This is to certify that the
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THE ADJUSTMENT OF SUDANESE REFUGEES TO SETTLEMENT IN A MID-AMERICAN CITY: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF INITIAL PERCEPTIONS

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Alan Michael Martin

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THE ADJUSTMENT OF SUDANESE REFUGEES TO SETTLEMENT IN A MID-AMERICAN CITY: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF INITIAL PERCEPTIONS

By

Alan Michael Martin

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ABSTRACT

THE ADJUSTMENT OF SUDANESE REFUGEES TO SETTLEMENT IN A MID-AMERICAN CITY: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF INITIAL PERCEPTIONS

By

Alan Michael Martin

This study explored the initial perceptions of Sudanese refugees with respect to their needs being fulfilled during the first 18 months of resettlement in a Midwestern city of the United States. Forty-four (44) male Sudanese refugees participated in this research project. The participant pool was made up of refugees from 12 to 18 years of age (minors) and some above 18 years old (majors). The two age groups were interviewed separately. Eight focus group sessions were held at a church site over a period of six months. The focus group methodology was used as the primary method for data collection. The research was conducted through this focus group methodology by interviewing the same group twice. The first interview involved gathering data about their initial resettlement and adjustment to the United States. The second round of focus group sessions involved gathering data about their African experiences and some of their initial accomplishment during resettlement in the United States.

The data revealed that the Sudanese refugees did not perceive their initial resettlement in the United States as highly favorable. Their beginning struggles had very little to do with their own abilities and desire to succeed but was exacerbated by ecological and systemic factors beyond their control. The study used Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs, embedded within a framework of human ecology, to explore their perceptions of "need fulfillment" and "human

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betterment" as refugees. Several macro-level systemic factors, such as legal processing, culture, and federal policy issues were key to their disappointment. Other micro-level systemic factors, such education, work, and peer denigration, also contributed to their negative perceptions of their initial resettlement. Their reports of foster families, mentors, community and agency help and assistance during their resettlement were rendered with mixed reviews.

With gratitude

To all the Third World refugees from Africa

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The honor of serving the Sudanese refugees was mine. At the time of our research efforts, I had not planned on using their focus group information for my dissertation. But as destiny would have it, I was honored to work with, and organize the information through this arduous, dissertation process. This process took me beyond mere research and into the hearts and experiences of the participants. Thank you, participants for this rich experience. I hope that this research will promote efforts to help any future refugees from Third World countries in their resettlement and adjustment.

A special word of thanks must be directed to two professors who drafted me into this project, Tom Luster and Deborah Johnson. Not only did they hire me to be the principal focus group facilitator, they also accompanied me to every group, worked alongside me, and contributed greatly to its success. Further thanks must go to L. Annette Abrams, from University Outreach Partnership at Michigan State University, who made funds available for us to conduct the focus groups as well as to remunerate the Sudanese refugees for their time and participation.

It was my committee members, Harriette P. McAdoo (my advisor, and major professor), David Wiley, Robert Griffore, and Lillian Phenice who eventually nudged me into the direction of qualitative research using the Sudanese refugees data. For that I personally thank them for their vision and

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insight. They certainly made this process a more satisfying and endearing one.

Finally, I thank my wife and children for being so patient with me during this process. I owe them time, relaxation, and a mind not preoccupied with my research in the future. And above all, I thank God, my Observer for the opportunity He afforded me at Michigan State University, in the Department of Family and Child Ecology.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The spatial and social displacement of people throughout the world has accelerated within the last decade (Newman & Selm, 2004). International research and relief organizations estimate that there are between 10 and 11 million refugees and between 20 million and 25 million internally displaced persons worldwide (Mollica & McDonald, 2002). Refugeeism is fast becoming a very significant and expanding feature of the world's sociological landscape.

The sociological and anthropological refugee literature informs us that refugeeism is first and foremost a "Third World problem" or a problem of "developing countries" (Malkki, 1995). In linearly viewed reality, that seems correct, but the etiology of the problem is more world-systemic in nature. Malkki (1995) posits that the rapid decolonization in the 1960's introduced a watershed period for refugees and refugee settlement practices. People dominated for decades or centuries by superpowers, and then left to their own devices after those superpowers leave, are bound for internal chaos that may become the springboard for refugee flights.

Economics or poverty is not the major reason for refugee flights. It is estimated that over 90% of the world's refugees remain in Third World countries (Gosh, 1994; Malkki, 1995). The nature of the problem resides in

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the vacuum of legitimately established powers in those former, dominated Third World countries, as well as the limited access to education of those citizens in the realm of peaceful human existence, and positive humanitarian values. History is replete with examples of superpowers making their exits from Third World countries, while leaving their weapons in the hands of those who remain (Malkki, 1995; Schechtmann, 1963; Sjoberg, 1991).

Western countries, starting with Europe, were the first to accept, and globalize the management of refugees after World War II (Zolberg, Suhrke, & Aguayo, 1989). Since the 1980's, however, western countries have begun to scale down their acceptance of immigrants and refugees. In fact, the same tendencies are evident throughout the nineties and into the twenty first century. Fortunately, the United States of America opened its borders to some 3,600 refugees from the Sudan, detrimentally labeled as "Lost Boys" (named after Peter Pan's cadre of orphans). All of these Sudanese refugees (the majority of whom were male, with only a small number of girls) were dispersed throughout the United States to live in major cities (Kriner, 2001). Some of these cities include: Chicago, New York, Nebraska, Minneapolis, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Boston, Grand Rapids, and other mid-American cities. Soon after the Sudanese refugees arrived in these major cities, many institutions, social service agencies, churches, and individuals were available and ready to assist them in their resettlement and adaptation to their new environment.

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Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to explore the Sudanese refugees' initial perceptions of "human betterment" (Boulding, 1985) and "needs fulfillment" (Maslow, 1954) in the United States. The concept of "initial" in this study spans a window of time from one to 18 months since their arrival on U.S. shores. The concept of "human betterment" and "needs fulfillment" will be explored by determining their level of satisfaction, through their own perceptions, under the hierarchical needs of Abraham Maslow (1954): (1) Biological and Physiological needs, (2) Safety and Security needs, (3) Belongingness and Love needs, (4) Esteem needs, and (5) Self-actualization needs.

The researcher's secondary goal for this study is to simplify the outcome of this research and to make it as understandable as possible, so that every participant who was involved in the focus groups could appreciate and identify with it (Miller & Glassner, 1997). This study will be approached from the sound advice of Krueger and Casey (2000) who state:

> Consider yourself the voice or interpreter of the participants. Your task is to clearly communicate how participants felt about the topic. In a way, you are their spokesperson. There may be different voices and multiple views that need to be presented, and your task is to accurately represent the range of views (p. 141).

The Significance of the Study

Bolea, Grant, Burgess, and Plasa (2003, p. 220) state that, "the literature has yet to focus specifically on the culturally-relevant, meaningful

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belief systems that surround the experience of Sudanese refugee children." They, furthermore, suggest that what is missing, with respect to understanding the experiences of the Sudanese refugees, is a more focused examination of the context of their experiences, as expressed and explained by those who were directly involved -i.e. the Sudanese refugees' own description of their experiences.

This study will answer the call of Bolea et al. (2003) by providing such relevant information that will add much to our understanding of the initial perceptions of the Sudanese refugees with respect to the "human betterment" and "needs fulfillment" issues that they face. Pertinent information will be added to the body of research with respect to these Sudanese refugees because of the study's unique methodological approach to obtaining in-depth information from the perspective of the refugees. The current political climate in the country of Sudan holds out the possibility of thousands more being forced to seek refuge beyond their borders. This study will be invaluable in assisting with their initial resettlement in a future "first world" country.

The experience leading up to refugeeism, in itself, already is traumatic for such individuals. The refugee decision, and the entire process of leaving one's country of birth, adds to the stress. Then, to be placed in an unfamiliar environment within a cultural context that has absolutely no resemblance to one's own, further serves to exacerbate such stresses in adjustment.

This is most probably the encounter, and experience for most, if not all, Third World refugees. Refugees from First World or European countries may

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face some similar struggles, but their western linkage, knowledge, and exposure to American culture, may serve as a bridge to a much faster resettlement and adjustment to their new host society. Refugees from Third World countries, however, may not have had any exposure, education, information, or any type of linkages to the American way of life and culture. This most certainly puts them in a disadvantaged position for initial resettlement. There is obviously very little that can be done to ease the traumatic refugee aspects of the process, but there is much that can be done to alleviate the struggles these Sudanese refugees must endure to merely obtain basic and necessary needs to improve their human condition.

In this study, initial perceptions of the fulfillment of the Sudanese refugees' needs were analyzed from the perspective of the Sudanese refugees *alone*. This study took into consideration the words of Bolea et al. (2003) when they stated: "...to work effectively with the Sudanese refugee children, one must understand their unique experience...and the meanings they associate with those experiences" (p. 232).

The Organizational and Community context for Refugee Resettlement and Services

The Sudanese refugees applied for refugee status in refugee camps outside their home country. They attained the refugee status by having had to prove to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees that they had a legitimate and well-founded fear of persecution because of their race,

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religion, national origin, or political opinion. After they were declared refugees, they were then interviewed by the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). After they were accepted by the INS, they were sent to the United States through the Lutheran Immigration and Resettlement Services (LIRS), a national resettlement agency.

The Lutheran Immigration and Resettlement Services (LIRS) have ten voluntary agencies that assist them with their resettlement programs and services throughout the United States. In the mid-western region one such voluntary agency is the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB) (Refugee Services, personal communication, May 11, 2005). These voluntary agencies also have sub-agencies that help them to resettle refugees within the region. Those sub-agencies are usually designated as Refugee Services within each state and serve the needs of the state with respect to refugee resettlement and services.

It is the responsibility of the Refugee Services agencies to help refugees with their resettlement and services before, during, and after their arrival. The Refugee Services agency is responsible for the refugees' cultural orientation, employment services, immigration services, social services, educational services, linkages with health services, and various voluntary community organizations.

The Refugee Services agencies are federally funded to provide for the resettlement and service needs of the refugees. These federal funds are channeled through the state and the major voluntary agencies (example,

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USCCB). The sub-agencies then apply for those funds to be disbursed in the form of grants. Based on the size of the grants they receive the Refugee Services can then determine the amount of the stipend per refugee and the duration for such stipends (Refugee Services, personal communication, May 11, 2005).

The Sudanese refugees consisted of both "majors" (18 years and older) and "minors" (younger than 18 years). In the Midwestern region where this research occurred, the state is the legal guardian for the minor refugees. The minor refugees were placed in foster homes with American families like any national foster child. The funds for this program come from the same source (federal) as that for national foster child placements. Decisions with respect to the placements and movements (into independence) of minors are determined by the state in consultation with caseworkers and parents (Social Services, personal communication, May 11, 2005).

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Definitions

1. *Majors.* The Sudanese refugees aged 18 years and older who were living independently in houses or apartments.
2. *Minors.* The Sudanese refugees aged 17 years and younger, who were living with American families.
3. *Mentors.* Individuals, couples, or families who volunteered to help the Sudanese refugees with their resettlement and adjustment. These helpers mentored the refugees in everyday activities, life issues, cultural issues, and made themselves available to them when needed.
4. *Foster Families.* American families who formally applied to house, raise, and socialize "minor" Sudanese refugees.
5. *Initial Perception.* A period of one to 18 months since the arrival of the Sudanese refugees in America.
6. *Gateway Needs/Issues.* The elementary needs, conduits, and avenues that lead to the provision of food and the satisfaction of thirst and hunger.
7. *Educational Grafting-In.* A slow, but progressive phase-in educational process of inserting the refugee into the educational mainstream of the American society.

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8. *Human Betterment.* The four fundamental cornerstones for human needs satisfaction: economic adequacy, justice, freedom, and peace (Boulding, 1985).

The Human Ecological Conceptual Framework

A human-focused and Human Ecological framework did much to help us understand their initial struggles and levels of "human betterment" and "needs fulfillment" during their resettlement. With respect to the initial perceptions of "human betterment" and "needs fulfillment" of the Sudanese refugees themselves, the Human Ecology framework served an invaluable purpose. It primarily focuses on humans as social beings who interact with their environment for the purpose of adaptation, survival, and healthy functioning (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993). Its ideas of ecology has its early roots in the thinking of Plato, Aristotle, and Darwin, who could not conceive of human development, adaptation, or survival without stable and healthy interaction with systemic levels of the environment (Duncan, 1965). Human Ecology clearly delineates pertinent assumptions that will serve as the basis for considering the initial resettlement issues of the Sudanese refugees. The key assumptions, as outlined by Bubolz and Sontag (1993, p. 421) are as follows:

(1) Social and physical environments are interdependent and influence human behavior, development, and quality of life;

(2) Environment is a source of available resources; and

(3) We can choose, design, or modify resources and environments to improve life and well-being, and we should do so.

Since the 1960's, much has been added to this framework to raise its level of importance on the international scale (Brown, 1985). Contributions from Bateson (1972), one of the key people to emphasize the essential approach to conceptualizing phenomena from holistic and systemic perspectives proved invaluable. The interrelationship of humans with their environment surfaced anew as a prominent feature during his day. Other systemic thinkers such as Bertalanffy (1968), and Capra (1975) similarly pursued theoretical notions of the interdependence of all of life with the environment. The stage was also set for global or international thinking about population growth, contamination of the environment, genetic loss, and the decrease in fossil fuels and other valuable resources (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993). But most importantly, the stage was set for thinking about humans, irrespective of their origin, their legal, migrant status, or human status in terms of humanness and providing them with quality of life and meaning as they resettle, and daily live within their newfound environment (Hook & Paolucci, 1970).

Human Ecology as a framework for viewing refugees in their initial resettlement, Human Ecology proves to be invaluable because of its foundational premises and values. It strives to understand and promote human survival within its environment in any place and condition in the world. It similarly promotes environmental protection by humans in their ecological

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interaction. It esteems the notion that humans are part of the total life system, interdependent with all other forms of life and the non-living environment (Brown, 1985).

Furthermore, it exonerates any notion of human helplessness, by holding to the value of human goal-orientation within the environment. In other words, humans are not helpless creatures, dependent on their environment alone for survival and adjustment. Instead, human beings can manipulate their environment to survive, adjust, and improve their quality and lot in life.

One of the key values that have been incorporated into the framework of Human Ecology is that of "human betterment". The goal toward "human betterment", as coined by Boulding (1985), has four fundamental cornerstones: (1) adequate economic resources which will eliminate starvation, poverty, ill-health, inadequate housing, and provide the basic essentials of life; (2) justice and equality with respect to jobs, education, and health accessibility; (3) freedom in contrast to confinement and living in fear; and (4) peacefulness, in contrast to a war-torn existence. These core values will provide an additional framework to explore and describe the initial resettlement of the Sudanese refugees in mid-America. It is incumbent upon us as Human Ecology scholars and practitioners to make sure, that suffering human beings (especially refugees from developing countries) be given a fair and equitable share of our scholarly attention and practical, outreach efforts.

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In using the Human Ecological perspective in exploring the initial human conditions and needs of the refugees, one cannot overlook the paradigm for human development in context that was introduced by Bronfenbrenner (1979). His model may have had as its initial intention, the observation of a young, developing child within the laboratory contextual setting, but it certainly has a more general, and applicable human adjustment validity built into its conceptual framework. His model views the individual embedded within four nested systems. The innermost system is called the *micro-system* in which the developing person experiences a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical and material features. This system also contains other persons with distinctive characteristics of temperament, personality, and systems of belief (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). With respect to the Sudanese refugees, this system would either be their fellow Sudanese refugees, living as family with them in an independent setting, or the Sudanese refugees, living with American families in foster settings.

The second system is known as the *meso-system* (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). This system describes the linkages and processes that take place between settings or environments in which the developing person is contained. This refers to the relationships of the individual or individuals within the micro-system with other systems, e.g. the relations between home and school, school and work place etc. These other systems influence the behavior and adjustment of the person as interaction takes place across

systems. With all of the Sudanese refugees involved in settings outside of the home, especially school and work, this aspect of the framework helped to identify the impact of these interacting systems on their initial resettlement and human condition.

The third system in the model is the *exo-system* (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). He explains it as the system that has linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings. One of these settings does not ordinarily contain the developing person, but events occur within it that does affect or influence processes within the setting that does contain the developing individual. With respect to the Sudanese refugees, this involves the relation between the foster homes in which some of them live, or the relation between the independent homes and the neighborhood. The exploration of such relations added insight to their initial resettlement and human condition.

The final, most distal and expansive region of Bronfenbrenner's (1989) ecological environmental model, is the *macro-system.* He explains it as an overarching system that can be thought of as a social blueprint for a particular culture, subculture or broader social context. These are those institutional systems that lay out the blueprint for the functioning of the individual or group in a society. This is an important aspect of the framework that helped to explore the "human betterment" condition of these Sudanese refugees, because they are now embedded in a new society with its own unique norms, values, cultural ideals, practices, roles, and expectations. This system is particularly pertinent with respect to refugees in that it takes into consideration

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the influences and impacts of national and international policies on various aspects of the refugees' resettlement. One example is the impact of federal immigration policies concerning work permits, health benefits, and taxes on their initial resettlement and human condition. This part of the model also explored the initial impact on the refugees being placed in urban settings verses rural settings. This part of the model took into consideration federal government and state programs, bureaucratic institutions that dealt with the refugees, international and local laws, and international politics that affected refugees.

Mapping the Reality for the Sudanese Refugees

There is no doubt that the Human Ecology conceptual framework aided the researcher in enunciating and explicating the Sudanese refugees' initial adjustment in interaction with their environment, but what about *their* definition of the situation? Thomas and Thomas (1928) reason, that it is *their,* perception of adjustment that we are after, not ours. Their initial perception of adjustment may not make any sense to us, but as Thomas and Thomas (1928) explained, "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (p. 572). It, therefore, became essential to explore the *Sudanese refugees'* phenomenological conception of the environment as well as some of the external influences. Human behavior, development, and adjustment are very seldom significantly influenced by external influences from the environment alone. The aspects of the environment that have the

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most powerful influences on the shaping of the person are overwhelmingly those that have meaning to the person in the given situation or culture.

