

PUTTING DOWN ROOTS: A CASE STUDY OF THE PARTICIPATION OF SOMALI
BANTU REFUGEES IN THE GLOBAL GARDENS REFUGEE
FARMING PROJECT IN BOISE, IDAHO

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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Title: Putting Down Roots: A Case Study of the Participation of Somali Bantu Refugees in the Global Gardens Refugee Farming Project in Boise, Idaho

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Using interviews with refugee farmers and insights gained through participant-observation at farms and at farming events, this thesis explores how Somali Bantu refugees interact with the Global Gardens resettlement project in Boise, Idaho. Somali Bantu refugees' engagement with the agricultural integration program reveals that the United States refugee resettlement system often focuses on economic integration goals and measures to the exclusion of alternative development or integration options. Refugee farmers' common and differing experiences and evaluations of the farm project challenge the wisdom of a purely neoliberal, economics-focused approach to resettlement. This study suggests that refugee-farming participants were not uniformly and principally motivated to farm by potential financial gain: in addition to viewing the farms as an economic resource, participants valued the farms as important social, cultural, and civic resources.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of Study

There are approximately 12 million refugees worldwide, the majority of which reside in developing states. Each year, less than one percent of these refugees are resettled internationally, with the majority taken in by the United States (“Durable Solutions,” 2010). After resettlement, refugees face a host of new challenges (Lubbers, 2002). Once in the United States, these people navigate a complex, loosely structured, and costly resettlement program involving multiple agencies and actors. The aim of the US resettlement regime is to make refugees economically self-sufficient; taking this view, successful integration projects work to move refugees off of social welfare services into independence.

Yet, according to a 2010 Senate Committee report, the current policies and structure of the US resettlement regime are failing to sufficiently integrate refugees (United States, 2010, p. 1). Faced with an uncertain economic climate, refugee service agencies are under pressure to ensure that newcomers are economically self-sufficient as soon as possible after their arrival. The report pointed to the burden the system creates for receiving communities and found that the current structure and guiding policy do not adequately speak to the complexities of resettlement and identity: “irrespective of important factors such as education level, health condition, or psychological background each refugee is initially afforded a one-size-fits-all assistance” (United States, 2010, p. 3). The report’s findings connect with recent studies and recommendations on integration,

which have suggested that integration depends on a multitude of factors (Brown et al. 2007).

The assessment and criticism of the regime as ‘one-size-fits-all’ link to debates within international development. Reviewers of mainstream development have criticized it for its assumptions about progress and its singular method despite complex identities and contexts. The dominant development dialogue typically focuses on growth tactics applied to the developing world, yet the development experience might not be geographically isolated. This thesis explores the overlap between development approaches and assumptions and the US resettlement program.

The guiding questions for the study are: In what ways do refugee resettlement policies reflect mainstream development approaches and what can be learned from refugees’ experience with these policies? In order to learn the extent to which US resettlement mirrors development, this research is a focus-study on a refugee agriculture project in Idaho. The Idaho project aims to assist refugee integration through farming. The study examines the aims and challenges of the Global Gardens’ Star Farm initiative as a resettlement project in design and in practice, and focuses on refugees’ responses to the project. Ultimately, the project seeks to understand the role that the Global Gardens’ Star Farm plays in resettlement in Boise and what lessons and best practices might be learned from it.

My research design was inspired by intersectional scholarship, which expresses the importance of narratives in analyzing systems of power (Fernandes, 1997). As McCall posits, “Narratives take as their subject an individual or an individual’s experience and extrapolate illustratively to the broader social location embodied by the individual”

(2005, p. 1781). Heeding McCall, my study utilizes the experience and personal narratives of Somali Bantu refugees in order to understand the broader consequences of development. As such, after concluding a review of the literature surrounding development and resettlement, I began five weeks of field research in Boise, Idaho. This study utilizes information gleaned from participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and two life-stories in addition to textual analysis of farm-related documents.

The study explores the Star Farm Small Farmers' Project near Boise, Idaho as a microcosm of the complex interactions between international, state, and local development actors and the recipients of development or integration assistance: refugees. Insights gained through this study reveal that successful integration encompasses more than solely economic factors. The farm project provides a unique example for viewing the dynamic processes at work in resettlement programs. Using lessons learned from literature on critical development studies and a series of interviews with farmer refugees, I articulate a need to reassess the primacy of economic strategies to resettle refugees, using refugee lived experiences as a point of departure. The findings from this study contribute to understandings of international and domestic development.

The research and findings are presented in five chapters. In order to position my study within a wider discussion of international development, the first chapter provides an overview of mainstream development and resettlement, drawing parallels between the objectives of each. I then present a more in-depth description of my methodological approach. The second chapter introduces Somali Bantu refugees, the participants in this case study, as representative of a new type of refugee. It then provides an overview of their resettlement process. The preparations for their resettlement and their reception

provide both an example of how refugees are represented as a problem to be solved (not unlike the Third World¹) and provide a context for delving into the case study in Boise. I introduce my case study in chapter three. Chapters four and five focus on my findings and analysis of my observations and interviews respectively.

Theoretical Framework: Why and How?

This study engages discussions and debates in critical development and in US resettlement in order to frame and better understand the dynamics at work in the Global Gardens resettlement project. Utilizing the development discourse as a framework is beneficial because it provides a rich history of critical dialogue about the assumptions, prescriptions and outcomes of development programs. I argue that the current resettlement discourse and system attempts to develop refugees using the same assumptions and strategies as mainstream development. Each discourse, resettlement and development, are framed by related presumptions, therefore it is valid and instructive to apply the lessons learned in critical development studies to discussions about resettlement.

Historically, the object of development has been the Third World, and the subject the First World. This thesis explores the question, what happens when that ‘object’ is embodied and migrates? The remainder of this chapter will set the conceptual groundwork for understanding this question. It demonstrates the similarities between development and resettlement by reviewing mainstream approaches to development with close attention to the way it defines objectives, objects and solutions and will briefly

¹ I recognize that the term Third World is problematic and has been criticized within development studies. Throughout this thesis I purposefully utilize the term mimicking news media and popular constructions of African refugees. The term’s continued use in the resettlement discourse likewise helps to connect development language to resettlement.

sketch the parallels within the resettlement system. The following sections define and situate mainstream development then discuss the assumptions, goals, and criticisms of development and resettlement respectively.

Mainstream Development Discourse

The meanings, approaches, and even the value of engaging development have been debated and contested productively by numerous scholars and theorists (Carson, 1962; Escobar, 1995; Leys, 1996; Pieterse, 2001; Sachs, 1992). While there is no unanimously agreed upon definition of development or a singular approach, there is a standard, which has dominated the development discourse (Simon, 1997). That standard subscribes to a linear model of development and utilizes the language liberalization and markets in its formula for human progress (Simon, 1997, p. 4). The strategy for encouraging progress or development is to maximize access and participation in the market (Simon, 1997 p. 188). The successes of such policies are often presented in measurements of economic improvement and are more reflective of donor rather than recipient priorities (Simon, 1997 p. 188; Ferguson, 1994).

Mainstream development begins with two assumptions that inform its theory and applications. First, there are underdeveloped societies, which are considered underdeveloped because they lack Western economic, legal, and educational mechanisms (Isbister, 2003). On its surface, this assumption appears benign, and seemingly opens up an opportunity for the West to assist those lagging societies. However, at its core, the assumption sets up an unequal dualism where the West is the modern subject and the Global South the primitive object of development. Ferguson explains: “Like ‘civilization’ in the nineteenth century, ‘development’ is the name not only for a value but also for a

dominant problematic or interpretive grid through which impoverished regions of the world are known to us,” (1994, p.xiii). It is the gaze onto the impoverished world that yields a value and power dynamic: “it appears self-evident that debtor Third World nation-states and starving peasants share a common ‘problem’, that both lack a single ‘thing’: ‘development,’ (1994, p.xiii). In identifying the Third World as a simple object, development theory denies the complexities and differences between and within developing states. Second, the discourse assumes underdeveloped states can be developed via strategies provided by developed states.

The conventional model of development sets up a binary in which the West or the Global North is modern and developed and the Global South is not. Pieterse’s description of development elaborates on this power dynamic:

“We can probably define development as the organized intervention in collective affairs according to a standard of improvement. What constitutes improvement and what is appropriate intervention obviously vary according to class, culture, historical context and relations of power” (2001, p. 3).

Development in this view diagnoses a problem and then prescribes a solution from a distinct perspective. Historically, the standard of improvement has been based on a definition of development that is synonymous with the industrialized, liberal West (Leys, 1996). The resulting paradigm constructs development as a linear progression where societies move from traditional-primitive to modern-industrial (Isbister, 2003; Leys, 1996). Assuming development is natural and historic (Isbister, 2003), development theory and practitioners assess a lag in this process as problematic and define it as underdevelopment.

Going hand-in-hand with these presumptions are accepted definitions of the underdeveloped as being without, lacking, primitive or backward. Reiterating theoretical assumptions about the Third World, Leys writes: “They assumed that the ‘backwardness’ of the Third World was an ‘original’ backwardness, a primeval backwardness that had once been universal and could be overcome by the transmission of capital and know-how from the industrial West” (1996, p. 111). The concept of a world divided into First and Third World categories is based on assumptions of backwardness: when this is projected onto the Third World, it should be understood as racialized. The binary denies the complexities, context, and history of the Third World, viewing it only as a problem of maturity or progress.

Thus, the development project is born from an assumption that there is a correct way to develop, and that the West has paved the way forward. Pre-industrial states are viewed as primitive. Though the discourse is clearly situated on the international stage, these assumptions about backwardness and limitations carry over into the resettlement of refugees from the Third World in the US. The resettlement of Somali Bantu in the US and locally in Idaho, discussed in chapter two, exemplify the notion that refugees need to be modernized, and that they require development to be normal or integrated. The assumption that there is a development problem easily leads into the second assumption about the best and most correct solution.

The second assumption refers to the strategy by which the West can best assist primitive societies in achieving development. The assumption has been that the impoverished parts of the world lack ‘development’ or the technology, knowledge, or socio-political devices to ‘develop’; they were underdeveloped (Ferguson, 1994, p. xiii;

Isbister, 2003). Development, then, seeks to intervene in societies that are not developing by prescribing a solution in an effort to catapult them into the modern world. The impetus for developing these pre-modern societies has been through industrialization and liberalization of their economies (Chandra, 1992, p. 1; Pieterse, 2001, p. 5). It is through this particular language of development that economics and individualism have become mainstreamed in implementation.

In practice, this transmission occurred through the prescription of development projects focusing on economic development and integration as the solution for underdevelopment (Leys, 1996, p. 110). Projects focused on oriented training and education and attempted to integrate developing countries into the global market. Evidence of this trend can be seen in the United Nations' Development Goals in the 1970's, 80's and 90's which clearly and overtly focused on economic integration and structural adjustment (Jolly, 2010). With the advent of the UN's Millennium Development Goals, the development regime's focus turned toward basic human needs. Still, structural impediments to development and the market economy continue to be centered in large scale, mainstream development projects (Craig & Porter, 2006). Distinctly, neoliberal structural adjustment programs in the early 1990's called for liberalization of markets, and the privatization of industry.

This dominant development approach has not been without critique for its shortcomings. Critical scholarship has noted that the mainstream view singularly focuses on economics, and views the individual as only a market-actor, stripped of history, context, culture and politics (Brohman, 1995). Thus, mainstream development has neglected to address social and cultural interactions as well as the meanings of

development from different perspectives (Brohman, 1995). The resulting projects following this narrow understanding of development have been faulted for their failure to deliver promised results (Leys, 1996; Munck & O'Hearn, 1999; Ward et al. 2009). They also have been critiqued for their assumptions of 'primitive' and formations of a developed and underdeveloped binary (Ferguson 1994).

These critiques have paved the way toward a wider, more inclusive discussion of successful international development. These alternative discussions have played an important role in mainstreaming women and gender issues, local voices, and the importance of context and indigenous knowledges (Visvanathan, 1997). Importantly, these new approaches attempt to transcend the notion of linear development by incorporating the interests of the recipients of development in defining projects (Krishna et al. 1997; Uphoff et al. 1998). While these new approaches are not without criticism, they denote a step away from mainstream assumptions.

