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The Acculturation of Sudanese Refugees in Maryville, Tennessee:

Has Self-Sufficiency Been Achieved?

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A thesis

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Sociology

East Tennessee State University

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In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Sociology

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by

Caitlin T.S. Teaster

December 2010

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Dr. Leslie McCallister, Chair

Dr. Lindsey King

Dr. Melissa Schrift

Keywords: Sudanese, Acculturation, Self Sufficiency, Refugee

## ABSTRACT

The Acculturation of Sudanese Refugees in Maryville, Tennessee:

Has Self-Sufficiency Been Achieved?

by

Caitlin T.S. Teaster

In 2000, a small group of refugees from Sudan were sponsored by three local churches in Maryville, Tennessee. The churches worked with the Bridge Organization in order to orchestrate the refugees' departure from Africa to Maryville. At the time of their sponsorship, it was believed that the Sudanese population in Maryville would be self-sufficient within two years of arrival. This study uses one-on-one, open-ended interviews and a paper-pencil questionnaire with the Sudanese population and a focus group with the American sponsors to assess the extent that the Sudanese refugee population in Maryville has become self-sufficient. While individual success depends on multitude of variables, the results indicate that in general, the Sudanese community is still struggling with American norms and culture, and, as a result, has not become self-sufficient.

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to three women: one who gave me her strength when I had none of my own, one who showed me that even through hard times you must own your strength or it will be taken from you, and one who smiles even when the pain of life tries to write its frown upon her face – you are the strongest people (male or female) I have ever met... Thank you Angela, Julia, and Mama.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend the greatest gratitude to my true friend, Victor Chol, who has lived the story I am merely attempting to tell. Without his help and endless hours of support, this thesis would not be possible. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, my dearest friend.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

There are over 42 million people who have been forcibly removed from their home and are living as refugees across the world (UNHCR 2009). In 2004, the United States (US) alone received over 75,000 applications requesting refugee status. Over half, 52,835 persons were granted refugee status and brought to the US.

In 1980, the first systematic procedures for accepting refugees were implemented and named the Refugee Act of 1980. This act encompassed both asylum seekers and refugees. The main difference between the two is that a person seeking refugee status is applying outside of the US, whereas, asylum seekers are within the US at the time of processing their application. While exact numbers are subject to change, the US places a ceiling on the number of refugees admitted from different countries (ORR 2010). The US, on average, grants refugee status to 30,000 people from Africa, 8,500 people from East Asia, 13,000 people from Europe, 3,500 people from Latin America/Caribbean, and 3,00 people from the Near East/South Asia. The US has an unallocated reserve for 12,000 individuals (Rytina 2005). The region that contributes the most refugees to the US is Africa (ORR 2010).

Due to the amount of violence and war in Sudan, Africa, many Sudanese are searching for safety. In 2000, several families and individuals from Southern Sudan were granted refugee status, and sponsored by churches around the US. Maryville, Tennessee, was one of the American cities that sponsored these refugees. Approximately 70 Sudanese refugees were placed in Maryville, Tennessee.

The Sudanese population in Maryville has become an established community; however, their collective and individual level of acculturation has yet to be assessed. This study serves as

exploratory research in an attempt to understand and evaluate the self-sufficiency of the Sudanese refugees in Maryville, TN.

The concept of self-sufficiency needs to be defined. Unfortunately, there is not one inclusive definition. In Maryville, there are three main groups with an interest in Sudanese self-sufficiency. Each group has unique opinions about what self-sufficiency entails. The organization, Bridge, which orchestrates the Sudanese migration to the US, states that they will provide assistance for the first six months. While not elaborating on what the services are, Bridge does claim to “provide services to insure that the new arrivals’ living conditions are safe and sanitary” (BRIDGE 2010). Children five years and older must be enrolled in school, adults will have fair and full employment, and the family will have access to medical care.

The churches who worked with Bridge to sponsor the Sudanese refugees feel more responsible for the Sudanese’s success. In general, they feel that the adults should be able to speak and read English at least at an eighth grade level so that they are able to fill out forms. The adults should also have permanent employment, insurance, and housing. Children should be enrolled in school and provided with proper nutrition, clothing, and medical care (Turner 2009).

The Sudanese thoughts of self-sufficiency vary even more from their sponsoring agencies. The Sudanese view self-sufficiency as living in a home they own, not public housing. Having a job is desired; however, they wish to find permanent employment with an established company rather than through a temporary service. Speaking and reading English fluently is vital. Achieving citizenship is very important to the Sudanese as well.

For the purpose of this research, if the community is to be defined as self-sufficient, then they must not be living in public housing or depending on food stamps and/or Tennessee Care (TN Care). Depending on government resources does not imply self-sufficiency. Moving away

from receiving funding from local churches may be seen as an improvement for the Sudanese; however, it may simply be the result of waned interest in the Sudanese by the sponsoring churches. Therefore, the overarching research question is are the Sudanese in Maryville self-sufficient.

In order to determine this, the researcher designed an open-ended interview guide that was administered to the Sudanese population that focused on employment, education, general feelings about life in America, and their hopes for their children if they were parents. A focus group was conducted with Americans who worked with the Sudanese population at Adult Education and who worked on the church committee that sponsored the refugees. Questions asked in the focus group surrounded the participant's perceptions of how the Sudanese were acclimating to life in Maryville.

Bridge was contacted for an interview but did not respond to phone calls or emails. Therefore, they became much less of a focus in this research.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF CURRENT LITERATURE

#### *Sudan: A Brief History*

Colonized by the British in 1899, Sudan is the 10th largest nation in the world and is home to over 34.5 million people (Arabic German Consulting 1999). In the early nineteenth century Sudan served as a passageway to the Mediterranean (Mitropoltski 2004). With its large oil deposits, the Nile River, and its ideal location next to Egypt, Sudan was quickly seen as an asset for the British Empire and taken possession of. Prior to colonization, Sudan's population was mostly nomadic. It is still home to over 400 diverse ethnicities (Cultural 2009). In fact, aside from open political borders that allowed passage to and from neighboring states, Sudan did not restrict its ethnic and religious borders. The state operated under a variety of animist, Christian, and Muslim traditions.

The empirical West worked to create a subservient population that would serve to increase the wealth of the British Empire. In order to accomplish this in a nation composed of a multitude of tribal populations that encompassed a variety of ethnicities and religions, Britain worked to create a population of blended ethnicities. Creating populations that were not solely Dinka or Ja'alín, for example, (Global Security n.d.) allowed for stronger British control because there was less tribal loyalty. Due to the tribes' endogamous tradition, the new blended ethnicities created political turmoil within tribes. Many Sudanese tribes were ill equipped to deal with both the cultural and tribal consequences. This ultimately eradicated pre-colonial ways of life and restructured the interaction of tribes. After World War II when Egypt became an independent nation, it became clear to the British that independence would be sought by the Sudanese population. Therefore, their tactics changed and measures were taken to draw distinct lines

between the tribes again. After de-colonization, the nation of diverse religious beliefs that tended to peacefully co-exist all but disappeared (Mitropolitski 2004). The south had always been afflicted with inner-tribal conflict, and to gain power, the Muslim north provided arms to continue the discord in the south (USID Feb. 2010). This allowed for Northern Sudan to gain control over the government as the British left. By gaining control, the Muslim north was able to dominate the south (CIA 2009, Encyclopedia of Nations n.d.).

### *Sudan's 1<sup>st</sup> Civil War*

By 1956, Sudan as a whole gained independence from Britain; however, ethnic-based conflict only increased. After years of colonization, Sudan's government and economic base was located in the north. The stronghold of the British-ruled, Muslim-populated north was questioned and disliked by the Christian south. In Sudan, a professed democratic state, the Muslim majority enforced Islamic law. As a result, drinking alcohol became a crime punishable by lashes and amputations. This became viewed as a law directed towards the Christian south due to Islamic rules and regulations against drinking (New Encyclopedia n.d.). The Islamic law was viewed by the Christian south as discriminatory, and, while fighting started in 1955, by 1958 the south was calling for independence from the north. The south wanted to be free from the social, cultural, political, and religious domination of the Islamic north.

The first civil war revolved mainly around political and religious discord. When the north formed the majority in the government, by the 1980s they had enough power to institute a more strict religious law, the Shar'ia Law. As a result, the law replaced English as an official language in the south with Arabic (CIA 2009). This war continued for 20 years. In 1972, the first peace agreement was reached between the Sudanese Government (commonly thought of as Northern Sudan) and Southern Sudan's, South Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM).

### *Sudan's 2<sup>nd</sup> Civil War*

Peace in the region would not last for long. After what many southern Sudanese felt to be a rigged election, a coup broke out in 1976 (Arabic German Consulting 1999), and by 1983, a second civil war tore through the land (CIA 2009). Sudan's second civil war continued for over another 20 years. While the first civil war was motivated mainly by political and religious reasons, the second civil war was exacerbated by the environmental conditions (CIA 2009). During this time, according to South Sudan's Liberation Movement, over 2 million people were murdered as a result of war or perished due to war-related activities or famine. In addition, over 4 million people were displaced and now live in refugee camps or abroad as political refugees. Many of Southern Sudan's refugees have found themselves in squatter camps outside of major northern cities, far away from their native land and culture. They traveled north in search of jobs, food, and water (Cultural 2010; Kevane and Gray 1995; USID Feb. 2010).

### *Migration as Both a Result and Cause of War*

Just as there are many factors that contribute to the development of war, there are many reasons that motivate migration; several factors are mutually exclusive and can explain both war and migration. The movement of people is associated with the effects of war (during and after) while people are fleeing for safety (Rogge 1989). Due to the violence, drought, and tribal conflict, Sudan has experienced a mass migration into the major cities. Over 5 million people now live in the city of Khartoum (Cultural 2009).

Often, migration is directly associated with war. This is certainly the case in Sudan. "Sudan is a microcosm of all the tragedies of Africa's massive flows of refugees who move against a backdrop of civil war and famine" (Wood 1994: 624). Not only is the conflict in Sudan responsible for over 400 million internally displaced persons and 420,000 external refugees, but

it is also host to many refugees from neighboring nations such as Ethiopia and Uganda that have experienced their own civil wars. It is estimated that several hundreds of thousands of refugees from other nations make Sudan their home. Mass migration into an area causes a break in the social equilibrium and results in violence.

*Economics of Climate and Natural Resources: An Impetus for Civil War*

While political, religious, and economic reasons are responsible for much of the violence in Sudan, environmental conditions contributed significantly to Sudan's second civil war and to further destabilize Sudan (CIA 2009). Michael Kevane and Leslie Gray conducted research on the collapse of the Sudanese village, Kordofan. Through their case study of the native village they concluded that "civil war, drought, refugees, adverse international sanctions and national mismanagement" were instrumental in the delegitimization of the local government (1995: 273). Because the local community of Kordofan is symbolic as a microcosm of the greater Sudan, Kevane and Grey's research may offer some insight into the collapse of the Sudanese nation. During colonization, Northern Sudan became the political and economic strong-hold. As the economic base, the Euro-economic development of the north was far greater than in the south. This continued to develop as a result of environmental factors, such as drought. Negative consequences are directly associated with drought. This, combined with the political instability associated with de-colonization, leaves a nation vulnerable to migratory flight and war. The situation in Sudan was intensified by a continuous drought that plagued that nation for 30 years, only to finally begin to abate in 1985.

As a semi-arid nation, Sudan is vulnerable to the changes in rainfall. Not only is rainfall becoming scarcer, it is also becoming much less predictable. In the village of Kordofan, studies show a steady decline in rainfall since the 1960s (Kevane and Grey 1995). Through analyzing

data collected by the Sudan Meteorological Department, Mike Hulme, Senior Research Associate of Climate Research at the University of East Anglia, has discovered that rainfall has not only declined, but that rainfall patterns have shifted (1990). The northern region is experiencing the most significant decrease in rain, whereas Western Sudan, commonly referred to as the Darfur region, has experienced the least amount of variability (Hulme 1990).

While it may seem obvious that a decrease in rainfall would have adverse effects on a nation, it tends to have more serious consequences in Sudan and other developing nations. Sudan depends heavily on agriculture and horticulture for survival. The US Committee for Refugees (1999, n.p.) writes that:

Cows are the centerpiece of diet, commerce, and religion. Families rely on cows for nutritious milk and meat, for bartering to gain money and goods, for dowries to arrange marriages, and for sacrificial killing to honor gods and ancestors. Cows are a source of dignity and self-esteem for most Dinka men.

Cows, as other living creatures, are dependent on water. Without adequate rainfall, a nation that is built on the cow is doomed for failure.

The drought of the late 1970s was a major impetus in the dissolution of the original peace agreement between the north and south because southern Sudanese tribes began to become increasingly more violent towards each other. Sudan is composed of subsistence farmers. The Sudanese survival depends on agriculture and horticulture. Four out of five people in Sudan are farmers (Cultural 2009; n.p.). It was not uncommon for neighboring tribes to raid a village for grain. In Jonglei and Juba, the Lou Nuer planned a retaliation attack against the Murel because the tribe raided their cattle and abducted women and children. A Lou Nuer female participated in the attack because the Murel stole her grain and abducted her children and husband. She said, “I



have no more reason to live” (Human Rights Watch 2009). The north intensified these attacks by providing weapons to different tribes in order to encourage southern tribal discord and violence. The brief period of peace during the 1970s ended as drought consumed the state and northern politics used the famine as an instrumental tool in maintaining power.