Lewin (1935), likewise, held the notion that the most important understanding of a person's real environment is not as it is perceived by the scientific, objective world, but as it appears in the mind of the person. This became very important in the exploration of the initial "human betterment" and "need-fulfilling" perceptions of these refugees, because their resettlement and adjustment had more to it than merely fitting in with the environment and culture. They had internal struggles, based on a cruel, historic Sudanese past. They had traumatic memories of family losses, personal survival episodes, and a false sense of security in some African camps (Browne, 2000). Their initial perceptions of their needs being fulfilled may have been totally colored with lenses fraught with their past and most recent Sudanese, traumatic experiences. This may have meant either seeing the beginning of their human condition in America as glorious or seeing it as having to struggle and survive again under merely different circumstances and in a different territory.

Abraham Maslow's Human Motivation and Personality Theory

To provide this study with a more specific theoretical underpinning, Abraham Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs was used as a guide to explore the initial perceptions of the Sudanese refugees with respect to the fulfillment of their needs. This hierarchy of human needs is depicted as a pyramid

consisting of five levels (Maslow, 1954). The four lower levels are grouped together and referred to as "deficit needs". The top level is referred to as "being needs". Maslow (1954) posited that each need had to be satisfied in turn, starting with the first, which deals with the most obvious needs for survival itself. The human being will only be concerned with the higher order needs of influence and personal development, once the lower order needs of physical and emotional well-being are satisfied. The hierarchy of needs was designed as illustrated by figure 1:

1. *Level one*: Biological and Physiological needs. This involved the basic need for air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sex, sleep, etc.
2. *Level two*: Safety needs. This involved protection from elements, security, order, law, limits, stability, etc.
3. *Level three*: Belongingness and Love needs. This involved work group, family, affection, relationships, etc.
4. *Level four*: Esteem needs. This involved self-esteem, achievement, mastery, independence, status, dominance, prestige, leadership responsibility, etc.
5. *Level five:* Self-Actualization needs. This involved realizing personal potential, self-fulfillment, seeking personal growth, and peak experiences.

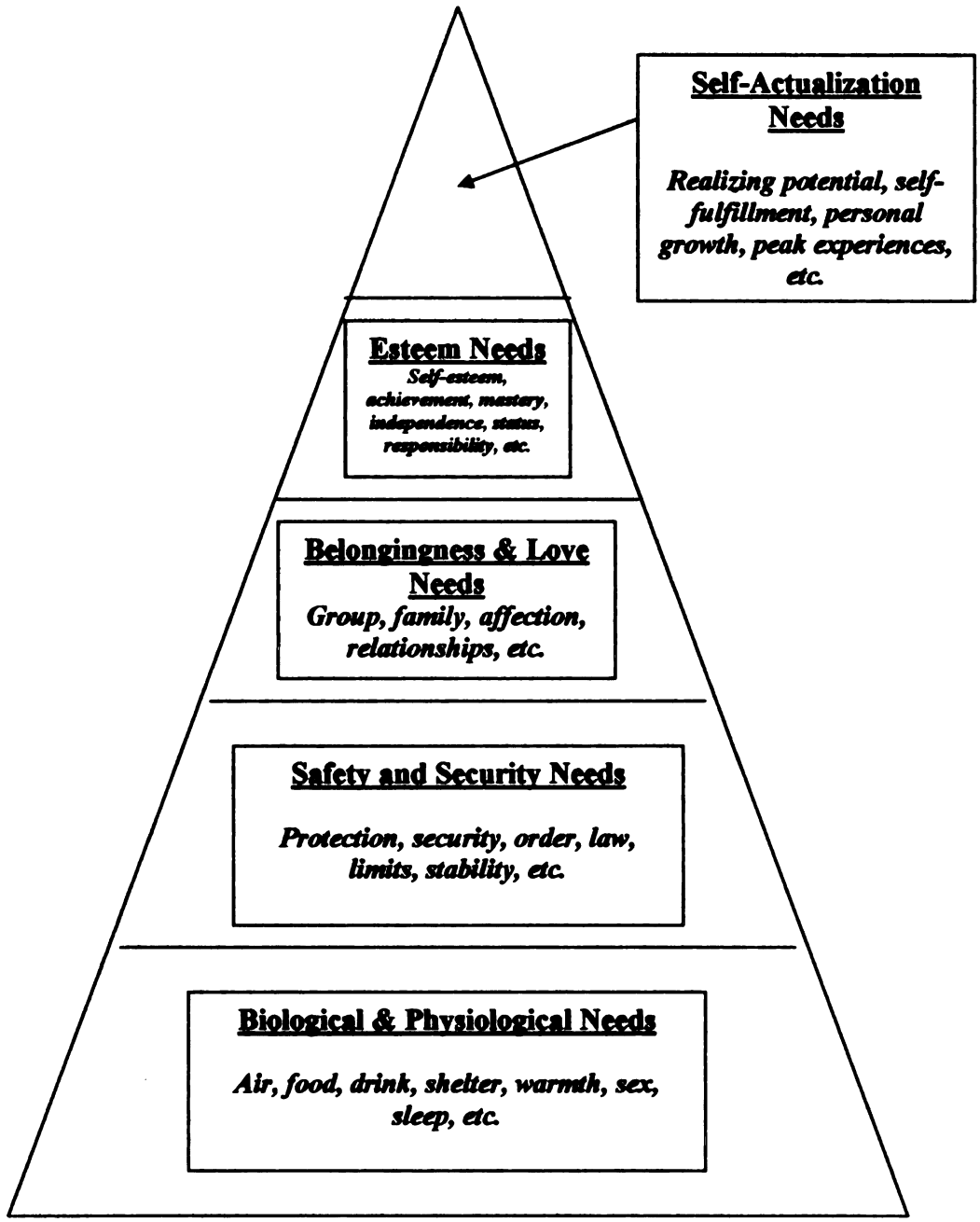

Figure 1. Maslow's (1954) Hierarchy of Needs

For Maslow (1954), the lower needs seemed to be instinctual, it must be satisfied for the human being to survive and fully function as a holistic being. Maslow (1954) regarded self-actualized people as being qualitatively

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different. That difference is that they are primarily growth motivated, with their deficiency motivation playing a very small role in their daily existence. They are people who assess the culture in which they live in a critical fashion, and accept or reject components based on inner, personal criteria. As a result, they have a tendency towards transcending nationalism, have a clear perception of reality, consider themselves as being citizens of the world, and thus are somewhat immune to psychosocial infection. The serious notion, however, is that to get to this level the lower needs have to be met.

The Paucity in Literature

Scholarly writings, with respect to the initial "human betterment", and "need-fulfilling" perceptions of the Sudanese refugees, are very limited (Bolea et al., 2003). This may partly be due to the recent nature of their refugee status in the United States, or it may simply be due to a one-sided focus on their country's current, and ongoing conflict, rather than their present human conditions in a safe and peaceful democracy. Most of the current literature is mainly case studies, which deal with individual perspectives of their past African experiences as the focal point of the investigation, while very limited insight is given about their overall initial adjustment.

Some of the most recent and more topical literature that has been published comes from a few non-governmental organizations (NGO's). From such organizations, the depth of information about their initial adjustment is but cursory and sensationally driven at best. They, nevertheless, attempt to

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understand some of the initial adjustment difficulties or successes these Sudanese refugees are experiencing. That is a sad reflection on the scientific research community's efforts, and lack of published works with respect to this nationally publicized phenomenon.

One cannot justify a review of the literature on the initial resettlement of the Sudanese refugees, without first providing a cursory view of their pre-displacement conditions and history in their homeland. Their perceptions of their initial human conditions ride high on their traumatic Sudanese experiences. In fact, Herman (1992) posits that the traumatic events in Sudan have the potential to overwhelm human adjustment and adaptation in their newfound country due to their inordinate exposures to losses, threats, and close encounters with death.

An Abbreviated Review of Their African Displacement History

In the last 20 years, over two million Sudanese have been killed; over four million have been internally displaced; and hundreds of thousands have been forced to become refugees (Dyer, 2002; Holtzman, 2000). The killing, displacement, and refugee flights are the direct results of an ongoing Sudanese civil war between factions in the north and south of the country. Ethnic groups in the northern section of the country mainly constitute the government, are culturally linked to the Arab world, and predominantly Islamic (Deng, 1995). Ethnic groups in the southern region of the country espouse

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Christianity, and have been open to Christian mission efforts for the past half-century (Holtzman, 2000).

Tensions, however, between these two regions have its roots in more than just religious differences. The constant attempts by the current Sudanese government to Islamicize the country is one of the greatest sources of tension (Dyer, 2002; Holtzman, 2000; Satchell, 2001). In the mid-1980's Islamic extremists from the north conducted a bloody campaign in the south to control the Christian ethnic groups and take charge of their oil fields (Dyer, 2002). The attacks on families were vicious, and brutal, with young children being exposed to the massacre of their loved ones, while being forced to flee from their homes.

Thousands of children fled their homes and trekked for months to the southwestern region of Ethiopia, where squalid and scabrous relief camps existed (Holtzman, 2000; Hutchinson, 1996; Satchell, 2001). These camps were actually sponsored (before 1992) by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). The revolution in Ethiopia during the 1990's caused the closure of those camps, resulting in the return to Sudan by some of the young refugees. Others continued their trek to refugee camps at Kakuma, Kenya in search for safety and security.

Those long journeys to both Ethiopia and Kenya were fraught with dangers and horrific tales of survival. En route to these camps, they were compelled to eat leaves, berries, carcasses of dead animals, birds, mice, and quenched their thirst with their own urine when water could not be found

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(Bolea, et al., 2003). Even at the camps, they experienced a severe shortage of food, water, medication, and limited education. The transitions from the Ethiopian camps to the camps at Kakuma were especially brutal. Many were forced by Ethiopian soldiers to cross the crocodile-infested Gilo Wenz River – whether they could swim or not – and if they refused, they were shot (Satchell, 2001). Those who could not swim drowned, while others became bait for vicious crocodiles. Throughout, the young refugee survivors witnessed these horrendous happenings, with each event etching a traumatic memory in their young minds (Bolea et al., 2003; Holtzman, 2000; Satchell, 2001).

The Labeling of the Sudanese Refugees as "Lost Boys"

No other refugees are known by this term, except for the Sudanese Africans. One has to wonder who first initiated the idea of labeling these refugees as "Lost Boys". In media circles, some would explain that the term "Lost Boys" is taken from Peter Pan's legion of lost boys (Kriner, 2001; Kiley, 1973). Other scholars, however, have suggested that the use of this term "Lost Boys" was a historically racist and denigrating term for the African male (D. Wiley, & H. P. McAdoo, personal communication, November 6, 2004). It was, furthermore, suggested that such denigration was a result of prejudicial colonialism whose end goal was to subjugate Africans.

A critical aspect that this researcher considered to be a notable determinant for excluding the Sudanese refugee women was the labeling of

these male refugees as "Lost Boys". How could one conduct cross-gendered focus group sessions and then refer to the entire group as "Lost Boys"? This certainly would have created a misrepresentation of the constitution of the participant groups. This researcher considered it rather strange that no "Peter Pan" type of label was attached to the women who were Sudanese refugees. One wonders what historical, racist determinants promulgated such a use of terms with respect to the African male refugees.

In the Peter Pan story, male contemporaries who joined his legion of so-called "Lost Boys", joined because their lives were filled with confusions, contradictions and conflicts (Kiley, 1973). They were caught in the abyss between the man they did not want to become and the boys they could no longer be. They existed in a world of continual and endless emotional and social turmoil. They were boys who refused to grow up, and pledged allegiance to the cause of "being lost". Their desire was to do whatever they had to, to remain just what they were: little children who won't grow up. They simply wanted to soar away from the adult realities of life and remain in a fantasy world of Never Never Land (Kiley, 1973).

The above description of Peter Pan's legion of orphans does not even get close to the desires and life descriptions of the Sudanese refugees in the mid-west. This writer has not seen any notion of these refugees wishing to cop out on life responsibilities, or having a desire to remain helpless infantiles. On the contrary, they have a strong desire to advance in life, forge ahead into responsible manhood, while wisely managing the traumatic memories of a

cruel past. These Sudanese refugees are definitely not "lost" as perhaps some would wish or speculate, but their dreams and goals bespeak maturity, and an inordinate desire to succeed as African, Sudanese refugees in a vastly different democratic society.

A Review on Their Resettlement in the United States

A seminal, and fairly extensive, scholarly work on the Sudanese refugees was done by Holtzman (2000), whose work forms part of a "new immigrant" series. In this work, he covers the forced displacement of the Sudanese refugees (most of them are from the Nuer ethnic group) to Minnesota. An integral part of his work summarily describes their adjustment to changes in their new environment:

> In the earliest days, even the simplest tasks – how to shop or how to cook – seemed like insurmountable challenges. Beyond changes in daily routines, there was the necessity to reforge their social worlds. In Sudan, and even in the refugee camps, the Nuer lived within a network of family and friends which made up a close knit community. Suddenly, in America they were unusual, and often isolated, strangers (p. 30).

He describes their total shock, as they first encounter the American, northeastern snow-filled winter, as they enter New York's JFK Airport. It becomes clear, by their ill-suited dress, that they were not properly informed about the contrasting weather conditions in their new destination. His view of their adjustment, at the beginning of their stay in America, seems positive and optimistic, even though every aspect of their daily experience was completely new, and different from anything they knew in Africa. He portrays their

expression of initial joy, and sense of security, now that they no longer have to worry about food, medicine, and day-to-day survival.

Holtzman's (2000) work covers a lot of anthropological ground, which, in its purpose ties a lot of historical information from the Nuer ethnic group's past cultural orientations and practices, to their current resettlement issues. Such historical and cultural continuities are obviously helpful but may have limitations when cultures differ as sharply as the Sudanese and American cultures. His goal may, however, be to highlight the contrasting nature of such divergent cultures. Furthermore, his reports on their initial adjustment or resettlement come from the accounts of the Sudanese individuals plus their social workers, churches, and mentors.

It is this author's notion that our grasp and understanding of the initial need-fulfilling *perceptions of the Sudanese refugees* within American society were greatly enhanced by individual accounts within a multi-ethnic, Sudanese group setting. This format allowed others to immediately confirm or deny individual or collective experiences. This kind of setting provided the Sudanese refugees with a format suitable to their African culture's community orientation. An additional benefit that was derived from such a group setting was the spirit and voice of "collectivity". Sometimes in individual, isolated interviewing the interviewee will be tempted to respond to research questions in a manner favorable to the orientation and culture of the interviewer. But in this group setting for Africans with their village mindset, the orientation of the interviewer had limited impact upon group-thought and voice.

A study by Bolea et al. (2003) explored the trauma experienced by the Sudanese refugee children during their migration. In their study the goal was to obtain a systemic understanding of the children's traumatic migration experiences. They, too, obtained research data from the Sudanese children, plus social workers, and foster parents. What was insightful from the results of that study was the authors' acknowledgement on numerous occasions that the most important voices to be heard were that of the *Sudanese refugees themselves.* They said: "Their experiences and stories are central to the understanding of the researcher and reader" (p. 220).

These authors only did a cursory discussion of the Sudanese refugees' adjustment to the United States. Some of the adjustment issues mentioned were: (1) the vast difference between life in Africa and America; (2) their difficulty with the English language; (3) being overwhelmed to the point of being euphoric with newfound experiences, like flushing a toilet, and turning out lights; and (4) the changing role of women. An important point expressed by Bolea et al. (2003) was the notion of "shared understanding" of the Sudanese refugees' experiences with respect to their entire migration narrative. They discussed the variances in perspectives among the refugees, foster parents, and social workers with respect to their migration narrative. The foster parents viewed their journey and experiences as a series of events, while the Sudanese refugees described it as part of the same continuous narrative.

A series of articles written by Kriner (2001), a staff writer for the Red Cross organization likewise described some of their initial adjustment experiences. Among the adjustment experiences she reported on, were their fears of rolling traffic in downtown Boston; recurring nightmares about their African experiences; their first encounter with snow; their difficulties with regulating their sleeping patterns; their rapid education in cooking (for women did all the cooking in Sudan); and their first use of the telephone. Like all former researchers, Kriner (2001) obtained most of her information about the Sudanese refugees from *sources other than the refugees themselves*. She had contacted the Massachusetts Bay Area chapter of the American Red Cross and talked with a well-traveled international disaster and aid worker. Her information, though credible, was not obtained from the Sudanese refugees themselves. She did, however, obtain some invaluable information about their initial adjustment which goes beyond the initial euphoria.

It is this aspect of their initial perceptions of their needs being fulfilled as refugees that our study thoroughly explored from the perspective of the *Sudanese refugees themselves*. The lists of questions that guided the exploration of the Sudanese refugees' perceptions in the focus group sessions *were not* specifically designed to be categorized under Maslow's hierarchy of needs. However, after the research was conducted, this writer decided to use Maslow's hierarchy of needs to organize the Sudanese refugees' responses with respect to the initial perceptions of the fulfillment of

their needs. The guiding questions from the main lists that elicited responses under Maslow's hierarchy of needs categories were as follows:

1. *Biological and Physiological Needs.*
    a. What is the most difficult thing about being in the USA or *coming to the USA?*
2. *Safety and Security Needs.*
    a. What was the best thing that has happened to you since you've been in the greater [mid-American] area?
    b. What is the scariest thing that you face in your life here?
    c. Where do you feel safe?
    d. Whom do you talk with when you need information about life in America?
    e. What kind of refugee assistance have you received since you arrived in the USA
3. *Belongingness and Love Needs.*
    a. What is it like to live with an American family?
    b. How important is being with other Sudanese youth whom you knew before?
    c. Who and what help the most when things are hard?
4. *Esteem Needs.*
    a. How important is school or education?
    b. Do you think racism will affect you?
    c. How important is learning English?

5. *Self-Actualization Needs.*

    a. Now that you are here, what do you want to accomplish more than anything else?

    b. When you first knew you were coming to the USA, what did you think would happen?

    c. What would you consider to be your most important accomplishment since you came to the USA?