The presumption that development is best achieved by integrating societies into a modern economy (Leys, 1996; Pieterse, 2002) carries over from international to domestic projects. If the dominant development paradigm understands its objects as backward and primitive and phrases development in purely economic and instrumental terms, what happens when its objects migrate? In the following section I outline the resettlement policy in the United States focusing on its goals and linking them to objectives visible within international development.

When the Third World Subject Migrates: Resettlement as Development

The current US resettlement structure is founded on the definitions and procedures put forth in the Refugee Act of 1980, which defined refugees, structured

resettlement, and set the groundwork for creating and administering state-led integration programs (“United States: The Refugee Act,” 1980). Importantly, the Act set the precedence for priorities within refugee resettlement by defining refugee integration as economic self-sufficiency (Kennedy, 1981; Leibowitz, 1983). The Act’s purpose was to move refugees from welfare toward independence (Leibowitz, 1983). The resulting definition, objectives, and solutions mirror the problems and solutions defined in conventional international development.

The definition of refugee under the new Act was broadened to include a new type of refugee and bring the US policy into line with the 1951 UN convention definition (UNHCR, 2010). Prior to the 1980 Refugee Reform Act, the definition of a refugee for US admissions purposes was restricted to people fleeing communism or the Middle East (Boas, 2007). The new Act broadened the definition of refugee and opened the door to settling significant numbers of African refugees. In practice, though the Act formally extended the definition of refugees and set a minimum for annual admissions, the US did not begin to increase admissions from Africa until the end of the Cold War, nine years later (Boas, 2007; Keely, 2001).

The 2010 Senate committee report on refugees noted this change in refugees receiving services, finding that local resettlement organizations and communities were taxed with providing services to a “qualitatively different kind of refugee”, one that “lacks the basic skills required to compete in an increasingly strained job market” (United States, 2010, p. 1). The language and examples used within the report echo that of mainstream development. For its examples on the “different” refugee, the report focused on refugee populations that had not experienced modern conveniences, had low skills,

and were perceived as unsanitary by the receiving community (United States, 2010). All of these examples were of populations from the Third World. These new refugees from Africa and elsewhere in the developing world required more basic needs assistance during resettlement, fueling the perception in their receiving communities that they were backward or primitive.

The dialogue surrounding this qualitatively new refugee sounds distinctly similar to the mainstream development dialogue, which focuses on the problem of modernizing Third World States. As these refugees from the Third World move into the first world, the development discourse appears to follow them. This is important in understanding how resettlement projects perceive refugees and prescribe their solutions. As will be discussed in Chapter 2, Somali Bantu refugees and their resettlement in Idaho embody the discourse around the new refugee. The following section focuses on the objectives and standard solution set of US resettlement. The focus on economic intervention and the pressure to be economically self-sufficient connects to the dialogue in international development. A close examination of the objectives and solutions embedded in US resettlement policy situates the Somali Bantu development experience in Boise through the Global Garden project.

Critiquing Solutions

The 1980 Refugee Act continues to guide the intentions and goals of resettlement; the Act firmly established that successful integration meant early employment and economic self-sufficiency. Employment and self-sufficiency are driving forces within US social welfare policy; welfare reforms in the 1990's centered on removing the welfare burden by moving people from assistance into jobs (Peck, 2002; Morgen, 2001;

McCluskey, 2003). The driving force has been criticized for failing to integrate all people into the work force and for demoralizing welfare recipients (McCluskey, 2003). This aim is likewise reflected in the objectives and funding priorities for resettlement institutions. US refugee policy together with the structure of the resettlement system focus on economic integration as a primary goal of resettlement. Outside of the economics sphere “integration” is not clearly defined in the US policy. The international resettlement dialogue, however, suggests that successful integration includes more than economic factors alone.

The United Nations High Council for Refugees (UNHCR) UNHCR definition of integration includes: economic independence, the promotion of the capacity to rebuild, family reunification, the promotion of connections with volunteers, the promotion of cultural and religious integrity and the support of cohesive refugee communities (“Integration Handbook, 2004). Additional research focused on refugee and newcomer integration has demonstrated the importance of multiple integration indicators (Ager & Strang, 2004; Hopkins, 2010; Phillimore & Goodson, 2007). In particular, studies have highlighted the importance informal networks (Mott, 2010) and support from within the already present refugee community that appears to be paramount to the success and sustainability of new refugee livelihoods (Hume & Hardwick, 2005). This research begins to problematize the Act’s reliance on solely economic indicators as short-sighted; viewing integration only in the short term. By not considering context, or the resources refugees need to sustain employment and integration success, the current policy fails to integrate current research.

Recently, US institutions have taken steps toward a establishing more inclusive definition of integration. An Integration Working Group found 8 important areas of integration: health/well-being, language acquisition, economic opportunity, civic values/participation/engagement, education, housing, social connections, and belonging/safety (Brown et al. 2007). The working group acknowledged that economics was a key to integration; however, it was not the only factor important to achieving successful integration (Brown et al. 2007). Yet, the United States Resettlement Program continues to emphasize economic self-sufficiency (Cernea, 2003; United States, 2010); and long-term refugee integration is not an immediate goal (Brown et al. 2007).

Despite these more inclusive definitions of integration, US institutions continue to emphasize economic self-sufficiency as a primary goal. The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), founded with the 1980 Refugee act, continues to direct and assist states with refugee resettlement. Its mission is to “provide(s) people in need with critical resources to assist them in becoming integrated members of American Society,” (ACF, 2008). The ORR works to ensure state-administered programs provide appropriate assistance to refugees.

The ORR’s Division of Refugee Assistance more explicitly spells out the agency’s aims. The Division of Refugee Assistance operates beneath the ORR and “was created to oversee and provide guidance to State-administered programs that provide assistance and services to refugees” (ACF, 2011). The DRA’s objective is to provide assistance through its programs to “enable [refugees] to become economically self-sufficient as soon as possible after their arrival in the United States” (ACF, 2011). The DRA does this through programs that aim to move refugees from state-assistance

programs to self-sufficiency. These federal institutions, under the guidance of the US refugee policy, privilege economic self-sufficiency as the primary goal of resettlement programs.

Stage Set: Developing the Refugee

The guiding policy of the current refugee resettlement regime is embedded in a larger discourse of international development. Resettlement, like development, relies on essential understandings of Third World refugees, identifying them as a problem. Resettlement is constructed as ‘developing’ refugees so that they are economically integrated and presumably socially and culturally integrated into the local and national economy (United States, 2010). Despite exploring other integration options, US institutions presiding over resettlement exhibit singular missions: integrate refugees by facilitating economic self-sufficiency as soon as possible. Certainly, economic stability is important in refugee resettlement; however, the current mode for integration ignores context as well other integration factors.

The dominant development agenda has historical links to western-centered notions of progress and development (Mehmet, 1995; Boas, 2007). The unit of analysis for resettlement and development has been historically dissimilar with international development focusing on the state while resettlement focuses on individuals or individuals within groups (Isbister, 2003). In practice, both resettlement and international development subscribe to an analogous solution-set, based on economic development and integration. Both are projects of the Global North. Nearly all resettlement options are states from the Global North (“Flowing Across Borders”, 2010). Development as a practice and field of scholarship has long been identified as an external

project of the Global North (Chua, 2003; Escobar, 1995; Isbister, 2003; Leys, 1996; Massey, 1994; Rapley, 2004).

Influenced by dominant development theory and policies, the United States refugee resettlement system prizes economic integration and self-sufficiency. This framework is a guiding force within refugee resettlement projects; relying on essential understandings of Third World refugees, it identifies them as a development problem and it privileges economic integration projects over alternative approaches. Whereas the traditional development dialogue focuses on the Third World state as the locus of development, resettlement might be understood as the relocation of that focus to the Third World body. The preparations and resettlement of a group of Somali Bantu refugees in Idaho provide an example for exploring the relocation of development language from the international arena to the United States.

Methodology

This project explored the ways that the US resettlement program resembles development by examining Somali Bantu participation in the Global Gardens resettlement project in Boise, Idaho. The research began with a review of development, cultural identity, and urban community garden literature. Prior to beginning my fieldwork, I gathered first and secondary documents related to the US resettlement regime, as well as resettlement in Boise in order to set the foundation of my study. At the heart of this study are the day-to-day realities of farming activities and life for refugees in Boise, Idaho. While document-based research is important in framing this study, to learn about these realities it was necessary and important to begin with the experiences of the refugees who were participating in the farming project. To understand these realities, my

study included five weeks of fieldwork where I conducted participant observation and interviews.

The use of participant observation and interviews to study newcomers and agriculture projects has been used in other case studies. One example is Salvidar-Tanaka & Krasny's (2004) study on Latino community gardens in New York, 'Culturing Community Development, Neighborhood Open Space & Civic Agriculture' which used participant observation and interviews of gardeners. Their study makes reference to the gardens as 'participatory landscapes' where agricultural production and social interaction take place. In my own fieldwork, observations of the work and interactions on the farm proved to be invaluable and served to provide valuable context for my interviews. The best way to observe and analyze these dynamics is through observation and interaction real people on the farm.

I first contacted the director of the Global Gardens project the February preceding my fieldwork at the Idaho Conference on Refugees. I attended the conference as a university student interested in refugee issues in my home state of Idaho and took particular interest in the Global Gardens panel. The Global Gardens director and several participating refugees gave a presentation on their involvement with garden and farm projects in Idaho. Strikingly, most of the refugee panelists were Somali Bantu. I learned from the presentation that Global Gardens had been working with Somali Bantu refugees through a collective farming endeavor called the Somali Bantu Zigua Community (SBZC) Farm, which had been very successful. The director explained that Global Gardens was breaking ground on a new type of refugee agriculture project in the spring of 2010. The new program, the Star Farm, would lend one-acre plots of land to refugees

who applied to be in the program. The goal of the new program was to help refugees begin their own independent enterprises. I approached the director immediately following her presentation and exchanged information. I began my fieldwork in July of 2010.

I designed the project with a mixed methods approach incorporating surveys, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation in addition to textual analysis of primary documents and the research of secondary sources. I foresaw the surveys and interviews playing the biggest role in the research. As often occurs, my experience in the field necessitated a change in strategy. My intention was to survey all or nearly all of the participants in the farm project. However, after devoting a significant amount of time and paper to creating the surveys, I learned that the surveys would be an inappropriate tool for the research participants. I explained the surveys and went over each survey question with two Somali Bantu community leaders. Both reacted negatively to the idea of using a survey. Their concerns were that participants would not know what was the ‘right’ answer, and that they would be intimidated due to limited English skills. Later in our conversation, the two compared the survey experience to experiences in the refugee camp whereby officials asked a series of questions with ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ answers to assess individual fitness for relocation. Due to the possibility of causing undue stress to research participants, I abandoned the surveys. Additionally, I gained access to individual farmer applications, which provided me with a standard set of questions that each farmer answered prior to their involvement with the second farming project.

In lieu of an analysis of surveys, I employed a textual analysis of small farmer applications and farm plans in order to gain a clearer picture of both the donor and farmer

intentions for the project. In most cases, the farm applications and plans were completed by participants with varying levels of English and a few applications reflected a very low command of English. Thus, the applications are more useful as an entry point into understanding the NGO and funding goals in creating the farm, rather than as a tool for analyzing farmer expectations and contributions. I also collected and analyzed web documents and media publications specifically about the farm and Boise Somali Bantu refugees. These publications described the project from the view of the Global Gardens and, in some media cases, the larger Boise community.

Both farmers and NGO workers and volunteers were aware of my status as a student researcher who was curious about the farm and refugee integration in Boise, Idaho. The day I arrived in Boise, I met the director and toured the office and two of the gardening sites. I quickly made arrangements to volunteer full time at the two farms where Somali Bantu Refugees worked. There was not a legitimate reason for my research to be covert and the director initially introduced me as a student researcher to refugee farm participants. In cases when the director was not on site, refugee-farming participants introduced me to their friends and family. In some cases, they introduced me as a friend or volunteer. When this occurred, I made every effort to explain who I was, where I was from and what I was doing on the farm. Being open about my position as a researcher was advantageous as project participants were able to bring in and add their own unique questions and concerns to my project. Often I found that participants would raise concerns or complaints about the daily function of the farm probably only because I presented myself as someone who wanted to learn about the farm and to document its successes and challenges. Though it was known I was a student, most of the farmers

seemed to view me as an extra farm hand and I was instructed to carry, wash, and weed accordingly.

