

Factors Related to Educational Resilience Among Sudanese Unaccompanied Minors

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Background/Context: Educational resilience is defined as having successful outcomes in school despite the adversities one has faced in life. There is a dearth of research on a particularly high-risk group—unaccompanied refugee minors who are separated from their parents by war and lack the protection and advocacy provided by adult caretakers.

Purpose: This qualitative study explores the factors associated with educational resilience among unaccompanied Sudanese refugee youth who experienced extreme trauma and chronic adversity prior to being placed with American foster families in 2000–2001.

Setting: The setting includes Lansing and neighboring communities in Michigan.

Participants: Nineteen Sudanese refugees (mean age—15 years at the time of resettlement; gender—17 males, 2 females) who had been placed in a foster care program for unaccompanied refugee minors in the United States participated in the retrospective interviews. We interviewed 20 parents from 15 families, including five couples, 3 married mothers interviewed alone, 2 single fathers, and 5 single mothers.

Research Design: The study used a qualitative research design by using open ended semi-structured interviews in which the participants were comfortable speaking about their experiences, yet the researchers were able to follow the interview protocol. With the assistance of the resettlement agency (Lutheran Social Services of Michigan), we sampled for diversity in the foster families to obtain a sample of youth who were exposed to diverse families and circumstances. With the help of foster parents and the assistance of a Sudanese cultural consultant, we recruited at least one youth from each of these families, with the exception of two families.

Data Analysis: *The transcribed interviews were coded thematically. A three-step coding procedure was used: open, axial, and selective coding.*

Findings: *All youth in our study came to the United States with “education” as their primary goal. Many youth had a desire to help those left in Africa and to rebuild Sudan. All the youth interviewed had achieved at least a high school diploma, and all but three had either completed or were enrolled in higher education. Personal attributes, relationships, and community support/opportunities helped the youth in overcoming the challenges that they faced in terms of educational attainment in the United States.*

Conclusions/Recommendations: *This study confirmed the important roles of parents, teachers, and school counselors in educational success for at-risk youth. The challenges noted by the youth and their foster parents provided useful information for possible changes in policy that could enhance their success.*

Educational resilience is defined as having successful outcomes in school despite the adversities one has faced in life (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994). Research on educational resilience is limited and generally has focused on children from low socioeconomic status and ethnic minority families. There is a dearth of research on a particularly high-risk group—unaccompanied refugee minors who are separated from their parents by war and lack the protection and advocacy provided by adult caretakers. This study explores factors that contributed to individual differences in the educational attainment of unaccompanied Sudanese refugee youth who experienced extreme trauma and chronic adversity prior to being placed with American foster families in 2000–2001. After placement, they faced additional challenges as they adapted to an unfamiliar educational system. To understand why some of these youth may have achieved educational success despite these extraordinary challenges, we sought the perspectives of the parents and the youth. The study is important to understanding of the cross-cultural school experiences of unaccompanied minors, and thus it has implications for educators, researchers, and resettlement agencies.

BACKGROUND ON SUDANESE UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

During the civil war in Sudan that erupted in 1983, more than 2 million people were killed, and millions were displaced (Bixler, 2005). Children were separated from their parents when villages were attacked in the late 1980s. During their flight first to Ethiopia and later to Kenya they endured considerable trauma and deprivation. These hardships continued during their years in refugee camps, where they lived for years with minimal support from adults (Hecht, 2005; Luster, Johnson, & Bates, 2008).

Opportunities for schooling were often erratic as the youth fled from one country to the next before settling in the Kakuma, Kenya, refugee camp. There were no schools when they arrived in Kakuma. While schools were being constructed, “classrooms” were blackboards placed under trees, and classes sometimes had to be canceled when sandstorms made it impossible to see the blackboard (Luster et al., 2008). Once the schools opened, they often lacked basic resources, such as textbooks and trained teachers (Luster et al.). Inadequate food rations in the refugee camp resulted in the youth going without food for days at a time until the next meager ration was distributed (Duncan, 2001; Hecht, 2005). The inadequate nutrition made it difficult for children to attend school and to concentrate on schoolwork. Lack of parental supervision to enforce school attendance was an additional risk for low educational attainment among these children. If they completed high school, they were not allowed to obtain jobs outside the refugee camp, and there were very few jobs inside the camp (Luster et al.). Thus, the link between educational attainment and employment opportunities was tenuous at best prior to resettlement. Given these risk factors, it would be reasonable to expect low achievement and limited educational attainment among the refugee youth known by popular media as the Lost Boys of Sudan.

Gender also played a role in the educational experiences of the Sudanese youth before coming to the United States. Although the Lost Boys were exposed to multiple risk factors for educational achievement, the limited available evidence suggests that their female peers faced even bigger obstacles. Because of cultural role expectations, being a girl was an impediment to getting an education in Sudanese society. Parents were wary of education turning their daughters into “city women,” who were generally viewed with disdain for not taking care of traditional household responsibilities (Deng, 1972). There were in fact fewer opportunities for girls to attend school because they were often absorbed into families and expected to care for the families’ young children and do domestic chores (Luster et al., 2008).

It is important to explore the performance of these refugee children in schools in the United States given their personal experiences of trauma and war. To understand what contributes to the educational attainment of these children, it is also important to investigate the available literature on educational attainment of other refugee students. One could hypothesize that the refugee children may be at risk of failure in the U.S. education system because they have different or no educational experiences in their home countries.

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES OF REFUGEE CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Currently in the United States, about 22% of young people under the age of 18 have parents who were born outside of the United States (Hernandez, Denton, & McCartney, 2007). In the last three decades, the school-age non-English speakers increased by 185% (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Education for these children is one of the many means of integration and social and economic mobility in the host society (Gandara & Rumberger, 2009). The journey of many immigrant families is driven by their desire to afford better educational opportunities for their children (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). In addition to social mobility, education is considered as emotional and social healing for refugee children to help them in restoring normalcy (McBrien, 2005; Sinclair, 2001).

The educational outcomes of immigrant and refugee children have been of interest to both educators and researchers during the last several decades. Common challenges that could influence educational achievement of both groups include previous educational experiences, which are often quite different from those they experience in the host country; little or no experience with educational technology; limited language abilities; lack of access to curriculum in their native language; cultural conflicts and misunderstandings; the need to work to support the family; racism and discrimination; mobility; and mental and physical health problems (Gonzalez, 2005; Lustig et al., 2004; McBrien, 2005). In addition to the basic education, these children are expected to learn the English language, American history, citizenship, and social and vocational skills (Spring, 2001). Although both immigrant and refugee children must face many risks in and outside of school in their new homeland, refugee children face additional challenges because they are still dealing with symptoms of trauma and grief related to the adversities they faced in their country or during their displacement (McBrien).