Chapter 3

Methodology

Formal UCRIHS Approval

Formal approval for doing the research on the Sudanese refugees was obtained from the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS). The principal researcher from the Department of Family and Child Ecology applied for this approval. Under his research approval, this writer was hired and paid (as a graduate research assistant) to serve as facilitator for the focus group sessions. This writer also had to have Dr. H. P. McAdoo's (major advisor and dissertation committee chairperson) IRB (Internal Review Board) number submitted for consent to publish the research.

For the *writing of this dissertation*, this writer applied for permission to use the data obtained from the focus group sessions conducted with the Sudanese refugees. This formal approval was issued by UCRIHS on January 7, 2005, with an expiration date of January 6, 2006. This formal application and approval was given through an expedited review procedure because it was subject to the use of the originally issued Internal Review Board number (# 04-968) that was issued to the principal investigator. Please see Appendix H for the IRB (Internal Review Board) application approval.

Participants and the Recruitment Process

The Participants. A list of incoming Sudanese refugees was kept by two major social services organizations in the mid-American area. This list was subsequently shared with institutions and research groups who had a vested interest in working to help these refugees in their resettlement and adjustment. The research team organized these lists for this particular research purpose.

The lists were organized into two discrete categories: (1) a list of "majors" – those refugees who were 18 years and older, and living independently in a house or apartment; and (2) a list of "minors" – those refugees who were under 18 years of age and living with and in the homes of American foster families. The lists also contained their addresses and telephone numbers. Many of the "majors" did not have telephones at the time of contact.

Along with the lists, the following items were also provided: (1) a Sudanese Youth Consent Form (See Appendix C); (2) a letter addressed to foster parents, introducing the researcher as a graduate research assistant, and authorizing him to recruit their foster-Sudanese young person to be a part of the focus group sessions (See Appendix D); and (3) a participant tracer/demographic data sheet (See Appendix E).

The Recruitment Process. To recruit participants, who were older, the researchers personally visited them in their homes. At times it was difficult to recruit them because they were involved with multiple resettlement and initial adjustment activities. In addition, they had taxing school and work schedules together with organized social activities arranged by either churches or agencies. During the recruitment visits the researchers systematically did the following:

(1) Gave explanation of the purpose of the visit.

(2) Gave an explanation of the process involved with focus groups.

(3) Took time to carefully explain the information contained in the consent form and demographic/tracer sheet.

(4) Asked each prospective recruit carefully read through the contents of the consent form and data sheet, informing them that they had a choice whether they wanted to participate or not.

(5) Informed them that they would be paid for their participation and helping us with our research.

(6) Promised to provide transportation to and from the focus group session.

(7) Asked them to bring along their social security card to sign off for payment.

(8) Promised to confirm the date for the focus group session a couple of days before it would be conducted.

In recruiting "minors" (those refugees who were under 18 years of age and living with foster families), the procedure was different. Their State of residence was their legal guardian and had to give consent for them to participate in our research. They authorized the caseworkers to decide who could participate and who should not.

The foster families were contacted by telephone. The researcher asked to first speak to a parent and then asked permission to also speak to the Sudanese refugee. With the exception of perhaps one or two families, most foster families were pleased that such a project was being undertaken to help the refugees with their resettlement and adjustment issues. An appointment was then made to personally visit their home to systematically follow the procedure that was followed with the "majors". Most of the foster parents were helpful in reminding the refugees of their appointments, and some even transported them to the group sessions.

Information about the Researcher

In an extensive discussion on ecological validity, Bronfenbrenner (1979) points out that interpretation of research results may be tainted when investigators fail to take into account the full range of environmental forces that are operative in a given situation. It is, therefore, the researcher's scientific obligation to make known to the reader his ethnic origins, professional background, and value system.

The Researcher's Ethnic Origins. There was a plus-factor in setting up the focus groups and recruiting the Sudanese refugees for this research project. The researcher introduced himself as a citizen of South Africa. Inevitably, after every introduction, their very first comment did not relate to the researcher, but to South Africa's first democratic president, Nelson Mandela. It was obvious that this kind of introduction almost instantaneously leveraged a huge amount of acceptance with the Sudanese refugees. Not total acceptance, however, because it was noted that their refugee plight and past experience have trained them to skillfully and wisely reserve total acceptance. The researcher's accent is a mixture of Afrikaans (Dutch-oriented language tailored to suit the South African culture) and British (English) and his appearance is that of mixed descent. He was born in South Africa. His lineage, however, is both South African (Zulu in father's lineage) and French. There is no doubt that the Sudanese refugees reserved full acceptance and trust for further interaction. On the surface, however, it was perceived that our beginning interactions were cordial and positive. There was at least a common continental denominator because the researcher was an African.

The Researcher's Professional Background. The educational background is rooted in an African, British, and Dutch system, at least to the secondary level of education. The researcher was legally immersed into an educational stream that was strategically designed by the Apartheid system to keep his

path of development divorced from totally identifying with the traditional African. He was mandated to study the English and Dutch-oriented languages in school. He was legally kept separated from living among true, native Africans and adopting their local customs, languages, and ways of life.

The researcher's first exposure to tertiary education was in the United States of America. There he was first trained as a Minister of Religion. Thereafter, he pursued the professions of Psychology, Marriage and Family Therapy and Family Studies. The researcher's education, training, and life experience endows him with a penchant for working with humanity embedded in turmoil and disruptions in life.

The Researcher's Value System. The national, segregated and subhuman treatment and experiences in the country of "Apartheid" South Africa instilled within this researcher the value of treating any and all humans with dignity and total respect. The past experiences, however, helped one to somewhat understand the confusing conditions of displacement, and mistreatment from fellow citizens in one's own country. The researcher, therefore, brought to this research the additional value of plainly, accurately and truthfully describing phenomena through the voices of the oppressed. The attempt was made to avoid couching any perceptions of the refugees' reported experiences in mere scientific language. The writer reported it intelligibly and straightforwardly.

Furthermore, as a non-citizen immigrant in the United States, the writer understood the difficulties involved in cultural adaptations, language barriers (in the researcher's case, more accent barriers), and trying to survive economically in a First World country. The researcher, therefore, brought to the research table a more sympathetic and, at times, empathetic ear to their stories. The researcher could, likewise, understand and sympathize with them with respect to the immigration and legal processes. The frustrations of having had to wave through much bureaucratic red tape operations, and having to be patient and cooperative with the governmental system. The legal restrictions of employment while applications were in process, was especially a matter this writer could readily sympathize with fully.

The core of the researcher's life values is that of the Christian religion. As an ordained Minister, the researcher was intent on being very specific about his espoused religion. The researcher's espoused religion is not "spirituality in general" but the Christian religion. It was important to expose the adherence to this value because a lot of information referred to with respect to the Sudanese refugees' "God-talk" related to Christianity.

Much of what an individual brings to the entire research project essentially becomes a part of the project and its outcomes. The notion of total objectivity is not humanly possible. A certain amount of subjectivity during the process as well as in the reporting of results is inevitable. The key, however, is to let the reader understand and know one's paradigm, embedded values, and one's unique lens in the process of interpretation. It

was, therefore, this researcher's intention to provide full disclosure of his ethnic origins, professional background, and value system so that the readers could understand his perceptions of the research data and results.

The Design of the Study: Focus Groups

The Traditional Uses of Focus Groups. As early as the 1920's, focus groups were used to develop survey questionnaires (Morgan, 1998). From World War II to the 1970's, focus groups were used by market researchers to gain an understanding of people's wants and needs (Madriz, 2000; Morgan, 1998). Then from the 1980's until the present focus groups have been used by many professional researchers to gain information dealing with multiple social issues (Morgan, 1998). There have been concerted efforts and a renewed interest during the 1980's to recognize group interviews as a bona-fide social science research method (Madriz, 2000).

Frey and Fontana (1993) assert that focus groups have become invaluable in social research, irrespective of the particular fields of inquiry. Such assertions developed because the traditional, individual interview techniques, which used highly structured questionnaires raised skepticism in the minds of researchers. The skepticism evolved around the conscious or unconscious influencing nature of the interviewer on the process – his framework, viewpoints, belief, and impact on the outcome (Krueger, 1994). The focus group technique is a less directed method, which has as its

premise the appropriateness of eliciting less-influenced responses from participants to accurately reflect *their* social realities.

Focus Group's Value for Third World Refugee Research. Maynard & Purvis (1994) espouse the view that traditional methods of research are becoming more alien to population groups who have been traditionally marginalized. They state this with respect to American marginalized groups, but it applies similarly to "world marginalized groups". The focus group technique or method is highly appropriate for the study of this population, because it emphasizes the "collective", rather than the individual, which is something Africans treasure (Frey & Fontana, 1993; Madriz, 2000).

This method also seeks to listen to the voices of the participants, and reduces the influence of the interviewer. It tilts the balance of power toward the group with the view to fostering free expression of ideas, and opinions. In this way the control the researcher has during data gathering is decreased, whereas the participants' experiences and voices are validated through the collective nature of the process (Frey & Fontana, 1993; Madriz, 2000; Wilkinson, 1998).

It was important to use a group interviewing technique with the Sudanese refugees for the purpose of uncovering their collective narratives, cultural symbols, words, signs, and ideological representations. For the researchers it served as merely a data gathering technique, but for them it served the purposes of: (1) breaking silence barriers (Collins, 1998); (2)

healing some inner trauma; and (3) raising consciousness about their personal plights and that of their country. Furthermore, being limited in their use of the English language, some of them felt relieved that their individual voices were heard through the collective expressions and explanations of the entire group (Wilkinson, 1998; Madriz, 2000).

Informed Consent and Data Collection Procedures

Before the beginning of each session, each Sudanese refugee was asked to sign and date the consent form (Appendix C) and to complete the participant tracer/demographic form (Appendix E). They were then reminded that all information would be kept confidential, and would only be used for research purposes as explained during the recruitment process. A somewhat misleading sentence under the *confidentiality declaration* in the Informed Consent Form reads as follows: "Your individual responses to questions will not be shared with other participants in the study such as caseworkers, foster parents, or teachers." The full intent of this sentence was designed to inform the participant that his *personal name or identity* would not be divulged with respect to information he may provide during the focus group sessions. The participants fully understood that the data would be used for research publication and help with their resettlement and adjustment.

Two video cameras were set up in the rectangular room to record every session. The two cameras were set up to have visuals of the participants as they would interact during the session. Every session also

was audio-taped to maximize the retrieval of information. The primary tool for the retrieval of their verbal information was the audiocassette recorder, and the video recordings would serve as back-ups and clarification records.

Data Analysis Procedures

For this study, the Grounded Theory Method of analysis was used to understand the Sudanese refugees' experiences in as much detail as possible (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). Grounded Theory method seemed highly appropriate for this type of analysis, because it enabled the researcher to depend less on concepts grounded in the experiences of socially dominant groups and classes. The narratives or life stories of these Sudanese refugees thus served to deepen the critique of existing knowledge and added invaluable information to the understanding of the human conditions, and accompanying issues which refugees from Third World countries face.

Furthermore, formulating theories about their initial perceptions of adjustment helped the research community in understanding two things: (1) knowledge about the participants and (2) knowledge about the society of which they now form a part. The grounded theory method of analysis leans towards a more postmodernist approach to research, which at its core seeks to "expose that system of power that authorizes certain representations while blocking, prohibiting or invalidating others" (Owens, 1983, p. 59).

The origination of this method started in the 1960's with Glaser and Straus (1967), but was more recently promoted and enhanced by other

qualitative-oriented researchers (Becker, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1997; Wilson & Hutchinson, 1996; Wright, 1997). It is the goal of grounded theorists and analysts to identify seminal categories and concepts with the view to linking them into substantive and formal theories about people's experiences. The grounded theory method of analysis also has the advantage of being viewed as an iterative process, allowing the analyst to become more deeply "grounded" in the data to develop increasingly richer concepts and linkages to formulate theories (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

Various techniques were employed under this method of analysis. This researcher made use of "open coding" (Sandelowski, 1995a). This is where the researcher thoroughly read the material, underlined certain phrases, and identified potential themes. Part of the analysis also involved comparing and contrasting themes and concepts in the data with the view to understanding the conditions under which they occurred in the text (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Some refer to this as the "constant comparative" method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

This study also made use of visualizations of categories and concepts (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Kearney, Murphy, Irwin, & Rosenbaum, 1995). This was an effective way to graphically depict ideas and concepts with the view to building a theory that will practically benefit the research community. To identify clues about shared cognition – what the Sudanese refugees must have in their minds to verbalize the things they do – the researcher also made

use of the schema analysis technique (Quinn, 1997). In using this technique, the researcher looked at the repetition of key words and phrases, the use of metaphors, and the commonalities in their reasoning about certain issues. This enabled the researcher to observe how frequently they circled through the same network of ideas (D'Andrade, 1991).

Sample and Venue

The eight focus group sessions were held at a church facility. A secluded, confidential room was used for conducting the focus group sessions. Each focus group was designed to only consist of a convenient and purposeful sample of 5 to 8 Sudanese refugees. A total sample of 44 Sudanese refugees participated in the eight focus group sessions. Each group contained a mixture of ethnic groups. The percentages of the various representations of ethnic groups were as follows: Dinka, 91%, and Moru, 9%. The entire Sudanese refugee group espoused the Christian religion and attended various denominations in the immediate region.

The eight focus group sessions were divided into two stages. There were a total of four first stage sessions and four second stage sessions. Two, separate first stage sessions were held for the "majors", and two for the "minors". That was followed by two second stage sessions for the "majors", and two for the 'minors". The *first stage sessions* (see Appendix A) were designed to gain the refugees' trust and then to obtain information about: (1) their expectations, (2) transition issues, (3) service issues, and (4) foster family experiences (for minors). The *second stage sessions* (see Appendix

B) were designed to obtain any information that was not retrieved in the first stage as well as new information about their African experiences, their survival abilities, and contact with families in Sudan.

The Facilitators and Researchers

There were at least three researchers in each session with the refugees. This researcher served as primary moderator and the rest of the research team helped to facilitate the process. A clinical psychologist was asked to be present in two of our first stage sessions. His key role was to monitor any psychological fall-out, as well as probe for any signs of acute trauma. Another important facilitator was a Sudanese translator who was employed by a social services agency as a caseworker. His role was to make some of the questions we posed understandable to those who had any difficulty with the English language.

Duration of Focus Group Sessions

Each focus group session lasted about 90 minutes. The majority of the focus group sessions lasted about 90 minutes, while a few of the sessions exceeded the scheduled time limit. The duration of the sessions, however, did not extend beyond two hours. Refreshments and drinks were readily available during each session, and at the end of every session, pizza or

sandwiches were served. Also, at the end of every session the Sudanese participants were paid a fee of $15.00 for their participation in the study.

Data Transcription

This author did the transcribing of the first focus group session. The remaining sessions was transcribed by professional transcribers and graduate assistants. The student transcribers were of African descent (South African, Kenyan, and Nigerian). Sudanese transcribers could not be found to help with this project. The professional, American-born transcribers had greater difficulty understanding and deciphering the Sudanese way of speaking English. The graduate assistant transcribers were sworn to confidence. After all the information was transcribed, copies were made for the three key researchers in the project.

Securing the Research Data

From the beginning of this study, we had put in place measures to protect the research data (Krueger & Casey, 2000). To avoid issues of selective perception in the study, it was purposely planned for the three key researchers to be constants in every focus group. The three of us also had data transcripts of every focus group session, as well as access to the video and audio recordings of every session. It was also part of our plan to have regular debriefing meetings after each focus group session. The debriefing

was to reflect on our research method, strategies, and the interviewing process.

Feedback to Agencies and the Community

It is the intention of this writer to inform the respective agencies, community organizations, mentors, and foster parents of the publication of this research. In addition, the writer will send an executive summary of the outcome of the research to the major Refugee and Social Services agencies. They, in turn, will be asked to send a summary report to the refugees, mentors, foster parents, schools, churches, and voluntary organizations who were directly involved with the refugees during their resettlement and adjustment.

Chapter 4

Results

The interaction that was witnessed in the eight focus group sessions fostered empathy, cemented the commonality of experiences, and encouraged self-disclosure and self-validation. Just being together for this process and sharing together also served as a means of building on each other's opinions and thoughts (Heyck, 1994). With their collective voices, these Third World refugees reclaimed their humanity through freedom of expression, while at the same time, empowering themselves by making sense of their experiences of vulnerability and former, Sudanese persecution (Hill Collins, 1998; Madriz, 2000).

The Reporting Framework

The results of the study are reported in six sections. The first section will enumerate the author's participant observations in four sub-areas: (1) group identity verses individuality, (2) emotional or language barriers, (3) the "God talk", and (4) the lack of involvement of female refugees in the focus group sessions. The remaining five sections deal with the refugees' responses under the hierarchical needs levels as designed by Abraham

Maslow (1954). This reporting starts with the lowest level and move in ascending order to the highest level in exploring the Sudanese refugees' perceptions of their initial fulfillment of needs under each of the levels. The reporting of the results is simplistic and uses many of the refugees' own statements to portray and report their perceptions.

Some Participant Observations

As a participant observer, one sees more than what the transcribed data reveal. Particularly with these Sudanese refugees, this researcher was embedded in the entire research process from the point of having had to recruit participants (with all its concomitant nuances) to post session activities. For example, several of them had to be taken to work after sessions. It would be a show of grave inattention and neglect if this researcher were not to inform the reader of some of those "out of focus group session" observations. Some of those observations impinge on my perceptions and interpretations of the transcribed data. Those observations will provide the reader with enhanced insights into the fullness of the Sudanese refugees' experiences.

Group Identity verses Individuality. This researcher observed during the recruitment process that some Sudanese refugees would not totally commit to the process until they had a chance to consult other group members. On multiple occasions, they consulted with each other while this

researcher was in their presence. They rapidly switched to their native language (thus shutting me out), conversed among themselves, and then one of them (a presumed "better communicator" in English) provided me with the group's response. The response usually was something along these lines: "Yes, *we* think *we* will do that focus group with you".