This study employed interviews with farm participants and agency workers, and while important, due to the layout of the farm sites and the nature of farm-work, interactions and dynamics of the farm best come out through participant observation during farm labor and farmer's market hours. My observations took place over 5 weeks. I spent a minimum of 6 days a week with farmers and Global Gardens staff. Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays were particularly busy at both the Star Farm and the SBZC Farm. I alternated Friday afternoons at both farms harvesting and prepping produce for the market, Saturday mornings I helped to setup and visited with farmers as they sold, and Sundays I set irrigation pipe and weeded Star farm plots along side the farmers. In between harvest hauls I jotted notes in my notebook.

My best interactions with the farmers came from the time I spent assisting with the harvest. Harvesting times for the SBZC Farm were especially lively as 3-4 people sat and worked together to wash and arrange items into packets. During these times, I often had the opportunity to take part in discussions about the farms, the participant's lives, and their family life. At the individual Star Farms, harvesting and setting irrigation pipe ended up being the most fruitful for observations and interactions. Due to the large layout of the farm, and the variety of individual activities, I learned more about individual farmers while helping them during irrigation.

After spending nearly two weeks on the farm, and meeting all of the farmers, I began to request interviews. I arranged interviews with 9 of the 11 primary farmers at the Star farm and 3 of the primary volunteers at the SBZC farm for and at their request

utilized an interpreter from their community who was familiar to them. I audio recorded all of these interactions with the permission of those interviewed. The findings from my interviews are presented in summary form in chapter four and I have selected anecdotes and extrapolated from specific interviews which best represent the whole of the research experience.

CHAPTER II
FROM THE THIRD WORLD TO THE FIRST:
SOMALI BANTU RESETTLEMENT

Throughout my fieldwork, residents of Boise often approached me to ask about Somali Bantu refugees. They wanted to know who they were, why they were in Boise, and what they were doing. Understanding the answers to these questions is important to understanding Somali Bantu resettlement in an American context. Ultimately, these queries frame the larger question: what happens when the development problem migrates? In order to understand the linkages between development and resettlement, an overview of Somali Bantu resettlement is necessary.

This overview begins in the Third World and traces the Somali Bantu journey to the United States and ultimately to Idaho in Chapter 3. Newspaper and agency descriptions of the incoming Somali Bantu refugees reverberate mainstream development's view that the Third World is primitive and backward, in need of development. This chapter serves to provide both an example of how refugees are presented as a problem analogous to the Third World in the dominant development discourse and also provide a context for understanding the participants in the case study. *Why Are They Refugees? How Do They Represent Ideas of the Third World?*

The Somali Bantu identity and experience is distinct from the majority Somalis. The use of the words tribe or clan has been contested in recent literature on Africa as being a construction of the colonizer and resulting from racialized notions of identity

(Willis, 1997). The Somali Bantu experience is best informed by an understanding of their constructed ethnic difference from the Somali majority. Brought to Somalia from what is modern day Mozambique and Tanzania as slaves, the Somali Bantu continued to hold a low-status within Somalia (Eno, 2004, p136). Even after emancipation, Somalis viewed Somali Bantu as a lower class and distinguished them by their physical characteristics including ‘kinky hair’ and ‘dark skin’ (Eno & Eno, 2008 p. 98). The Somali majority’s acceptance of the Bantu as a different and lower ‘race’ was galvanized by the Italian presence, in particular Italian anthropologist Puccioni who has been cited for his scientific racism work (Declich, 2000 p. 35). Somali Bantu were further differentiated from Somalis by their livelihoods and geographic location. They were largely settled cultivators whereas Somalis held to a pastoralist tradition (Laitin & Samatar, 1987).

Most Somali Bantu people settled in the Juba Valley, an area known for its agricultural production in Somalia (Van. et al. 2003). The historical construction of Somali Bantu as different or as ‘other’ kept them firmly outside of the majority and worked to prohibit them from exercising the rights of full citizenship. The Somali Bantu reportedly never had access to formal education, voting, or higher skilled jobs (Van et al. 2003). As a result of their position within Somalia, the Somali Bantu were often the victims of discrimination and violence (Wilkinson, 2002).

In 1991, the Somali government collapsed and the state devolved into civil war. The war intensified the victimization of Somali Bantu people. The Somali Bantu were caught in the crossfire of the warring factions (Bestman, 1999). Somali Bantu communities were pillaged and Somali Bantu individuals were victims of violence (Eno

& Eno, 2008; Bestman, 1999). Most of the Somali Bantu left to seek refuge outside the state's borders, where they unfortunately were still vulnerable. Discrimination and further marginalization continued beyond Somalia's borders into refugee camps in Kenya and Tanzania (Wilkinson, 2002). Somali Bantu refugees recall that they continued to be mistreated in the camps. Retelling part of his story to a New York Times reporter, a Somali Bantu refugee, who recently arrived in Connecticut recalled life in camps stating: "The life of a refugee is no good, many problems...Some people who carried guns would take away everything. They have guns. We have nothing" (Bowles, 2005).

Often Somali Bantus found themselves on the outer edges of refugee camps and were additionally geographically vulnerable to raids (Van et al. 2003). This spatial segregation reinforced the Somali Bantu identity as 'other'. Due to their particular vulnerability and historical persecution, the UNHCR identified Somali Bantu refugees as particularly vulnerable and prioritized them for resettlement. Most refugees spent 10 years in refugee camps prior to receiving the resettlement recommendation (Boas, 2007), and this is no different for the Somali Bantu.

Preparing for Resettlement-Preparing for Development

The United States volunteered to resettle nearly 13,000 Somali Bantu refugees in 1999, and began to resettle the first of them in 2003, a decade after their displacement ("A Home At Last," 2003). This was to be the largest group ever resettled en masse from Africa (Boas, 2007) and presented a particular challenge for local resettlement agencies (ORR 2003). Somali Bantu refugees were resettled in 50 cities in 38 states throughout the United States. While each refugee resettlement experience was unique and the context of each resettlement location varied, preconceived ideas about Somali Bantus as

underdeveloped and primitive were widespread. These ideas mirror assumptions about Third World societies within the mainstream development discourse. The context and background link to both sides of the development discourse: assumptions about Somali Bantus were racialized and the integration problem was framed as one of economics.

Newspaper articles announcing the arrival of Somali Bantus provide a glimpse at some of the receiving communities perceptions about the incoming refugees. The community and resettlement agencies anticipated encountering the most primitive and illiterate refugees of all time; many of the articles highlight the curiosity and anxiety that volunteers had over preparing to receive and integrate the Somali Bantu. An article in the Seattle Times compared the group of refugees to Hmong farmers who arrived in the in the US in the 1970's and the Lost Boys from Sudan who arrived in the 1990's stating that the Somali Bantu would "pose-and face- greater obstacles" than the previous two challenging groups (Vihn, 2004). The article introduced the Somali Bantu as people from a "primitive tribe" who "don't know how to turn a doorknob, use a pencil, boil water or brush their teeth-let alone read, write or speak English" (Vihn, 2004). A resettlement agency volunteer in Connecticut voiced the same concern. Quoted in the New York Times, Sister Dorothy who works for the largest resettlement agency in Connecticut indicated, "We've resettled Hmong, Laotians and Cambodians...but this is the most challenging" (Bowles 2005). Concern surrounding the acceptance of the refugees was related to the Somali Bantu's lack of education, their primitive lifestyle, and their relationship with a fear-provoking corner of Africa².

² US engagement with Somalia in the 1990's ended with the famed 'Black Hawk Down' incident, which imprinted Somalia on the US imagination as crazed and lawless.

To prepare for the influx of ‘primitive’ refugees, the ORR in collaboration with volunteer agencies released cultural information reports and created the Somali Bantu Project, which focused on how to best provide services for these new refugees (“Report from the 2003 Planning Workshop 2003). They focused on the basic history and background of Somali Bantu and suggested refugees would be starting from scratch with very little knowledge of the west or modern life (ACF, 2003). These new refugees, it seemed, would require even more support and more education making the transition to self-sufficiency difficult.

Recounting their preparations for welcoming Somali Bantu refugees to Buffalo New York, volunteers told a newspaper reporter for USA Today that they were told not to give the new refugees any device deemed to be too complicated. The article reflects on agency and community preconceptions regarding the new refugees: “The refugees, members of Somalia’s Bantu minority, were supposed to be among the world’s most backward people. What if they put metal in the microwave? Stuck their fingers in the beater? Soiled the Couch?” (Hampson 2003).

After the warnings, Somali Bantu families slowly began to arrive in various cities in the United States. Additional bureaucracy and security measures put into place post the 2001 September 11 changes in American security policy, delayed their arrival (Selm, 2003). Receiving community sentiments, relayed through news features and editorials, reflected surprise at the ability of the refugees to adapt and learn. One article about a Somali Bantu family in Phoenix illustrated how “sophistication [was] coming” through the introduction of Ferris Wheels and deodorants (Jaynes 2004). The ‘sophistication’

was credited to the exposure to Western ways and modern, forward oriented life, even the most backward of refugees were developing into modern, sophisticated people.

From 2003-2005 nearly 12,000 Somali Bantu refugees resettled across the United States. The resettlement is still recent and many Somali Bantu refugees continue to work with resettlement agencies for training, employment and community support. Agency workers from across the country report the Somali Bantu are hard workers, who have found employment in a variety of occupations (Hamilton 2004).

Somali Bantu Through a Development Lens

Somali Bantu have set up community organizations and nonprofits to help support one another in a number of resettlement locations. Demonstrating resilience and continually surprising agency staff, Somali Bantu refugees have worked within the resettlement system to gain employment, start community farms, and run community organizations.

The views of resettlement volunteers and agencies mirror the binary assumptions in classic development theory. Just as development theorists presumed that people from the Third World lacked know-how, including the basic elements of self-care, so resettlement agencies and volunteers viewed the Somali Bantu. As farmers from the Third World, the Somali Bantu were viewed as the biggest integration and resettlement challenge the United States had ever seen because of their primitive background. The community-based success of the Somali Bantu is largely unaccounted for within development theory and overlooked by the US resettlement regime.

CHAPTER III

THE CASE STUDY

This case study focuses on the participation of Somali Bantu refugees in the Global Gardens' Star Farm project in Idaho. It will demonstrate that the Idaho resettlement structure and discourse easily nest into the larger development and resettlement discourses explored earlier in this thesis. This chapter will begin to demonstrate that the Somali Bantu experience complicates the one-dimensional view that African refugees are a Third World problem, primitive and lacking. The chapter also underscores the importance of community development and highlights the agency of the Somali Bantu group. Somali Bantu refugees in Idaho formed their own community group, established a non-profit, and created a collective farm to support community members and community functions. It was through their involvement and success with their community farm and the support of the Global Gardens that precipitated Somali Bantu involvement with the Star Farm resettlement project. As will be further demonstrated in Chapter Four, their experience in Idaho, their commitment to community farming and their Star Farm resettlement project challenge the wisdom of the conventional approach to resettlement. It also points to gaps within the current resettlement regime. To situate the case study, this chapter briefly sketches Somali Bantu resettlement in Idaho, provides background to their community organization and introduces the Global Gardens Star Farm resettlement project.

Somali Bantu Resettlement in Idaho

Idaho might seem like an unlikely candidate for the resettlement of a small, African minority group, but it boasts a long history of refugee resettlement. In recent decades, Idaho has not been recognized for its diversity, but instead its prejudice and racism. Despite this racial history, Idaho has resettled members of almost every ethnic identity group since the Refugee Act in 1980 and in the last decade alone, has resettled over 5,000 refugees (IOR, 2010). Idaho reportedly is a preferred resettlement city because it is viewed as a “soft landing” place for refugees due to historical employment trends and a welcoming community³. The Idaho Office for Refugees together with the Mountain States group works with four refugee resettlement agencies to provide services and support for refugees in Idaho (IOR, 2010). The Idaho Office of Refugees is a private sector initiative that bears the primary responsibility for providing services to refugees in Idaho and is a private sector initiative (IOR, 2010). The Office’s objective is to offer assistance and services to refugees so that they may become functioning members of society: “Once newly arriving refugees have been resettled, the IOR provides assistance and services designed to help these new Americans become integrated into their communities as productive, contributing members of society,” (IOR, 2010). This aim echoes the aim of resettlement at the national level; refugees should be self-supporting as soon as possible.