Refugees migrate to developed countries with the goals of seeking refuge from political persecution or economic hardship and/or to gain social mobility (Ogbu, 1987). The societal values of the country of origin shape goals of these migrants (Lese & Robbins, 1994). For example, the migrants from collectivist cultures may have collective goals for family and sometimes even for their community (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Refugees who have experienced political upheaval in their countries set their goals to attain education to avoid negative outcomes, such as depression and trauma (Lese & Robbins). However, more research needs to be done with migrants from non-Western cultures to see the

relationship between goal-setting and educational achievement in receiving countries (Lese & Robbins).

Much research has been conducted on educational attainment of children from different immigrant groups, such as Latin Americans (e.g., Lopez & Stanton-Salazar, 2001); Caribbean Americans (e.g., Rumbaut, 1995); and Asian Americans (Sue & Okazaki, 1990). Some research has examined educational attainment of refugee children (e.g., Zhou & Bankston, 1998), but most studies have focused on children who came with their families. To the best of our knowledge, no research is available on the educational outcomes of unaccompanied refugee minors. The present study intends to fill this gap in the literature.

Although during the past four decades, many different groups of refugee children arrived in the United States, most research on education of refugee children has been conducted with Southeast Asian refugee groups. One such group was children of first- and second-wave Vietnamese refugees who entered the United States after the Vietnam War ended in 1975 (Ngo & Lee, 2007). Over time, many of these children outperformed their American-born peers in school. Their academic achievement was viewed as a collective family affair based on family bonds and obligations (Zhou & Bankston, 1998). Vietnamese American families inculcated their cultural values through a family lifestyle that emphasized the high achievement of their children (Caplan, Whitmore, & Choy, 1991). The youth who were able to maintain their Vietnamese cultural values were more successful in schools than their “more Americanized peers” (Zhou & Bankston).

Other groups of refugees who came in large enough numbers to draw the attention of researchers included the Hmong and Cambodians from Southeast Asia (Ngo & Lee, 2007). The high school dropout rate was higher for Hmong students than for Vietnamese students because of their poorer English skills and lower start levels of education. Previous war experiences, low educational skills, and different learning styles also could have contributed to low rate of high school completion for Hmong students (see the review by Ngo & Lee). However, other groups of researchers reported that many Hmong students performed as well in school as their non-Hmong peers (McNall, Dunnigan, & Mortimer, 1994). Factors contributing to their success included high educational aspirations, hard work, and the bicultural identity maintained by some Hmong students. Similar to the Hmong, some Cambodian children performed well in U.S. schools, whereas others struggled with the new education system (Goldberg, 1999; Sin, 1991). Family values, Buddhist philosophy, educational aspirations, and the bicultural identities

maintained by Cambodian youth were identified as possible explanations for successful outcomes.

The groups just described typically migrated with their parents to the United States, and the findings show the important role that families play in the educational outcomes of refugee children. Thus, these findings may have limited applicability for refugee children who resettle without their parents. It is important to explore how unaccompanied minors do in school, given that they are more vulnerable to psychological distress, traumatic stress reactions, and externalizing behavioral problems than children who were accompanied by their parents (Bean, Deruyn, Eurelings-Bontekoe, Broekaert, & Spinhoven, 2007; Lustig et al., 2004). To understand this process, we have used an educational resilience framework as suggested by Wang et al. (1994) and linked it to a framework of risk and resilience provided by Masten and Powell (2003).

EDUCATIONAL RESILIENCE FRAMEWORK

Resilience is defined as successful adaptation of an individual in the face of adversities and trauma (Masten, 1994). Researchers using a resilience framework to study diverse populations of at-risk children have identified protective factors that foster resilience into three key categories: personal attributes, relationships, and community resources and opportunities (Masten & Powell, 2003). Factors in each of these categories have been linked to educational resilience.

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

Personal attributes associated with educational resilience among children from diverse backgrounds include a positive outlook on education, an internal locus of control orientation, and high self-esteem and educational aspirations (Peng, 1994; Sacker & Schoon, 2007); higher levels of autonomy and interpersonal problem-solving skills (Wang et al., 1994); and cultural values, including respect for authority among refugee children (Caplan et al., 1991; Zhou & Bankston, 1998). Goal-setting behaviors are also considered important in achieving educational goals and are one of the individual-level protective factors of building resilience in children (Werner & Smith, 1982). Student learning depends on interaction between goals, (i.e., academic, social) and motivational properties of these goals; the accomplishment of these goals works as feedback to attaining long-term goals (Covington, 2000). However, the extant literature is scant in understanding the association between individual goal-

setting behaviors and educational attainment in non-Western cultures (Lese & Robbins, 1994).

RELATIONSHIPS

Prior research has linked relationships and other family variables to educational resilience. Parents' socioeconomic status, educational expectations, support for achievement at home, and involvement at school are associated with educational outcomes in their children (Epstein, 1987; Peng, 1994). Peer group relationships also may encourage or discourage academic achievement (Ogbu, 1987; Peng). Relationships with teachers influence school performance and may be especially important for youth who lack supportive relationships with their parents (Crosnoe & Elder, 2004). Teachers who respect diversity in their classrooms are effective in fostering resilience among children from ethnic minority families (Wang et al., 1994).

COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Schools and other aspects of the community in which an individual lives are important for educational success (Wang et al., 1994). Peng (1994) identified the following characteristics of schools that can promote resilience among students: positive school climate, socioeconomic and ethnic diversity, counseling services, appropriate curriculum and instructional practices, remedial programs, including English as a second language (ESL) classes, and extracurricular activities. Supportive school-based relationships, tangible as well as emotional, contribute to academic engagement and educational outcomes (Conchas, 2001; Hamilton & Moore, 2004; Suarez-Orozco, Pimentel, & Martin, 2009). In their longitudinal study, Peck, Roeser, Zarrett, and Eccles (2008) found that extracurricular activities served as protective factors for an otherwise educationally at-risk group of adolescents. A sense of belonging to school reduces feelings of alienation and disengagement and thus promotes psychological adjustment and higher performance in refugee children and other at-risk groups (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007; Wang et al.). Resources provided by social organizations and opportunities available for children and youth to participate in community programs can also foster resilience (Wang et al.).

Prior research has established that youth who are exposed to multiple risk factors are at higher risk for educational failure (Luthar, 2003). In considering the experiences of the Sudanese in Africa and the additional challenges they experienced in the United States, there were reasons to

expect high rates of school failure in this group.

Although prior research has identified some important factors associated with educational resilience in diverse groups of children, the extent to which these same factors are important for successful outcomes among unaccompanied minors is not known, given their unusual circumstances. The present study was designed to address this gap in the educational resilience literature. The research questions of interest are: (1) What were the goals of Sudanese unaccompanied minors when they came to the United States? (2) What educational risk factors did they face in the United States? (3) What protective factors contributed to educational resilience in this group?

