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Acculturative Stress, Coping, and Approaches to Working with Refugee Immigrants in the United States

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Acculturative Stress, Coping, and Approaches to Working with
Refugee Immigrants in the United States

by

Adiel Uzabakiriho

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A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Social Policy and Social Research

_____

September 2011

Each person whose signature appears below certifies that this dissertation in his/her opinion is adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree Doctor of Philosophy.

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CONTENT

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ABBREVIATIONS

CFS	Children and Family Services
CIS	Citizenship and Immigration Services
CNA	certified nurse assistant
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services
DOS	Department of State
ESL	English as a second language
GPA	grade point average
INA	Immigration and Naturalization Act
IRO	International Refugee Organization
N	sample size
NGO	non-governmental organization
ORR	Office of Refugee Resettlement
P	participant
PRM	Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
PTSD	post-traumatic stress disorder
SCT	social cognitive theory
SD	standard deviation
SLT	social learning theory
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
UN	United Nations
UNCHR	United Nation Commission on Human Rights

UNHCR	United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRRA	United Nation's Relief and Rehabilitation Agency
U.S.	United States
USCIS	United States Citizenship and Immigration Services

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Acculturative Stress, Coping, and Approaches to Working with
Refugee Immigrants in the United States

by

Adiel Uzabakiriho

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Social Policy and Social Research
Loma Linda University, September 2011
Dr. Ignatius Yacoub, Chairperson

Every year, due to environmental, political or social reasons, a large number of

people worldwide are forced to leave their homes and many become refugees. Based on

the U.S. Refugee Act of 1980, the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 protocol, some

of those who fall into the legal definition of refugees get the chance to be resettled in the

United States. During the course of migration, refugees encounter various experiences

which contribute to adjustment outcomes in the United States. One of the significant

factors involves acculturation and related stress identified as acculturative stress. This

exploratory study identified and examined psychosocial factors which contribute to

acculturative stress across different groups of refugee immigrants in the United States.

Eighteen interviews conducted with participants from five groups of refugee immigrants

at various geographical locations in the United States were transcribed and analyzed

using a constant comparative method. Demographic characteristics of refugees and the

type of acculturative stressor experienced were found to contribute to the type of coping

mechanisms used. Psychosocial interventions which are built on cultural sensitivity and

empowerment were identified as effective policies towards refugee services in the United

States.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of human history, people from different cultures worldwide have historically been forced or motivated to migrate for various reasons (Charles, 2006; Ingleby, 2006). While some of those reasons were associated with the search for better economic conditions, other reasons were associated with the search for safety (Charles, 2006; Pirages & Degeest, 2004; Robila, 2008). The search for safety which plays a significant part in contemporary migrations has been identified with refugees who are forced to migrate because of either social, political, environmental factors, or various forms of generalized violence (Bookman, 2006; Charles, 2006; Ingleby, 2006; Levine, 2001; Lischer, 2007; Melander & Öberg, 2006; Melander & Öberg, 2007; Pirages & Degeest, 2004).

In recent years, approximately 9.9 million people worldwide were considered refugees having fled their homes because of fear of persecution for their beliefs, political participation, ethnicity, or social groups (Chan, 2006; Charles, 2006; Crisp, 2000; Ellis, MacDonald, Lincoln & Cabral, 2008; Norredam, Garcia-Lopez, Keiding & Krasnik, 2009). Consequently, forced migrations have become part of the growing global events which often have a big impact on the demography, culture, economy, and politics of countries hosting refugees (Crisp, 2000; Charles, 2006; Essed & Wesenbeek, 2004; Hoyt, 2009; Koser, 2007; Meyers, 2004).

Unlike regular immigrants, refugees are considered a population at risk because they frequently encounter various challenges involved in forced migration (Goodkind & Deacon, 2004; Magno, 2008; Norredam, Garcia-Lopez, Keiding & Krasnik, 2009).

Regular immigrants usually decide to relocate for economic reasons and can plan their

travels more safely (Goodkind & Deacon, 2004; Segal & Mayadas, 2005). However,

refugees neither leave their homes voluntarily nor have a choice in the matter since

violent circumstances or fear of persecution often force them to flee (Lischer, 2007;

Nicholl & Thompson, 2004; Snyder, May, Zulcic & Gabbard, 2005). In addition to

leaving their countries of origin against their will, many refugees often experience

dangerous conditions over the course of their travels (Nicholl & Thompson, 2004).

Most refugees, regardless where they come from, may share similar

circumstances usually relating to overcoming past traumas, dealing with difficulties of

life in refugee camps, or even facing the challenges of adjusting to life in their host

communities (Bhui et al., 2003; Miller, Worthington, Muzurovic, Tipping & Goldman,

2002; Oikonomidoy, 2007; Snyder, May, Zulcic & Gabbard, 2005). However, the

various demographic characteristics of refugees also representing a multitude of cultures

and ethnicities contribute to differences in migration experiences (Bhui et al., 2003;

Miller, Worthington, Muzurovic, Tipping & Goldman, 2002; Stutters & Lion, 2001).

In every culture, human beings have social standings which are usually built on

diverse links of relationships to other people, organizations and social structures

(Kibreak, 2004). These relationships do not only provide the network within which

people are accepted in a society, but also provide social support (Kibreak, 2004).

However, when refugees flee their homeland and cross into other countries in search of

relief and safety, they lose those relationships since they become uprooted from their

social, economic, and cultural networks (Kibreak, 2004; Vissicaro, 2009). For instance,

during the course of their flight, refugees may leave behind significant material losses

comprised of property and assets as well as nonmaterial losses which involve loss of

national citizenship, community networks, cultural norms and practices, social identities

and statuses, traditional authority, and social organizations (Kibreak, 2004). During the

course of migration and resettlement, many refugees experience family separation

(Meyers, 2004). In addition, when refugees get to a new society, they typically have

behavioral patterns and cultural values which are different from their new environment's

(Charles, 2006; Franz, 2003; Shim & Schwartz, 2007; Snyder, May, Zulcic & Gabbard,

2005). These demographic differences along with psychosocial difficulties in new

environments create problems for those who cannot adapt well to the new society (Shim

& Schwartz, 2007; Yunjin Oh, Koeske & Sales, 2002).

It is evident that forced migration experiences frequently have a negative impact

on the psychosocial well-being of refugees in their host communities (Birman & Tran,

2008; Ellis, MacDonald, Lincoln & Cabral, 2008; Snyder, May, Zulcic & Gabbard,

2005). However, responses to these issues can be mediated by different sets of variables

including; cultural similarities or differences between refugees and host countries;

availability and accessibility of resources and income-generating opportunities;

availability and nature of assistance at the initial stage; host government immigration

policies and practices; attitudes of host communities towards newcomers and existing

social support in the host community (Kibreak, 2004; Vissicaro, 2009). Based on various

challenges involved in forced migration, most refugees believe that if given the choice,

they would prefer to stay in their native countries and not seek shelter in what they

perceive to be strange foreign lands where they are sometimes isolated, marginalized or

impoverished (Crisp, 2000).

Due to the fact that refugee problems are considered a matter of concern to the international community, they must be addressed in the context of international cooperation and burden-sharing (Hyndman, 2010; Weis, 1995). Therefore, since the 20th century, the recognition of refugee problems has become one of the outstanding achievements in the humanitarian field (Iqbal & Zorns, 2007; Theodore, 2008; Weis, 1995; Williams & Stewart, 2008). This notion first came into existence after the First World War under the League of Nations which dealt with successive waves of refugees (Bernstein & Weiner, 1999; Weis, 1995). The notion was further developed and strengthened after the Second World War through continuing action undertaken by the United Nations to address numerous international refugee problems (Bernstein & Weiner, 1999; Weis, 1995). Since refugee problems still remain part of today's tragic events, international cooperation in dealing with such problems presupposes collective action by governments in working out effective interventions which can end in repatriation, integration, or resettlement (Jacobsen, 2010; Weis, 1995). Based on such international cooperation, countries with resettlement programs are obligated to arrange for refugee migration and resettlement process (Essed &Wesenbeek, 2004). In order to protect human rights of resettled refugees, humanitarian assistance is provided to them (Tazreiter, 2004; Vissicaro, 2009). That is the process by which every year, specific numbers of refugees are resettled in the United States and many receive social and healthcare services during their early adjustments (Allen, 2009; Hume & Hardwick, 2005; Lange, Kamalkhani & Baldassar, 2007; Robertson et al., 2006; Swerdlow, 2006; Zoysa, 2006).

The refugee population in the United States includes many people who manage to attain considerable economic and educational success in the country (Birman & Tran, 2008; Charles, 2006; Haines & Rosenblum, 2010). However, various psychosocial issues resulting from negative migration experiences are also frequently reported within the same population (Fortuna, Porche & Alegria, 2008; Ngo, 2006; Stutters & Ligon, 2001). These psychosocial issues are associated with reactions to negative pre-migration experiences, host community reception, and adaptation experiences in the United States (Ehntholt & Yule, 2006; Ellis, MacDonald, Lincoln & Cabral, 2008; Jamil, Nassar-McMillan & Lambert, 2004; Jamil, Nassar-McMillan & Lambert, 2007; Pine & Drachman, 2005; Segal & Mayadas, 2005; Shim & Schwartz, 2007).

While negative pre-migration experiences contribute to psychological trauma, negative post-migration experiences involve facing the constant challenge of balancing refugee cultural practices and behaviors with those of the dominant culture in the United States (Ellis, MacDonald, Lincoln & Cabral, 2008; Hassouneh & Kulwicki, 2007; Jamil, Nassar-McMillan & Lambert, 2007; Nicolas, Desilva, Prater & Bronkoski, 2009; Schwebel & Hodari, 2005; Yost & Lucas, 2002). Many psychosocial issues among refugee immigrants in the United States are worsened by a combination of both pre-migration and post-migration experiences, usually involving past trauma, low socio-economic level, grief, low English literacy and low job skills (Ellis, MacDonald, Lincoln & Cabral, 2008; Fortuna, Porche & Alegria, 2008; Robertson, Halcon, Savik, Johnson, Spring, Butsher, Westermeyer & Jaranson, 2006).

Although forced migration experiences give rise to various psychosocial issues among refugee immigrants in the United States, particularly in the early stages of

resettlement, successful adaptation in the host country has been linked to post-migration

process involving different forms of coping strategies and availability of social support

(Beiser, 2006; Simich, Beiser & Mawani, 2003; Thomas & Choi, 2006). In addition,

acculturation has been identified as the major key player in the process (Landrine &

Klonoff, 2004; Ngo, Tran, Gibbons & Oliver, 2001). Based on those facts, psychosocial

and environmental factors of acculturation and the role they play on post-migration

experiences have been the focus of a large proportion of studies of various refugee

immigrant groups in the United States (Burman & Tran, 2008; Constantine et al., 2010;

Smith, 2008).

Refugee immigrants in United States have patterns of cultural beliefs, values, and

behaviors (Magno, 2008; Marin & Gamba, 2003). Refugee immigrants in the United

States also have wide variations in demographic characteristics (Constantine et al., 2010;

Franz, 2003; Haines & Rosenblum, 2010; Piedra & Engstrom, 2009; Quintiliani, 2009;

Winders, 2006). Each of these demographic characteristics contributes to adaptation and

performance in their host communities in the United States (Piedra & Engstrom, 2009).

During the acculturation process, many refugee immigrants in the United States

change their social and work activities as well as their thinking patterns, values and self-

identification (Constantine et al., 2010; Shim & Schwartz, 2007; Smith, 2008). Their

attitudes and behaviors are gradually modified as a result of contact with the new culture

(Constantine et al., 2010; Shim & Schwartz, 2007). Many refugee immigrants in the

United States identify with the dominant culture by rejecting key aspects of their cultural

norms and beliefs (Constantine et al., 2010; Shim & Schwartz, 2007). While some

manage to assimilate into the dominant culture, others achieve bicultural integration by

identifying with both their culture and American culture (Constantine et al., 2010; Shim & Schwartz, 2007). How an individual acculturates depends on various psychosocial factors, including one's acculturation mechanisms (Berry, 2003), one's stage of cultural identity development, (Sue & Sue, 2003), and geographical location of the host community (Miller, Birman, Zenk, Wang, Sorokin & Connor, 2009).

For many refugees, the process of acculturation which occurs following many losses represents an enormous threat and challenge to coping and adaptive capacities in their host communities (Kibreak, 2004). This difficult process can sometimes be accompanied by far-reaching psychosocial consequences (Shim & Schwartz, 2007). The acculturation process may contribute to degree of a refugee immigrant's mental health status, overall well-being, social conflicts, attitudes toward services in the host community, and general life satisfaction (Shim & Schwartz, 2007; Wong et al., 2006). During acculturation process, structural confusion, cultural conflict, and cultural alienation may disturb the drive toward clarity, consistency, and continuity, thus becoming sources of psychosocial stress for any refugee immigrant going through the process (Miller, 2004; Yunjin Oh, Koeske & Sales, 2002). During the process of acculturation, negative reactions to the physical location of the host community may also disrupt social ties and the supportive functions of a refugee immigrant's own ethnic networks (Brit, Espen & Lackland, 2004).

The acculturation process has been found to be particularly difficult for refugee immigrants who try to function effectively in their new environment while simultaneously attempting to negotiate whether to maintain traditional values or accommodate a new identity with new cultural norms or standards (Shim & Schwartz,

2007). That is one reason adjustment difficulties are greatest among refugee immigrants

who are from a culture that is highly different from the host culture (Shim & Schwartz,

2007). Adjustment problems resulting from the acculturation process not only affect one

single refugee immigrant, but they can have a negative impact on all refugee family

members, sometimes at the same time (Berger, 2000; Fong, 2004).

During the acculturation process, the burden of losses of the 'webs' of

relationships sometimes becomes too taxing to bear and results in a breakdown of the old

social order and way of life (Kibreak, 2004). Some refugee families adapt to such

dramatic changes in gender-role change (Kibreak, 2004; Park, 2008; Quintiliani, 2009).

While some family members react to the changes in a confused, defeatist and chaotic

manner, the need to provide for family members may consequently force others to waste

no time and engage in unskilled jobs without being constrained by their previous

economic or social statuses (Kibreak, 2004; Park, 2008). All discomforts resulting from

facing different cultural norms are described as acculturative stress, or stress arising

uniquely from the process of acculturation (Miller, Birman, Zenk, Wang, Sorokin &

Connor, 2009; Yunjin Oh, Koeske & Sales, 2002).

Due to various psychosocial issues involved in forced migration and adaptation to

host communities, some refugee immigrants in the United States rely heavily on the

assistance of services which orient them to life in their new environment (Smith, 2008;

Quintiliani, 2009; Vissicaro, 2009). However, because of partial understanding of issues

involved in forced migration, many of these services, which are necessary and vital,

sometimes use ineffective interventions (Bloemraad, 2008; Fallitt, 2008; Morland,

Duncan, Hoebing, Kirschke & Schmidt, 2005; Quintiliani, 2009; Vissicaro, 2009; Willis

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& Buck, 2007). Some psychosocial interventions for refugees resettled in the United

States often overlook negative migration experiences and resulting posttraumatic stress

reactions (Knipscheer & Kleber, 2006; Morland, Duncan, Hoebing, Kirschke & Schmidt,

2005; Willis & Buck, 2007). In addition, the current U.S system does not always

incorporate cultural sensitivity in refugee services either (Faist, 2000; Morland, Duncan,

Hoebing, Kirschke & Schmidt, 2005; Quintiliani, 2009; Vissicaro, 2009). For instance,

most federal services provided to refugees resettled in the United States tend to visualize

these people as a uniform group of helpless victims (Pottier, 2002; Quintiliani, 2009).

These services also foster an attitude which ignores the refugee situation by overlooking

differences in demographic characteristics as well as migration experiences which play a

major role in the adaptation process in the host country (Morland, Duncan, Hoebing,

Kirschke & Schmidt, 2005; Quintiliani, 2009; Vissicaro, 2009). Consequently, some of

these refugee services lacking cultural sensitivity often create a sense of forced amnesia

that represses personal histories, denies differences, and submerges individual traits and

values, creating resettlement and adaptation issues (Quintiliani, 2009; Vissicaro, 2009).

　　　Many refugee immigrants in the United States make efforts to adapt to their social

environment (Franz, 2003; Szente, Hoot & Taylor, 2006; Piedra & Engstrom, 2009).

However, during the adaptation process, the matter of acculturative stress becomes vital

to their experiences (Derluyn & Broekaert, 2007; Quintiliani, 2009). Therefore,

psychosocial interventions with members of this population need to always incorporate

cultural sensitivity (Derluyn & Broekaert, 2007; Fallitt, 2008; Hendricks & Fong, 2006;

Nordanger, Mjaaland & Lie, 2006; Segal & Mayadas, 2005; Young, Marshall & Valach,

2007). In addition to the need of culturally sensitive interventions in refugee services,

forced migration experiences, resettlement, and adaptation to host communities always create a need for research studies (Croegaert, 2010; Derluyn & Broekaert, 2007; Ehntholt & Yule, 2006; Hart, 2009; McGuire & Martin, 2007; Piedra & Engstrom, 2009). That is one reason this qualitative research explores acculturative stress, coping, and approaches to working with refugee immigrants in the United States. Learning to identify psychosocial factors which contribute to acculturative stress and how refugee immigrants in the United States cope with them is one way to develop cultural competency and potential effective services for this population.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, disproportionately large numbers of various groups of immigrants

from different geographical locations worldwide came to the United States (Allen, 2009;

Charles, 2006; Franz, 2003; Hume & Hardwick, 2005; Pine & Drachman, 2005; Segal &

Mayadas, 2005; Snyder, May, Zulcic & Gabbard, 2005). While these various groups of

immigrants come to create new lives in the United States, the country has been

undergoing rapid demographic change which in turn contributes to the adaptation process

of newcomers (Abu-Ghazaleh, 2009; Allen, 2009; Cornelius, Tsuda, Martin & Hollifield,

2004; Dalla, Ellis & Cramer, 2005; Silka, 2007; Snyder, May, Zulcic & Gabbard, 2005;

Takougang & Tidjani, 2009; Qingwen, 2007).

During the last four decades, the number of immigrants in the United States has

increased from 9.6 million to 28.4 million (Silka, 2007). Today, the growth of

immigrants in the United States constitutes 70% of the annual population increase (Bean

& Stevens, 2003; Silka, 2007). This means one out of every ten people in the United

States comes from either a regular immigrant or an immigrant from a refugee background

(Chi-Ying Chung, Bemak, Ortiz & Sandoval-Perez, 2008; Hickey, 2005).

Who Are Refugees?

Refugees are people who are forced to leave their countries because of a well

founded fear of persecution based on religious, ethnic, political, or social reasons

(Ehntholt & Yule, 2006; Fazel, Wheeler & Danesh, 2005; Goodkind & Deacon, 2004;

Salehyan, 2007). Refugees are also considered humanitarian migrants since they are

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forced to migrate due to a fear of persecution in favor of an uncertain future elsewhere (Rubin & Moore, 2007; Vissicaro, 2009).

The refugee problem has become one of the outstanding achievements of the 20th century in the humanitarian field (Charles, 2006; Iqbal & Zorn, 2007; Weis, 1995). Since World War II, an international refugee regime developed a differentiated capacity to respond to refugee problems on a global scale (Bernstein & Weiner, 1999). In 1946, the United Nations General Assembly established the International Refugee Organization, IRO, which took over the United Nation's Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (UNRRA) (Bernstein & Weiner, 1999). The same organization received a temporary mandate to register, protect, resettle, and repatriate refugees (Bernstein & Weiner, 1999). When it became evident that the responsibility for refugees deserved further international effort, the UN General Assembly established the Office of High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in its resolution 319 A (IV) of December 3rd, 1949 (Bernstein & Weiner, 1999). The UNHCR was to be in charge of providing international protection to refugees and to seek related durable solutions by assisting governments in facilitating the voluntary repatriation of refugees or their integration within new national communities (Bernstein & Weiner, 1999).

The 1951 Refugee Convention

On July 28th 1951, members of the United Nations signed a convention relating to the status of refugees which had been drafted as a result of a recommendation by the newly established United Nation Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) (Bernstein & Weiner, 1999; Matas & Simon, 1989; Weis, 1995). This convention was a landmark in

setting standards for the treatment of refugees (Weis, 1995). In addition to formulating the legal definition of the term "refugee" (as stated in article 1of the Refugee Convention), the minimum standards for treatment of refugees was set including the basic rights to which they are entitled (Bernstein & Weiner, 1999). This Convention, unfortunately, could benefit only persons who had become refugees as a result of events occurring prior to January 1st, 1951 (Bernstein & Weiner, 1999). Throughout the late 1950s and 1960s, new refugee groups, which emerged in particular in Africa, were in need of protection but did not qualify under the limited time frame of the 1951 Convention (Bernstein & Weiner, 1999; Weis, 1995). Consequently, the 1967 Protocol relating to the status of refugees was drafted as well (Bernstein & Weiner, 1999). This protocol extended the application of the Convention to the situation of new refugees who met these criteria and who had become refugees as a result of events that took place after January 1st, 1951(Bernstein & Weiner, 1999; Matas & Simon, 1989; Weis, 1995). The Convention gave rights and protection to refugees by expressing the desire for all states to recognize the social and humanitarian nature of the problem of refugees, and by stating that all should be done to prevent this problem from becoming the cause of tension between states (Charles, 2006; Salehyan, 2007; Weis, 1995). Today, countries that signed this convention are expected to abide by it, as well as to provide humanitarian assistance to those who qualify as refugees (Weis, 1995). The 1951 Convention and its 1967 protocol state the legal definition of refugees focusing on three elements:

- Must have a well-founded fear of persecution on the basis of race, religion, nationality, social group, or political opinion.
- Must be outside his or her country.

- Cannot or will not, out of fearfulness, seek protection of his or her own
  government (Nicholl & Thompson, 2004).

The current refugee demography is about 9.9 million worldwide (Grodin, Piwowarczyk, Fulker, Bazazi & Saper, 2008). While refugees flee against their will because of fear for their lives, they are pushed from their social, cultural and economic status by events that are perceived to be potentially or imminently threatening to their physical safety, security, dignity, liberty and property (Burds, 2007; Colic-Peisker, 2005; Kibreak, 2004). Refugee migrations are generated by civil wars, ethnic conflicts, economic depressions, and wars between countries or other forms of generalized violence (Levine, 2001; Lischer, 2007; Melander & Öberg, 2007; Snyder, May, Zulcic & Gabbard, 2005; Teklemariam, 2005).

Refugees represent a multitude of cultures, ethnicities and experiences (Goodkind & Deacon, 2004; Haines & Rosenblum, 2010; Kusow, 2006). Many refugees share certain similar circumstances, such as overcoming past traumas, dealing with difficulties of life in refugee camps or facing the challenges of adjusting to life in a new environment (Bhui et al., 2003; Miller, Worthington, Muzurovic, Tipping, & Goldman, 2002; Schweitzer, Melville, Steel & Lacheriz, 2006; Snyder, Zulcic & Gabbard, 2005). However, refugees are not homogeneous groups of people (Stutters & Ligon, 2001). They differ in terms of socioeconomic background or status, occupation, race or ethnicity, religion and geographical origin or nationality (Haines, 2007; Haines & Rosenblum, 2010; Kibreak, 2004).