One can draw parallels between war in Sudan and the drought. While post-colonization is a period filled with uncertainty and power struggles, devastation from the drought helped to further drive a wedge between the north and south. The south is also resource rich in oil. And, it was through oil that Sudan’s Islamic Front had hoped to gain power. In 1970, Jaafar al-Nimairi came to power. He was sympathetic to the communist block and the political discord of Egypt. He modeled the Sudanese government after socialist and communist regimes. Nimairi worked to create a socialist Sudan. Interestingly enough, he granted large amounts of freedom to the south. However, by 1980, Nimairi’s affections to the socialist world turned sour. After a coup that tried to remove him from power, Nimairi had many communist supporters executed. He then aligned himself with the Persian Gulf. The Persian Gulf, mainly Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates, came to Nimairi’s aid. They provided countless loans, military aid, and “outright financial grants” and flooded Sudan with income through various business arrangements, including purchasing Sudan’s oil (Fatal Transaction 2008). As a result of politics, Sudan became the Persian Gulf’s largest foreign supplier of oil during the 1980s. Nimairi slowly restricted the south’s freedom to support economic gain for Sudan and created the National Islamic Front. Unfortunately, by the 1980s Sudan had not experienced much economic growth. The living situations of the Sudanese, especially Southern Sudanese had deteriorated to deplorable levels. The second civil war broke out (New Encyclopedia n.d.).

*Sudan's Current Situation: The National Islamic Front (NIF)*

The National Islamic Front (NIF) controls Sudan's government. As the British orchestrated mixing of tribes, the NIF also used this method to maintain continued control over all of Sudan. The Islamic policies and methods have been especially disastrous in the south where the majority of the population is of Christian or animist beliefs. Islamic Sudan has traditionally been extremely inclusive. "Muslims don't know ethnic minorities, and ethnic minorities will disappear" (Kevane and Gray: 1995: 278). The idea is that Islamic culture becomes the thread that weaves people together. However, Islamic tradition does not simply include a faith; it imposes itself upon every facet of life. Therefore, enforcing Islamic tradition actually works to create an inclusive society by essentially exterminating different cultures. The NIF asserts that:

We [NIF] want Islam to judge our cases; we want Islam to judge our economic activities...we want Islam to be practiced in everyday life, not just inside the house...we don't want it to be only in a corner of the life of the family. We want it to be the core of life... [for] the whole society and the whole Sudan and the whole Muslim world. That is the only difference between the NIF and the [rest of] Sudanese society as it has existed since independence (Kevane and Grey 1995: 278)

While the spread of Islam in Sudan can be presented as a tool for unity, it actually requires tribes to give up traditions. Because the NIF controls the Sudanese military, much of the violence during the past two civil wars and the genocide in Darfur have been the result of the military forcing tribes to follow Islamic law. Some of the violence can also be attributed to the economic consequences that often accompany the loss of the traditional marketplace. However, according

to the Cultural Orientation Resource Center, Sudan's government is responsible for the devastation of war (Cultural 2010).

*Islam, Gender, and the Economy: A Case Study*

In Bireka, a small village in the Kordofan province west of Khartoum, social, political, and economic changes have been documented that are the result of the Islamic invasion in the South. Like most other villages in Sudan, there are strong differences between groups within the village. The differences work to create a social order and hierarchy. In Bireka, there are two specific ethnic groups: the Burgo and the Hausa. The Burgo, while an ethnic tribe, is more closely affiliated with the Muslim cause than the Hausa tribe. In Bireka, the ethnic Hausas' tended to have more political and economic clout because they owned the land (Kevane and Gray 1995).

In Southern Sudan, including the village of Bireka, women often worked by the main road brewing and selling tea and beer and earned a substantial amount of income (Kevane and Gray 1995). Often women became the primary breadwinners for the family by means of selling beer. Interestingly, under traditional conditions, women were in complete control of the money they earned and were not required to turn it over to their husbands or fathers. They could spend it as they saw fit. As a result, women became economically independent. However, economic independence did not bring personal autonomy. Women did not find liberation within the home regardless of their independent wealth. Men were still responsible for arranging the woman's marriage. Women, especially in the south, are an economic resource for men because there is a bride price of several cows, the traditional form of currency in the South. As the NIF worked its way south, it found a great playing hand in Bireka. Because the Burgo were economically less successful than the Hausa and followed certain Islamic traditions, the NIF was able to persuade

the Burgo to collaborate. As a result, Islamic rules and governance were instrumental in changing the norms of Bireka. The changes were especially dramatic when focusing on gender. Islamic Shar'ia law, a fundamentalist Islamic law, has become a legal system. Under this law women are treated poorly (HRW 2009). In the specific case of Bireka, women were not allowed to work, much less sell beer, and were stripped of their autonomy. One woman in Bireka continued to sell beer. As a result, under the Shar'ia law, she was severely whipped. Few women went back to selling at the roadside and market place. The economic deterioration of the roadside market seeped into the everyday economic situation of the men. By conforming to Shar'ia law, the reduction in income generated by the women hurt the village. At the expense of economic welfare, Islamic law as interpreted by the village in Sudan was established.

#### *Peace after Two Civil Wars*

In 2005, a second peace agreement, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed between the north and the south (CIA 2009). However, tensions are currently (2010) beginning to mount. After the CPA was signed, borders were drawn between the north and south in an attempt and with the hopes of minimizing tension. However, the north is “dependant” on the south (NY Times 2007) because of southern Sudan’s oil deposits. The north attempted to draw borders that merge well into areas affiliated with the south. The most hotly contested area was Abyei, an area in the south with an abundance of oil reserves. Abyei has a mixed population of Muslims, Christians, and animists. As a result, both the north and south feel entitled to the state and the wealth it potentially could create. Tensions are continuing to rise over this area and the boundaries in general. By most estimates, if resource rich southern Sudan succeeds in becoming an independent nation, the north stands to lose billions of dollars (NY Times 2007). As dissenting emotions grow, the CPA is becoming more and more unstable. As a result, in

2010, southern Sudan refused to participate in the national election due to concerns over its legitimacy (NPR 2010).

### *International Attention on Sudan*

For 40 years, the Sudanese civil war and the genocide that resulted received limited coverage. As a result, the atrocities of war and famine that consumed Sudan went widely unnoticed by the international arena. Because the international community gained very little knowledge about the situation in Sudan, limited aid was given. After the coup in 1989, the limited amounts of international aid were pulled because Sudan became a risky investment. The nation of Sudan was left to flounder. The absolute dissolution of Sudan's economy may be the only feasible outcome for both Sudan and the global market economy (Sultan 2009). Sadly, in the views of some, the complete and utter destruction of Sudan's government and economy is the only way to rebuild the nation. During the first months of 1996, US diplomatic officials and personnel were removed from Sudan. As a result, Sudan became more unwilling to work with international agencies to pay back debts. The removal of American political workers from Sudan conveyed the message that there was little hope for political success in Sudan and raised questions about the safety of Americans in the area (Arabic German Consulting 1999: n.p.). The economic influence of the US was felt as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank began to distance themselves from Sudan. The US exercised a leading and active role in the creation of policies and positions regarding Sudan in these two institutions. The ensuing reduction of aid and support ostracized Sudan from the rest of the world. Kevane and Grey assessed that "the IMF and Work Bank have treated Sudan as an international pariah, taking the country further along the path to expulsion than any other recalcitrant debtor" (1995: 274).

However, international perceptions of Sudan changed following the 2001 terrorist attacks

in the US. The international world was sensitive to Islamic fundamentalism and became attuned to the religious violence in Sudan's eastern region of Darfur. When it became known that the Islamic north was persecuting the Christian and animist south, the international community became involved (Lynch 2009). In 2003, war erupted in the Darfur region of Sudan under similar circumstances as the two civil wars (Lynch 2009). Darfur has a varied ethnic population. The region has long suffered from religious and political tensions between the nomadic Arabs and Christian farmers. It is a commonly held belief by Christian farmers that the government provides preferential treatment to the Arab nomads. A common dispute revolves around grazing rights. By 2003, the Sudanese Liberation Army and the Justice and Equality (JEM) movement executed attacks on the government. As a result, the Islamic government funded militias, named Janjaweed, to wipe out the Christian Africans. Air raids would follow the on ground attacks by the Janjaweed. Over 200,000 Christian Africans have left for Chad and another 300,000 have died (BBC News 2009). Darfur has become known by the US as "the first genocide of the 21<sup>st</sup> century" (Morgan 2010).

### *The Role of the US*

While international attention has not constantly focused on the tensions in Sudan, the US has contributed a substantial amount of aid and resources to assist the Sudanese population. Since 2005, the US has donated over \$6 billion to Sudan. In 2004, the US became the largest food assistance donor to Sudan. US Agency for International Development (USID) has also implemented a multi-year plan to provide \$30 million in an effort to promote health and agricultural productivity (USID: Africa 2010). In 2005, Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick said that reconstruction efforts and humanitarian assistance provided by the US to Sudan would total \$1.7 billion (US Today 2005). By America's best estimates, access to

drinkable water for Darfur and southern Sudan is quite low; with only 44 percent of Darfur's population and 36 percent of Southern Sudan's population having access to potable water. USID estimates that for the current year, 2010, over 4.3 million southern Sudanese will need food assistance (USID 2010). A substantial amount of monetary resources are currently being contributed to Darfur; however, southern Sudan has not been entirely forgotten.

### *The "Lost Boys"*

During the second civil war in Sudan, thousands of young boys were away from their villages grazing cattle when their homes were pillaged. It is estimated that over 20,000 boys (and a few girls) escaped and walked for three months to Ethiopia (SLAGSA 2010). Once in Ethiopia, the young children, many who were no older than four, made a home in camps in Ethiopia along the Sudanese border. Four years after their arrival, war broke out in Ethiopia. The Sudanese government, in concert with the Ethiopian government, gave the Sudanese refugees 48 hours to leave Ethiopia. At the end of the 48 hours, those who were not yet able to cross the Gilo River (Nile River) were met with gun fire (Chol 2010). In an attempt to escape the onslaught of bullets, boys and young men jumped into the Gilo. "Those unable to swim were swept away in the turbulent currents. Others were eaten by crocodiles, attacked by hippo, or killed by enemy gunfire" (SLAGSA 2010).

Those who survived the river crossing spent approximately a year and a half living in the Sudanese bush on their way to the Kenyan refugee camp, Kakuma. Upon reaching Kakuma Refugee Camp, the young boys had become young men, and during that time walked over 1,000 miles (SLAGSA 2010). By 2001, the young men had become known to the world as the "Lost Boys," a play off of the characters in Peter Pan (Goffe 2004). And, 3,400 were offered refugee status by the US (Cultural 2009; Goffe 2004). American agencies worked with the government

to find sponsors for the “Lost Boys.” The boys ended up all over the US, some in Texas, Kansas, California, Massachusetts, and other states (Mylan 2008).

*“Lost Boys” – Escaping and Coming to the US*

The most common story about how the “Lost Boys” came to be revolves around pastoral traditions. It was said that the boys were out of the village grazing the cattle when the militias came through and pillaged their villages. As a result, mass numbers of boys were left without family and fled to Ethiopia for safety (SLAGVA 2010). Contrary to most of the research regarding the escape of the “Lost Boys,” one “Lost Boy” claimed that the villages were warned that the militias were coming and that the boys would be executed. He said that all the young boys were gathered up and the Sudanese Liberation Army soldiers and older men helped guide them to Ethiopia. The story was likened to that of Bible story of Moses.

*Bridge Refugee and Sponsorship Services, Maryville, Tennessee*

In general, private, non-profit organizations work with the US government on refugee admission and resettlement in the US (Zucker 1983). One such organization, Bridge Refugee and Sponsorship services (BRSS), located in Knoxville, Tennessee worked to resettle many of the “Lost Boys” from Sudan and other Sudanese refugees in Maryville, Tennessee, in 2001. Unfortunately, the researcher was not given access to the number of Sudanese refugees who were sponsored by Bridge Refugee and Sponsorship Services (BRSS). BRSS started out as a grassroots agency during the 1980s in Oak Ridge, Tennessee and was instrumental in sponsoring approximately 70 Sudanese refugees. Bridge Refugee and Sponsorship Services is the result of the efforts of two women, Barbara Mozingo and Sue Casaro-Hofer. After moving to Oak Ridge, TN, Mozingo realized that services for sponsoring and relocating refugees were not available. To fill this void she and Casaro-Hofer worked diligently to conscript the help of churches in the



area. Successfully garnering support from the Church World Ministry and the Episcopal Migration ministries, East Tennessee became an area that was receptive to the needs of individuals from devastated regions of the world. Mazingo, who realized that there was little in the way of opportunity and support for refugees in East Tennessee, developed BRSS, formerly called Bridge. The organization received support from the State of Tennessee through the Department of Human Services. Under the umbrella of hard work and community involvement, BRSS works to unite the community and churches in order to sponsor refugees and help provide people from ravaged areas with a new and promising beginning “to live safely and prosper in a free society” (Bridge 2002: n.p.).