³ This information came from personal correspondence with a Mountain States Group staff member who works with the Idaho Office for Refugees in resettlement. The correspondence included information on Idaho processes, cash assistance, and perceptions and comparisons of Somali Bantu refugees prior to and after their arrival in Idaho.

Refugees arriving to Idaho receive the minimum guaranteed funding of 8 months of cash assistance (IOR, 2010). As there are multiple cash assistance programs, the amount and exact length of the cash assistance varies. The current time period for cash assistance is much shorter than previous allocations in the years immediately following the passage of the 1980 Refugee Act when assistance was guaranteed for 36 months (Selm, 2003). By comparison to other resettlement countries, the US offers a minimal cash resettlement package (Selm, 2003). An IOR agency worker explained that refugees are encouraged to be self-supporting soon after their arrival; federal guidelines prioritize newer refugees for resource allocation. The relatively quick time period to achieve economic viability motivates resettlement agency priorities; for the IOR out of all of the dimensions of integration, employment and economic integration are its main priorities.

Similar to their reception at the national level, Somali Bantu refugees were received with anxiety and preparation in Idaho. The guiding assumptions that Somali Bantu refugees would be unlike any other group resettled, that they were primitive, and would require a different project orientation were maintained by refugee agencies. Echoing the stories in other sites across the United States, the IOR worked to learn as much as it could about the Somali Bantu. An agency worker explained to me that because it was relying on minimal information, the agency prepared to receive a group of people coming from primitive living conditions, with minimal knowledge of Western cultures and little to no exposure to a cash economy. Reflecting on the Somali Bantu arrival, the agency worker explained that the agency met with the medical community, the police, schools, as well as with people who had worked with Somali Bantu people overseas. Before resettling the Somali Bantu, Idaho agencies had primarily worked with

Eastern Europeans, and notably Bosnians. The Somali Bantu would be a remarkably different group from the Bosnians with which volunteers and workers were familiar. The perception was that Bosnians were more familiar with Western culture as compared with the Somali Bantu. According to the worker, based on the information they had, resettlement agency workers anticipated a high level of malnutrition in the children, widespread female genital mutilation, and adult members who might need extra support. Agency workers prepared for an illiterate, malnourished, and primitive population; integrating these new refugees into the economy was going to be difficult.

In 2003 the first refugees landed in Boise and the resettlement work began. Altogether, Boise received a group of just over 250 Somali Bantu refugees (IOR 1010). After arrival, agency workers and volunteers found that the Somali Bantu category represented diverse people and experiences. One agency worker explained to me the transition from preparing for Somali Bantu to receiving them: “We tend to think that they [refugees] have more in common than they often do...they had a broad spectrum of backgrounds, it wasn’t as though everybody hadn’t experienced electricity.” Her comments serve to undermine the preconceived ideas about Somali Bantu refugees. She also noted that the Somali Bantu refugees surprised volunteers and agencies with their strengths: “they have incredible community organizing mentality so they, more than any other group ethnic or national group have really cared for one another in the community and worked together in a self-supporting way.” The self-supporting way that the agency worker noted, was not necessarily economic self-sufficiency as set forth by the resettlement regime; this was a community-social support system.

After arrival, Somali Bantu refugees faced integration and resettlement challenges that were unaccounted for within the resettlement goals and strategies. Resettlement agencies focused their attentions on acclimating refugees to a modern lifestyle, learning English and finding jobs according to their directives. Yet, some of the challenges the Somali Bantu articulated were not accounted for prior to their arrival and are difficult to enumerate. One of the challenges that was particularly poignant for Somali Bantu refugees in Idaho was the lack of a social safety net. While the refugees were supported by state welfare services in addition to local agency support (ACF 2011; IOR 2010), they still lacked an established social network to cover the gaps that welfare and resettlement support left open.

According to the Somali Bantu Zigua Idaho narrative, this gap was illustrated with the first death of a Somali Bantu community member. At present burial assistance available for them is limited to \$255 and available only to residents receiving social security, the benefit is paid to the surviving spouse or children under the age of 18 (“Burial Assistance” 2010). Beyond that Ada County residents who meet the indigent definition are eligible for cremation benefits, or in the event that their religion prohibits them from being cremated, the county will supply burial costs in the amount of cremation costs (“Indigent Deceased” 2011). Community members reported the costs associated with releasing a family member’s body from the morgue and then burying him or her exceeded their individual incomes. This narrative was repeated at the Idaho Conference for Refugees and in personal interviews with refugees. Refugees took up a collection to help pay for the one time cost of burial, but identified a larger need.

In an effort to fill the gap and support their community, Somali Bantu refugees established a community support group, which they dubbed the Somali Bantu Zigua Community. In the beginning the group was self-funded through member donations. The current president of the SBZC explained that each family began by giving \$50 out of their own funds. Eventually, the SBZC, with the assistance of the IOR, filed for official nonprofit status and became eligible for grants. The nonprofit works to support the community by assisting with burial costs, organizing community information sessions which have included driver training, assisting families with emergency rent and other emergency expenses, and by providing social spaces for people to come together.

Today, instead of being supported only by dues or donations from members, the SBZC is supported through sales from its community farm. The SBZC has worked with Global Gardens, a program of the IOR to build on its community-farming endeavor. As a program of the Global Gardens, the SBZC has grown to have its own tent at the Boise Saturday market and support its own Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program. To manage the farm, the SBZC has organized its membership into volunteer teams who are responsible for either harvesting or weeding certain parts of their farm on given days. The group also coordinates rides and has arranged to have its membership meetings on the farm so that the whole community can contribute and benefit from the farm project.

In the 2009 season the SBZC farm made roughly \$8000 through its CSA and Saturday market booth, for 2010 they hoped to make between \$10,000 and \$15,000. All of the monies go back into the collective to support the group socially and financially. Ultimately, the monies make up for what the state and federal resettlement system cannot provide. Through the establishment of a community organization the Somali Bantu

demonstrated an ability to organize and navigate collectively the Boise terrain to the surprise agency workers.

The SBZC/Global Gardens story helps to unpack some of the criticisms of the resettlement system; that it has gaps, does not holistically integrate refugees, and in privileging individual economics overlooks social and cultural needs as well as the importance of a social safety net. Somali Bantu refugees displayed resourcefulness and exercised agency within a system that had them pegged as backward and primitive. The Somali Bantu refugees were not as backward and primitive as the receiving communities expected. Instead, the SBZC story highlights the insufficiencies of the system. Focusing on solely economics did not address all of the Somali Bantu needs, and the assumptions about them painted an incomplete and inaccurate picture of them.

Global Gardens & Somali Bantu Farmers

The Global Gardens is a program of the Idaho Office of Refugees that connects refugees with agricultural resources. Global Gardens sponsors various refugee agricultural projects at 8 different locations in the Boise area (“Refugee Agriculture Program” 2011). Most of the Global Gardens projects operate as community gardens for refugees of all origins. Until recently, Global Gardens’ resettlement projects were not focused on market sales. Instead the NGO focused primarily on connecting refugee families with garden plots for home consumption. Until 2010, Global Gardens sponsored only two commercial farms and both were communal farms.

The initiation of the Star farm marked a change in direction for the Global Gardens. The Star Farm was the first solely entrepreneurial, market-oriented project of the Global Gardens. The new farm project was sponsored in part by a \$70,000 grant

from the Refugee Agricultural Project (RAPP); Idaho Power Company donated land for the farmers' use. RAPP is a new program of the DRA: its objectives include achieving "sustainable income" and "supplemental income" for refugees in addition to "having an adequate supply of healthy foods in a community, better physical and mental health, community integration" ("Refugee Agricultural Partnership" 2010). RAPP's directives directly correlate to the overarching goals of the resettlement regime.

Global Gardens opened the Star Farm project to all refugees who wanted to participate in the new endeavor. Refugee participants who were interested submitted an application detailing past farming experience and their farm plans. The Star farm was set up as an incubator farm project. Global Gardens promised training, market support, and limited on-site guidance to would-be farmers. In the first season, all participants in the incubator project were Somali Bantu refugees.

CHAPTER IV

EXPERIENCING DEVELOPMENT: THE SOMALI BANTU IN BOISE

Introduction to Findings

This chapter explains the intentions and challenges of the Star Farm resettlement project. Using insights gained through fieldwork, it describes the project and demonstrates the challenges the project encountered in centering economic self-sufficiency. My observations revealed that these challenges were related to two suppositions. First, as a RAPP grantee, the Star Farm project relied on the understanding that refugees' uniformly had an agrarian background that would apply to American context. Second, in privileging only economics, the project assumed that the Star farmers engaged solely for monetary gain. The Somali Bantu complicate the assumptions of the project by their experiences, narratives, and perceptions of the farm. The chapter begins by underscoring the design and intentions of the Star Farm. Next, it proceeds with a description of the farm and farming activities as I saw them in 2010 to provide a sense of the laborious nature of farm work and offer the economic results of the farm. Finally, pulling from farmer experiences and interviews, it complicates the assumptions and intentions of the project. Ultimately, the observations reveal that the intentions of the project are misaligned with participants' motivations.

By Design: Project Intentions

In the following discussion I show how the Star Farm's resettlement project is a development project guided by neoliberal principles of self-sufficiency and individual responsibility and informed by mainstream development presumptions, albeit in central

Idaho. The farm sought to assist refugees with economic integration through commercial farming. The Star Farm was designed to create viable small farm businesses. As a RAPP grantee, the project was organized to assist refugees with “agricultural and food related resources consistent with their background” (USDA, 2010). RAPP and especially the Global Gardens as an organization acknowledge the multiple advantages to connecting refugees with agriculture, but concentrate on them more as fringe benefits rather than centralizing them. The Star Farm’s primary intention was to be a training ground where participants would build on their farming skills and be able to apply those skills to make an income. The Global Gardens’ website gives the following definition of the Star Farm: “An incubator farm is a place where new farmers can borrow land and equipment, practice farming, and learn from each other for a few years before they begin an independent farm enterprise” (“Refugee Agriculture Program,” 2011).

In practice, the Global Gardens supported this mission beginning with the farmer applications and following through to the support at the market. The project application stressed the entrepreneurial model of the farm as important: farmers outlined their business plan, named their business, and included their earnings expectations. The farmers also included their previous knowledge with farming, and many of them listed experience with the SBZC community farm. Once farmers received their plots, the Global Gardens staff followed through by providing training, and connecting farmers to consumers.

In 2010, the Global Gardens project had 2 staff people and 2 Americorps volunteers to assist the Star farmers with farm production, marketing, and sales. One of the staff was devoted to marketing produce to restaurants and local markets the other

directs the program. The marketing staff person arranged orders for local restaurants and businesses once a week, and assisted farmers with a Tuesday farmer's market and the Boise Saturday Market.

A recent Boise television commercial reiterated some of the local and organization perceptions of the farmers and the purpose of the farm. The commercial, advertising for Idaho Power, begins with the quote: "for many refugees, the land is everything. Here, they can feed their families and reconnect with their culture." The commercial then explains that through farming, "they learn how to have business transactions in the community." The commercial highlights the value of the farms as an economic resettlement tool and paints a picture of a modernizing refugee. Interestingly, the commercial also highlights alternative valuations of the farm as a community resource, but focuses most on the capital building potential for the farmers and relies on flat categories for refugees. As a category, the commercial assumes that refugees somehow are primitive and tied to the land in a way that modern people are not and that their culture is somehow essentially tied to cultivation. This type of categorization denies difference and the possibility for layered and multiple identities.

The intent of the farm project helps to locate the Star Farm project in development. RAPP seeks to take advantage of the primitive skill-sets that refugees do have, and seeks to insert them into the market. The theory behind the farming endeavor is clearly informed an economic view of integration as it prioritizes economics to the exclusions of other measures such as culture and community. The intentions and assumptions for the farm reflect the acceptance of the flat category of refugee in need of development and the singular approach for doing so.

In Practice: Description of Farmers, Activities, and Earnings in 2010

In spring 2010 farmers broke ground on the Star Farm for the first time. Global Gardens' staff and volunteers began the endeavor with 11 farmers. Working on the farm proved to be laborious, connecting farmers with the market difficult and the earnings minimal. The following section will provide my depiction of the farm, farming activities, and participants as I perceived them in 2010.

