REFERENCES:

INTERSECTIONALITY: EXPERIENCES OF GENDER SOCIALIZATION AND RACIALIZATION FOR IRAQI STUDENTS RESETTLED IN THE UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT

Individuals from conflict-affected countries, such as Iraq, face formidable challenges when they resettle in the United States. Drawing from intersectionality theory, we explore the lived experiences of adolescent boys and girls from Iraq who have resettled in Texas and Virginia. In this qualitative study, we focus on the school as an institution that is positioned to enforce, or to combat, systemic and interpersonal inequalities among young refugees, especially in terms of gender and race. Our thematic analysis identifies the ways their interactions with teachers, peers, and family in the school context have shaped the socialization of these adolescent boys and girls from Iraq. The study findings reflect the importance of understanding how education settings can affect the intersectional experiences of conflict-affected youth who have resettled in the United States.

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR 2019, 4) has called the period from 2010 to 2019 the "decade of displacement," as these were years in which multiple chronic crises around the globe resulted in a record-breaking number of refugees and asylum seekers. In 2019, 84 percent of the forcibly displaced persons worldwide were from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, a portion of whom resettled in high-income countries,

including the United States. For refugees contending with the many hardships of displacement, the resettlement experience poses its own unique challenges, including the process of adjusting to a new social and cultural environment (Silove, Ventevogel, and Rees 2017; Fazel et al. 2012; Awad, Kia-Keating, and Amer 2019; Gibson 2001; Miller and Rasmussen 2010). Refugees who resettle during adolescence, a life stage marked by rapid biological and psychological changes, are particularly sensitive to social and cultural influences.

Adolescents spend a large proportion of their waking life at school or in school-related activities. As such, teachers and peers are "especially central to shaping and perpetuating [gender] norms" (Amin et al. 2018) in the school setting. A systematic review of the factors that shape gender norms globally found that schools can reinforce inequitable and harmful gender norms by, for example, prizing boys' achievements over those of girls and enforcing systems that constrain girls' equal participation (Kågesten et al. 2016). Schools can also have a positive influence on gender socialization, which is the process by which individuals learn to perform gender roles according to established norms (Ryle 2018; John et al. 2017). For example, in the evidence-based "coaching boys into men" program developed by Futures Without Violence and implemented around the world, school coaches are engaged as positive role models for boys as a way to challenge stereotypical gender norms and combat gender-based violence (Miller et al. 2014). Other programs engage female role models to encourage girls to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, which historically are male dominated (González-Pérez, Mateos de Cabo, and Sáinz 2020).

Schools are also the primary institutions where adolescents experience racialization and "othering." Racialization, which is the "extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified social relationship, social practice or group" (Omi and Winant 2014, 13), may contribute to othering, which is the "set of dynamics, processes, and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality" (Powell and Menendian 2017, para. 8) based on group identities. As adolescent Iraqi refugees navigate their new school settings, they may have difficulty fitting in with their peers, and into the school climate more generally (Awad et al. 2019). Having these early and often ongoing experiences in the United States may shape the ways these young Iraqis perceive themselves, including their identification with a minority racial category. Racialization and othering challenge these adolescents' sense of belonging, are detrimental to their academic success, and deplete their self-efficacy (García Coll and Magnuson 1997; Kia-Keating and Ellis 2007). Young Iraqis' experience of being racialized also can contribute to extended poor physical

and mental health outcomes (Abdulrahim et al. 2012; Bakhtiari 2020). Despite the growing literature on the racialization of refugees from the MENA region (Nojan 2022; Gowayed 2020), the literature on this phenomenon among Iraqi youth is limited.

The field of education in emergencies concerns itself with the access to and quality of education for displaced children and youth in crisis-affected contexts. Gender is a key consideration in the provision of education in emergencies. Evidence indicates that gender often shapes the educational expectations of and opportunities available to displaced youth in conflict-affected contexts (Schlecht et al. 2017). Conflict and displacement often exacerbate existing gender inequalities in education (INEE 2019). Furthermore, failing to recognize the diverse social identities and experiences of young people across and within the MENA countries, practitioners and researchers sometimes treat Muslim or Arab refugees as a monolith. In this paper, we delve into the intersectional experiences of a subgroup of MENA refugees, namely Iraqi boys and girls who have resettled in the United States. This population warrants attention, given that 144,400 refugees from Iraq have settled the United States since 2001 (Krogstad 2019).