METHOD

The present study is part of a larger research project on Sudanese refugee youth known as the Lost Boys that began in 2001 and focused on their risks, resilience, and adaptation to a new culture. Data for this article were drawn from in-depth interviews with the Sudanese youth and their foster parents 7 years after resettlement to explore their experiences of adjustment to living in a new culture. Educational outcomes of the youth was one of the topics covered in the interviews.

PARTICIPANTS

Nineteen Sudanese refugees who had been placed in a foster care program for unaccompanied minors in the United States participated in the interviews; this is 21% of the 89 minors resettled by Lutheran Social Services of Michigan in Lansing and neighboring communities. With the assistance of the resettlement agency, we sampled for diversity in the foster families to obtain a sample of youth who were exposed to diverse families and circumstances. We interviewed 20 parents from 15 families, including five couples, 3 married mothers interviewed alone, 2 single fathers, and 5 single mothers. Most of the foster parents were European Americans (75%); 10% of the parents were African American, and 15% identified themselves as being from other ethnic groups. The families were diverse in terms of the type of community they lived in (urban, suburban, rural), family structure (two-parent homes, single mothers, single fathers), and prior parenting experience. The sample included 13 families in which 17 of the youth who participated in our study lived at some point during their foster care placement; we could not locate any youth who lived with the other two families. We also interviewed 2 youth whose parents could not be interviewed. Altogether, a little more than half (49

of 89) of the Sudanese unaccompanied minors who were resettled in the Lansing area lived in these 15 families at some time during their foster care experience because of multiple changes of placement.

At the time of the interview, all the Sudanese youth were adults, ranging in age from 18 to 26 years (mean = 22 years; $SD = 2.31$). Of the 19 youth we interviewed, 17 were male and 2 were female. Only 13 females were resettled in the Lansing area, and of the 3,800 Lost Boys resettled in the United States, only 89 were female (Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, 2005). A total of 18 of the 19 youth identified themselves as Dinka, the largest tribal group in southern Sudan. At the time of resettlement, the mean age of the youth was 15 years ($SD = 2.34$), and the youngest child was 11 years old. Some of the youth did not know their exact age, and in those cases, we used the age estimated by the United Nations based on the youths' level of physical maturity when examined in the refugee camp.

PROCEDURES

Typically interviews were conducted first with the 15 foster families who were recruited by means of a letter sent from the resettlement agency. During the interview, we asked the foster parents to provide contact information for the youth who had lived with them. With the contact information provided by the foster parents and the assistance of a Sudanese cultural consultant, we were successful in locating and interviewing at least one youth from each of these families, with the exception of two families. Of the youth we invited to participate in the study, 78% agreed to be interviewed; 2 males and 3 females decided not to take part in the study.

THE INTERVIEW

Semistructured interviews with the youth were conducted by six members of the research team—three faculty members and three graduate research assistants. Two of the interviewers also conducted interviews with foster parents. All interviewers followed the parallel interview protocols designed with a similar set of questions for the youth and foster parents (see interview questions in Appendices A and B). The interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants and later transcribed. The transcripts of the interviews were sent to the original interviewers to examine them for accuracy before they were coded.

The interview with the youth, which took approximately 2 hours to complete, began with a short demographic questionnaire. The

remaining interview was divided into three parts. The data for this article were drawn from the section that focused on the youths' educational experiences in the United States. The questions were asked about their goals when they came to the United States and the progress they made in achieving their goals. Other questions were about the challenges they experienced and the support they received related to educational attainment. The youth were also asked about their educational experiences in Africa and how those experiences affected their educational progress since resettlement. In addition, they were asked their views on why some of the youth were relatively successful since resettlement whereas others struggled. The other two parts of the interview focused on their experiences in American foster families and identity issues. Data from these sections of the interview pertaining to educational outcomes were also included in the analysis (e.g., educational support from foster parents, experiences of peer harassment).

The interview with foster parents took approximately 2 1/2 hours to complete. It began with a short demographics questionnaire. In a parallel section to the youth interview, we asked foster parents about the successes and challenges of Sudanese youth in adapting to life in the United States, including information on their educational successes and challenges. Other sections focused on parents' experiences fostering youth and their views on identity formation among these youth; again, we reviewed these sections of the transcripts to gather any relevant information. The parents not only talked about the youth who participated in our study but also shared relevant information about other Sudanese unaccompanied minors who had lived with them.

DATA ANALYSIS

After transcribing the interviews, three members of the research team conducted thematic analysis. A three-step coding procedure was used: open, axial, and selective coding (a full description of these codes is presented in Appendix C; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). First, the three authors did open coding, an "open" process in that the researchers broke data apart and outlined concepts to stand for blocks of raw data. Next, the researchers conducted axial coding, that is, the researchers grouped the codes and concepts into higher level conceptual categories that deepened the theoretical framework underpinning the analysis (Strauss & Corbin). Finally, they conducted selective coding, a process in which the researchers integrated the categories to form a theoretical structure of the analysis (Strauss & Corbin) through making comparisons and contrasts and then selecting the stories that best illustrated the lived

experiences of the participants (Fassinger, 2005). The researchers also carefully examined context and processes while coding the data because the interaction between the two determined the trajectories of experience (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The coders then held a meeting with the larger team to discuss the key stories told by the participants and the most effective ways to represent these stories.

TRUSTWORTHINESS OF FINDINGS

We aimed to enhance the trustworthiness of the study findings through taking three additional steps. First, we hired a cultural consultant from the same cultural group, who had also been a participant of this study. The cultural consultant provided us with insights into the Dinka culture and the state of education in the camps. Second, we included both the youth and the foster parents' perspectives to understand the educational resilience among these youth. Third, as another check on the trustworthiness of the data, we used member check by two people (i.e., the draft of the manuscript was reviewed by one foster parent and one of the Sudanese youth who participated in the study). Both of these reviewers confirmed that the overall findings and our interpretation of the findings were consistent with their experiences and observations.

LIMITATIONS OF THE METHODOLOGY

There are some limitations of our methodology. First, although the youth selected in this study were about 21% of all the minors who resettled in this area, our sample was highly selective; we only interviewed the youth who were doing relatively well. Because of ethical and practical considerations, we were not able to approach the youth who were not doing well (e.g., involved with alcohol or in trouble with the law). And within the families we interviewed, we did not include all the youth who had stayed with these foster families and were doing well. Second, only 13 girls resettled in the area, of whom we could only interview 2; this limited our capacity to compare their experiences with those of the male youth in the study. We were limited in accessing the school teachers many years after the youths' graduation to add another perspective to the study. Finally, the study used a retrospective design, in which the information was based on the participants' memories.