On more than one occasion when the researcher had the chance to speak to a refugee alone he would very quickly comply with the request for involvement but would later renege on his promise. This researcher quickly learned that the key recruitment approach to this Sudanese refugee group was more effective within a group. The unraveling of the dynamics involved in the process of their decision-making, has still to be determined. It can only be assumed that a major part of their group-consultative response to someone they did not know very well, was for their individual protection and safety. It makes sense when one considers their historical plight and their experience during flight in Africa.

Emotional or Language Barriers? The very nature of their traumatic, historical circumstances and background led this researcher to anticipate deep-seated emotional disturbances. What was puzzling across multiple sessions was the lack of emotionally-laden words or terms used by these refugees. In fact, during one particular session the clinical psychologist directly asked them how *they felt* about certain African displacement

experiences. As a fellow therapist, this researcher thought his question would certainly evoke some type of emotional outburst.

The lack of overt affect, as well as the limited amount of emotional expressions that were uttered, were very surprising. Upon reflection, this researcher wondered whether it was really a lack of emotion or whether they were just not capable of putting their feelings into emotional terms. It may be that the English language barrier (for most of them) may have been somewhat of a hindrance to the full expression and explanation of their emotional state.

In many instances, avoidance of painful issues (during discussions) is usually a major indicator for the presence of pain that may be related to that issue. Even during the discussion of their African experiences (see introduction), very few emotional displays were evident. This writer does not recall any tearfulness or any refugee having to leave the session to regain composure after the discussions of their trauma. This was puzzling, to say the least, and it had this researcher wondering whether they have learned to integrate such emotional painfulness into their challenging experiences as refugees or whether they have merely developed a system of coping that is unique in nature. In psychological terms, they may have come to an emotional cut-off or they may have mastered emotional channeling. It could perhaps be an aspect of their cultural orientation.

The "God Talk". It was this researcher's observation that none of the focus group questions contained any references to God, religion, or spirituality. The only related aspect was the aspect of the involvement of Churches with the refugees. However, during sessions, different individuals invariably made some type of reference to God. "God talk" surfaced with references to their culture and their ways of conducting life culturally. "God talk" also surfaced in a more pronounced way during the discussions of their flights and survival in Africa.

It became clear from the few remarks made about God that they had a strong belief in the providence of God in their lives. As one refugee stated:

> I believe in God very much, because from all the issues that I have gone through, He always helps me, He always gives me food to eat, he always gives me clothes. When I went to Ethiopia from my country, all the food, all the clothes, I believe He has provided. He always made me to be friendly to everybody and that's how I survived.

This researcher does not intend to create the impression that every Sudanese refugee made references to God. However, the participants who did were the most dominant and verbal leadership types within the groups. Furthermore, the participants in their "God talk" made reference to God as One who was beneficent and providential in attributes.

Virtually none of the "God talk" references hinted or directly surfaced any sense of personal bitterness, anger, or accusatory attitudes towards God. This was absolutely remarkable in view of their recent suffering, loss of kinship ties, and the experience of utter helplessness in the face of cruel circumstances and onslaughts by their perpetrators. In western reasoning

and thought it would at least be reasonable to ask some searching questions: "where is God when we need Him? Why do we (African Sudanese) have to always suffer?" But no such questions were raised during our focus group sessions neither during any ensuing private discussions.

For generations the Sudanese people had a natural sense of spirituality and pragmatism. Their traditional beliefs were in the spiritual powers of local Sudanese gods. They believed that spirits or gods existed for every facet of life and that they could call on them for help. They also had faith in the help of a medicine-man or magician (Perner, 1994). They could be helped by him through several means: (1) medicinal herbs, (2) charms which could protect them against various forms of evil, (3) removal of a foreign body by suction, and (4) being cured from a disease caused by imprecations (Perner, 1994).

One of the key concerns among the Sudanese people was the notion of "curses". One such curse, in their view, is that of severe suffering. A well known proverb among Sudanese is that "God is grinding fine flour; what remains is the sifting" (Nikkel, 1991, p. 90). They traditionally apply this proverb to periods of unbearable suffering that persists for a long time. When such suffering is heavy upon them they then conclude that the hand of Nhialic (the One above) who brings both blessings and hardship is brutally crushing His people for a purpose. During those times of hardship and suffering they appeal to their various gods but when those gods are silent and impotent to help they will turn to avenues that will bring them relief.

It was during such suffering times of civil war and famine over 50 years ago that Catholic and Protestant missionaries brought new hope to the Sudanese people in the southern region of the country. During those times of traditional spiritual disappointments unprecedented displaced rural masses shifted their spiritual allegiances to the Christian God. Several mission stations were founded in the southern region of the country, and missionaries labored among the local population with unprecedented success in conversions to Christianity. When some Sudanese were asked whether the civil war and their suffering was the impetus for their conversion, they responded as follows: "... only the will of God who has kept us for this time. God has come among us slowly, and we did not know it".

The Exclusion of Female Refugees from Focus Group sessions. The rationale behind this procedural bent was largely based on cultural notions and expectations. It was surmised that the Sudanese women's active involvement during the focus group sessions would be restricted based on the cultural notion of "women's subservience" in the presence of African men. The research group, therefore, designed a series of separate focus group sessions to be conducted by a "women only" team of facilitators. Upon receiving subsequent information about the women's focus group session, it was reported that the information sharing among the women as a separate group was very sparse in itself.

The researchers' initial sense of possible cultural discomfort with women being present in the focus group sessions was tested when we introduced a female as a co-moderator in the sessions. This researcher observed very little discomfort among the men during the various sessions with this approach, but then again the female co-moderator was not a Sudanese native but an American woman with authoritative credentials. This may have made a difference.

Responses Relating to Physiological Human Needs

The researchers did not use the Maslow's (1943) "Hierarchy of Needs" model to design and guide our focus group questions, but the elicited responses of the refugees naturally followed its flow. Maslow (1943) maintains that the differences in specific desires from one culture to another, is merely superficial when it pertains to human fulfillment and basic needs. It is his notion that human behavior is organized into a hierarchy (see appendix F) of relative prepotent needs. This researcher, therefore, extracted the responses from one key question to report their perceptions of the fulfillment of their most urgent and basic physiological needs.

Their Perceptions of the Most Difficult Thing about Being in the USA or Coming to the USA. For most of these Sudanese refugees, the discussion of food, sex drive, thirst, and hunger were almost non-existent. There were no initial, acute concerns in this area for them. The most urgent needs, however,

that surfaced during this discussion, were "gateway" issues to the fulfillment of those basic needs. By "gateway" is meant, those elementary and necessary conduits that will lead to the provision of food and the satisfaction of thirst and hunger. As refugees, they were transferred to a place in the world where food and drink are plenteous. So, those elementary needs as discussed by Maslow (1943), at least for the Sudanese refugees, did not create any major, direct initial problems. They were, however, surprised and alarmed by the slow-moving and retarded processing of some of their "gateway" needs.

The State-of-Residence Identity Card. The first "gateway" need that generated a lively discussion from virtually every verbal participant was the state *Identity Card or Work Permit.* The refugees expected the Work Permit to be handed to them as soon as they arrived in the United States, but that did not occur. For some refugees, the processing of the permit was often too slow, confusing, and a major source of frustration. As one refugee put it, "...the I.D., we thought would come in the first month, but it did not happen." During the application process for the Work Permit, they were asked to produce pertinent documentation such as passports and birth certificates, which they obviously did not possess. For them, this was a major source of frustration because they had to flee their homes several years before, without having the time or readiness of mind to grab such legal papers before their escape.

Some of the refugees, out of desperation to obtain their own state's Identity Card, even traveled to another state to have their legal paper work processed more rapidly. They then returned to their state of residence with an out-of-state Identification Card and had it changed to their state of residence Identification Card. The "transfer" process, apparently took much less time than a full state of residence Identity Card application process. The effort, and expense it took to obtain their initial and most urgent legal documentation was the most dominant and difficult issue during their initial resettlement. Many of their most basic needs depended on producing such a document in multiple arenas of their daily functioning. The Identification Card and Work Permit served as the conduit to obtaining work, obtaining a driver's license, opening a bank account, cashing checks, purchasing a vehicle, and applying for any type of educational financial aid.

Work & Work Related Issues. The second "gateway" issue was *work and work-related issues.* At the time of conducting the first few focus group sessions, a few of the refugees were still not employed. The obstruction to obtaining work, at the time, was not its unavailability but rather the refugees' legal status. Those who were legally able to obtain work reported various difficulties with *the type of employment* that was available to them. They were mainly employed in manual labor jobs that paid the minimum wage. These jobs included working in warehouses as packers, grocery stores as cleaners and packers, and fast food industry as cleaners.

Some of the refugees expressed their disgust and frustration with the limited number of jobs in which they could be employed, but found very little sympathy for their plight among service agency workers. One particular refugee recounted his problematic experience on the job and reported it to the Refugee Services. His complaint involved working in an environment that literally made him sick. His complaint: "... I have problems. The place is very smelly, and it causes a vomiting for me always." He was simply told to endure the circumstances for at least three months (the supposed legal limit) before Refugee Services could help him to obtain another job.

A few of the refugees took issue with having to work the night shift on some of the jobs. One of them even reasoned that this was a foreign concept in his culture. He reasoned that *work* was for daytime hours and *sleep* was for nighttime hours. The key frustration related to this issue was the fact that almost all of these refugees were involved in multi-tasking. They had to work at night and attend school during the day. Most of them also were involved in various refugee-related activities: learning to cook, learning computer skills, learning to drive, and various fundamental survival and adaptation tasks. For most of them, time was of the essence but having to work was compulsory because so many economic factors were related to it. As one refugee put it: "... if I don't do the work then nobody is paying my rent ... I thank God that I am still working because there is no way out."

Transportation Issues. Closely connected with the work-related issues was their need for transportation to and from work. Most of the Sudanese refugees lived within the major city limits and some of them could only find employment in some of the adjacent, outlying townships. That required the dependence on being transported by their mentors, foster parents, and some of their fellow refugees who were fortunate to have their own means of transportation. Others were left to the mercy of the scheduled trips of the public system of transportation. This created some problems for those refugees who worked nights and had schedules that did not align with that of the public transportation system. Not only were there scheduling difficulties with respect to transportation, it was an added financial burden to these refugees who subsisted at the minimum wage level.

The Payment of Personal Income Taxes. A third "gateway" issue relates to *the payment of taxes.* One refugee humorously put it this way: "We don't mind paying the taxes, but not every week." This comment was meant to be humorous, but the ensuing laughter and agreement revealed a real sense of confusion and lack of understanding of the importance of this responsibility. Their frustrations bordered on thinking about their level of earning (at minimum wage level), having to pay their own transportation fees, being responsible for their own rent payment after just three months of being here, and then having to provide for their own living. Add to that the fact that they had to juggle hours between work and school and then make sure that

they worked enough hours to earn the necessary income to make ends meet. This was their frustration with the government taking a substantial amount of money out of their paychecks. It was as if they were subliminally requesting a "resettlement break" from taxes for the purpose of just surviving as refugees in their new environment. Their frustration with this tax issue evoked this comment:

> We decided that the reason America brings us here is to pay the taxes. When we go to the job, at the end of the week when we get the money, we find that most of the money was taken by the taxes.

Dating and Marriage. The fourth "gateway" issue involved the discussion of dating, marriage, and starting a family. Maslow (1943) classifies sexual needs as part of humanity's basic instinctual needs. In responding to this area of life, several reported that the concerns in this area took second stage in view of their more pressing economic needs. They reasoned that they needed to be economically established first before any conjugal or marital commitments. They were still of the mindset that they needed to be in a position to afford their cultural, marital dowry. Some also commented that they learned very quickly that to have a girlfriend or boyfriend in the United States required a lot of money for entertainment. They, therefore, thought it wise to rather focus on economic issues that will provide a greater measure of life improvement in the near future. This is how one refugee phrased his reasoning on this issue:

> So, we do not think about girlfriends. No, it is not in our minds. Our mind is on how we can get education here... if there is no proper

education, we just wash dishes, clean restrooms and they pay you little money.

Responses Relating to Safety & Security Needs

It is Maslow's (1943) position, that practically everything in an individual's life appears less important than safety and security. That is why refugees flee without taking any food, clothing, important documentation, or anything of sentimental value with them. They consider their life and safety as of prime importance during those threatening moments. Maslow (1943) postulates that unexpected, unmanageable or threatening dangers unsettle human beings to the core. This researcher, therefore, focused on some of the questions that directly or indirectly related to their perceptions of safety and security as refugees in a strange and new land.

Their Welcoming Reception. One key issue of safety and security was the welcoming reception they received when they arrived in the new country. One refugee noted that he felt relieved upon his arrival in the United States because he no longer had to worry about the sound of gunshots around him. The release from that constant worry and concern about staying alive was liberating to this particular Sudanese refugee. Just the normal sounds of people talking, people laughing, and people walking, spelt safety to him in a bustling New York airport. Others reported their sense of disorientation at the airport of arrival at first entry into the United States but still having a feeling of safety and security. The temporary sense of not knowing their way around

the airport was nothing compared to the former state of constant fretting and alertness to just survive. Another said that even the sight of a policeman in uniform was a welcoming, rather than a fear inducing sight for him and he felt free to approach him for help in finding his way around the airport.

Some of them acknowledged being shocked by the cold weather when they first arrived. They were, somehow, not well prepared to face such extreme temperatures, but the American people who welcomed them at their arrival soon provided them with their material needs. The refugees could not forget the spontaneous outpour of acts of generosity by many who came to welcome them at the airport. Some described how certain individuals drove around "in the cold" to collect warm clothing for them soon after they arrived. Others described their welcome as reminiscent of the type of care their own parents in Sudan would shower upon them:

> You know, they act as our parents because you know it remind us that we leave our parents in Sudan. Now when they started to do these things, we feel that it brings our minds back to our parents and we are feeling at home. These are great things and we say that American people are very good people.

A number of them reported that the help and support from the American people were consistent and enduring, even five months after they had arrived on United States shores. They reported this gesture as a definite endorsement of the "goodness of the American people", and a clear indication that they would no longer have to suffer and be left alone to fend for themselves.

Their sense of Freedom. Several refugees uttered the word "freedom" in connection with the kinds of help they had received in the initial stages of their resettlement. They perceived the atmosphere of generosity and the numerous acts of kindness as, somehow, being connected with "freedom". Across the various focus groups, this researcher had not heard a single negative comment about their reception and welcome to the United States. Maslow (1943) does indicate that a major prerequisite or precondition for the satisfaction of these basic needs is "freedom". He maintains that whenever humans do not have a sense of freedom, the satisfaction of their basic needs is virtually impossible, or at the least, very severely endangered.

Immersed into Urban Life. As participant observer, this researcher could not help but wonder how safe and secure they felt about being placed within an urban setting immediately upon arrival. Their Sudanese background was highly agrarian and "country" and they were used to farming and living off the land. For the past few years before departing for the United States, they also resided in refugee camps in highly agricultural areas. They were now placed in housing and apartment facilities within the major city limits that had very little or absolutely no resemblance to their origins. They were immediately faced with the hustle and bustle of a raging city with a population of over 100,000 people. Add to that the notion of a multicultural society that is the norm for big urban sprawls in America. How secure and safe did they feel?

This immediate baptism into the urban lifestyle must certainly have engendered multiple stressors for these refugees. During the recruitment phase, this researcher could not help but notice their initial insecurity and sense of disorientation within their residences. They had to be taught what a microwave oven was. They had to be exposed to gas-operated stoves, and electrical refrigerators. To get to a grocery store, some of them had to be taught to use the public transportation system. Now, these would become necessary training elements anywhere within this country, but add to that the undue pressure of city life, and it could spell disaster for initial, healthy resettlement. For the initial resettlement of agrarian-oriented refugees, this may not be the best way to introduce them to their newfound freedom. It would seem that a gradual phase-in program to living within an urban setting would be best suited for healthy physical, social, and psychological initial adjustment.

City life raises issues of possible exposure to more vice than virtue for the unsuspecting. There was the concern that some of the refugees might be exposed and easily influenced by certain city pitfalls. These Sudanese refugees were easily identifiable with their characteristic looks as tall and dark Africans. They were easily noticed as ones who were employed in minimum wage jobs. This could so easily become a target for those who would prey on struggling people to perform their illegal activities for "easy" money. Fortunately, these Sudanese refugees had a very strong community orientation, which for the most part was a sure protective net for such pitfalls.

This researcher wondered at times whether they were prepared for the inevitable pitfalls of city life: prostitution, gangsterism, drug abuse and smuggling.

Safety and Security at School. Some of the refugees raised issues of feeling insecure and unsafe within their public school environment. As one refugee stated:

> ...[T]he first day I went to enroll in school, I see there are many security in the school and this was not... there where we come from, the security cannot be there. I thought why the security be there... maybe they can come and attack the school?

When the refugee raised this particular issue, he was asked if the presence of the security officer made him nervous. His response was affirmative with the other participants in full concurrence. Upon further questioning, the researchers unearthed the source of their feelings of insecurity and fear. They had heard, and seen the school shootings in the United States on television. Such scenes always featured uniformed officers doing investigations of the shootings. Thus, their school's uniformed security officer reminded them of those shooting scenes in schools. This was more starkly told through the words of one refugee:

> I heard about... the news or watching TV, there are some student come and shoot some student in the school like in California... I fear because I might be alone in the class, and it might be some people they maybe don't like me... some kid they don't like you or what... because you come from another country...

This experience created a certain amount of insecurity and stress for these refugees, because it seems that they were not properly prepared and

informed about the purpose for having uniformed officers on school premises. This may be taken for granted by any local student resident, but for these refugees, who are still reeling from a traumatic and violent Sudanese past, this is a major stressor that could have provoked some catastrophic consequences. The refugees' heightened reaction to the mere presence of the security officer or policeman's presence in the school was indicative of their need for safety and security as displaced refugees.

Security and Safety with respect to Service Agencies. Safety and security concerns of this nature led us to ask them whom they turned to for information about life in the United States. On issues involving jobs, housing, and legal processing matters, a number of refugees consulted their service agencies. On more than one occasion, their reports about some of the service agencies were not too favorable. In the ensuing direct statements by refugees, I shall block out the actual name of the service agency that the refugee referred to during this discussion. This is how one refugee stated his impression of one of the service agencies:

> ... [M]ost of the people at _____, they don't understand the feelings of others. They don't understand what are the problems that people have. Sometimes you go to the office to talk to them and they don't even understand what you are talking about.
>
> For example, if I work for seven days and I go to them about this problem, that person will say to me, 'That is not my problem'. They should at least show concern about my problems. For me personally... I feel unhappy about these things.