Refugees also differ in terms of pre-migration experiences which initially forced them to flee (Kibreak, 2004; Okamoto & Wilkes, 2008). For instance, some refugees

may flee after being subjected to horrible treatments while others may flee in anticipation of an impending danger (Kibreak, 2004; Okamoto & Wilkes, 2008; Teklemariam, 2005). Refugee movements also involve different experiences (Kibreak, 2004; Okamoto & Wilkes, 2008). Some refugees may flee individually because of fear or threat of persecution, or a whole community may flee because of the threat to their collective safety and security (Kibreak, 2004; Teklemariam, 2005). While some refugee movements may be less dangerous than others, their destinations may also be different (Kibreak, 2004; Teklemariam, 2005). Not only do all these conditions mitigate or exacerbate the extent and consequences of the losses suffered by those who are forced to flee, but they are also likely to have a noticeable impact on the process of recovery (Haines & Rosenblum, 2010; Kibreak, 2004).

The exact numbers of refugees who are exposed to situations producing psychological trauma worldwide is not always well known (Levine, 2001). However, organizations such as Amnesty International, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the U.S. Committee for Refugees have made big efforts in obtaining international demographic data and information on the type and magnitude of human rights abuses frequently occurring worldwide (Crisp, 2000; Levine, 2001; Teklemariam, 2005). These organizations confirmed that many current refugees who endure traumatic exposures to violence come from countries where there may be a long-standing conflict related to racial, cultural, religious or political differences which are often used by all sides involved in the civil war to target or exploit the civilian population (Greenhill, 2008; Levine, 2001). Torture, including beatings, psychological abuse, sexual abuse, witnessing the torture of loved ones, deprivation and burns are part of the various

refugee experiences (Farr, 2009; Fortuna, Porche & Alegria, 2008; Grodin, Piwowarczyk, Fulker, Bazazi & Saper, 2008; Jaranson et al., 2004; Levine, 2001; Quintiliani, 2009; Vissicaro, 2009). These traumatic experiences often lead to severe depression, constant anxiety and frequent thoughts of suicide (Grodin, Piwowarczyk, Fulker, Bazazi & Saper, 2008; Levine, 2001).

Refugee women are a high-risk group for developing severe psychological trauma from migration experiences of violence (Arcel & Kastrup, 2004; Chung, 2001; Farr, 2009; Ndulo, 2009; Reimann, 2009; Vissicaro, 2009). In addition to being vulnerable to violence from forced migration, many refugee women, after losing their spouses, they must learn to adapt to being the primary caretakers of their families and sole providers of their household (Chung, 2001; Hyndman, 2010; Magno, 2008).

Refugee migration has become an international phenomenon affecting those uprooted, the communities that feel the impact of their arrival and agencies which provide services to them (Colson, 2003; Magno, 2008; Vissicaro, 2009). Since refugee migration is still considered one of today's problems, it has become a matter of concern for many nations and has forced them to develop refugee immigration policies and services (Colic-Peisker, 2005; Zoysa, 2006). That is how some countries have refugee resettlement programs (Colic-Peisker, 2005; Tazreiter, 2004; Zoysa, 2006).

U.S. Refugee Resettlement Policy

A large number of refugee immigrants from different countries who come to the United States settle at different geographical locations, which results in an increase in ethnic diversity across the country (Brown, Mott & Malecki, 2007; Charles, 2006; Franz,

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2003; Smith, 2008; Winders, 2006). Part of the reason different groups of refugee

immigrants like to come to the United States is that the country has always welcomed

immigrants as a way of reinforcing its foundational beliefs and values, cementing its

national identity as a country extolling both individual freedom and opportunity (Clapp,

2009; Zoysa, 2006).

The Refugee Act of 1980

The refugee resettlement process in the United States involves a complex

procedure (Vialet, 2000; Willis & Buck, 2007). The current US refugee resettlement

program is mostly the product of the Refugee Act of 1980 (Barnett, 2002; Charles, 2006;

Quintiliani, 2009; Vialet, 2000). This act which modernized U.S refugee policy provides

guidelines and categories for refugee admission (Charles, 2006; Cox & Rodriguez, 2009;

Vialet, 2000). Based on this act, the United States also supports the international legal

standards that made asylum a matter of right rather than a personal choice (Charles,

2006). In addition, the Refugee Act of 1980 established a presidential privilege for

deciding on annual allocation after consultation with Congress to determine refugee

admission numbers for the fiscal year (Charles, 2006; Franz, 2003; Singer & Wilson,

2007).

In order to qualify under the US resettlement program, a refugee must normally;

be of a designated nationality and fall within the priority categories for that nationality in

that region; be referred by a US embassy, United Nation High Commissions for Refugees

(UNHCR) or a non-governmental organization (NGO); Meet the definition of refugee

(Newbold, 2002).

Priority Categories

Priority categories are used to determine a refugee's qualification for entry in the United States (Singer & Wilson, 2007). In order to qualify for an interview with the US resettlement program, a refugee must fall under either priority one, two, or three, as defined by the U.S Department of State (Singer & Wilson, 2007).

Priority one involves referrals from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as well as non-governmental agency (NGO) or Embassy identification of persons who are facing compelling security concerns in countries of first asylum (Singer & Wilson, 2007). These individuals may include; persons in need of legal protection because of danger of refoulement; those in danger due to threats of armed attack in an area where they are located; and former political prisoners (Singer & Wilson, 2007). Women at risk, victims of torture or violence, physically or mentally disabled and persons in urgent need of medical treatment not available in the country of first asylum are also referred (Singer & Wilson, 2007).

Priority two involves groups of special concern to the U.S. (Singer & Wilson, 2007). These individuals may include former political prisoners; members of persecuted religious minorities; human rights activists; forced-labor conscripts; persons deprived of their professional credentials or subjected to other disproportionately harsh or discriminatory treatment due to their political or religious beliefs or activities (Singer & Wilson, 2007).

Priority three involves spouse, unmarried children under 21 years of age, and parent(s) of a person admitted to the U.S. as a refugee or granted asylum in the U.S. or spouse, unmarried children, and parent(s) of a person who is a lawful permanent resident

or U.S. citizen and was initially admitted to the U.S. as a refugee or granted asylum
(Hidalgo & Bankston, 2008; Newbold, 2002).

U.S Refugee Resettlement Agencies

The major U.S government agencies involved in refugee resettlement include
Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) under the Department of State,
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) under the Department of Homeland
Security (DHS) and Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), under the Department of
Health and Human Services (Mason, 1999).

Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration

This department directs U.S. admission policies and coordinates the overseas
processing of refugees (Franz, 2003). The same department is also responsible for the
transportation and initial resettlement of refugee newcomers as well as administering
U.S. aid to most overseas programs that assist refugees (www.state.gov/g/prm).

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services are under the Department of
Homeland Security (DHS). Most refugee functions previously handled by Immigration
and Naturalization Services are now in Department of Homeland Security/U.S.
Citizenship and Immigration Services. DHS/USCIS field officers are responsible for
making individual refugee status determinations abroad (www.uscis.gov).

Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)

The Office of Refugee Resettlement under the Department of Health and Human Services administers federal funding to state and local programs that assist refugees, including cash and medical assistance (Franz, 2003). In addition to funding special programs for social services, English language training and employment services, the Office of Refugee Resettlement also oversees programs for unaccompanied children and foster care services (www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/orr/).

In addition, there are various Non Profit Organizations located in cities and towns throughout the United States which also provide services to newcomers (Morland, Duncan, Hoebing, Kirschke & Schmidt, 2005). Their mission is to meet the basic needs of refugees while encouraging them to become self sufficient (Morland, Duncan, Hoebing, Kirschke & Schmidt, 2005).

The Refugee Experience in the United States

The refugee population comprises about 10 percent of annual immigration to the United States (Abu-Ghazaleh, 2009; Singer & Wilson, 2007; Snyder, May, Zulcic & Gabbard, 2005). Many of those who migrate to the country manage to attain considerable economic and educational success (Birman & Tran, 2008; Charles, 2006; Haines & Rosenblum, 2010). However, despite those achievements, various psychosocial issues resulting from negative migration experiences are frequently reported within the same population (Fortuna, Porche & Alegria, 2008; Ngo, 2006; Stutters & Ligon, 2001). While some refugee immigrants in the United States perceive their pre-migration experiences to have been challenging, they also believe that their post-

migration experiences in the United States added another layer of confrontation due to the paradoxical climate existing in the country (Teklemariam, 2005; Vissicaro, 2009). Many refugee immigrants in the United States face social and environmental challenges associated with host community reception, and adaptation experiences in their host communities (Ehntholt & Yule, 2006; Ellis, MacDonald, Lincoln & Cabral, 2008; Jamil, Nassar-McMillan & Lambert, 2004; Jamil, Nassar-McMillan & Lambert, 2007; Pine & Drachman, 2005; Segal & Mayadas, 2005; Shim & Schwartz, 2007). These post-migration experiences will be explained from a social cognitive theoretical perspective.

Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory (SCT)**,** earlier known as the social learning theory (SLT), was first introduced by Albert Bandura (Sharma & Romas, 2008). While the word "*social*" refers to the social origins of thought and action, "*cognitive*" refers to the influential causal contributions of thought processes to human motivation, affect, and action (Sharma & Romas, 2008). The word *"theory"* suggests that this model has been empirically tested and that the set of constructs in this model can explain, describe, predict, or control behavior (Sharma & Romas, 2008).

Bandura (2004) defined social cognitive theory as one which specifies a core set of determinants, the mechanism through which they work, and the optimal ways of translating this knowledge into effective practices. Bandura (2001 & 2004) defined the core determinants as including; knowledge of risks and benefits of different practices; perceived self-efficacy that one can exercise control over one's habits; outcome expectations about the expected costs and benefits for different habits; the goals people

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set for themselves and the concrete plans and strategies for realizing them; as well as the perceived facilitators and social and structural impediments to the changes they seek.

Social cognitive theory assumes that human behavior can be explained as a triadic reciprocal causation (Bandura, 1986; Sharma & Romas, 2008). One angle of the tripod consists of the behavior. The second and historical perspectives angle consists of environmental factors and the third angle consists of personal factors such as cognitions, affect, and biological events (Bandura, 1986; Sharma & Romas, 2008). The unique interaction among these three dimensions often results in behavior change (Bandura, 1986; Sharma & Romas, 2008).

One of the distinctive features of Social Cognitive Theory is the importance it places on the potential of human beings (Sharma & Romas, 2008). According to this theory, five basic human capabilities, symbolizing, vicarious, forethought, self-regulatory, and self-reflective capabilities, describe human beings (Bandura, 1986; Sharma & Romas, 2008).

The first such capability is the symbolizing capability, which refers to the use of symbols in attributing meaning to experiences (Sharma & Romas, 2008). It is an important tool for understanding, creating, and managing one's environment since most environmental events act through cognitive interpretation rather than directly (Sharma & Romas, 2008). By using symbols, according to Sharma and Romas (2008), people give structure, meaning, and continuity to their experiences. Sharma and Romas (2008) stated that the symbolizing capability also helps in communicating with others at any distance, time, and space.

The vicarious capability refers to the ability to learn from observing other

people's behavior and the consequences they face (Sharma & Romas, 2008). According to Sharma and Romas (2008), this ability is important because it enables people to generate and regulate behavior without tedious trial and error. Sharma and Romas (2008) stated that some complex skills can be mastered through modeling which is not simply a process of response mimicry but entails creativity and innovativeness as well.

Sharma and Romas (2008) referred forethought capability to the fact that most behavior is purposive and regulated by prior thoughts and human beings motivate themselves and plan their actions using their forethought capability. Although future events do not have actual existence, those events can be imagined and can serve as motivators in the present (Sharma & Romas, 2008). Usually, the course of action that is likely to bring positive rewards is easily adopted, whereas the course that is likely to produce negative outcomes is not adopted (Bandura, 1986; Sharma & Romas, 2008).

Self-regulatory capability refers to setting internal standards and self-evaluative reactions for one's behavior (Sharma & Romas, 2008). Self-satisfaction is gained from meeting desirable standards, and dissatisfaction results from below-standard performance (Sharma & Romas (2008). Human beings are proactive and constantly form challenging goals for themselves, which also play an important role in self-regulation (Sharma & Romas, 2008).

The final capability is self-reflective capability, which is the analysis of experiences and examination of one's own thought processes (Bandura, 1986). Sharma and Romas (2008) stated that human beings are not just agents of action, but also self-examine and critique their own actions. They generate ideas and act upon them based on an anticipated outcome (Bandura, 1986; Sharma & Romas, 2008).

In his recent work, Bandura has emphasized on self-efficacy, the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the sources of action required to manage prospective situations *(*Camgoz, Tektas & Metin, 2008*;* Sharma *&* Romas, 2008). Individual's efficacy expectations are the major determinant of goal setting, activity choice, willingness to expend effort and persistence (Camgoz, Tektas & Metin, 2008). Self-efficacy beliefs regulate human functioning through cognitive, motivational, affective, and decisional processes (Bandura, 1997). As it may be the case in the refugee experience in the United States, these beliefs affect whether individuals think in self-enhancing or self-debilitating ways, how well they motivate themselves and persevere in the face of difficulties, the quality of their emotional well-being and their vulnerability to stress and depression, and the choices they make at important decisional points (Bandura & Locke, 2003).

Social cognitive theory acknowledges the influential role of evolved factors in human adaptation and change (Sharma & Romas, 2008). That is one reason the theory was selected to explain the adaptation experience of refugee immigrants in the United States.

Refugees who come to the United States have patterns of attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviors that are transmitted through cultural socialization (Marin & Gamba, 2003). In addition, refugees who come to the United States have wide variations in age, education, occupational skills, wealth, and some with high English proficiency (Haines & Rosenblum, 2010; Piedra & Engstrom, 2009). Each of these factors contributes to their adaptation and performance in the United States (Haines & Rosenblum, 2010; Piedra & Engstrom, 2009).

Previous research reported that highly educated and skilled adult refugees from countries that have close cultural similarities with the United States, as well as refugee immigrants who are willing to work hard are better able to easily adapt themselves to U.S. society, than those who come with little education, low levels of literacy and no exposure to complex social institutions and technology (Piedra & Engstrom, 2009). Highly educated refugee immigrants from countries with close similarities with the United State culture also have greater potential to access high wage work that is more likely to lead to rapid social mobility in the host country (Piedra & Engstrom, 2009). In addition, refugee immigrants who possess considerable educational levels and social skills that are valued in the United States encounter a more hospitable environment and have greater opportunity to regulate their situations and their family situations than those with lower education and lower social skills (Piedra & Engstrom, 2009; Quintiliani, 2009). Lower educated refugee immigrants in the United States may also have many more cultural disadvantages to overcome since competencies they developed in their native societies may not fit well in their host communities (Piedra & Engstrom, 2009; Quintiliani, 2009).

Previous research also revealed that cultural differences and notions of the new refugee immigrants in some host communities in the United States produce tension and social boundaries that isolate some groups of refugee newcomers (Teklemariam, 2005; Vissicaro, 2009). Consequently, the perceived inability of some refugee newcomers to freely interact with the rest of their host community members sometimes leads to distrust and apprehension (Vissicaro, 2009; Wong et al., 2006). The lack of interaction between regular host community members and refugee newcomers sometimes intensifies the

challenge of resettlement, adjustment, and service access (Vissicaro, 2009; Wong et al., 2006).

Due to the negative effects of forced migration, some refugee immigrants in the United States lose or leave behind the support network of close family members and friends that can provide support for personal adjustment (Bolea, Grant, Burgess & Plasa, 2003; Kibriak, 2004; Yost & Lukas, 2002). Since these members used to be more interdependent on each other, the separation of these family members who immigrate to the United States from those who stay behind becomes extremely stressful to them (Chung, 2001; Yost & Lukas, 2002). Often, these newcomers have great difficulty handling separation and individualization among family members, and, therefore, this interferes with the progress of learning adaptive skills in their new environment (Yost & Lukas, 2002).

Resettlement of some refugees in the United States may also mean the loss of community support since not only the customary support system that includes extended family, community leaders and spiritual leaders may be unavailable, but also, the resettlement policy may be to disperse them throughout the United States, which often increases their feelings of social isolation (Chung, 2001). In addition, many refugee immigrants in the United States may be experiencing survivor's guilt and haunted by the guilt of successfully escaping from their home country, while leaving relatives and friends behind in a potentially dangerous situation (Chang, 2004). Often, the lack of information about relatives who have been left behind frequently adds to the already existing guilt, experience of nostalgia, depression, anxiety and frustration that interferes with successful adjustment (Chung, 2001; Yost & Lukas, 2002).

While negative migration experiences create psychosocial issues which may interfere with adjustments of refugee immigrants in their host communities in the United States, acculturation has been identified as an important predictor of psychological adaptation and a mediator to post-migration experiences (Birman & Tran, 2008; Ehntholt & Yule, 2006; Jamil, Nassar-McMillan & Lambert, 2007; Keller, Lhewa, Rosenfeld, Sachs, Aladjem & Cohen, 2006; Landrine & Klonoff, 2004).

Definition of Acculturation

In order to better understand the meaning of acculturation, one has to first understand the definition of a culture. Wright and Zimmerman (2006) defined a culture as a set of learned variables or loosely organized systems of meanings shared by an identifiable group of people which shape their ways of living. According to Wright and Zimmerman (2006), these systems of meaning shape peoples' ways of living which include; beliefs, values, goals and other foundations of social exchange. These systems of meaning also organize group members' associated psychological processes and behaviors, including social norms, communication styles and rituals, to adapt successfully within a particular eco-cultural niche (Wright & Zimmerman, 2006). Wright and Zimmerman (2006) defined an eco-cultural niche as one that represents the cultural and ecological contexts in which individuals live out their daily lives.

Based on the given definition of a culture, one then can define acculturation as the process through which an individual's cultural behaviors and values change via contact with a majority or host culture (Abraído-Lanza, Armbrister, Flórez & Aguirre, 2006; Berry, Birman & Tran, 2008; Landrine & Klonoff, 2004; Schwebel & Hodari, 2005).

Acculturation has been conceptualized on a continuum from full endorsement of the language, values, norms, interests and behavioral patterns of the traditional or non-dominant culture to full adoption of the language, values, interests and behavioral patterns of the host or dominant culture (Birman & Tran, 2008; Beiser, 2006; Landrine & Klonoff, 2004; Ngo, Tran, Gibbons, & Oliver, 2001; Pasch, Deardorff, Tschann, Flores, Penilla & Pantoja, 2006). The process of acculturation is also viewed as involving changes in both behaviors and attitudes (Kim, Atkinson & Umemoto, 2001; Yeh et al., 2008). The behavioral dimension of acculturation involves more overt, observable characteristics of one's cultural practices which may include behaviors such as speaking, reading and writing in one's native language, eating foods identified with one's own culture, dressing in clothes that display one's native country, and celebrating one's national or cultural holidays (Shim & Schwartz, 2007). Acculturation also involves the importance placed on one's native values versus the host country's values (Chang, Tracey & Moore, 2005; Yeh et al, 2008). Decisions about one's values thereby affect one's perceptions, cognitions, experiences, morals, and ultimately one's personal identity (Chang, Tracey & Moore, 2005; Perres & Rollock, 2004).

Even though acculturation process arises as a result of the interaction between the non-dominant and the dominant groups, not all refugee immigrants in the United States enter into, deals with, or react to the acculturative event in the same way (Chung, 2001; Landrine & Klonoff, 2004; Miller et al, 2009). A number of acculturation studies revealed that acculturation predictive factors can broadly be divided into two categories, the first category being comprised of features of the original and host society such as: cultural, economic, political and social (Wei-Chin & Wood, 2009), and the other

category involving individual characteristics such as: age, gender, marital status, education, length of sojourn, personality, coping strategies, acculturation strategies, social support and the need for cognitive closure (Kosick, 2004; Wei-Chin & Wood, 2009). The expectations one holds or expect to hold in the host country also contribute to one's acculturation process (Haines & Rosenblum, 2010; Yost & Lukas, 2002).

During the acculturation process, different changes occur (Wei-Chin & Wood, 2009). First, refugee immigrants in the United States may experience environmental changes caused by housing conditions, increased population density, and pollution (Nwadiora & McAdoo, 1996). Second, refugee immigrants in the United States may experience biological change due to different types of food (Nwadiora & McAdoo, 1996). Refugee immigrants in the United States may also experience social change due to geographical location of resettlement (Landrine & Klonoff, 2004; Nwadiora & McAdoo, 1996). If the host community has a pluralistic society, acceptance of incoming cultures is more likely to be valued and without pressure from the dominant group for change, many customs are maintained (Nwadiora & McAdoo, 1996). However, if the host community is not open to different cultures, the unique qualities of refugee immigrants are often devalued (Nwadiora & McAdoo, 1996). As a result, according to Nwadiora and McAdoo (1996), there is considerable pressure to conform until the minority group is absorbed by the larger society, then those who cannot conform are expelled. The degree to which refugee immigrants interact with the majority culture usually depends heavily on the characteristics or demographics of refugee newcomers and host community's acceptance of those newcomers (Landrine & Klonoff, 2004; Miller et al., 2009).

The three main processes underlying the modes of acculturation are the contact period, which is the initial phase wherein the two distinct cultures meet; the conflict period, wherein the incoming culture experiences pressure to change exerted by the dominant culture, which, in turn, may result in a crisis of confusion of identity; and the resolution period, wherein conflicts may be resolved through acculturation (Kosic, 2004; Nwadiora & McAdoo, 1996). All persons in the acculturation process face two important questions (Nwadiora & McAdoo (1996). The first question they ask themselves is whether their cultural identity is of value and, if so, they ask themselves if it should be retained (Nwadiora & McAdoo (1996). The second question they ask themselves, according to Nwadiora and McAdoo (1996) is to whether positive relationships with the dominant culture are worth seeking. The response to these questions leads to one of the four distinct types of acculturation: assimilation, integration, rejection, or deculturation (Kosic, 2004; Nwadiora & McAdoo, 1996).

Assimilation entails the abandonment of the refugee's own cultural identity and the assumption of the characteristics of the larger culture (Nwadiora & McAdoo (1996; Ryder, Alden & Paulhus, 2000; Smokowski & Bacallao, 2007). During integration, the incoming group attempts to maintain its cultural identity while still becoming an integral part of the larger society (Nwadiora & McAdoo, 1996). Rejection occurs when the incoming group desires to maintain its own culture by avoiding the influence of the larger society (Nwadiora & McAdoo, 1996). According to Nwadiora and McAdoo (1996), deculturation occurs when the incoming group continues to strike out against the larger society due to intense identity confusion and alienation. Nwadiora and McAdoo (1996) also stated that the individual experiencing deculturation often loses contact with both its

own culture and the values of the larger society. One of the most obvious and frequently reported consequences of acculturation is marginality which results when this choice is made by the dominant culture (Nwadiora & McAdoo, 1996). Kosic (2004) reported that marginality or societal disintegration can result in personal crisis. According to Kosic (2004), during marginality, the old social order and cultural norms often disappear, and individuals may be disturbed by the change. At the group level, previous patterns of authority, civility and welfare no longer operate, and at the individual level, hostility, uncertainty, identity confusion and depression may set in (Kosic, 2004; Miller et al., 2009).