RESULTS

We begin the results section by summarizing the youths' recollections of

their goals when they resettled in the United States. Second, we describe the educational accomplishments of the youth via their own words, supplemented by their foster parents' perspectives. Next, we examine risk and protective factors that contributed to individual differences in educational attainment from the youths' and the parents' perspectives.

GOALS OF THE YOUTH

The youth were asked: *What goals did you have when you came to the United States, and how are you doing in terms of achieving those goals?* The youth frequently reported three major goals. The first goal, mentioned by all youth who participated in the study, was to further their education. The following comment was a typical response: "The only reason I came was to go to school. I can go to school and have food and everything I needed. And not worry about that I might die tomorrow because somebody is going to shoot me, you know what I am saying. So that was my goal." The youth perceived the safe environment in the United States as conducive to education. The second goal of the youth ($n = 14$), especially those who came to the United States in their late adolescence, was to help relatives and friends who were left behind, typically by wiring money to them. Having experienced deprivation themselves, the youth wanted to help those in similar circumstances. "I have to send them money, because I remember so many are so hungry," and "My goal was to come here, go to school, after school, go back home and try to help kid with no parent" were some of the typical responses. A third goal, mentioned by more than half of the youth ($n = 12$), was to help rebuild the infrastructure of war-torn southern Sudan, noting specifically hospitals, schools, and churches.

Education beyond high school was not possible in the refugee camp, so the youth recognized that resettlement represented a special opportunity that carried with it some obligation to help those who were not as fortunate. In the next section, we present the educational accomplishments of the youth.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

As Table 1 shows, all the youth interviewed had achieved at least a high school diploma, and all but 3 had either completed or were enrolled in higher education. One female, who recently had a baby, planned to return to school soon. The youth shared their achievements over time very proudly with us: "I'm more competent now, I'm sure, I can read anything now. I read." Another youth had similar experience: "I did a good

job in the beginning; I started in eighth grade, and my English was not that good. My writing was nowhere being good. I worked hard and I was getting As. And I was proud of myself.”

The youth also talked with pride about the collective performance of the Sudanese youth: “I can guarantee [that] 90% are doing well. One of the kids is going to Harvard. One is going to Stanford; some of the Lost Boys are in college. So in a way we are very successful.”

One of the females shared her thoughts about the small number of Sudanese females who were resettled in this area: “I know two girls that will be done this year with their four-year college degree. It’s just couple of us that is not going to school, but most of us are going to school.”

Table 1. Goals and Educational Progress of Youth Who Participated in the Interviews

Most frequently mentioned goals of youth	(N = 19)	Educational progress of youth ¹	(N = 19)
Education	19 (100%)	High school graduate ²	19 (100%)
Helping people back home	14 (74%)	Four-year college program	5 (26%)
Rebuilding Sudan	12 (63%)	Two-year community college	8 (42%)
		Graduated from college	2 (11%)
		Certificate program	1 (5%)
		Currently not enrolled/planning	3 (16%)

¹ Of the 89 unaccompanied Sudanese minors resettled in the Lansing, Michigan, area, 55% lived with the 15 foster families who participated in the study; of the youth who lived in these families, 86% completed their high school education.

² Two of the youth in our study earned their high school diploma with accolades.

The parents related that the youths’ educational progress, in light of their background, was one of the most rewarding experiences for them as foster parents. One of the parents who helped distribute community-funded scholarships to the youth remarked on what she observed on their scholarship applications about their performance in college, “Twenty-three kids’ grade points high enough, over 2.5; you know that’s incredible to me. That’s just huge.” Of all the youth who lived in these families, about 86% obtained their high school diploma. On the other hand, the foster parents also mentioned that not all the youth who had lived with them were in school or had graduated from high school. The combination of various risk and protective factors in different contexts contributed to different trajectories among the youth. In the following section, we present the risk and protective factors in the United States that were discussed by the youth and their foster parents (also see Table 2).

RISK FACTORS IN THE UNITED STATES

When the youth came to the United States, they were confronted with a different set of risks in this new context, including a number of challenges related to their educational goals.

Limited English Skills

The youth discussed the challenges they faced initially when they were not able to carry on conversations with their foster parents at home, and teachers and peers at school. Even though they had been taught English in the refugee camps, it was typically their third language after their mother tongue and Arabic. Comprehending, reading, and writing in English were extremely difficult for most of the youth in their first years after resettlement. In addition, some teachers had difficulty understanding their English when they sought help. The youth also had problems with grammar, as this youth noted:

It was tough like English-wise, I really did not know how to express myself; like whenever I had something to say, I had to figure out how to say it, especially the grammar. The person I was talking to had to figure out what I was saying. So, speaking was not that good, writing was not either.

Another youth shared his frustration about not understanding what was being taught because of his limited English skills:

When I start high school, it seem like I was in the middle of nowhere. I mean the teacher is talking, I couldn't even hear what the teacher is saying right there, and he's lecturing and I have to take notes, and I don't even know what notes are. So, the teachers were having hard time understanding me too.

Academic Challenges Related to Educational Preparation in the Refugee Camps

The Sudanese youth had different educational backgrounds than their American peers. The U.S. school system was different from what they knew in Kakuma. For example, students moved from one classroom to another in the United States, whereas in Kakuma, the teachers moved from one classroom to another. These youth had almost no experience with educational technology in the refugee camps, whereas in the United States, they had to use calculators and computers to finish their home-

work assignments, and their teachers used PowerPoint during class.

In addition, many subjects, such as American history and American government, were unfamiliar to them. Moreover, the curriculum in the United States promoted critical thinking, whereas these youth were used to teacher-guided instruction that emphasized memorization. In the United States, grade placement was largely based on the age of the youth, whereas in Kakuma, grade placement was based on knowledge of the content area. As a result, many youth were enrolled in higher grades in the U.S. schools than in Kenya and experienced significant academic challenges. If the Sudanese were subsequently placed in lower grades, they had difficulty relating to less mature students who lacked the kinds of early life experiences they had.

Risks Within Schools

In addition to the youth being ill-prepared for an unfamiliar school system, in many cases, parents believed the schools were not prepared for the influx of these high-need students in the middle of the academic year—long after funding levels and school budgets had been established for the year. In particular, schools in rural and suburban districts often lacked special programs or resources to deal with students whose first language was not English. In addition, the schools were often uncertain of how many credits from Africa to apply toward graduation requirements for these youth.

