- c) Affordable daycare for mothers
- b) Childcare and nutrition training for women
- d) Pre-arranged housing at least for the first six month.
- d) Transportation support
- e) Interpretation assistance by bilingual staff at health providers, schools, state and settlement agencies,
- f) Increase of welfare eligibility time for refugees, and finally
- g) job and skills training done by bilingual staff.

### Recommendations

This final part of this section suggests recommendations based on the findings of the study. These recommendations are of three types. First, recommendations are proposed for the improvement of this study. Second, recommendations for further



research are suggested. Finally, recommendations for improving settlement and adjustment conditions for Somali immigrant and refugee women are advanced.

#### Recommendations for the Improvement of this Study

This researcher encountered some problems in conducting this study. The study was limited to the Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston at the time of this study. It was not feasible to extend the study to other areas outside of the Boston area due to limited resources and time. Other problems encountered by the Researcher included lack of any organized list of Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston. Lists from Somali organizations, settlement agencies, and others were collected. The collected lists of Somali immigrant and refugee women were compared and checked to avoid using twice one name that may be included in more than one list. Once a final list was made, problems of identifying their current mailing addresses surfaced.

To improve this study, a longer time for such a study is needed. This will enable the researcher to spend time in compiling a bigger list of the Somali and immigrant women in Boston. Such a list will enable the researcher to expand the research questions and gain responses from a larger number of the population of this study. Another factor to take into account is the time and expenses of such an important study.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

The recommendations for further research fall in several critical areas that may encourage the improvement of the settlement and adjustment services provided to immigrants and refugees settling and starting a new life in the United States.

1. Since this study was limited to the settlement and adjustment problems experienced by the Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston, further study is needed to find out whether Somali immigrant and refugee women in other parts of Massachusetts and other states experience similar problems.
2. Further research is needed to examine the appropriateness of the programs provided by settlement agencies from their pre-departure preparatory ones to job and skills training provided them after they arrive in the United States.
3. Further research is needed with respect to how settlement agencies involve immigrant and refugee communities in prioritizing the needs related to settlement.
4. Further research is needed to find out the major problems that hinder the settlement, adjustment and adaptation of Somali immigrants and refugees in general, and the best ways in which settlement agencies and local community organizations could identify these problems and address, so that most if not all immigrants and refugees may succeed to their potential.

#### Recommendations for Improving Settlement and Adjustment Conditions for Somali Immigrant and Refugee Women in Boston

A fundamental purpose of assisting immigrants and refugees in a democratic society should be to provide quality services and opportunities. Not only are settlement agencies expected to initiate and develop comprehensive immediate settlement programs and activities that lead to the successful settlement and adjustment, but newcomers also expect these agencies to lead the efforts towards social justice in a society that is under constant demographic change. To achieve this purpose, settlement agencies have the responsibility of developing programs that help

all immigrant and refugee women and provide them with the opportunity to learn the necessary skills they need to be successful in this society.

The findings of this study have significant implications for improving settlement programs that immigrant and refugee women receive. The findings of this study confirm the findings of previous studies on settlement and adjustment problems experienced by immigrants and refugees.

There is no one way to solve the challenges immigrants and refugees face in their settlement, but there are many ways to approach addressing these challenges, if agencies recognize that immigrant community involvement is crucial in creating the conditions necessary for improved services by revisiting the existing programs and redesigning to meet the needs of the newcomers.

### Closing

Many Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston experience difficulty in settling and adjusting to this new home country. Despite our increased understanding of second language acquisition, individual differences, and the importance of involvement of community organizations in the process of assisting newcomers to settle and re-establish their lives in their new country, the immigrant and refugees still face many problems. Somali immigrant and refugee women continue to be the least educated, highest in unemployment, and the greatest number of heads of households among the immigrant and refugee population. As the immigrant and refugee population continues to increase, so will the challenges that accompany the need to provide adequate settlement and adjustment services. Many factors that contribute to these difficulties are associated with the settlement services that these immigrants and refugees receive when they arrive in the United States.