We begin this article with a description of intersectionality theory, which guides our analysis. In the next section, we provide a brief review of the literature on gender socialization among Iraqis, and on the intersecting experiences of racialization in education settings for Iraqi youth who have resettled in high-income contexts. We then describe our research methods and present our findings, which illustrate the intersection of gender and race in school for Iraqi youth who resettled in Austin, Texas, and Harrisonburg, Virginia. We conclude by discussing the theoretical and programmatic implications of our findings, including how to respond to the intersectional challenges facing refugee youth from Iraq who have resettled in the United States.

We argue that the refugee youth included in this study experience gender socialization and racialization in their peer relationships, in their interactions with teachers, and in their familial expectations. Over time, this may result in girls and boys having differing levels of educational attainment, different aspirations and participation in school, and varying degrees of psychosocial wellbeing. Recognizing the socialized intersectionality of gender and race among refugee youth who have resettled in new countries may lead to the provision of more targeted and appropriate supports and interventions.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

In this study, we employ intersectionality theory to explore the role gender socialization and racialization have played among Iraqi youth who have resettled in the United States. Intersectionality theory critiques the notion of a universal experience and argues that any analysis that focuses exclusively on one dimension of identity, such as gender or race, is insufficient, as these dimensions are experienced simultaneously (Viruell-Fuentes, Miranda, and Abdulrahim 2012; Crenshaw 1991; Cole et al. 2009; Collins 2019; Combahee River Collective 1977). Intersectionality theory was developed not only to understand the experiences of the marginalized but also to study (and resist) the intersecting power structures that create multiple layers of marginalization (Collins 2019). Intersectionality theory has been used extensively to understand the experience of intersecting identities in the United States, but only limited attention has been given to the ways larger institutions shape these experiences, specifically the experiences of refugees (Viruell-Fuentes et al. 2012).

We draw from intersectionality theory to investigate the understudied dimensions of gender and race in the resettlement of youth from Iraq. Gender socialization is informed by structural, relational, and individual mechanisms (Stockard 2006; John et al. 2017), and there is strong evidence about the roles played by parental attitudes and actions, household gender responsibilities, peer dynamics, and school environments in propagating strict gender norms (Kågesten et al. 2016; Endendijk, Groeneveld, and Mesman 2018). Gender socialization during adolescence can have a significant impact on health outcomes, including differential patterns of morbidity and mortality across genders (Chandra-Mouli, Plesons, and Amin 2018).

Racialization involves treating an individual or group as "different," based on their perceived racial or ethnic identity. Race is typically associated with phenotypical markers, such as hair texture or skin color, while ethnicity usually refers to a shared culture and common ancestry (Hughes et al. 2006). Racialization thus involves treating individuals differently based on their racial and ethnic identities. For refugee youth in the United States, racialization involves categorizing them into predefined groups, such as classifying Arabs as "white" in census records, which perpetuates unrecognized disparities and creates feelings of invisibility. Adolescents often endure racialization at school, where they are exposed to the prejudice and discrimination of peers, teachers, mentors, and even course curricula that may promote racial and ethnic othering (Rivas-Drake et al. 2020;

Aldana and Byrd 2015; Bennouna et al. 2021). Even more pernicious are policies like the Trump administration's "Muslim ban," which invoked the events of 9/11 to justify restricting entry to the United States for the nationals of several Muslim-majority countries and to curtail refugee resettlement.

For adolescent refugees from Iraq, gender socialization and racialization are inextricably connected. Their racial identities shape the ways they are treated in their new social environments (Qin and Li 2020), while racism simultaneously pushes them to the margins. Although refugees' identities are shaped by linguicism, heteronormativity, classism, and other social influences, we focus in this study on gender and race as central to their experiences within the US education system. Combining gender socialization with experiences of racialization enabled us to conduct an intersectional analysis of the experiences of the refugee youth in our chosen study sites.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conflict-related displacement and subsequent resettlement often result in significant changes in a family's household structure. Ethnic and racial differences in the host community may limit access to resources and social supports for newly arrived refugees (Awad et al. 2019), and access to employment and education may differ by gender, depending on local laws and customs (Kågesten et al. 2016). Adolescents are extremely susceptible to these new social influences, and the social ecology of the host environment may lead them to adopt behaviors that are stereotypically gendered or racialized (Abubakar et al. 2014).

Gender socialization occurs at multiple levels of the social ecology, from macro-level policies that sustain income inequality, to meso-level influences at school and in the social networks, and even in micro-level behaviors such as interpersonal communication (Ager 2006; John et al. 2017).[1] Displacement also may perpetuate existing gender inequalities, heighten exposure to gender-based violence, and end the community-based protections available in the refugees' countries of origin, such as family or community support (Ní Aoláin et al. 2018; Caprioli and Boyer 2001). Inequities in terms of micro-level interpersonal treatment and meso-level access to services during displacement promote stereotypically gendered roles

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[1]   Macro-level refers to legal, regulatory, and economic factors in the larger political environment; meso-level to institutional and community factors; and micro-level to individual, interpersonal, and familial factors.

among boys and girls, including prioritizing education and employment for boys, homemaking for girls.