Teachers in these schools, who had traditionally been able to assume that all their students shared culture-specific knowledge of the United States, suddenly had to adjust to a new situation. Some teachers had low expectations for these youth, and others did not want to make things difficult for them because they had already suffered a great deal in the war. One of the parents described how the low expectations of teachers frustrated her:

My challenge was getting the professionals to treat him like any other kid, to have high expectations. . . . My first parent-teacher conference, this English teacher tells me, "The good news is he's passing; he has a D." My jaw bone hits the table, "You're telling me that that's good news?" So I'm like, "Lady, we're on two different planets. Never congratulate me that my child has a D; for me that is not a passing grade."

Financial Constraints

Although most of the youth who participated in our study were supported by resources from the resettlement agency and their foster parents, some of them struggled with inadequate funds to pay for college. Most of the youth felt responsible to help their relatives and friends in Sudan or the refugee camps; this required working long hours, which took time away from studying. In some cases, working long hours to help those still in Africa made them ineligible for need-based financial aid; the money they sent to Africa was not considered in financial aid awards because the youth were not legally obligated to provide support for their friends and relatives.

Mental Health Issues

The issue of mental health problems came up repeatedly in the interviews with foster parents. The parents discussed such problems as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depressive symptoms, and somatic complaints such as severe headaches. Given the mental health problems among these youth, the chances of failures were high.

In addition to symptoms related to early trauma, most youth were preoccupied with the thoughts of their families in Sudan. Many of the youth arrived not knowing the fate of their family members and continued to seek information about their families from contacts in countries that bordered Sudan. With the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, more youth reconnected with family members. However, the foster parents noted that many of the youth also learned of losses, adding another stressor to their lives.

Problems With American Peers

The youth reported incidences of harassment by their American peers due of their dark skin color and different accents. For example, one youth reported, "I went to high school where there were all Black children and I was getting teased at my skin color. I was getting mad." Another youth who attended a nearly all-White school described how racism by peers affected his focus in school: "I think it was my senior [year] that I was riding a bus, this kid just came into my face and say, 'What's up, monkey?' That day I was so upset. I cannot do homework; I cannot focus."

In addition to discrimination, some youth reported that their American peers were disruptive in class, making it difficult for them to focus. In two instances, the youth were moved to higher grades because of disruptive behavior of their same-age peers. The foster parent of one of the youth shared how peers pressured his son to get lower grades:

When he first came home he had like lots of As and Bs, and a little later, his grades started going down, I said, "What's going on?" He said, "Oh it's not too safe to make a lot of good grades," and then he explained to me what was going on.

Having Own Children

Four youth who participated in our study were also parents of young children. The education of both females in our study was interrupted by their maternal responsibilities. One of them was expelled from her private Christian college when it was discovered that she was pregnant. She also shared with us, "The fact that I got pregnant before I was done with college, dad was not so happy about it. I slowed down when I got pregnant. So I was just going part time."

In addition to the stress of parenting, having children added to their financial burdens, which further hindered their educational progress. The foster parents also shared that some male youth were not able to continue their education because they had to pay child support for their children.

Despite the trauma that these youth had faced in their sojourn in Africa and the challenges that they had in the U.S. schools, all youth in our study managed to finish high school, and most of them were able to go to college. What factors may have helped to protect the educational achievement of these youth?

PROTECTIVE FACTORS IN THE UNITED STATES

Individual Characteristics

Sudanese youth who were relatively successful in school exhibited many personal characteristics that may have contributed to these outcomes.

Motivation and focus on goals. Most of the youth in our study were highly motivated because they wanted to help people back in Sudan. As one youth explained, "Every single one of us has to go to college because we need to go back and help." Those who were most successful stayed focused on their goals and managed to avoid the many distractions that

could have undermined their educational progress in their new homeland. As one of the parents put it, “They realized that education is like their key to success and they have real motivation to get higher education.” While in the refugee camp, these youth had been taught by their elders to focus on the future rather than ruminate on what they had lost. Given the limited opportunities in the refugee camp, the youth tended to view their resettlement in the United States as an unprecedented opportunity and wanted to make most of it: “I want to get an education. I want to be on top of my game. I want to be the best I can be, because now I have this opportunity, I don’t want to let it go. It’s a one-time chance. You don’t want to lose it.”

Hard work and determination. The youth and foster parents attributed much of their success to hard work and determination. For example, one youth discussed the importance of hard work:

I was further behind than the people that are same ages as me. So I had to work extra hard and that kind of slow down my motivation a little bit. Will I ever be really smart and know everything that I needed to know? But the hard work paid off. I made it through high school and I started college.

The youth who were doing well educationally also tended to exhibit perseverance. One of the youth shared recollections of his initial struggle and his persistence: “I had difficulties in the classes because my major was not an easy thing; I think it was not an easy thing for me. I failed some classes, but I repeated them and I passed.”

Educational aptitude and resourcefulness. Several foster parents commented on the intellectual ability of the youth they cared for:

Some of them are very intelligent and they had a thirst for knowledge back in Kenya and they were learning all they could. And when they came to the United States, [name of youth] already knew calculus, trigonometry, biology, some chemistry. He probably knew more than some of the kids at high school in those science subjects.

Some of the foster parents speculated that personal attributes that had been instrumental to their survival in Africa—intelligence, resourcefulness, and adaptability—were also important for their educational success in their new homeland: “And so, it’s almost a self-selection thing. And they are the ones that made it, and the ones that didn’t have those traits are dead.”

Many of the youth seemed to develop a sense of self-efficacy from dealing successfully with their war-related challenges. One of the youth shared, "Let's say if I walk, I can say a thousand mile, lot of miles, just walking without food, water and all this, I say how can I not get that grade?" Some youth also conveyed a sense of optimism: "I always say, 'I can suffer today, I don't know what is going to happen tomorrow, might be good or bad,' but always think something good will happen tomorrow."

Biculturalism. Five of the youth mentioned that they were able to succeed in the United States because they did not forget where they came from and what their goals were when they came to their new homeland. They also mentioned that they had adopted some of the American culture to navigate successfully in the United States. One of the youth in our study distinguished the more successful youth from less successful in the following way:

The ones that are doing well are the ones that take a little bit of each culture and the ones which are not doing well are the one that are sticking to the Sudanese culture. But some of them took too much of American culture, and those are the ones that are not going to school because they forgot about where they came from before, like how bad was it in Sudan, that it is important to go to school.

Another youth shared how the unsuccessful youth were distracted when they came to the United States: "One of the things that separated Lost Boys into two groups is how they adapt to the American culture; they forgot what their goal was, why they came in United States. There is some good and some bad about America. It's easy for you to get off the track."

Relationships

Important relationships for the Sudanese youth included those with foster parents, teachers and school staff, and peers.