Creating effective programs and welcoming settlement environments for all immigrants and refugees is not an easy task. It requires commitment and collaboration of all concerned organizations to assist newcomers with the support they need, motivate them, and help them to achieve the necessary skills. In addition, constructive partnership between Somali community organizations and organizations providing settlement and adjustment services to immigrants and refugees is key to helping newcomers to successfully settle, adjust, and re-establish their lives.

## APPENDIX A

### A LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

## LETTER TO PARTICIPANT CANDIDATES

102 Prince Hall, Umass  
Amherst, MA

(name)  
(address)

Dear (name)

I am Samia H. Mafal, a Masters candidate in the Center for International Education at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Massachusetts, USA. I am doing research to get data for my Masters Project. The title of the project is Somali Immigrant and Refugee Women in Boston: Settlement and Adjustment Problems.

This research focuses on the factors that help or hinder the settlement and adjustment of Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston. The instruments used for data collection will be questionnaires written in English and Somali that will be mailed to each parent participant. Confidentiality will be assured. Neither your name, nor your address, and names of people close to you will be used. In case of specific data, I will use codes that in no way relate to you or to your family.

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate. I look forward to talking to you when the questionnaires are ready to be mailed. Thank you again

Sincerely,

Samia H. Mafal

APPENDIX B  
CONSENT FORM

## Participant Consent Form

I, Samia H. Mafal, am a Masters student at the School of Education, University of Massachusetts in Amherst, Massachusetts. I am conducting a study for my masters project that will explore the settlement and adjustment problems that Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston.

You are asked to be a participant in this study because you are one of the Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston. The data will be gathered by means of a questionnaire.

Your participation is voluntary. Therefore, you are free to participate or not to participate without prejudice. Also your decision to participate or not to participate will no way affect you or your family. If you choose to participate, you will be one of approximately 20 participants completing the questionnaire forms. The data obtained from the responses of the questionnaire will be categorized with the final objective of analyzing the material for.

- \* My Masters project
- \* A possible journal article
- \* Presentations and workshops to groups interested in providing quality programs for immigrant and refugees in Boston.

In all written materials and oral presentations in which I will use the data from the questionnaires, I will use neither your name, nor names of people close to you. In case of specific data, I will use codes to participants.

You may withdraw from part or all of this study at any time. Also, you may review your data any time. If I am to use the data provided in any other way not consistent with the above mentioned objectives, I will contact you to get your additional consent.

I \_\_\_\_\_, have read the above statements and agree to participate in this study under the conditions stated above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of participant      Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_



APPENDIX C  
INSTRUCTION TO PARTICIPANTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Somali immigrant and Refugee Women in Boston:

Settlement and Adjustment Problems.

Participant Survey

Dear Participant:

Thank you for helping with this important study. The following survey is designed to find out what you consider to be the settlement and adjustment problems, that Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston experience. Your responses to the following questions will assist Somali community organizations, settlement agencies, and others that work with the Somali immigrants and refugees and other newcomers to improve the services they.

Your participation in the survey is voluntary, and your responses are completely confidential. Please note that there are no right or wrong responses to the questions. I appreciate your help in completing this survey.

Please place the completed questionnaire in the provided stamped and self-addressed envelope and mail. Again, thank you for all your help.

Sincerely,

Samia H. Mafal  
Bilingual Teacher  
Center for International Education  
School of Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

APPENDIX D  
PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

## Somali Immigrant and Refugee Women Survey(SIRWS)

I. Personal Information      II. Participant Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Please check the category that fits your profile.