BRSS operates under a strictly religious platform. Drawing on the support of religious institutions throughout the area, BRSS serves as a Christian entity. This motto comes from the Bible verse Matthew 25:35-40. It is as follows:

‘...for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you drink?...’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me’  
(Coogan 1991: 48 New Testament)

BRSS finds its calling and devotion in the resettlement objectives of the agency. Working to be a good disciple “under the name of the Lord,” BRSS works to develop an inclusive religious organization, thereby ensuring the success of the organization and increasing the number of people who the agency is able to sponsor. On the organization web page, all religions are

mentioned as a means for garnering support, "...for a reasonable expectation of success, we must have the assistance of churches, synagogues and mosques" (BRIDGE 2002).

The statistics for the agency are impressive. During the past 20 years, Bridge Refugee and Sponsorship Services has sponsored and resettled over 1,500 families. The organization works to provide relief to people around the world. Families from over 13 nations have benefited from the support of Bridge. The wide variety of nationalities served by the organization contributes to Bridge's success because it does not focus its efforts only on Christian nations. This helps garner support from a variety of religious denominations. Of the sponsored refugees many are from the nations of Bosnia, Burundi, Congo, Kosovo, Iran, Iraq, Poland, Romania, Sudan, Ukraine, [and] Viet Nam (BRIDGE 2002).

BRSS works as a recruiting agency to create a base of sponsoring churches and other religious-based groups. Essentially, BRSS works with the American government and international agencies to provide refugees with legal status and eventually bring them to US. The inner workings of how individuals are selected from refugee camps for sponsorship are a bit hazy; however, in the movie, *The "Lost Boys" of Sudan*, and from other personal interactions with refugee communities that the researcher has visited in Fiji, Africa, and Central America, the most common method is through a lottery system. It is Bridge Refugee and Sponsorship Services' mission to sponsor families; however, due to conditions in war-torn regions, many families are not intact.

Should a church decide to sponsor, it is expected to operate as a base for the family. To prepare for their upcoming responsibility, sponsors can attend a training offered by Bridge Refugee and Sponsorship Services. There is also unlimited access to a manual prepared by the agency to assist the church throughout its sponsorship process. The church members are

informed by Bridge at the beginning that they are only expected to work in depth with the sponsored refugees for a period of 90 days. After that period, if the church follows the recommendations of the agency, then the refugee family will not be in constant need of the church's support. The following excerpt from Bridge Refugee and Sponsorship Services explains what is expected from sponsoring churches.

Table 1. Bridge Sponsorship

Sponsorship IS:	Sponsorship is NOT:
A moral commitment	Necessarily expensive (\$2,000 for a family of four)
A group commitment of about 250 hours	A permanent commitment (the term of sponsorship is 90 days)
Meeting the family at the airport	A legal commitment involving responsibility for debts or criminal activity
Setting up an apartment with basic furniture and house wares	A guarantee that the refugees will live according to the sponsors' wishes
Providing transportation until the refugees can drive or use the bus	
Introducing the family to the community	
Being a friend	

Source: BRIDGE 2010.

According to a sponsor, the application process is relatively simple (Turner 2009). BRSS acknowledges that this is a new experience for both the sponsors and the refugees. BRSS's website offers reassuring dedication to the sponsors and the refugees:

Bridge shepherds the family through the first six months of their new lives and provides services to insure that the new arrivals' living conditions are safe and sanitary; that families are in good health and that they have access to medical care; that all children over the age of five are enrolled in school; that the adults have fair and full employment: and that the family has sufficient information to make the cultural adjustments" (BRIDGE 2002).

In short, BRSS claims that it will provide the necessary support to churches and other sponsoring

agencies to ensure that the refugee population will be self-sufficient and well adjusted to their new life in a completely different culture that often operates under a completely different language than the refugee's native language. And, it claims that this can be done in six months. The website is visited by churches to field their interest in the sponsorship process and BRSS claims that the organization works to solidify the engagement of the church.

*Previous Experiences in the US with "Lost Boys"/Sudanese Family Resettlement*

While BRSS asserts that self-sufficiency can be achieved in six months, aid workers in the Kakuma Refugee Camp report that the transition to American society will be relatively difficult. There are four items that are necessary to address when dealing with the "Lost Boys" (and girls). They are:

1. Role of education in restoring power and in replacing parents
2. Belief that trust in God helped them escape
3. Desire to be educated so they can return to Sudan to help their people
4. Among girls, a resistance toward arranged marriages

(Cultural 2009; n.p.).

While the young men have received an education in the camp, women have not had the opportunity to learn English. In fact, those males and females residing at the Kakuma Refugee Camp have had more services and educational opportunities than those who remained in Sudan. Therefore, if the refugees are brought over as family units, i.e. not "Lost Boys," there is an even greater chance that both males and females have limited knowledge of the English language. According to the United States Convention on Refugees (USCR), "two generations of southern Sudanese children have not received education" (1999; n.p.).

Due to the interaction that the "Lost Boys" have had with western aid workers, their

ability to adjust to American life may be easier. Therefore, any cultural issues that the “Lost Boys” have had difficulty with, it is likely to be amplified by other Sudanese refugees. The main issues that aid workers have noticed is a misunderstanding of time management and a growing dependency on Western support services; however, there has also been the tendency for those to resist help.

[The Sudanese] are a proud and resourceful people. They know how to support themselves in normal times. Their lives have become a constant struggle against hunger and sickness because of 15 years of war have forced them from their farms, robbed them of precious cattle and seeds, and destroyed their traditional livelihood (USCR 1999; n.p.).

Regarding the “Lost Boys,” those who were deemed to be less than 18 years old have had the best luck in the US. Those over 18 were forced to start work immediately upon arrival to the US; however, their skills only qualified them for menial jobs. The younger “Lost Boys” were enrolled in school and were able to finish their education in the US. Those with even less education or English language skills have had an even more difficult time adjusting to American life. Unfortunately, those with less education tend to also be those with a family, often large in size, to support.

There has been a negative opinion regarding resettlement and sponsorship agencies among the Sudanese. Many have asserted that they have received little to no help or inadequate help from their sponsoring agencies (Mylan 2008). “Agencies don’t help us; when you come to the US you have to make it on your own. Everything they tell you in orientation is lies” said Peter, a “Lost Boy” who was settled in Houston, Texas (Mylan 2008). Many of those in the refugee camp and in Sudan believe that life in America is easy and that work is not necessary

(Mylan 2008). Samuel, a “Lost Boy” who now lives in California said, “America wasn’t paradise and it wasn’t as easy as they told you in the camps...Back in Africa they do not know how hard it can be here for us” (Goffe 2004; n.p.). A “Lost Boy” said regarding his new life in America, “There is no heaven on earth” (Mylan 2008).

### *Refugee Acculturation*

While successful local integration of a refugee community into a host country has at times proven to be successful, this is most likely to happen with the nation’s cultures are similar in culture, environment, and racial make-up (Berry et al. 1987). An example would be as the African states Tanzania and Botswana, who have both granted citizenship to their successful refugee population, often, integration is riddled with difficulties and complications that prolong the suffering of refugee populations while adding stress to host nations. Of the many African populations, the Sudanese have had an extremely difficult time with reintegration (enticing their population to return) as well as integrating refugees from other nations within their state. The Ethiopian refugees who settled in Eastern Sudan have failed, even with the assistance of Sudan’s government to develop agricultural settlements that garner a wage (Rogge 1989).

Uganda was the recipient of hundreds of Sudanese refugees. After the Sudanese government created the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission in an attempt to reintegrate their exiled natives, only the highly educated Sudanese refugees in Uganda returned to their native homeland. The less educated preferred to stay in the new land based on their success in Uganda. Those Sudanese refugees who were younger or had little to no formal education adapted remarkably well to Ugandan life even though they entered into a different and ethnic homogenous population. Rogge proposed that these Sudanese adapted so well because there was

such little in the way of formal education and development of Sudanese culture for these specific Sudanese refugees in Sudan as a result of ages of civil wars. As a result, the Sudanese refugees in Uganda adapted to Ugandan culture as their own, whereas the highly educated were aware of Sudan's history and felt a connection to their culture and homeland (1989).

Repatriation to Africa has been a popular option for Western nation-states that have received African refugees. In 1972, rather than granting citizenship to refugees from African nations, the Addis Ababa Accord was created and enforced the repatriation of 2.5 unwilling refugees. Under this agreement Southern Sudanese exiled communities abroad were repatriated to Sudan in less than two years (Goffe 2004). However, since the year 2000, Sudanese refugees have been brought to the US with the government's intentions of permanent residency.

In order to accomplish successful acculturation into a new community, there is a great need to minimize acculturation stress. Berry, Kim, Minde, and Mok define acculturation stress:

To be a generalized physiological and psychological state of the organism, brought about by the experience of stressors in the environment, and which requires some reduction, through a process of coping until some satisfactory adaption to the new situation is achieved (Berry et al. 1987).

Most immigrants experience some level of anxiety, depression, confusion, and the feeling of being marginalized. Fortunately, there are three predictors of acculturative stress that can be used in assessing the potential success of an individual and/or community. The first and most influential predictor of the level of stress migrants will feel is their education level. The more highly educated the person/population, the less likely the person is to experience high levels of stress. A second predictor of acculturative stress is how the individual actually feels about the acculturation process. Does the individual possess a desire to unite with his/her new community

and adapt new customs and traditions, or, is he or she resistant to this form of change. The reasons for the migration will have a large impact on how willing a person is to adapt to a new culture. And, finally, the third predictor of acculturative stress is the amount of contact the migrant/migrant community has with the host community. While it may seem counter-intuitive, those who interact heavily with the new community tend to suffer less from acculturative stress. Berry et al. point out that there is certainly a link between education levels and the amount of interaction a migrant is likely to have with their host community (Berry et al. 1987).

There have been several problems associated with the resettlement of refugees within the US. Refugee sponsorship and resettlement is a fragmented division of the US government that has merged with private organizations that work to sponsor refugees. There is not a clear established view on what refugees are entitled to. As a result, there is no black and white criterion that private organizations must adhere to when sponsoring a refugee. Views on refugee entitlement range all the way from the belief of compensatory social assistance to the belief that no additional help is required past admission to the US. Unfortunately, there is not a clear middle of the road and as a result, refugees are provided with the resources that their sponsoring agency (not the US government establishes as sufficient) (Zucker 1983).



## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

The goal of this study was to gather a detailed understanding of how individuals who came from Sudan have adjusted to life after six years of living in the US. The researcher was interested in finding out if the population in general has become self-sufficient. The researcher defines self-sufficiency as either steady employment that provides a living wage or full-time enrollment in college. Self-sufficiency means that the population is not dependent on public housing or government assistance. Language skills and an understanding of American culture are also essential factors in self-sufficiency. Rather than focusing on the overarching generalization of refugee communities in the US, the researcher was more interested in specific, detailed accounts of the lives of a few. Qualitative research is much more conducive to the goal of this study. Often, qualitative research is used when there is relatively limited information about the topic of study (Ambert 1995). Qualitative research serves as an exploratory tool by allowing the researcher to discover the topic in its entirety without focusing on very specific topics. After substantial exploratory research has been conducted, then qualitative research may give way to quantitative methods. While there have been many studies conducted on the acculturation of refugees, there is limited information specifically about the Sudanese population in Maryville.

#### *Personal Interviews, Questionnaires, and Focus Groups*

Qualitative studies have several advantages over quantitative studies. First, while standardized information could be gathered from a quantitative study, it is likely that the study would be unable to elicit a wide-ranging database of emotions and feelings. Basic statistics such as income, number of household members, and jobs could be assessed through such a questionnaire; however, acculturation and success of a population is not limited to economic and

demographic factors. Second, “Qualitative research seeks depth rather than breadth” (Ambert 1995: 880). Personal interviews can be longer, thus more expansive than a quantitative survey (Nuckols 1964; Yin 2003). In fact, interview respondents give more detailed answers to open ended questions than do those who complete a survey (Glesne 2006; O’Dell 1962). Research conducted with a foreign population is often most successful through a qualitative approach because it allows the participants a voice (Merton 1946).

However, Nuckols, who conducted both interviews and mail surveys to document owners of life insurance policies, has argued that the amount of information gathered from both qualitative and quantitative studies are similar (1964). Nuckols uncovered several interesting benefits of administering a quantitative survey when dealing with private information. He found initially that those who responded via mail instead of in an interview were more likely to give correct accounts of their life insurance. He further found that those who participated in face-to-face interviews were less likely to admit to embarrassing behavior or opinions (Nuckols 1964).

While Nuckols promoted quantitative research, he divided his participants between interview and survey groups based on their education levels and whether or not they had assistance at home. He asserted, “Whether a mail panel ever could include a representative segment of the very low education level is problematical” (Nuckols 1964: 13). Those with lower educations, specifically less than a high school diploma, had difficulty with the mail survey. The current study is compounded by the fact that not only do most of the participants not have a high school diploma, but also they are not fluent in the English language.

However, while a qualitative approach seemed more appropriate, there are several complications with this method over quantitative. “The expression of derogatory opinions is embarrassing and therefore less likely to occur in the presence of an interviewer than in a

response to a mail questionnaire” (Nuckols 1964; 15). I found this to be a correct assumption during my research. The Sudanese population on every occasion except two became quiet when they were asked about Bridge Sponsorship and Resettlement agency, the organization that sponsored them to come to the US. One woman, who had developed a friendship with the researcher, was very vocal about her displeasure with the agency. Another issue that the researcher ran into was when assessing how “well” they were doing. Many would claim that they were doing great, when in fact they had been out of work for over a year.