Iraqi adolescents in the United States are subject to gendered racial, ethnic, and religious prejudice, which may affect their physical and mental health (Kira et al. 2010, 2008). Officially classified as white but typically racialized as non-white, refugees from the MENA region, including Iraqis, exist in a racially ambiguous space (Cainkar 2016, 2009; Jamal and Naber 2008; Tehranian 2008). Moreover, anti-Arab and Islamophobic rhetoric is pervasive in the United States and is often exacerbated by negative portrayals in the media of people from the MENA region (Rostam and Haverkamp 2009). The media and certain US policies such as the Patriot Act, the "War on Terror," and the "Muslim ban" ascribe to the belief that Muslim people are "backwards, barbaric, uncivilized, oppressed women, men who oppress women, violent, unreasonable, terroristic" (Chan-Malik et al. 2014, 19). These racialized descriptions contribute to the othering of refugees from the MENA region and can have a significantly negative impact on their mental and physical health (Kira et al. 2010; Yako and Biswas 2014; Hess et al. 2018).

The US education system is a primary location of the racialization and gender socialization of Iraqi youth, and the implicit and explicit bias of administrators, teachers, and peers can further propagate racialized gender norms and roles. Studies also have found that language barriers and other acculturative stressors may make it difficult for Iraqi students to succeed in US schools (Nykiel-Herbert 2010). Furthermore, many Iraqi students experienced extended gaps in their education before arriving in the United States, due to precarious living conditions, residency restrictions, discriminatory treatment, and financial difficulties (Bang and Collet 2018). Studies have found that such adverse life experiences and gaps in education can negatively affect academic outcomes, including for Iraqi students who have resettled in the United States (Bang 2017). In what follows, we describe how we investigated these processes of racialization and gender socialization among adolescent Iraqi refugees and demonstrate how they can manifest in various facets of student life.

The challenges faced by adolescent refugees in the United States are not well-documented. This study aims to fill this gap by assessing the intersecting experiences of racialization and gender socialization through an analysis of key findings from the Study of Adolescent Lives after Migration to America (SALaMA). SALaMA is a mixed methods study led by Dr. Lindsay Stark to gain understanding of the experiences of people from the MENA region, including

Iraqi adolescents, who have been affected by crisis and are currently living in the United States (Bennouna, Ocampo et al. 2019).[2] It is hoped that the results will inform the development of more tailored and impactful approaches to support Iraqi adolescents who are resettling in the United States.

METHODS

SETTING

The SALaMA research team focused on areas where the study sponsor, Qatar Foundation International, had strong partnerships, and where school leaders expressed interest in using the study findings to inform their future programming. Due to the high number of refugee families from Iraq who settled in Austin, Texas, and Harrisonburg, Virginia, our data collection focused on those two communities during the summer of 2017.

In recent years, Harrisonburg and Austin have been leading cities for immigration; from 2014 to 2018, approximately 17.2 percent and 18.5 percent of Harrisonburg's and Austin's residents, respectively, were born outside the United States (US Census Bureau 2019). Although the rate of refugee resettlement plummeted during the time data were being collected, due to the newly imposed ceiling on immigration imposed by the Trump administration, approximately 48 percent of the students at Harrisonburg City Public School (HCPS) were born outside the United States. After English and Spanish, Arabic and Kurdish were the most common home languages among HCPS students (10% and 7%, respectively) (HCPS 2020). In the 2017-2018 school year, the Austin Independent School District (AISD) served 81,650 students, 27 percent of whom were English language learners (ELLs) (AISD 2018). Approximately 19 percent of AISD's ELLs were immigrants, refugees, or asylees. After Spanish, Arabic was the most common home language among ELL students.

Participants

The primary data collection took place in July 2018. It consisted of (1) gender-disaggregated, school-based focus group discussions with high school students ages 13-23 who were born either in conflict-affected MENA countries or during their family's displacement from one of these countries; (2) semistructured interviews

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2   While the study participants included students from multiple countries in the region, the present analysis focuses on students from Iraq.

with the caregivers of these youths; and (3) semistructured interviews with key informants, who included teachers, guidance counselors, school district/division administrators, case workers, therapists, and personnel from nongovernmental organizations. Although the SALaMA study included participants from Iraq, Syria, and Sudan, our results highlight the unique experiences of Iraqi participants, who were the majority of the study sample.