Research studies which attempted to identify the cultural and psychological factors that govern the relationship between acculturation and mental health revealed that although mental health problems often do arise during acculturation, these problems are not inevitable (Kosic, 2004). While acculturation may positively contribute to one's mental health and life outcome, it may also destroy one's ability to carry on, depending on a variety of group and individual characteristics that enter into the acculturation process (Kosic, 2004; Walker, 2007). The different changes which constitute the negative side of acculturation often result in psychological stress (Jang, Kim & Chiriboga, 2009; Kosic, 2004). The psychological stress which also affects many refugee immigrants during the acculturation process has been defined as acculturative stress (Kosick, 2004; Roysircai-Sodowsky & Maestas, 2000; Schwebel & Hodari, 2005; Walker, 2007).

Acculturative Stress and Contributing Factors

Acculturative stress is defined as a type of stress from which contributing factors result from the process of acculturation (Wrobel, Farrag & Hymes, 2009). While different immigrant groups in the United States have various psychosocial stressors associated with forced migration, stress related to acculturation also involves problems unique to same groups of people, usually difficulties with adjusting to the culture of the host country (Wrobel, Farrag & Hymes, 2009; Walker, 2007).

Previous research studies examining acculturative stress revealed that this type of stress can have a negative impact on a refugee immigrant's psychosocial well-being (Torres and Rollock, 2004; Wrobel, Farrag & Hymes, 2009). A refugee immigrant experiencing acculturative stress may exhibit a particular set of stress-related behaviors that include anxiety, depression, suicide ideation, feelings of marginality and alienation, heightened psychosomatic symptoms, and identity confusion (Kosic, 2004; Landrine & Klonoff, 2004). Consequently, acculturative stress may contribute to the reduction in health status such as physical, psychological and social health (Chung, 2001; Kosic, 2004; Landrine & Klonoff, 2004).

The level of acculturative stress depends on various psychosocial factors which are based on characteristics that were present prior to migration and those that developed during acculturation (Kosic, 2004). For instance, previous research studies revealed that pre-migration factors comprised of prior knowledge of the language and culture of the host country, prior intercultural encounters of any kind, and motives for the contact and attitudes toward acculturation may enhance one's ability to function more or less effectively under acculturative stress (Kosic, 2004; Wrobel, Farrag & Hymes, 2009). A

refugee immigrant's level of education and employment, values, self-esteem, and Contact

experiences have also been identified as pre-migration attributes that account for

variations in acculturative stress (Kosic, 2004). Post-migration experiences involving

personal, behavioral and environmental factors to acculturative stress among some

groups of immigrants in the United States have also been identified (Landrine & Klonoff,

2004; Roytburd & Friedlander, 2008; Teklemariam, 2005; Wrobel, Farrag & Hymes,

2009; Yost & Lukas, 2002).

Personal Factors

Culture Shock and Related Health Concerns

Culture shock has been defined as the anxiety resulting from contact with a new

culture combined with feelings of confusion, loss and powerlessness that accompany the

loss of old cultural cues and social norms (Yost & Lukas, 2002). Because of the

overwhelming negative strain of post-migration experiences, some refugee immigrants

experience culture shock during their early days in the United States, which sometimes

interferes with their ability to gather information, solve problems and make decisions

(Yost & Lukas, 2002). The degree to which a refugee newcomer experiences culture

shock depends on a variety of factors, some of which involve previous familiarity with

other cultures, amount of preparation for the cultural change, the availability of support

systems, the degree of differences between the newcomer's culture and the host culture,

or differences of individual personalities (Chung, 2001; Yost and Lukas, 2002).

Some groups of refugee immigrants in the United States experience a much

greater culture shock because the difference between their cultural backgrounds and the

host culture is so great (Haines & Rosenblum, 2010; Yost & Lukas, 2002). Others

experience even greater difficulties during the adjustment process because culture shock

is combined with negative pre-migration experiences of having suffered psychological or

physical traumas (Birman & Tran, 2008; Khamphakdy-Brown, Jones, Nilsson, Russell,

Klevens, 2006; Snyder, May, Zulcic & Gabbard, 2005). The experience of culture shock

may have negative effects on new immigrants' health, and may be one of the most

debilitating obstacles to adjustments in the new environment (Yost & Lukas, 2002).

Language Problems

It has become evident that refugee immigrants who possess English skills, who

also know how to navigate complex social organizations, have a big advantage in the

United States (Piedra & Engstrom, 2009). However, while English communication is

important for facilitating adjustment for immigrants in the United States, it is a concern

for those who do not speak the language (Wrobel, Farrag & Hymes, 2009; Yoo & Kim,

2010).

Refugee immigrants in the United States who lack fluency in English are more

likely to have adjustment difficulties (Ellis, MacDonald, Lincoln & Cabral, 2008;

Fortuna, Porche & Alegria, 2008; Yost & Lukas, 2002). When some refugee newcomers

in the United States try to develop English skills, they sometimes experience anxiety and

self-consciousness, termed "second language anxiety," which can cause these newcomers

to make more English mistakes that are publicly embarrassing, resulting in acculturative

stress (Yost & Lucas, 2002).

Loss of Status

Adjusting to many losses that accompany forced migration can have a negative impact on the psychosocial well-being of a refugee immigrant (Kibriak, 2004; Yost & Lukas, 2002). During the adjustment process, the loss of all that was familiar, including friends, places, unique customs, social status and familiar social interactions and behaviors, may become traumatic experiences for many newcomers(Kibreak, 2004; Yost & Lukas, 2002). These experiences may contribute to severe psychological stress such as; feelings of depression as well as symptoms such as suicide ideation, substance abuse, family conflicts, or even domestic violence (Gupta et al., 2009; Yost & Lukas, 2002). The loss of status experienced by many refugee immigrants in the United States may lead to low self-esteem because all of the previously known ways they felt useful, needed, and important within their social environment have disappeared and must be reconstructed (Kibreak, 2004; Yost & Lukas, 2002).

Low Socioeconomic Status

Many refugee immigrants in the United States who have left their previous life and the occupation they had established in their homeland often experience a strong sense of loss (Yost & Lukas, 2002). Some of those who have professional degrees or certificates, upon arrival in the United States, often find their training is not recognized since licensing procedures for a wide variety of occupations in the United States requires graduation from accredited programs, then those who find themselves in a such situation feel a great sense of loss and invalidation (Yost and Lucas, 2002). Acculturative stress may be severe for refugee immigrant men from traditionally paternalistic societies, where

one's occupation and role as provider within the family is considered to be the major

source of identity and self-esteem (Yost & Lucas, 2002).

Role Change

The refugee adjustment to the host culture may allow changes in gender and

family roles, and consequently, create stress and a sense of loss of control and power

(Khamphakdy-Brown, Jones, Nilsson, Russell, & Klevens, 2006). Results from previous

studies have shown that younger refugees acculturate to new environments faster than

older refugees (Chung, Bemak, & Wong, 2000; Porter & Haslam, 2005). For that reason,

refugee children who often are more skilled in the host country's language may be asked

to translate for their parents, causing shifts in family roles (Bemak & Chung, 2000). For

many refugee immigrant women, it is sometimes stressful when it becomes necessary for

them to work outside of the home for the first time in their lives to help support their

families (Khamphakdy-Brown, Jones, Nilsson, Russell, & Klevens, 2006). This

experience usually becomes worse when their husbands are unemployed or

underemployed (Khamphakdy-Brown, Jones, Nilsson, Russell, & Klevens, 2006). The

process of adjustment to cultural changes which causes traditional roles to shift may

contribute to marital discord and conflict, even among cultures where this is rare (Chung,

2001; Yost & Lukas, 2002).

Country of Origin

The country of origin is another post-migration factor which has an impact on the

degree of stress experienced during the process of acculturation (Wrobel, Farrag &

Hymes, 2009). For some groups of refugee immigrants in the United States, the country

of origin not only has a major impact on the acculturation process, but it can also

contribute to identity confusion (Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007). For instance, the different

groups of refugee immigrants in the United States come from countries with different

educational systems and speak one or more of dozens of different languages (Silka,

2007). In the United States, these immigrants enter schools that hold very clear

expectations not only for the youth, but also for their parents (Silka, 2007). While the

youth are expected to respond to the educational opportunities in particular and

prescribed ways, the parents are expected to understand their responsibilities for

encouraging their children and for interacting with children's teachers (Silka, 2007). If

those refugee immigrants come from war-torn countries, the parents may have had

interrupted educations and may find themselves unable to meet school expectations set

out for them (Silka, 2007). Some refugee immigrant parents may not speak English, may

not read messages sent home, or the parents may come from different traditions, ones in

which it would be inappropriate for an uneducated parent to presume to interact with or

offer an opinion to the child's teacher (Silka, 2007). Consequently, these differences may

create issues in refugee immigrant families as well as involved school systems (Silka,

2007; Suarez-Orozco & Suarex-Orozco, 2002).

Levels of Acculturation

Another post-migration factor of acculturative stress among refugee immigrants

in the United States has been linked to mode and phase of acculturation (Kosic, 2004).

Although acculturative stress may increase depressive symptoms, its relationship with

acculturation is perceived to be negative (Yunjin Oh, Koeske & Sales, 2002). Higher

acculturation can lead to lower stress while lower acculturation can lead to higher stress

(Yunjin Oh, Koeske & Sales, 2002). For instance, during the process of acculturation,

refugee immigrants in the United States who feel marginalized may be highly stressed,

and those who seek to remain separate may also be highly stressed (Kosic, 2004). In

contrast, refugee immigrants in the United States who pursue integration are minimally

stressed, and those who assimilate have intermediate levels of stress (Kosic, 2004).

Age

    The age of the newcomer at the time of arrival in the host community appears to

play a role in adjustment in the acculturation process (Choi, 2001; Wrobel, Farrag &

Hymes, 2009). For some groups of refugee immigrants in the United States, a younger

age at the time of immigration is more likely to predict higher levels of acculturation and

greater life satisfaction (Wrobel, Farrag & Hymes, 2009). On the other hand, elderly

refugees who have recently immigrated to the United States may have a greater degree of

difficulty with isolation, limited independence, fear of failure to learn a new language,

and demoralization than younger people (Wrobel, Farrag & Hymes, 2009).

Gender

    The influence of gender on the acculturation process and related stress among

refugee immigrants in the United States is complex and varies in part due to variation in

gender role ideology across cultures (Wrobel, Farrag & Hymes, 2009). Previous research

studies reported that refugee immigrant females have greater difficulty in adapting to the

new culture, with either fewer opportunities to acculturate when remaining in the home,

or stressed by demands of employment coupled with a traditional division of labor in

their families, resulting in a heavy workload (Wrobel, Farrag & Hymes, 2009). Amer

and Hovey (2007) noted that some groups of refugee immigrant women may be uniquely

"at-risk" for mental health and physical problems as they are impacted by pressure to deal

with Western cultural behaviors and influences on their children, while at the same time

experiencing their own social discomfort. Some groups of refugee immigrant women in

the United States, because of their demographic characteristics, they appear to be readily

targeted and discriminated against (Hassouneh & Kulwicki, 2007).

Forced Migration

While a large number of regular immigrants get motivated to come to the United

States for educational or economic opportunities, those with a refugee status may

perceive themselves as having less choice in the decision to leave their country of origin

(Wrobel, Farrag & Hymes, 2009). Based on many psychosocial issues involved in forced

migration, refugee immigrants with a less certain status and a history of mistreatment

may perceive themselves as threatened or treated unfairly by those in the mainstream

group, and thus may feel less inclined to identify with that group (Ajrouch & Jamal,

2007). Previous research studies revealed that due to the negative effects of forced

migration, some refugee immigrants in the United States frequently report feeling down

(Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007; Wrobel, Farrag & Hymes, 2009).

Behavioral Factors

Family Problems

Since children of refugee immigrant families in the United States acculturate more and faster than their parents, this adaptation process often creates a gap in the acculturation level of parents and their children (Ellis, MacDonald, Lincoln & Cabral, 2008; Jones & Trickett, 2005; Morrison & James, 2009; Pasch et al., 2006; Yost & Lukas, 2002). Since young people easily adopt the dominant culture that often clash with the traditional culture of the older generations, these acculturation gaps often affect adolescent behavior, family functioning, and thus producing or exacerbating parent-child conflicts (Ellis, MacDonald, Lincoln & Cabral, 2008; Pasch, Deardorff, Tschann, Flores, Penilla & Pantoja, 2006; Piedra & Engstrom, 2009).

Previous research studies involving refugee immigrants in the United States have identified three types of intergenerational acculturation gaps which often contribute to social problems and stress among some immigrant families in the United States (Piedra & Engstrom, 2009). These types of acculturation gaps have been named: dissonant, consonant, and selective acculturation (Piedra & Engstrom, 2009).

Dissonant acculturation occurs when children from immigrant families learn English and adopt the dominant culture at such an accelerated rate, compared with their parents, that parental authority is undermined and children prematurely free themselves from parental control (Piedra & Engstrom, 2009). In the most extreme instances, role reversal occurs when children's high proficiency of the dominant language and culture puts them at a more social advantage than the parents, often children being expected to serve as translators and mediators in their host communities (Piedra & Engstrom, 2009).

A dissonant acculturation process may diminish the ability of parents to provide critical guidance usually in a context of limited community support and the results from these issues may be cruel (Piedra & Engstrom, 2009).

Consonant acculturation is a process in which there is a gradual loss of an immigrant native language and culture (Piedra & Engstrom, 2009). This gradual loss of language and culture may also have a negative impact on the psychosocial well-being of some refugee immigrants' families in the United States (Piedra & Engstrom, 2009).

Selective acculturation occurs when the learning process of both generations is embedded in an immigrant community that slows down the cultural shift and promotes the partial retention of parents' home language and cultural norms (Piedra & Engstrom, 2009). Selective acculturation is commonly found among homogenious immigrant communities in some geographical locations in the United States (Piedra & Engstrom, 2009).

Previous research reported that intergenerational acculturation gaps among refugee immigrant families in the United States result in acculturative stress when more traditional parents become alienated from their highly Americanized children, then the children, in turn, experience alienation from their less acculturated parents (Pasch et al., 2006; Yoo & Kim, 2010). In an effort to manage these differences, family conflicts erupt, with the parents attempting to restrict the process of acculturation in their children and instead further alienate them from the family and the values of immigrant culture (Nguyan, 2008; Piedra & Engstrom, 2009). Yunjin Oh, Koeske and Sales (2002) as well as Chang, Rhee and Berthold (2008) in their research with refugee immigrants in the United States also reported that family issues involving parental traditionalism and

physical abuse, was associated with higher depression, reflecting the impact of norms in the culture of origin of immigrants. Previous research also revealed that acculturation gaps among refugee immigrant families in the United States are more likely to create adolescent behavior problems, including school problems, emotional problems and alcohol or drug abuse (Leong, Leach, Yeh & Cou, 2007). Higher rates of suicide of elderly refugee immigrants in the United States have been linked to their children's acculturation with its subsequent cultural conflict between generations (Leong, Leach, Yeh & Cou, 2007). Research on intergenerational conflict amon refugee immigrants also revealed that traditional notions of filial piety decreases as acculturation among family members increases, resulting in changed individual and community identities, social isolation, and familial misunderstandings (Leong, Leach, Yeh & Cou, 2007).

Perceived Discrimination

Some groups of refugee immigrants in the United States are more acceptable on grounds of demographic characteristics than others (Kosic, 2004). Those who are less acceptable may experience discrimination and exclusion that may lead to greater stress and health issues (Brondolo et al., 2009; Fortuna, Porche & Alegria, 2008; Moradi & Hasan, 2004; Kosic, 2004; Williams, Neighbors & Jackson, 2008).

Previous research studies involving refugee immigrants in the United States revealed that the kind of reception refugee immigrants receive in their host communities affects strategies for their adaptation such as familial relationships and stability or choices about identification and societal participation (Beiser & Hou, 2001; Cohen & Haberfeld, 2007; Lopez-Gonzalez, Aravena & Hummer, 2005; Potter & Cantarero, 2006; Yost &

Lucas, 2002). In addition, the type of attitude portrayed to refugee immigrants provides an essential context for the settlement of their families and children (Tadmor & Tetlock, 2006). Discrimination has been viewed as having an impact on the level of acculturation utilized in adaptation, with some refugee immigrants choosing to totally assimilate, denying their heritage, and others choosing to remain insulated within their cultural community (Wrobel, Farrag & Hymes, 2009).

Although many refugee immigrants in the United States have a variety of social skills and knowledge they may wish to contribute to the U.S. society, some people in the host community may sometimes see these newcomers as competitors for jobs, housing, food and other basic needs and services in the community then look for ways to discriminate against them (Yost & Lucas, 2002). Different factors contributing to discrimination may include one or a combination of: the general state of the economy, the political mood and trends, employment services available in the host community, and the individual differences in biases, prejudices, and xenophobia (Burr, Jerst, Kwan & Mutchler, 2008; Kosic, 2004; Yost & Lucas, 2002).

Environmental Factors

Length of Time in the United States

The length of time in the United States has also been identified as one of the post-migration factors which contribute to adjustment (Wrobel, Farrag & Hymes, 2009). Research studies examining the impact of length of time on immigrants in the United States noted that recent immigrants displayed either poorer adjustment or greater resistance to cultural change based on how long they have lived in the country (Wrobel,

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Farrag & Hymes, 2009). With greater exposure to the new environment, refugee

immigrants in the United States become more acculturated, either acquiring the host

culture or rejecting it (Wrobel, Farrag & Hymes, 2009).

Time of Entry

Previous research studies reported that the time some groups of refugee

immigrants come to the United States is meaningful for them (Wrobel, Farrag & Hymes,

2009). Self-identification and related acculturation may vary a great deal depending

upon the time period during which a refugee immigrant came to the United States

(Wrobel, Farrag & Hymes, 2009). The different waves of immigration which bring a

large number of refugees from different origins at different times in the United States

play a role in their adjustment process in their host communities (Wrobel, Farrag &

Hymes, 2009).

Recent Immigration

Recent immigration is another post-migration factor which may contribute to

acculturative stress across different groups of refugee immigrants in the United States

(Wrobel, Farrag & Hymes, 2009). It is anticipated that stress related to pressure to

acculturate will be greatest in refugee immigrants who have arrived recently in the

country (Wrobel, Farrag & Hymes, 2009). Pressure not to acculturate may also be great

in recent refugee immigrants, particularly those who come from countries which are

perceived as threatening to the host country, making these newcomers a greater target for

marginalization (Wrobel, Farrag & Hymes, 2009). Consequently, their overall level of

acculturative stress may be highest (Wrobel, Farrag & Hymes, 2009).

Although refugee immigrants in the United States are at risk from numerous

factors that contribute to acculturative stress, many of these factors can be controlled or

their impact moderated (Han, Kim, Lee, Pistulka & Kim, 2007; Kosic, 2004). A key

psychological variable in dealing with acculturative stressors is that of coping (Kosic,

2004). Although not all refugee immigrants in the United States deal with acculturative

stressors in the same way, when confronted by two cultures, they develop attitudes and

coping strategies that lead to varying personal adaptations (Kosic, 2004).

Refugee Coping with Acculturative Stress in the United States

When refugees arrive in the United States, they have to learn to adjust to their

new social environment (Hall & Silka, 2007). During the adjustment process, many of

these new comers often encounter various interconnected psychosocial challenges (Segal

& Mayadas, 2005; Silka, 2007). In response to those challenges, these new comers

manage to develop a variety of coping mechanisms (Silka, 2007; Vissicaro, 2009).

Coping has been defined as an individual's cognitive and behavioral actions taken

to manage the internal and external demands experienced during a stressful situation

(Amiot, Blanchard & Gaudreau, 2008; Whitty, 2003). Three types of coping mechanisms

used by people experiencing stress have been identified (Trouillet, Gana, Lourel & Fort,

2009; Whitty, 2003).

The first type of coping mechanism with stress has been named; problem-focused, which is directed at managing or altering the problem causing the distress (Whitty, 2003). The second type of stress coping mechanism has been named; emotion-focused, which is directed at regulating the emotional response to the problem (Whitty, 2003). The third dimension of coping is recognized as; mixed- problem and emotion- focused coping (Gençöz, Gençöz & Bozo, 2006). This type of stress coping mechanism involves finding a solution to a challenging situation as well as seeking social support (Gençöz, Gençöz & Bozo, 2006).

The different strategies used to cope with stress are influenced by various psychosocial factors (Whitty, 2003). These influencing factors have been linked to age, gender, the amount and the type of stress, an individual experience, personality, and the environment (Whitty, 2003).

Research studies noted that when it comes to age, older adults are more likely to use problem-focused coping compared to younger people (Trouillet, Gana, Lourel & Fort, 2009; Whitty, 2003). When it comes to gender, men are socialized to use more problem-focused and direct coping strategies compared to women (Whitty, 2003). On the other hand, it has been noted that most women tend to use more emotion-focused coping strategies than men, such as avoiding confrontation, or relying on social support (Whitty, 2003).

Some research studies reported that the number of stresses and the type of stress people encounter with also affects their coping mechanisms and adaptation outcomes (Whitty, 2003). Research also indicated that individuals cope better when they have control over the situation (Whitty, 2003). When there is a belief that nothing can be done

to modify a harmful, threatening, or challenging situation, emotion-focused forms of coping are more likely to be effective (Whitty, 2003). On the other hand, when a challenging situation can be managed and is more likely to change, problem-focused forms of coping are used and tend to be effective (Whitty, 2003).

Problem-focused Coping

One of the challenges many refugee newcomers encounter during their recent immigration to the United States is the ability to find a good place to live since their economic status gives them a few choices about where to live (Silka, 2007). New refugee immigrants in the United States who don't have enough income to afford paying rent at safe locations may end up in neighborhoods with the highest crime rates, and housing issues, then become intertwined with questions of safety often leading to psychological distress (Silka, 2007). In order to cope with the situation, these newcomers sometimes live in extended families with many people all in the same physical space (Silka, 2007). In addition, refugee newcomers who do not have their own transportation may decide to rent closer to where they can get public transportation even though public transportation system in their places of residence may be so inadequate that it may not reach many of the job locations (Silka, 2007).

Some non-English speaking refugee immigrants who come to the United States sometimes face the daunting challenge of living in a society with a very high level of literacy but find ways to deal with those challenges (Pierce, 1998). For instance, upon arrival in the United States, some Southeast Asian groups of refugee immigrants (such as Hmong, Laotian, Cambodian and Vietnamese adults) typically have had to not only learn

how to understand and speak English, but a good number, must also learn for the first time how to read and write in any language (Pierce, 1998). After spending a period of time in the United States, many of these refugee immigrants manage to become literate in English and function effectively within literate American society by taking advantage of the continuing education and career opportunities available to literate adults (Pierce, 1998).