The Star Farm site was just over 22 acres and each farmer had approximately one rectangular acre, accessible only by passing along the irrigation ditch, running the length of the property. My first impression of the farm was that it was an empty, overgrown field. Closer scrutiny and some time in the weeds proved otherwise. As part of the farm's market niche, it was grown using organic methods; aside from the tractor that carved the irrigation rows, the farm was cared for by hand. The irrigation rows were close together and designed for tractor harvest and maintenance.

Each farmer planned his or her field independently and most had a variety of lettuce, beets, kale, Swiss chard, potatoes, tomatoes, beans, basil, turnips, corn and squash. The majority of the items planted were not cultural or familiar foods to the Somali Bantu and called "American" foods by most farmers, though all farmers devoted a portion of their plot to cultural foods. American foods were grown with American markets in mind. Often there was a surplus of lettuce, kale, Swiss chard and beets that farmers did not take home to their families. When I indicated that I enjoyed kale, farmers often reacted first by asking me what I did with it, and then by unloading their excess kale onto me. By contrast, farmers were keen to keep tomatoes and potatoes for home use and looked forward to harvesting their corn for the same reasons.

Nine of the farmers were between the ages 22 and 40. The farmers marked their age by generation: by their age markers two were grandparents and the rest were parents. Most of the farmers were men; only one woman completed an application for a farm plot and she shared the spot with her daughter. Eleven farmers signed up for the project, but only 8 came to the farm and maintained their plots regularly. Out of those 8 only 4 regularly participated in marketing their produce with 3 actively participating in farmers markets and restaurant sales. Typically, single farm owners did not work the farm alone. Farmers brought their families, friends, and extended families to help them with care for their farm rows. Even with the help from friends and neighbors, the farms were in need of constant attention. Weeding rows by hand took time, and if rows were to be clear of weeds, the farmers would have to devote significantly more time than they usually did. In all cases, the farmers or their friends and family who transported them, worked elsewhere during the day. For most, the farm was a supplementary income earning activity, for some it was their third or fourth job. This meant that farmers began working in their fields in the heat of the day between 3:00 and 6:00 in the afternoon. Some days, the work started and ended in one hundred degree heat. The work was hard and the progress slow. It was not uncommon to arrive and weed 4-5 hours and not have completed more than a few rows.

The busiest and longest work days on the farm were Thursdays, Fridays, and Sundays, though on any day of the week in the afternoon at least one farmer could be found working in his or her field. On Thursdays, one of the Global Gardens' staff members or Americorps volunteers called farmers and tried to match a restaurant or store order with produce that was ripe and ready for harvest. Since farmers did not plant

uniformly, this was not an easy task. Additionally, the Global Gardens staff tried to be fair in distributing orders across farms. Thursdays were stress-filled and mildly chaotic because farmer's required considerable support to execute harvest orders, and there were only a few staff onsite to assist them. Usually one staff member or volunteer had an order sheet, while one or two other volunteers tried to assist farmers with their produce. It usually was not enough to simply give the farmers the restaurant order to have them fill it. As the farmers did not recognize the produce easily by name, a staff person or volunteer accompanied the farmer to his field and assisted him with most, if not the entire order. Produce pulled from each farm was then carried back up to the washing station where it was either counted or weighed and then bundled before being sorted into coolers.

When harvesting, a farmer walked down the irrigation ditch carrying a large rubber container on his or her shoulder. Due to the size of the containers and the width of the rows, it was important to keep the load of produce fairly light so that the bucket could be turned, picked up overhead, and maneuvered in, around, and over the other plants. The produce had to then be hauled back to the main washing station, which, depending on the location of the farmer's plot, might be the entire length of the farm-site. This made for a slow harvest process. The heat likewise slowed the process.

Though the farmers used organic methods, they did not have organic certification. This is significant because organic farming is often more laborious than conventional methods, but without the certification farmers could not sell their produce at the premiums that other local farmers sold. Global Gardens managed orders from the Boise Co-op and a few higher-end restaurants. Each week farmers could sell their produce to

help fill restaurant and market orders. The size of these orders varied while I was on site from as little as 25 heads of lettuce to an order that required that all farm lettuce that was ready be harvested. Restaurant and grocery orders were typically filled on Thursdays. A staff person would call various farmers to ask if they were interested in helping to fill the order. As the orders were split between several or more farmers, the cash earned from these types of sales ranged \$10-50.

Farmers also had the option of selling their produce at two weekly farm stands as well as a Saturday market. Typically only 2 farmers elected to sell at these venues. The Saturday market proved to be the most lucrative market venue. Farmers split the cost of one market stall (\$35) and then kept track of their sales throughout the morning.

Saturday market could bring a farmer over \$100 on a good morning. For the entire farm season (planting began in April and the last harvest was in late October) farmers reported earning from \$0 to just over \$2800. Three of the farmers reported earning over \$1000, five reported earning more than \$100 and four reported that they did not take home cash earnings.

The end results of the 2010 season reveal that the majority of farmers did not report high earnings. Additionally, most farmers did not actively participate in market events. As the project was designed, it did not meet its goals of creating viable commercial farmers in its first year. Despite the low earnings, and the challenges farming posed, farmers explained that they were still happy with their farms and that they would continue. My observations reveal that there were several assumptions leading the farm to not match up with its intentions and, if unaddressed will hamper the future success of the farms as a project. First, it relied on assumptions about the developed and

development. The project assumed would be able to draw from their agrarian/primitive past, and second, that they would participate solely for economic purposes. The Somali Bantu experience directly challenges each of the assumptions and offers alternative motivations for participating that are unaccounted for within development thought. The following section will focus on the two assumptions: refugees are primitive and will integrate into American society solely via economic means.

Challenge: Farming in Idaho

The assumptions informing the intent of the project was that refugees would be able to pull from primitive backgrounds and then apply those farm skills created tensions or problems in many cases. The small Global Gardens staff had a high number of tasks for which they were responsible, and did not have the time to instruct or assist every farmer as much as they required. My observations and interviews challenge the assumption that all farmers on the project would be able to farm. Farming participants, while many had family members who farmed in Somalia, struggled to learn to farm commercially in the American context. Additionally, the set-up of the farm made commercial farming and teaching very difficult: it was designed for irrigation farming and the harvest station was not centrally located.

It is partially true that the Somali Bantu had an agrarian background. Many claimed an ancestry tied to farming, but most also admitted knowing little about the day-to-day operations of a farm. The length of the refugee resettlement process presented an issue in applying agrarian skills and methods they may have used in Africa. Most of the refugees in the program had spent more than 10 years in refugee camp situations prior to arriving in the United States, and many of them had either forgotten or never learned

about farming. Having left Somalia as children, these refugees left when they were too young to learn how to farm. (IOR 2010). While the Somali Bantu often do perceive themselves as farmers with families rooted in an agrarian lifestyle, tied to the land, it should be clear that in reality the majority of the Somali Bantu farmers in Boise did not arrive equipped with farm skills and most found employment outside of the farming industry upon arrival (IOR 2010). Somali Bantu farmers had to learn the climate and conditions of Idaho as well as the produce preferred by American customers. These farmers also had to contend with the logistics of American farming, which included transporting themselves and their produce, speaking English and marketing to Americans.

The farmers in the project acquired skills through technical training classes and trial by error. Solidifying this point, a majority of project participants requested additional farming lessons via their farm application and annual reviews. The Somali Bantu have learned farming, and they are in the continual process of becoming farmers. Farming is relatively new to many of them, yet they are continually described from both within their and without as long-time farmers (IOR 2010).

All of the Star farmers expressed that they had forgotten, did not know, or needed to learn how to farm through their applications or through my interactions with them. Even those with a family history of farming often explained that they either never learned or had forgotten how to farm. All farmers expressed the need for more technical farm training and market-related education on their farm applications and in my interactions with them.

Many of the farmer's stories illustrated the challenges of learning or re-learning to farm. One of the older farmer's experiences speaks to this challenge. Rahma is

unmarried but holds a higher ‘grandmother or elder’ status within the Somali Bantu community amongst both the men and women. She often expressed her love of the farm and the work but also of the difficulty, especially the difficulties of farming alone, without a man or husband. She explained that it had been a long time since farming in Somalia and that she did not know the full particulars of farming in America. When I asked her about the success of her farm she told me about the lessons she had learned through trial and error—that many of her plants were dead due to the way they were planted or to insects. Her farm plan had not worked because she did not know about farming in America. Pointing to her field during the interview she said, “Most are dead. And also we didn’t know what to plant we didn’t know it we didn’t know the plants.”

When I asked her about her farm and her farm’s progress, Rahma explained that while there was progress, she had not really experienced success as a farmer in Boise:

“Well yet I didn’t see the success or more success more progress in gardening because um the thing is when we are doing like uh the corn the corns we’re doing like the corns we don’t know exactly ones to plant. Like they have the African corns like we say they are Africans the harder ones and also these uh soft ones the ones you can tell. So we just learning this now well uh progress.”

Not knowing exactly what to plant or where to plant it was a problem for many of the farmers. Many of them had experience farming for themselves in community gardens or with the SBZC, but they did not necessarily have experience farming on their own or farming for profit. It was not that many of them were not ‘farmers’, but that being a farmer in Somalia or enjoying the memory of farming is not an inherent identity. The

plants and marketing structure in Idaho were new and required that many of them have support learning.

Rahma's story begins to illuminate some of the issues with applying a development approach based on essential assumptions of Third World refugees. These assumptions belie the context of refugee resettlement, and simplify the refugee experience into a single category. While Rahma could recall farming in Somalia, the skills did not directly transfer to Idaho.

Sharing and building on Rahma's experience, another farmer, Mkoma, often expressed confusion or frustration during harvests for restaurant sales. Mkoma is the father of several children ranging from newborn to seventeen years in age. Most days on the farm, Mkoma was accompanied by 3 or 4 of his children and occasionally, his wife. While Mkoma was able to come and go to the farm in his own vehicle, he still required considerable support from his family members and the Global Gardens staff with most farming tasks. His oldest two daughters provided considerable help to him on the farm. They usually acted as interpreters, translating the orders to Mkoma or harvesting the orders themselves. Mkoma is shy and hesitantly uses English. Language was a barrier both at the market and at the farm. Many of my interactions with Mkoma were facilitated by a question that he had about what to harvest, how to identify plants, or which plants were ready for harvest. On more than one occasion Mkoma went out to his field with an order for a specific type of lettuce to harvest and either came back with nothing in hand or with a lettuce that did not match the order.

Mistakes like the one Mkoma made could be frustrating and costly to farmers. If the wrong kind of lettuce was harvested, and there was no alternative buyer, the lettuce

was wasted. Depending on the type and quantity of the produce incorrectly harvested, it might be donated to a food bank or brought home to the farmer's family and friends. On one occasion, I purchased 20 pounds of red potatoes because of a farmer's error. Even farmers like Mkoma who had the skills to farm, were not equipped to deal with the commercial aspects of farming. Certainly, the project is set up as a learning farm, but the support provided (2 full time workers and 2 volunteers) is not sufficient to assist all the farmers with all of their needs.

Stories like Rahma and Mkoma's challenge the assumption that refugees come prepared to farm and equipped to participate in the market economy by way of farming. Their stories complicate the one-size-fits all assumptions of development and highlight some of the barriers that farmers and staff have to overcome. The project was well tailored to connect refugees to market, but required more support in order to transition the farmers into commercial actors. In 2010, there was not enough support or staff to slowly and repeatedly teach, correct and support all of the farmers. Ultimately, these experiences problematize assumptions of an agrarian past, which echoes developments assumptions of progress: societies and people develop linearly from primitive to modern.

Challenge: Economic Priorities

Given the intent of the project, staff and volunteers spent a considerable amount of time working with refugees and securing markets for their production. Despite the effort put forward on the part of the Global Gardens staff, individual farm sales were relatively low (the highest earner on the farm averaged just over \$466 a month from May to the end of the market in October) and participation was low and inconsistent for most of the year. The farm project was founded on the assumption that turning a profit was the

priority for farmers. My observations on the ground demonstrate that some farmers did prioritize earning money, but not all of them. The following section outlines some of the problems with the assumption that turning a profit was a priority for farmers. First, it discusses actual, perceived and indirect wages, next participants interactions with market events, and finally their evaluations of the farm despite the low earnings.