Using an informant was a good way to combat this problem. Merton (1964) suggests that when possible rely on a key informant to plug holes in research. “Key informants can provide particularly useful information about what is happening in subgroups to which the observer does not or cannot have direct access” (Patton 2002: 264). Even as an acquaintance of the community and a close friend to the translator, a member of the Sudanese community, the researcher found that specific details, specifically criticism of the US were highly unlikely to be elicited. Furthermore, certain personal issues would not be discussed. The Sudanese community is extremely tight knit and even the translator would not discuss the families outside of the interviews. Therefore, the researcher called upon a certain participant in the focus group to discuss those who had been interviewed. The participant was instrumental in sponsoring the individuals, has worked at Adult Education as a Guidance Counselor to the Sudanese, and has been one of their American support systems. As a result, she was privy to the underlying issues that participants had faced because they often relied on her to solve serious problems. The use of an informant who has close ties to the community was beneficial in gathering data.

While dealing with another culture, it is important to consider the role that traditions play in the answering of questions. Understanding culture is important even in subcultures within the

US. The question is, according to the population of interest, what is considered embarrassing? Perhaps money is not of concern, but family relations are. This makes it difficult to know how to form a document that asks appropriate questions; the personal interview opens the door for discussion (Sullivan et al. 1995) and the opportunity to discover the cultural differences between the Sudanese and Americans.

Ambert (1995) also asserts that qualitative research is complimentary to studies focusing on the processes of the family. While the current study is not specific to the family, family ties and obligations were a key component in the quality of life the members of the population experienced.

The goal of the research was to understand the “other” (Sudanese) in Maryville society. All interviews took place in the home of the participant except one, which was conducted over the phone. The principal investigator, a white woman who attended college in Maryville, TN, met the participants at their house. While interacting and interviewing members of the Sudanese population, the researcher began to view herself as the “other.” Freidenberg asserts that “rather than peeping inside imagined self-contained cultures..., it might be profitable to explore the spaces and places of mutual construction of identities through cultural encounters...” (1998; 183). As a result, the researcher expanded her original research design and spent time interacting with the community through Sudanese hosted parties and English tutoring. The fieldwork served to offer a more complete image of how the community functions as a whole.

### *Theoretical Stance*

Certain theoretical positions such as feminism generate “overarching concerns and a general paradigm to explain the structural position of women” (Ambert 1995: 882). One argument raised by feminist theorists is that realities are bifurcated and that females are

constantly in conflict with “objective” reality because the objective reality that they live in is merely the reality of a certain group, i.e. white males (Frye 1983). Patricia Hill-Collins stretches the feminist argument to African Americans and asserts that people of color are doubly removed from “objective reality” (Hill-Collins 1990). Along Hill-Collin’s rationale, refugee population from Africa would be triply removed from the “objective reality.” Ultimately, this theoretical approach claims that “the researcher’s social position influences his or her approach and interpretation and that knowledge is socially situated” (Ambert 1995: 882). As a result, when attempting to develop an inclusive understanding of the Sudanese population in Maryville, conducting semi-structured interviews that present the researcher’s questions of interest is not enough. There needs to be room for the Sudanese to voice their opinions about what concerns them as cultures are different.

#### *Background Information on Maryville, TN*

This research explores the level of acculturation that has been experienced by the Sudanese refugee population in Maryville, Tennessee. The resettlement process from Sudan to Maryville was sponsored by Bridge Refugee and Sponsorship Services in concert with local churches and expected to take two to three months to ensure a smooth transition. Currently, there is not a specific census of the number of Sudanese in Maryville; however, best estimates from members of the Sudanese community put the total population in Maryville around 70 persons (Chol 2010). This is an extremely small minority when comparing it to the population make-up of Maryville. The city is predominately White non-Hispanic (91.2%). Minorities make up 8.2% of the population with only 3.2% of the population being black or African American.

Maryville is a small city located 30 minutes from Knoxville, a large city in Tennessee. Maryville is home to a small liberal arts college and is a burgeoning town, housing many

expatriates from Knoxville. In July 2008, Maryville was home to 27,156 people and has experienced over 17.5 percent growth since 2000. The average income of Maryville citizens is slightly above the Tennessee average of \$43,614 at \$50,059 (Maryville 2008). The economy of Maryville is doing moderately well compared to the US economy.

#### *Participant Recruitment for Interviews*

Participants were informed of the study at the Sudanese Church Service at Saint Andrew's Episcopal Church in Maryville, TN. The researcher was invited by a member of the Sudanese community to speak at the church about her proposed research. There were five men ranging in age from early 20s to mid to late 30s. Unfortunately, there were no women present at this particular church service. All agreed to participate in an interview. After the church service, the researcher met with those who agreed to participate and implemented a snowball sample, locating two other participants. Four other interview participants were later identified during the focus group conducted with American women who worked with the Sudanese refugees.

#### *Interview Construction and Data Collection*

Eleven in-depth, one-on-one interviews were conducted. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour. Of the 11 interviews, 7 were conducted individually. In the case of four individuals, exceptions were made: a married couple preferred to be interviewed as a pair and a son and mother were interviewed together. This was due to the language skills of the women. Participants were asked interview questions that ranged from demographic information such as age, ethnicity, and marital status to more thought-provoking analytical questions such as questions 17, 18, and 19 which asked, "Overall, how do you think you are doing? What was your perception of America before you moved here? Was your perception of America accurate?" (see questionnaire). Many questions focused on childcare if participants had children. Education and

work-related opportunities were also a major focus of the interview. Finally, participants were asked about needed services and their thoughts on life in the US. Limited details about life in Sudan were gathered.

### *Interview Participant Demographics*

All participants were adults. The youngest participant was 21 and the oldest was 50. Participants were refugees from Sudan who have lived in Maryville for a minimum of eight months. The Bridge Organization sponsored most; however, three individuals came to Maryville through other means. In the case of one family, they were sponsored by Catholic Charities and were placed in Boston; however, unable to find work, Catholic Charities got in touch with Bridge, who agreed to assist the family with relocation to Maryville. The other individual who was not sponsored by Bridge followed his original host family from North Carolina to Maryville, TN.

Members from three different tribes/ethnic groups were interviewed; however, the majority were of the Dinka tribe (7/11). Interestingly, Dinka is not a homogeneous population and there are several subgroups within this one tribe. One couple came from the Nubian Mountains and is of the Nuer tribe. The mother and son came from a predominantly Dinka area, but are from the Kres tribe. All but two are of Christian faith.

Of those interviewed, 6 of the 11 are “Lost Boys.” The five others migrated as a family unit and still live among their family. Six of the participants are single. A couple was interviewed and a cohabitating unit was also interviewed. One woman was interviewed whose husband is still in Sudan. All the women were either married or cohabiting with a man. None of the single men have children in the US; however, one has a child in Sudan but has been unable to locate him. The male in the cohabitating couple has two children in Sudan and has been working to get them

to the US. His wife was murdered in front of him and his children. The children are living with surviving family members. The couple that was interviewed together has at least one daughter in Sudan. There was mention that there may have been another child, a son, in Sudan who lost his life in the war. The married woman whose husband still remains in Sudan is also separated from at least one child. In the US, the Sudanese women have on average five children. Two women had children before they came to the US. Now those women each have six children in the US. The one woman who came to the US as a teenager became pregnant by a boy at her school. After an arranged cohabitation by the daughter's parents with a Sudanese man, she now has three children.

The education levels of participants were varied. None of the "Lost Boys" were deemed young enough to be admitted to an American high school. However, through scholarships and sponsorships, one participant is working on his master's degree and two others are working on their bachelor's degrees, one at a local private college, the other at a state school. One "Lost Boy" attended college in Sudan but never finished his degree. The rest of the men had various levels of reading capabilities and understood conversation to a decent degree. All desperately wanted an education but found managing work and school difficult. The two men who were not "Lost Boys" understand and speak English well; however, their reading levels were never determined. All of the women interviewed were unable to read. Two had extreme difficulty understanding questions and depended on a translator. One woman is working on her reading skills and is currently reading at a first grade level. This woman was young enough to attend high school when she came to the US; however, she was unable to speak English and was put in special education classes. After becoming pregnant, she dropped out. All mentioned how important an education is, and the parents were specifically interested in sending their children to



college.

Excluding the three young men who are in school, one man is unemployed but is steadily looking for work. One is a truck driver who owns a big rig and is making approximately \$40,000 a year. Two of the men work at Denso, a Japanese owned factory in Maryville. Neither has been hired on by the company; they are working at Denso through Staffing Solutions, a temporary employment agency. One of the men has just recently got this job and was previously out of work for over a year. One man and two women work at restaurants as cooks and dishwashers. And, one woman who was a nurse in Sudan is working as a caregiver in a retirement home. Only the truck driver is making above minimum wage. The factory workers do get sick days. The one who has worked there for over four years gets a paid vacation as well. Only one family admitted to receiving family assistance such as food stamps or welfare; however, through other sources, it has been ascertained that many have had help filling out applications for such services. Currently, the cohabiting couple is in the process of applying for a Habitat House. Unfortunately, their credit is very poor and they are having difficulty taking the steps to repair the damage that was done to their credit when they didn't understand the methods of loans and repayment in the US.

### *Ethics*

Since 1995, the methodology of qualitative research has become open to the concept of developing “closer relationships between researchers and the persons they study” (Ambert 1995: 887). The development of friendships enables the researcher and the participant to communicate more freely and intimately, creating a more natural picture of the society. “Qualitative researchers’ meaningful ties to their respondents enhance their ability to gain information about hidden behavior, intimacy, and interpersonal feelings and emotions” (Ambert 1995: 887).

The researcher, as noted before, has varying degrees of relationships with the participants. Furthermore, the researcher's mother is closely connected to the community. Clearly the researcher's family relationship with the population of interest had an impact on recruiting participants and the depth of the interviews (Freidenberg 1998).

It is necessary for researchers to own their characteristics, i.e. ethnicity, race, gender, and age and be aware that there will be a certain level of influence on both the researcher and participants (Ambert 1995: 882). The researcher anticipated that cultural differences might cause difficulty with an interview. From preliminary research and talking with key informants in the community, it was uncovered that the "Sudanese are a proud people" (Chol 2010) meaning that they will not ask for help. However, in this instance, the researcher's presence as a white woman in many cases worked to elicit desires from participants. Due to the researcher and her mother's previous relationships with the community, it was not uncommon for the participants to ask at the end of the interview for help. Requests ranged from helping with English, sitting down with their children and discussing college, to bringing estranged children over from Sudan. Certainly, the researcher's previous role as "friend" and her mother's role as offering assistance, along with the research topic led the Sudanese to a level of comfort and the desire to request help. There are both benefits and disadvantages to the closeness of the researcher and the participant; however, Ambert has "argued that researchers' values and perspectives are an important dimension in all types of research" (1995: 886). Therefore, by taking into consideration the biases, the research is still valuable.

The researcher created informed consent documents that informed the participants of their right to skip questions they were uncomfortable answering and their right to end the interview at any time for any reason. The participants also were required to be 18 years or older

under East Tennessee State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements. An interpreter was provided in order to eliminate stress that could be associated with answering questions in English. Due to the cultural norms of the population of interest, the translator was also present to ensure the participants understood that termination of interview was absolutely allowed and expected if at anytime they were uncomfortable.

Ensuring the validity of the researcher's results was of the utmost importance. In order to control for interview bias, the researcher was aware of the language she used and the nonverbal gestures she made. And while the participants knew the ultimate goal of the study, wanting to know about their lives in Maryville, the researcher was conscious to not expose her personal opinions. To further complicate the matter, due to the researcher's pre-existing relationships with many of the people interviewed, she was aware of the vulnerability of the participants to divulge more information than they were comfortable with. Therefore, the researcher clearly stated the participant's rights prior to conducting the interview.

#### *Focus Group*

This study works to develop a theoretical attempt to limit the bifurcation of realities that Frye (1983) hypothesizes about. Dealing with a dichotomous relationship between the American culture and Sudanese culture, it is necessary to focus on both groups. While the Sudanese have a unique culture, their success or failure depends heavily on how acclimated they become to American society. A combination of information from both those who offer assistance and the Sudanese population will create a better depiction of the authentic well-being of the population. To develop a holistic understanding of the success (or failure) of the Sudanese population in Maryville, it was also necessary for the researcher to conduct a focus group with the people who were instrumental in relocating the Sudanese to Maryville and providing them an education.

According to Macartan Huphreys, when conducting research about a refugee community's success, it is essential to speak with people who provide services and offer help to the community (2005). While it is important to find out the Sudanese's perceptions of their well-being, it is also important to find out the perceptions of those who work with the Sudanese about their well-being.

Martinez and Velez-Ibanez, who study border cultures, argue that fieldwork is a strong way to explore the gray area between cultures. They also argue that borders can be reduced to extremely small units. Interviews allow the researcher to contact the smallest units in a community; however, fieldwork allows the researcher to more clearly piece the interviews (and lives) of the Sudanese together for a more cohesive representation of the community (1994; 1996).