In Harrisonburg, the study team purposefully selected key informants with the assistance of a school administrator, who helped to recruit participants and schedule interviews. The study team contacted the key informants outside the school directly, via email, and asked them to recommend other participants. The study team worked with Christian World Service to identify potential youth and caregiver participants. A researcher and a trained Arabic interpreter contacted the adult caregivers by phone to explain the study and ask if they were interested in participating. Information on the study in Arabic and English was mailed to individuals who expressed interest. Of the 25 families contacted, 17 participated, one declined, and the rest could not be reached. A researcher and an interpreter visited each family that expressed interest in participating to answer their questions and obtain their written informed consent; this included adults' consent for their children to participate. To ensure that the children's participation was voluntary, they were subsequently invited to complete a written informed assent at the high school without their parents present.

In Austin, the study team worked with the AISD Refugee Family Support Office to develop a list of potential participants. They contacted potential key informants directly via email or phone, and all key informants provided written consent in person. Of the 48 families contacted, 14 participated, eight refused, five consented but were not present for data collection, and the rest could not be reached. To answer their questions and obtain written informed consent, the research team and interpreter visited all the families that expressed an interest in participating. The youth participants were invited to the public high school, where they completed written informed assent; only students whose parents signed and returned consent forms were approached for assent on the day of data collection.

Data Collection

In both Austin and Harrisonburg, the data collection was conducted with the caregivers and adolescents by a study team consisting of two public health researchers, a Muslim Pakistani American woman and an American man of Moroccan and French descent. They were accompanied at each site by an Iraqi

interpreter who was familiar with the local refugee community and the schools. Unless a participant requested otherwise, the researchers audio-recorded all the interviews and also kept detailed field notes. A team transcribed the audio files, including the interpreter's Arabic-to-English translation, and the research team then reviewed, edited, and de-identified all the English transcripts. All the records, including the audio and written transcriptions, were stored on password-protected computers to ensure confidentiality.

Ethical Considerations

The research protocol was approved by the institutional review boards at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health (IRB-AAAR7830), AISD's Department of Research and Evaluation (R18.62), and the HCPS superintendent of schools.

Data Analysis

This qualitative analysis explores the experiences of Iraqi male and female adolescents, with a particular focus on their intersectional experiences in the education ecosystem. The research team analyzed the data using thematic analysis and the constant comparative method, which is a process developed by Glaser and Strauss (2017) wherein excerpts of raw data are sorted and organized into groups according to attributes in order to formulate a new theory (Silverman 2015). A lead analyst conducted the initial primary analysis of these data, which involved reviewing all the transcripts to develop the initial codes, comparing them to the relevant literature, and generating a codebook. A team of coders with backgrounds in public health, social work, psychology, and refugee resettlement were trained in the study protocol and codebook. Together with the research team, they finalized the codebook, which contained 56 codes, built intercoder reliability through an iterative process, and identified the key themes in the data (Bennouna, Ocampo et al. 2019).

The research team analyzed the data in order to gain an understanding of the intersectional experiences of adolescent Iraqi newcomers to the United States. The transcript segments originally coded as "gender system," "negotiating personal identities," and "acculturation strategies" were extracted and analyzed further. The code "gender system" included references to the ways gender constructs (e.g., gender schemas, norms, roles, identities, or stereotypes) contributed to differences in access to services and in how individuals were treated. This included direct comparisons between genders, and indirect comparisons in which one gender was highlighted as being subject to a certain phenomenon or tendency.

"Negotiating personal identities" included references to the tensions individuals experience in navigating the various dimensions of their multiple identities (e.g., nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexuality, refugee status, developmental stage, etc.). "Acculturation strategies" referred to the ways the adolescents and the host communities managed the newcomers' socialization and acculturation to US norms and practices. This included integration (i.e., maintaining cultural continuity while also adjusting to a new culture), assimilation (i.e., shedding cultural heritage and adopting a new culture), separation (i.e., maintaining cultural continuity and avoiding other cultures), and marginalization (i.e., shedding cultural origins and also avoiding other cultures). To more fully understand the ways adolescents experienced their intersecting identities, the primary author re-analyzed these themes and identified subthemes related to education, gender, and race/ethnicity.

RESULTS

In this analysis, we included Iraqi refugees (n=21) from the larger SALaMA dataset of adolescent respondents. We included the perspectives of key informants, caregivers, and service providers. The results underscore the intersection of gender and race/ethnicity. We considered the intersecting experiences of gender socialization and racial socialization within two overarching themes: the adolescents' gendered and racialized experiences at school, and the gendered expectations within their families. The results highlight the socialization processes adolescents from Iraq experienced upon their resettlement in the United States.