The earnings from the entrepreneurial farms were minimal when compared with hours worked and possible hourly wages that farmers could earn at another job. This is not to say that the income from the farm was not important or valued by participants, instead that there might be additional and sometimes competing reasons that they chose to farm. Farm work was difficult and in some cases, farmers lost money. Since it was the first year of the farm, the earnings were also affected by inexperience and ostensibly could grow in future seasons.

When I asked about the monies that farmers took home, most respondents expressed that earning money was a positive aspect of the farm. They also often noted that the United States was expensive and required a lot of work. Refugees are set up with little cash assistance; actual monetary assistance varies according to family size and situation. I did not collect data related to income but most of the refugees that I interviewed referenced food stamps. When they shared with me their occupations, most of them shared with me that they were in entry level, low-skilled work. Examples of the types of jobs they worked include meatpacking, landscaping, and janitorial services. Even compared with lower-wage labor, farmers explained that they earned little in exchange for the amount of work that their farms required. Farmers spoke little about real

wages associated with the farm, but did articulate that the farm was a lot of work for little pay.

Nuuria, who always drove and assisted her mother, highlighted the difference between the work and the wages. After more than four months of farming her mother had earned very little. She explained that her mom was excited about and needed the money from the farm for her family, but that the farm really had not yielded much in the way of actual cash.

“She need the money the most important because she have children that she is growing right now and she need the money to pay her rent and her stuff. She is just getting food stamp you know and food stamp is not paying the rent. She doesn’t make enough money [at the farm], I think since she started here she have only 50 dollar in her pocket.”

Nuuria’s mother worked as an ad-hoc caregiver for some of the community children. Since many of her community members were out of work or chose not to work given daycare expenses, she indicated that her work was very inconsistent.

Participants reiterated in my interviews and in my on-site interactions that though they were happy with their farms, they did not make much money by farming. In some cases, participants lost money on the farm. Farmers that reported losing money on the farm also did not tend to their farms regularly nor did they sell at the market. Two farmers, Kabea and Migua explained during a joint interview that the farm had been a lot of work and a large monetary investment that was not going to yield a profit. The two are the youngest farmers at Star, both are busy, go to school, and hold other jobs. They

explained how the work grew to be too much to balance with their schedules and ultimately resulted in a loss of wages:

“I was thinking you know. It’s going to be so easy you know. But finding the time is like crazy you know.”

“We wasted a lot of energy on that thing we wasted a lot of money actually.

“We wasted a lot of money. Because we bought a lot of tomatoes and everything we bought a LOT. We spent like 300 dollars actually. And now, everything gone [because of the weeds].”

Kabea and Arbow’s farms were not typical, but an extreme example of the farm’s objective not being met. Out of all of the farm lots theirs was probably the most overgrown with weeds. By mid August, they had only three partial rows of corn that they were tending to. Often they only came to the farm on irrigation days when the rest of the farmers were onsite.

Not every farmer expressed a loss. Some farmers sold at the market and some took home crops to supplement their families’ food budgets. While I was in residence on the farm, this did not occur as frequently as one might think or hope. We regularly harvested lettuce, potatoes, Swiss chard, kale, and beets. For home use farmers said they preferred field corn, cabbage, *mchicha*, and potatoes and tomatoes.

The low participation in market events might be explained by the farmers’ description of the farm work. In many cases, farmers viewed farming as an activity and not necessarily as a job. Not a single farmer considered the farm their primary occupation or saw it as a primary means of generating income. Some farmers worked to hold multiple jobs in addition to farming. One farmer, Malik, explained his workweek

included a regular weekday job, weekend and night odd jobs, and on top of that he had the farm.

“Yeah because yesterday I am work 7-1:30 Saturday also...landscaping. Then my work normal 8 hours every day. Then the farm. A lot of work.”

That selling the produce was not necessarily a top priority sometimes created tension between the staff workers, volunteers and the farmers. This compounded with frequent misadventures in communication sometimes led to confusing scenarios on harvest days. Often farmers did not show up for the harvest day, or opted to not have their produce harvested for the restaurant sale. At times, farmers preferred to keep certain produce for themselves, for home-use. The following scenario exemplifies some of the tensions between the NGO objectives and the farmers' experience.

In the middle of my fieldwork, I began to assist more often and played a larger role on harvest days. One Thursday, the harvest was especially rushed with multiple orders, few staff, and a time-crunch to return to town. One of the staff had secured a very large restaurant order of purple potatoes. Most farmers had 3 or 4 potato varieties planted in their fields, but they were difficult to find. Red, russets, Yukon Golds, and purple potatoes might be all mixed in together in the same row. To harvest the correct potato, the harvester had to push the dirt away from the roots until he could see the top of the tubers to identify them by color.

At this point in the season potatoes were in short supply on the farm for a few probable reasons; they were often harvested for restaurant orders, they were planted too near to the irrigation ditch and many of them were ruined by over-watering, and participants harvested for themselves and for farmers market sales quite frequently. That

day I helped a few different farmers harvest their potatoes but no one had enough purple potatoes to satisfy the order.

The oldest farmer involved in the project happened to be onsite and I went out to harvest his potatoes. He understood that the restaurant would pay him for the potatoes and showed me where his potatoes were planted. As another volunteer and I began to pull up his potatoes, Abdulrahman became very concerned. Soon he was telling us, no no and pointing back at the ground. After some discussion about the restaurant order and his ability to sell the potatoes, the other volunteer and I confirmed that he did not want us to harvest any more of his potatoes. Though I did not see him take them home, I assume that he eventually harvested them for home consumption.

When the Global Gardens as a whole agreed to take an order and could not fill it; it made the next order difficult to make. Restaurants and grocery stores count on consistency of product and efficiency in securing it. Given that all of the farmers were in their first year at the incubator farm, and it was the incubator farm's first year, it was a lot of work to build and maintain business connections.

Though in rhetoric, the farmers and Global Gardens spoke about the Star Farms as an economic opportunity, in practice the farm added little in the way of real wages. Out of the 12 farmers, only 1 consistently sold at the Saturday market. That farmer expressed that the farm stand was going well for him and his family; the same farmer worked 4 different jobs. The farm, in this case, did not solely sustain him or his family. Farmers could not expect to survive or even substantially supplement their income through farm sales, which averaged less than \$1000 per farmer for over 4 months of farm-work. If

counting only economics as an indicator in this resettlement project, an evaluation of the first year, may not reveal its full success.

Despite the relatively small cash earnings and the difficulties they encountered, farmers often explained to me their plans for future years, always prefacing the future with (god-willing). The low earnings did not appear to deter their involvement. In fact, most farmers explained that they would continue to farm next year even if they made no money. Nuuria and Rahma, the two female farmers who emphasized that the most important thing was to make money, also made it clear that they wanted to keep farming. Nuuria explained that it the money and hard work did not matter; she and her mom would continue to farm in the coming years:

“If they give us the farm we will do. Even if it doesn’t make money, we are havin’ fun to be at the farm. It doesn’t bother us, now she [my mom] have like \$50 and all these weeds, so what?”

In practice, farmers experienced a number of challenges related to individual commercial farming and did not prioritize the farms as solely profit-making sites. Additionally, farmer enlisted the help of his family and friends for farm upkeep, harvest, and market. Most of the farmers in the project did not take home a large profit, but all farmers expressed (either through interview or personal interaction) that the farms were valuable to them. The stories, interviews, and insights learned from these farmers illustrate the problems associated with the assumptions that the farm is a solely economic tool. They also hint at alternative motivations and benefits to participating in the farm. The realities of the farm work and earnings, the participants; willingness to participate in the market, and their responses to interview questions about the motivations for farming

all challenge the notion that the farm was viewed primarily as an economic opportunity by Somali Bantu farming participants. The noneconomic motivations farmers listed are unaccounted for within development.

Alternative Motivations and Objectives for Participating

Even though Somali Bantu participants were challenged by farming in the Idaho context and did not farm primarily for economic benefits, they nonetheless found the project important and valuable. The insights I gained help to highlight the mismatch between the narrow goals of resettlement and the wider resettlement needs articulated by refugees. These insights offer a foundation for possible reframing or reorganization of projects and the approaches that yield them. Farmers were able to articulate what was important to them, and in all cases calculating the values of their farms was more complex than just adding up inputs and outputs. Farming was hard work and seemingly yielded little in the way of profits. I questioned why they continued to farm, what they felt or thought about when they farmed, why they enjoyed farming, and if they would continue to farm next year. In response to my questions, the farm participants highlighted numerous benefits to participating in the farm. In the following section, I highlight three recurring themes, all of which demonstrate a difference in objective between the farm's organizers and the farms themselves. Farmers valued the farms as a critical social space for their facilitation of the preservation of cultural identity, community engagement, and for participation with the greater Boise community.

Farming for Community

When explaining why they farmed or why individually they participated in the Star farm project, the participants most often responded by citing membership to the

Somali Bantu community as a principal reason or motivation for participating. Often in my interviews, my respondents would conflate their participation in the SBZ farm with their participation in the individual Star farmers' project. This was not surprising as people often worked at both farms in the same day and seemed to view both the individual and the community farms as community resources. On multiple occasions individual farmers supplemented the community farm's CSA with produce grown on their individual farms. In some cases this exchange was reimbursed by the SBZC and in other cases it was not. Even though farmers seemed to clearly enjoy and articulate the pleasures associated with owning and operating their individual farms, they viewed the individual farms as, to some degree, community supporting. Community benefits of the Star Farm resettlement project, both in community building activities and the indirect support of the community farm, are not primary goals of the farm. Farmers valued both their participation in the Star Farm and the SBZ and often articulated experiencing tension associated because they participated in both farm projects.

Several of the refugee farmers articulated the importance of the community over the importance of the individual farm. While all of the farmers at least in conversation supported the community farm, and most provided the community farm with labor or with produce, one farmer, Mustaf, epitomized the importance of the community farm to some of the refugees. Mustaf never participated in the Saturday market as an individual farmer, but was highly involved with the community farm. His Star Farm field was covered in weeds and this was often a source of banter between he, other farmers, and even volunteers. His potatoes, however, were quite healthy and on multiple occasions I observed him filling harvest buckets to take to the community CSA. Mustaf devoted

many hours a week to the community farm, and was always at the community farm booth at the Saturday market.

“I was supposed to work for my own property, but I leave [the Star Farm] I run to the community to work for the community to make sure that the community we get a little bit.”

While Mustaf is an extreme example of a farmer who really did not participate in the Star Farm for individual reasons, even farmers that were very dedicated to individual farming articulated the value of their community and community farm. Malik, a farmer who was often thought of as the most dedicated to the Star Farm and was most involved with the individual market sales. Malik was also among the highest earners for the 2010 season. His wife sold produce from his farm three times weekly, at a small Tuesday Market, the Friday night farm stand, and the Saturday market. When I asked Malik what was the most important reason he had to farm, he answered that it was the community: “The most important [reason to farm] is the community. Community is first”.

The reasons the farmers gave for prioritizing the community largely connect to notion that the community members together formed a social safety net. Farmers offered numerous examples of the need for a safety net, even though not all of them had accessed it. Reflecting on the importance of the safety net and what might happen if farmer neglected the community farm and thereby neglected the community, Mustaf explained:

“If our member for our community have bad condition, the community can help them. We do something now to help in the future”

He then elaborated his fear for what might happen if the community farm did not support the community:

“So [if] nobody can work for the community the community will go down. In America is a community if our community down, then everything gonna be bad for us. So we work so bad, we have to work so hard, now we need to go forward. That’s going to be hard for us, we have to work forward now”

Mustaf, not unlike other farmers, described the important role that the community played in the refugees’ lives, and viewed the farm as vital to the community’s survival.

Often the individual Star Farms were viewed as beneficial to the community farm. The notion seemed to be that if people were working individual farms for themselves and their families, less produce would be taken from the community farms for consumption. In this way, the community benefited from the Star Farm. One of the community leaders articulated this point well, explaining the community benefits:

“So you know, do the community farm means a lot of things for me. Because we have the individual that is also good, is also a good thing because people right now are getting their uh, a lot say, their cultural food, the food that they can’t find at a grocery store. Before we didn’t have that individual we had it in the community right? And, uh so everybody we formed there we get all we can get and we sales. So, um right now we are happy that everybody most not everybody most of the people have their individual and they can work and they can work as individual they can get whatever they want. And also, give some time to the community farm, and help and the community also will get some.”