Foster parents. The youth noted numerous ways in which the foster parents supported them, including providing transportation and helping them financially in some cases. Six youth in our study mentioned that they were able to go to schools of choice or private schools because of their foster parents: "I was glad that my foster family sent me to a private school. They have like high academics." One of the parents took an extra step to find five different schools in the city for his five foster children; he sought matches between the schools and his children's aptitude and

personality. Parents were also supportive in terms of helping them with their homework, especially with the subject matter unfamiliar to the youths. One of the parents noted, “Every evening I helped them with their homework, each of them individually. Try and explain things to them with the homework; I tried to explain, use any opportunity to explain things to them about America, American government, and American culture and helping them with homework.” In addition to helping them at home, foster parents acted as advocates for the youth at school, helping them to receive the services that they needed to be successful. One of the parents mentioned, “We’d go and meet with him [counselor], we’d call and bug him, and so in that sense [name of the youth] were lucky because they had advocates for them.” Two parents were also teachers in the schools the youth attended. Other parents served on school boards; one mentioned, “I am very active person, and I was on the school board, but I still went to conferences for [name of the youth], I was also e-mailing instructors, we want to make sure that [he] is successful.” Therefore, most parents maintained regular communication with schools and teachers. Three foster parents mentioned helping youth to set their priorities in terms of getting their education and working for money; some parents helped youth to deal with discrimination and peer harassment in schools, and they also encouraged the youth to avoid becoming distracted by American attractions (including expensive clothes and shoes) and activities (watching TV, partying, and so on).

Teachers and school staff. The youth found some teachers supportive, providing extra instruction after school: “Teachers were nice. They even give out homework and say take your time, and they gave us ESL class too. Provide a teacher—one hour to work with that teacher, teach us how to do homework.” Some parents also found their school district, teachers, and staff very supportive. “The counselor was pulling stuff out that is on the books for those kids who really struggle, we were just blessed because this man was willing to put that time in. The teachers did their best to make children understand,” a parent shared with us.

Peers. Throughout their journey in Africa, Sudanese peers helped each other survive, provided emotional support, and motivated each other in times of extraordinary adversity. In the United States, the Sudanese youth reported continuing to support and encourage each other. For example, one youth recalled, “The friends that had helped me a lot, because they were always telling me what to do, and if things don’t go right to always keep your head up high and keep trying.” In many cases, youth said their American peers also welcomed their new classmates and helped them with their initial school adjustment. Most of the youth also participated in sports, which helped them in developing friendships with American

peers. They also reported taking what they learned from their athletic peers and applying it in other contexts, such as school.

Psychological presence of biological parents. Three of the youth mentioned that they avoided distractions in the United States and maintained their focus on education so that they would not disgrace their families. They also thought that getting an education would enhance the good name of their families. The foster parents concurred: “They don’t want to let down their people; their family reputation is very important, and they have a desire to make a success of themselves, to have an honorable career, an honorable job, to bring honor to their family. They will work hard for that.”

Community Resources and Opportunities

The key support in the community discussed by nearly all the youth was the resettlement agency, Lutheran Social Services of Michigan (LSSM). The LSSM helped these youth by placing them with foster parents, providing financial support until age 21, helping pay college tuition through a special grant program until age 23, and providing independent living skills classes (e.g., cooking, budgeting). The LSSM also paid for private tuitions for most youth in our study and helped youth during the transition process to emancipation.

Table 2. Risk and Protective Factors in the United States

Risk Factors	Protective Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited English skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivation and focus on goals Hard work and determination Educational aptitude Resourcefulness Psychological presence of parents Self-efficacy and optimism Biculturalism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic challenges related to educational preparation in the refugee camps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster parents Teachers and staff Peers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of resources Low teacher expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources and opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial constraints • Mental health issues • Problems with American peers • Having own children 	

Caseworkers from the agency served as cultural brokers, helping the youth understand their new culture and mediating when there were misunderstandings between the foster parents and the youth; Sudanese caseworkers were particularly helpful in this regard. Foster parents also noted the support provided by LSSM. The agency provided training for the foster parents before the youth arrived and continued to offer support for dealing with issues that arose after resettlement.

DISCUSSION

In this study, we examined the factors that contributed to the high educational attainment of Sudanese unaccompanied minors, given the adversities and trauma they had faced in Africa. All 19 youth in our study reported coming with “education” as their primary goal. The notion, *Piocyen e kee ama ku awa*—“Education is my mother and education is my father” (Chanoff, 2005)—fits very well with the experiences of the youth in our study.

The majority of the youth in our study came to the United States with little or no educational experience in refugee camps. Moreover, they did not view the educational experience they had in refugee camps as very helpful for schooling in the United States. Given their traumatic experiences in Africa, we could easily expect failure in United States schools. Our results, however, show a different picture. The youth sampled in our study were successful; they had all completed high school and were pursuing college degrees at the time of the interviews. The graduation rate in the population from which we were able to sample parallels the findings of the refugee resettlement agency; a majority of Sudanese youth were achieving educational success. Thus, the youth we interviewed were able to accomplish at least one of their three goals (i.e., to get an education, which most of them viewed as a ladder to social mobility and a way to help people back home).

Our analysis showed that personal attributes, relationships, and community support/opportunities were considered highly valuable to youth in overcoming the challenges that they faced in terms of educational attainment. Personal characteristics that the youth described can be characterized as optimism, motivation, hard work, educational aptitude, resourcefulness, biculturalism, and persistence. Many of these personal characteristics were related to their school experiences, or lack thereof, as a result of war in Sudan. For example, youth described a kind of “survival optimism” during the interviews; they perceived that if they had survived the war, finishing education would not be that difficult. The youth who were able to go to school in the camp said they used these

experiences in their U.S. schools to some extent. Moreover, their prior educational experiences helped to give them a “dual frame of reference”: Their educational experiences in the United States provided them opportunities for social mobility, better jobs, and extending help to people who were left behind; however, their experiences in Africa shaped their personal characteristics to support their resilience. Although our study uncovered some of the important personal characteristics that helped these youth to succeed, there were undoubtedly other unmeasured factors contributing to their success. The results of our study are in line with another educational resilience study, which found that parents, teachers, parent-teacher interactions, and community resources foster resilience (Wang et al., 1994).

Our study fills a gap in current literature on educational resilience. First, most educational resilience studies have been conducted with inner-city or minority children in the United States; to the best of our knowledge, the present study is the first to examine educational resilience in refugee minors. In addition, most studies conducted on educational attainment of refugee populations have been done with children who came to the United States with their parents; our study is a contribution to the field of educational resilience in a special population: unaccompanied refugee minors who lived with American foster parents. A great deal of research has focused on educational attainment of immigrant children and native children of immigrants, but to the best of our knowledge, no study has used the educational resilience framework. Our study contributes to a better understanding of educational attainment in relation to resilience in unaccompanied refugee minors. We also include voices of youth and parents, which is a strength of our study.