A. Marital Status:

1. Single\_\_\_\_ 2. Married\_\_\_\_ 3. Separated\_\_\_\_  
4. Divorce\_\_\_\_ 5. widowed\_\_\_\_

B. Education:

1. None\_\_\_\_ 2. Elementary\_\_\_\_ 3. Intermediate\_\_\_\_  
4. Secondary\_\_\_\_ 5. College\_\_\_\_ 6. University\_\_\_\_

C. Number of Years in USA:

- 0-2\_\_\_\_ 2-5\_\_\_\_ 5-10\_\_\_\_ More than 10 years\_\_\_\_

E. Number of children :

- 1\_\_\_\_ 2\_\_\_\_ 3\_\_\_\_ 4\_\_\_\_ 5\_\_\_\_ 6 or more\_\_\_\_

F. Grade level of your child

- K\_\_\_\_ Elementary\_\_\_\_ Middle\_\_\_\_ High\_\_\_\_ College\_\_\_\_

G. Employment

- Employed.\_\_\_\_ Self employed\_\_\_\_ Unemployed\_\_

### Instructions to the Survey

Below are statements of possible factors that may affect positively or negatively the settlement and adjustment of Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston. Please indicate if you Strongly Agree (1) Agree(2) Neither Agree nor Disagree (3) Disagree(4) Strongly Disagree (5) with each statement, by circling the number that corresponds with your position.

- 1= Strongly agree  
2= Agree  
3= Neither agree nor disagree (undecided)  
4= Disagree  
5= Strongly disagree

Q.1. What do Somali immigrant and refugee women consider to be the factors that help the Somali immigrant and refugee women who are succeeding in settling and adjusting to this new country?

1. Receiving immediate daycare assistance	1	2	3	4	5
2. English language proficiency	1	2	3	4	5
3. Previous work experiences	1	2	3	4	5
4. Getting housing assistance	1	2	3	4	5
5. Receiving support from SDC	1	2	3	4	5
6. Having clear future goals	1	2	3	4	5
7. Employment	1	2	3	4	5
8. Receiving support from family members already in USA	1	2	3	4	5

Q.2. What do Somali immigrant and refugee women consider to be the factors that hinder their settlement and adjustment to this country?

1. Lack of permanent housing	1	2	3	4	5
2. Lack of culturally sensitive daycare programs for single mothers	1	2	3	4	5
3. Dealing with many agencies that have different goals	1	2	3	4	5
4. High illiteracy rate among Somali women	1	2	3	4	5
5. Cultural shock	1	2	3	4	5

6. Communication problems due to lack of English proficiency

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

7. Lack of extended families' social and emotional support is a problem to their success in settling and adjusting to their new country.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

8. Lack of financial, social, and emotional support from husbands is a problem to their success in settling and adjusting to their new country.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Q.3. How important do Somali immigrant and refugee consider the collaboration of service in helping immigrants and refugees succeed in their settlement and adjustment to this country's ways of living?

1. Collaboration among agencies helps the provision of appropriate programs.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

2. Collaboration among agencies encourages community involvement in schools

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

3. Collaboration among ethnic and other agencies creates trust

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

4. Collaboration among ethnic and other agencies helps to find the real needs

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

5. Collaboration among ethnic and other agencies helps to prioritize programs in terms of need.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Q.4. What recommendations do Somali immigrant and refugee women make that may help them and other immigrant refugee women to succeed in settling and adjusting to this country better?

-----  
For question # 4, please list three suggestions that you think may help you and other immigrant and refugee women to succeed in settling and adjusting to this country better.

Recommendation 1 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Recommendation 2 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Recommendation 3 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX E  
THANK YOU LETTER



Thank You Letter to Participants

102 Prince Hall, Umass  
Amherst, MA 01003  
April 25, 2000

<Title> <First> <Last>  
<Address>  
<City, State>

Dear <First>,

Thank you for completing the questionnaires for my Master's Project titled "Somali Immigrant and Refugee Women in Boston: Settlement and Adjustment." Your ideas about the factors that impact the settlement and adjustment of Somali immigrant and refugee women in Boston, help not only the completion of this study, but also the provision of appropriate services all immigrants and refugees settling in Boston.

The data collection portion of my research is now complete. Because of your assistance and that of other participants, I have the responses from 15 participants. This information will be organized and analyzed during the Spring semester of 2000. When my work is complete, I will send you a copy of my report.

Again, thank you for your time and thoughtful responses. My warmest wishes to you and your family.

Sincerely,

Samia H. Mafal

## APPENDIX F

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