It seems that the refugees simply wanted the agency workers to have a sense of compassion and understanding toward them during their initial resettlement phase. The initial resettlement phase was difficult for these refugees, as they had to come to grips with taking personal responsibility for their survival in their newfound democratic home. They felt that their sense of safety and security were somewhat undermined by the very agencies that were appointed to assist them in their initial resettlement. The negative experiences with some service agencies were not exactly the same for every refugee, but a significant number of refugees raised these concerns to make this an issue worth noting.

Safety and Security with respect to Mentors. The refugees expressed a more positive sense of security and safety with respect to their mentors. A number of them reported how they consulted and requested help from their assigned mentors. The mentors helped them with their basic needs: cooking meals; washing laundry; shopping; using the shower; college applications; financial aid; driver's education; and the legal processes. They felt secure in that they could call on their mentors at any time. Some of the mentors would spend hours with the refugees during hospitalization and recovery. I am aware of a few who opened their homes to the refugees as a place where they could come and relax, and feel "at home". The refugees felt that the mentors played a pivotal role in their initial resettlement. Some of the

refugees had such a close relationship with their mentors that they felt free to call the matriarch of the family, "Mama".

Safety and Security with respect to their Foster Parents. Their sense of safety and security in the foster homes, were given mixed reviews. Some minor refugees had favorable reports about their foster home experiences, while other reports were somewhat dismal. The reception of the refugees into foster homes was initially exciting for both the families and the refugees. The refugees had praise for foster parents who helped them with their cultural transitions. Some were impressed with the way their foster parents prepared them for democratic life in the United States. The foster parents would inform them of the endless possibilities in a free and democratic country in education, with jobs, with personal aspirations, and possibilities. They reported how helpful some parents were in cautioning them about the pitfalls of immorality on television and life in general in this country.

However, in some homes the clash of cultures within the home soon soured some relationships. For example, one participant reported how a foster mom insisted that he looks at her when she's addressing him. He was told that avoiding eye contact was a sign of deceit or lying to her. He told her that in his culture that was a sign of respect towards the adult. Another refugee told about his clash with his foster mom when it was discovered that he had tuberculosis. This is how he reported it:

> You have TB, so now all my family is now wrecked... let's go to hospital... and we go and get check up... they call her sons and

> daughter and we go to hospital. They check her and the doctor say... it's not in everybody only one exposed. Then she say, no, no, no, they came with disease from Africa.
>
> So, she quarreled a lot and said me a lot of things. Then I said, no, I do not deserve this. It's not my problem it must be a problem for those people that bring us from Africa...

This particular refugee then left that home and was taken in by another family who cared for him until he was able to move into independent living. A number of them appreciated the guidance given by their foster parents. At first, the instructions and chores assigned in the home seemed strange and contrary to their cultural norm, but they later realized that it was done with purpose to prepare them for independent living. So, for many of the refugees some experiences provided them with a sense of security and safety, while others' fears and insecurities were exacerbated.

Responses Relating to Love, Affection, and Belongingness Needs

It is Maslow's (1943) view that the obstruction of love, affection, and belongingness needs for any individual, irrespective of culture and ethnicity, may form the core for maladjustment and severe psychopathology. A significant quote from Maslow (1954) with respect to any human's belongingness needs, strikes at the heart of the refugee displacement experience in a strange land:

> From these we know in a general way the destructive effects on children of moving too often; of disorientation; of the general over-mobility that is forced by industrialization; of being without roots, or of despising one's roots, one's origins, one's group; of being torn from one's home and family, and friends and neighbors; of being a transient or a newcomer rather than a native (p. 43).

He maintains that all humans have an implanted animal "tendency to herd, to flock, to join, and to belong" (p. 44). With their forced displacement from their native homes, their trek across neighboring African countries, and their final placement in a land that is so far removed from their own, these refugees especially need a place to belong.

The Initial Perceptions of Feeling They "Belong". After a few months of initial, euphoric receptions and relationships between foster parents, their children and the Sudanese refugees, reality struck. Again, not everybody's experiences were the same with foster parents and their children. Some of the refugees developed close relationships with the foster parents and their children, while others were made to feel that they did not "belong". The descriptions of their experiences with foster parents were as varied as the colors of the Fall season. One participant described his experiences with his foster family, who could not afford to have him in their family, in disparaging terms. He was living in a foster home with seven family members (five children) where the father of the family was the only breadwinner. He reported that he needed medication to alleviate leg pains, and asked for their assistance. He was given a list of reasons for their inability to help him obtain the needed medication.

Another refugee told about his experiences with the children in the family. They were, initially, enamored with him but after a while the young children started ridiculing him with remarks and comments that made him feel

unloved and unaccepted within that home. Most of the negative and taunting remarks related to his physical features, and his black, African appearance. Other refugees reported feeling discouraged and disconnected because they were told not to invite their Sudanese friends to the foster home. This is how one refugee reported his experience:

> When I see another foster parent, they told me 'don't bring your friends here at home'. I say, 'why?' They said: 'I don't like your friends'. When I go to school, I tell my two friends.

He also reported that the foster parents had problems with him inviting his friends without informing them first. He then explained that in his African culture one could freely visit from place to place without asking permission or first informing people of your coming. Another participant concluded that the restrictions imposed on him by his foster parents made him feel like he was in jail.

On the opposite side of the spectrum other refugees felt loved, accepted, and a sense of belonging in the foster families. Some of them described the healthy relationships that were developed in the foster homes, with parents teaching them the basics of American culture and how to function in everyday life. In some of these homes the differences in their cultures were celebrated rather than scorned. Parents were involved with their daily school and extra-curricular activities, and expended time and effort to make them feel welcome and accepted in their families. A particular participant stated that his foster dad made special time to teach and help him

with his schoolwork. He would also be taken along to all the family's activities to be exposed to the norm of the daily, American lifestyle.

Some of the refugees who were taken into foster homes at age sixteen or seventeen reported struggling with the concept of being launched into "independence" upon turning eighteen years old. Some had fears about living on their own, without an adult being present for counsel and guidance. This American, cultural practice catapulted them into an arena and life stage that for many spelt "individuality". Such individuality (at least in this initial phase of their resettlement) did not fully give them the sense of feeling they "belonged". The only way some of them could make any sense of this practice was to rationalize it as a vital part to surviving within the system of democracy.

The Clash of Cultures. Another insecure aspect of their initial resettlement was their clash with the American culture. They recognized this clash to be inevitable, but it nevertheless, engendered a sense of "not belonging". One cultural aspect that concerned the unmarried refugees was dating an American girl. They, somehow, had the impression and understanding that American girls were very strong in personality, and that they would be forced to comply with things in the relationship that would put their legal status in jeopardy. This is how a few refugees described some of their cultural, relationship fears:

> ... in America you have the women are at this level and the men are at this level.
>
> ...[W]omen here dominate the people.

> ...[L]ike here, ladies they chase boys around in front of people. In our culture, the boys are the ones who chase ladies, not ladies who chase boys.
>
> It might be that I have no job and I might be having American girl, and maybe I met with her and she got pregnant. I have no job, and I am not the one [a citizen] of this country...What [How] do you think that will affect my life?
>
> Yea, it might be even through that mistake they can send you back to your country...

They were also informed of the legal responsibility of paying "child support" when a child is born out of wedlock. Several of them struggled with this information as they thought about having to work at night, attend classes during the day, and barely surviving economically.

Facing Independence. Many of the refugees, however, felt they had to quickly come to terms with "independence" as a necessary part of their development and growth into American social life. The few among them, who voiced very little insecurity with this practice, were the ones who seemed to have leadership type qualities (as witnessed within the group settings), and the ability to verbalize and envision the positive aspects contained within this cultural practice. Those individuals among them were forward-looking in their approach to resettlement, rather than being culturally sentimental. This is how one participant described his struggle with moving away from his cultural practice:

> No, in my country, you stay with your father or your mother. You stay till thirty-five and then you get married. You get married and you build

your house around your family. Your father also is still protecting you and everything.

Their Fellow Sudanese Support. Most of them reported that a vital ingredient for their survival in their initial resettlement, and the enhancement of their ability to ride the American cultural tides, was the close association with their fellow Sudanese. This, especially in the initial phase of their stay, provided them with the vital sense of "belonging", even though they had to resettle into a system of rugged individualism. They felt and experienced a semblance of home, even though they were immersed in a foreign culture. Their need and drive to be together as a group of Sudanese citizens, and fellow refugees formed part of the impetus for their initial survival and maintenance of their sense of community. When they felt misunderstood by their foreign culture, they turned to their fellow citizens for solace and empathic understanding. Most of them drew courage from the well of their historical, survival stories.

During recruitment visits with prospective participants, this researcher had the opportunity to be exposed to their sense of "belonging" within their Sudanese group. During a particular recruitment follow-up, a group of nine or ten Sudanese visited with each other in one apartment room. They were all sitting around, talking, and listening to Sudanese music. After stating the purpose for the visit, they invited this researcher to listen to their music and witness their cultural dance. It was indeed a very strange dance of continues vertical leaps into the air. The music was unlike anything I have ever heard

before, but they were dancing and singing within their group, with a deep sense of satisfaction and "belonging" written all over their demeanor. At that moment, this researcher did not have a clue what they were singing nor did he understand the meaning behind their cultural dance. That made him feel like an "outsider" who "did not belong", but *they* exuded comfort, satisfaction and a sense of being at home within their group.

That one incident provided this researcher with the insight into their daily struggles and feelings of "not belonging", when they are faced with the unfamiliar and inexplicable things of their new environment. This was on par with Maslow's (1954) tenet that humans have the drive to seek safety and stability "in the very common preference for familiar rather than unfamiliar things, or for the known rather than the unknown" (p. 40).

Responses Relating to Esteem Needs

Maslow (1954) posits that the satisfaction of a person's self-esteem needs leads to feelings of self-confidence, personal self-worth, strength, capability, adequacy, and being useful and necessary in this world. He also states that the obstruction of such needs can easily lead to feelings of weakness, inferiority, and helplessness.

Freedom of Speech. These are the words of one refugee who was very expressive with his thoughts and words about his newfound freedom:

> We have freedom of speech. When people have problems with their [state] I.D., some of us we wanted to talk and have a meeting about it.

> That means there's freedom of speech. That is the best thing that I have found here. Where we come from, you cannot speak for your rights. You don't have an argument about an issue.

In this focus group setting, he felt empowered to speak his mind, because he was informed that he was now operating and living within a system of western democracy. He had the sense that what he said would be heard and respected by others. That gave him freedom of thought, and he felt that he could speak his mind without any reservations. These refugees were so emboldened by this democratic principle, that when they had problems with their state of residence Employment Authorization Card, they felt they had the freedom to organize a meeting for the purpose of taking their complaints about the delayed processing and receipt of this document to the next level. Not only did each of them feel empowered, and a sense of self-respect, but they felt that they would be listened to as a group.

For all of these refugees, this was a far cry from their not-to-distant past. It was just a short while ago when they were virtually dehumanized by their perpetrators who ravaged their homes, scattered them savagely, and plundered their properties and possessions. They had to flee like helpless animals into a vast unknown future, where they would have to survive by the skin of their teeth. Not only were they stripped from all they owned, all they belonged to, and all they were familiar with, but from their sense of self-respect and self-esteem. Now, in a focus group setting, in a mid-western American town, they feel they have the right to stand up and speak for their rights. They felt this empowered, because they believed they were given the

rights that the democratic, constitutional system afforded every United States citizen.

It became very obvious during some of the focus group sessions, that some of the refugees embraced this gift of freedom, much sooner than others. Some of them still had reservations in sharing their sincere feelings about matters that were not satisfactory to them. Others were still cautious in dealing with sensitive issues related to their resettlement. But there were a few through whom the majority expressed themselves vicariously on issues that affected them negatively. As Maslow (1954) purports, "...confidence in the face of the world..." (p. 45) is one sign of a healthy sense of self-respect and self-esteem, and signifies an individual's desire for independence and freedom.

Educational and Placement Frustrations. One of the unexpected blows to their self-esteem and sense of self-worth was in the realm of their education. They had arrived in the United States with a standard of education, which to them seemed adequate for placement in a similar grade level. They were, however, informed that their African (Sudan, Ethiopia and Kenya) level of education was not at the grade level needed to handle the academic work. They were then placed in a lower grade level of education. This is how some of them expressed their opinions about this issue:

> ... [T]hey're expecting us to have that credit. But when you come and show them what you did, you know, they don't give you no credit. And they're denying you from graduating..."

> "You able to present what you did in Africa but they don't want to. 'We don't give credit for African curriculum'. Where do they think that we going to get this credit?

During this discussion, there were tones of frustration, despair, and disappointment, and some even remarked that they felt that they were just wasting their time in school. Others complained that the work they were doing (especially in the sciences) was work they had already done in Africa. Their confusion and sense of frustration was with having to repeat the same work again. This is how another refugee vented his frustration:

> ... [L]ike me, I take a lot of sciences. Everybody in Africa take sciences. Here they say take one, take one each year... But you come show them what you did in Africa, they don't give you credit... These things really, you know, discourage a lot of students. This one will lead to drop out of most students in school. That's like wasting time, you know, keeping them in school and they're not going to achieve their goals.

The refugees felt that their educational progress was being retarded. Some of them had visions of entering college within a year or two, but now they were being told that their level of education was not sufficient to allow them to be placed at their expected grade level. Some of them expressed the importance of moving through the educational levels at the expected pace, because so many economic factors depended on achieving their educational goals.

An additional issue for the refugees was being placed in grade levels where they clearly looked much older than the rest of the class or grade level. This is how one of them expressed his feelings about this seeming embarrassment:

> I'm growing up. I may be out on my own and [at] my age are [is] not supposed to be in high school, but I may have knowledge for further studies... I can't go to college if I don't have high school diploma... You know this is really seriously affecting us... You see, it's totally affecting me, and this day, I worry about it because I say, I came to America... even for me it is better to stay in Africa... because to come here to America and to miss what is called education, is like you are not hungering.

Some of the refugees were in the twelfth grade, but were told that they would not be able to graduate, because they lacked some credits from earlier grades. This was very difficult for them to understand because their African system was so dissimilar in academic structure. Most of their confusion came about because of their knowledge of the African system, where you only advanced to a higher grade once all the requirements for the current grade were completed successfully. They, therefore, could not fathom the term "making up credits".

There was a definite sense that, during the discussion of their educational levels, the refugees were not properly prepared for this blow to their self-esteem or sense of self-respect. They were then asked who they talked with during those confusing times. Some indicated that they talked with their school counselors, while others approached their caseworkers on the matter. The outcome for them, however, was still the same. They had to make up the credits for previous grades by taking extra classes during summer vacation. This is how one refugee representatively expressed their sense of determination to obtain the needed credits:

> We commit ourselves, like summer school... because we want to get...we want to achieve our goal... we don't have like holiday. We go, like in regular school and in summer school, we do the same... and

> we get B or B+ or A. This is what we get in all these grades... even if English is not our mother language, we do, ah, we compete with the students who being [were] there.

Not all the refugees were totally frustrated with their lack of advancement in their respective grades. There were a few who accepted the reality that they were treated in this way because they were unable to produce the necessary academic records to verify their grade levels. Some of them had the sense to bring some of their records with them, but for most of them at the time of displacement, this was probably not a priority. One refugee, who remained calm and positive during this whole discussion, had the following remarks that served to calm some of the exclamations of frustration and panic:

> You know everybody who is in school who is facing the same problem... I do talk to my counselor about it, and my counselor is quite sure that, you know, by all means we are gonna [going to] graduate.

Graduating was still their responsibility. They had to make up the needed credits from previous grades. Some of them were tested up to five times to assess their academic level for placement. One refugee complained that he was tested ten times for placement. His difficulty came when he transferred from one high school to a different one in the same region. Here are some of his comments:

> Right now I gotta [got to] take five tests again. Like in ———[the high school], I took five, now I'm taking five again. When I tell them I took Economics last year, I told them, I took Economics in Kenya. I already had Economics. Why do you need Economics again?

The facilitators of the focus group sessions, could tell that there was a sense of urgency attached to discussing their progress in education. So

much of their sense of competence was closely tied to their educational achievements, and any blocking of their aspirations and goals in this arena surfaced major frustrations and discouragement.

Issues of Personal Denigration. A number of stories relating to negative treatment were raised when we asked about their concepts of racism and discrimination. At first, the researchers discussed the notion that it may be too early to assess their views on these subjects, but the responses were enlightening. The various responses provided us with insight as to the initial impacts such personal denigrations have on these refugees. They reported feeling sad that in a democratic and free society, where they were expecting equal and fair treatment from fellow human beings, they still had to defend themselves and give account of their Africanism.

At one point during the discussion of racism and discrimination, the researchers checked whether they understood what "discrimination" meant. This was what one refugee said:

> Different people. These people are from this country, these people are from this race, these people are from this religion, these people... not belong to this country, these people are not friend of mine... I think...

Another refugee gave his view on discrimination in this way:

> ... [T]hey are gonna [going to] say, you are not an American... Why don't you speak English? That's the first thing, second thing, if you don't do things like American does. If you are tall... flush of the toilet and you don't know how to flush the toilet, you are automatically not an American. Like they will make fun of you... they will tease you... you will take it as discrimination. Why? Because you will always be separate in whatever thing you'll be doing apart from them.

Several of them expressed the fact that they thought they were treated differently because of their origin (Africa), their lack of English fluency, their accent, their physical features, and their ignorance of American culture and ways. One refugee reported how he was fooled, and made fun of, by a group of boys on a CATA bus. He was strongly urged by the group of American boys to get up from his seat to close the door of the bus. The bus driver, obviously confused, asked him what he thought he was doing. His response was simple: "I was told by those boys to close the door". Laughter erupted from the rest of the passengers, and he was made to feel like a fool. He later learned that the doors closed automatically. This may seem like an innocent cultural experience, but this story was etched in his mind as an example of discrimination and dehumanizing treatment. It was actually the tricksters' ensuing words (as reported by this refugee) that made a greater negative impact on this refugee:

> You were so stupid that you [think you can] close, I mean shut the door with your hands. It just closes automatically, you know, by remote. So, I mean, you can't do it that way.