More specifically, our findings contribute to current research on immigrant and refugee adaptation by highlighting the unique perspectives and experiences of a group of refugee youth who shared similarities with voluntary immigrants (Ogbu, 1995). The youth in our study came to the United States for educational and work opportunities so that they could help those who were left behind. Even though they did not voluntarily leave their homes as other immigrants do, they espoused what has come to be called “immigrant optimism” (Ogbu). Immigrants often have dual frames of reference, in which they compare their new life with that in their own country. This constant comparison can give immigrants hope for their future prospects despite challenging realities they face in their new homeland (Qin, Li, Rana, & Han, 2010). The positive outlook may also contribute to their educational outcomes. The results of our study are consistent with studies conducted with other refugee populations in

the area of educational attainment and associated factors (McNall et al., 1994; Ngo & Lee, 2007; Zhou & Bankston, 1998).

In most cases, being placed with an American foster family was an advantage for these youth in terms of pursuing their academic attainment (Luster et al., 2008). The foster parents served as cultural brokers and provided a great deal of instrumental help to the youth (Luster et al., 2009). Not only did the foster parents in our study report helping the youth with their schoolwork, but they also advocated for them in their schools and were involved in their school activities. Many children of immigrants may not have the privilege of having their parents involved in school because of their limited English language abilities, xenophobia, overly busy work schedules, and different cultural norms of participation in education (Dyson, 2001; Gandara & Rumberger, 2009; Sy, Stephanie, & Schulenberg, 2007). Most youth in our study were also involved in several sports by virtue of their foster parents' contacts and resources; they felt that the sports team experiences helped to further their positive relationships with peers and adults and helped their adjustment in schools (Warren, 2009).

Our study also highlights the potentially beneficial context of refugee resettlement on youths' adaptation. The context of resettlement influences the achievement and adjustment of refugee children in the United States. A well-known example is the case of Cubans and Haitians in the United States. Haitian children, as a socioeconomically disadvantaged group who were not welcomed by the American society, ended up in lower-class schools. On the other hand, Cuban immigrants, who were in exile from a communist revolution and who were mostly from higher socioeconomic classes, were well received by the American society and were perceived as the victims of communist oppression. Many opportunities in terms of funding, education, jobs, businesses, and training for jobs were created for Cuban immigrants, which helped them to settle more easily than Haitians (Stepick, Castro, & Dunn, 2003). Similarly, Sudanese Lost Boys became a very visible group, received a lot of media attention, and received benefits that may not be available to other refugee groups. The welcoming attitude of the host society may have also contributed indirectly to their academic pursuits. Having said this, we are not dismissing the trauma and challenges that these youth had faced, in Africa as well as in the United States.

As stated previously, our study has limitations. We had a highly selective sample, given that we did not have the opportunity to compare Sudanese minors with those who resettled as adults and were not placed with foster families. We also did not interview unsuccessful Sudanese minors (i.e.,

those having mental health problems, incarcerated, or failing in school) for ethical reasons. Because the sample was very selective, caution should be taken in generalizing the results of this study.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

In spite of these limitations, our results have implications for understanding educational needs of refugee children in schools and the importance of education for integration into the mainstream society. This study underscores the important role of parents, teachers, and school counselors in the educational success of at-risk youth—in this case, unaccompanied refugee minors. However, the challenges noted by the youth and their foster parents suggest some changes in policy that could enhance their success.

Immigrant youth who enter Michigan schools at the secondary level are confronted by the need to complete their educational requirements for graduation prior to the age of 20. This policy makes it difficult for these students to attain all the skills needed to be successful in postsecondary education. First, acquiring the English skills needed to accomplish secondary-level work is a major challenge because youth are trying to master the basic tools of communication while also learning the content of their classes. Even the best students may need intensive ESL training, especially in the areas of academic reading and writing, in order to meet grade-level benchmarks (Gandara & Rumberger, 2009). Second, students who enter the schools lacking basic educational skills need access to remedial education to catch up with their same-age peers because most secondary-level teachers are not prepared to teach basic math and literacy. Finally, immigrant children may need to take supplementary courses to build their knowledge base in areas not covered in schools outside the United States, such as American history and government. Many of these skills cannot be taught in a compressed time frame. By implementing a more flexible time frame for completing the high school curriculum and collaborating with local community colleges to offer options for joint enrollment, the school system could help to ensure that immigrant students graduate with the skills needed to succeed in higher education and work life.

Because of the various wars going on in the world, the developed nations are likely to witness an increasing flow of refugee children; schools need to be prepared to assist them. The results can also be used by resettlement agencies in carefully placing such children with foster parents and in providing resources to these children. Future work needs to be done with other groups of unaccompanied minors.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A Interview Questions—Youth

1. What goals did you have when you came to the US, and how are you doing in terms of achieving those goals?
2. Tell me about what was challenging for you after arriving in the US and how you dealt with these challenges.
If not covered in question 1 or 2 — (Probe: Tell me about your educational experiences after arriving in the US. Did your schooling experiences in Kakuma affect how you did in American schools?)
(Probe: Tell me about the jobs you have had since arriving in the US. Are you happy with them?)
3. We are trying to understand what it takes for a refugee to move successfully to a new country and a new culture. What are your thoughts on that? What has helped you personally to get adjusted to living in the United States?
(Probes: Tell me about who has helped you to adjust to life in the US; where have you received support since you moved here? For example, Lutheran Social Services, foster parents, peers? What was the most helpful support?)
(Probe: Do you think your personal strengths and previous experiences helped you in adjusting to life here? If so, in what ways?)
(Probe: What effects have your war experiences in Africa had on you in the US?)
4. Some of the Sudanese youth seem to be adjusting well to life in the US and some of them seem to have more problems. How would you explain these differences?
(Probe: Think about two or three Sudanese youth you know who have struggled adjusting to life in the US. What do you think made adjusting to life in the US difficult for them?)
5. If you have a cousin who is coming to the US, what advice would you give him or her about adapting to life in the US?
6. What are your future goals?
7. You have been living in the US for 6 or 7 years. What has it been like living in this area as a person from another culture? What's the best part? What's the most difficult part? Why?
8. Has anyone ever treated you differently because you are from Sudan? Are there times when you felt you were mistreated in the United States? Can you discuss one incident of when this happened?
(Probes: What happened? Why do you think it happened? Have you had other similar experiences? By which group? Why?)