Research studies revealed that financially, refugee immigrants in the United States range from comfortable to destitute (Lipson & Omidian, 1997). For instance, some refugee immigrants in the United States who face economic challenges and related stress cope with the situation by working hard long enough to buy a house and maintain a middle-class lifestyle (Lipson & Omedian, 1997). Other refugee immigrants in the United States cope with their economic challenges by moonlighting. Previous research studies revealed that although some refugee immigrant families receive support from social services, this number is rapidly decreasing as young people move out, go to school, enter the job market and become self-sufficient (Lipson & Omidian, 1997). Some refugee immigrant families in the United States gain financial security by having all family adult and adolescent members work, even though none of the jobs pay well and some manage to open small businesses which sometimes lead to the excellent economic adjustment and a way of coping (Silka, 2007; Turcotte & Silka, 2007). On the other hand, some families who formerly experienced great wealth and possessions in their homelands cope with their economic challenges in the United States by living with extended families in the same apartment (Lipson & Omedian, 1997).

Emotion-focused Coping

In most situations, refugee immigrants in the United States are faced with economic challenges they cannot problem solve by themselves then regulate their emotion to cope with the situation (Lipson & Omidian, 1997). For instance, Lipson and Omidian (1997) reported that some older first-generation refugee immigrants in the United States have strong and mixed feelings about the issue of public assistance. These refugee immigrant families, according to Lipson and Omidian (1997), in considering what jobs are available to them, think that they do not really have a solution to the challenging situation. The expression of anger that nothing can be done to change their economic situation becomes a form of emotion-focused coping (Whitty, 2003). Lipson and Omidian (1997) stated how one Afghan social worker said:

> Afghans are not lazy. They want to work hard, but they cannot live on what they get paid. There is a problem with the job and without the job; there is not enough money either way (Lipson & Omidian, 1997, p. 7).

Another way some groups of refugee immigrants in the United States use their emotion to cope with acculturative stress is through cultural dance (Vissicaro, 2009). Refugees experience many unexpected and abrupt life changes during forced migrations, so that change becomes the norm (Vissicaro, 2009). In order to accommodate these changes, they learn to process information differently and find ways of making sense of their unfamiliar surroundings in the United States (Vissicaro, 2009). One strategy for achieving this goal involves traditional cultural dance (Vissicaro, 2009).

Cultural dance involves the embodiment of values and ideals considered significant to the people from which the dance originated (Vissicaro, 2009). Therefore,

during forced migration, refugees sometimes dance to forget their problems and reconnect to a happier time (Vissicaro, 2009). By performing their traditional dance, memories of home and family induce feelings of joy, comfort and celebration involving expressive movement (Vissicaro, 2009). These memories, although temporary, reduce refugee trauma (Vissicaro, 2009). In addition to that, when given the opportunity, refugees exchange cultural knowledge through storytelling and playing music, which also serves as a coping mechanism to ease acculturative stress in their host communities in the United States (Vissicaro and Godfrey, 2004; Vissicaro, 2009).

Previous research revealed that spirituality and related practices are common human experiences in adversity, particularly among those who suffer from the traumatic consequences of various disasters (Ai, Tice, Huang & Ishisaka, 2005). It has been noted that refugee immigrants experiencing acculturative stress tend to use emotion-focused form of coping by increasing their use of prayer, religious coping, and ritual as well as perception of a more active role for God (Ai, Tice, Huang & Ishisaka, 2005).

Mixed-problem and Emotion-focused Coping

Some non-English speaking groups of refugee immigrants in the United States use their social network effectively to cope with English problems (Pierce, 1998; Lipson & Omidian, 1997). For example, in their research, Lipson and Omidian (1997) reported that in one particular refugee community, some refugee immigrants who do not speak English request one man, the only member of his large family who reads and understands English, to help them obtain their driver's licenses by driving them to the Department of Motor Vehicles and when they get there, they both take the written test and then secretly

switch tests. Yost and Lucas (2002) also reported that adults low in literacy skills usually manage to function effectively without high levels of literacy by using mixed-problem and emotion-focused form of coping through maintaining social networks and by developing a wide range of learning and life strategies appropriate to the literacy demands of their immediate environment. In many cases, according to Yost and Lukas (2002), adults who have low literacy skills in standard English have been shown to be quite literate in other dialects or languages which often replace or augment English literacy to a certain extent.

Simich (2003) suggested that lack of meaningful supportive relationships within the ethnic community adversely may affect refugee health and well being, resulting in social isolation, stress, and mental and physical health problems. For that reason, some refugee immigrant groups in the United States cope with these psychosocial issues by organizing social groups, social activities or by creating grassroots organizations (Magno, 2008). These social organizations also help them maintain their culture and provide them with a sense of belonging as well as social support (Lorentzen, 2003).

Social support outside refugee immigrant families in the United States has been found to be an important stress coping mechanism (Jovanovic, Aleksandric, Dunjic & Todorovic, 2004; Magno, 2008). With respect to support from members of the host culture, a number of refugee research studies have revealed that refugee immigrants in the United States who had more American friends have lower levels of acculturative stress (Gellis, 2003). For instance, Gellis (2003) reported that in a sample of Vietnamese refugees receiving mental health services in a U.S. urban community, the size of host culture networks had a positive impact on reduced levels of depression. Beiser (2006)

also reported that with respect to support from members of the ethnic culture, presence of a like-ethnic community appeared to act as a positive mental health resource for Vietnamese refugees in the United States.

The increase of diverse faith-based organizations in most immigrant communities in the United States is another source of social support for many refugee immigrants (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Previous research revealed that the different immigrant churches in the United States have reached beyond what traditionally has been seen as their responsibilities (Silka, 2007). Realizing that the greatest ties for immigrant experiences were often to the church, some faith-based organizations have started offering informational sessions after their services so that new immigrants could get their health care and educational questions answered in a setting where they felt comfortable (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2007). Silka (2007) also reported that many refugee immigrants bring their conflicts from their home countries to their churches in the United States to be resolved. Lorentzen (2003) also mentioned that immigrant churches have many things to offer. For instance, according to Lorentzen (2003), some immigrant churches champion the rights of the world's migrants and experience an influx of new ethnic groups that they have assisted in resettling. Lorentzen (2003) revealed that by helping refugee immigrants, Christian theology and religious practice in the United States benefit from the varied contributions of newcomers as well.

Other ways many refugee immigrants in the United States cope with acculturative stress are based on acculturation strategies (Kosic, 2004; Schwebel & Hodari, 2005). Refugee immigrants who endure acculturation with the minimal level of psychological problems are those who discover effective ways to adjust to the majority culture

(Schwebel & Hodari, 2005). For instance, assimilation (where the refugee immigrant entirely adopts the practices of the majority culture), is believed to achieve the medium degree of acculturative stress (Kosic, 2004). Separation (where the refugee immigrant has contact with the majority group but maintains the original culture) and marginalization (where the refugee immigrant has no contact with the majority group), are believed to achieve the highest acculturative stress (Kosic, 2004). Integration of the minority and majority cultures is believed to be the healthiest means of acculturation since it affords the lowest acculturative stress (Kosic, 2004; Schwebel & Hodari, 2005).

Due to the various demographic characteristics and migration experiences, some refugee immigrants in the United States cope with acculturative stress by relying heavily on the assistance of social services in their host communities (Smith, 2008; Quintiliani, 2009). However, others cope with acculturative stress by using personal networks as their social support only seeking outside help when they have exhausted their own resources (Obasi & Leon, 2009; Segal & Mayadas, 2005). Therefore, identifying all refugee immigrants in the United States as monolithic may overlook some of their psychosocial needs (Marks, Settles, Cooke, Morgan & Sellers, 2004). Since the various demographic characteristics and experiences of refugee immigrants in the United States cannot be ignored, special attention is being directed toward this population (Hendrick & Fong, 2006). That is how a number of effective approaches involved in refugee services have been proposed (Engstrom & Okamura, 2007; Levine, 2001; Wright & Zimmerman, 2006).

Suggested Approaches to Working with Refugee Immigrants in

the United States

In order to provide effective services to refugee immigrants in the United States, a number of conceptual models which take into account differences in ethnic and racial identity among minority groups have been proposed (Bernar, 2006; Engstrom & Okamura, 2007; Qingwen, 2005; Levine, 2001; Wright & Zimmerman, 2006). These models were developed based on psychosocial need assessments and evaluations of services provided to different minority groups in the United States (Miller & Green, 2007; Morland, Duncan, Hoebing, Kirschke & Schmidt, 2005; Thomas & John, 2003).

Cultural Competency

Refugee immigrants in the United States come from every continent, have significant differences in languages, customs, educational background, and socio-economic status (Byars-Winston & Fouad, 2006; Levine, 2001). These demographic characteristics influence both reactions and adaptations to stressors in their host communities in the United States (Levine, 2001). The historical experiences each refugee sending country has had with the United States also vary considerably and this too may affect refugee adaptation and access of services (Levine, 2001). Service providers who had the opportunity to work with refugees affirmed that they managed to increase techniques of professional communication with their clients when they made an effort to develop cultural competency with this population (Chen, Kakkad & Balzano, 2008; Griswold et al., 2006; Owen & English, 2005). Therefore, in response to this population growth and the increased demand for appropriate services, refugee service

providers in the United States need to identify cultural competencies as guidelines for incorporating culturally sensitive approaches in services (Falicov, 2007; Segal & Mayadas, 2005; White, Connolly Gibbons & Schamberger, 2006).

Cultural competency is based on the recognition of other cultural beliefs, practices, and an appreciation of other cultural systems, and skills needed to work effectively across cultures (Wright & Zimmerman, 2006). Culturally competent skills involve awareness of personal, professional and cultural biases that negatively affect minority groups (Hackney-Hanson, 2006). Culturally competent skills also involve the understanding of personal, racial, and socialization processes that cultivate prejudice as well as knowledge of the sociopolitical history among minority groups (Hackney-Hanson, 2006). Culturally competency-based skills are used to create equality and justice in the life of immigrants and refugee clients (Hackney-Hanson, 2006).

While cultural competency involves skills needed to work effectively across different cultures, cultural sensitivity is based on the extent to which ethnic and cultural characteristics, experiences, norms, values, behavioral patterns and beliefs of a selected population as well as the relevant historical, environmental and social forces are incorporated into the design, implementation and evaluation of programs and services (Wright & Zimmerman, 2006). Professionals who incorporated cultural sensitivity in services affirmed that this approach contributed to the increase of the quality of services provided to their clients (Griswold, Kernan, Wagner, 2007; Hernandez, Bunyi, & Townson, 2007; Koehn & Sainola-Rodriguez, 2005; Martinez, Smith & Barlow, 2007; Thomas, 2006). Therefore, while making efforts to learn about both the cultural background and migration experience of clients, refugee service providers need to

incolporate these skills and knowledge in intervention services (Chan, 2003; Segal & Mayadas, 2005).

The term "cultural sensitivity" has often been used interchangeably with terms such as "cultural relevance," "cultural appropriateness," or "culture- based" (Resnicow, Soler, Braithwaite, Ahluwalia & Butler, 2000; Whaley, 2008). Programs are considered culturally-based when they combine culture, history, and core values as agents to encourage behavior change (Wright and Zimmerman, 2006).

Service interventions for refugee immigrants in the United States could be considered culturally sensitive if they recognized and incorporated clients' cultures in the content of activities and services (Wright & Zimmerman, 2006). Furthermore, service interventions for refugee immigrants could be considered culturally sensitive if they conceptualized culture as an asset to be enhanced as the prevention strategy itself (Bolea, Grant, Burgess & Plasa, 2003; Wright & Zimmerman, 2006).

Assessments and Interventions from a System Perspective

The effects of psychological trauma many refugees endure are systemic and multigenerational (Levine, 2001). Therefore, like in all minority groups, it is very important that refugee service providers assess and intervene with members of this population from a system perspective (Blume & Lovato, 2010; Levine, 2001). This framework is critical even when the intervention involves one single refugee because one or more family members may be deceased or missing (Levine, 2001). Although information about missing or deceased family members may not always be obtained, Levine (2001) suggested that a system perspective is essential for developing a holistic

understanding of individuals in their social, psychological, cultural, and economic

contexts. Because each refugee immigrant family in the United States is unique, Levine

(2001) suggested that service providers must use a system framework that facilitates the

analysis and the understanding of the behavior of the client in relation to the ongoing

operations of the family group. Based on this approach, when assisting refugee

immigrants, it is critical to devote special attention to the family context component of

the assessment, including family's access to basic resources such as food, health care,

housing, or job training (Levine, 2001).

Assessments and Interventions from Strengths Perspectives

Strength perspective focuses on capacities, abilities and skills of an individual

rather than pathology or deficits (Levine, 2001). This perspective rests on an

appreciation of ways in which individual and social resources can be developed and

sustained (Levine, 2001). Using this approach, the service provider becomes a consultant

and collaborator rather than an expert on the client's situation and needs (Levine, 2001;

Nicholson & Kay, 1999). Sources of strengths which are shown to sustain the viability of

refugee immigrant families include reliance on cultural attachments, values and social

support from family, kin and community (Levine, 2001). Therefore, working from

strengths perspective is more likely to diminish the feelings of victimization, low self-

esteem and loss of control that arise in refugee immigrants who struggle to cope with

negative effects of forced migration (Levine, 2001).

Empowerment and Advocacy

Empowerment is a process through which people are encouraged to become strong enough to participate in, share control of, and influence events and institutions affecting their lives and those they care about (Levine, 2001). Some refugee immigrants in the United States have organized social groups or grassroots organizations which demonstrated how members of these groups can empower themselves in the face of catastrophic losses (Levine, 2001). These immigrant organizations manage to empower themselves or their members through providing social support (Levine, 2001). Therefore, based on this approach, refugee immigrant services in the United States can facilitate community organizing efforts so that these immigrants can empower themselves toward achieving the goals of social justice and participatory decision making (Blume & Lovato, 2010; Levine, 2001).

In regard to advocacy, psychosocial interventions with refugee immigrants in the United States must advocate for services which help traumatized individuals cope with psychological repercussions, such as depression and anxiety (Levine, 2001). In addition, psychosocial interventions with refugee immigrants need to focus on promoting participatory behavior, skill acquisition and different forms of self-efficacy attributions (Levine, 2001).

Advocate and Intervene to Prevent a Conspiracy of Silence

Despite extensive research that indicates that refugee immigrants in the United States have significantly higher rates of mental health problems than the general population, some of their psychosocial issues often go unaddressed during intervention

services (Levine, 2001). Negative experiences of forced migration can lead to a variety of psychosocial issues (Levine, 2001; Magno, 2008). Lack of public resources designated to help people cope with the psychosocial aspects of forced migration can contribute to a conspiracy of silence (Levine, 2001). Therefore, refugee immigrant services in the United States must advocate for mental health services to meet the needs of this vulnerable population) Levine, 2001). In addition, refugee immigrants should be encouraged to talk openly about their negative migration experiences with the goal of becoming their own advocates since they can be the most persuasive voice for bringing attention to migration issues, as well as taking leadership roles in helping to prevent a conspiracy of silence (Levine, 2001; Magno, 2008).

Develop Strategies to Cope with Effects of Vicarious Trauma

Vicarious trauma occurs when professionals who interact with clients who endured traumatic experiences absorb some of their emotional pain (Levine, 2001). During such interactions, the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can affect the helpers as well as the primary victims of the trauma since those who help refugee immigrants are not immune to nightmares, hyper-vigilance, avoidance, or a preoccupation with the trauma (Levine, 2001). Refugee service providers must recognize their vulnerability and know the warning signs, such as when a specific case is consuming their thoughts and entering into their personal life (Levine, 2001). In order to help stave off the deleterious effects of vicarious trauma, professionals who work with refugee immigrants need to develop anticipatory coping strategies (Levine, 2001). For instance, while the helper should be made aware that having intensive emotional

reactions to the disturbing material is normal, effort should be placed on developing social supports to ameliorate the toll of these reactions (Levine, 2001).

In addition to the above approaches, psychosocial interventions with refugee immigrants in the United States would be more effective if they focused on the time clients have lived in the United States, their reasons for leaving their homeland, their migration experiences, their acculturation strategies, and the receptiveness of the new host communities (Qingwen, 2005; Segal & Mayadas, 2005; Weine et al., 2006). Refugee immigrants receiving services in the United States would make greater gains if individuals of similar ethnic backgrounds who have skills and ability were encouraged to get involved in assisting their own people (Lambert, 2003). In order to provide effective psychosocial interventions for refugee immigrants in the United States, institutions or agencies that offer services to this population need to keep learning about social and environmental stressors many refugee immigrants face on a daily basis in their host communities (Lipson & Omidian, 1997). That is why this research study explores psychosocial factors which contribute to adaptation experiences across different groups of refugee immigrants in the United States.

Specific Aims

The research statements which guided this qualitative research study are:

1. To discuss participants adaptation experiences in the United States. The related research question is: "What are participants' adaptation experiences in the United States?"

2. To explore and examine the different acculturative stressors that participants have endured after migrating to the United States. The related research question is: "What are the different acculturative stressors participants have endured after migrating to the United States?"

3. To identify the different coping mechanisms refugee immigrants in the United States use in response to acculturative stress. The related research question is: "What are the different coping mechanisms used by participants in response to acculturative stress?"

4. To identify effective policies that may be used to help refugee immigrants in the United States. The related research question is: "What are effective policies that may be used to help refugee immigrants in the United States?"

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore definitions and perceptions of acculturative stress and factors which contribute to these conceptualizations across different groups of refugee immigrants in the United States. The research study explored and examined strategies different groups of refugee immigrants in the United States use to cope with acculturative stress. Approaches to working with refugee immigrants in the United States were also identified.

Previous research studies examining acculturative stress among immigrants in the United States focused mostly on either single groups of immigrants or various groups of immigrants with close-related demographic characteristics (Birman & Tran, 2008; Roytburd & Friedlander, 2008; Thomas & Choi, 2006; Yunjin Oh, Koeske & Sales, 2002). However, this research study focused on five groups of refugee immigrants with various demographic characteristics in order to explore commonalities in post-migration experiences involving acculturative stress and coping mechanisms across different groups of refugee immigrants in the United States.

Previous research studies with refugee immigrants also revealed that some service agencies in the United States often provide ineffective services to this population due to the little understanding of psychosocial issues involved in forced migration, resettlement, and adjustment to host communities (Bloemraad, 2008; Fallitt, 2008; Morland, Duncan, Hoebing, Kirschke & Schmidt, 2005; Quintiliani, 2009; Segal & Mayadas, 2005). In order to explore and examine those issues involved in the adaptation process, this research study focused on an exploratory design. This type of research methodology is

mostly preferred when group or population experiences included in a research study is not well-known (Sullivan, 2001).

Data Collection Procedures

The research study involved a one phase collection of data. In order to accomplish this goal, a number of procedures were used.

Recruitment Criteria

The recruitment criteria were based on immigration status, age, and length of time in the United States. Both males and females legal refugee immigrants of 18 years or older who have been living in the United States for at least one year were recruited.

Participants

Participants of this research study were legal refugee immigrants who had been living in the United States for the time period ranging between 3 and 36 years (Mean=14.9, SD=11.96). Their age ranged between 25 and 81 (Mean=48.8, SD=17.16). Their educational background ranged from "no education" to "post college graduates". Participants' marital statuses were comprised of: 27.8% single, 61.1% married, and 11.1% widowed (figure 1).
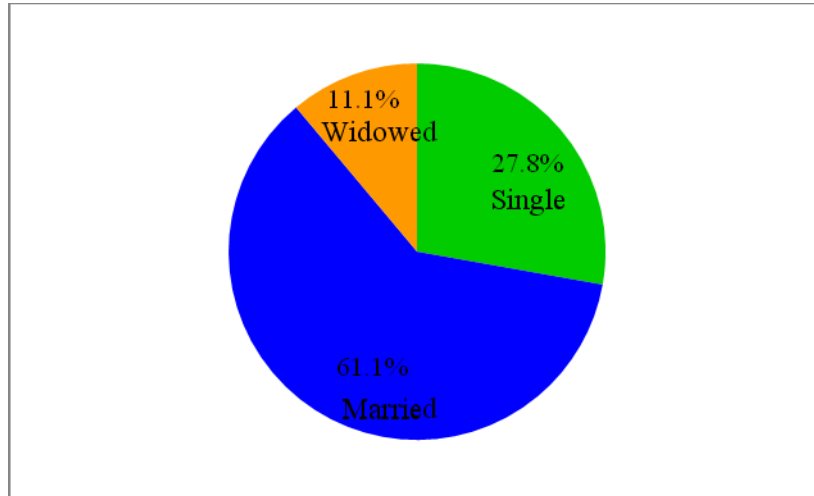
Figure 1. Marital status representation.

Sample Size

A sample of (N=18; 9 males and 9 females) refugee immigrants from various geographical locations in the United States were recruited (figure 2).
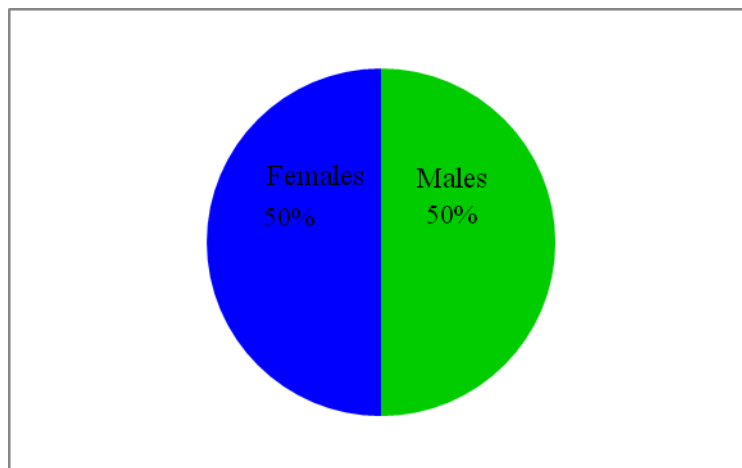
Figure 2. Gender distribution.