This same group of boys then linked this part of their conversation with the following question: "Why are you so black?" He then told them that he thought that he was "just as black" as each of them. Their response was: "No, you are black and we are brown".

The refugees seem to think that they were made to feel inferior and stupid simply because they were different and from another culture. A few demeaning statements were sometimes hurled at them, by children and

teenagers. One refugee reported how a young boy approached him during a shopping experience and asked him whether he was a "vampire". The boy asked this because of the refugee's protruding front teeth. He then jokingly told us how he responded to that question: "I said, 'yes I'm a vampire, do you want me to eat you up?' And he ran away". Another refugee told how he accidentally kicked a soccer ball against another boy's posterior. The boy got upset, told him he was gay, and called him a "baboon". At this juncture the researchers asked whether he took this as a joke. This was his response:

> I can't take it as a joke. I never met him before. You never met that person before and he tells you such a strange thing. How can you take it as a joke? You take it serious.

The various incidents of personal denigration occurred intermittently with these refugees. They did not only experience acts or words of denigration from one particular class or race group. This occurred across class and race. The perpetrators may have intended to have fun with them, but for these fledgling refugees who are trying to settle into a new society, it was a blow to their sense of self-worth, self-respect, and self-concept. The very notion of being a refugee, in and by itself, is already a strike against them.

Self Image Boosters. Some of the refugees really lit up when they talked about being treated as "family" in the foster homes. One refugee reported how his foster family took him along to all of their usual family activities. He was taken to the movies, ball games, and was included in the

regular family rituals. Some reported how they were taught to cook American meals, use the washing machine, vacuum, and clothes iron.

Others reported how their foster parents encouraged and supported them in the development of their respective sports. One particular refugee was made to feel very important at school because he was a good long distance athlete. He reported being treated in a very special way by his peers and his trainers because of his special ability. In fact, he has received several medals within a space of fourteen months, since his arrival. His athletic achievements have opened several future doors for him in the sporting world. This is how he elaborated on his prospects:

> I run cross-country and track and field, so I got lots of letters from different colleges, like NYU, Ohio State, Massachusetts, and Missouri. They want me to run there, but I get everything from [University].

This refugee feels that doors are opening for him because of his special ability. I could tell that he had a different outlook on things that were disparagingly talked about by some of the other refugees. Were his refugee status, cultural orientation, and descent overlooked because of his special ability? Was he treated differently because he was able to *contribute immediately* to what society deems important and special? However this may be answered, what is important is the fact that this refugee is getting the kind of esteem and recognition that so many of them deserve, to make a success of their resettlement in this new society.

Responses Relating to Their Self-Actualization

At such an early stage of their resettlement, it would seem highly unlikely to assess some type of individual or group self-actualization with these Sudanese refugees. However, self-actualization is a life process that can most times be detected and assessed more easily under duress or circumstances that test the growth and development of individuals and groups. Maslow (1954) in fact posits that self-actualized people are more apt to perceive things as real. They live in the real world and not just in the man-made world of concepts, abstractions, expectations, beliefs, and stereotypes. It is this notion of lucid perception that I would like to illuminate about these Sudanese refugees.

Their Extraordinary Emotive and Survival Abilities. As a trained therapist, this researcher watched very closely for swings of emotions among these refugees. The initial expectation was for most of them to exhibit some type of post-traumatic effects and stress as a result of their cruel treatment in the Sudan, and their endangered trek across several borders. These refugees have either learned to mask their emotions very skillfully, or there must be an alternate explanation for their ability to be so well controlled during the discussions of their dangerous displacement journeys. During discussions of their refugee flights in Africa, very few of the Sudanese displayed any emotions of extreme anger, bitterness, fear, hatred, or even vengefulness.

At one point during the discussion of their difficulties in Africa, one of the facilitators asked whether surviving the difficulties in Africa has made them stronger as individuals to be able to adjust more readily in the United States. Here's the response of one refugee:

> When you face a lot of difficulties, [and] it made you to learn a lot of different things, and sometimes it made you to be somebody because you have seen those things. You have seen somebody who is dying; you have seen somebody who is shot down. So sometimes it will make us to make our life good in the future. For example, now I am hoping the difficulties that I have seen in my life, it will make me to keep my mind ready for the future, and so I think that one is good for me.

Another refugee continued the response to that same question in this way:

> ...[S]uffering is the best teacher. If you are suffering, you grow stronger. But when we were in Africa, we know what is going on, what is bad and what is good. So here in the United States, now there is free education here. I am certain about the future, I think. It helps our foundation to be good, and we will be nice people in the future.

What is extraordinary about these refugees is their ability to encase their negative experiences in memories of the past. They show a unique ability to not allow those memories and traumatic experiences to impact their current motivations. I noted that there was a strong emphasis on their opportunities to make the *future* brighter and better. This is clearly suggestive of a very strong intrinsic motivational ability, which is clearly a trait of self-actualized individuals (Maslow, 1954).

The Extraordinary Ability to Forgive and Perceive Reality. Maslow (1954) asserts that the difference between a self-actualized individual and

one filled with neurosis is based on the ability to "take the frailties and sins, weaknesses, and evils of human nature in the same unquestioning spirit with which one accepts the characteristics of nature" (p. 155).

There were seldom talks of hating their perpetrators for the injustices they suffered. The many injustices they suffered were more intensely cruel than any of us could imagine, yet they did not focus on its negative impacts. They reported the facts of their refugee flights, and yearned for the safety of those left behind, but not a word about wishing evil on any of their perpetrators. Their ability to psychologically "bounce back" and operate under a new democratic system with all its concomitant acculturative stressors, with such positive and non-retributive motivation is indeed extraordinary.

Some of the refugees did not wish to be engaged in ongoing dialogues about their negative African experiences, unless a solution for resolving those Sudanese conflicts was on the table. This is how one Sudanese expressed his sentiments about discussing the past experiences:

> You know, there is [are] no solutions to them, because I have no way to stop the war in Sudan. I have no way to bring them back when they have lost their lives, but it's just a kind of nature you know, it's just nature. About those things in Sudan, I can just feel it but I have no solutions.

Was this expression a sense of hopelessness, or a sense of reality? For this refugee, the rehashing of the past without a real and workable solution in sight would merely be for information, rather than transformation. This same refugee continued:

> ...[I]f there is no solution to it, that's why we don't feel to talk about it. But if there's a solution to it to help our people back in Sudan, we like it, but if it doesn't then we don't like it.

The bottom line for this refugee was "facing the reality" of what was happening in his country, rather than engaging in research babble. For him and so many others, it was not just about "individual" feelings and plights. For most of them it was about the future of their country, and the future of their fellow citizens who are currently suffering under the unthinkable oppression of perpetrators. This is completely in line with what Maslow (1954) terms a "more efficient perception of reality" (p. 153) that is characteristic of self-actualized individuals. These refugees were more apt to perceive what was there (or real), rather than being reflective about their personal feelings of fear and the cruel audacities of their perpetrators.

Furthermore, these refugees had a unique way of focusing on extrinsic matters rather than on intrinsic, egotistical needs. In our western way of uncovering neurosis, we usually focus on the individual's inner world for cues and clues. Very little was evident or forthcoming with these refugees intrinsically. They made it plain that their focus was on a solution *for their country and those they left behind.* They, therefore, felt that their mission went beyond mere personal satisfaction, but that they had an obligatory task to fulfill that went far beyond their own needs – to call the world's attention to the plight of their homeland, Sudan. This type of unselfish thinking is typical of people who have developed into self-actualized individuals, for self-

actualized individuals are more problem centered rather than ego centered (Maslow, 1954).

The Unique Ability to maintain Inner, Cultural Detachment. These refugees have been immersed into a western culture with strong global influences. The pervasive American influences from movies, to fashion styles, to music, to moral values have swept the globe. But right here in a midwestern American city, Sudanese refugees sharply distance themselves from some practices with clarity of boundaries. Maslow (1954) believes that self-actualized individuals know when to separate themselves from certain cultural tenets and practices. They do not fear criticism for their cultural differentiation. They choose what is good from the culture, and reject that which does not fit their inner core values.

These Sudanese refugees have not been here very long but they show a clear determination to hold to their values. They did not allow themselves to be easily subjected to cultural transformations or shaping. Some of them were very clear about some of their cultural practices being based on certain endearing human values: (1) Taking care of the extended family; (2) respecting the order of marriage within the family – the younger cannot precede the older in marriage; (3) Caring for your parents; and (4) Respect for the elderly by honoring their requests.

In some of our discussions about the differences in the two cultures, it was clear that most of them were not reticent in the adoption of certain

American cultural practices, but they were more adamant to continue those cultural practices they deemed beneficial and respectful of their Sudanese identity values. It was their belief that some of their cultural traditions and practices were based on God's law. This is how those beliefs were expressed by some of them:

> Concerning the culture of Sudan and America, they are not the same. Our culture is related to God's law.
>
> Where I come from we don't work nights. It is God's agreement to put a difference between day and night. There is a time when God wants you to do everything, and there is a time when God wants you to rest.

At this early stage of their resettlement some of them had already determined their inner cultural detachment from certain western cultural values. This is perhaps not a prognosis for future acculturative adaptations, but it bespeaks an inner cultural strength typical of self-actualized individuals.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Implications

The Sudanese refugees expressed thankfulness to the American government and its people for their newfound freedom. They were overwhelmed with the initial hospitality and the goodness of the American people. They described their reception as a remarkably positive experience in contrast to their displacement from their home country. Their initial perceptions of their resettlement in a Midwestern region of the United States were consistent with their frankness about their reception. They told of their experiences with honesty and clarity.

In summary, they were enthralled with the American people in general. The American people's generosity is what impressed them most. They were, however, not too impressed with some cultural practices of the Americans. They considered some of their own cultural practices and traditions more in line with divine values. They, therefore, insulated themselves from being tainted by such cultural practices and values.

They were disappointed with the immigration processing services. They thought that a much more rapid system of legal and immigration processing should have been in place to help them with a smoother resettlement. They considered the obtaining of their Identity Card an urgent

matter for survival and progress in the initial stages of resettlement. They were discouraged during their educational placements. They thought that they were disadvantaged in their grade placements and retarded in their academic progress. Some of them were disappointed in the types of work available to them. Some complained about the long working days and nights for minimum wage. All of them complained about the federal and state tax system that consumed a lot of their earnings.

They were frank about the kinds of help they received from the Social Services and Refugee agencies. They did not have glowing reports about some of these agencies (see the result section). They had high praise for their mentors and various churches in the region but had mixed reviews about foster parents.

Capturing the Intent of the Study

This qualitative study of a group of Sudanese refugees in mid-America was designed to analyze *their perceptions* of the fulfillment of their needs in the initial resettlement phase. With the increase of refugeeism around the globe, especially from war-torn and totalitarian-ruled countries, an exploration and description of this nature would serve to benefit, in principle and practice, both the host country and those seeking refuge. This study was intent on reporting the descriptive or the result section as simply as possible, with the view to making it readily intelligible not only to the scholarly community but to the Sudanese refugees themselves. A research tradition of transmitting

knowledge merely for scholarly consumption is an impractical one at best. Since these Sudanese refugees were participants and collaborative producers of these findings, this researcher consider it only respectful to report it at a level where they could easily agree or disagree with it (Doherty, 2000).

The conceptual questions that guided this study were primarily chosen from a host list of focus group questions (See Appendix A), with the view to illuminating the Sudanese refugees' voices with respect to Maslow's (1954) conception of basic needs fulfillment. Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs was developed with western notions of motivations and personalities in mind, but served just as well to enlarge the view of the commonalities among all humanity with respect to human needs. Human beings, irrespective of origin, continental residence, or political status in life, are driven by the innate possession of an instinctual nature that depends on the meeting of particular needs. It was this essence within each of the Sudanese refugees who contributed to the richness of this study that was captured by their individual and collective perceptions of the fulfillment of their needs. Since this study was exploratory and descriptive in nature, it is hoped that it will lay a sound foundation for future research, theoretical formulations, practical applications, and the revisiting of Third-World refugee initial resettlement needs.

Supporting Refugee Resettlement

Initial resettlement and adjustment to a new culture for most everyone who experienced it is probably one of the most traumatic stressors in life. One could, therefore, imagine the exponential nature of the stress that these Third World refugees have to face who transition to a western culture so dissimilar to theirs. Add to that the factor of heightened expectations, with few being initially realized, and you basically have a recipe for possible resettlement disappointment.

Refugee resettlement, especially for those who come from some poorer underdeveloped, Third World countries like the Sudan, means survival. It means survival for them, because they come from a country where their lifestyle, skills, and education did not prepare them for such a giant leap in cultural adaptation, educational achievement, and participation in a more highly skilled labor force. The initial reaction, therefore, will be shock, fear, and a sense of dismay with the new system and host culture. This writer is raising this resettlement reality so that the reader may understand the importance of reading the ensuing discussions and implications with caution to support the Sudanese refugees in their resettlement struggles. These Sudanese refugees experienced acculturative stress and alienation as they came face to face with cultural dissonance, both on a macro systems level and more sharply on a micro system level as they faced radical initial changes and needs.

Macro and Micro Economic Needs Considerations and Implications

It is not coincidental that three out of the four "gateway needs" the refugees raised as very important for their resettlement relates to Boulding's (1985) "adequate economic resources". Boulding (1985) postulated that for human betterment to occur there must be the availability of resources that will eliminate starvation, poverty, and inadequate living. One would think that such economic considerations would be paramount in the minds of those who formulate policies for refugees at the macro system level. As bone fide, legal refugees, they knew what to expect, but it was the untimely delivery of the promises that created anxiety. For example, their government stipends were coming to an end after the initial three months, but their work permits were not yet approved. This caused panic among the refugees because they were living in rented housing and apartments which required full rental payment at the appointed time.

Somehow, at the policy level, enough time should be allowed for the refugees to receive stipends to cover the approximate period for processing their work permits. Since it would be illegal for refugees to accept employment without a work permit, this initial economic consideration would serve to avoid any notion of illegal leanings. In a host society, one does not want to circumstantially force new refugees into the existential notion of "you must do anything you can to survive". This writer is raising this issue because one refugee informed us that he went to another state (where fellow Sudanese refugees resided) to apply for his work permit. This was a move of

economic desperation. This also implies several things: (1) that he was applying for his work permit in the new state as one who resided there; (2) he had used a local address; (3) he must have applied under false assumptions; (4) he returned to his original state of residence and transferred his work permit as if the transfer was natural (and not under false pretenses).

Somehow a more "refugee-friendly" system for processing legal documentation must be devised to facilitate their initial resettlement. It becomes a more serious notion when one considers the full implications and potential pitfalls of such desperation. These Sudanese refugees are highly visible individuals. They have distinct physical features, and most people know they are foreigners. They could very easily become targets of illegal operatives if it becomes known that these refugees are being economically desperate and deprived. Furthermore, some of them (especially those living independently) are residing in residential areas or apartment blocks, not particularly known as completely "safe neighborhoods". This researcher personally visited with them in those neighborhoods and apartments and had clear exposure to their living environments.

Another gateway issue that merits consideration at the macro system policy level is that of "paying taxes". Most, if not all, the Sudanese refugees who are legally employable came here with no specialized or professional job skills. It, therefore, stands to reason that they will be employed in minimum wage jobs, doing the most menial and physically labor-intensive work. Most of them accepted the arduous nature of the work, but the unacceptable part

was when they received their remuneration. They were disappointed to note that a substantial cut of their minimum wage was taken by federal, state, and city taxes. One could argue that they need to be taught responsible citizenship and that a large part of that involves the paying of taxes. On the other hand, however, one could raise the notion that these are refugees who had to flee from their country and kindred with absolutely nothing. Most of their initial resettlement needs are demanding and dependent on personal generation of finances. Should there not be some consideration in giving them an initial tax break for a specified period of time, with the view to initial, successful resettlement?

These physiological "gateway" issues are not only important macro system considerations, but on a more micro level, it affects the personal motivation and psychological functioning of the refugees in their new society. Many immigration experts and scholars have noted that during the first year of arrival, the refugee is full of anxiety, fear, and frustration (Marmora, 1999; Ammasari & Black, 2001). What is least needed during this volatile period of acculturation is the added stress of economic survival. Maslow (1954) stresses in his motivation theory that the fulfillment of the physiological basic needs is crucial for the individual to ascend the ladder towards total human actualization. Unfortunately for the Sudanese refugees, and any other refugees for that matter, the steps towards that fulfillment is not within their personal powers but in the power and hands of higher authorities.

The responsibility for lessening the resettlement burdens of these Sudanese refugees cannot be laid at the feet of their service agencies, foster parents, mentors, and the local communities. It is at the national policy level that such burdens can be alleviated with the view to helping the new refugee with this "crisis of load" (Rambaut, 1985, Nwadiora, 1992). This "crisis of load" which is imposed upon the refugee by his host culture could easily produce severe psychological distress, anxiety, and depression within refugees during the initial resettlement stage. Such, initial, personal psychological dysfunctions within nascent refugees will not be in the best interest of the host culture, whose goal and purpose it was to rescue these refugees from such traumas in their home country.

In a much earlier, but seminal work on immigrants by Parks (1928), he found that the degree of assimilation of new immigrants or refugees into the new culture was heavily dependent on economic issues. He posited that the successful adaptation of new immigrants or refugees was strongly predicated upon needs being satisfied within those economic areas. The successful economic survival of the refugee group, in turn, will render societal dividends to the host country when they are able to thrive and be productive in their new environment. This will enhance the host society's perception of the refugees as not only being liability consumers of their generosity and goodness, but positive assets to their pluralistic society.