To develop a holistic understanding of the success (or failure) of the Sudanese population in Maryville, it was also necessary to talk with people who were instrumental in relocating them, i.e. churches and employees at Adult Education who helped the Sudanese with basic education. Talking with people who have been directly involved with the individuals from the Sudanese population offers an outsider's perspective on how the community as a whole is doing. Participants in the focus group were known by the researcher prior to the formation of this study. Five individuals were asked to participate and three were able to commit.

#### *Focus Group Participant Demographics*

The three participants have been the main American support system for the Sudanese community. Two of the women were involved both through their different churches in the sponsoring of the refugees and work at Adult Education, where they have worked directly with the community. Marla (pseudonyms are used) works as the guidance counselor at Adult

Education and has helped the Sudanese with receiving outside resources such as food stamps and finding jobs. Though her job entails helping with resumes and offering educational assistance, Marla has spent a great deal of her personal time working with the Sudanese community. She has become the person they call when they have questions concerning citizenship, needing to get out of jail, and even when they need an abortion. Janice works as the Families First instructor at Adult Education and has also volunteered a substantial amount of time to teach English classes to the Sudanese. She also worked directly with the Bridge Resettlement and Sponsorship Organization to help situate the Sudanese in Maryville. Sally worked at Adult Education for 12 years and was instrumental in teaching computer skills to the Sudanese and providing guidance.

All the participants were white women ranging in age from 55-65 years old. While there were men who worked on the sponsorship committee, only women have worked with the population at Everett Adult Education. In fact, through correspondence with the Sudanese community, there are four women, including the three who participated in the focus group, who have been most involved with them. The participants have known each other for a minimum of 12 years and have worked together and separately with the Sudanese community. Each has become extremely close to specific families; however, the guidance counselor has the best understanding of the entire community.

### *Questionnaires*

Because there is always the risk that developing friendships with participants could lead to interview bias (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 2008), the researcher decided to distribute simple questionnaires to the community during a Sudanese hosted party. The questionnaire was to serve as a census of the Sudanese community, i.e. figuring out the population. The questions were extremely simple and several key Sudanese informants helped those who were illiterate to

fill out the forms. When assistance is available, surveys work increasingly well to gather simple data (Sullivan et al. 1995). While there is a debate about the ability to combine qualitative and quantitative data (Sullivan et al. 1995), this researcher agrees with Brewer and Hunter (1989) and Sullivan et al. (1995) that using both qualitative and quantitative methods offers a check and balance to the research. It allows for the research to weigh analytical material against statistical data.

The questionnaire was modeled after Zon Gangbayee Quewea's instrument used to collect data from a Liberian community in Johnson City, Tennessee. Very small changes to wording were made in two incidents. Two questions regarding work were modified to include part-time employment. A question regarding political affiliation was removed from the questionnaire. This model was chosen for three reasons. First and foremost, it had been successfully implemented. It was also administered to a population that was similar to the Sudanese community in Maryville. The small geographical distance between the locations of implementation was also a key factor. Maryville, TN, is approximately 2 ½ hours from Johnson City. Both African communities were located in the southern, mountainous region of the southeast. It was anticipated that due to the geographical closeness and, therefore, cultural closeness of the populations that the immigrant communities are immersed in, the survey controlled for external, American, cultural biases.

#### *Limitations of Questionnaire*

However, the populations being surveyed, while very similar, were also very different. The greatest difference between the two populations was their reasons for coming to America. The Sudanese community in Maryville is comprised entirely of refugees. In most cases, their choice for coming to the US was to escape genocide. Quewea's population of interest was much

more varied. A few were refugees escaping the 1989 Liberian Civil War. Many others migrated for employment opportunities and to reunite with family members. These immigrants, as Quewea refers to them, came to the US on their own accord, and, therefore, did not have close interaction with the American government.

After working closely with two members of the Sudanese community, a woman and a man, it was decided that the questionnaire would be best administered at the gathering for the coming-out party of the woman's newborn child. The party was to be held at the public housing community center where the family lived. This specific tribe waits 40 days before throwing a party in honor of the child and mother. It is tradition that the whole village comes to the party. According to the two Sudanese the researcher was working with, this party is for the women. All the men come, but it is to support the women. I (the researcher) was also invited, and based on Sudanese traditions and customs, I was treated in a special manner by being allowed to eat first and have the best seat. Based on Sudanese traditions, having a special guest, it was believed that the women would gladly fill out the questionnaire. The men would also fill it out because the male helping the researcher plan the survey was a patriarch of the community. The researcher was concerned about the party atmosphere deterring people from taking the time to fill out the form. However, both individuals said that would not be the case. In fact, the party, at least for the adults, followed traditional protocol. Men sat on one side of the room and the women sat on the other, allowing plenty of time to fill out the forms.

Unfortunately, even with the help and influence of the community members, individuals were unwilling to fill out the forms. In all, only one form was completed. The person completing it was a college student. And, one can assume that she is used to filling out forms. Most research suggests that those with low reading levels will have difficulty with the form; therefore, the

researcher had four people, including herself, who could help read and explain the questionnaire. Two were from the Sudanese community and the other was an American woman who often assists the Sudanese with filling out forms for the government, education, etc. To great surprise, the main deterrent for filling out the forms was not language; however, they would have had to have help completing it. The researcher was met with an unwillingness and almost vehement protest against answering the questionnaire. On several occasions, they would say, “The government knows I’m here. Why do you need this information?” They were extremely leery of the form and apprehensive about filling it out. Trying to explain that it was for educational purposes did not help. At first, the researcher thought that the participants just didn’t want to fill out the form themselves, so she offered to write down their answers for them. They became increasingly agitated and said “No.” They were most turned off by the form when they saw question seven, which asks them to provide the names and ages of their children.

While they were completely unwilling to fill out the forms, most were willing to participate in an interview. Some, after refusing to fill out the questionnaire, started telling the researcher and her American helper about life in Sudan and life in Maryville consists. They were willing to participate in interviews, or “talk to me as friends,” but they would not fill out a form.

#### *Working Hypothesis*

Due to the qualitative nature of the research, and because the researcher was conducting exploratory research, the researcher analyzed the data searching for emergent themes. An older article, *Emergent Ethnicity: A Review and Reformulation*, written by Yancy, Ericksen, and Juliani (1976), offers insight into how to approach qualitative research dealing with ethnic communities in America. They wrote, “As an emergent phenomenon, ethnicity continues to



develop with the changing positions of groups and individuals within society” (1976). Therefore, the researcher decided to examine data for emergent themes. The researcher, as someone who has interacted with the community prior to this research, is aware of the biases she brings to the table. Therefore, the interview schedule was created to touch on various aspects of the lives of the participants and did not dwell on particular areas that the researcher had preconceived ideas about. This allowed the participants to discuss what *they* thought was important. Questions revolved around the current household composition, employment history and current work, family of origin characteristics, education and income, sponsorship to the US, life in Maryville, and asking the participants to contribute any other information that they wished to talk about. While remaining open-minded, the researcher hypothesized that self-sufficiency had not been reached by a majority of the Sudanese population in the Maryville community.

#### *Data Coding*

The researcher based her analysis approach on Patton’s cross-case analysis (2002). Because an open-ended interview schedule was used, responses were grouped into the nine categories they fit into. After the questions that “had been generated during the conceptual phase of the study” (Patton 2002: 378) were sufficiently answered, the data were scanned for potential new insights. For instance, while questions on gender roles were limited to education and work, most of the Sudanese population passionately discussed the creation of new gender dynamics, mostly centering on women’s liberation. Emergent data throughout analysis either supported or rebuked the hypothesis that the Sudanese have not become self-sufficient.

#### *Study Limitations*

When dealing with qualitative research, there are always a number of limitations. The first limitation is that there was absolutely no data on the Sudanese population in Maryville.

Developing an acceptable sample size was difficult because there was little knowledge about the population size. While, based on this research, it is believed that the population is around 70 Sudanese with 30 being adults, it would be beneficial to spend more time to develop a reliable way of tracking the number of Sudanese in Maryville. Further research and interest in the community will only strengthen future data. With that said, the sample size was extremely small (N=11). With such a small population, the sample size is representative; however, it would be beneficial to recruit more participants.

Because there was so little information about the population in Maryville, the researcher created an interview schedule based on similar situations; however, the interview schedule could be expanded on to include the topics of gender dynamics and different subcultures.

A major limitation was language skills. While the researcher had an interpreter who was familiar with the community, and this sometimes worked to her advantage, there is no telling what wasn't said or what was said as a result of a high figure in the community translating their words. In future research, the researcher would like to employ a translator from another community.

#### *Suggestions for Future Research*

An area of interest that emerged through interviews was the creation of the illegal sub-culture in the Sudanese community. Future research focusing on the similarities between refugee communities and lower-class Americans linked to the development of a drug culture might produce beneficial information about the pushes and pulls into the negative environment. This knowledge would be helpful to agencies such as Bridge and other sponsoring bodies in an effort to prevent the deterioration of refugee communities into illegal activities.

The Sudanese refugee population in Maryville is abundant with potential gender research.

The dynamics within the culture that are the result of growing up in an extremely patriarchal society and moving to a society where women are independent are unimaginable. Based on the little data on this topic that developed out of my research, there is the potential to amass great amounts of data.

Developing a method that encourages responses to quantitative questionnaires would greatly increase the wealth of knowledge on the Sudanese population in Maryville and provide demographics necessary to further exploring this population.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### *Research Questions*

The study was designed to explore the successes and failures of the acculturation of members of the Sudanese community in Maryville, TN. To control for researcher bias, questions pertaining to the overarching themes in life were presented to the participants. Questions fell under six categories: current household composition, current employment and work history, family of origin characteristics, education and income, sponsorship, and life in Maryville. Probing was conducted to elicit any thoughts and concerns that were important to the Sudanese that were not hypothesized by the researcher. The researcher transcribed the data and then codified the data with general markers, i.e. employment, education, Bridge, children. The data were used to analyze nine questions that were developed in order to establish whether or not the Sudanese population had met self-sufficiency. The questions focused on education, employment, general feelings about life in America, and thoughts and hopes for children, if they were parents.

#### *Age and Gender Regarding Successful Self-Sufficiency*

Revealed in the focus group, much of the American sponsors' energy was spent on finding adults with dependent children employment and helping these adults with education. However, all the participants who were adults when they settled in Maryville are working minimum wage jobs. Two men have good jobs at a local factory; however, because they do not have high school diplomas, they are employed through a temp agency rather than the actual factory. As a result they do not receive any benefits associated with factory equivalent of their jobs.

Those who came over between the ages of 14 and 18 and attended high school have not

fared well. It was mentioned in the focus group, “the group that came in as high school boys did very poorly” (FG 2010). The women in the focus group brought up feelings of having failed the high school boys. One woman said, “They were in an in-between place.” Another woman said, “I tried to help them, but I focused most of my attention on the family. I overlooked the needs of the older children” (FG 2010). Interviewee 3 was 16 when she came to the US. Prior to coming to the US, interviewee 3 lived in Khartoum, a northern city, where the only language they were permitted to speak was Arabic (Int. 3 2010). She complained that she did not know English but was entered into a public high school. When she was unable to read, let alone speak English, she was moved into the developmentally challenged classes. She said, “When I came I didn’t speak nothing, but now, you can hear me right? I got it all from Everett (Adult Education in Maryville)” (Int. 3 2010).

Children who were very young upon coming to Maryville and those born in the US are having the most success. Two individuals who came to Maryville 10 years ago have been accepted into college. They will start their first semester fall 2010. Parents commented that their children correct them when they are speaking English. Interviewee 8’s children fill out all forms except food stamp applications for her parents. Of all the school-aged children, parents commented that they make “A”s in class.

Interview and focus group participants reported that gender has an impact on success in America. The focus group determined that the women, on average, have much less education than men. Of the participants, none of the women had higher than a middle school education. All men except one had at least some education. Three men had some college and one man is working on his master’s degree.

However, the education levels vary not only by gender, but also by what region in Sudan

the refugees immigrated from. “They are different tribes, different cultures, different languages,” said one woman in the focus group who works at Adult Education. The two individuals who have no education are a married couple from the Nubian Mountains.

*Help Provided by Bridge to Church Sponsors and Refugees*

Out of the 11 participants, 10 were sponsored through Bridge. While there were no emphatic agreements to the questions regarding how helpful Bridge was and has been, several people muttered yes or hesitantly said yes. Most said that Bridge met them at the airport and helped them find a place to live. Interviewee 2 said that “Bridge showed me hospitality” but would not elaborate. Interviewee 11, who is a highly educated man, became frustrated with the researcher when she probed about his perceptions of Bridge. He said, “If you give Bridge a bad name, they will not be able to help other people. You have to ask them for help or else you won’t get it.” Four participants said that Bridge was not helpful. Interviewee 5 was unwilling to talk about Bridge, she only said that “it was no good.” Interviewee 6 said, “Bridge met me at the airport and helped me find a place to live. They help you with your first five appointments. They weren’t very helpful. They didn’t help me find a job.” Interviewee 3 was very angry about her relationship with Bridge. She felt that she had been severely mistreated. When asked what she thought about Bridge, Interviewee 3 said,

No...hum, it sucks [laughter] I mean we got here and we really needed help, I mean we desperately needed help. When I come they just throw me to high school. How’m I supposed to go to high school if I don’t speak English? And they make fun of me (students at the high school) for like a year and a half and I’m sick of it. The school...at least give me somebody to help me start from the beginning, but they don’t do that. They just drop me off. They don’t really care.