Previous research studies involving refugee immigrants in the United States have revealed that demographic characteristics associated with country of origin are factors which contribute to adaptation process and related stress in the host country (Segal & Mayadas, 2005). Therefore, this qualitative research study, which focuses on cultural diversities, recruited participants who came to the United States from Burundi (16.7%), Ethiopia (11.1%), Rwanda (38.8%), Thailand (22.3%), and Vietnam (11.1%); (figure 3). In addition to being culturally diverse, these five countries were identified based on their war history (Abbink, 2006; Levine, 2001; Mann, 2004; Tan-Mullins, 2009) and their being among major refugee sending countries to the United States (Leong et al., 2007; Robertson et al., 2006; Vissicaro, 2009).
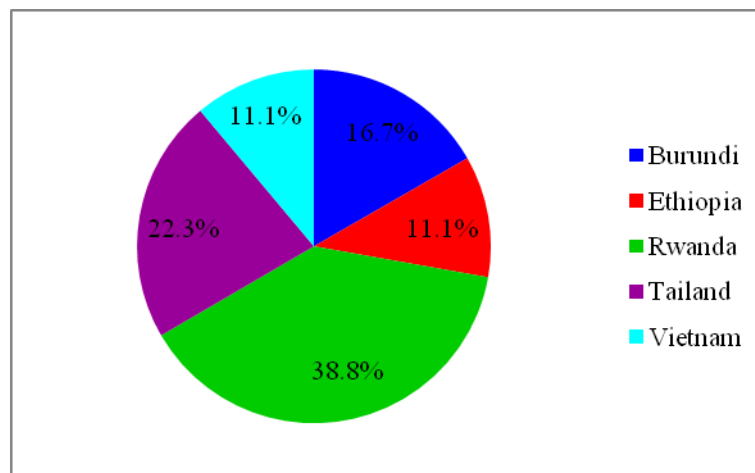
Figure 3. Country of origin representation.

Sampling Technique

Refugee immigrants in the United States come from various cultural backgrounds and many of their host communities are not well-known. For that reason, participant selection was based on snowball sampling technique. This qualitative sampling relies on referrals from initial participants to generate additional participants in a single research study (Sullivan, 2001). Key informants such as refugee immigrant cultural brokers and immigrant grassroots organization leaders were first contacted for participant referrals. Some initial participants were also requested for more referrals.

Results from previous research studies involving refugee immigrants have also revealed that geographical location of resettlement is among post-migration factors which contribute to the adaptation process in the host country (Brown, Matt & Malecki, 2007; Vissicaro, 2009). For that reason, this research study compared adaptation experiences of participants currently residing in communities of Riverside, San Bernardino and Santa Monica (California), Atlanta (Georgia), Mishawaka (Indiana), Kalamazoo (Michigan), and New Buffalo (New York). Most of these refugee host communities were identified based on key informants' referrals.

Interview Procedures

All interviews involved in this qualitative research were conducted during the time period of five months beginning December 2010 to April 2011. The procedure involved both face-to-face and telephone interviews. All participants signed a consent form before they were interviewed.

Participants who agree to be involved in face-to-face interviews first signed a consent form then the interview session proceeded. Consent forms were first mailed to those who agree to participate in telephone interviews, and after they were signed and returned, interviews were then scheduled and carried out.

Informed Consent

The consent form provided information relating to participants' rights and responsibilities. This information included; the title of the research, purpose of the study, explanation about voluntary participation, form of participation, information about rights to confidentiality, time commitment, benefits and possible risks that might occur from participating in the research study (see Appendix A).

Interview Guide

All interviews were conducted based on the interview guide approach. The interview guide was comprised of two sections.

The first section included items aiming to explore participants' demographic characteristics. These demographics involved age, gender, country of origin, marital status, educational level, and length of time in the United States (See Appendix B).

The second section was comprised of 15 open-ended key questions. These questions which guided each interview session were formulated based on specific aims of the research study. In order to ensure validity and reliability of the research, all key questions involved in this section were pilot-tested and revised prior to being used on consenting participants (See Appendix B).

The first question under this section asked participants to comment on their adaptation experiences in the United States. The specific aim of the question was to introduce the subject of post-migration experiences and to engage participants to start talking about their adaptation experiences in the United States.

The second key question asked participants about challenges they might have faced or may still face after migrating to the United States. The specific aim of the question was to explore psychosocial issues that participant's faced during their adaptation process in the United States. The same question allowed participants to express narratives related to their post-migration experiences involving socio-economic difficulties, language barriers, challenges related to weather, etc. All these psychosocial and environmental factors are part of post-migration experiences of different groups of refugee immigrants in the United States (Segal & Mayadas, 2005).

The third question asked participants whether their adaptation challenges in the United States might have contributed to acculturative stress. This question, which is also linked to the previous one, allowed participants to comment on their adaptation challenges and how some of them contributed to acculturative stress.

The fourth question on the interview guide asked participants how they coped with adaptation challenges they had mentioned in the previous question. The specific aim of this question was to explore different strategies participants use to cope with acculturative stress in the United States.

The fifth key question asked participants whether they would consider themselves to be adjusted to the U.S. environment. The specific aim of this particular question was to engage participants in a conversation which allowed the interviewer to explore

participant's acculturation levels which are also post-migration factors contributing to acculturative stress (Kosic, 2004).

The sixth key question on the interview guide asked participants what they like about the United States. The specific aim of this particular question was to have participants talk about anything they like about the United States so that the interviewer can identify their acculturation levels involving "assimilation" or "integration". These two variables are post-migration factors which may also predict the different levels of acculturative stress (Kosic, 2004; Schwebel & Hodari, 2005; Yunjin Oh, Koeske & Sales, 2002).

The seventh key question asked participants whether things they like about the United States contribute to their adjustment to the U.S. environment. The specific aim of this question was to also explore participants' acculturation levels based on what they like about the United States and how what they like contribute to their adjustment.

The eighth key question asked participants what they dislike about the United States. Same as in question six, this question engaged participants to talk about anything they dislike about the United States. The specific aim of the question was to identify participants' acculturation levels involving either "integration" or "rejection". These two variables are also post-migration factors which may be used to predict different levels of acculturative stress (Kosic, 2004; Schwebel & Hodari, 2005; Yunjin Oh, Koeske & Sales, 2002).

The ninth key question on the interview guide asked participants whether things they dislike about the United States contribute to their adjustment to the U.S. environment. In response to this question, participants had the opportunity to talk about

what they don't like about the United States and their narratives allowed the interviewer to identify participants' acculturation levels from a different perspective.

The tenth question asked participants whether they had made any friends since they came to the United States. Being able to make friends in a foreign country is also part of the acculturation process in a host community (Yost & Lucas, 2002). Furthermore, participants' narratives in response to this question allowed the interviewer to examine how participants view the importance of social support, which is one way to cope with acculturative stress (Magno, 2008).

The eleventh key question asked participants to comment on how important their friends are to them in the United States. This was another way to examine the importance of social support which, according to the literature, plays a role in stress coping mechanism (Jovanovic, Aleksandric, Dunjic & Todorovic, 2004; Magno, 2008).

The twelfth question asked participants what they do when they need social assistance. The specific aim of this question was to examine whether participants are able to seek help outside their family/social network. Being able to seek help outside one's family/social network is an adjustment process which can be used to develop policies related to empowering refugee immigrants in the United States (Levine, 2001).

The thirteenth question asked participants whether they had used any refugee services since they migrated to the United States. Participants' narratives in response to this question allowed the interviewer to examine how much participants were familiar with refugee services in the United States and how these services are viewed. In addition, participants were given the opportunity to evaluate refugee services they might have used.

The fourteenth question on the interview guide asked participants how they felt about being refugee immigrants in the United States. This was another way to examine participants' levels of life satisfaction in their host communities and their acculturation levels which can also be used to predict their levels of acculturative stress.

The fifteenth and last question on the interview guide asked participants what would be the effective ways to work with refugee immigrants in the United States. The specific aim of this question was to allow participants to express their points of views of how refugee immigrants in the United States should be treated.

Interview Sessions

Based on the interview guide approach, all the interview sessions, which lasted between 45 to 60 minutes, were conducted in English, Kinyarwanda or Kirundi. These languages were used based on participant's cultural background or their preferred way of oral communication. All interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed for data analysis.

<div align="center">

Data Analysis

</div>

After all interviews were transcribed, a constant comparative method was used to analyze data. This method of analysis gathers information about a particular concept from data then codes them into categories, properties, and hypotheses (Glaser & Strauss, 2008). The process of creating different categories was based on open coding, selective coding, axial coding and theoretical coding. Initial or open coding is the analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties are discovered in qualitative

data (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Selective coding combines key categories while refining and integrating the theory (Rabinovich & Kasen, 2010; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Axial coding relates categories to their subcategories (Charmaz, 2006; Rabinovich & Kasen, 2010; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Theoretical coding is the process of conceptualizing how the substantive codes may relate to each other as hypothesis to be integrated into a theory (Charmaz, 2006).

The constant comparative analysis in this research study used theoretical coding to link categories standing for acculturative stress to personal, behavior, and environmental factors, the three dimensions of the social cognitive theory which guided the research. The same coding procedure was also used to link coping-related categories to the three dimensions of the stress and coping theory (problem-focused, emotion-focused, and mixed-problems and emotion-focused coping). Axial coding was used to create subcategories from a number of categories related to coping mechanisms. Selective coding was used to create major categories involving effective ways of working with refugee immigrants in the United States (See Appendix E). All major categories resulting from data analysis were used to develop a grounded theory built on different principles and to answer the research questions. A grounded theory is a method in which the theory is developed from the body of data (Glaser, 1999; Patton, 2003; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

In order to ensure internal validity of this qualitative research study, all interview transcripts were revised by different individuals for translation accuracy. In addition, analyzed data were handed to multiple reviewers who also added their input.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This exploratory study examined psychosocial factors which contribute to acculturative stress across five groups of refugee immigrants in the United States. Coping mechanisms the same groups of refugee immigrants use in response to acculturative stress were also identified. Effective ways of working with the refugee population in the United States were suggested.

This chapter explains how common themes from participants' narratives were grouped into various categories and how categories with similarities were linked to create major categories (Refer to Appendix E). The chapter explains how major categories were used to develop a grounded theory and to answer the research questions.

Acculturative Stress Factors

The constant comparative method emerged 31 categories standing for acculturative stress. The theoretical coding linked these categories to personal, behavior, and environmental factors.

Personal Factors

Slow Adaptation

One participant who linked part of his post-migration experience in the United States to slow adaptation stated that he was the only one to adapt too slowly in his family. When the interview was being conducted, the participant also reported that he was not fully adapted yet to life in the United States and this was creating stress for him.

Skill Levels

One participant who commented on his social skills reported that when he and his family came to the United States, one of the problems he had was that he did not know how to drive. Therefore, his inability to drive contributed to stress and anxiety during his adaptation to life in the United States.

Gender

Two participants commented on their negative acculturation experiences in the United States from gender perspective. The first one stated how during her first days in the United States, because of her gender, she seemed to be vulnerable to many social situations with some incidents creating conflicts between her and her roommate. The second participant talked about her negative experience at work due to being a female. This participant stated that a number of times, because of her gender, she was often mistreated and undermined by her supervisors at work.

Culture Shock

Three participants reported having culture shock during their early days in the United States. The source of their culture shock was mainly from not knowing what to do in a new culture, especially at work. One participant expressed her experience this way: "This was a big challenge for me to take care of naked older individuals whom I perceived to have my parents or grandparents age." Another participant who commented on the experience of culture shock expressed herself this way:

> When my Dad came home in the evening, we all started crying, telling him how we hated this place. We told him that we wanted to go back home, then my mother started crying too.

Language Issues

Ten participants reported experiencing language issues following their migration to the United States. One of them expressed himself this way: "…One problem after another. The first problem you encounter with is the language." Another participant who commented on his English language problem stated that with the four years he already spent in the country, there are times he does not understand what Americans are saying, especially when they are conversing among themselves. One more participant who commented on her experience of the language issue stated:

> Another situation I remember is being scared of taking an English test when school started, my parents were there but I remember crying because the teacher would say things in English I did not understand.

Low Self-evaluation

Three participants commented on skills they had when they came to the United States. Their self-evaluations were mostly based on low English proficiency. One of them reported how her American teachers realized she was having the language difficulties then made some efforts to help the best they could. Another participant who commented on his low English proficiency stated that even though his English level was too low, he knew there was nothing he could do in the United States without being able to speak the language. One more participant who commented on his English proficiency revealed that he was expecting to have a language issue because even in his homeland, he

never expressed himself well in any language. The same participant also revealed that when he was still in school, even French had been a big challenge for him.

Loss of Social Status

Three participants reported losing their social status after migrating to the United States. One of them mentioned how this post-migration experience can be stressful. For instance, this participant revealed that he had completed the law school in his homeland. Following that, he went and worked for the Commercial Bank for eight years. When he came to the United States, the only jobs that were available to him were housekeeping jobs. According to the participant, this was very stressful for him. Another participant who commented on her loss of status following her migration to the United States stated that when she remembers what she used to do and now she is sitting down doing nothing, she often feels very sad. One more participant stated that being a refugee immigrant in the United States is something that always sticks in one's mind leading to low self-esteem.

Low Level of Education

One participant revealed that one of the challenges he faced in the United States was related to school. The same participant stated that the fact that he did not have education in the United State was contributing to his stress and anxiety.

Negative Pre-migration Effects

One participant commented on the negative experiences he had during his pre-migration and how it has affected his life in the United States. Because of the war situation in his homeland, he had never had the chance to complete secondary school. When he came to the United States, he tried to go back to school to get a high school diploma but life was very difficult for him. The fact that school was very hard for him, he had to drop out. This participant reported that he was very sad because his negative pre-migration experiences were contributing to his poor performance in the United States and this was becoming very stressful for him.

Low Socioeconomic Level

Five participants reported being frustrated by their low socio-economic levels in the United States. One of them expressed himself this way: "Until now, I still feel stressed out because of my life situation. I live alone and life is too expensive." One more participant who commented on his economic situation in the United States stated:

> In this country, everything is money. You work to pay bills, food is money, and it is not like back home where you can grow something in your own garden. You don't have your own home, and then you have to pay rent to stay in an apartment.

The same participant did not end there. He further commented on his frustration related to his low economic situation this way:

> For instance, you happen to be living in the same neighborhood with a family that is making a good income and you yourself are making ends meet. That family is not going to talk to you. You live closer to a neighbor who drives a new or expensive car and you yourself are driving a car which is almost a junk. That individual is not going to interact with you.

Another participant who commented on her low economic situation, especially during her first days in the United States, revealed how one time, her older brother who was living with her and the only one working lost his job; and consequently, they could no longer pay rent. Then a few weeks later, they were receiving eviction notices and this was very stressful. One more participant reported that one of his main problems in the United States was related to finances. The same participant revealed that following his migration to the United States, he always had economic problems no matter what he did to solve it. Another participant revealed that when he came to the United States, his economic situation was very bad at the beginning. This was because neither his wife, nor he had a job. The family did not have transportation either. The same participant revealed that even finding a job was a challenge for his family because none of the family members had a car to drive to look for a job.

Family Separation

One participant revealed that part of stress she felt during her adaptation process in the United States was related to the separation anxiety she felt when one of her older siblings decided to move out to look for his own apartment. Because her older brother was taking care of all family responsibilities, after he moved out, it became very stressful for the younger siblings to take over those responsibilities with little experience. The same participant reported that it took them a while to learn and adjust to their family responsibilities with lots of stress.

Health Status

One participant revealed that one of the challenges he faced following his migration to the United States was related to his health issues. He reported that one time, he broke his arm and it was necessary for him to have an arm surgery and it took him the entire year to recover. The participant reported that this became very depressing for him and his family since there was not enough income to take care of his family needs.

Family Issues

Three participants reported that some of their experiences involved in post-migration in the United States created social issues and stress in their families. The first one who reported not getting along with some of his family members expressed himself this way: "Unfortunately, my brother-in-law and I did not get along. It did not take a long time for them to kick my mother and me out of their house". Another participant stated that some of the issues he has with the United States is related to family policies which gives too much freedom to children. The same participant revealed that children's rights to freedom have created many issues and stress in his family. One more participant expressed the same issue this way:

> However, if you ask me to tell you what I don't like, what I can tell you is that I don't like the way many children in this country are raised.

Social Isolation

Three participants revealed that part of stress they felt following migration to the United States was related to their experience of being isolated since they neither knew anybody in the United States nor spoke English to be able to communicate with others.

One participant commented on her experience this way: "…The fact that we did not

know anybody in the neighborhood, we felt lonely." Another participant stated that

because she does not speak English and is too old to learn it, she feels isolated in her host

community. Since she hardly communicates with anybody, this situation becomes very

stressful for her. The same participant reported that her stress mostly comes when a

weekend comes and goes, and she realizes she did not get a chance to go to church to

meet others. One more participant reported that during her first days in the United States,

she had no support since she did not have any family around and this made her feel

isolated.

Lack of Trust

One participant revealed that during her first days in the United States, it was very

hard for her and her siblings to trust anybody because they were not familiar with the

culture and the social environment in their host communities. The same participant

expressed herself this way: "We were always scared, we did not trust anybody."

Psychosocial Despair

One participant revealed that one source of her adaptation stress in the United

States is related to how she often feels about herself in terms of age. For instance, the

same participant believes that the United States deserves young people but not old people

like her. This participant with social anxiety believes that her old age makes her feel

useless in the country.

Social/Family Concerns

Two participants revealed that part of stress they felt following migration to the United States was related to social concerns they had about one or more of their family members. One of those participants who also came to the United States at a young age stated that her mother did not know what to do with her and her siblings and the more the mother who was concerned about her family felt depressed, the children also felt depressed since they did not know how to console their mother. The fact that the girl was always worried about her mother was very stressful for her. The other participant who also commented on her stress from having concerns about her relatives reported that during her early days in the United States, she was always concerned about her brothers and sisters she had left in her homeland and this was very depressing for her.

Generation Gap

One participant who seemed to be older in age revealed her frustration linking it to family conflicts resulting from generation gap she and her daughter were having. The participant stated that before she came to California, she had learned that her daughter had told her children that Grandma was coming. Therefore, they were no longer going to wash dishes because Grandma was going to be the one to take care of this task. This participant revealed that she did not like her daughter's idea. Consequently, this created conflicts in the family. When this participant was asked further questions related to this subject, she expressed her frustration this way:

> Can you imagine children in this country being raised by just watching television or spending all day on the computer? What kinds of kids will they turn out to be?

The same participant also revealed that her daughter and she don't agree that children should not be allowed to be lazy by just watching television all day and night. According to this participant, children should be raised to prepare them for their future.

Deception

Two participants reported that part of stress they felt following migration to the United States was related to the deception they experienced when they came to the United States. One participant expressed himself this way: "We come here with high expectations but we become disappointed and sometimes discouraged when we realize that life in this country can sometimes be very difficult." Another participant reported that some refugees who come to the United States get discouraged by their life situation and some want to go back to their homeland.

Food Habituation

Three participants reported having challenges with American food and this was very depressing for them. One participant expressed himself this way: "When you cannot enjoy the type of food you used to eat in your homeland because the taste is different, there is no fun about it." Another participant who learned to adjust to American food commented on her challenges this way: "The food was not that bad. However, I remember, I did not like to eat cold food like cold sandwiches. I did not like the kind of salad dressings that are used in the United States." This participant revealed that it took her a while to adjust to American food.

Lack of Information

One participant mentioned that often, refugees who are resettled in the United States don't get enough information about where they are going. When they arrive, they become confused and many don't know what to do and their adjustment process becomes very stressful.

Nostalgia

One participant reported missing life in his homeland and this was contributing to stress and anxiety. The same participant wonders whether he will get the chance to go back to his homeland one day.

Table 1

The following table displays personal factors which contribute to acculturative stress.

Personal Factors	
Demographics	Post-Migration Experiences
Slow adaptation	Culture shock
Skill levels	Language issues
Gender	Loss of social status
Low self-evaluation	Negative pre-migration effects
Low level of education	Low socioeconomic level
Lack of trust	Family separation
Psychosocial despair	Health status
Generation gap	Family issues
Deception	Social isolation
Lack of information	Social/family concerns
Nostalgia	Food habituation

Behavioral Factors

Cultural Incompatibilities

Six participants reported how post-migration experiences involving incompatibilities between their cultures and the host culture contributed to their adaptation challenges and stress in the United States. One participant stated that one of the challenges she faced during her first days in the United States was related to her roommate. According to the participant, the resettlement agency had put her in an apartment with another refugee immigrant who smoked and drunk alcohol. This participant revealed that most of the time, she was not pleased by her roommate's conduct. Therefore, one day, she decided to report the roommate's bad conduct to the refugee resettlement agency. The other girl finally decided to change her bad behavior. However, these two girls could no longer communicate and it became very stressful for both of them.

Another participant reported that he was often frustrated by certain behavior characteristics exhibited by many children in the United States who don't get disciplined by their parents. The same participant believes that those children are often "messed up." One more participant linked his frustration to U.S. cultural norms which tolerates certain behaviors he does not like. The same participant expressed his frustration this way: "Because of where we come from, we tend to think or do things differently and this creates problems." This participant also revealed that there are times he speaks to people in his host community and immediately, they ask him where he is from and when they find out his cultural background, they immediately display a negative attitude towards him and he too feels different from them.

Cultural Communication

Three participants reported how differences in communication between them and some people they met in the United States was a part of their adaptation challenges. One participant stated it this way: "Here in the United States, people say 'I will see you later' and you don't know what it means…" Another participant stated that he did not like the way some people in the United States told him that they liked his English accent just to point out that he had an accent, or bad English pronunciation, when he communicated with them. One more participant, who does not like the way people in the United States communicate, expressed himself this way:

> Here in the United States, people gossip too much. Whenever they have something to talk about you, they would make fun of it. What one knows, another one is going to know it in a matter of seconds. They communicate like electricity.

> The same participant also revealed that in his culture, when a man reaches a certain age, he only speaks when it is necessary and is expected to act wise by showing self-control, especially in what he says. However, in the United States, according to the same participant, if you are in a group of people and don't talk, some people may think that something is wrong with you. The same participant also stated that the way some Americans communicate among themselves creates frustration to some immigrants who listen to them. The participant stated that there is too much American slang in oral communication and some American people, although they are born here, whenever they speak, they purposely do not use the proper English grammar and no one can correct them. This participant concluded this subject stating that because of differences in cultural communication, it is very hard for an immigrant to learn the meaning of American slang when he/she doesn't interact with people who use it.

One more participant who commented on issues which can result from differences in cultural communication stated it this way:

You know how in my culture, when you respect someone or when you are interacting with someone older than you, you don't look at that person in the eyes. But here in the United States, if you don't look at someone in the eyes, that person may think that you are lying or you are disrespecting him/her.

The same participant also revealed that in his culture, when someone speaks to an individual he/she respects, he/she has to talk slowly and calmly. However, according to this participant, here in the United States, people talk too loud and fast, regardless who they communicate with. The same participant also commented on issues which often result from differences in cultural communication this way:

When you are communicating with a person thinking that you are showing some respect based on how you were raised, then that person asks you what is wrong with you, you don't feel happy about it.

Marginality

One participant mentioned how she was often marginalized by some members of her host community and this affected her feelings and self-perception. She commented on her experience this way:

I remember in high school, my classmates who knew I was from Africa would come and tease me about my English, they would ask me many questions related to my life back to Africa, they would often make comments stating that in Africa, children don't have shoes. They would often be laughing at me.

The same participant believes that it is good to be a refugee in the United States. However, she did not think it was enough for her since she always feels different from other people in her host community. One more post-migration experience she commented on was when she went to apply for a job and she was asked to prove her

immigration status. When she mentioned that she was a US citizen, the agency then asked

her for her passport and when she showed her US passport, the agency asked her what

country had issued the passport. This participant believed that this was not because the

agency did not recognize the U.S. passport, but it was because of the color of her skin and

her English accent.