Here, Mustaf explains that before the Star Farms, some of the important cultural foods were grown on the community farm plot. By moving the cultural produce offsite, the community would ultimately be able to sell more and could build on the social insurance.

Additionally, farmers often sited that the farms were spaces to meet and interact with one another in order to actively build community. During the 2010 season, the group changed their weekly meeting to coincide with farm workdays. In addition to providing a space for the community to interact and work through problems, Kabirow explained that part of the fun of the farm was being together with his community:

“Because you know everytime on the farm you know because everything goes with uh uh that kind of ambiance that is created which puts everybody in a good mood and so that gets us motivated...”

That Somali Bantu participants emphasized the importance of community for social insurance purposes as well as community building. Though I interviewed them about their individual Star Farms, they all expressed the importance of both farm projects to their community. Their perceptions of the community farm, in particular, resonate with recent studies as well as the recent senate report, which highlighted the importance of social and informal networks for refugees. The community built around the farms might lend an important first level of security to refugees who otherwise hang in the balance. The farms, both the individual and the community farm, are recognized as sites where social networking takes place and where a tangible safety net is being built, maintained, and reflected out into the greater Boise community.

Farming for Cultural Identity

Throughout all my interviews, refugees also cited their cultural identity as an important reason to farm. By participating in the farm, Somali Bantu refugees asserted their identity as a cultural group within the Boise community. It should be noted that cultural identity is constructed, that they incorporated farming into their identities not

they were essentially farmers⁴. Through the farm, the group tells and retells its story of origin, reproduces its cultural identity and ultimately values the farm more as a cultural resource than as an economic resource. Interviewees also tended to agree that through the farm, Somali Bantu parents and elders could transmit their culture to their children. In this way, engaging in farming was a way to teach and reconstruct the Somali Bantu farming identity in the Boise context. One of the farmers articulated his feelings on cultural identity transmission very clearly.

Ali is a quiet man whose presence on the farm was also noticed only after being on the farm for an hour or more. Ali worked at a meat packing plant on an early morning shift, and usually arrived at the farm in the late afternoon. He almost always had one or two of his children who worked with him on the farm. When I asked Ali about why he farmed, and why he enjoyed it he explained:

“I do it for my children. I am getting chance to bring them here out into the garden, how we were doing, uh how I was doing back in Africa. I think Africa at the farm. And also I can show my kids so they can learn about how the Somali Bantus”

Quotations like those above were underscored by the fact that farmers brought their children, nephews and nieces to the farm. Many of the younger children played and wandered together in the fields, but the older children assisted in all parts of the farming project. Some of the older children even represented the Somali Bantu farmers at local stores and national conferences.

⁴ Constructivist analysis of cultural identity acknowledges that group identity looks and even may feel deep-rooted, but instead of accepting the identity as natural, the constructivist peels back the many layers and the learned customs to examine the forces at work in identity creation (Anderson 1991; Bates 1993).

The farm site and the activities of farming were important for community building and cultural remembrance. Farmers spoke about the opportunity to engage in collective activity and actively remember and revisit life in Somalia.

One of the conversations I had with the participants repeatedly was about food, the perceived quality of food, their cultural foods, and American foods. Part of the Global Gardens overarching narrative is closely tied to the importance of cultural, heritage foods. The story was repeated to me regularly, that in the beginning of their stay in Boise, Somali Bantu refugees could not find their cultural foods in the grocery store. Often, they did not even recognize the foods in the store. Thus, the garden became an important resource for connecting to their identity.

The women with whom I interacted on the farm consistently praised their own heritage foods in comparison to American foods. Many of my conversations with women were about what produce they used at home, and what foods they preferred. In all cases, they showed a preference for foods they deemed African, or heritage foods. In some cases American foods were associated with health problems or obesity. Fatuma, the wife of one of the farmers, tried to explain to me that American foods, especially the ones that come from the refrigerator, made people fat: “at home you can eat food that is fresh and since it’s not cold you don’t get fat.” By comparison, the farm’s fresh food was equated with the healthy food of their former country. It was viewed as both better because of nutrition and because of a cultural connection to the food. While I was working with Nuuria and Rahma on their tomato plants, I asked Nuuria if they had taken any produce home and what they thought of it. Nuuria laughed because she and her mom

had just been discussing the farm food and the grocery food. After bringing home tomatoes, Nuuria explained:

“The food tastes like my country food, it tastes differently than the one we buy at the shopping. I don’t know what it is but the farm tastes better than the shopping...it remind of home in Somali”

Farm food was viewed as a way to connect with their roots and be Somali Bantu. Many of the farmers explained that being on the farm made them think of Somalia, of their culture, and of being happy. Malik’s explanation for farming, seems to summarize their thoughts on the farm well:

“This is a reason why I wanted to do it [the farm] because it’s my culture, farming.”

The farm, in this way, offers a space for a certain type of cultural identity to be grown, performed and projected much like a news-broadcast. It provides the opportunity for Somali Bantu to produce and literally consume a particular cultural identity. The farm is a medium through which Somali Bantu establish the boundaries of their group, teach children their cultural ways, and build on their collective memory. It is useful and valuable for more than just its economic potential and has become the focal point around which Somali Bantu community identity is constructed. The group mobilizes through the shared experience and knowledge of farming in order to strengthen, reinforce and build up both the economic and social capital of the whole group. As it is both spatial and temporal, the farm is a valuable resource.

Farming for Participation

In describing refugee motives for participating in farming, the coordinator stated, “Farmers have always said they want to grow food for their friends and neighbors.” I found this statement to be true and applicable to the greater Boise community throughout my fieldwork. Farmers expressed that the farm was a tool for connecting to people outside of their Somali Bantu Zigua community and viewed the farms and farms stands as a way to be visible and participate within the greater community.

The farms are easily the most visible refugee integration projects within Boise. During my short time in Boise, Somali Bantu refugees were featured in a PBS special and an Idaho Power Commercial⁵. Since my fieldwork, the group has been asked to present at a USDA conference, the Idaho conference for refugees, and has been featured in news magazine articles. A Mountain States agency staff person reiterated the positive feedback the refugees receive for participating in the Global Gardens. In an interview she said:

“Farms-one of the wonderful things about them is that they’re very visible, away to introduce people to the community as contributing rather than as people with needs.”

Given that current resettlement programs have largely failed to make refugees economically self-sufficient and have thus fallen to local states and communities as a welfare burden (United States 2010), the positive press the farmers receive is important both for refugees and for the refugee agency.

Farmers also expressed that the farms were important for the positive attention refugees as a group receive. Responses to interviews both reaffirmed the importance of

⁵ The commercial and the PBS special are available in abridged form on the Idaho Office for Refugees Webpage.

the farm for constructing a farming identity and for receiving positive recognition.

Farmers were sure to remind me that their community was involved in farming and that through the Global Garden project their community was known throughout Boise and that they could give back to the Boise community. Mustaf spoke about the importance of being visible as a group in a way that demonstrated that Somali Bantu were active, full-participating citizens:

“United States of America help us—we was us like slave people in Somali we was not getting education we was just—kill us like animals. So now, we have to help them. They help us—now we help them also. Is not help to give money them but is help to do together (the community and the farm) that is our goal.”

Occasionally, participants mentioned a future hope to have an even larger presence within Boise, something beyond the Global Gardens marketing tent. This sentiment most often came from leaders within the Somali Bantu community. These participants hoped to have a strong presence to give back to Boise via the food bank or to even open up a Global Gardens store. One interpretation of the desire to create a store might be attached to economic development goals. While this may be true at some level discussions surrounding the store and the Somali Bantu presence in Boise reflect a desire to create a stable and lasting community. The store would be something permanent. One of the farmers noted that if the Global Gardens expanded it could support refugees and also bring an African market to the city of Boise:

“I think it would make sense to grow that garden so that it would produce enough for the entire city or even enough to support other African markets. And in the mean time we can open up a global store that’s what it’s going to be called a

Global Garden store where all the produce can be displayed in the store and also the livestock so when we butcher our goats. Same with produce, same with cassava, same with anything else we produce. So that's actually going to be an organic store which in Boise.”

Civic participation and positive community feedback is a byproduct of the farm projects, and not a primary goal. Somali Bantu farmers reiterated that the farms offered them an opportunity to be active in the community and be visible to Boise. Civics and participation outside of market participation is largely left out of the resettlement discourse, but might play a valuable role in changing the perceptions of refugees as being a welfare burden.

CHAPTER V

UNDERSTANDING DEVELOPMENT ON THE FARM

In this chapter, I comment on the findings and the preliminary analysis I offered in the last chapter in order to more productively connect the findings from my case study to key theoretical concepts I introduced in Chapter 1. These connections foreground the challenges farmers faced and thereby shed light on some of the problems and issues embedded in the current approach to refugee resettlement. Recall that the following questions oriented this study: How does the Global Gardens Star Farm project look like development in design and in practice? How do refugees respond to the project? What can be learned from the Somali Bantu experience in Boise, both proximately in terms of resettlement projects and ultimately in terms of general development? Keeping with the structure of these queries, this chapter begins by reviewing the first question, using the case together with readings from critical development to draw out the issues. Next, it takes the Somali Bantu motivations for participation and summarizes and draws in new literature to suggest an alternative evaluation of the resettlement benefits of the farm. Finally, it illustrates a disparity between resettlement project interests and the concerns of the Somali Bantu participants.

Star Farm and the Development Critique

Ferguson posits the “development industry is apparently a global phenomenon” (1994, p. 8). Ferguson’s critique of the international development apparatus is a good starting point for viewing this case study as an example of one-size-fits-all development (1994). The case study extends the reach of the critical development discourse to the US resettlement program. Just as mainstream development intervention projects are designed

to bring Third World societies into the modern economy and move them from their primitive status into the modern world, US resettlement projects are designed to similarly develop Third World refugees. The design of the Star Farm project resembled mainstream development in two ways: in its assumptions about refugees and in its prescription for developing them. Critical development studies help to elucidate some of the issues with this approach and its application in the Star Farm case.

Defying Primitive and Highlighting Context

Somali Bantu refugees were constructed as a problem prior to their arrival in the United States. Recall the picture that news stories painted: Somali Bantu people were primitive and lacking in a variety of areas. Resettling agencies and volunteer groups did not have reliable information about the incoming group. Knowledge was limited to the known facts: the Somali Bantu were from Africa and the people were among some of the poorest, most primitive peoples in the world. Due to the hype about them, the Somali Bantu Star Farm participants could be considered iconic for the least ‘developed’ or the Third World. This echoes Ferguson’s critique that development often constructs a problem in order to produce a project to solve it (1994). Appraisals of refugees as primitive connect to the assumptions of linear development as noted in my literature review. Critical scholarship has charged that this singular view ignores the history and current context of the international system, (Escobar, 1995). This criticism can be applied to the views of the Somali Bantu prior to resettlement. As the Idaho agency worker noted, the preconceived notion that the refugees would be primitive and problematic belied the complexity of identities because in reality the Somali Bantu had “a

broad spectrum of backgrounds.” In other words, the linear development model was not sufficient for explaining Somali Bantu resettlement.

Given the ‘problems’ Somali Bantu refugees were thought to pose to resettlement, the RAPP project sought to capitalize on what refugees could do, farm. The concept behind RAPP was that agricultural projects were appropriate for African refugees in particular, because they had traditionally been farmers. In this way, the project subscribes to the linear view of development: because Somali Bantu were associated with agriculture in Somalia, and culturally identified as farmers, they were viewed as inherently farmers from traditional society. Even for those Somali Bantu who had a long history of farming, this identification ignores the context that they would be farming in a new environment for new consumers. In actuality, the refugees on the Star Farm had spent years in refugee camps where there were minimal opportunities to farm. Those that had farmed previously, were not able to easily apply their skills to the Idaho context. They did not know how to plant their farms efficiently, care for the types of crops that they planted, or have experience with irrigation farming. Their experience with the farm, highlights the complexities of refugee identities, and underscores the need to address context.