Table 1: Adolescent Participants

Pseudonym	Site	Gender	Age
Ali	Austin	M	16
Fatima	Austin	F	17
Zainab	Austin	F	14
Hussein	Austin	M	14
Ahmed	Austin	M	15
Muhammed	Austin	M	16
Mostafa	Austin	M	15
Haidar	Austin	M	16
Zahra	Austin	F	15
Nour	Harrisonburg	F	16
Iman	Harrisonburg	F	17
Mariam	Harrisonburg	F	17
Shaimaa	Harrisonburg	F	16
Sarah	Harrisonburg	F	19
Hassan	Harrisonburg	M	18
Abbas	Harrisonburg	M	17
Omar	Harrisonburg	M	16
Abdullah	Harrisonburg	M	17
Saad	Harrisonburg	M	16
Ibrahim	Harrisonburg	M	17
Jassim	Harrisonburg	M	18

Intersectional Experiences at School

Refugee boys from Iraq reported dealing with ethnic stereotypes and gendered expectations while attempting to develop friendships with their peers in their new school settings. For example, some boys in Austin reported being bullied and called a terrorist (e.g., Ali).[3] These interpersonal dynamics often resulted in verbal and sometimes even physical altercations. One boy explained that, when he experienced a miscommunication with a peer, a school faculty member encouraged him to engage in violent behavior, a gendered norm in the United States. The faculty member allegedly said, "Yeah, like, they're going to fight you to see how good you are, and if you're not good, they're just going to keep on fighting you again" (Hussein).

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3   Adolescents' names have been replaced with pseudonyms in order to maintain confidentiality and privacy.

However, when others in the Austin focus group were asked about fighting, one boy responded that his "life is not that crazy," while another said he "[had] no interest in that." Other boys emphasized the importance of being "nice with other people, 'cause when you help them, they can help you," and of responding to discrimination with humor rather than violence: "We make fun of the situation to make it less significant" (Ahmed).

The boys also reported having built positive relationships with their peers by participating in athletics, especially with others who had experienced racialization as outsiders in the United States. One boy recalled that "one of them is from Pakistan but he…lived most of his life here and he was helping me most of my time. After this, I start liking football 'cause we play together" (Ali). Iraqi boys in Harrisonburg often made friends with other boys from the MENA region, and they supported each other while learning English and participating in class. One boy recalled that the teachers "encourage us to ask questions, but sometimes we don't know what to ask about because we…don't know anything about [the system, so] getting another friend in the class [who can]…explain [the answer] better to you…would help you out" (Ibrahim).

Refugee girls from Iraq were also confronted with anti-MENA discrimination at school, but their experiences differed substantially from those of the boys. Both educators and their fellow students had fixed ideas about the roles and behavior of women and girls from the MENA region, including Iraqis, and the refugee girls' interactions with teachers and other students often carried discriminatory gendered expectations. A girl in a focus group in Austin recalled a substitute teacher who used her as an example of how people from MENA "change cultures" after coming to the United States and "change their personality." The teacher had pointed to the girl and said, "Whenever she got here, she took off her scarf." The girl actually had never worn a hijab, and she was insulted by the conflation of country of origin and religious practices. As she recalls, "When I was in Iraq, Syria, Turkey…I didn't even wear it…I didn't take it off when I got here" (Fatima). Another girl in Austin recalled a conversation in which the teacher asked her if all girls from MENA wear a hijab, and she responded, "Do[es] everybody in Mexico just…carry around maracas and start shaking them everywhere?" (Zahra).

The refugee girls' interactions with their peers at school were sometimes similarly fraught. While they, like the boys, encountered discrimination due to their ethnic identities, such as comments that Iraqi students might throw "bombs in schools" (Zainab), the girls also endured exoticization and objectification by both their peers and the teachers. For example, some girls reported experiencing unwanted

attention from boys when wearing the hijab. One girl in Harrisonburg recalled a boy staring at her and talking about her negatively because she was wearing a hijab. The girl felt unable to respond adequately to him, due to her limited English proficiency, so she "was just silent and…was looking down" (Mariam). Another girl recalled a time when a boy harassed her at school, and although it took multiple attempts, she was assertive and continued to address the issue until she was heard. She explained:

> There was a boy there and he kinda like[d] Muslim girls who wears hijab…[He] was like bothering me all the time and I was telling him to stop, "Please, I don't like this." And he kept talking about this, he was keep following me when I walk in the hallway…[and] at my lunch…he kept bothering me. And one time I was alone in the class and, uh, he came to the class and he close the door and I was really scared. And then I'm, like, "What do you want?" And after that, the teacher came and I was like, there's God…I was really scared, and after that, um…I told the teacher, and it didn't work and…I went to, uh, [the school liaison], I talked to her about that and she talked to other person and then I talked to principal. And then he [the boy] stopped. (Mariam)

In many cases, when a girl was stereotyped by a teacher or peer due to gendered racialization, she addressed the microaggression directly. However, as in the case above, it was not always easy to rectify discriminatory behaviors that were threatening and potentially dangerous.

Some service providers noted that the coed schools could be particularly challenging for girls from Iraq, as the schools in their country of origin had a vastly different environment. Service providers were particularly concerned about Iraqi students witnessing physical intimacy at school, such as "kids making out in the hallway," and how this would conflict with ideas of the "parents at home, [who] want [their girls] to adhere more closely to…values and…customs of [their] home country" (Black female key informant, service provider in a community-based organization, Austin). Service providers also noted adolescents' susceptibility to "social pressure" and gossip among girls: "If kids see kids in the schools doing something and they tell their parents…then all the families are now talking about that family, who lets their daughter speak to boys in the hallway, and then that family has pressure from the community to pressure their daughter" (white female key informant, community-based organization, Harrisonburg). Reflecting on their schools in Iraq, some girls said they could be suspended for physical

expressions of intimacy. In one girl's words, "They will suspend you or call your parents if you…hugged a person for a long time" (Mariam). "Here is so different," she added, saying that the students at her new school "can do everything they want." These conflicting norms prompted the refugee girls to reflect on their own behaviors and identities. They and their caregivers were particularly attuned to these different social norms in terms of how the girls would behave at school. The challenge of an unfamiliar learning environment was complicated by the actions of peers who adhere to different norms around gender and sexuality. In some cases, particularly in Austin, Iraqi girls experienced tensions with Latina-identified girls, whose style of dress and relationships with boys defied the traditional Iraqi concept of a "good girl."

Another site of gender socialization for girls was social media, which the girls described as platforms used for bullying. One service provider in Harrisonburg discussed the ways Iraqi girls bullied each other on social media: "The [Iraqi] girl posts a picture on her social media site where she is…showing her beautiful hair and is posing seductively…She has only allowed access to people that she can tell her mother are only girls, [but other girls send] those things out and [open] them up to the public" (white female key informant, school district leader, Harrisonburg). These behaviors reaffirm gender norms wherein girls are simultaneously objectified by boys and subject to gossip and ridicule by their girl peers.

School leaders in Austin are working to address the intersectional dynamics of both gender and race/ethnicity. One Latina key informant who is a school leader in Austin stated that

> a lot of the equity work has to do with…very specific groups, and now you're throwing in a different subset that you have to consider. With Latinas and with African Americans, I think, when I'm at the race and diversity conversation, gender is not a huge part of that conversation, but you throw in Muslim refugees, it's huge…and it's been a massive learning curve for me…When I meet with families and I see the husband saying, "No, she cannot go to school because she needs to be doing x, y, and z," I have to be careful about how I approach that.

Familial Expectations

Boys commonly reported gendered expectations at the family level that influenced their educational experiences. Some stated that their parents trusted them and that they did not have to share their academic progress with them. Others recalled

conversations where their parents had said, "Go to college, be a doctor. That's all you hear" (Hassan). A boy in Harrisonburg stated that "going to America and getting [a] degree is…a big thing for…our family. Like, they're counting on you to come here, get a degree, buy them a house or some[thing]…to pay them back, they brought you all the way over here and the struggles that they had is a lot" (Omar). Some male students perceived that their parents cared more about their grades and future career prospects than about other indicators of wellbeing, while others felt that their parents put pressure on them to earn an income as quickly as possible. Both of these attitudes affected these adolescent boys' perceptions of parental support for their educational attainment. A service provider in Austin explained:

> A lot of guys couldn't wait, they wanted to leave school early. They wanted to get a job and get money in their pocket. And I was trying to explain to them the difference between an hourly wage and a salary, and why it was better to stay in school. Yeah, you don't have money in your pocket today, but… in this country you can't have a middle-class life [as] a truck driver or taxi driver…So, you want to…resist the temptation to get the hourly job now, work at CVS or whatever, and finish at least high school. (Black woman key informant, service provider in a community-based organization, Austin)