Non-adapted Policies

Three participants reported that part of their adaptation challenges resulted from

making efforts to adapt to policies that have been implemented in the United States. One

participant stated that one challenge he still faces is related to signing too many

unnecessary papers before he can get any services. He expressed himself this way:

> In this country, anything you do or any service you receive, you have to first sign
> papers… In this country, whenever you go to the healthcare center to have
> medical services, instead of treating you first, you are required to first sign a
> whole bunch of papers some of which you don't read because of small prints.

Another participant stated that in her homeland, when a working female becomes

pregnant, she gets maternity leave. However, when this participant became pregnant and

presented her request to her job to get maternity leave, based on the company's internal

policy, she was fired.

Xenophobia

One participant reported that what she did not like about the United States is that

some people in her host community don't like immigrants. The same participant noticed

that at her job, immigrants are mistreated. According to the participant, when an

immigrant reports something wrong at work, supervisors do not take it seriously. This also contributes to her frustration and self-perception.

Discrimination

One participant reported that one of the big challenges she faced following migration to the United States was related to discrimination. This participant stated that when she and her group of refugees came to the United States from Africa, there was another group of refugees from Czechoslovakia who came to the United States around the same time and those two groups were resettled in the same community. This participant revealed that the two groups were treated differently. For instance, according to the participant, while the group of refugees from Africa was being taken to Salvation Army to get used clothes and used utensils, the group of refugees from Europe was being taken to the store to get new clothes and new utensils. According to this participant, this incident involving inequalities in treatment was brought to the attention of the refugee office and one of the case workers stated that even though those two groups involved refugees, they were different.

Table 2

The following table displays behavioral factors which contribute to acculturative stress.

Behavioral Factors	
Culture	Social Practice
Cultural incompatibilities	Marginality
Cultural communication	Non-adapted policies
	Xenophobia
	Discrimination

Environmental Factors

Recent Immigration

Nine participants revealed facing environmental challenges during their recent immigration to the United States. One of them mentioned how one day, she wanted to cook French fries and went to the store to buy cooking oil to make those French fries. When she got to the store, she saw a big gallon which she thought was cooking oil. Without reading the label, she grabbed the gallon, paid for it and went home. When she got to her apartment, she took a frying pan and poured some of what she thought was cooking oil. She turned the stove on and waited for the oil to warm up. What she thought was cooking oil was not warming up as oil normally does. After a long wait, she went and asked her roommate who came to the U.S. earlier to come and tell her what was wrong with the oil. The roommate came and started laughing and when the girl who bought oil asked her what was wrong with the oil, her roommate stated that what she thought to be cooking oil was not oil, instead, it was a gallon of apple juice. This participant also mentioned that during her recent immigration to the United States, she used to get lost a lot. The participant revealed that to her, every place looked the same. Sometimes she would be riding in a city bus and because of not being familiar with the new environment she would get out at the wrong place. Other times, she would push the button to stop the bus where it was not supposed to stop and, every time she got out the bus at the wrong place, she would walk miles thinking that the distance was short, and she would be late to school. The same participant also reported that at her first place of employment in the United States, her CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant) job was also very stressful. Because of her recent immigration to the country and because of not

knowing how to handle some duties involved in her job description, she would go to the bathroom and cry.

Another participant commented on adaptation challenges he faced following his migration to the United States this way: "When you first come here, everything is new to you. Even knowing how to open a package of something sometimes becomes difficult…" One more participant reported that during his first days in his host community, people would communicate in English and because he was new in the United States, he would not understand what they would be talking about and this was very stressful. Another participant revealed that during his first days in the United States, since nobody in his family knew how to drive, he would take one bus to do one thing, then take another bus to do another thing, then take a third bus to do another thing then he would realized that the whole day was gone by just spending time in the bus and this was very stressful. The other three participants who commented on their environmental challenges during their recent immigration to the United States also stated that what they went through during their early days in the United States was challenging and very stressful. One among those three participants commented on how he used to walk in snow in South Bend (Indiana) for more than five miles looking for a job and this was very challenging and stressful for him.

Time of Migration to the U.S.

Time of migration to the United States was another category which was created from participants' common themes. One participant who came to the United States in August 2006 and it snowed two months later in his geographical location of resettlement

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stated that he hated it and he still hates it. This participant revealed that his time of

migration in the United States was a big challenge for him at the beginning. The same

participant wishes he could have come to the United States during spring, the time period

of the year he enjoys the most.

Cold Weather

Five participants reported facing challenges related to cold weather and this was

very stressful during their adaptation process. One participant revealed that he has had a

car accident from driving in a snowy cold weather and this caused his insurance to go up.

This participant also revealed that because of his past experience, he still does not like to

drive in snow. The other participants who also were resettled in geographical locations

where it gets too cold and snows also told narratives related to their experiences with the

weather and revealed that it was very challenging and depressing to adjust to the cold

weather. One of them stated that she still hasn't adjusted to the cold weather yet and

revealed that whenever it gets too cold, she has to stay indoors.

Table 3

*The following table displays environmental factors which
contribute to acculturative stress.*

Environmental Factors	
Migration Period	Location of Resettlement
Recent immigration	Cold weather
Time of migration to the U.S.	

The following figure displays reciprocal causations among major categories which have been linked to personal, behavioral, and environmental factors.
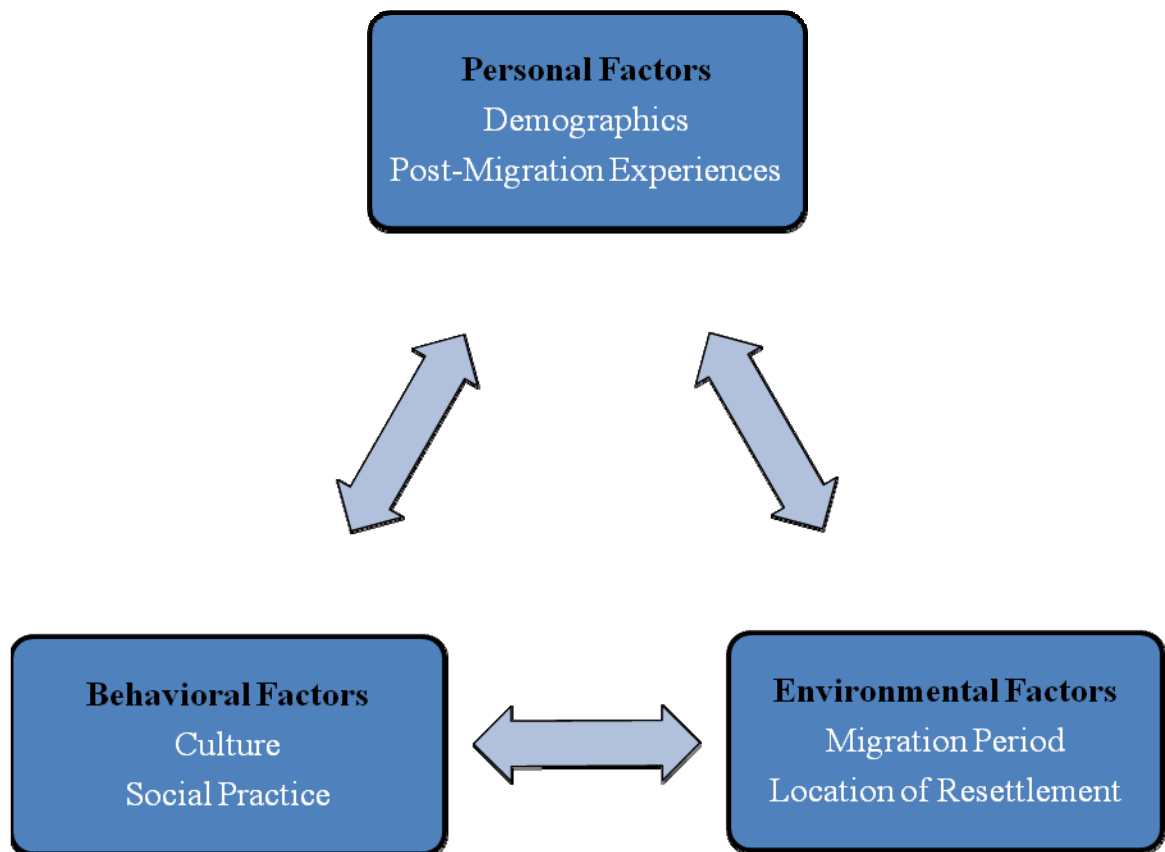
Figure 4. Reciprocal causations of emerging themes.

Coping Mechanisms

Common themes from participants' responses indicating how they coped with acculturative stress in the United States were grouped into nine categories. Using axial coding, two of those categories were divided into seven subcategories. The theoretical coding linked these categories and subcategories to the three components of the theory of

stress and coping (problem-focused, emotion-focused, and mixed-problems and emotion-focused coping) (See Appendix E).

Problem-focused Coping

Self-efficacy

Eleven participants reported coping with acculturative stress through their efforts to make goals and working towards achieving them. Most participants who used self-efficacy as a coping mechanism also made efforts to solve their own problems without depending too much on others. Using axial coding, this category was divided into four subcategories.

Work Ethics

One participant commented on her stress coping mechanism this way: "One more thing that consoled me was the fact that I was going to school." Another participant who managed to develop this type of stress coping mechanism stated it this way: "These two jobs keep me very busy. I don't have enough time to think about my own problems." One more participant commented on her stress coping mechanism this way: "One more thing that consoled me was the fact that I was going to school."

Goal Pursuit

Most participants who used the mechanism of pursuing their goals as a way of coping with acculturative stress reported that their goal achievements became the source of strength and resiliency to many obstacles in their host communities. One participant

expressed it this way: "Yes, it helps. When you realize you are achieving something in this country, it becomes a boost to your adjustment." One more participant revealed that in order to cope with stress, she gradually learned to adapt and worked hard in school. When she graduated from high school, she had a higher GPA than many of her classmates who were born and grew up in the United States.

Self-sufficiency

Five participants of this research study commented on the importance of being self sufficient. These participants revealed that in order to cope with acculturative stress, they have learned to deal with their own problems by always making efforts to solve them on their own. They believe that since they have struggled too much as refugees, they have learned not to always depend on others. These participants also revealed that whenever there is a problem, they try to solve it within the family without including outsiders. One participant revealed that being able to solve his family problem increases his self-esteem. Another participant who commented on this subject expressed himself this way:

> Even though you have friends, it is better to do things on your own. Friends are there but they cannot do things for you. …You have to learn to struggle on your own.

Secondary Migration

Three participants reported that one way they coped with acculturative stress was to change their initial geographical location of resettlement in the United states to go to a suitable place. One of them revealed how she changed her location this way:

… I remember when I moved to California from Missouri, the first weekend in California, I went to church. I did not know where the church was, but I thought there could be some churches in the area….

Another participant revealed that before she and her brother moved to Kalamazoo (Michigan), they first lived in Baltimore (Maryland). The same participant also reported that she and her brother moved to Kalamazoo to get a better life.

Emotion-focused Coping

Positive Community Perception

Two participants revealed that they were so fortunate to be resettled in communities that welcome immigrants. The same participants stated that the way they felt they were being treated in their host communities contributed to their coping mechanisms. These participants appreciate how most people in their host communities are open to them. One of them expressed his feelings this way:

> When people greet and smile at you even if you don't know them, you feel attracted and you feel you want to interact with them. By interacting with them, you learn from them and this contributes to the adaptation process…. You go to church, and people greet you even when they don't know you. You go to the store, someone you don't know smiles at you as if he/she knew you. I like that.

Hope

Three participants revealed that having hope in a positive future became a way of coping with stress. One of them stated it this way: "…I always thought my life would improve then do better in this country." Another participant stated that he still did not have his high school diploma. But, he is hoping that when his life situation improves, he will try to go back to school.

Spirituality

Three participants reported being comforted by their spiritual beliefs which had also been their way of coping with stress throughout their migration process. One of them stated it this way:

> I would say it has been difficult to cope with my adaptation challenges in this country. However, I have Christian beliefs which comfort me. I seek God's comfort everyday and have hope.

Another participant stated that one way she learned to cope with acculturative stress in the United States was the fact that she grew up in a Christian family and whenever there was something challenging for her and her family, all family members prayed and were comforted by their prayers. The same participant also stated that with many prayers and putting God first, she and her family overcame many challenges and didn't know how it happened. This participant stated that as a refugee immigrant, one is more likely to face social and environmental challenges. However, according to this participant, God uses mysterious ways to provide solutions to many challenges facing refugee immigrants in the United States.

Self-amusements

Two participants revealed coping with acculturative stress in the United States by finding ways to amuse themselves. One of them stated it this way:

> I remember the evening we were crying, the next day, my Dad went and bought candy machines. There were four of them. My Dad left us with lots of coins to use with those machines. We kids spent time playing with them because we did not have any other toys to play with.

The same participant also stated that sometimes, when she and her siblings felt lonely, they would take turns to tell each other's folktales from their homeland. Other time, they would spend time reminding each other how life in their homeland was like compared to life in the United States. The other participant who also reported coping with stress through self-amusement stated that whenever she felt stressed out, she would go to eat out. Other times, she would watch some movies on television.

Mixed Problem & Emotion-focused Coping

Social Support

All participants of this research study revealed that having social support in their host communities has helped them cope with stress during their adaptation process. Participant revealed that whenever they felt stress out, they managed to access social support in different ways depending on the need they felt they had. Using axial coding, this category involving social support was divided into three subcategories standing for "emotional", "appraisal", and "tangible" support.

Emotional Support

Seven participants reported that one way they coped with stress during their adaptation process in the United States was to interact with friends or other family members. One participant who affirmed using this coping mechanism stated it this way:

> I have friends in the area. In addition, my sister and my brother-in-law also live in the area. Whenever I feel stressed out, I talk to them.

Another participant who also used this coping mechanism expressed himself this way:

> However, in this country, we all seem to be busy. We only meet with friends once in a while. When I feel stressed out, I call some of them for conversation. This relieves my anxieties.

One more participant expressed the importance of emotional support in coping with stress stating that because he was going to school and there were some other immigrants from his homeland at the school he was attending, they had time to talk to each other, especially on weekends and this was very helpful to all of them. The same participant believes that interacting with people from one's own culture is a good coping mechanism in a foreign country. Another participant revealed that what helped her cope with stress was to realize that adaptation challenges and stress she was experiencing was not unique to her. This participant reported that every refugee friend in the United States she disclosed her problems to told her that she was not the only one. Once she realized that she was not the only one with adaptation problems, she felt consoled. Another participant who affirmed having received emotional support from his friends stated that since he grew up in a church, he coped with stress by going to church. This participant reported that the church he once attended had a youth choir which he decided to join. The participant revealed that while he was singing in the choir, he was not only coping with stress, but he was also improving his English language because during the choir practice, all group members had to memorize English songs. According to the same participant, being around friends in the choir was very helpful to him.

Appraisal Support

One participant reported that following migration to the United States, his friends, especially refugee immigrants who came to the United States earlier, were very helpful. In addition to encouraging him, they provided him with information about how to live and become successful in the United States. They always gave him good advice based on their adjustment experience in their host communities.

Tangible Support

One participant who affirmed receiving this type of support stated that whenever he needed some tangible or material assistance, he would go to his friends, and if they had something he was looking for, they would give it to him. If he needed some money, they would let him borrow it and pay back later. Another participant who affirmed receiving tangible support and this helped him cope with acculturative stress expressed himself this way: "It was until after six months that an old lady from the church we were attending decided to give us one of her old cars, the one she was not driving…."

Acculturation

Five participants mentioned how learning to adapt to life in the United States became part of their coping mechanisms. One of them expressed himself this way: "The good thing is that since I started going to school, I have met students who think like me, professors with valuable ideas I can learn from." Another participant reported that after she started working, she has been able to drive herself around and she keeps discovering where things are in her community then this relieves her stress and anxiety. One more

participant stated that what he likes about the United States is the availability of services.

For instance, according to this participant, in the United States, there are many services

for everybody who needs them and anybody who has courage to go to school can do it.

One more participant stated that with many opportunities available in the United States,

he is able to access and use technology, read books, watch television and go to school.

This participant mentioned that all those activities he likes to get involved in contribute to

his adjustment and his coping with acculturative stress in the United States.

While most participants revealed that one way to cope with acculturative stress

was based on integration to the American culture, one participant reported having

rejected the American culture and this became her way of coping with stress. This

participant expressed herself this way: "You know, I don't know if there is anything I like

about this country. To tell you the truth, I have been thinking about going back home."

The same participant stated that after realizing that some people in her host community

did not like her, she was more likely not to interact with them. She also revealed that

since she has had many difficulties adjusting to the American culture, she usually

interacts with Americans in her host community, but she never develops friendship with

them.

Self-identification

One participant reported being able to cope with acculturative stress in her early

days in the United States by identifying herself with another immigrant in her host

community. The same participant revealed that when she was in fourth grade, she met

another immigrant girl from a different continent and because they were struggling

together in English, they decided to hang around together. This participant reported that she and the other girl liked each other because they were the only children from refugee immigrant families in that community. This participant reported that in order to cope with stress related to their adjustment to their new environment, the two girls would tell each other things related to each other's culture.

Social Service Use

One participant reported developing strategic ways to cope with stress which mostly resulted from his low economic situation during his adjustment in the United States. This participant reported that in order to cope with stress, he learned effective ways of using and maintaining social services. The participant expressed his coping strategy this way: "…I lived on refugee services until both my brother in law and my sister who are also refugee immigrants came from California to visit us in Arizona."

Table 4 summarizes the different acculturative stress-related coping mechanisms used by refugee immigrants in the United States.

Table 4

Coping mechanisms.

Coping Mechanisms		
Problem-focused	**Emotion-focused**	**Mixed problem & emotion-focused**
Self-efficacy	Positive community perception	Social support
• **Work ethics**	Hope	• Emotional support
• **Goal pursuit**	Spirituality	• Appraisal support
• **Self-sufficiency**	Self- amusements	• Tangible support
• **Secondary migration**		Acculturation
		Self-identification
		Social service use

Approaches to Working with Refugee Immigrants in the U.S.

Participants of this research study gave their input on effective ways of working with refugee immigrants in the United States based on their migration experiences and past refugee service use. Common themes from their responses were grouped into nine categories. Using selective coding, categories with similarities were linked to create three major categories standing for "cultural sensitivity", "psychosocial interventions", and "empowerment" (See Appendix E).

Cultural Sensitivity

Culturally-based Practice

Five participants suggested that the best way to work with refugee immigrants in the United States would be to provide services that recognize different cultures. One participant suggested that based on her post-migration experiences in the United States, when it comes to assigning places of resettlement to refugee newcomers, refugee agencies need to link together people with similar demographic characteristics. The same participant believed that even though refugee agencies are doing it to a certain extent, one criterion such as race is not enough. This participant suggested that refugee services need to consider similarities in various demographic characteristics before linking any resettling refugees together.

Another participant suggested that refugee services need to include cultural sensitivity in adult education. The same participant suggested that adult education needs to revise the curriculum and offer classes that are adapted to skill levels of resettled refugees. This participant also suggested that adult education needs to hire culturally competent teachers who are able to understand and recognize migration problems of resettled refugees in the United States.

The other participants commonly suggested that refugee services in the United States need to make sure newcomers are well adjusted before discontinuing their services. One of them stated that refugee services need to go slow, step by step, because many refugees go through a lot before coming and during their migration to the United States.

Strength Perspective

One participant who commented on the importance of strength perspective suggested that refugee services need to assess the abilities and strengths of refugees, then help them considering who they are, what they can do, and what they are willing to do.

Cultural Orientation

Six participants suggested that refugee resettlement agencies need to provide enough cultural orientation to refugees before they arrive in the United States so that they know what to expect. According to the same participants, refugee resettlement agencies need to tell newcomers exactly how life in the United States is so that when they arrive, they already have a starting point. These participants also suggested that following migration, refugee immigrants in the United States need to be culturally integrated and taught the meaning of things. One participant suggested that newcomers need to be taught how to pay their bills and the value of U.S currency. Another participant suggested that refugee immigrants need to be taught that domestic violence is not accepted in the United States. In order to accomplish these goals, all participants suggested that refugee services need to create more programs aiming to provide information related to cultural orientation. The same participants affirmed that cultural orientation is essential to new resettled refugees.

Equal Opportunities

One participant who expressed the need of equal opportunities in refugee services suggested that all refugees need to be treated equally regardless of where they come

from. The same participant believed that refugee services need to provide equal opportunities mostly in education programs for refugee newcomers because education is the key to their success in the United States.

Psychosocial Interventions

Counseling Services

Four participants expressed the need of psychosocial interventions in refugee services. One of them believed that when refugees come to the United States, a lot of issues they have are more mental than material. Therefore, according to the same participant, refugee newcomers need enough counseling. Another participant stated that many refugee immigrants in the United States have lots of trauma resulting from their migration experiences. In order for them to recover, they need spiritual interventions, meaning lots of prayers. The same participant also suggested that as long refugee newcomers are alive, someone needs to pray for them.

Social Support

Three participants commented on the importance of linking newcomers to social network in refugee services. One of them expressed this need this way: "…So I can say that the best way to help refugee immigrants like African immigrants is to help them socialize." Another participant expressed this need suggesting that linking refugee newcomers to where their own people are is very important.

All three participants believed that social network is very helpful to any human being. Therefore, according to the same participants, refugee newcomers need to be

linked to where they can get social support and those who don't have people to communicate with need to be informed about where they can go and participate in social activities.

Restoring Hope

One participant suggested that the best way to work with refugee immigrants in the United States would be to provide them with psychosocial interventions that restore hope. This participant believes that many refugees who come to the United States have lost hope. Therefore, one way to effectively intervene with them would be to talk to them, cheer them up, visit them and tell them that their bad days have passed.

Empowerment

Eight participants suggested that the use of empowerment in refugee services in the United States is very important. They expressed the need of this type of intervention in refugee services from different perspectives. This major category emerged from two categories standing for "language assistance" and "goal motivations".

Language Assistance

Five participants suggested that the best way to help refugees would be to assist them to learn the language during their early days in the United States. One participant expressed this need this way:

First, services need to help refugee newcomers learn the language. Once they know the language, they're mentality will change. They will feel more confident, they won't have any complex of inferiority, complex of being ignorant.

Goal Motivations

Five participants suggested that refugee newcomers in the United States need to be helped make goals and encouraged to pursue them. One of those participants suggested that refugee immigrants who are still young need to be encouraged to go to school to improve their knowledge so that they can get better jobs. Another participant suggested that refugee immigrants in the United States need to be encouraged to not be lazy since they have come to a country that has lots of opportunities and freedom.

Table 5 summarizes the effective approaches to working with refugee immigrants in the United States.

Table 5

Approaches to working with refugee immigrants in the U.S.