Alternative directions and solutions in development projects have begun to address the problems associated with a linear view of development, centering instead on empowerment, participation, and rights (Simon, 2007). Studies and critiques of development projects have highlighted the requisite for locally based, and participant driven development projects because geographic, cultural, and political contexts matter (Nelson & Wright, 1995). Moving away from a singular approach to development has

yielded creative projects, many of which have been more successful at addressing local needs (Krishna et al. 1997). These lessons can be productively carried over into the resettlement system. This case study suggests that resettlement projects might not be effective if designed as one-size-fits-all and that alternative views of successful integration should begin with local experiences of refugees.

A Question of Intent

The Star Farm project focused on training refugees and transitioning them into commercial farmers. Neoliberal principles were inherent to the Star Farm development project, initiated by RAPP: its goals were to make refugees self-sufficient and personally responsible for their and their family's financial wellbeing, and to be market-oriented individuals. Taking this view, the project's primary intention was connecting farmers to the market. However, the year-end results of the farm coupled with my observations illustrate that participants' intentions and motivations for participating did not neatly align with the Star Farm's organizational goals. In practice, farmers did not seem to value the farm primarily as an economic integration tool. First, the year-end results of the farm revealed low individual earnings; second, my observations and interviews on the farm demonstrated that marketing the produce was often not a top priority. While refugee participants expressed that earning money from the farm was important, their actions and responses during interviews indicated that they had many reasons for participating, all of which were important.

The differences in organization and participant priorities led to varying levels of interaction with market events and contributed to the overall reported earnings of the farm. Recall that most farmers reported earnings of less than \$500 for the entire season

and some even reported operating at a loss. If the farm were to be evaluated solely against the resettlement regime's main objective, economic integration, it might be viewed as a failure in its first year.

The failure of development to meet its goals of economic development has been a central criticism posed by scholars and theorists (Isbister 2003; Leys 1996; Munck & O'Hearn 1999). Recent work in refugee and immigrant studies likewise have questioned the wisdom of using a purely economics approach to resettlement (ISED 2007; Mott 2010; Hume & Hardwick 2005). What can be taken from these development analyses and the new studies on refugee and immigrant immigration is that economics is not the sole indicator for integration or human development. This lesson applies to the findings from the case study. If evaluated solely for its economic integration properties, the full value of the farm as an integration project even in its first year might be overlooked. Despite low earnings, farmers reiterated that they would farm again. Participants found the farm valuable for purposes related to the new integration indicators: community, cultural identity, and civics. Though not as it was planned or intended, the farm did assist farmers with crucial aspects of integration.

This finding again connects to Ferguson's case study, which demonstrated that planned interventions more often than not have unplanned consequences or side affects (1994). In his case, the consequences stemmed from the 'planner's' lack of contact with the ground, self-serving interests, and lack of attention to other development consequences (1994). In this case study, the unplanned side-affects proved to be valuable to the participants, but not central to current resettlement aims.

Nuuria's comment affirms the message that the farm was valuable: "If they give us the farm we will do. Even if it doesn't make money, we are havin' fun to be at the farm." The motivations on the part of the Global Gardens and the motivations of the participants are misaligned; in both design and practice participant considerations and impetuses are largely immeasurable and largely left out of the resettlement discourse.

Re-evaluating the Project

The reasons participants gave for participating in the project despite the fact that farming was hard work for little pay build on two existing bodies of literature. The first connects to an emerging literature and research that interrogates and calls for a broader definition for integration. The second focuses on the cross section between migrant studies and community agriculture. Together, the literatures help to better frame and account for the ways Somali Bantu participants perceived the farms' values.

The findings from my interviews and observations echo research which has found the importance of social-networks for refugees proved to be of utmost importance in finding and keeping employment and preventing secondary migration (George & Chaze 2009; de Vroom & Van Tubergen 2005). My findings demonstrate that the farmer's valued the space for crucial relationship building and maintenance. All of the participants in my study were first involved in the SBZC farm prior to their involvement with the Star Farm. When asked about the importance of the farm, all of my informants mentioned their community as important and most often they described the community effort as equally or more important than the individual Star farms. To reiterate Mustaf's comments: the farm enabled the community to help one another in times of crisis. The community farm, and by extension the Star Farm, appeared to meet the needs of the

community as a social-networking space. This finding echoes the 2007 findings of the Integration Working Group, which found eight determining factors in integration (ISED, 2007). Yet, building social networks is neither actively sought by nor an essential goal of current resettlement policy.

This study found that the farm played a significant social and cultural role the lives of the Somali Bantu farm participants. The importance of farm spaces and agriculture for community building (both socially and culturally) has been documented by recent research focusing on community agriculture and immigrants/migrants (Baker 2004; Head et al. 2004). The preference of farms for community space over agricultural space connects directly to the findings of a study on a Latino agriculture project. The study found that instead of the space being important for agricultural production, it was important for social interaction, community building, and cultural identity (Salvidar-Tanaka & Krasney). The study concluded that the farms were important “participatory landscapes” where evidence of all three (food production, community development and cultural production) was present. Somali Bantu experiences with the farm affirm that the farms were important community spaces, and the food produced from the farms was important for sustaining the community much like those in the previous study.

Given that agricultural spaces have been found to be beneficial for newcomer integration and that, in the case of my study, participants appreciated the communal aspect of farming and were successful in their group endeavors, future farm projects might work to actively integrate the social and cultural aspects of the farm. The communal aspect of the SBZC farm model worked to address some of the issues that the Star Farmers faced. The SBZC organized carpools, work parties, and community events

all around the farm project. The work and responsibility for the farm were shared. In order to make the Star Farm project more successful in future years, some of the community and social aspects of the SBZC farm should be applied to the Star project including: community organized work and selling groups, carpools, and community building events should be considered as valuable additions.

Concluding Thoughts

This case study adds to the resettlement discourse by calling attention to that which the current understanding of resettlement cannot explain: the importance of social-networks and cultural identity. What development denies, recent studies on refugee networks and immigrant agriculture and this study highlight. Farmers consistently articulated that the farm was important for realizing and maintaining Somali Bantu community and cultural identity. The farm was not a significant source of income, and the farmers did not solely measure the farm's value in economic terms. Similarly, in resettlement economic integration is not the only important factor in determining economic success.

The findings of this case study highlight Somali Bantu creativity and agency within the current resettlement structure. Building on recent scholarship extending the meaning of integration and resettlement as well as the limitations of the current regime ("Integration Handbook" 2004; George & Chaze 2009; "Report of the Integration Working Group"; United States 2010) this study found that the farm's role extended beyond economics and food production. Additionally, the social, cultural, and civic opportunities available through the farm attend to the additional integration factors as identified in the UNHCR handbook and the Integration Working Group. Insights gained

through this study affirm the importance of creating social networks and building cultural identity for refugee integration.

This study revealed that project's goals and the Somali Bantu motivations for participating in the project were not completely aligned. Whereas the resettlement project focused on connecting farmers to consumer to create revenue in order to assist refugees with economic integration, participants valued the ways the farms contributed to multiple aspects of integration.

The Somali Bantu experience with the Star Farm project in Idaho helps to broaden discussions about refugee resettlement and integration in the United States. Their experience in Boise also points to current gaps within resettlement policy. The current resettlement policy privileges economic integration to the exclusion of other resettlement indicators including the reconstruction of social networks and cultural identity.

The findings from this case do not suggest that resettlement programs should necessarily be abandoned; rather, it suggests such programs should be re-evaluated for their assumptions, goals, and methods. Additionally, the Somali Bantu assessments and engagements with the farm suggest that resettlement as a whole might be best evaluated not through criticizing projects for what they fail to do, but by investigating them for what do accomplish in terms of resettlement. Farmers found that their farms helped to fill an important community and cultural role.

The case study also presents an opportunity to include the perspectives of refugee participants in the creation and application of resettlement projects. Their motivations and assessments of the farm indicate that the full value of the farm might be impossible to

quantify. Malik, the farmer who was most dedicated to the Star Farm project helps to illustrate this with his articulation of the farm's value:

“I think I am very happy [when I am at the farm]. Yeah, I happy for I see my farm I think happiful. Like, boy, like boy he is born today. Yeah, like boy because I am happy like that for the farm. Like mom and dad happy when born is first girl or first son. Me too. I am happy like for the farm.

The sentiments Malik expressed cannot be easily quantified or even easily incorporated into policy. Yet, his words should give cause to pause when evaluating such projects based solely on their economic performance.

The dynamics of the farm project serve as a window for viewing the larger US resettlement regime. Where the current US resettlement regime has been found to be lacking as a one-size-fits all approach, the case study demonstrates that refugees within projects make their own creative solutions. Somali Bantu participants' responses to the project might serve as the basis for a re-evaluation of the farm project and also a starting point for addressing the current approach to resettlement programs. Resettlement programs might learn from the alternative approaches now posed to international development.

The Star Farm also provides an occasion to consider and discuss development from a new perspective in a familiar locale. Broadening the development discourse to include internal US development projects might be an important first step in fully re-evaluating not only US resettlement projects but also its projects abroad. Ultimately, the case study challenges the wisdom of a purely economics approach to development and calls for a more nuanced, holistic definition of development.

APPENDIX A

LIST OF ACRONYMS

DRA—Division of Refugee Resettlement

ORR—Office of Refugee Resettlement

RAPP—Refugee Agricultural

UNHCR—United Nations High Council on Refugees

SBZC—Somali Bantu Zigua Community

APPENDIX B

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Circle the Answer that works best for you

1. What is your gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Prefer not to respond

2. Please select your age range:
 - a. 18-24 years old
 - b. 25-30 years old
 - c. 30-40 years old
 - d. 40-50 years old
 - e. 50-60 years old
 - f. over 60 years old

3. What year did you arrive in the United States?

4. What is your primary occupation or Job?

5. What region or country of the world are you from?

6. Where did you learn English? & What other languages do you speak?

7. How long have you been involved in Global Gardens?
 - a. This is my first season
 - b. This is my second season
 - c. This is my third season
 - d. More than three seasons

8. Where else have you farmed or gardened?

- a. In my home country
- b. In my home in Boise
- c. Only with the Global Gardens
- d. Other _____

9. If you farmed in your home country, in what capacity did you farm? (example: Was it commercial or home gardens or other?)

10. Which Global Gardens projects do you help with?
- a. The Allumbaugh Farm (African Community Development)
 - b. The Somali Bantu Farm
 - c. Community Garden
 - d. The new Farm in Star

11. Why do you participate in the farm projects? (Answer each)

- a. The Somali Bantu Project:

- b. The New Star farm:

12. How often do you participate in these projects during the summer?
- a. About 1 time a month
 - b. About 2 times a month
 - c. About 1 time a week
 - d. About 2 times a week
 - e. More than 2 times a week

13. Are you able to go to the farm or garden as often as you would like to go?
- Yes I am able to go whenever I would like to go. (Skip to question 16)
 - No I would like to go more often. (Answer question 15)
14. What prevents you from going to the farm or garden more often?
15. Will you participate in the Global Gardens projects next year? If so, which ones?
16. What do you like about farming with the Global Gardens?
17. Does your family use food from the Global Gardens at home?
- Yes, often
 - Yes, sometimes
 - No
18. Do you grow food that you used in your home country? If yes, what is it? If no, why not?

19. How important are the Global Gardens projects for growing food for your household or family?
- Very Important
 - Somewhat Important
 - Neither important or not important
 - Somewhat Not important
 - Not Important
20. How important is the Global Gardens for meeting or spending time with friends and family?
- Very Important
 - Somewhat Important
 - Neither Important nor Not Important
 - Somewhat Not Important
 - Not Important
21. For supporting the Somali Bantu Community?
- Very Important
 - Somewhat Important
 - Neither Important nor Not Important
 - Somewhat Not Important
 - Not Important
22. How important is the Global Gardens for making additional money or income for your family?
- Very Important
 - Somewhat Important
 - Neither Important nor Not Important
 - Somewhat Not Important
 - Not Important
23. How Important is the Global Gardens for learning new skills?
- Very Important
 - Somewhat Important
 - Neither Important nor Not Important
 - Somewhat Not Important
 - Not Important

24. Please write your opinion:

- a. The Global Gardens farm projects are valuable to me because....

25. Please right your opinion:

- a. The biggest challenge or most difficult part of being a part of the project is.....

26. Do you have any additional comments about the Global Gardens that you would like to share?

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