Parents also reinforced traditional expectations about sons' responsibility to the family, such as translating for their parents at the school and, to a lesser degree, caring for their siblings. Older boys were often expected to act as the liaison between the school and their parents, due in part to Iraqi gender norms, wherein men are more active in their communities in terms of seeking employment and resources, and are responsible for their female family members. For example, one boy mentioned that his "mom uses me [as a translator] for the medical stuff" (Ahmed), while a mother in Austin described her son as "the point of communication between [me and the school] because I gave my son's phone number and email. So, if they have anything, they contact my son, and my son will tell me." These responsibilities were integral to the experiences of the families in this study. The boys were often contending with challenging school-based experiences, including teacher and peer dynamics that sometimes sanctioned violence, while at home they navigated significant familial responsibilities along with high expectations for their academic success. These socialized patterns were informed by the intersectional experience of being both male and from Iraq, a country where men are socialized to earn an income for their family and to hold a position of authority in their community.

Iraqi girls contended with a new reality upon resettling in the United States, where education and employment priorities are structured differently. At home, girls faced their parents' expectations about caregiving responsibilities that were similar to those of their male siblings. Girls were expected to care for their siblings, such as by walking them to school, and to help their mothers with housework, but unlike the boys, they did not report acting as a liaison between their parents and the school. One Iraqi mother in Austin reported that "my daughter…sometimes she helps me also [but] she's studying, so sometimes she will not be able to do that." In the United States, parents expected both girls and boys to contribute to the family finances, whereas in Iraq, girls were not necessarily expected to participate in the labor market.

Some parents were more open to the possibility of their daughters entering into romantic relationships in their new environment than they had been at home. One mother in Austin stated, "I can't prevent you from doing something that I personally was doing when I was your age. So, it's okay that you have a boyfriend. But the thing is that…you have to put kind of limitation with your relationship." Other parents taught girls not to spend time alone with boys. The girls said they were often more comfortable spending time with their female peers, especially those from the MENA region. One girl stated, "My dad, he didn't let me go because he didn't know the boy…or what he [might] try to do. He [thought it was] better to just let me go with the girls. And I agree with that" (Sarah).

DISCUSSION

In this study, we investigated the intersectional experiences of adolescent Iraqi refugees who resettled in the United States. Our findings indicate that racialization and gender socialization are not independent processes but intersectional experiences that contribute to the othering of Iraqi adolescents in the US school setting. The Iraqi adolescents in our study navigated the multiple factors that shaped their racialization and gender socialization, including their parents' expectations of gender roles as defined in their home country; their teachers' and peers' perceptions of gendered behavior for Arab and Muslim adolescents, which often were influenced by stereotypes; and their own observation and internalization of the gender socialization process for their US-born peers. These intersectional patterns have important policy and practice implications for Iraqi youth and families who are resettling in the United States.

Adolescent boys and girls from Iraq were influenced by the gender roles and norms espoused by their parents, many of whom engaged in quite equitable behaviors toward their children. It appears that the financial strain placed on families as a result of displacement and resettlement created opportunities for parents to treat their sons and daughters more equitably. While experiencing financial strain is not new to Iraqi families escaping crisis (World Bank 2016), women's legal right to work in the United States induced more parents to allow both boys and girls to participate in the labor market. Many participants said that the gender roles in their families had changed since resettlement, to the extent that girls were able to participate in more activities to help support their households financially. At the same time, however, it is important to note that refugee youth who had greater household responsibilities in their income-constrained households also had less time to engage with their studies.

Several features of the US school climate, including discriminatory behavior, shaped the racialization and gender socialization experienced by the Iraqi youth in this study, who were treated differently from their US-born peers in their teacher-student and peer relationships. We found, for example, that some teachers expressed stereotypical beliefs about how people from Iraq should behave and dress, especially in terms of their gender roles and norms. Adolescents from Iraq also were aware of the racialized and gendered stereotypes that were endemic among their classmates, who sometimes explicitly associated Iraqi adolescents with terrorism. Some Iraqi participants in our study sought community in one another, and with similarly racialized peers from the MENA region and from Pakistan. The participants described a range of strategies for coping with experiences of othering, such as using humor to deflect peer bullying, turning to trusted educators to escape unwanted and exotifying attention from boys, and joining sports teams to make new friends. Newcomers at both study sites made friends across racialized boundaries, and their new classmates exposed them to unfamiliar norms, which prompted them to reflect on their identities. Social media provided a space where Iraqi girls could experiment with new forms of self-expression, but it also enabled co-ethnic peers to monitor each other's adherence to Iraqi gender norms and to shame those who were perceived to violate those norms (Awad et al. 2019). Given the ubiquity of social media in young people's lives, its role in the social and educational adjustment of refugee adolescents warrants greater attention (Pottie et al. 2020).