Approaches to working with refugee immigrants in the U.S.		
Cultural sensitivity	Psychosocial interventions	Empowerment
Culturally-based practice	Counseling services	Language assistance
Strength perspective	Spiritual interventions	Goal motivation
Cultural orientation	Social support	
Equal opportunities	Restoring hope	

Grounded Theory

All major categories resulting from both selective and theoretical coding were used to develop a grounded theory. The theory which focuses on acculturative stress, coping, and approaches to working with refugee immigrants in the United States has been built on five principles.

Principle 1

Demographic characteristics and migration experiences are personal factors which contribute to acculturative stress across different groups of refugee immigrants in the United States. Some of the demographic characteristics contributing to acculturative stress may include; age, gender, nostalgia, slow adaptation, low skill levels, low socio-economic level or country of origin. Migration experiences which contribute to acculturative stress include; culture shock, health issues, family issues, family concerns, generation gaps, psychosocial despair and social isolation (Refer to Table1).

Principle 2

Differences in culture and social practices between refugee immigrants and their host communities are behavioral factors which contribute to acculturative stress across different groups of refugee immigrants in the United States. While cultural differences contributing to acculturative stress may involve incompatibilities in cultural norms and cultural communication, social practices contributing to acculturative stress may involve xenophobia, discrimination, marginality, and non-adapted service policies (Refer to Table2).

Principle 3

Unfavorable migration period and geographical location of resettlement in the United States are environmental factors which contribute to acculturative stress across different groups of refugee immigrants. Unfavorable migration period to the United Sates involves recent immigration in the country and the time of resettlement which may favor some groups of refugees but not others. Unfavorable geographical location of resettlement is mostly related to places where the weather gets too cold (Refer to Table3).

Principle 4

Refugee immigrants in the United States cope with acculturative stress by seeking to boost their psychological well-being and by adapting strategic ways to resolve issues contributing to their stress. Refugee immigrants in the United States seek to boost their psychological well-being by developing social support, by having hope in a positive future and by looking for ways to fit and to feel there are accepted in their host communities. Refugee immigrants in the United States also develop strategic ways to solve issues contributing to acculturative stress by working hard to improve their life situation and by achieving their set goals (Refer to Table4).

Principle 5

Approaches to working with refugee immigrants in the United States require psychosocial interventions which are built on cultural sensitivity and empowerment. Psychosocial interventions with refugee immigrants in the United States need to involve counseling services, social support, and spiritual interventions aiming to restore hope.

Cultural sensitivity in refugee services in the United States need to focus on culturally-based practices, strength perspective, and cultural orientation. Empowering refugee immigrants in the United States would be to help them learn the language and to motivate them to become self-sufficient (Refer to Table5).

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The United States is one of a few countries with refugee resettlement programs. Based on the U.S Refugee Act of 1980, the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, many refugees from various countries worldwide who flee their homeland with a well-founded fear of persecution because of their race, gender, ethnic group, religion, social or political affiliation, are resettled in the United States.

During post-migration to the United States, some groups of refugee immigrants face a variety of adaptation challenges as a result of their demographic characteristics and migration experiences. Some of those challenges often contribute to acculturative stress across different groups of refugee immigrants in the United States. Many refugee immigrants experiencing acculturative stress in the United States manage to develop coping strategies. However, adaptation challenges involved in post-migration, which also play a role in the life outcomes of refugee immigrants in the United States, need to be well-understood in order to provide appropriate psychosocial interventions. These interventions need to be based on cultural competency, systemic approach, strength perspective, empowerment and advocacy.

The qualitative data analysis of this research study has revealed participants' common experiences involved in the adaptation process in the United States, related stress, coping strategies, and effective ways of working with this population. Common themes from a constant comparative analysis have suggested that these experiences and coping strategies can be universal to all refugee immigrant groups in the United States,

especially since these results are corroborated by the current literature (e.g. Kosic, 2004; Segal & Mayadas, 2005; Vissicaro, 2009; Yost & Lukas, 2002).

Results from a constant comparative analysis of this research study revealed that the specific aims of this qualitative research study have also been fulfilled. For instance, the first aim of the research was to discuss participants' adaptation experiences in the United States. Participants were able to tell narratives related to their pre-migration experiences and how these experiences contributed to adaptation process in the United States. The second aim was to explore the different acculturative stressors that participants have experienced after migrating to the United States. This aim was fulfilled when common themes from participants' responses identified a variety of personal, behavior, and environmental factors which contribute to acculturative stress across different groups of refugee immigrants in the United States. The third aim of this research study was to identify and examine the different coping mechanisms refugee immigrants in the United States use in response to acculturative stress. This aim was fulfilled when participants' responses emerged common themes indicating three types of coping mechanisms they have used in response to acculturative stress. The fourth aim of the research was to identify effective policies that may be used to help refugee immigrants in the United States. This aim was fulfilled when common themes resulting from a constant comparative analysis revealed effective ways of working with this population. Psychosocial interventions that are built on cultural sensitivity and empowerment have been found to be effective ways of working with different groups of refugee immigrants in the United States.

Policy Implications

This research study provides information relating to migration and adaptation experiences of refugee immigrants in the United States, psychosocial and environmental factors which contribute to acculturative stress, and related coping mechanisms. Based on these experiences, a number of suggestions are stated.

Results of this research study indicate that demographic characteristics and post-migration experiences of refugee immigrants in the United States are personal factors which contribute to acculturative stress. Therefore, in order to identify those factors across different groups of refugees, cultural competency with this population is required. This means refugee service agencies in the United States need to learn about the refugee experience and the negative psychosocial consequences of forced migration.

Participants of this research study commonly identified low levels of English proficiency as one of the major personal factors which contribute to acculturative stress. For that reason, refugee services in the United States need to increase the number of English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and make them available to all host communities of refugee newcomers.

Recent immigration in the United States has been identified as one of the major environmental factors which contribute to acculturative stress across different groups of refugees. Therefore, newly resettled refugees in the United States need to receive enough cultural orientation. Refugee services need to provide class sessions with information about life and culture in the United States before resettling refugees arrive and immediately following their settlement. Once cultural orientation is provided effectively

to those newcomers, they will be more likely to adjust to their host communities with fewer difficulties.

Differences between refugee immigrant cultures and the host culture can foster behavioral characteristics which are more likely to create conflicts between refugee immigrants and some members of their host communities. Therefore, education about tolerance between host community members and refugee immigrants is essential. While refugee immigrants are encouraged to learn about American culture, host community members need to be encouraged to learn about the negative effects of forced migration so that they can live with newcomers in harmony.

Many refugee immigrants in the United States have strengths and skills they have acquired from their homeland, which may be used not only to cope with acculturative stress or other post-migration challenges, but to also improve their economic situation in the United States. Therefore, refugee services in the United States need to assess those skills and help newcomers make goals and choices related to what they are capable of doing.

Some refugee immigrants in the United States would like to improve their economic situation but still need some encouragements and guidance. Therefore, refugee services in the United States need to find ways to motivate and help them become self-sufficient. One way refugee services can motivate newcomers would be to invite some refugee immigrants who managed to become successful in the United States and ask them to come to talk to newly resettled refugees about their adjustment experiences and strategies they used to become successful in the country. Refugee services in the United States can also empower newcomers by selecting, printing, and distributing some

examples of successful stories of refugee immigrants in the United States. These stories can be printed in different languages refugee immigrants can read and understand. For refugee immigrants who are not able to read, a designated person can help them read those stories in their preferred language.

Many refugees who come to the United States have endured traumatic experiences during their migration process and many have lost hope in life. Therefore, policies and interventions with refugees in the United States need to include strategic ways to restore hope to those who experience psychosocial despair. This can be done by finding ways to provide them with social support.

A large number of refugee immigrants in the United States have a variety of ongoing social, environmental and political issues experienced from the time they fled their homeland. In order to provide them with appropriate interventions, refugee services need to make efforts to learn and understand those issues. This can be accomplished by developing policies that focus on cultural competency which can be developed through open-communication and by conducting regular research with this population in the United States.

Cultural competency has generally been found to lead to culturally sensitive services and empowerment of all minorities. Therefore, once policies and refugee immigrant services in the United States include cultural sensitivity along with empowerment, many refugee immigrants who receive these services will be more likely to become self-sufficient and good citizens, which will also enable them to contribute to the economic well-being of the country.

Strengths of the Study

The study managed to include participants from a variety of cultures, specifically, five different groups of refugee immigrants living in the United States. The snowball sampling technique allowed the recruitment of participants from different geographical locations in the United States. Although this qualitative study has strengths, it also presents some limitations.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this research study are related to participant availability and demographic representation. Other limitations are related to cluster representation in the study.

With regard to participant availability, refugee immigrants who consented to participate in this study live in separate geographical areas of the United States. For that reason, it was very hard to group them together to conduct a focus group in order to confirm the results of the study. Even among the few participants who live in the same geographical area, it was impossible to schedule a time which would work for everyone due to work and/or school obligations.

The United States is comprised of refugee immigrants from various countries. Although this qualitative study presents good results, not all major refugee sending countries to the United States were represented in the study. Having a large number of refugee sending countries represented in the study would have increased the variety of themes based on a large variety of refugee demographics and a variety of migration experiences.

The snowball sampling technique used in this qualitative research study did not allow an equal representation of all clusters with refugee immigrants in the United States. Although there are many refugee host communities in the United States, only seven of them were represented in this research study.

All these limitations may possibly affect external validity of the study. Consequently, a number of recommendations are proposed.

Recommendations

Due to the fact that this qualitative research study presents possible limitations, additional research studies with similar purposes and different designs are recommended to confirm results of this research study. For instance, mixed-methods or longitudinal studies involving large samples of diverse groups of refugee immigrants in the United States are recommended.

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**Acculturative Stress, Coping, And Approaches to Working with Refugee
Immigrants in the United States**

Informed Consent

Purpose

I understand that the purpose of this research is to explore and examine stress I

may have felt while adjusting to the U.S following immigration. This is a student

research project that is being supervised by the student's advisor, Dr. Ignatius Yacoub.

The data will be used for research purposes only. The data may be included in

presentations at academic conferences and in publications in social science. However,

identifying information will not be revealed in the results of this study or in presentations

and/or publications.

Voluntary Participation

I understand that my participation is completely voluntary. I also understand

that I can begin the interview and then decide to withdraw from it at any time, without

penalty.

Form of Participation

Participation in this face-to-face interview will mean that I will be asked

questions about my background and about how I adjusted to life in the United States.

Also, I will be asked questions that aim to explore effective ways of working with

refugee immigrants living in the United States. The interview will be recorded to enable

the researcher to write down what I say exactly at a later time. However, I can ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time. In that case, the interviewer will make notes based on my responses to the interview questions. I can stop at any time or change my responses at any time.

Confidentiality

I understand that the interview will be kept completely confidential. My personal information will be removed from the interview transcripts and replaced by an assigned identification number. Only the researcher will have access to the recorded interview and will be able to match my personal information with the assigned identification number. The recorded interview will be stored in a secured file cabinet in the Doctoral Suite at the Loma Linda University Department of Social Work & Social Ecology. Recorded interview materials will be stored in this file cabinet for one year after the conclusion of this research. At that time, all recorded materials will be destroyed.

Time Commitment

I will be asked to participate in one interview session that will last between 40 to 60 minutes. I may be contacted within two months for a follow-up interview and my participation in that interview will be entirely at my discretion.

Benefits

This study will add to social science knowledge related to working with refugees and immigrants in the United States. This will enable service providers to learn

more about this population and how to meet their needs. However, I may not directly benefit from this research.

Risks

Possible risks involved in this study may include negative reactions to questions that deal with past experiences. I understand that if I experience any discomfort, I may stop the interview at any time. Upon my request, the interviewer may make an appropriate referral.

If I have any questions about the research itself, I may contact:

Adiel Uzabakiriho, PhD Student

Department of Social Work and Social Ecology

Loma Linda University

Loma Linda, CA 92350

Tel: (909) 379-7599

E-mail: auzabakiriho@llu.edu

Dr. Ignatius Yacoub, Professor and Research Supervisor

Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, CA 92354

Tel: (909) 379-7580

E-mail: iyacoub@llu.edu

I may talk with an impartial third party not associated with this project about any question or complaint at the Office of Patient Relations.

Tel: (909) 558-4647

E-mail: patientrelations@llu.edu

I have read completely the statements on the preceding page. I will be given a
copy of this consent form. I have also had all my questions answered satisfactorily
and I now consent to participate.

Name:

Telephone (with area code):

Signature:

Date:

Section1: Demographics

1. What is your gender: Male (1)   Female (2)

2. What is your country of origin? _____

3. What is your age? _____

4. When did you first come to the United States?

Month_____Year_____

5. How many family members are with you in the United States? _____

6. What is the highest level of education completed?

Section2: Qualitative interview guide questions.

        The following open-ended primary questions were formulated based on the

purpose of this research project which is to:

1. Discuss participants' adaptation experiences in the United States.

2. Explore participants' definitions of stress and the ways they have responded to stress

in the United States.

3. Identify the different adaptation stressors that participants have experienced since

migrating to the United States and how they cope with them.

4. Identify effective policies that may be used to help refugee immigrants in the United

States.

Primary Questions

1. Tell me about your adaptation experiences in the United States.

2. What challenges did you or still face since you came to the United States?

3. How did you cope with those challenges?

4. Would you consider yourself to be adjusted to the U.S. environment?

5. What do you like about the United States?

6. Do those things you like about the United States contribute to your adjustment to the

   US environment?

7. What do you dislike about the United States?

8. Do those things you dislike about the United States contribute to your adjustment?

9. Have you made any friends since you came to the United States?

10. How important are your friends to you in the United States?

11. What do you do when you need social assistance?

12. Have you used any refugee services since you came to the United States?

13. How do you feel about being a refugee immigrant in the United States?

14. What would be the effective ways of working with refugee immigrants living in the United States?

November 8, 2010

To whom this may concern:

I am writing to request permission to conduct student research as well as to request referrals to potential participants within your community/organization.

The research project will involve both male and female refugee immigrants of 18 years or older who have been living in the United States for one year or more. The purpose of the research is to explore and examine stress that different groups of refugee immigrants feel when they come to the United States and how they cope with it. In addition to being used to complete the student dissertation for the PhD program, the research will be used for conferences and publications and may provide information to service providers who want to meet refugee needs in the United States. Dr. Ignitious Yacoub, Professor in the Department of Social Work and Social Ecology at Loma Linda University is supervising the project.

I would highly appreciate your assistance in referring me to one or two refugee immigrants within your community/organization who would be willing to participate in this research study. Once the individual gives you permission to release their contact information to me for the study, I will then contact them to discuss participation and if they choose will arrange to meet face-to-face with them for an interview session. Thank you very much for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Adiel Uzabakiriho
PhD Student.

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE TELEPHONE SCRIPT WITH PARTICIPANTS

My name is Adiel Uzabakiriho, a doctoral student in Social Policy and Social Research at Loma Linda University, California.

I am calling to inform you that I am working on a research project with refugee immigrants in the United States and ask you if you would be willing to participate on it.

The purpose of the research is to explore factors which contribute to acculturative stress across different groups of refugee immigrants in the United States. Results from this study will be used to complete my dissertation project. In addition to that, results from this study will provide information to refugee service providers in the United States which will help them meet refugee needs. I would like to inform you that your participation will be highly appreciated.

Common themes from participants' responses were grouped into different categories and subcategories. Categories with similarities were also linked to create major categories. Participant identification is referred to the letter P followed by a number.

Acculturative Stressors

Personal Factors

Slow Adaptation

P4. In my family, I was the only one who was too slow to adapt and I am still not fully adapted yet to life here in the United States.

Skill Levels

P4. When my family and I came to the United States, I did not know how to drive.

Gender

P1. … The following day, I reported the incident to the refugee agency and stated that I could no longer stay with that girl in the same apartment because she was putting me through a lot.

P9. I got married and right now, I am pregnant. Based on my doctor's recommendation, I am not supposed to be performing heavy duties...

Culture Shock

P1. Another challenge I faced is related to my Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) job.

P1. This was a big challenge for me to take care of naked older individuals whom I perceived to have my parents or grandparents age.

P7. When my Dad came home in the evening, we all started crying, telling him how we hated this place. We told him that we wanted to go back home, then my mother started crying too.

P14. I remember having culture shock when I first came to the United States….

Language Issues

P2. …One problem after another. The first problem you encounter with is the language.

P2. …The challenges I still face in this country are related to language and differences in cultures...

P3. I would say language problem. During my first days here in New Buffalo, people would speak then I would not understand what they would be talking about….

P3. …Even with the four years I already spent in the country, there are times when I don't understand what Americans are talking about, especially when they are conversing among themselves.

P4. I have experienced Language difficulties. Although I knew how to speak English even before I came to the United States, some individuals here in the United States speak English and you don't understand what they are talking about….

P5. One of my challenges was related to communication. Sometimes people spoke to me and I did not understand what they were talking about….

P7. Another situation I remember is being scared of taking an English test when school started, my parents were there but I remember crying because the teacher would say things in English I did not understand.

P8. Another challenge I faced when I first came to the United States was related to language.

P9. The language was a big stressor…. I remember in high school, my classmates who knew I was from Africa would come and tease me about my English,...

P13. The first challenge I faced which I also had been expecting is related to language.

P14. The language was a big issue for me…

Low Self-evaluation

P8. My American teachers realized I was having the language difficulties then tried to help me the best they could.

P13. I knew, there was nothing I could do in the United States without being able to speak the language.

P15. I was expecting to have a language issue because even at home, I never expressed myself well in any language. When I was still in school, even French has been a big challenge for me. You can now imagine my English skills…

Loss of Social Status

P2. It can sometimes be stressful. For instance, in my case, I had completed the law school in Rwanda. Following that, I went and worked for the Rwanda Commercial Bank

for eight years. When I came to the United States, the only jobs that were available to me were housekeeping jobs. This became very stressful to me…

P10. When I remember what I used to do and now I am sitting down doing nothing, I often feel very sad. I think you need to pray for me.

P13. The fact that you are a refugee immigrant in this country sticks in your mind. Whether you become a permanent resident or a citizen in this country, you are always a refugee immigrant.

Low Level of Education

P3. One more challenge I faced is related to school….

Negative Pre-migration Effects

P3. Because of the war situation in Burundi, I never had the chance to complete secondary school. When I came to the United States, I tried to go back to school to get a high school diploma but life was very difficult for me. School was very hard for me. I did not continue.

Low Socioeconomic Level

P3. Until now, I still feel stressed out because of my life situation. I live alone, life is too expensive and…

P4. In this country, everything is money. You work to pay bills, food is money, and it is not like back home where you can grow something in your own garden. You don't have your own home, and then you have to pay rent to stay in an apartment.

P4. For instance, you happen to be living in the same neighborhood with a family that is making a good income and you yourself are making ends meet. That family is not going to talk to you. You live closer to a neighbor who drives an expensive new car and you yourself are driving a car which is almost a junk. That individual is not going to interact with you.

P9. Later on, my older brother who was living with me lost his job. Consequently, we could no longer pay rent. A few weeks later, we were receiving eviction notices.

P14. One of my problems in the United States was related to finances. I always had economic problems.

P15. My economic situation was very bad at the beginning. Neither my wife, nor I had a job. We did not have transportation. Even finding a job was a challenge for us because we did not have a car to drive to look for a job.

Family Separation

P9. The first challenge was when one of my older brothers made a decision to leave us to get his own apartment. My one brother and I were now the only two renting the apartment.

Health Status

P4. Another challenge I faced when I came to the United States was related to my health issues. One time, I broke my arm and it was necessary for me to have arm surgery. It took me the whole year to recover from it. In the meantime, I stayed home for the entire year without working.

P4. Yes, especially my health issues. During my recovery process, I spent the whole year without working and there was no income coming. This put me through lots of anxiety and stress.

Family Issues

P2. Unfortunately, my brother in law and I did not get along. It did not take a long time for them to kick my mother and me out of their house.

P4. Another issue I have with this country is the fact that they give too much freedom to children.

P10. However, if you ask me to tell you what I don't like, what I can tell you is that I don't like the way some children in this country are raised.

Social Isolation

P7. …The fact that we did not know anybody in the neighborhood, we felt lonely.

P10. The challenge I am facing now is that I feel I am isolated. Here in the United States, because I don't speak the language and I am too old to learn, I hardly communicate with anybody. A weekend comes and goes, another one comes and goes and I don't go to church. This is very difficult for me.

P10. Making friends? This is the problem I am currently having. You know, I grew up in a church back home, and here in this country, I feel isolated. Can you imagine the weekend comes and I cannot go to church even though I would like to? This is not easy for me.

P10. …I wish I could find somebody who would interact with me on a regular basis. There are days I spend 24 hours without talking to anybody. Sometimes I become worried that my mouth will stink from spending long hours without talking.

P14. During my first days in the United States, I had no support, I had no family…

Lack of Trust

P7. We were always scared, we did not trust anybody.

Psychosocial Despair

P10. This country deserves young people but not old people like me.

Marginality

P9. I remember in high school, my classmates who knew I was from Africa would come and tease me about my English, they would ask me many questions related to my life back to Africa, they would often make comments stating that in Africa children don't have shoes. They would often be laughing at me.

P9. It is good to be a refugee in the United States. However, I don't think it is enough for me. I always feel different.

P9. For instance, I sometimes go to apply for a job, and when I am asked to prove my immigration status, I mention that I am a US citizen. The agency then asks me for my passport. When I show my US passport, they ask me what country issued my passport. This is not because they do not recognize my US passport, but it is because of the color of my skin and my English accent.

P9. Whether you are a US citizen or have US immigration papers, you are always treated as an African immigrant.

Social/Family Concern

P7. My mother did not know what to do with us and the more she felt depressed, we too felt depressed. We did not know what to do.

P7. I think I was so fortunate because I came to the United States at young age, I did not have responsibilities, but my parents did.

P7. … However, I was always worried about my Mom and this was very depressing for me.

P14. I was always concerned about my brothers and sisters I had left in Thailand.

Generation Gap

P10. Before I came to California, I learned that my daughter had told her children that Grandma was coming. Therefore, they were no longer going to wash dishes because Grandma was going to take care of it. I did not like my daughter's idea. Consequently, this created conflicts between us.

P10. Can you imagine children in this country being raised by just watching television or spending all day on the computer? What kinds of kids will they turn out to be?

P10. My daughter and I don't agree with this but I think children should be raised up to prepare for their future but not being taught to be lezzy by just watching television all day and night.

Nostalgia

P13. You always think about your homeland. …You wonder whether you will get the chance to go back to your homeland one day.

Behavioral Factors

Cultural Incompatibilities

P1. …Another challenge I faced is related to my roommate. The resettlement agency put me in the same apartment with another refugee immigrant from Liberia. This girl smoked and drunk alcohol in the apartment although she knew I did not drink nor smoke…

P1. Oh Yes. After I reported the incident of my roommate to the refugee agency, my roommate tried to change her behavior. However, we a kind of became enemies. Our communication changed. You can now imagine the stress I felt from living in the same apartment with someone I did not get along with.

P1. … Another challenge I faced is related to my Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) job. In my country, I was not used to take care of old people.

P1. In my culture, we respect elders but when I started doing my CNA job, some of my duties were to give a bath to people assigned to me….