Appendix B

Interview Questions—Foster Parents on Youth Challenges and Accomplishments, and Factors Related to Adaptation/Resilience

1. Among the Sudanese youth you worked with, what have been the biggest challenges they have dealt with since coming to the US and how successfully have they dealt with those challenges?
(Probe: What were the educational experiences of your foster children like in the US?)
(Probe: What issues related to mental and physical health did you observe in the youth in your home?)
2. What are the major accomplishments of your foster children since they resettled in the US?
(Probes: Look for practical [education, employment] as well as social or psychological accomplishments [developing identity, dealing effectively with effects of trauma])
3. When you think about their successes and accomplishments, what do you think helped them to achieve these successes?
(Probe for personal characteristics, supports, relationships, etc.)
4. Some of the Lost Boys and Girls seem to be adjusting well to life in the US and some of them seem to have more problems. Among the youth in your home and their friends, did you see these differences? If yes, how would you explain the differences?
(Probe: Did those who were relatively successful tend to have certain characteristics in common?)
(Probe: Did the relationship the youth had with their foster families affect how well they adjusted to life in the US?)
(Probe: If you knew some who struggled, what do you think made adjusting to life in the US difficult for them?)
5. How much did your foster children disclose to you about their experiences in Africa? In what ways, if any, do you think their experiences in Africa affect how well they adjusted to life in the US?
6. Do you think there are things that schools and communities could have done to help Sudanese youth adjust to life in the US better? And do you think the refugee resettlement policy helped the Sudanese youth? What can be improved?
7. Being a foster parent to the Sudanese youth is likely to be both challenging and rewarding. What did you find challenging and what did you find rewarding?
(Probe: Can you think of times when you felt particularly good about being a foster parent? Can you describe that experience?)

Appendix C

Trail from raw data to conclusions

1. The transcripts were checked for accuracy and completeness.
2. Three coders completed the open coding for at least one youth's and one foster parent's interviews.
3. These three coders met after this coding and discussed their open codes with each other.
4. The coders met again after completing all the open coding for all the interviews. In this meeting, they discussed their memos and came up with axial and selective codes for the open codes.
5. After reaching an agreement, the coders met with all members of the research team who had conducted interviews with the youth; this larger team confirmed that the themes identified with the coders were consistent with what they learned in the interviews they conducted. The larger team also discussed examples from their interviews that were illustrative of the themes.
6. With the larger team, we also brainstormed the framework of the article and the contexts that affected the individual experience.
7. Finally, the larger group had a few small suggestions for "word-smithing" the way the results were presented.
8. The foster parents' perspectives were added to supplement the information gained from the youths' interviews.
9. We also hired a Sudanese consultant for the larger study, who reviewed the Results section of the article and confirmed that the results were accurate based on his knowledge of the experiences of the Sudanese youth in foster care.
10. See Table C1 for some illustrations of how we reached the highest category of codes from raw data.

Table C1. Example of Trail From Raw Data to Conclusions

Raw Data	Open Code	Axial Code	Selective Code
When I first came to the US in my first goals was go to school, get my high school diploma. Which I have. And then move on to college. Make sure I got a degree. And then find a job after that.	Getting school diploma Getting college degree Getting job	Education	Goals of the youth
I see there is a need for nurses . . . and when some day I will go back to Sudan you know, I want to be able to help them Uh, just get a school, education..make money sometime, ha. So I can help my brothers. I've got brothers at home.	Helping people in Sudan with educational applications Helping family members with money after getting education	Helping people in Sudan	
I feel like if I get an education and same with all the Lost Boys, so I feel like if they get their education, and things get better someday in Sudan, with all the education they get they can take that back and help all those people who are in needs and who are living in that dark continent. It's helping, it could be let's say all engineers and doctors and accountants, like you know it's so much impact they can do there.	Education will be helpful in development of Sudan	Rebuilding Sudan	
Yeah, basically my mom always try to, like kind of try too much to just introduce me so many people the families and the children that are going to school with me. She talk to the parents, "we got [name of the youth] here, this is my foster son." And so I can get closer to these people. So she basically did that and they to take me and she try invite me to go to a lot of events.	Agents in acculturation	Support of foster parents	Relationships
They [foster parents] would help me with doing the homework and everything.	Support for education/school work		
I think I had kind of sense of my family, my brothers that if I do something. I make my dad cry or not even cry just cry, but I just feel like my dad is watching me and that's not right thing my dad want although I am not perfect.	Desire to do good to honor their biological parents	Psychological presence of parents	

Table C1. Example of Trail From Raw Data to Conclusions (continued)

<p>I think you have to be willing to accept any changes. Because when you move from a different place to another, you should not expect everything to be the way you want it. But you need to just try to fit in.</p> <p>You lived in a different culture. So you have to adjust to it and actually take a little bit of each and then put it together. That's the only way you can manage to live in America. The ones that are doing well are the ones that take a little both of each culture and the ones which are not doing well are the ones that are sticking to the Sudanese culture, I think. You don't want to be too Americanized, you need to remember your culture too.</p>	<p>Trying to make adjustments</p> <p>Maintaining a balance between two cultures</p>	<p>Biculturalism and adjustment</p>	<p>Personal characteristics</p>
<p>But what helped me adjust here personally was being able to know what I was here for.</p> <p>You've got so many opportunities here, but at the same time there are so many distractions here that, that if you come in here and you just come and you run into, you just find these things.</p> <p>You have to be careful because a lot of things, you could be good, you could make a better life here in America, you could be bad, you could go through bad life or you could go through good life.</p>	<p>Revisiting goals</p> <p>Making right choices</p>	<p>Focus on goals</p>	
<p>The language for me I had to know enough for me to be able to do my own work. Be able to talk with friends. Be able to talk at home. Wherever else I go—shopping. I had to do my own shopping. So, the language was pretty challenging.</p>	<p>Communication was difficult due to language barriers</p>	<p>Limited English skills</p>	<p>Risk factors in the United States</p>
<p>When I start high school, it seem like I was in the middle of nowhere. I mean the teacher is talking, I couldn't even hear what the teacher is saying right there, and he's lecturing and I have to take notes, and I don't even know what notes are. So, the teachers were having hard time understanding me too.</p>	<p>Language issues in academia</p>		
<p>Yeah, physically, emotionally, and mentally I wasn't doing well. So it took me about 7 months until the agency moved me to a different foster home. I knew that I was crying all the time and I wouldn't eat and so across a lot of problems, and then I was really in the bad shape. I was depressed.</p>	<p>Depression (Psychosomatic)</p>	<p>Mental health issues</p>	
<p>I had problem which is all of us had problem in school, the way schooling system is set here and the way it is back home is totally different</p> <p>I knew like A, B, Cs like a chair, a car, and that's about it. I did not know how to put a sentence together. Back in the camp, they don't go by how much you know about it or whatever, if you wanna go to the sixth grade, you go to the sixth grade. I had little education.</p>	<p>Difference in school system</p> <p>Prior education attainment</p>	<p>Academic challenges related to educational preparation in the refugee school</p>	

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