The gender socialization process is different for US-born youth than for their Iraqi counterparts. Boys in the United States typically are socialized to be aggressive and competitive, while girls often are socialized to practice emotional, affectionate, caring, gentle, and overall benevolent behaviors while simultaneously being objectified (Stromquist 2007; Kessler and Milligan 2021; John et al. 2017). However, the parents of Iraqi adolescents whose families have resettled in the United States expect both boys and girls to engage in caregiving roles at home, engendering the children's need to take some responsibility for their family's wellbeing.

These findings have implications for the improvement of policies and programming for adolescent students resettling in the United States. This study also confirms the findings of previous research on gendered racialization in schools, wherein boys are socialized to adhere to aggressive masculinity and to be the breadwinners for their families, while girls are seen as timid and are objectified (Youmna 2018). Adult actors in the US school setting have an opportunity to protect crisis-affected adolescents from the stressors associated with resettlement. Efforts to do so have included social and emotional learning (SEL) programs, some of which promote positive ethnic-racial identity and critical analyses of privilege and power (Bennouna, Khauli et al. 2019). It is worth noting that the two school districts included in this study implemented specific programs and policies to promote social cohesion among students, and to discourage students from bullying and other forms of violence. For example, schools in both cities implemented SEL programming, which encouraged the development of interpersonal skills such as social awareness and creating healthy, caring relationships (AISD 2020; HCPS 2020). AISD implemented programs that included restorative practices, mindfulness, and a focus on building adults' capacity for SEL. HCPS offered an informal after-school program for girls that was led by an adult school liaison from Iraq who had resettled in the United States. This program was an invaluable source of psychosocial support that reinforced the in-school SEL activities the students were already engaged in. Additional aspects of these programs have been well documented elsewhere (Bennouna, Khauli et al. 2019; Seff et al. 2021; Stark et al. 2021; Bennouna, Ocampo et al. 2019). There is burgeoning interest in the development of programs that are culturally responsive and tailored to the intersectional dimensions of race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, and other characteristics (Bennouna, Khauli et al. 2019). Lessons learned from these programs could lead to the development of initiatives for crisis-affected populations around the globe.

Interpretation of these findings should be considered alongside some key limitations of this study. The first limitation is that the interviews included in this analysis were conducted with caregivers and students from Iraq. Therefore, there are no data on comparison groups, either refugee youth from different cultural backgrounds or US-born youth. It is not possible to determine the degree to which experiences such as exposure to violence at school would differ across the two populations. Second, the experiences described here are specific to the locations where the study was conducted and therefore are not generalizable to individuals who are resettling in other cities or states. Although these findings are relevant to the global context, gender socialization is culturally specific and bound to other culture schemas. Individuals fleeing conflict settings other than Iraq may have different experiences when integrating into the US setting. Finally, this analysis focuses primarily on adolescent Iraqi boys' and girls' experiences at school; other aspects of their wellbeing, including labor market participation, early childhood education, and health-seeking behaviors, were not addressed.

CONCLUSION

Conflict- and crisis-affected populations face myriad complexities during their displacement journeys. Among other things, displacement can contribute to gender inequality, including unequal access to quality education. The gender socialization and racialization adolescents experience as a result of displacement are largely affected by the environmental context. In the United States, the schools are the primary environment where adolescents experience gendered socialization and racialization. Despite this, there is a dearth of literature about the intersectional experiences of Iraqi girls and boys who resettle and attend school in the United States.

This study highlights the gendered racialization of boys and girls from Iraq, with implications for adolescents from MENA more broadly who settle in the United States. The ways gendered behaviors are either reinforced or challenged for newcomer boys and girls would benefit from further research, and the ideologies and behaviors of service providers, teachers, caregivers, and youth must be better understood in order to ensure that newcomers have a smooth transition into US culture. Social norms in the adolescent ecology can have a robust impact on the safety of boys and girls by subjecting them to discriminatory practices and dangerous patterns of socialization. For example, encouraging aggression among boys can lead to physical violence. Further research should explore the experiences of girls and boys from the MENA region as they transition into a new social and

cultural environment. The findings of this study can have important implications for policies and programs aimed at supporting crisis-affected families settling in the United States, as they offer valuable lessons about the impact on students of gender socialization and racialization. It is vital to address harmful gender and racial/ethnic stereotyping, to promote gender equity, and to develop inclusive programming that addresses patterns of discrimination.

FUNDING DISCLOSURES

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