Later on in the conversation she switches back to the topic of Bridge and said, “Bridge could be there for people. Help with tutoring, at least somebody to help you with your English. That’s a big thing – communicating.”

All focus group participants expressed feelings of being let down by Bridge. But, all participants also express gratitude to Bridge. Marla said, “Bridge was doing a wonderful thing helping people escape deplorable living conditions; however, I did not feel that we [church sponsors] were well enough prepared to assist the Sudanese refugees.” According to the participants, they had one session that lasted for two hours. This session was intended to introduce them to Bridge, the Sudanese culture and their responsibilities. One participant said, “If I had been better prepared I could have been a better volunteer assistant.” It was agreed that Bridge is successful at recruiting local church sponsors; however, they feel that the church is mostly responsible for finding the refugees housing and taking care of their daily needs for well over 90 days. According to the focus group participants, Bridge did respond to calls and would provide assistance if asked for three years. However, around year three and four, the refugees started to have a lot of trouble. People wanted to get citizenship and had not acquired sufficient language skills. One woman who had worked closely with Bridge to sponsor the refugees said,

You couldn’t get Bridge on the phone. We (church) would ask Bridge to please have a dialog with us. We need help; the Sudanese need help. Bridge said, ‘they are doing as well as other refugees. We don’t want to spoon feed them.’ We asked Bridge for an interpreter last year and Bridge just cut us off. They quit answering or responding to our calls.

All in all, the focus group concluded that Bridge had not been helpful in their quest to provide the Sudanese with all the opportunities needed in becoming self-sufficient. They all agreed that it

is simply impossible for the Sudanese as a whole to become self-sufficient. They agreed that Bridge “was not a good situation” and that “the Sudanese families are fed up with Bridge.”

The researcher sent two emails and called the Bridge office four times leaving two voicemails. Bridge would not answer or respond to her calls. Therefore, she was unable to offer Bridge the opportunity to discuss its organization and the issues/struggles they face and their success stories.

### *“Lost Boys” and Family Refugees*

Out of the 11 interview participants, the US Government has classified 4 as “Lost Boys.” These young men range in age from 29 to 33. The average age is 31.5. The four “Lost Boys” interviewed claimed that education was optional in the refugee camp; all four attended lessons. Three were one year shy of receiving a high school diploma in Sudan. And, one attended two years of college in Sudan. He was majoring in electrical engineering. Upon coming to the US, none of the young men attended American high schools. As was the case in the movie, *The “Lost Boys” of Sudan*, the participants were all too old upon arrival in the US to attend high school. All started work immediately upon arrival to the US. One worked full time and went to a community college to earn his General Educational Development (GED). Another, after several years of employment at a local factory, passed a college entrance exam and was admitted to a local college.

Of those who are not classified as “Lost Boys”, four were adults with children upon arrival to the US. Their main goal was to learn English and get a job so that they could provide for their children. One young man was selected as a young child to come to the US. He came here in 2007 when he was 21 years old. Upon arrival he was admitted to the University of Tennessee (UT); however, they could only offer him out-of-state tuition. He decided to attend



Pellissippi Community College for two years. He is transferring to UT as an in-state student this fall and will hopefully earn a degree in electrical engineering. Two other young adults have been unable to attend college. The teenage woman had a child out of wedlock with an African American boy and the other found himself in legal trouble off and on. He has since straightened up and has found part-time employment.

### *Employment*

Finding steady employment that provides a living wage has been extremely difficult for many Sudanese. In the researcher's sample, only one person has accomplished this. Interviewee 1 has successfully become a truck driver. And, in 2009 he purchased his own truck for \$49,000. He was able to put \$15,000 as a down payment on it. Interviewee 1 was extremely successful because he was able to find a job that paid a great salary. Also, because he is always driving, he doesn't pay for an apartment. When he is in Maryville, he stays with his other Sudanese friends. Two other individuals work at a local factory full time. However, they are employed through a staffing company because they do not have high school diplomas. As a result, they do not get benefits or high pay associated with the factory job in Maryville. Four individuals work in the kitchen of different restaurants. "It is hard work," said Interviewee 8 who works in the kitchen at a ritzy resort in Townsend, which is 30 minutes south of Maryville.

### *English as a Hindrance*

Maintaining employment has been difficult for members of the Sudanese community. Interviewee 9 was out of work for over a year and a half. During this time he and his family lived on the meager wage his wife brought home from her part-time employment. He said that his poor English contributed greatly to difficulty finding a job. Interviewee 6 also shared the same sentiments. He said, "It's very hard to get jobs, I think it might have something to do with poor

English. Also, I don't know the right people – no social networks” (2010). He would like to be an FBI translator, but he hasn't been able to get citizenship. Therefore, he is unable to use his language skills in Arabic for employment.

### *Racism on the Job*

When the researcher asked if they had experienced racism, all respondents said, “no.” However, two individuals described situations where there was clear discrimination. Interviewee 1's story is as follows: He was working at a factory and decided to take the test for a promotion. He studied for the test and made the highest score. When he was offered the job his manager suggested that he not take it. In this case, seniority was more important than a high score. Interviewee 1 was convinced and did not accept the promotion. The researcher asked about the race of the manager and the man who got the job. Interviewee 1 responded, “white dudes.” A few months later another promotion was offered. Once again, interviewee 1 made the highest score. This time he took the job in spite of his manager's suggestion not to. He said that the manager started to “mistreat him greatly.” When the researcher asked him point blank if he thought his race had something to do with it, interviewee 1 responded, “I...I mean, I'm not going to say that because at the time I'd worked there for two years and I got no idea about why he mistreats me.” Interviewee 1 eventually left the job because it became so unpleasant. He was unwilling to file a suit because he said, “If I did that (file a suit) the company would fire him (his manager) and then everyone would know that I was the reason that he got fired, and I tell myself, you know, I'm just going to leave.”

The child of one couple interviewed was 17 when he came to the US. He was unable to attend high school and has occasionally attended lessons at Adult Education. He now has a child, but is unable to find employment. Interviewees 1, 11, and 6 said that Maryville is a very difficult

place to find a job. Interviewee 4 mentioned that an education was necessary to get a job that paid more than minimum wage. He stressed that a minimum wage job would not sufficiently provide for anyone, much less a family. He was extremely concerned about earning money because he, along with four other individuals, send money back to their families on a regular basis. Interviewee 11 said that people are moving to other areas such as Nashville because there are more factory jobs. Interviewee 1 also said,

Without an education, Maryville is not a good place for refugees because there are not enough jobs, factory jobs. Many go to Nashville, they have over 50 companies. In Maryville there are only three. If you lose your job, you won't get a job in Maryville. If you have an education in Maryville you will get a job.

### *The Importance of Education*

The importance of education came up in every interview. All participants said that education was the way to improve their current living conditions. The “Lost Boys” were much more geared to improving themselves in order to go back to Sudan and rebuild their home. Interviewee 4 said, “My top priority is wherever God is going to call me, that’s where I am going to go. I’d like to go back to Sudan and help people.” Prior to this research, two “Lost Boys” who lived in Maryville and attended Maryville College have returned to Sudan to work on rebuilding their nation. Interviewee 11 has created his own non-profit organization that works to provide housing for volunteers in Sudan.

Those who found refuge in Maryville but were not “Lost Boys” also have a strong desire to get an education. All mentioned concerns about their ability to speak English. Most were referring to learning English when speaking of their need for education. All of the participants try to create a work schedule that allows them to attend classes; however, often, this is not

possible. Interviewee 3 went to Adult Education religiously until she gave birth to her third child. She is no longer able to go to English classes. She said, “Right now I need a lot of help, to be honest. I need help with my English.” She wants to learn how to read and write and most importantly, she wants to speak English well.

Four men actually quit jobs because they were unable to attend their English classes. They believed that getting an education was the most important thing. However, many are torn between education and family obligations back in Sudan. Four individuals are the main breadwinners for their families in Sudan. The families in two situations were very unforgiving to the individuals who decided to quit their jobs and return to school. Interviewee 1 desperately wants to go back to school. He left Sudan because his father had been murdered and he was to be next. At the time of his departure from Sudan, he had attended two years of college. Coming to the US has derailed his education plans; however, he has become economically successful. He has become so successful that he has bought his family land in Sudan and has built them a house. He confessed that if he went back to school, his family might lose everything that he has acquired for them.

### *Changing Gender Dynamics*

Upon arrival to the US, many Sudanese women started quickly adapting to America’s relaxed gender norms. It was not uncommon for young women to have the desire to participate in activities that American girls of the same age are participating in. Often the Sudanese women were married at 12 years old and were teenagers with children upon arrival (Anita 2009). Four men mentioned women and their rights. Three were aggravated by the changes in gender roles and one said that he was indifferent. Interviewee 1 said:

There has been a change – in Sudan, man is the head of the family. In the US,

man and woman are equal. When women come here she may go to classes and learn that she is equal to the man. When she gets her rights, she starts exercising her rights. Man thinks, this is not good, and tells her not to do this. She thinks, how come my man tells me not to do this? I've got a right! Women start going to clubs and making men mad. Many women in Maryville have left their husband.

There have been at least three cases of women leaving their husbands in Maryville. Two went to Nashville to live with family and one went to Minnesota. One woman who left her husband and moved to Nashville left her three daughters with her husband. For the past four years, the man has been a single father. Interviewee 11 said that he kept the children because the mother was not capable of taking care of her kids. He said that she could not speak English. While the men freely discussed the women who had left, women would not.

#### *Culture of Dependence*

The United States Committee for Refugees (USCR) discussed that one problem sponsors may face when dealing with the Sudanese population that lived in refugee camps is dependence. In fact, there was concern that a culture of dependence had been created and facilitated by aid workers in Kenya. From my sample, many thought that America was the place where dreams come true. Interviewee 6 said, "I remember, like wow, I feel like I'm just born new" about arriving in America. However, all then commented on how difficult life in America actually is. Many mentioned needing help, four participants asked me to help them with different matters ranging from teaching English to helping them get their children in Africa to America. No one said that he or she deserved help. In fact, most were very grateful for the help that they received. However, all individuals expressed a desire to take care of things themselves. Interviewee 9 said, "I don't need every time somebody to help me; I need to help myself too." Interviewee 4 was

very blunt about the help the refugees will receive upon coming to America. He said,

No one is going to tell you that they need help. Sudanese might have some issues, but they are trying to maintain their impressions and act like nothing is happening. This is how we are trying to survive in America. When you come here as families, say a husband and wife and two kids, they will all be working. At the same time, the income that is coming in is not sufficient to support the family. And they will act like they have it all, but they are in the trap of poverty.

Life is difficult for the Sudanese. Most do not speak fluent English. Many can't write. The women never learned English in Sudan. They are unable to find full-time employment. All but two who are working have part-time employment. And, they all earn minimum wage. They are dealing with not only economic and educational issues but the amalgamation of cultural norms has also been extremely difficult.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

#### *Self-Sufficiency*

The concept of self-sufficiency needs to be defined. If the community is to be defined as self-sufficient, then they must not be living in public housing and depending on food stamps and Tennessee Care (TennCare). In the interviews conducted all families receive food stamps, all have lived in public housing at some point during their stay in Maryville; however, two families were kicked out of the housing units. All families receive food stamps and two families said they receive TN Care. Depending on government resources does not imply self-sufficiency. Moving away from receiving funding from local churches may be seen as an improvement for the Sudanese; however, it may simply be the result of waned interest in the Sudanese by the sponsoring churches.

#### *Community Success*

The researcher was interested in finding out how much of an impact does age and gender play into one's acculturation success? The success of the community is extremely variable. It is difficult to generalize about the self-sufficiency of the entire population. While many are experiencing extreme difficulty in America, others have done very well. Age, gender, and education are the main factors influencing the success of the Sudanese. Those who came over as "Lost Boys", who are now approximately 30 years old, have done the best of all. In general, the "Lost Boys" have a desire to return to Sudan with their education, knowledge, and influence. Children of both genders who came to the US as primary students and those who were born in the US also have bright futures. They have been socialized in American culture since birth and understand the cultural norms. They have learned English and even some lessons of adulthood

by being responsible for filling out forms etc. for their parents. Time will only tell, but if they follow the trend of their parents, they will not have the same desire as the “Lost Boys” to return to Sudan. They will make their lives in the US. Those who came to the US as adults without an education are highly unlikely to be self-sufficient in their lifetime. If they have children, gradually they may become less dependent on churches and individuals and more dependent on their American educated children. It is highly unlikely that they will ever be able to read and write English, which diminishes their ability to become self-sufficient. Sadly, those who came over as teenagers seem to be in an in-between. Somehow they have become lost in American society. They migrated to the US too late to learn English, but too young to really understand Sudanese culture. An emergent theme that arose from the data was the creation of an illegal subculture.