Residential Placement Considerations and Implications

When the state-of-residence was nominated to host some Sudanese refugees the various service agencies, obviously, went to work to find placements for them. One key consideration was to place the younger (minors, who were under 18 years of age) refugees with American foster families. This process seemed like it would work out smoothly, but as our exploratory results indicated it had many challenges. It can be very difficult to match the right children with the right families, especially if the children are of foreign origin, of African descent, refugees, a different race, a different economic background, a rural background, and unable to speak English fluently. The foster families who offered their homes need to be commended for their spirit of hospitality and willingness to provide refuge to the children of Africa. *Post de facto,* however, one wonders how much serious systemic considerations were given to some crucial resettlement notions.

Intra-cultural placements of children in foster homes are already a difficult process. It is no small wonder that we had a number of issues to surface with the placements of the Sudanese refugees in American foster homes. The cultural differences were evident, and the placement matching with respect to race, socio-economic standard, family demographics, and territory (urban verses rural) lacked resettlement vision. The multiple negative experiences of some refugees with foster families are indicative of placements that were done with limited vision for the total well-being of both the foster family and the fledgling refugee. Some refugees had to move from

their homes after just a few short months of stay. They were virtually compelled to move into "independent living, which is a way of life completely foreign to them on a cultural level. This does not bode well for initial resettlement and working to becoming a productive citizen of the new host country.

The involvement of federal, state, and local governments should form more effective and workable partnerships with the private sector and private citizens. For Sudanese refugees who, since their original flight from their parental homes, always lived with fellow Sudanese in villages, compounds, and camps, a similar style of residential placement arrangement should work to better facilitate their initial resettlement. The refugees reported that they were always supervised and lead by adults throughout their flight and their African camp experiences. They were seldom without some type of adult supervision and guidance. The teaching was done by adult teachers and guides within group settings. This was done in the various schools they attended during their displacement. It would then seem that two major functional residential issues for them would be (1) initially, living within a group setting for a while; and (2) learning and thriving within that group setting under some organized adult supervision and guidance.

This researcher would, therefore, put forth the following practical recommendations for residential placements of future Sudanese refugees, based on what was learned from their reports:

1. No fewer than four refugees placed together in a group home in a rural community.
2. Two of the four should be "majors (over 18 years) two could be minors (under 18 years).
3. Teams of mentors to be assigned to each home for an initial resettlement period of 12 months. Mentors to be fully available to the refugees to guide them. Mentors to be remunerated for their services. Mentors to receive Sudanese, cultural sensitization.
4. Mentors to serve as adult supervisors, educational guides, cultural teachers, and basic, resettlement life coaches.
5. The Sudanese refugees to be integrated and involved with various religious agencies, churches and related institutions. This guidance to be provided by their mentors in concert with the refugees' religious affiliations and preferences.
6. An orientation program be established through which social service agencies, churches, foster families (children included), and members of the community could be sensitized to the Sudanese way of life, customs, and culture.
7. A guarantee to be given by government and state that the initial resettlement period will provide for refugees' residential costs for the first 6 months (verses the current 3 months).

8. Government, the private sector (businesses), and citizens, work together to provide grants to assist with this crucial resettlement plan.

These recommendations are made on the basis of Maslow's (1954) view that humans have the implanted tendency to flock, to join, and to belong, and that this security provides any human (whether refugee or other) the best possible chance to adjust well and to avoid any type of psychopathology.

Macro and Micro Educational Grafting-In Considerations and Implications

In the main, the state of residence educational programs and systems did not make any special allowances for the initial educational integration of the Sudanese refugees. It was simply assumed that the refugee, if he or she wished to be academically successful in the host country, needed to fall in the line with the current system for such success. The argument could be raised: "Why treat these refugees so special?" My simple response would be: "They are no different (in political category) from Cubans, who for some reason are well accommodated into the various spheres of their new society.

There are accounts of various educational programs that were implemented at schools for migrant children, but even in such cases, those programs were more designed to benefit the host country rather than the immigrants (Marmora, 1999). When such programs are offered, however, they would still provide knowledge of the language and conventions of the host country. Education, no doubt, has always been widely used as a

strategy for integration (Castels, 1993). When there is a well-prepared strategy for integrating the immigrant or refugee into the host country's education system, then that will eliminate much initial, refugee discouragement. Such knowledge, when presented at the outset of the refugee's educational experience, will provide the refugee with a positive sense of psychological relief. The various dispirited stories, about their initial educational grafting-in experiences are numerous. Some of the refugees were not ready to be immersed into this western system of education without some prior preparation. Their academic background, their language skill level, their entire system of education throughout the displacement experience, simply did not and could not prepare them for such a huge academic transition and insertion. How fair is it then to subject them to standardized tests, based on the western educational model, for grade placements? How fair is it to require them to perform on par with all host-country students in assignment completion, testing, reading, and all other academic performances? How fair and just is it to demand computerized homework assignment completions from the start, with these refugees having no experience or even exposure to the world of computers?

Whether we deal with refugees, other immigrants, or disadvantaged host-country communities, deprivation or improper preparation in the arena of education are seed forms of greater discrepancies in the future (Naylor, 1999; McAdoo & Martin, 2003). As much as all of the Sudanese refugees desire to move up the educational ladder to obtain their high school diploma as quickly

as possible, it nevertheless is not to their total advantage to do so without proper initial preparation to handle the western system of education. I am, therefore, appealing for a system to be designed that would facilitate the progressive, educational grafting-in of future Sudanese refugees. The broad framework for such a grafting-in system should lean on the following educational pillars:

1. The refugees should be required to do at least six months of English language training, if his/her first language is not English. This should be compulsory and be completed before any other required subjects could be studied.
2. The refugee should be required to attend orientation classes to learn about the western system of education (the school system, college system, the testing system, etc.).
3. The refugee should be required to attend orientation classes to learn about the American cultural system. This should be related to the teenage culture, the culture of sports, the culture of recreation, the culture of entertainment, race and racism, and state of residence weather.
4. The refugee should be required to attend orientation classes to learn about the American career system. The possibilities for the future when they receive their degrees, diplomas, and certificates.
5. The refugee must be required to attend orientation classes dealing with the American labor market, white collar jobs, blue collar jobs,

the federal, state and city tax systems, social security, health care, medicare, and similar topics which will prepare the refugees for their future work life.

It is this researcher's notion that improper preparation and educational grafting-in of these Sudanese African refugees will only set them up to what so many disadvantaged people are experiencing in the main culture - marginalization. These refugees will always be recognized as Africans, no matter how educated they will become. They, therefore, need the proper educational start to be able to perform and function at levels that will bespeak competence, professionalism, and competitiveness as world citizens. It is also this author's notion that a sound educational system should always be one that will strive to engender the principles of democracy by showing full commitment to develop the totality of human potential in the best possible way (Gutman, 1987; Macedo, 1994). It does not help the refugee, neither the host country, if persons are made to conform to an educational system with the express goal to "just make the grade". This researcher opines that "making the grade" should not be the end-goal. Learning and becoming a wholly educated human being should be the primary goal no matter the person's country and status of origin. This researcher, therefore, in conjunction with the above discussions would like to propose a new adapted Maslow (1954) model for initial, Sudanese refugees' resettlement.

An Adapted Maslow Model for Successful Initial Refugee Resettlement

Abraham Maslow (1954) devised a model for personal motivation that would in essence reach the ultimate stage of human self-actualization, where the individual would be immersed in the frequency of peak experiences. To him, the individual would at this peak-experiential level realize his/her personal potential, self-fulfillment, personal, and vibrant growth. Maslow (1954) had not devised this model with refugees in mind, but his model provides the opportunity to family scientists and others the impetus and framework for analyzing what would motivate individuals to reach a point of success in their unique personal and social circumstances. It was this notion which motivated this researcher, based on the exploratory information on the Sudanese refugees, to think about what they would initially need to set the foundation for their successful resettlement and consequent future adaptation and assimilation.

Much of the thinking on refugeeism is too focused on merely helping the refugee out of his political and/or historical plight, and too little time is spent focusing on his future as a productive world citizen. Whether the goal by the host country is to groom the refugees for future citizenship or just to assist them for a period of time until they return to their country of origin they, nevertheless, have to make it a priority to help them to reach a level of *successful initial resettlement*. It is the initial foundation in refugeeism that marks the course for successful future development. Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs states that we must satisfy each need in turn, starting with

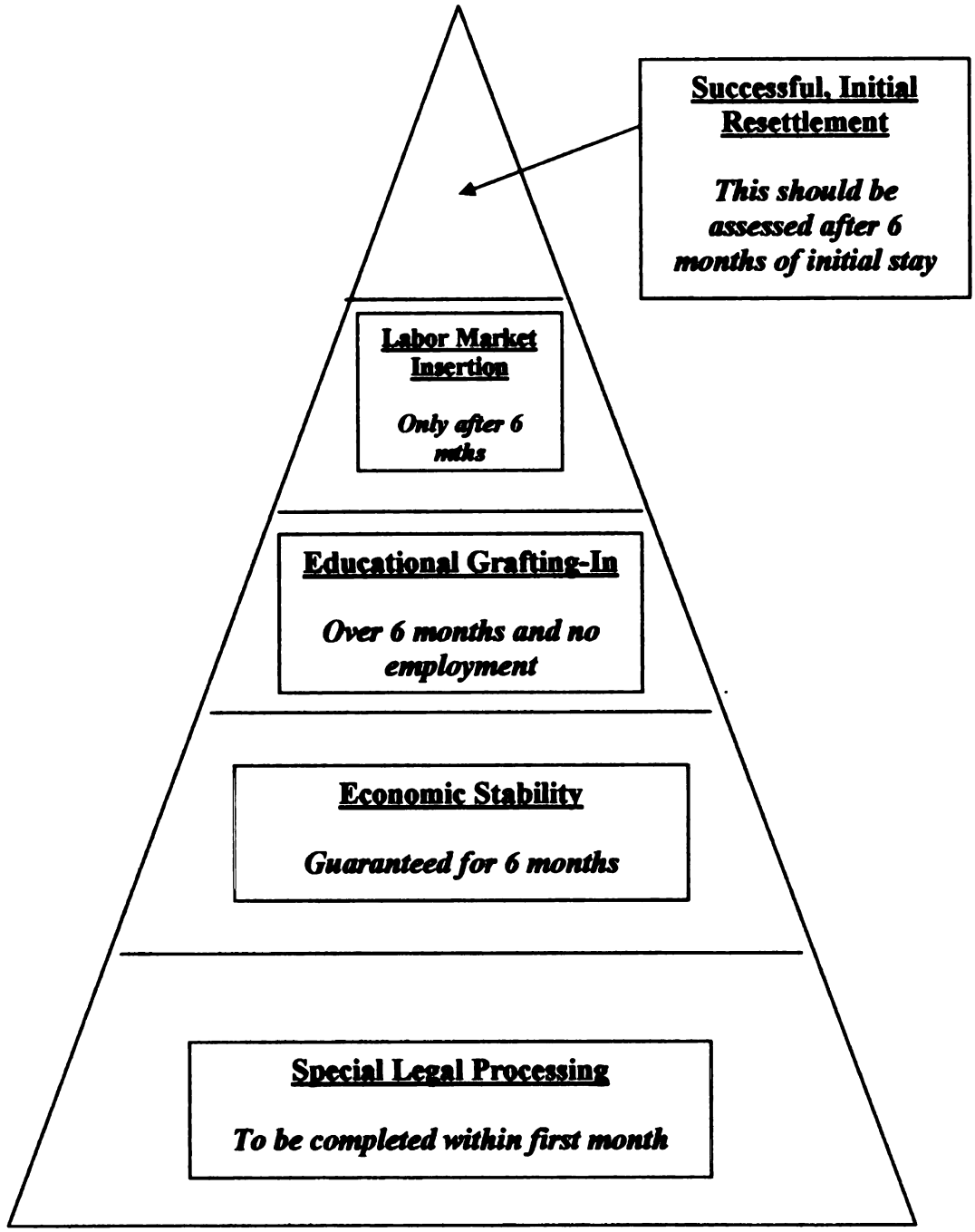

Figure 2. An Adapted Maslow Model for Successful Initial, Refugee Resettlement.

the first level which deals with the *obvious needs for survival itself.* This researcher has, therefore, devised a Maslow-based hierarchical model that puts into perspective the *obvious beginning needs* for the Sudanese refugee's successful, initial resettlement. For the layout of the hierarchical model in pyramid form see the above diagram. This adapted model, like that of Maslow (1954) has five hierarchical levels.

Level One: Special Expedited Legal Processing Completed within First Month of Arrival. Nothing makes any immigrant or refugee as insecure as having no legal documentation to show his/her legal status. In an urban setting, where everyone calls for proof of identification for doing just about anything, it is the most frustrating experience to have to rehash one's political plight after six months – "I am a refugee who just arrived, and I am waiting on the government to issue my documentation". Then to have to endure the consistent negative response: "sorry we cannot do anything about that, we need your legal documentation". This is obviously, not a school, bank, employer, or driving school problem. It is a processing problem at the macro-system level. The first line of security for any refugee and immigrant is to have proof of his/her approved governmental legal status.

Level Two: Economic Stability Guaranteed for Six Months. A deep sense of insecurity and frustration reside within refugees whose level one needs have not been taken care of within the first six months of arrival, and

then having to be concerned with their government stipends running out after just three months. A system needs to be in place where the refugee is *guaranteed at least six months of government assistance*. This assistance should be sufficient to cover the initial needs (rental and food) of every refugee for the first six months. Some may object that this will cost the states and the federal government too much money in resettling refugees. I submit that it will cost the government and the states much more money if, for some reason, any of these refugees has to be admitted for psychiatric treatments, medical procedures, or any type of civil infarction due to illegal activities (because they need to survive), and substandard living due to the lack of economic stability.

The notion of refugee hosting affordability should not be a post de facto discussion. Such discussions should have taken place prior to the refugee's arrival within states borders. The initial criteria for countries and states hosting refugees, *should not* be the following: (1) Accepting refugees to save face in the international arena; (2) To fill the lower, labor market needs of employment within a particular state; (3) To provide balance to certain states' population demographics; and (4) To boost individual states' grant coffers for hosting refugees. The primary focus and goal for hosting refugees should be to help them find safety and security for peaceful human existence on earth. If this goal is not the primary motive of the host country and states, then the privilege of helping refugees to become productive world citizens should be left to another.

Level Three: Educational Grafting-In over Six Months. Here the reader is referred to the earlier discussion on educational grafting-in considerations and implications. The term "grafting-in" is used, because this researcher wish to raise it to the level of *a slow phase-in process*, rather than an immediate insertion into the current main stream of education. For refugees from a Third World country, this western system of education could, initially become overwhelming. This is not because the Third World citizens will not be able to cope with the new educational system, but it does mean that the leap to such a new system, together with all the other new systemic and ecological factors may prove to be "too much too soon". At the end of this period of educational grafting-in, a "refugee readiness" assessment should be done before the decision is made to insert the refugee into the main stream of education. This process may seem like a waste of invaluable time, but it will serve to establish the refugee in his understanding of the new educational system, motivate him/her in constructing future educational goals, and remove fears of the unknown.

Level Four: Labor Market Insertion after Six Months of Arrival. The first few months in the host country should not be time spent in joining the labor market. The majority (perhaps all of them) of these Sudanese refugees is still at school and need to focus on all the initial resettlement issues as well as their educational grafting-in process. Many of them complained about having to divide their time between school, after-school projects, and long

working hours. Some even had to work the night shift to fit in enough hours to earn sufficient income to make ends meet. Not only is this type of schedule a health hazard (with the refugees getting too little sleep and rest), it undermines their ability to positively cope with the initial facets of successful resettlement and adjustment.

A minimum of six months should be allowed to elapse before any refugee should be considered for any type of legal employment. During those initial six months, the refugee should be granted time to gather as much information about his/her options in the labor market. When refugees are inserted into the labor market out of desperation, they will subject themselves to all kinds of employer abuse. Some of them reported how they were given the most menial of tasks, but they had to endure because they were desperate for the income. It is especially in the labor market that the host country should take care to protect the refugee from employer abuse.

Level Five: Successful, Initial Resettlement. Six months after the refugees' arrival, an assessment should be made that would take into consideration the previous four hierarchical levels of refugee resettlement. This assessment could be made by social workers interviewing each refugee and their mentor(s). Only after a satisfactory assessment process, based on specific criteria under each hierarchical level, could a refugee be allowed to (1) be inserted into the main stream educational system, (2) be inserted into the labor market, and (3) become responsible for his own economic

subsistence. The first three months after the initial period of resettlement and education (i.e. only after six months since arrival) should then be a time of transition from being government and state supported to becoming self-sufficient.

Considerations and Implications for Professionals and the Community

Working with the Sudanese refugees in their resettlement and adjustment afforded professionals and community people the unique privilege of learning to understand the beginning struggles of a displaced people. Very little work has been done in the realm of understanding the difficulties and struggles Sudanese refugees face within the first eighteen months of their resettlement. Most of the work done with the Sudanese refugees focused on their experience of trauma in Africa, and perhaps the current plight of their country. This study has described and explored their initial perceptions of adjustment and needs fulfillment with the view to fully inform professionals, educators, community people, and agencies. This will help those working with Sudanese refugees in the future to serve them more effectively.

Professionals who will be contracted to work with Sudanese refugees in their initial resettlement phase should familiarize themselves with literature on refugees in general. They should, in particular, acquaint themselves with the customs, culture, and historical background of these Sudanese refugees. If at all possible social workers, family scientists, psychologists, or service agency workers should be mandated to attend orientation classes that focus

on "understanding and knowing Sudanese refugees". The orientation classes should be taught and conducted by the Sudanese natives or people from the United Nations, who have gained experiential knowledge from working with Sudanese people in the past. Professionals should be screened for unethical motivations for desiring to work with these refugees.

Various educational classes should be offered to churches, and faith-based institutions that will interact with the Sudanese refugees. Prospective mentors, employers, and teachers should also be mandated to familiarize themselves with the background and culture of the refugees. Medical doctors and psychologists should be encouraged to consider a more multicultural approach to working with Sudanese refugees (Helms, 2003; McAdoo & Martin, 2003). Therapists should avoid perceiving refugees' mental health problems purely from the western perspective. The therapists' and social workers' usual western-oriented assumptions must be set aside and serious attempts must be made to understand and be sensitive to the unique experiences of the refugee. The use of alternative, holistic therapy types should be considered when working with these refugees (McAdoo, & Martin, 2003). Various community educational projects should be organized to expose the community to the value of understanding this new subgroup of refugees. One form of good educational exposure could be to run an ongoing series of articles on the life and background of the Sudanese refugees in the local newspaper. In the main, purposeful action must be taken to expose professionals and the community to the life and culture of the new refugees.