P4. Many children here in the United States don't get disciplined by their parents and are often messed up.

P5. Another challenge is related to cultural differences. Because of where we come from, we tend to think or do things differently.

P5. There are times I speak to people and immediately they ask me where I am from. The moment they do that, I feel I am different from them.

P5. I sometimes feel frustrated of how things are done here, but I don't let my frustration run my life.

P5. The only problem is that every time I meet people here in America, they ask me where I come from and because of that, I feel I am different. May be it is because of how I look or because I don't speak English like them.

P6. My first challenge is related to differences in culture.

P6. When you compare African food with food here in the United States, you realize that food here in the U.S. is tasteless. Canned food with no natural taste, too much sugar in everything you eat. This is also a big challenge for me.

P11. You know, in Vietnam, salad and the rest of the meal is mixed together. But here in the United States, they serve you salad first. You have to eat salad before you eat another food….

P11. The different types of salad dressings used in the United States are also different from the ones used in Vietnam.

P12. You know, in Vietnam, we eat sandwiches but we put hot staff in them. Even bread in Vietnam is crispy warm. But here in the United States, they make cold sandwiches and put cold staff in them.

Cultural Communication

P2. …Another problem you encounter is the differences in cultural communication. Here in the United States, people say "I will see you later" and you don't know what it

means…

P2. …I don't like the way some people here in the United States tell me that they like my English accent just to point out to me that I have an accent or bad English pronunciation when I communicate with them.

P2. …The challenges I still face in this country are related to communication and differences in cultures....

P4. Here in the United States, people gossip too much. Whenever they have something to talk about you, they make fun of it. What one knows, another one is going to know it in a matter of seconds. They communicate like electricity.

P4. In my culture, when you reach a certain age, you only speak when it is necessary. You are expected to act wise by self control especially in what you say.

P4. However, in this culture, if you are in a group of people and don't talk, some people may think that something is wrong with you.

P4. There are too many American slang people use and you don't understand their meanings.

P4. Some individuals, although they are born here, whenever they speak, they do not use the proper English grammar and you cannot correct them.

P4. It is very hard to learn the meaning of American slang when you don't interact too much with people who use it.

P6. You know how in my culture, when you respect someone or when you are interacting with someone older than you, you don't look at that individual in the eyes. But here in the United States, if you don't look at someone in the eyes, that person will think that you are lying or you are showing a sign of disrespect.

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P6. In my culture, when you speak to an individual you respect, you have to talk slowly and calmly. However, here in the United States, people talk too loud and fast, regardless who they are talking to. This is a big challenge for me.

P6. For instance, when you are communicating with a person thinking that you are showing some respect based on how you were raised then that person asks you what is wrong with you, you don't feel happy about it.

Non-adapted Policies

P4. One more challenge I faced during my adaptation process is related to too much signing of unnecessary paperwork….

P4. …In this country, anything you do or any service you receive, you have to first sign papers… In this country, whenever you go to the healthcare center to have medical services, instead of treating you first, you are required to first sign a whole bunch of papers some of which you don't read because of small prints.

P4. Often, the curriculum and educational material provided to resettled refugees are not adapted to their performance levels and this becomes very difficult for them to learn.

P7. I think what I would say is, maybe things are different from the way they used to be, but when we came, refugee services would assume that things we needed were clothing,…

P9. This is different. Back home, when a working female becomes pregnant, she gets maternity leave.

P9. However, when I presented my request to my job, instead of helping me, I was fired.

Environmental Factors

Recent Immigration

P1. At the beginning, I faced a number of challenges….

P1. I remember one day, I wanted to cook French fries. I went to the store to buy cooking oil to make those French fries. When I got to the store, I saw a big gallon which I thought was cooking oil I was looking for. Without reading the label, I grabbed the gallon, paid for it and went home. When I got to my apartment, I took a frying pan and poured some of what I thought was cooking oil. I turned the stove on and waited for the oil to warm up. What I thought was cooking oil was not warming up as oil normally does. After a long wait, I went and asked my roommate who came to the US before I did to come and tell me what was wrong with my oil. She came and started laughing at me and when I asked her what she was laughing about, she told me that what I thought to be cooking oil was not oil. Instead, I had bought a gallon of apple juice.

P1. For instance, when I first came to the United States, I used to get lost a lot. To me, every place looked the same. Sometimes, I would be riding in a city bus and get out at the wrong place. Other times, I would push the button to stop the bus where it was not supposed to stop. Every time I got out the bus at the wrong place, I would walk miles thinking that the distance was short, and I would be late to school.

P1. My CNA job was also very stressful. Sometimes, I would go to the bathroom and cry then wipe my face and come out. Oh yeah. The adjustment process was very stressful and challenging to me at the beginning.

P2. …When you first come here, everything is new to you. Even knowing how to open a package of something sometimes becomes difficult…

P2. …The beginning here in the United States was very stressful for me

P3. During my first days here in New Buffalo, people would speak then I would not understand what they would be talking about.

P4. …But here in the United States, since none of us knew how to drive, I would take one bus to do one thing, then take another bus to do another thing, then take a third bus to do another thing then I realized the whole day was gone by just spending time in the bus….

P4. …Since none of us knew how to drive, we would walk long distances to get what we needed and this took too much time.

P7. I remember my Dad would go to work early in the morning and would come home late in the evening because he worked two jobs. When he came, that is when my mother would go to do the grocery because she could not go without my Dad. She did not know where to go.

P8. I remember during my first year in the United States, I was living in Texas at that time. I tried to go to school. School started at 8:00AM and because I had to ride in a public transportation, I had to be ready by 6:00AM in order to be at school at 8:00AM. If I was not ready by 6:00AM, I knew I was going to be late.

P8. I remember how one day, I was coming out of school and forgot to get out of the bus at the right place. The bus took me all the way to the last destination. When I got to the final destination, I realized I had passed my stop area. Therefore, I stayed in the bus waiting for the return. Fortunately, it was still daylight and even with that kind of delay, I was able to get home before sundown, but it was stressful.

P9. Yes. At the beginning. Many times, we did not have any solutions to problems we were having and it became very stressful.

P13. My first four years in the United States were not so easy for me. In addition to many personal problems, I had to also adjust to the new culture.

P15. I remember how during my first days in the United States, because I did not have transportation, I used to walk in snow from home to South Bend looking for a job.

Deception

P4. We come here with high expectations but we become disappointed and sometimes discouraged when we realize that life in this country can sometimes be very difficult.

P6. Some refugees who come to the United States get discouraged by their life situation and some want to go back home.

Cold Weather

P3. Another challenge I still face here in the United States is related to the cold weather….

…P3. I have had a car accident from driving in a snowy cold weather and this caused my insurance to go up.

P4. Another challenge that I faced during my adaptation process is related to the cold weather.

P6. When I came to the United States, the first thing I experienced was the cold Weather.

P12. Since I was in Washington DC, the weather was sometimes cold. I always felt cold. Even in summer time, there were some nights I felt cold.

P15. It gets too cold here in Indiana….

Time of Migration to the U.S.

P3. I came to the United States in August 2006 and it snowed two months later in October 2006. I hated it and I still hate it.

Xenophobia

P9. What I don't like about the United States is that many people in this country don't like immigrants.

P9. For instance, at my job, immigrants are mistreated. When you report something wrong at work, as an immigrant, supervisors do not take it seriously.

Discrimination

P9. … Another example I can give you is that, when we first came from Africa, there was another group of refugees from Czechoslovakia. I can tell you that we were treated differently.

P9. While we, refugees from Africa were getting used clothes and used utensils from Salvation Army, the group of refugees from Europe was being taken to the store to get new staff….

P9. This discrimination problem was brought up to the refugee office and one of the refugee case workers stated that even though we all were refugees, we were different. He told us that no matter how long we may stay in the US, we will always be different.

P9. This was discrimination even within the refugee service agency which is supposed to treat all refugees equally regardless where they come from.

Food Culture

P6. Another challenge I still face is related to food.

P6. When you cannot enjoy the type of food you used to eat in your homeland because the taste is different, there is no fun about it.

P11. One thing I can tell you is that I had to adjust to American food….

P12. The food was not that bad. However, I remember, I did not like to eat cold food like cold sandwiches….

P12. I did not like the kind of salad dressings that are used here.

Lack of Information

P4. Often, refugees who are resettled in the United States don't get enough information about where they are going.

<p style="text-align: center;">**Coping Mechanisms**</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">*Problem-focused Coping*</p>

Self-efficacy

This category was divided into the following subcategories.

Work Ethics

P3. I try to keep myself very busy so that I don't think about my problems.

P3. These two jobs keep me very busy. I don't have enough time to think about my own problems.

P5. You know, I have some friends here in the United States but I don't need them for help. I am always working or going to school. I don't have time to interact with my friends. Maybe after graduation.

P5. First, I am going to school, when I don't go to school, I am working as a taxi driver for one company at Los Angeles International Airport….

P6. I cope with stress by working two jobs and going to school.

P8. When I was having English difficulties, I spent time using my English-French dictionary.

P14. I have learned to work very hard and I keep doing it.

P15. It was very cold but I did not have any choice. I needed to get out of the house.

P15. I had to work night shift full time so that I can help the children during the day by driving them to school and back to my place of residence.

Goal Pursuit

P1. …One more thing that consoled me was the fact that I was going to school.

P2. …What consoled me is the fact that I was going to school.

P6. I am currently going to school and I am graduating this coming May 2011 from Western Michigan University in Aviation Maintenance Technology.

P6. I learn to deal with snow when I came to the United States.

P8. …While I was enrolled in school, before taking any other classes, I made sure I first took English required classes in order to build my English skills. This was very helpful to me.

P8. Yes, it helps. When you realize you are achieving something in this country, it becomes a boost for your adjustment.

P8. …When you look back from when you came and realize you are making some improvements, you feel you are being adjusted.

P9. Gradually, I learned to adapt and when I graduated from high school, I had a higher GPA than many of my classmates who were born and grew up here.

Self-sufficiency

P2. This motivates me to work hard so that I can be self sufficient and learn to not always depend on my friends.

P3. …I have learned to deal with my own problems and I always try to solve them on my own.

P3. You know, as a refugee, you have struggled too much that you learn to not to depend on others to be the ones to help you.

P3. It is better to learn to survive on your own without always depending on others.

P4. Whenever there is a problem, my family and I will be the ones to deal with it. We try not to rely too much on outsiders.

P4. … I would say Atlanta has a good weather but sometimes it gets too cold that you have to cover your ears. If you don't cover your ears, you may end up having some health issues.

P5. I feel I am well-adjusted. I know how to handle even difficult situations here in the United States.

P5. I try to do things on my own. I have another friend also from Ethiopia, we attended the same university in Ethiopia then we met again here in Los Angeles. Sometimes if I need help or advice I go to him but I don't need too much of his assistance.

P5. …Even though you have friends, it is better to do things on your own. Friends are there but they cannot do things for you. …You have to learn to struggle on your own.

P5. I have been thinking, maybe in the future, I may build a civic center where African immigrants can meet and socialize.

Secondary Migration

P1. … I remember when I moved to California from Missouri, the first weekend in California, I went to church. I did not know where the church was, but I thought there could be some churches in the area….

P2. …For the first time, I hesitated but during their second visit to Arizona, they kept insisting that we come and live with them…. Finally, my mother and I decided to move to California to live with them.

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P9. …Before moving to Kalamazoo, we first lived in Baltimore. We moved to Kalamazoo in 2007….

Emotion-focused Coping

Social Interactions

P2. One way I cope with stress is to talk to people….

P2. …I have friends in the area. In addition to that, my sister and my brother in law also live in the area. Whenever I feel stressed out, I talk to them.

P5. I cope with stress by talking with friends although it is not too much.

P9. However, in this country, we all seem to be busy. We only meet with friends once in a while. When I feel stressed out, I call some of them for conversation. This relieves my anxieties.

P10. How can I cope? Once in a while, somebody comes to visit and it becomes a chance for me to interact with that person….

P10. …For instance, you yourself came to talk to me today and I am interacting with you. Every time this happens, I feel happy and my sadness goes away for a while.

P11. Because I was going to school and there were some other immigrants from Vietnam at the same school I was attending, we had time to talk to each other, especially on weekends.

P11. Talking to people from your own culture is a good coping mechanism in a foreign country.

Positive Community Perception

P2. …In addition to that, most people in the United States are open. They don't hide anything from you.

P4. When people greet and smile at you even if you don't know them, you feel attracted and you feel you want to interact with them. By interacting with them, you learn from them and this contributes to the adaptation process.

P4. The culture in this country is different. I like how people are open to you. You go to church, and people greet you even when they don't know you. You go to the store, someone you don't know smiles at you as if he/she knew you…. I like that….

Hope

P1. …I always thought my life would improve then do better in this country.

P2. …However, the good thing is that you expect to get used to the system one day….

P2. …I always thought that my life would be better one day…

P2. …but I always thought that this was just for a short term. I always hoped that one day, life would be better.

P3. I still don't have my high school diploma yet. Maybe when life becomes easier for me, I will try to go back to school.

Spirituality

P4. I would say it has been difficult to cope with my adaptation challenges in this country. However, I have Christian beliefs which comfort me. I seek God's comfort everyday and have hope.

P9. I grew up in a Christian family. Anytime there was something challenging for us, we prayed….

P9. With many prayers and putting God first, we overcame many challenges and we didn't know how we overcame them. We learned to seek comfort and guidance from God.

Self-amusements

P7. I remember the evening we were crying, the next day, my Dad went and bought candy machines. There were four of them. My Dad left us with lots of coins to use with those machines. We kids spent time playing with them because we did not have any other toys to play with.

P7. Sometimes, when we felt lonely, we would take turn to tell each other's Ethiopian old folks. Other times, we would spend time remembering how life back home in Ethiopia was like comparing to life here in the United States.

P7. It was a kind of comforting to play with those candy machines and to remember how home used to be like.

P16. Whenever I felt stressed out, I went to eat out. Other times, I would go and watch some movies on television.

Mixed problem & emotion-focused coping

Social Support

This category has been divided into three subcategories involving emotional support, appraisal support, and tangible support.

Emotional Support

P1: What helped me was to realize that what I was going through was not unique to

me….

P1. Every refugee immigrant I mentioned my problems to told me that I was not the only

one. They too were having different kind of problems related to adjustment.

P1. Once I realized that I was not the only one with problems, I felt consoled. P1.

…Yeah, there are many friends who are very important to me in this country.

P1. When I need social assistance, I usually call my roommates for help….

P1. …Every time I need some assistance, I knock at their doors and they are always

willing to help me….

P2. Yes. I have made many friends. Especially my classmates…

P2. …Since they came to the United States four years earlier and were already settled

down in California, they invited us to come and live with them. They promised to help

us once we got to California.

P4. In addition to that, I rely on my family. Whenever there is something difficult for

me, my God and family are the source of my support.

P4. Friends can be helpful in terms of providing needed services.

P4. Whenever I need some assistance, I turn to my family.

P5. Yes, I have made some friends. Mostly other immigrants from Ethiopia and other

people from my church.

P6. I also enjoy staying with my family and like to take care of my children when my

wife is at work.

P6. Whenever I need social assistance, I usually rely on my family and friends. I don't

seem to need to much social assistance but there have been some cases in the past.

P9. Friends are there to help if necessary.

P11. Whenever there was something going on for one individual, we would all find ways

to handle the situation among ourselves….

P13. Since I grew up in a church, I coped with stress by going to church….

P13. …The church I was attending had a youth choir. I then decided to join the choir.

While I was singing in the choir, I was not only coping with stress, but I was also

improving my English language because during the choir practices, we had to memorize

English songs. This was very helpful to me.

Appraisal Support

P2. My friends, especially refugee immigrants who came to the United States before I

did, are very helpful. They provide me with information about how to live in this

country. They always give me good advice based on their adjustment experience….

P3. Friends are always important. During my first days in the United States, they

showed me around and because of their help, I had a good start and now I know where to

go or who to ask when I need help.

P5. When I came to the United States, my friends from Ethiopia helped me for a while.

They showed me around where to get things. They even helped me find my first job….

P6. I usually need my friends to provide me with advice. They sometimes come to me to

ask for advice and I feel I am helpful when I manage to do something for them.

Tangible Support

P1. You know, my friends are very important to me in this country. For instance, as I mentioned a while ago, if it wasn't for that family I told you about whose husband arranged for my plane ticket to go visit my friend in Zambia, I would not have been able to go….

P2. As I was mentioning, whenever I need some assistance, I go to my friends. If they have something I am looking for, they will give it to me. If I need some money, they would let me borrow it and pay back later…

P15. … It was until after six months that an old lady from the church we were attending decided to give us one of her old cars, the one she was not driving….

Acculturation

P2. The good thing is that since I started going to school, I have met students who think like me, professors with valuable ideas I can learn from.

P2. …Before the war, I always thought Rwandans were the only smart people and superior to others. However, during the refugee migration, I came to learn and realize that there are more good and intellectual people in different countries. Since then, I learned to make friends with different individuals regardless where they come from.

P3. Yes, I feel I am adjusted. I am able to do things on my own.

P3. …Since I started working, I have been able to drive myself around and I keep discovering where things are.

P3. What I like about the United States is the availability of services. Here in this country, there are services for everybody who needs them. Anybody who has courage to go to school can do it.

P3. The only thing I can tell you is that the more time I am spending here in this country, the more I am learning many new things I can do to survive and help others.

P6. After 12 years in this country, I consider myself to be well-adjusted… I can say that I am well-adjusted.

P6. Yes. This is because with the opportunity we have in this country, I am able to access and use technology, read books, watch television and go to school. All those things I like to do contribute to my adjustment.

P6. With the time I already spent in this country, I have managed to make a number of friends. I have made many friends from different parts of Africa, America, Asia and Europe. These are friends I met at work, school and at church.

P7. I have made lots of friends. I have met friends at school, at church and in my community.

P9. You know, I don't know if there is anything I like about this country. To tell you the truth, I have been thinking about going back home.

P9. Of course. When you realize that people don't like you, you are more likely not to interact with them.

P9. To tell you the truth, I never made any friends with Americans here in the United States….

P9. All my friends are only immigrants from Africa, like Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi and Zambia.

P9. I have had many difficulties with American culture. I usually interact with

Americans, but we never become friends.

Self-identification

P7. When I was in fourth grade, I met this Japanese girl. Because we were struggling

together in English, we decided to hang around each other….

P7. …We liked each other because we were the only foreigners in that community. We

would tell each other things related to each other's culture….

P7. …Japanese culture and Ethiopian culture do not have anything in common, but at

least it made me comfortable to get acquainted with her….

P7. …When you are with other immigrants, it gives you comfort that you are not the

only one struggling.

Social Service Use

P2. … I lived on refugee services until both my brother in law and my sister who are also

refugee immigrants came from California to visit us in Arizona.

Approaches to Working with Refugee Immigrants in the U.S.

Cultural Sensitivity

Culturally-based Practice

P1. The only thing I can say is that in terms of assigning places of resettlement for refugee newcomers, refugee agencies need to link people with similar cultural background together. I know they are doing it to a certain extent. However, one criterion such as race is not enough. They need to assess different cultural characteristics before linking people together.

P4. Another suggestion I can give to refugee services is related to competency in adult education….

P4. Adult education needs to revise the curriculum and offer classes that are helpful to resettled refugees.

P4. Adult education need to hire culturally competent teachers who are able to understand problems of resettled refugees in this country.

P8. Refugee services need to include individuals who have knowledge about the refugee experience who can also understand forced migrations-related problems.

P9. Refugee services need to also make sure newcomers are well adjusted before discontinuing their services.

P15. Refugee services need to go slow, step by step, because many refugees living in the United States have gone through a lot before coming to this country.

Strength Perspective

P2. …However, what refugee services need to do would be to assess refugee individual's

ability and strengths and help them based on who they are and what they can do.

P2. …Refugee services should assess a refugee immigrant's strengths and experiences

then link them to what they are capable of doing.

Cultural Orientation

P4. Refugee resettlement agencies need to provide enough cultural orientation to

refugees before they are resettled so that they can know what to expect.

P6. …What refugee resettlement agencies need to do is to tell them exactly how life is in

this country so that when they come here, they already know what to expect.

P6. Refugee immigrants in the United States need to be integrated and taught the

meaning of things. They need to be taught how to pay their bills and the value of the

U.S. currency.

P6. Some refugee immigrants need to be taught that domestic violence is not accepted in

this country.

P8. The best way to help them would be to assist them adjust during their first days in

the United States.

P13. Refugee services need to create more programs aiming to provide information

related to cultural orientation.

P14. Refugees in the United States need to be helped settle down.

P15. Refugee services needs to provide cultural orientation to new refugees in the United

States since some of those who come here do not have any social support or anybody to

ask for information about what to do.

Equal Opportunities

P9. Refugee services need to provide similar services to all refugees regardless where

they come from.

P9. Refugee services need to provide equal educational information to all refugees.

Psychosocial Interventions

Counseling Services

P6. Refugee immigrants in the United States need enough counseling…

P7. …But on the refugee stand point, when you come here, a lot of issues are beyond

that. It is more mental than material.

Spiritual Interventions

P12. …As long as they still alive, someone need to play for them.

P17. Many refugee immigrants in this country have experienced lots of trauma. In order

for them to recover, they need spiritual interventions, meaning lots of prayers.

Social Support

P5. …So I can say that the best way to help refugee immigrants like African immigrants

is to help them socialize.

P7. I think being able to link new refugees comers to where their own people are, I think it is very important.

P10. However, old people like me, I hear there are retirement centers where they can live and meet others.

P10. …Refugees need to be linked to where they can get social support.

P10. …Those who don't have people to communicate with need to be linked to social activities.

P10. …I believe social support is very helpful to any human being.

Restoring Hope

P12. …One way to help them would be to talk to them and cheer them up. Helping them would be to visit them and tell them that those bad day have passed….

P12. Refugee social workers need to comfort newcomers so that they can be positive in their thinking, and feel they are lifted up.

Empowerment

Language Assistance

P8. The best way to help them would be to assist them learn the language.

P11. First, refugee services need to help them learn the language. Once they know the language, their mentality will change. They will feel more confident, they won't have any complex of inferiority, complex of being ignorant.

P11. …So, language is the first thing I think all immigrants coming to this country need to focus on.

P13. Refugees who come to the United States need to be helped to learn the language.

P14. Refugees who come here need to be taught the language, and…

Goal Motivations

P8. The best way to help them would be to assist them find jobs.

P10. Those who are still young can be helped to go to school and be helped to find jobs.

P11. …The second thing is employment. Refugee services need to link new comers to jobs.

P12. Refugee services need to help newcomers find jobs, teach them to work and encourage them to not be lazy since they have come to a country that has lots of opportunities and freedom.

P12. Refugee immigrants in the United States need to be encouraged to go to school and learn to be good citizens so they can stay away from troubles.

P12. Refugees need to be encouraged to advance themselves physically and spiritually since they come to a better country.

P18. For those who still can, refugee services need to help them improve themselves by going to school, learn the language and finding employment.