### *Drug Dealing*

Many of the young men who came over as high school students are gravitating to the subculture of the streets. Sudan was never their home because of war and the American dream, upon arriving here, America was not their home because they did not have the opportunity to learn English. As a result, they have been unable to find jobs. Drugs, specifically marijuana, have become a new means of income for this group, and, more importantly an identity. These young men are torn between two nations, neither of which is home. They were not the “Lost Boys,” but they are lost now. Their younger siblings have not seemed to follow in their paths. In one incident where the oldest son has committed to the drug culture, the second oldest has worked to put his younger siblings in childcare and help pay the family bills. He has become the father, and thus, he has been met with the same predicament as those who have family in Sudan. While he wishes he could reject his responsibilities and attend college in order to better himself, he



continues to work and provide for a family that depends on him, a family that is in the US. His hard work has made it possible for his brother, who is younger than him by two years, to enroll in an out-of-state college. It seems that gravitating to the streets for the Sudanese is one way to find purpose and a self-identity. It does not appear to be cultural.

There were no accounts of women in this age group participating in drug activity. The researcher only knows of one woman who came over during her later high school years, i.e. the same age as the young men who now participate in drug dealing. She ended up getting pregnant and finding herself confined to traditional culture norms of an arranged “cohabitation” with a Sudanese man.

#### *“Lost Boys” and Family Refugees*

Because the Sudanese community in Maryville is an amalgamation of people from all over Sudan with different histories, specifically traditional refugee or a member of the “Lost Boys,” the researcher was interested in determining if one group had more success than the other. It was impossible to explore the success of the two groups without combining that research question with the importance of education for the Sudanese.

While it is not unusual for migrants to depend on their extended family for success, as seen with Mexican-American immigrants (Teaster 2007), this sample presents a different scenario. From the data collected, in this particular sample, those who migrated the US under the umbrella of the “Lost Boys” have tended to be more successful in the US than those who migrated over as a family unit. There are several reasons for this. The first has to do with the opportunity that individuals had in Africa. “Lost Boys” lived in Kakuma Refugee Camp where United Nations (UN) aid workers provided educational services in English. According to USCR, those who were in Sudan were unable to receive an education because of the violence and war.

In fact, for 40 years, there has been little infrastructure to support educational services in Sudan. If individuals lived in a city prior to migrating to the US, they were forced to learn Arabic. They could be killed for speaking English. Interviewee 3's father, a professor of a college in Khartoum, was imprisoned because he was a Christian. As a result, those who made it to refugee camps were given more opportunities to learn valuable skills such as English. Having English language skills before coming to the US has proved to be beneficial in the process of adapting to American culture. Another aspect that distinguishes the Sudanese refugees from other populations is that many migrant populations use extended families as a strategy to survive in the US. In this case, unfortunately, for the Sudanese, the sponsors set them up in "American" style living arrangements. A nuclear family was placed in public housing where they were prohibited from extending their living quarters to other family members or individuals.

Those who came over here with children were unable to focus on education. Their English skills are limited. The focus group participants commented on the language skills of the Sudanese women. "Many of the women had to learn a new alphabet" (FG 2010). Not knowing the English language is an extreme handicap when trying to find employment. There are more pressures on the adults who have children to find housing, pay rent and bills, and take care of the children.

While it may appear that the "Lost Boys" are faring better than those who are not "Lost Boys," the fact of the matter is, those who grew up outside of Sudan, such as Interviewee 2 have had a much easier time adjusting to life in the US. Interviewee 2 left his rural family in Sudan to live in Kenya with his peasant father's older brother. In his tribe, the child with the most promise was sent to a large city. Interviewee 2 just happened to be the child in this generation who was deemed the brightest. Interview 2 grew up in a boarding school and was able to come to the US

through Refugee Resettlement, even though he has never experienced war. Interviewee 2 is doing as well as the “Lost Boys” in the researcher’s sample.

### *The Ebb and Flow of Gender and Acculturation*

With many refugee communities, the home culture does not disappear but acculturates in with the host country’s culture. Quite interesting, much data regarding this question came up during discussion on gender roles. The incompatibility between Sudanese culture and American culture is most clearly expressed through gender roles. Sudan, including Southern Sudan, is an extremely patriarchal society. Even now, after the civil war, women and girls are seen as the property of their fathers. At the Nesie School in Wow, Sudan, the largest problem that instructors and administrators face is fathers coming and taking their daughters from the all-girl’s school. Upon removal from school, the girl is married. It is then up to the new husband to decide whether or not she can continue to attend school (Anita 2009). Achak Deng from Southern Sudan developed a coed school; however, he acknowledges that women are severely oppressed. An alarming statistic for Southern Sudan is that “a girl there is far more likely to end up dying in childbirth than she is to gain a primary education” (Bai 2010: 13). When women made it to the US and were afforded freedom, adapting to American culture was much more appealing to them than it was for men.

There is a difficulty merging traditional norms of the Sudanese with the norms of American culture. In many incidences, there is a huge backlash against traditional roles for Sudanese women in the United States. Women’s empowerment came to these women literally overnight. Changes have happened extremely quickly and it is too soon to know what effects they will have for later generations of Sudanese-American women. Having numerous children is not uncommon for Sudanese women; however, having numerous illegitimate children without

the safety net of a husband is a new phenomenon. Women's liberation not only brought about empowerment, but it also brought about pregnancies outside of marriage (NY TIMES 2010). Women bring with them to this new freedom the social understanding of their traditional cultures. So, while women feel they deserve to go out and party, i.e. express their freedom, they often are illiterate and, therefore, have no means to take care of themselves and be autonomous individuals. We have yet to see what this will mean for the Sudanese community and Sudanese men and women individually.

There is much question about the women's knowledge of birth control. The focus group was uncertain if women knew about birth control. However, it has been made fully aware to the focus group that the Sudanese women understand the consequences of having children in America. On several occasions, women from the focus group have been asked to help the Sudanese women have an abortion. Women's freedom is asserted by asking for the abortion. When an abortion is sought, the baby is either illegitimate or the woman is married and her husband is unaware of her pregnancy. The women make the decision to terminate the pregnancy on their own; however, freedom may not be as present as one would initially think.

Within the Sudanese marriages that have remained, there is still a level of patriarchy. Men assume ultimate power. The researcher was unable to uncover if women were aware of birth control. However, traditional Sudanese culture is not accepting of regulating births. The researcher hypothesizes that this is one aspect of traditional culture that remains between married couples. If so, the husbands have power over whether or not they will allow their wife to use birth control. Now, in the US women may not be able to prevent conception, but they can prevent birth.

A problem emerges when Sudanese and American culture come into contact with each

other regarding human rights as they relate to gender. In Sudanese culture, which is built on patriarchy, men hold the power. However, this power is built on a double-edged sword. In order for men to exercise their rights and authority they must have a wife. Without a wife they have not proven themselves to be a man. Therefore, simply being born male does not ensure respect and authority. It is achieving the Sudanese definition of manhood that instills power through patriarchy. This Sudanese cultural norm has not changed in the US. The men who are in their 30s but not in school are desperately searching for a wife to harness respect and authority in Maryville's Sudanese community. Interviewee 10 said, "I want to marry. My brother has many kids and he is the one who followed me!" There are several traditional steps that are taken for boys to become men. It starts with circumcision and true manhood culminates after marriage and children. Interviewee 1 complains that his advice is not taken because he is not married. "In Sudanese culture, you have to have a family for the community to accept your advice. I get treated like a teenager because I am not married. You need to have a wife to have influence" (Int. 1 2010).

The definition of masculinity for the Sudanese seems to be ingrained in their culture and is quite difficult to change. However, the young men who are in college are not in any hurry to marry. The most highly educated person in the sample said, "I want a wife who is my equal, who is my partner." His ideology seems to match that of his peers: educated and progressive. It appears that their education affords them the recognition of manhood.

Not only are the men who came over in their mid to late 20s bound to the cultural identity of masculinity that is presented to them through their Sudanese culture, but they are still engaging in the Dinka traditions. To deal with an out-of-wedlock childbirth, the parents of Interviewee 3 established an arranged cohabitation between Interviewee 3 and Interviewee 7.

While the arranged cohabitation is an adaptation of a traditional arranged marriage, it was used to shield the family from embarrassment and to ensure that the baby would grow up in the Sudanese culture. This arranged cohabitation has resulted in two more children.

There is definitely the desire to establish a marriage between the cohabiting pair. However, there is conflict between traditional Sudanese culture and American culture. Interviewee 7 has paid a dowry of over \$6,000. The parents of the woman are demanding that he pay \$10,000. The parents have encouraged Interviewee 3 to leave at different points if the dowry is not paid. In Sudanese culture, if the dowry is not paid, then the children can leave with the mother; however, if the dowry is paid in full and the relationship sours, the wife's parents must pay back the dowry and the husband gets to keep the kids.

The conflicting ideology is that in Sudan this is a protective strategy; however, in the US it is detrimental to the success of a family. The syncretism of cultures is not allowing the development of successful family. Interviewee 7 is earning minimum wage, taking care of three children, one of which is not his. Interviewee 3 is currently not working and not receiving maternity pay. While Interviewee 3's family wants the money as a protective barrier, i.e. to serve as an incentive in case of a divorce, it is not actually needed because of the American laws regarding marriage. In fact, it is creating a hardship for a family. Interviewee 3, by siding with her parents, is more closely attaching herself to the Sudanese culture and has not formed a union with her partner by American standards.

### *Questionnaires*

While the questionnaires appeared as a blatant failure, the Sudanese's refusal to fill out the forms was a very interesting finding. Their contact with the government and sponsoring organizations has been less than positive. And, with these organizations they are constantly

filling out forms. These forms decide everything for them. A form tells them whether or not they were able to get citizenship. A form can get them in trouble with the government if they fill out a tax document wrong. Many of their interactions with the government, whether it be local, state, or federal, and their interactions with sponsoring agencies have been wrought with unpleasantness, difficulty, and a feeling of being pushed aside. In two cases, parents are trying to bring children over from Sudan. And, in both incidents they have received absolutely no help from their sponsoring agency (Int. 7,8,9 2010). In the focus group, it was adamantly agreed that not only are the Sudanese families fed up with Bridge, but so are the churches that worked with Bridge. It was said, "Bridge just cut Maryville off." In another situation, a young Sudanese man moved from one apartment to another. During his move, his green card came in the mail. His old roommate (a fellow Sudanese refugee) threw it away because he didn't know what it was and assumed that it was not important. It has been a five-year process to get it replaced. The agency is unwilling to work with him because they claim it is his fault. It has taken him five years to save enough money to replace the card (FG 2010). Forms are not good things to this population. It is something that elicits stress and worry. The second they were asked to complete the questionnaire they shut down.

Ultimately, the purpose of the questionnaire was to find out how many Sudanese are in Maryville. At the party there were 20 adults and 30 children. The researcher estimates that about 20 people were missing. The best estimates put the population total at 70 men, women, and children. Of that, 30 are adults and the rest are children.

#### *Feelings Regarding Bridge*

Bridge played an instrumental role in bringing the Sudanese to Maryville. It is because of this that the researcher was interested to discover how both the people who sponsored the

refugees and the refugees' themselves feel about Bridge. In general, people were unwilling to say negative comments about Bridge; however, there were four individuals who had very little positive to say about Bridge. What is most interesting about the Sudanese's comments or lack of comments regarding Bridge was how it appeared they masked their true feelings. No respondent was willing to emphatically support Bridge. In fact, nonverbal cues were the most telling regarding feelings about Bridge. Upon asking about Bridge, eye contact would be lost. Many participants looked down, some looked around the room. None looked the researcher straight in the eye and said that Bridge was helpful. The researcher spent over two months teaching English to several members of the Sudanese community. It was during those interactions that negative comments and feelings about Bridge came out clearly. It was only when the Sudanese had developed a rapport with the researcher that they were willing to let her know they were disappointed by Bridge. The researcher hypothesizes that most do not want to talk negatively about an agency that saved them from the war in Sudan. The researcher believes that Interviewee 11's comment, "If you give Bridge a bad name, they will not be able to help other people. You have to ask them for help or else you won't get it" has a lot to do with the way people responded about their feelings of Bridge. Four individuals who were interviewed want to bring their children who are still in Africa to America. They may not want to burn bridges, pun intended.

And, ultimately, the refugees' perception of Bridge has a lot to do with the caseworker they are assigned at Bridge. Bridge is an expanding organization. It now has two offices in Knoxville (FG 2010). And, not every Sudanese has the same caseworker. As with all things, individuality does occur and certain people have had better reception with the organization.

### *Culture of Dependence*

The researcher was interested to know what the Sudanese expectation is of the American



government. The concerns raised by the United States Committee for Refugees (USCR) surrounding a culture of dependence may have been valid initially. Many Sudanese refugees thought that coming to America would ease their worries; however, the Sudanese found that life is very difficult in the US. Interviewee 1 said, “I could help my family at any time come to America, but it is probably not good for them. They may come here and never succeed. The chances for failure are too high.”

Many Sudanese do not want to depend on people on a regular basis. The unfortunate fact is, most of the people in my sample cannot read and write English fluently. Because they do not know the language, they are unable to complete basic tasks such as filling out the Census. Interviewee 4 said, “Sudanese don’t really show that they need help. It is culture. No one is going to tell you that they need help.”

The Sudanese desperately want to be self-sufficient, but those with children say that, “My hope is for my children. That is why I came here” (Int. 5 2010). Many worry that they will never get their GED. Interviewee 3 said, “Do you think I can get my Dream? Get my GED?” The researcher took note of the sadness in her voice and the tone of giving up. Interviewee 3 wants her children to be doctors and lawyers. Interviewee 9 said, “I want my children to go to college. This is why I come here. I don’t need money; I need my children to get an education.”