The Strengths and Limitations of the Study

Strengths. The first major strength of this study was that the Sudanese refugees were personally afforded the opportunity to "tell their story". This is so qualitatively different from merely analyzing "true or false" statements. These focus group experiences provided the refugees the platform to "make their own voices heard", albeit within a group setting. This type of research approach was more consistent with their African orientation of "community" discussions verses the more western notion of individual interviewing. The refugees were bolstered in their forthrightness. They felt empowered when the group consented to their individual voices. They felt free to speak their minds and relate their individual and collective stories, knowing that their fellow citizens could corroborate or deny the veracity of their accounts. This alone makes for an invaluable retrieval of information. This direct retrieval of contextual information and stories from the refugees far outweighs the mere assumptions made by researchers of categories and aspects of "reality" that they purport to describe (Silverman, 2000).

A second strength of this research project is that this researcher was personally present in each focus group session, to not only retrieve research information, but to experience and feel the initial plights of the refugees through their stories. Furthermore, this researcher was able to visit their homes during the setting up of those focus group sessions. He had the honor of talking "off camera" (out of session) with most of them, an added privilege

of being a participant observer. This researcher was able to mentally compare what was seen in their homes, and heard "out of session", with what was witnessed and heard in the focus group sessions. This also provided the richness of more systemic, contextual information during the exploration and description of their experiences.

A third strength of this study is that the researchers did not rely on focus group notes or our own recollections of the conversations. The sessions were video and audio recorded. Future researchers could have access (with full permission of course) to the information that was gathered on tape to compare new information. They will not have to rely on deductions, but will have exposure to the actual details of the original information. These tapes are now a matter of public record, available to the scientific community, in a way that field notes at times are not. In addition, those tapes could be replayed if there is any kind of discrepancy with the information in the transcripts. Despite all its strengths, the study also had a few limitations in it.

Limitations. The first limitation was that the research team did not have a Sudanese facilitator or translator with us in every focus group session. Attempts were made to procure a Sudanese translator for the duration of the focus group sessions he could only be available for the first two sessions. The presence of a Sudanese translator was absolutely necessary at times. With most of the participants not fully fluent in the English language, it was

difficult at times to fully grasp some parts of their speech and understand them. On more than one occasion, the researchers had to ask them to repeat their statements. The moderator also had to put his understanding in simple English words and repeat it back to them for verification. This presented us with an additional problem. They perhaps did not have the full ability to understand our rephrasing of their comments.

A second limitation of this study was that most of the transcribing was done by people who were not present during the focus group sessions. It is understood that, this is the usual routine. In this case, however, it was particularly difficult to understand or grasp the Sudanese accent without physically having been in their presence and in the context of the discussion. The transcribers were not Sudanese. This writer is, therefore, convinced that much information was lost because of the difficulty to grasp the Sudanese accent. In reviewing the completed transcripts, it was evident that the transcribers had a difficult time understanding the participants. This also is based on the fact that the research team was consistently present during sessions, and they had to request a repeat of certain phrases and statements for clarity of understanding.

A third limitation was that none of the focus group moderators made any post-session notes. Debriefing meetings were held shortly after the focus group sessions, but no researcher kept a record of some of our discussions. In hindsight, that would have been helpful as additional, reflective information for research purposes. That kind of reflective information could have

provided multi-perspective participant observations, which could have been shared with the readers of this study.

A fourth limitation was the fact that the research team did not do a specific and formal pilot study with the Sudanese refugees before the actual focus group sessions started. Instead, the research team's efforts were directed at developing rapport with the youth and understanding their experiences through a variety of immersion experiences. These experiences involved various group programs, church programs, and attending Sudanese focused events. The research team also worked with the refugees' caseworkers on measures and questions that would help with collecting focus group data.

Considerations for Future Research

Future research with this group of Sudanese refugees could involve periodic assessments of their long-term adjustment in the USA. By periodic is meant conducting focus group sessions with the same groups every five years. A similar methodological format (focus groups) could be used to stay true to their community orientation. This will provide key information of their ongoing adjustment to their new country, and will also inform the research community about the pros and cons of their initial, resettlement effects. This will also give new insights to their achievements (in education, careers, and society) and struggles (in education, careers, and society) at those periodic intervals.

Future research also could include women Sudanese participants in the focus group sessions with the men. Sessions could be designed to assess cultural changes and impacts with respect to male-female relationships, cultural adaptations with respect to cross-cultural relationships, cultural assimilations with respect to disavowing Sudanese traditions and customs (e.g. dowry), cultural insulation with respect to stubbornly maintaining their own and rejecting that of the host country, and cultural frustrations with respect to nostalgia for home despite the current conflicts.

Future research could involve measuring their true achievement of resiliency. It is my notion that to measure resiliency within the first couple of years of their resettlement process, is too soon. The issues of initial resettlement (as we reported), first needs to be fully addressed by the various systems before the full measure of the resiliency could be assessed and reported. The unsettling issues of initial resettlement could have been too overwhelming for these refugees and could have had some type of negative impact on their ongoing adjustment. It, therefore, would be prudent to allow them first to come to grips with those issues, resolve them within a reasonable measure of time, and then be free to focus on full ongoing adjustment or assimilation.

One first needs to have a base measure of their health (mental, physical, emotional, psychological, and social) to make some type of determination that they have "bounced back". If one does not have that base, it cannot be concluded that they have bounced back. After they arrived here,

they were not totally healthy. Just because they seemingly "fit in", "seem happy", "and seem to cope with life" does not necessarily mean they are performing at their base health. If their initial resettlement perceptions were any indication of their health then I would tentatively conclude that they have a way to go before they get there.

Conclusion

It was clear from the analysis of the results of this study that several elements have to be addressed with respect to resettling refugees in the future. One such element is *preparing* people and organizations for such a huge undertaking. The results of this study as well as ongoing verbal reports from people and organizations indicate that not enough preparation was made to effectively deal with the Sudanese refugees. Foster families and their children (especially) were not well prepared for the cultural diversity. Churches and voluntary organizations were ill-prepared to cater for their spiritual and physical needs. Employers were not sensitized to the cultural ways, time notions, and work ethic of the Sudanese refugees.

It is hoped that through the results of this study the Refugee Services agency and the many voluntary Social Service agencies will enhance their orientation efforts with future refugees. The local community should likewise be informed and educated about the Sudanese refugees' culture, way of life, and traumatic experiences. This writer is convinced that a more informed public will be a more compassionate and understanding public.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

The Complete List of First Stage Focus Group Questions

(Address: Expectations; New Family Experiences, transition issues, supportive services)

Warm Up:
How long have you been here?
Where do your Michigan families live?
What was the best thing that has happen to you since you've been in the greater Lansing area?

Expectations:
When you first knew you were coming to the US, what did you think would happen?
What did you hope for the most?
Now that you are here, what do you want to accomplish more than anything else?
How important is school or education? How important is work?
Do you know about racism in the US? What does it mean to you?
Do you think this racism with effect you?

Transition issues:
How important is being with other Sudanese youth that you knew before?
Are you able to be with other Sudanese enough?
How important is learning English?
Do you have enough opportunities to speak your own language? Is that important?
Is American culture very different from what you expected? How?
What is the most difficult thing about being in the US or coming to the US.
When things are hard, how do you cope with that?
What helps the most when things are hard?
What is the scariest thing that you face in your life here?
Where do you feel safe?

Services issues:
Who do you talk with when you need information about life in America?
What kind of assistance have you received from Refugee Services since you arrived in the US?
Are there topics that you would like to see discussed in future "activity nights."

Family Experiences (for minors):
What is it like to live with an American family?
What did you think it would be like to live with an American family?
How is it different then you imagined?
Do you feel close to the family you are with or with others who
have been friends to you?
Do you feel different from the family you live with?
How does the family help you the most?
Do the families you live with have other children? Do you feel accepted in the family?

Appendix B

The Second Stage Focus Group Directive Comments and Questions

These questions should be introduced by talking about following up on previous discussions with them, and getting some more insights about their experiences before, and after adjustment here in the US. Cut down the Africa questions to three.

Questions

1. What has been your most significant accomplishments since you came to the US? What do you feel good about?
2. I would like to ask you about your experiences in Ethiopia. You were all very young then, separated from your families and living in a strange place. Were there adults there who helped you, or did you have to take care of yourselves?
3. When you had to leave Ethiopia, and you went back to Sudan and later to Kenya, did you get help from adults during that part of your journey?
4. Did you receive help from the UN or from other agencies?
5. I understand that when you were in Kakuma, the minor group lived in one part of the camp and some adult caregivers provided some help, is that true? What did the caregivers do in Kakuma to help you?
6. Most of you went to school in Kakuma. Did the education you received in Kakuma prepare you for going to school in America, or was it difficult to adjust to school in America after going to school in Africa?

7. Most of you have been here for a year now. Some of the "Lost Boys/Sudanese refugees/guys/youth have probably adjusted better or more easily to life in America than others. For those who seem to be adjusting well to life in America, what is it about them, their skills, background, age or their personalities that helped them to adapt/do well here?
8. From time to time, many people feel unhappy or disappointed. When you have talked with other Sudanese guys/refugees who were unhappy or disappointed since coming to the US, what has caused them to feel that way?
9. Some people who have come to live in the [mid-American] area have left. Why did they leave? Do you know? Do you think you will stay here for a long time or not? Why would you leave this area?
10. I have heard that many of the Sudanese youth who came as you did get requests to send money back to Africa. Has that forced you to make difficult choices between saving money to meet your expenses in the US, or sending money back to help people in Africa? If so, how do you decide what to do?
11. If you had to say or ask one thing that would help you now, and you could get that thing from a person or an agency/service, what do you need the most help with?

Appendix C

Sudanese Refugees Consent Form (Majors)

Dear Participant,

We are asking you to be a part of a study we are doing to learn about the experiences and needs of Sudanese refugee youth in Lansing.

Project Information. The Sudanese Youth Adjustment Project is a collaborative study involving Michigan State University, Lutheran Social Services of Michigan, and Catholic Social Services of Lansing/St.Vincent Home, Inc. The purpose of the project is to assess the adjustment and service needs of Sudanese youth who are resettling in the Lansing MI area. In an effort to gather the most useful information, we are planning to collect data from newly settled Sudanese youth, foster families, caseworkers, and teachers. Information from each of these sources will be useful for understanding how the Sudanese refugees are adapting to life in the United States, and for determining how well services provided by Lutheran Social Services and Catholic Social Services are meeting the needs of Sudanese Youth and their foster families. Along with Catholic and Lutheran Social Services and Ingham County 4-H, the project also offers regular recreational and educational activities where the Sudanese youth can socialize with other Sudanese youth.

You can participate in the activities with no obligation to participate in the research. Participation in this research part of the project will take about 90 minutes (1 ½ hour) of your time. You will be asked to participate in a focus group discussion and to complete several questionnaires. In the small discussion group you will be asked about your feelings about school/work, resettlement, foster families (if you live with one), health issues, your satisfaction with your new home, personal and provided supports. An interpreter will be present in these groups of 6-10 persons. Some of you may be asked to participate in a second group at a later date. The questionnaires ask you about your daily activities, psychological and physical health, and about your strengths. If you do decide to participate in the research, you can refuse to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable, and you can stop participating in the research at any time.

Refreshments (pizza, sandwiches, beverages etc.,) will be served at the focus group sessions. We appreciate your time and participation.

Confidentiality. The focus group sessions will be audio and videotaped for the purposes of accurately recording the discussion. We will only ask your first names on tape in order to protect your privacy. Several other steps will be taken to help ensure your rights to privacy, These tapes will be protected in a locked room at the University. Access to the tapes will be limited to the research team or for educational purposes which may include audio clips or portions of the video to be used in classroom instruction or conference presentations of research findings. Your privacy will protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. You should also be aware that if you report ongoing child abuse we must by law report it to the proper authorities. As a participant you have the right ask questions and to leave the group at any time or refuse to answer a question that makes you uncomfortable. Your individual responses to questions will not be shared with other participants in the study such as caseworkers, foster parents, or teachers.

Benefits. We hope this work will benefit you in several ways. First that the activities will provide positive experiences with other Sudanese youth and offer some additional information on living in the Lansing community and in the US. We also intend for this research project to inform Lutheran Social Services and Catholic Social Services so that they can provide high quality services to Sudanese refugees. Finally, we hope to begin the process of documenting the very important story of the youth from Sudan and your struggles and successes. Should you have any questions or wish to speak with any investigator associated with the project please contact Dr. Deborah Johnson at 353-6617. You may also contact Dr. David Wright of the MSU Human Subjects Committee, UCRHIS at (517) 355-2180 at MSU Human Subjects Committee, UCRHIS.

We appreciate your willingness to join us and hope that you enjoy the discussion. We are looking forward to learning from your experiences and perspectives.

CONSENT

I have read the above letter seeking my permission to be included in the study on Sudanese Youth Project. I realize my participation is voluntary and that I may decide not to participate in the study. I am also aware that all information I provide in this study (with the exception of information about ongoing child abuse) will be kept confidential and that my name will not be included in any written formation obtained.

_____

Printed Name

_____

Participant Signature Date

Appendix D

Introductory Letter to Foster Parents to Recruit "Minors"

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF
HUMAN ECOLOGY
Department of
Family and Child Ecology
Michigan State University
107 Human Ecology
East Lansing, Michigan
48824-1030
517/ 355-7680
FAX: 517/ 432-2953

October 8, 2001

Dear Foster Parents:

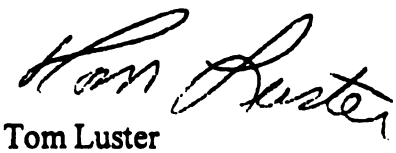
This letter is intended to introduce Alan Martin, Graduate Research Assistant at Michigan State University. Alan is working for me on a research project to study the adjustment of Sudanese youth, known as the "Lost Boys", to life in the United States. This project is jointly sponsored by Michigan State University, Lutheran Social Services of Michigan, and Catholic Social Services of Lansing/St. Vincent Home, Inc. You may remember receiving a letter that explains the research from Christine Rehagen, Program Director at Lutheran Social Services.

Alan is visiting the homes of foster families to talk with the youth about their interest in participating in the study. Any information that he receives either from you or from the youth will be kept confidential to the maximum extent allowed by law.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me at (517) 432-3323 or to call Laura Bates, research manager, at (517) 353-6617, ext 115. You may also contact me by e-mail at luster@msu.edu.

Thank you for your assistance with this project.

Sincerely,



Tom Luster
Professor

Appendix E

Participant Trace & Demographic Data Sheet

Name _____ Age _____ Male ___ Female ___

Street Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Home Telephone number _____

Which agency helped you resettle in Lansing? (Please check one):

Catholic Social Services ____ Lutheran Social Services ____

Do you live in a foster home or an independent living apartment? (Please check one):

In a foster home ____ In an independent living apartment ____

If you live with foster parents, what is their name? _____

Do any of your sisters or brothers live with you? Yes ___ No ____ If yes, how many? ____

Do any of your cousins live with you? Yes ___ No ___ If yes, how many? _____

To what tribe do you belong?

Dinka ___ Nuer ___ Shilluk ___ Didinga ___ Uduk ___ Mora ___

Do you have a job? Yes ___ No ___ If yes, what hours do you work? _____ to _____.

When would you be able to meet with an interviewer about the research?
(Please check all times that you can meet):

Monday Morning _____ Afternoon _____ Between 5 and 8 in the evening _____

Tuesday Morning _____ Afternoon _____ Between 5 and 8 in the evening _____

Wednesday Morning _____ Afternoon _____ Between 5 and 8 in the evening _____

Thursday Morning _____ Afternoon _____ Between 5 and 8 in the evening _____

Friday Morning _____ Afternoon _____ Between 5 and 8 in the evening _____

Saturday Morning _____ Afternoon _____

Appendix F

UCRIHS Initial IRB Application Approval

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

Initial IRB Application Approval

January 11, 2005

To: Tom Luster
13 G Human Ecology
Msu

Re: **IRB # 04-968** Category: EXPEDITED 2-5
Approval Date: January 7, 2005
Expiration Date: January 6, 2006

Title: INITIAL PERCEPTIONS OF THE FULFILLMENT OF HUMAN NEEDS: THE CASE OF THE SUDANESE REFUGEES IN MID-AMERICA

The University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) has completed their review of your project. I am pleased to advise you that **your project has been approved.**

Waiver of consent for use of existing data.

The committee has found that your research project is appropriate in design, protects the rights and welfare of human subjects, and meets the requirements of MSU's Federal Wide Assurance and the Federal Guidelines (45 CFR 46 and 21 CFR Part 50). The protection of human subjects in research is a partnership between the IRB and the investigators. We look forward to working with you as we both fulfill our responsibilities.

Renewals: UCRIHS approval is valid until the expiration date listed above. If you are continuing your project, you must submit an ***Application for Renewal*** application at least one month before expiration. If the project is completed, please submit an ***Application for Permanent Closure***.

Revisions: UCRIHS must review any changes in the project, prior to initiation of the change. Please submit an ***Application for Revision*** to have your changes reviewed. If changes are made at the time of renewal, please include an ***Application for Revision*** with the renewal application.

Problems: If issues should arise during the conduct of the research, such as unanticipated problems, adverse events, or any problem that may increase the risk to the human subjects, notify UCRIHS promptly. Forms are available to report these issues.

Please use the IRB number listed above on any forms submitted which relate to this project, or on any correspondence with UCRIHS.

Good luck in your research. If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at 517-355-2180 or via email at UCRIHS@msu.edu. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Peter Vasilenko, Ph.D.
UCRIHS Chair

c: Alan Martin
2323 Barritt St. Lansing, MI 48912

OFFICE OF
RESEARCH ETHICS AND STANDARDS
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