Life is hard for the Sudanese in America. The women from the focus group wonder if they are really better off in the United State. However, comments such as “There is no food in Sudan, no clean drinking water. My being in America was a blessing to the whole family because I could get a job” (Int. 4 2010), help to ease some of the worries surrounding the focus group participants. The focus group agreed that they did not think that the present adult generation of Sudanese community, as a whole, would ever be self-sufficient. There is hope that

they will get better, but “they will always depend on their children to fill out forms” (FG 2010).

However, there is the belief among the focus group participants that the children will have bright futures. It will be the kids who adapt to American culture.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Interview Guide

Interview location: Maryville, TN  
Interview

**INTERVIEW PROTOCOL – MARYVILLE CITY INTERVIEWS WITH SUDANESE REFUGEES**

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**CURRENT HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION**

A. Your 1st Name DOB Marital Status\* Ethnicity\*\*

DOB: Marital Status:

Ethnicity:

1. Are you married? How has your relationship fared? What kinds of strains do you two, as a couple, face?

B. Partner’s 1st Name DOB Ethnicity\*\*

DOB:

Ethnicity:

Child Receives child (First Name) support	Sex	DOB	Relation to A ***	Relation to B ***	Contact w/ bio parent
				(Y, N)	(Y.N)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Do you have any children not currently living with you? (If yes) Who are they, and where are they living?

*Other Household Members*

Relationship to A	Length of Time in Household	Permanent or Temporary Arrangement
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Interviewer Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

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**EMPLOYMENT/CURRENT WORK**

1. **Let's talk about your employment situation. Are you currently working?** (If not employed, skip to Question #2)

**What kind of work do you do?**

**[Establish whether interviewee has more than one job and ask the following for each job]**

**What are your main duties on the job?**

**How much are you paid?**

**When did you start working there?**

**How many hours do you generally work each week?**

**How many weeks do you work during the year?**

**Participant's Current Employment (summary)**

	Wage/Salary	Date Started	Hours/week	Weeks/Year
Job 1	_____	_____	_____	_____
Job 2	_____	_____	_____	_____
Job 3	_____	_____	_____	_____

**Sometimes people work for cash doing odd jobs to earn extra money – work like cleaning houses, babysitting, mowing lawns, etc. for cash. Do you ever do odd jobs to make extra money? (If relevant) Does anyone else in your family do this?**

2. (Ask only if not currently employed) Are you looking for a job now? (If yes) How are you going about it? (If yes or no) Have you ever worked for pay?

3. **[If married]** What about your partner? Is s/he currently employed?

What kind of work does s/he (partner) do? How much is s/he (partner) paid? When did s/he start working there? How many hours does s/he generally work each week? How many weeks does s/he work during the year?

**Partner's Current Employment**

	Wage/Salary	Date Started	Hours/week	Weeks/Year
Job 1 _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Job 2 _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Job 3 _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

4. Is there anyone else in the household who has a job? **(If yes)** Tell me about that.

5. **(Ask if currently employed)** Do you get any benefits from your job(s)? How about your partner? What about health insurance...

<i>Benefit</i>	<b>Provided by Interviewee's Job(s)</b>				<b>Provided by Partner's Job(s)</b>			
	Y	Yes	N	No	Y	Yes	N	No
Health insurance for self	Y	Yes	N	No	Y	Yes	N	No
Health insurance for children	Y	Yes	N	No	Y	Yes	N	No
Sick leave	Y	Yes	N	No	Y	Yes	N	No
Vacation pay	Y	Yes	N	No	Y	Yes	N	No
Overtime	Y	Yes	N	No	Y	Yes	N	No
Retirement plan	Y	Yes	N	No	Y	Yes	N	No

6. In Sudan do women work outside the home? How do you feel about women in the USA working outside the home?

7. **What would be an ideal job for you for supporting your family? Why would this be a good job?**

**Can you think of what would be an ideal job for your partner?**

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## WORK HISTORY

1. I am interested to know about the kinds of work that people have done in the past. Tell me about your work history in Sudan if applicable. How old were you when you got your first job, joined the army, etc?

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## CHILDCARE

1. Do you have children? If so do they live with you?

**(If relevant)** How old are your children?

2. If you are working, who takes care of your children?
3. How was childcare arranged in Sudan?
4. Would you consider American childcare systems to be good of quality? Explain.

**(Follow-up questions – Ask as relevant to establish how these arrangement work out)**

How do you get your children to your childcare provider?

About how long do they stay every day?

Is it different if you have to work evenings or weekends?

5. **(If appropriate)** What about your older children? What do they do after school (if mom/dad is working)?

What about school holidays and summers?

6. Overall, about how much do you pay for childcare each month?

7. How do you like your childcare provider? Why do you feel this way?
  
  5. Is it difficult to find childcare in this community?
  
  6. Does the cost of childcare in this community seem expensive to you?
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*FAMILY OF ORIGIN CHARACTERISTICS*

1. What year did you come to the United States
  
2. I'd like to ask a little bit about your background. What was your family like when you were growing up? Who was in your family (number of siblings, etc.)? What part of Sudan did you come from (show map so that they can point to their home)?
  
3. What kind of work did your parents do?
  
4. Do you remember a time without war? Describe your childhood.
  
5. How much education did your mother have? \_\_\_\_\_ Your father? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a = 8<sup>th</sup> grade or less**
  - b = some high school**
  - c = high school or GED**
  - d = some technical training or college**
  - e = technical degree or associate's degree**
  - f = college graduate (BA or BS)**
  - g = one or more years beyond college**
  - h = graduate degree**
  - i = don't know**
  
5. How often did you move in Sudan as a result of war? What refugee camps did you stay at? If you feel comfortable, tell me a little bit about your migration patterns (what you went through, where you went, your feelings and discomfort, etc).
  
6. Do you know if your family members are alive? If so who?
  
7. Where do your surviving family members live now? (Sudan, refugees in another nation such as Australia, USA, Maryville)

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## EDUCATION AND INCOME

1. What is your current educational level? \_\_\_\_\_ (use scale below)

Where this education was acquired (Sudan, USA, etc.)

**a = some high school**

\_\_\_\_\_

**b = high school or GED**

\_\_\_\_\_

**c = adult education (USA)**

\_\_\_\_\_

**d = some technical training or college**

\_\_\_\_\_

**e = technical degree or associate's degree**

\_\_\_\_\_

**f = college degree (BA or BS)**

\_\_\_\_\_

**g = one or more years beyond college**

\_\_\_\_\_

**h = graduate degree**

\_\_\_\_\_

**i = don't know**

**(If no high school diploma)**

2. How many languages do you speak – what are they?

3. Were you able to attend school in Sudan (and refugee camps)? If so, please describe the school. (Did you have paper? Who was the teacher? Were more boys in school than girls?) Describe your education in Sudan? In the United States?

4. **(If appropriate)** What about your partner-how much education does s/he have? \_\_\_\_\_ (scale)

5. Since coming to Maryville have you taken advantage of Adult Education? If so, what classes have you taken? Have you found it helpful? Has it helped you get a job?

Since coming to Maryville, what school(s) have you or your children attended? (Maryville, Alcoa, County School)?

6. Did you/do your children enjoy school? Have you/they made friends? Do teachers in Maryville implement different methods of teaching than teachers in Sudan? How so?

7. In the last few years have you had the opportunity to get further education or develop new job skills? Why or why not and what kind?

8. I'd like to know a bit about your family's sources of income.

**(Establish from which of the following sources income is received)**

Source of Income	Amount	Weekly	Bi-Weekly	Monthly
Wages and salaries (self)	_____	Y	Y	Y
Wages and salaries (partner)	_____	Y	Y	Y

Tips, commissions, overtime	_____	Y	Y	Y
Social Security Disability	_____	Y	Y	Y
Social Security Retirement/Pensions	_____	Y	Y	Y
SSI (Supplemental Security Income)	_____	Y	Y	Y
TANF	_____	Y	Y	Y
Unemployment Compensation	_____	Y	Y	Y
Worker's Disability Compensation	_____	Y	Y	Y
Veterans' Benefits	_____	Y	Y	Y
Child or spousal support	_____	Y	Y	Y
Children's wages	_____	Y	Y	Y
Food Stamps	_____	Y	Y	Y
Other:	_____	Y	Y	Y

9. Families sometimes receive assistance from a variety of government or private programs. Do you receive assistance from any of the following?

- |                         |                               |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Y WIC                   | Y Transportation Assistance   |
| Y School Lunch Program  | Y Energy/Fuel Assistance      |
| Y Medicaid              | Y Educational Grants or Loans |
| Y Child Care Assistance | Y Housing Assistance          |
| Y Other                 |                               |

**6. Is there any other assistance you're getting, such as help with healthcare, food, meals, clothing, furniture, baby goods, day care, or anything else?**

7. In which of the following categories would you say your household's annual income falls? (If living in an extended family household – based on whose earnings?)

- a. Less than \$10,000
- b. Between \$10,000 and \$20,000
- c. Between \$20,000 and \$30,000
- d. Between \$30,000 and \$40,000
- e. Between \$40,000 and \$50,000
- f. Between \$50,000 and \$60,000
- g. Between \$60,000 and \$70,000
- h. More than \$70,000

8. Compared to three years ago, would you say your family's economic situation has:

5 = Improved a lot

4 = Improved a little

3 = Remained the same

2 = Gone down a little

1 = Gone down a lot

Ask for some explanation -- in what way(s) has it improved, gone down, etc.?

9. To what extent do you think your income is enough for you to live on?

**1 = Not at all adequate**

**2 = Can meet necessities only**

**3 = Can afford some of the things we want but not all we want**

**4 = Can afford about everything we want**

**5 = Can afford about everything we want and still save money**

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## **SPONSORSHIP AND LIFE IN MARYVILLE**

1. Who were you sponsored by to come to the US?

2. Has this agency been helpful in assisting you with becoming acclimated to American society and culture?

3. What services did they (group who sponsored you) offer you when you first moved to Maryville?

4. Do you feel that they (sponsorship group) have been helpful enough? What could they do to make things easier?

5. You have been in Maryville longer than 2 years – has the sponsoring agency helped you after the agreed upon 2-year commitment? If so, in what ways?

6. What groups do you depend on and are your support system?

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## ***LIVING IN THE COMMUNITY***

1. Tell me about moving to the USA?



3. Who met you at the airport when you arrived in Maryville?
4. How long have you lived in Maryville?
5. Have you developed friendships with people Native to Maryville?
6. Has the Sudanese community in Maryville remained tight knit?
7. Who is your closest friend in Maryville? Is this person a native of Sudan or American?
8. Have you lived other places in the United States?

Where else have you lived? When?

9. Tell me about how Maryville is as a place to live.

What are the good things about living here?

(Best thing?)

Are you a member of a local church or parish?

Is that an important part of your connection to this community?

What are the difficult things about living here?

(Worst thing?)

10. What do you think about Maryville as a place to raise children?

What is good about it as a place to raise children?

What is difficult about it as a place to raise children?

11. Do you see that there are problems in this community?

Are there issues that concern you?

12. Many families with children struggle to make ends meet or experience other kinds of pressures.

Can you think of additional programs or services that might be provided to help families in this community?

13. What do you think about Blount County as a place to earn a living?

[Do you/your partner work in Maryville or Knoxville?]

14. What do you think of the job opportunities here?

Maryville specifically –

Maryville/Knoxville region generally –

Are job opportunities in Blount County better or worse than in other places you know about?

15. What do you think of the pay scales here – do you think wages are higher or lower here than other places you know about? (Or about the same?)

16. Do you ever think about moving to another community?

Why or why not?

(What keeps you here?)

17. Overall, how do you think you are doing? What was your perception of America before you moved here?

Was your perception of America accurate? How is it, How is it not?

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**NOTES**

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire

**Sudanese Census 2010 Questionnaire**

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Age: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Sex:         Male         Female

4. Ethnic Background:

- Dinka
- Nuer
- Kres
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Current Marital Status:     Married to: \_\_\_\_\_  
    Cohabiting Couple partner: \_\_\_\_\_  
    Divorced  
    Single, Never married  
    Widow

6. Are you a parent?     Yes         No

7. If you are a parent, please state the number of children who live in the USA and their ages:

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

3. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

4. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

5. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

6. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

8. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

8. Completed Formal Education:

- Less than high school
- High School Diploma
- GED
- More than high school, less than A.A.
- A.A. or equivalent
- More than A.A. less than Bachelors
- Bachelors
- Post-bachelors

9. Current Employment Status:

- Homemaker
- Employed Where: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Full  Part-time
- Unemployed
- Retired
- Student

10. Personal Current Annual Income:

- \$0000 - \$9,000
- \$9,001 - \$15,000
- \$15,001 - \$24,000
- \$24,001 - \$35,000
- \$35,001 - \$45,000
- \$45,001 - \$55,000
- \$55,001+

11. Household Current Annual Income:

- \$0000 - \$9,000
- \$9,001 - \$15,000
- \$15,001 - \$24,000
- \$24,001 - \$35,000
- \$35,001 - \$45,000
- \$45,001 - \$55,000
- \$55,001+

